

# Maitreya Buddha Statues at the University of Pennsylvania Museum

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Among the Chinese Buddhist sculptures in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (UPM) collection are two statues of Maitreya, the future Buddha, and a pedestal that originally also supported a Maitreya image, all of early sixth century date (see Figs 6, 7 and 8). These sculptures epitomize the apogee of the Maitreya faith in China in the latter part of the Northern Wei dynasty (386-534). Of superb quality, they also characterize the emergence of the first synthesized Chinese Buddhist style, after an initial period of interaction between foreign (Indian and Central Asian) and indigenous Chinese artistic traditions in the fourth and fifth centuries. Furthermore, inscriptions offer glimpses of the religious beliefs and practices of the people for whom they were made. This essay will discuss these sculptures and the Maitreya faith in the context of early Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art.

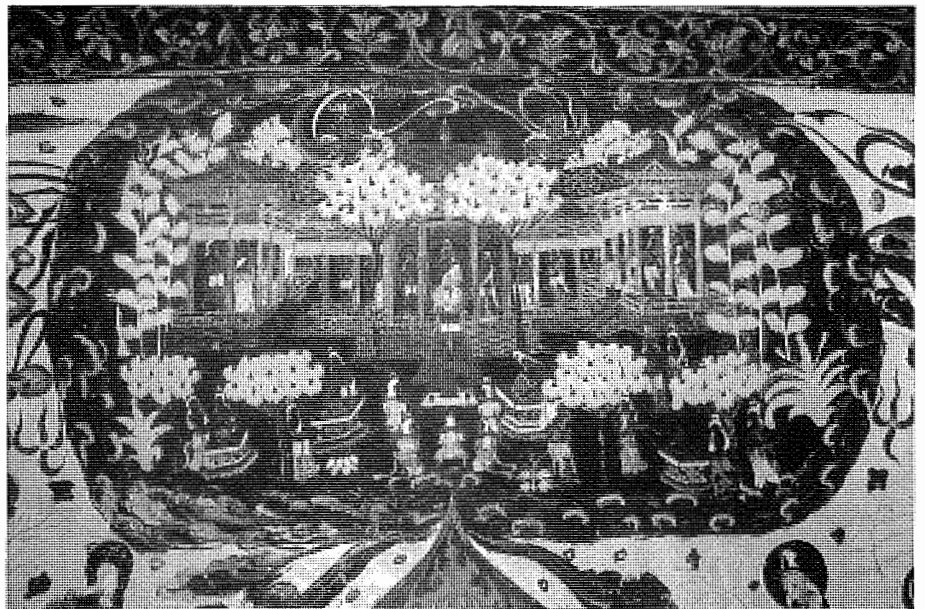
Maitreya (Ch. Mile), also known as Ajita (Ch. Cishi), means 'the Compassionate One'. In Buddhist legends, Maitreya is a bodhisattva destined to succeed Shakyamuni, the historical Buddha, as the Buddha of the future age. Shakyamuni, meaning 'Sage of the Shakya clan', is the honorific name for Siddhartha Gautama (c. 563-483 BCE), the founder of Buddhism who is generally accepted as a historical figure. Maitreya, however, is an abstract theological creation. The emergence of Maitreya as a cult figure in India around 2,000 years ago signalled important changes within the Buddhist tradition, among which were the development of the bodhisattva cult and the Mahayana movement. Mahayana (Great Vehicle) refers to the new schools of Buddhism, which distinguish themselves from the older Hinayana (Small Vehicle) schools. Central to Mahayana teachings is the bodhisattva doctrine, which prescribes a path of spiritual progress towards enlightenment for devotees to follow. The new schools also emphasize devotional faith and reliance on the supernatural powers of deities for salvation, as opposed to the cultivation of morality and self-discipline for deliverance characteristic of the Hinayana tradition.

The invention of Maitreya is tied to the way Buddhists view the meaning and essence of Buddhahood. It signals a shift away from the model of a concrete, historical person to a more general, abstract concept of a transcendent being. Eventually the Mahayana tradition boasts a vast pantheon of innumerable Buddhas and bodhisattvas who possess colourful characters and are endowed with supernatural powers. Joseph Kitagawa wrote:

...Buddhological speculation developed a wide variety of notions and interpretations of the nature of the Buddha, previous Buddhas, multiple Buddhas, and bodhisattvas. The Hinayana tradition acknowledges Matteyya (Maitreya) together with Gautama as a bodhisattva, or 'a being destined for enlightenment of Buddhahood'. In the Mahayana and Esoteric traditions, Maitreya is a savior side by side with other 'celestial' bodhisattvas, Buddhas, and saviour figures. In all these traditions, Maitreya holds a special place as the future (final) Buddha, even though his futureness has been understood in various ways. (Sponberg and Hardacre, eds, p. 17).

Besides Shakyamuni, Maitreya is the only bodhisattva recognized in both Hinayana and Mahayana traditions. He thus plays a central role in the transition from the old to the new schools. Together with Shakyamuni, they are the most important devotional figures in early Mahayana Buddhism in India and China, and are well represented in the figurative arts, long before well-known Mahayana cult figures such as Amitabha (Ch. Amituo; Lord of the Western Pure Land) and Avalokiteshvara (Ch. Guanyin; Bodhisattva of Compassion) became prominent. The Maitreya faith in India spread eastwards along the Silk Route to the Buddhist kingdoms in the Tarim Basin during the first few centuries of the Common Era. By the time the cult reached China in the fourth century, it was already quite developed.

In the Chinese context, Maitreya belief consists of two main



(Fig. 1) Maitreya Bodhisattva in Tushita Heaven  
West wall ceiling of Cave 338, Dunhuang, Gansu province  
Tang period, early 7th century  
Mural painting  
(Photography by Wu Jian)

motifs: ascent and descent. The ascent motif centres on Maitreya's role as a bodhisattva. He is currently in Tushita Heaven (Ch. Doushuaitian); Tushita means contentment or satisfaction, and it is designated as one of the six heavens in the 'realm of form' in Indian cosmology. Maitreya resides in the inner quarters of a splendid seven-storey palace, where he practices virtues and preaches to *devas* (heavenly beings) while waiting to be reborn to earth. The outer quarters of the palace are adorned with light-emitting jewels, lotus ponds, aromatic waters, the sensuous pleasures of music and dance, and the enjoyment of *devas*. A Tang dynasty (618-906) mural in Cave 338 at Dunhuang in Gansu province portrays Maitreya Bodhisattva in Tushita (Fig. 1).

The ascent motif is called *shangsheng* in Chinese, literally meaning '[re]born above'. It refers to devotees' wishes to be reborn in Maitreya's Tushita Heaven after death. Because of his role as a teacher, Maitreya is also very popular among the clergy, who pray that he will answer their questions about Buddhist doctrine. For example, the eminent Chinese monk Dao'an (312-85) and his disciples made a wish to be reborn in Tushita in front of a Maitreya image. In popular devotion, Maitreya Bodhisattva is worshipped as one of the deities in the heavens, presiding over a paradise-like domain that serves as a final resting place for the deceased and for their salvation. Pre-Buddhist Chinese beliefs in an afterlife and the existence of a land inhabited by deities and immortals no doubt facilitates the reception of Maitreya and his paradise (and the Pure Land cults).

The descent motif focuses on Maitreya's role as the future Buddha. Buddhists believe that the world degenerates and rejuvenates in a cyclical manner. In a state of moral decline, society is chaotic and people have short life-spans, but when morality is restored, the world becomes prosperous and peaceful, and people will live to a ripe old age. Descending from Tushita, Maitreya will be born into one of these positive eras, in the kingdom of Ketumati (Ch. Chitoumocheng).

Ketumati is ruled by a *chakravartin* (Ch. *zhuānlunwáng*), literally a 'wheel-turning king'. This implied a militarily powerful and morally superior king, or universal monarch; embodying the Indian ideal of kingship, the term was soon incorporated into Buddhism. Like a paradise on earth, Ketumati has no crime, no evil, and the people are free of sickness. They live to the age of 84,000, and women marry at the age of 500. The land is fertile and there are all kinds of conveniences, such as coins and clothes hanging from trees. Maitreya is born into a brahmin family as a human. When he grows up he joins the *sangha* (monastic community) and gains full enlightenment. As an enlightened Buddha, Maitreya will hold three assemblies under the *nagapupa* (Ch. *lónghuā shù*; the dragon-flower tree). Beings who attend any of these assemblies will gain salvation: in the first assembly 96 billion, the second 94 billion, and the third 92 billion. A number of Tang dynasty murals at Dunhuang depict Maitreya Buddha in Ketumati (for example, Caves 445 and 148; see Dunhuang Academy, *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, Beijing, 1987, vol. 3, pl. 175 and vol. 4, pl. 28).

The descent motif is called *xiasheng* in Chinese, literally meaning '[re-]born below'. It refers to devotees, who are already in Tushita, accompanying Maitreya to be reborn below in Ketumati, where they will gain final liberation by attending one of Maitreya's assemblies under the dragon-flower tree.

Corresponding to the ascent motif, Maitreya is portrayed as a bodhisattva in Tushita Heaven (as in Figure 1). Maitreya Bodhisattva is one of the most popularly depicted deities in early Chinese Buddhist cave temples at Dunhuang, Yungang in Datong, Shanxi province, and Longmen near Luoyang in

Henan province (Datong and Luoyang were the two capitals of the Northern Wei). The peak of the Maitreya cult in China spanned the last quarter of the fifth century and the first quarter of the sixth, coinciding with the latter half of Northern Wei rule over a unified northern China. The ruling elites of the Northern Wei consisted of a confederation of nomadic tribesman, led by the Xianbei people. In general, the Yungang phase of Northern Wei Buddhist art, from around the 450s to the 490s, is closer in style to its Indian and Central Asian prototypes. First we will look at several examples from this phase.

In a recessed niche from Yungang Cave 11, Maitreya Bodhisattva is shown seated with his legs crossed at the ankles, a position derived from royal portraiture of kings of the Indian Kushan dynasty (late 1st-3rd century) (Fig. 2). He wears a high crown, which bears an effigy of Shakyamuni, his predecessor. (In later images it is usually Avalokiteshvara who bears an effigy of Amitabha Buddha on his crown.) His proper right hand is raised, with the palm facing outwards in the *abhaya mudra*, the gesture of fearlessness. His left hand rests on his knee, holding a water flask – an attribute referring to Maitreya's brahmanic origins that is more commonly found in Indian images. The bodhisattva is also adorned with necklaces, arm-bands and other jewellery. The dhoti drapes tightly over the legs, following their contour with incised markings of parallel



(Fig. 2) Maitreya Bodhisattva  
East wall, Cave 11, Yungang, Shanxi province  
Northern Wei period, 3rd quarter of the 5th century  
Sandstone  
(After Yungang Cave-temples Cultural Relics Conservation  
Institute, ed., *Yungang shiku*, vol. 2 of *Chinese Buddhist  
Cave Temples* series, Beijing, 1994, pl. 91)

folds. The robust, full figure of the bodhisattva closely follows its prototypes in Central Asia and at Dunhuang (an early example of an image of Maitreya Bodhisattva at Dunhuang is in Cave 275, dating to the first quarter of the fifth century; see Dunhuang Academy, *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, Beijing, 1981, vol. 1, pl. 11). The face, however, bears the characteristic 'archaic' smile of Northern Wei images. In Indian examples, roofs and columns of buildings are represented to indicate the palace in Tushita Heaven; here the architectural elements are transformed into a general trapezoidal arch, with two pagodas serving as columns. Within and outside the niche are minor bodhisattvas listening to Maitreya preach. Donors are portrayed standing in a row directly beneath the niche, flanking a censer in the centre.

There are monastic worshippers, who stand closer to the centre, as well as lay devotees, with males on the right and females on the left. Their dress – men in short tunics and boots, and women with tall head-dresses and short coats over long pleated skirts – indicate that they represent Northern Wei noblemen and noblewomen.

Another panel, from Yungang Cave 17, emphasizes Maitreya's role in the lineal succession of Buddhahood (Fig. 3). Dated to 489, this shows Maitreya Bodhisattva in the top niche. The lions by the throne are Indian symbols of royalty, reiterating Maitreya's regal stature as a spiritual ruler. In the niche below, the two Buddhas seated side by side represent Shakyamuni and Prabhutaratna (Many Treasures Buddha, a Buddha of the Past).

This motif depicting two identical Buddhas is of Chinese origin, denoting the famous parable of the 'jewelled *stupa*' (the Indian relic mound) from the *Lotus Sutra*, one of the most important Mahayana texts in East Asia. In this episode, Shakyamuni is preaching the *Lotus Sutra* to an audience when Prabhutaratna arrives in a *stupa*. The audience requests that the *stupa* be opened, whereupon Shakyamuni rises into the air to perform the miracle. Prabhutaratna, who is sitting inside the *stupa*, then graciously offers half his seat to Shakyamuni, and the two Buddhas rejoice in preaching the sutra together. In this fabulous manner, the parable conveys the Mahayana concept that more than one Buddha can exist at the same time and in the same place, a radical departure from the early notion that there is only one Buddha in each aeon, and that one Buddha succeeds another.

In the Yungang panel, the representation of Maitreya with Shakyamuni and Prabhutaratna reiterates the bodhisattva's role as a successor of Buddhahood past and present, thus assuring the eternity of Buddhahood. Above the main niche, the depiction of the diminutive images of the Seven Buddhas of the Past, a motif inherited from Indian Buddhist art, reinforces this theme. Thus while continuing the older concept of the lineal succession of Buddhahood, the presence of the innovative Twin Buddhas motif at the same time anticipates new developments in the Mahayana. The main icons of this group are attended by minor bodhisattvas and heavenly beings in adoring gestures. The donors, eight nuns, are portrayed below, flanking an inscription panel in the centre.

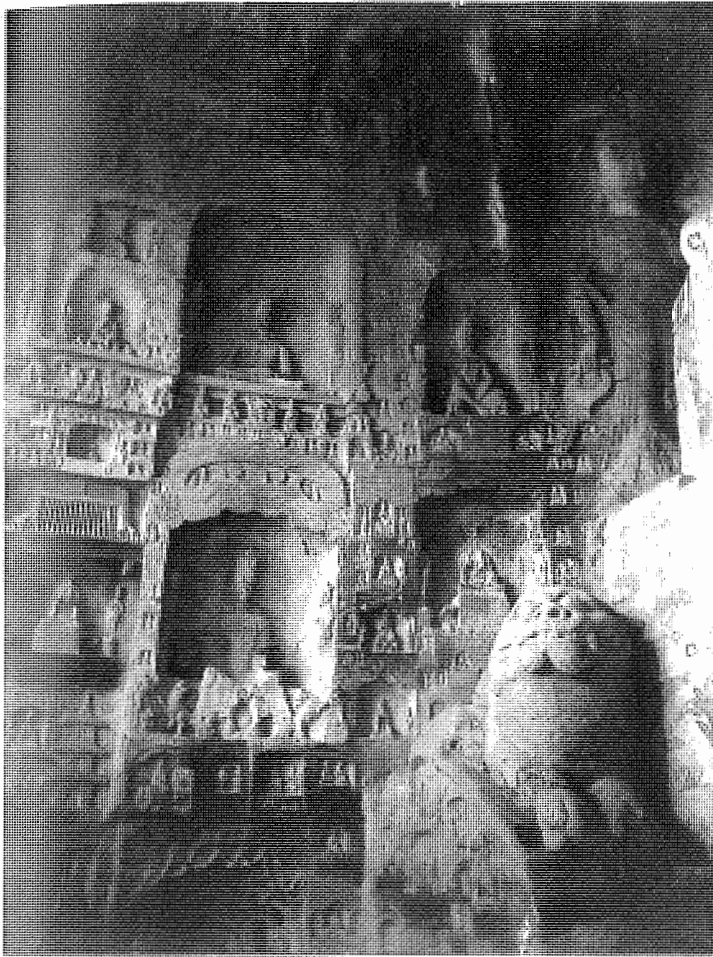
In 494, the Northern Wei moved its capital from Datong in the northern frontier to Luoyang in central China. Proximity to the centre of traditional Chinese culture and artistic traditions had a great impact on the transformation of Northern Wei Buddhist art. The Longmen phase, which began in the 490s and lasted until the 530s, witnessed a dramatic change in visual style brought about by the synthesis of foreign and indigenous Chinese traditions. Maitreya continued to be one of the most popular devotional

figures. An example from the Guyang Cave, which dates to around the first quarter of the sixth century, highlights the new stylistic developments in the Longmen phase (Fig. 4). Sadly the sculpture has suffered a lot of damage in recent times, but this photograph from the Freer Archive, taken in 1910, illustrates the fine carving of this magnificent statue in its former state. The bodhisattva possesses an elongated body rendered with angular planes on the surface, although the head retains a roundness in modelling. Much attention is paid to surface details such as the crown, jewellery and scarves. No longer clinging to the contours of the legs, the dhoti is executed in abundant but flattened overlapping folds. Accentuating linear patterns with lyricism, the drapery folds gently away to the sides. Above the shoulders, the saw-toothed edges of the scarves flare outwards symmetrically. The rounder, fleshier Buddhist forms of foreign style are tempered with the traditional Chinese emphasis on linear, abstract patterns, with an emphasis on rhythm and lyricism. The Longmen style of the early sixth century epitomizes the emergence of the first synthesized Chinese Buddhist art style, of which we find excellent examples in the Maitreya sculptures in UPM, to be discussed below.

Although images of Maitreya Bodhisattva predominate in cave-temple sites, a significant number of bronze and stone sculptures from the same period portray Maitreya as a Buddha, heightening Maitreya's role as a saviour, and the worshippers' longing for a utopia. One of the earliest representations of Maitreya Buddha is found on a stele from Sichuan province.



(Fig. 3) Maitreya Bodhisattva (above) with Shakyamuni and Prabhutaratna East wall of the exterior of Cave 17, Yungang, Shanxi province Northern Wei period, 489 Sandstone (After Shanxi Province Cultural Relics Unit and Yungang Cave Temples Cultural Relics Conservation Institute, eds, *Yungang shiku*, Beijing, 1977, pl. 81)



(Fig. 4) Maitreya Bodhisattva  
South wall, Guyang Cave, Longmen, Henan  
province, c. 1st quarter of the 6th century  
Limestone  
Courtesy of the Freer Archive

dated to 483 of the Southern Qi dynasty (479-502) (Fig. 5). The stele was originally a flat rectangular slab, its two edges having sustained damage in modern times. The obverse and reverse of the stele are each carved with a Buddha image: a standing Maitreya and Amitayus (Buddha of Infinite Life) in a seated position. Rendered in raised low relief, the figures are remarkably different from the robust, almost fully rounded Buddhist sculptures from the north. The Buddhas are draped in heavy robes, which, even though conforming to the monastic dress code, have taken on features like the dress worn by the Chinese gentleman – an outer shawl that resembles a long, flowing robe with wide sleeves and a sash tying the inner robe. The drapery folds are flattened and treated schematically (which is especially visible on the seated Amitayus), yet the faces are quite sensitively modelled with flesh tones. The relatively flat and linear style of this stele recalls the Han (206 BCE-CE 220) and Eastern Jin (317-420) sculptural tradition in the Sichuan region. The stylistic character of the Sichuan stele also heralds the Buddhist idiom of the Longmen phase, which synthesizes a northern form with an indigenous Chinese style (see Wong, 1998-99, p. 73, figs 4 and 17).

Maitreya images of the fifth to early sixth century originate from widely separated geographical regions in China and exhibit diverse styles. The large number of them also attests to the popularity of Maitreya and the growth of this messianic cult,

which peaked towards the end of the fifth century. The messianic aspect of the Maitreya faith also finds parallels in Chinese religious traditions. In Han times, Daoist and folk-religious sects organized peasant rebellions as social and political protests. The Buddhist faith rekindled millennial hope, giving rise to Maitreya sects which organized peasant rebellions to express dissatisfaction with the oppressive Northern Wei.

Some leaders of these sects proclaimed themselves the Maitreya incarnate, and thus their mandate to overturn the current regime in order to usher in a new era. During the last decades of the Northern Wei, no less than ten such Maitreya-inspired peasant rebellions were reported, especially in the Hebei region. The Maitreya cult in China expressed not only religious but also political and social aspirations of the era. Hebei, adjacent to the Northern Wei's



(Fig. 5) Maitreya  
From Maoxian, Sichuan province  
Southern Qi period, 483  
Sandstone  
Height 118 cm, width 50 cm  
Sichuan Provincial Museum  
(After Editorial Committee of Anthology of Chinese  
Art, ed., *Sculptures of Wei, Jin and the Northern  
and Southern Dynasties*, from the *Anthology  
of Chinese Art* series, Beijing, 1988, pl. 44)

power base in Shanxi, was first evangelized into Buddhism in the fourth century under the Xiongnu kingdom of the Later Zhao (328-51). It continued to be a major centre of Buddhism and Buddhist art throughout the Northern Dynasties period (386-581). The two Maitreya statues and the pedestal in the UPM collection all originate from this area, the hotbed of Buddhist millennial cults and political dissent.

Placed in this wider context, the two Maitreya statues in the UPM collection underscore the apogee of the Maitreya faith in China. Both sculptures also represent Maitreya in his role as the Future Buddha. The first image is a life-size stone standing statue, deeply cut in high relief against a flame-shaped *mandorla* (Fig. 6). The Buddha stands erect with bare feet. His disproportionately large head and hands draw the viewer's attention to the deity's benevolence, which are conveyed through his iconographic marks, and symbolic gestures. His head bears auspicious marks such as the *urna* (cranial protuberance) and long earlobes, which have been broken off. The face is rendered with distinct facial features and a gentle expression, along with the 'archaic' smile typical of Northern Wei sculptures. The Buddha's proper right hand displays the *abhaya mudra* while the left hand, also with palm facing outwards but pointing downwards, displays the *varada mudra* (wish-granting gesture). These two hand gestures are the most common types for early Chinese Buddha images. If not identified by inscription, Maitreya Buddha images from this period are virtually indistinguishable from images of Shakyamuni, as seen in a magnificent statue of the historical Buddha in the UPM collection which is dated 546 and originates from Henan (see cover). That these two images are similar is partly because Maitreya's career is modelled after that of the historical Buddha and partly because more distinctive iconographic marks for Maitreya Buddha had yet to develop (Tang dynasty Maitreya Buddha images are usually portrayed in the seated position with both legs pendant).

The rest of Maitreya's body is concealed under his monastic robe, which consists of three layers – the dhoti (visible above the feet), an inner robe tied with a sash around the chest, and a shawl that covers both shoulders (a precursor to this manner of wearing the monastic garb is illustrated by the Buddha images on the Sichuan stele; see Fig. 5). The proper right end of the shawl crosses over to rest on the Buddha's left arm, forming a loop in the centre. The shawl is articulated in parallel folds that accentuate the contours of the shoulders and arms. The U-shaped loop in front, overlaid with the sash of the inner robe, ripples into concentric arcs. The edges of the shawl and robe slightly flare outwards on the two sides. At the bottom the folds overlap rhythmically, forming a cascading pattern. The gentle swaying and flamboyant flourishes of drapery ends have been described in terms such as 'swallowtail' or 'waterfall' pat-



(Fig. 6) Maitreya Buddha  
From Shandong province  
Northern Wei period, 516  
Limestone with pigments and gilding  
Height 279.4 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of  
Archaeology and Anthropology, C 284

terns. Such mannerisms emphasizing the embellishment of the heavy robe rather than the physicality of the body are distinctive of the Longmen style, demonstrated in the Maitreya Bodhisattva image in Figure 4. Although the monastic garb has sometimes been likened to the traditional Chinese long robe with wide sleeves, the articulation of the three distinct layers of dhoti, inner robe and shawl shows that the artist understood the protocol of monastic attire.

The leaf-shaped *mandorla* behind the Buddha bears engravings of the Buddha's halo, which is decorated with floral designs. On the outer zone of the *mandorla*, incised flame patterns reinforce the symbolism of fire and light of the aureole, and thus the radiance or supramundane quality of the Buddha. At the bottom of the *mandorla*, a kneeling bodhisattva is engraved on either side of the Buddha. Pigments remaining on the statue include red, which covers the outer robe and the *mandorla*, green and blue on the Buddha's head, and black on the inner robe. Gilding can also be seen on the statue's face and neck. Although the current pigments and gilt might have been added to the statue in later times, recent finds of Buddhist statues from the site of Longxing Si, a monastery in Shandong province, indicate that many stone statues from the Northern dynasties period were originally painted and sometimes gilded (Zhang Zong, 'Exploring Some Artistic Features of the Longxing Si Sculptures', in *Oriental Art*, December 2000, p. 55).

The reverse side of the *mandorla* bears engravings of small seated images of Buddhas in the upper part and a long inscription at the bottom. At the apex are the Twin Buddhas of Prabhutaratna and Shakyamuni, and below are some fifty seated images representing Buddhas of numerous ages. Multiple Buddhas and Buddhas of past and present ages thematically augment Maitreya's role as the Buddha-to-be.

The main inscription records that Zhang Qianbai, of the village of Shanyang (in modern-day Dingzhou, Zhongshan, Hebei province), dedicated this Maitreya statue in the year 516 together with 38 members of an *yiyi* Buddhist devotional society. The names of donors inscribed next to the small seated Buddha images probably identify members of this society. Their surnames indicate that most of them were from the Zhang clan. Members of the clergy are also represented. The organization of Bud-

dhist lay worshippers into devotional societies emerged in the latter part of the fifth century and soon became widespread in northern China. This phenomenon was in part a result of the establishment of the Buddhist church as a state institution under the Northern Wei, and in part a revitalization of the old clan or village-based social and religious organizations that already existed in pre-Buddhist China. Led by local elites – officials of regional governments or elders of major clans – and joined by the clergy of communal temples, these devotional societies organized religious and patronage activities that the general populace could take part in. The ubiquity of these religious organizations in the north bears witness to the penetration of Buddhism at the popular level.

The statue exhibits a well-integrated style characteristic of late Northern Wei Buddhist art. It combines a rounded figural form (in this case seen in the head) with an emphasis on the heavy robe and surface treatment of the drapery, further enhanced by linear designs on the *mandorla*. The Maitreya theme and the expression of popular devotion also eloquently express the religious sentiments and practices of the time.

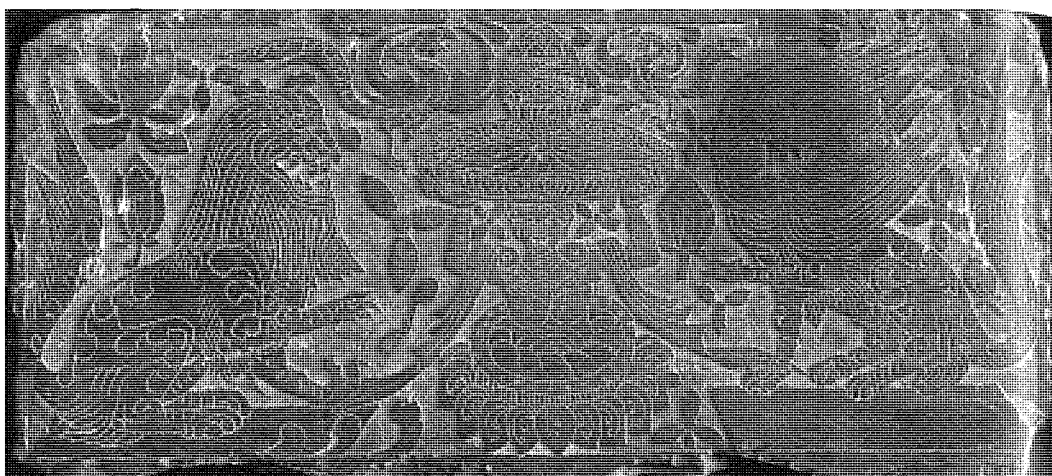
The second Maitreya Buddha image in the UPM collection is a small gilt-bronze statue (Fig. 7). The statue is exquisitely crafted and projects the same sense of stately elegance as the life-size stone sculpture. It dates to 536, the third year of the Tianping reign of the Eastern Wei dynasty (534-50), only two years after the demise of the Northern Wei. Although fashioned in a style similar to the 516 stone Maitreya, the gilt-bronze image shows slight variations and a meticulous attention to detail, partly because of its size and medium. The Buddha stands erect with a calm expression and the faint hint of a smile on his face. His hands are also positioned to convey the *abhaya* and *varada mudras*.

Compared to the stone Maitreya, this image attains a better proportion between the head and the body, although the hands remain fairly large. The monastic robe is similarly fashioned with three layers of dhoti, inner robe and shawl. However, the drapery folds are given a formulaic yet rhythmic treatment, accentuating the flaring of the sides and the scalloped edges at the bottom. The lotus and plant scrolls on the halo and the flame patterns on the outer zone of the *mandorla* are all crisply executed with fluency and finesse. The halo and the back *mandorla* are further



(Fig. 7) Maitreya Buddha  
From Shandong province  
Eastern Wei period, 536  
Gilt bronze  
Height 61.5 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of  
Archaeology and Anthropology, C 355

(Fig. 8a) Pedestal  
From Shandong province  
Northern Wei period, 525  
Stone  
Height (without lotus)  
28 cm, width 62 cm  
University of Pennsylvania  
Museum of Archaeology  
and Anthropology, C 145



(Fig. 8b) Inscription panel on the  
back of the pedestal in Figure 8a

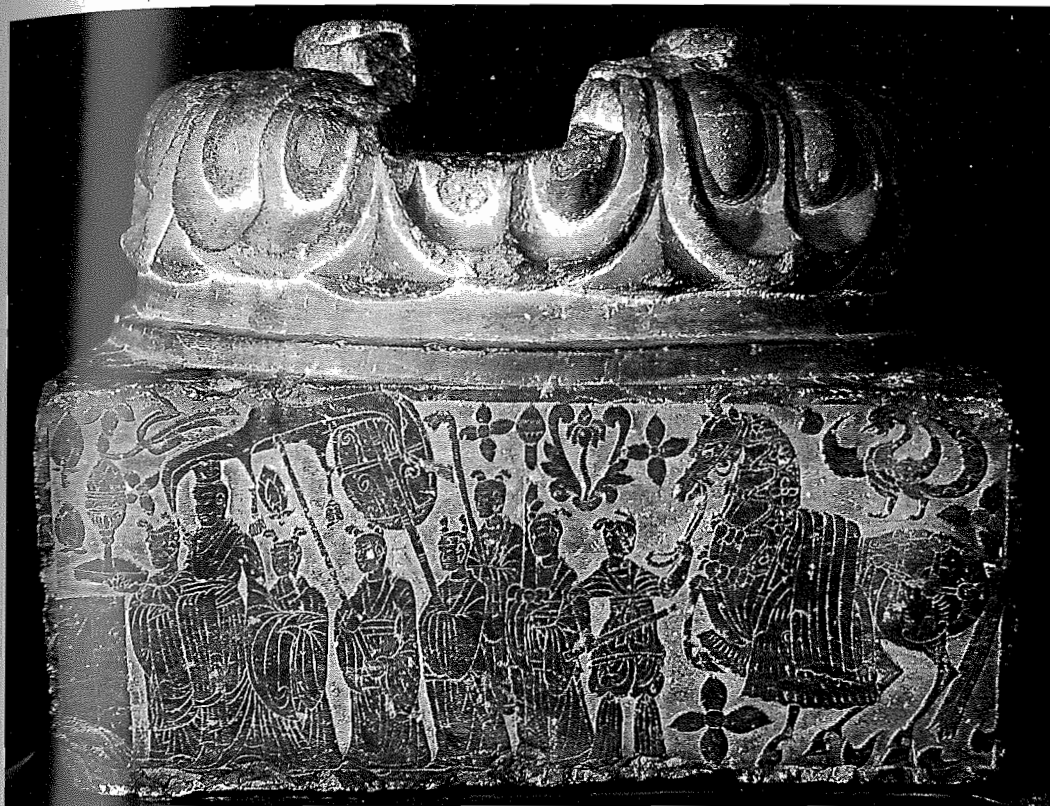


edged with the pearl band design. The statue stands on an inverted lotus which in turn is supported by a four-legged square pedestal. The inscription on the pedestal records that the image was commissioned by Le Long of Quyang (in Dingzhou); 47 other Buddhist disciples joined him in this dedication. In excellent condition, the statue compares closely with another gilt-bronze image of the Buddha in the Toledo Art Museum in Ohio.

The third sculpture in the UPM collection, shown in Figure 8, is a four-sided pedestal that originally supported a Maitreya Buddha statue. Although the Buddha is no longer extant, the exquisite relief carving on the pedestal makes the sculpture one of the most celebrated works of early Chinese Buddhist art. The front shows a censer in the centre as an offering to the Buddha (Fig. 8a). The censer is fashioned in the shape of a *boshanlu*, an object frequently found in Han tombs and which represents the Isle of Immortals in Han immortality cults. It is, however, supported by Lakshmi, the Indian earth goddess incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon, and flanked by a pair of lions. The blending of traditional Chinese and Indian motifs attests to the synthesis of these two traditions. The inscription on the back records that Cao Yongxi dedicated the image in the year 525 (Fig. 8b). The phrase *Mile xiasheng* ('Maitreya [re]born below') gives no doubt that the statue was a Maitreya Buddha and not a bodhisattva. Cao was a native of Wei county in Qizhou (present-day Hebei province). He was a military commander and governor of Boren.

Cao and his wife are portrayed on the right and left sides of the pedestal (Fig. 8c and d). The donors and their entourage are

shown as two processional groups advancing towards the front, paying homage to Maitreya Buddha. Because of his official rank, Cao is accompanied by symbols of status that include a horse led by a groom, the state umbrella, a round fan and a staff held by attendants. The wife is escorted by an ox-cart and female attendants carrying a round fan and a staff. Cao and his wife each hold a censer as an offering. They both wear head-dresses and the long, flowing robes appropriate to their gentry status, and are shown larger than their attendants. A phoenix, an auspicious Chinese symbol, is seen on each side, while lotus petals, scattering from the sky as offerings to the Buddha, fill in the space. The donors and their attendants are portrayed in three-quarter view, facing the centre in two symmetrical groups. This convention of representing donors is ultimately derived from Indian sculptures, and is widely seen at Dunhuang and Yungang. Northern Wei noblemen and noblewomen and the clergy, in their respective attire, are shown divided into two symmetrical groups and facing the centre in three-quarter view (see Figs 2 and 3). They are also shown with relatively little distinction in social ranking. On this example, the donors are shown in Chinese dress, accompanied by attendants and elaborate rank symbols that belie a convention with a strong emphasis on hierarchy and status. Furthermore, the horse and oxcart, shown in profile, recall the processional scenes in Han pictorial arts. Thus the pedestal has demonstrated a seamless integration of two modes of representing donors or processional figures. The pictorial character and fluency in the carving, as well as its symmetry and balance in composition, impart a sense of grandeur and dignity to the donor figures. Like the synthesized



(Fig. 8c) Male donor and attendants on the right side of the pedestal in Figure 8a



(Fig. 8d) Ink rubbing of the left side of the pedestal in Figure 8a showing a female donor and attendants

sculptural style of the two Maitreya statues, the intermingling of Indian and Chinese motifs and modes of representation seen on the pedestal characterizes the emergence of a truly integrated Chinese Buddhist idiom in the early sixth century.

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# Orientalisms

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This issue marks the first occasion in sixty years that the Chinese collection at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (UPM) has been published. Unique for its quality, the collection's main strength lies in Buddhist sculpture and paintings. The articles focus mainly on sculpture, while two essays re-evaluate the painting collection.

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