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CHAPTER THREE

THE MAPPING OF SACRED SPACE: IMAGES OF
BUDDHIST COSMOGRAPHIES IN MEDIEVAL CHINA

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The philosophical concept of a "cosmos" transforms the chaos of our experiential world through the structures of space and time and, as W. Randolph Kloetzli notes, "it must not be understood primarily as the physical universe, but rather as structured reality at every level, whether physical or spiritual."¹ In his investigation of perspective construction and the relationship between art and science in the Western tradition, Martin Kemp remarks, "Naturalistic painting and science both present models of the world. Both kinds of model rely upon discovery and invention, and upon some form of systematic recreation of the investigator."² The underlying assumption of this observation is that the mode of perception that informs naturalistic painting is based on epistemology, namely, science. In Chinese Buddhist paintings of the medieval period (ca. sixth to tenth century), certain depictions of Buddhist cosmologies (especially pure land cosmologies) also achieve a remarkable degree of spatial realism comparable to that achieved in Renaissance and classical traditions in the West, and underscore a rational perception and ordering of the universe. Rather than being based in Western science, this specific mode of perception and representation corresponds to Buddhist cosmological conceptions or, more specifically, the Chinese interpretation and mapping of certain Buddhist cosmographies. Are these similarities in naturalistic representations of the universe, physical or metaphysical, in disparate traditions only accidents in history, or are there larger principles behind the correlates in conception, perception, and representation? The resemblance of the pure land perspective to that achieved in other traditions is but one of many attempts

¹ Kloetzli 1983: 19.² Kemp 1990: 338.

to map various types of Buddhist cosmographies. What, then, are other modes of representation? And what are the factors that contribute to the selection of a particular mode of cosmographic representation?

The oldest conception of Buddhist cosmology is rooted in the Indian tradition, shared by both the Hindu and Jain religions. This cosmology, however, evolved as the Buddhist doctrine developed, expanding and transforming into a very different one in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Buddhist cosmology is a vast topic; here I outline a rudimentary classification that distinguishes the single-world system of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmology from the multiple-world system, or cosmology of innumerable, of Mahāyāna cosmology.³ Within each category, certain systems stand out because of devotional or doctrinal developments. For example, the pure land cosmology of Amitābha/Amitāyus, which belongs to the multiple-world system, came to dominate Mahāyāna Buddhist practice in medieval China. Another strand of Mahāyāna Buddhist thought in China emphasized the worship of Vairocana Buddha, whose cosmology of the Lotus Repository World incorporated the earlier single-world system but transformed it into a fantastic, miraculous realm. These different Buddhist cosmologies are integral to the diverse theories of Buddhist soteriology set forth in various texts, and they coexist as competing schemes of salvific visions.⁴

Before the introduction of Buddhism, the Chinese possessed their own theories about the universe, albeit less systematic and fantastic than Indian speculations.⁵ Buddhist cosmologies and images of cosmographic conceptions were also transmitted when the religion entered China, by way of land and sea routes, beginning in the early centuries of the Common Era. In the fifth and sixth centuries, when the Chinese production of Buddhist art began, the images or partial images of Buddhist cosmologies found in China, such as those depicted in Dunhuang murals (see below), primarily belonged to the

³ See Kloetzli 1983; a more succinct discussion is Kloetzli 1987. See also de la Vallée Poussin 1911 and Sadakata 1997. Broader discussions of Indian cosmology and cosmography include Sircar 1967, Gombrich 1975, and Schwartzberg 1992a (primarily on Hindu and Jain cosmographies).

⁴ “Soteriology” refers to the doctrine of salvation, while “salvific” means “tending to save, causing salvation.”

⁵ For a discussion of ancient and medieval Chinese cosmological ideas, see Needham et al. 1959: 210–228.

single-world system of pre-Mahāyāna cosmology. Sometimes interacting with indigenous traditions, these foreign cosmological concepts and images coexisted with local ones. In India, Buddhism virtually disappeared after the twelfth century, and many cosmological artifacts have been destroyed, except for rare examples and those expressed in the form of stupas or architectural monuments. As a result, the early images of Buddhist cosmologies in China provide some evidence as to what the Indian ones may have been like and how they might have been transmitted to China. The images of Mahāyāna cosmologies, however, were developed independently in China, coinciding with local developments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in China from the sixth and seventh centuries onward. These later Chinese images of Buddhist cosmographies largely flourished outside of India, even though their contents were based on canonical texts that originated in India.⁶

This chapter includes discussion of both the single-world and the multiple-world systems of Buddhist cosmologies, and the images associated with each category. It also discusses the transmission, reception, and transformation of Buddhist images of cosmologies in China, most of which pertain to the single-world system of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism. When examining the images of Mahāyāna Buddhist cosmologies that prevailed in China from the seventh century onward, I argue that the introduction of Buddhist cosmologies impelled Chinese artists to find new ways to visually represent the novel ideologies. For example, Chinese artists attempted the representation of illusionist three-dimensional space on plane surfaces in the pictorial arts of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) through the use of a parallel orthogonal perspective. Incorporating this indigenous perspective with the compositional principles of Buddhist imagery, which emphasize symmetry and frontality, they arrived at a convergent multiple-point perspective that portrayed deep recessional space, in images of pure land cosmologies in particular. The acceptance of and emphasis on certain aspects of the Buddhist ideology thus had an impact on shaping and transforming the structure of time and

⁶ The theory of purgatory and the cosmology of the Ten Kings of Hell are not discussed in the present context; though important in later Chinese Buddhism, this aspect of Chinese Buddhist cosmology developed relatively late in medieval China, incorporating considerable influences from indigenous concepts of the afterlife and mortuary practices. For a discussion of the subject, see Teiser 1994.

space in Chinese pictorial representations. In examining Chinese images of Buddhist cosmographies, I draw primarily on the rich repertoire of sculptures and paintings from the Dunhuang cave-chapels and nearby sites on the Silk Road. Dating from the fifth through the thirteenth century, the art of Dunhuang is predominantly Mahāyāna in content, although there are also subjects associated with Theravāda and Tantric Buddhism.

The Single-World System

The single-world system, which characterizes the pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist conception of the universe, has been more or less consistently described in texts of Theravāda Buddhism, especially the *Abhidharmakośa*. This cosmology is also known as the triple-world system because the world is divided into three realms from bottom to top: the realms of desire (*kāmadhātu*), form (*rūpadhātu*), and formlessness (*arūpadhātu*).

At the base, the substance of this universe is conceived as a single, circular disk surrounded by a wall of iron (*cakravāla*) on the perimeter. Circles of wind, water, and gold earth lie one above the other. Within the perimeter of the iron mountain is a series of seven circular, golden mountain ranges arranged concentrically, with Mount Meru, the world mountain or *axis mundi*, at the center.⁷ The waters of the various seas fill the regions between the mountain ranges. On the outer rim of the great ocean are the four inhabited landmasses, located at the compass points: Pūrvavideha in the east, Jambudvīpa in the south, Aparagodānīya in the west, and Uttarakuru in the north.

Five classes of beings inhabit the realm of desire: gods (*devas*), human beings, animals, ghosts, and hell dwellers; sometimes a sixth category is added: *asuras* (or demonic gods). The beings of lower spiritual levels dwell in the bottom part of this realm. Mount Meru, encircled by the serpent kings (*nāgas*), rises above, and the gods inhabit the six heavens on top of it. Mount Meru thus connects both the heavens at the top and the hells at the bottom. Among the heavens the important ones are Trāyastriṃśa, the abode of Indra (the god of gods), located directly above Mount Meru; and Tuṣita, the

⁷ See Mabbett 1983.

fourth heaven, where a bodhisattva is born immediately prior to being born as a buddha. On top of the realm of desire are the seventeen heavens of the realm of form, and above that are the four “infinities” of the realm of formlessness.

This single-world system, also known as the *cakravāla* because of the circular iron mountain that surrounds it, is the oldest Buddhist cosmology. In this cosmology, the drama of salvation unfolds in cosmic time, measured in units of *kalpas*, or eons. The eschatological path is the transmigration of beings going through endless cycles of birth and rebirth, with the goal of reaching ever higher levels of existence until ultimate release (*nirvāṇa*) from the chain of causation. Because of this emphasis on the temporal scheme of salvation, one of the early images associated with Buddhist cosmologies that survive in India focuses on the cycle of birth and rebirth. Monastic regulations instruct that a wheel of life/existence (*bhavacakra*) be represented in the entrance hall of each monastery; one of the earliest extant examples of this is a fresco in the porch section of Cave 17 at Ajanṭā, which dates to the late fifth or early sixth century. Radially divided into six segments, the wheel depicts the six realms of existence (gods, *asuras*, human beings, animals, ghosts, and hell dwellers) in the realm of desire, hence reinforcing the chain of causation against the backdrop of the cyclical nature of cosmic time.⁸ Images of the wheel of life did not seem to have much impact on mainstream Chinese Buddhist art but feature prominently in Tibetan art, which also abounds in various types of cosmographic depictions.⁹ For example, a large wheel of life is depicted on the east wall of the entry hall (opposite a pictorial depiction of the cosmos on the west wall) of the Tabo Monastery in western Tibet, which dates to the tenth century.¹⁰ Deborah Klimburg-Salter interprets that “While the Wheel of Life describes the nature of samsara, the different cosmologies sought to define the dimensions of the cosmos. Together they depict the microcosm and macrocosm. . . . Thus these images demarcated the boundary between the profane, outside world, and the sacred world—the

⁸ See Zin 1999, vol. 2: 26–27.

⁹ See Schwartzberg 1992b: 625–629, fig. 15.18. The wheel of life, based on the *Abhidharmakośa*, has been incorporated into the elaborate Tibetan cosmographies, coexisting with that based on the *Kālacakra Tantra*; see Brauen 1997: 22–23, 51–79.

¹⁰ Klimburg-Salter et al. 1997: 80–82. Similar depictions are found in other Tibetan monasteries.

world of the mandala [the interior of the monastery].”¹¹ The mural at Tabo Monastery seems to continue the Indian temple/cave-temple tradition, while the wheel of life is also a prominent theme in Tibetan *thangkas*. However, the theme of the wheel of life reached southwest China only in Song (960–1279) times in the Tantric context and was also depicted in the later periods.¹² It was probably through the context of esoteric Buddhism that the early Indian image of the wheel of life was introduced to China at this relatively late date.

Since Buddhist cosmology is an ethicized universe that has moral bearings, the single-world system presents the higher forms of heavens at the top and the lower forms of hells at the bottom, against the backdrop of Mount Meru as the world axis. Thus in addition to the wheel of life, which presents a scheme of salvation in cyclical cosmic time, another soteriological scheme exists that involves ascending or descending on a vertical path, with the stratified universe providing a field within which a being travels in stages on the long journey toward salvation in a vertical/temporal dimension. Joseph E. Schwartzberg notes, “The implication of this, from a cartographic perspective, is that the visual representation of the multi-dimensional universe in a two-dimensional image [i.e., a conventional map surface] sees it extended along a vertical rather than a horizontal plane.”¹³ This vertical format usually revolves around Mount Meru as its axis. A relatively late example is a fifteenth-century Buddhist map painted in Japan, which illustrates this cosmology diagrammatically (fig. 3.1a–c).¹⁴ The illustrator uses a bird’s-eye view and a level view alternately to depict the geographical features and buildings of this universe. When reaching the formless realm, the illustrator simply uses geometric circles to indicate the four heavens (fig. 3.1b). Similar examples abound in Thailand and other cultures where Theravāda Buddhism predominates.¹⁵

The early images of the single-world cosmology found in China, however, tend to be partial ones. Dating as early as the fifth and

¹¹ Klimburg-Salter et al. 1997: 82.

¹² A prominent example is a relief carving of the wheel of life at Baodingshan; see Howard 2001: 6–10, fig. 9. See also Teiser 2006.

¹³ Schwartzberg 1992a: 334.

¹⁴ Rosenfield et al. 1973: 104–109, map 5.

¹⁵ See Schwartzberg 1992c: 714–737, fig. 17.13.

sixth century, the majority of them center on the depiction of Mount Meru. An example is the mural on the north slope of the ceiling of Dunhuang Cave 249, which dates to the Western Wei dynasty (535–551; see color fig. 3.2). The ceiling of the cave-chapel is shaped like a truncated pyramid, with some resemblance to the local vaulted tombs dating to the Han and Jin (265–420) periods. Murals on the vaulted ceilings of these tombs usually portray the heavenly realm inhabited by celestial symbols, deities (most prominently the cultic figure of the Queen Mother of the West), spirits, and immortals. In Cave 249, we find a commingling of Indian and Chinese heavenly figures and motifs. The center of the north mural is dominated by an hour-glass-shaped Mount Meru that emerges from the ocean and mountain ranges at the bottom and soars to the top of the ceiling. Guarding it in front is the dark-skinned demonic god Asura, who has four eyes and holds the sun and the moon in two of his four hands. The summit of Mount Meru is rendered as a series of overlapping mountains in a palette of blue, brown, and beige. Above is a palace within a walled enclosure and gates, representing Trāyastriṃśa, the court of Indra. On two sides of Asura are a panoply of spirits: to the left are the thunder god (surrounded by a string of revolving drums) and the lightning monster (who holds a wedge-shaped implement); to the right are the wind god (with his wind bag) and the rain god (who blows rain). These storm gods are well-known nature spirits of Chinese origin, as are the winged immortals and hybrid creatures depicted in the mural. In the middle tier, however, the *kinara* (human-headed bird) and the *apsaras* (heavenly beings with flying scarves), to the left and right of Asura, are associated with the Buddhist realm. At the bottom, there are also bodhisattvas practicing within buildings. This configuration of a heavenly realm within the Buddhist cave-chapel thus accommodates both indigenous Chinese and Indian Buddhist conceptions of the cosmos, inhabited by spirits and beings from both traditions. The other three quadrants of the ceiling murals show a similar mix of Chinese and foreign motifs, although the identification of some figures remains in dispute.¹⁶

Cave 249 is an extraordinary example of how, at this early stage, imagery associated with both Chinese and Indian cosmologies already intermingled and coexisted. In other instances Mount Meru appears

¹⁶ See Bush 1974: 36–37; Dunhuang Academy 1980–82, part 1: pl. 97.

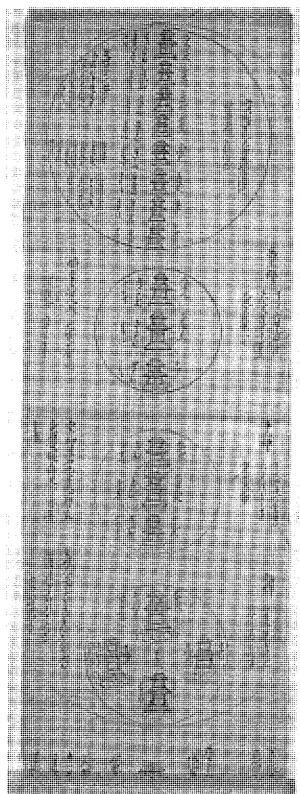


Fig. 3.1a. Upper part of Buddhist map in figure 3.1a, showing the four heavens in the formless realm as empty circles. Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Hofer Collection.

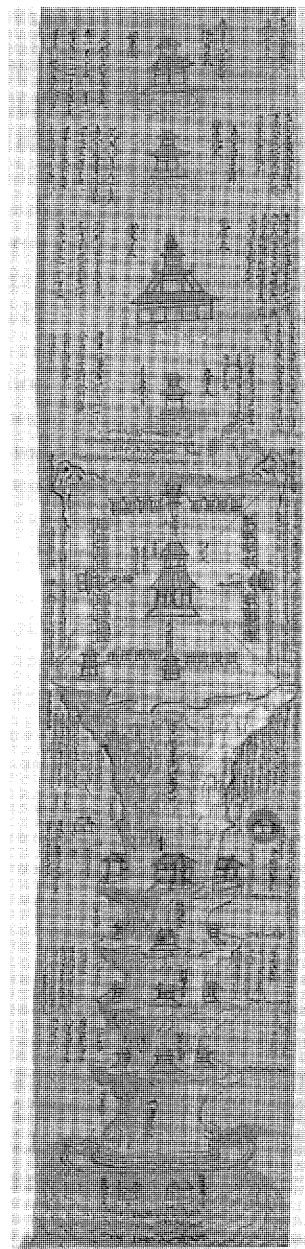


Fig. 3.1b. Lower part of Buddhist map, illustrated by monk Ryūyū. Japanese, Muromachi period (1392–1573), dated 1402. Handscroll, ink and color on paper. Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Hofer Collection.



Fig. 3.1c. Detail of figure 3.1a, showing the base of Mount Meru. Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Hofer Collection.

in a less hybridized context, as shown in relief on a number of Buddhist steles.¹⁷ Mount Meru is also featured on the robe of a specific type of buddha identified as either Vairocana or the Cosmological Buddha.¹⁸ In these examples, Mount Meru serves as a backdrop for the depiction of the encompassing universe described on the robe of the Buddha as the lord of the universe. The idea of mapping the universe onto a person's body—and hence the identification of the macrocosmic and the microcosmic—is rooted in the ancient Indian concept of the primordial or cosmic man (*puruṣa*) eulogized in Vedic literature, and in the depiction of Viṣṇu in Hindu art.¹⁹ After all, the deification of the Buddha also stems from the concept of *mahāpuruṣa* (great person). The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, a developed Mahāyāna text, describes the cosmic or transcendent buddha Vairocana as being interchangeable with the universe itself (see below). The kingdom of Khotan on the southern Silk Route was a known Buddhist center associated with the creation and dissemination of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Among extant examples of Khotanese mural paintings there is an example of Vairocana, whose body is adorned with images of Mount Meru (or symbolically the Mount Meru throne) and other cosmic emblems.²⁰ Apparently in a Tantric context, this Khotanese example attests to the widespread representation of this specific iconographic type, albeit in different styles and contexts.

Also related to the single-world cosmology are depictions of specific localities in the heavens, usually because of associations with sacred events or deity cults. Trāyastriṃśa, the abode of Indra on the summit of Mount Meru, is associated with one of the famous events in legends of the Buddha's life, for Gautama Buddha visited this heaven to preach the Abhidharma to his mother, who had been born there as a *deva*. The Buddha traveled the distance of 68,000 *yojanas* between the earth and Trāyastriṃśa in three strides, at Saṅkīsa. This celebrated event is depicted in early Buddhist art, such as on a pillar of the north gateway of Sāñcī Stūpa 1, dating to the first century

BCE.²¹ In the relief, a vertical ladder connects heaven and earth, implying the Buddha's descent from Trāyastriṃśa; the Buddha is not shown, but his presence is suggested by his throne and the bodhi tree at both ends of the ladder. The absence of an image of the Buddha has been ascribed to the "aniconic phase" of early Buddhist art. Alternately, some art historians argue that such a depiction does not portray the Buddha's presence but commemorates the sacred site that is also a focus of pilgrimage.²²

Another locality often shown is Tuṣita Heaven, the fourth heaven in the realm of desire and the abode of Maitreya Bodhisattva, the Buddha of the Future Age designated to succeed Śākyamuni. Maitreya is one of the oldest devotional deities in Buddhism, for his cult arose around the same time Śākyamuni Buddha began to be represented in anthropomorphic form at the beginning of the Common Era. Maitreya Bodhisattva is said to reside in Tuṣita Heaven, practicing and preaching while waiting to be reborn in the ideal kingdom of Ketumatī. Ketumatī represents a kind of utopia where all the conditions are right. There Maitreya will gain enlightenment as a buddha and hold three assemblies at which countless beings will gain salvation. Since the career of Maitreya stands for that of the prototypical bodhisattva, Tuṣita is where all bodhisattvas reside before their rebirth as buddhas. The cult of Maitreya was prominent because of its messianic appeal; besides, the promise of salvation in a future era tied into the soteriological scheme unfolding in cosmic time in early Buddhist cosmology. This cult spread, in the early centuries of the Common Era, from India through Central Asia to China as well as Korea and Japan.²³ Images of Maitreya ensconced in the palatial architecture of Tuṣita Heaven appear in Gandhāran sculpture of the third and fourth centuries (see color fig. 3.3), and such images were transmitted to China along the Silk Road, with examples found in the cave-chapels of Kyzil and Kumtura. When these images reached China, however, the Indian architectural forms with an arch and

¹⁷ Wong 2004: 151–174, fig. 10.3.

¹⁸ See Williams 1973: 120–124; Howard 1986.

¹⁹ Gombrich 1975: 115–116; Williams 1973: 123.

²⁰ Williams 1973: figs. 1, 2; Bussagli 1963: 55, 58–61.

²¹ See Scanlon 1996: 96–97, figs. 7, 11. Virtually all the paradises of *kāmadhātu* have been represented on Sāñcī Stūpa I; Marshall and Foucher 1940, vol. 1: 226–230.

²² Debates on the issue of aniconism include Huntington 1990; Dehejia 1991.

²³ For discussions of the Maitreya cult in Kushan India and its spread through Central Asia to East Asia, see Rosenfield 1967: 229–235; Lee 1983; Miyaji 1992; Kim 1997; and Wong 2004: 91–104, 155–159.

columns were interpreted in local architectural terms. For example, a relief sculpture of Maitreya Bodhisattva in Dunhuang Cave 275, dating to the fifth century, shows the bodhisattva in his typical cross-ankled seated position, enshrined in a niche marked by *que* gates to suggest the palaces in Tuṣita Heaven (see color fig. 3.4). *Que* gates denote palatial or funerary compounds in Han architecture, and this adjustment to employ a local architecture symbol is another example of the acclimatization of foreign images.²⁴

The Multiple-World System

The cosmology of innumerable worlds represents a grandiose cosmic structure envisioned in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Beyond the perimeter of the single-world system, innumerable world systems are thought to be distributed throughout the ten regions of space. This expansion from one to multiple worlds was concurrent with the development from one to numerous buddhas in Mahāyāna belief, emphasizing the themes of multiplicity and plurality. Each world system is presided over by a buddha, and is called a buddha-field or buddha land (*buddhakṣetras*). In contrast to the emphasis on cosmic time in the pre-Mahāyāna cosmology, Mahāyāna cosmologies accentuate the drama of salvation in cosmic space, accessible in the numerous buddha-fields dispersed in vast expanses of space.

There are three types of buddha-fields: pure, impure, and mixed. A buddha-field is a sphere, a place that becomes pure and ideal because of a buddha's purification work through his vows and deeds. When a world is adorned, and thus "ornamented" (*alaṃkāra*), with the fruit of a buddha's good deeds, it becomes a pure land.

Geographically speaking, human beings live on the southern continent of Jambudvīpa, but this realm is also defined in terms of its level of purity, and is known as the *sahā* world (*sahāloka*). The *sahā* world is the most important of impure lands. It is impure because the beings there are still chained to the laws of causation and are subject to transmigration. It is also the abode of demons and other kinds of troublemakers that cause adverse events. Yet in the Mahāyāna

scheme, the *sahā* world is the "land of transformation" where Śākyamuni Buddha dwells and in which all beings are transformed. Thus the *sahā* world is considered mixed, alternately ornamented (pure) and unornamented (impure). This allows for the presence of great bodhisattvas who can act and save suffering beings there.

Both in Buddhist texts and in mural paintings, the *sahā* world provides the settings for *jātakas* ("birth stories"), *avadānas* ("great deeds"), the Buddha's life events, and the Buddha's sermons (such as at Vulture's Peak, where the Buddha expounded the *Lotus Sūtra*), as well as the abodes of the great bodhisattvas, such as Mount Wutai of Mañjuśrī and Mount Potalaka of Avalokiteśvara. In addition, there are the stories in various sutras that occur in the *sahā* world. Within this varied subject matter, one can distinguish two categories: (1) stories that have strong narrative content and involve both temporal and spatial dimensions, and (2) descriptions of the sacred abodes of deities that embody transcendent time. The former are represented in the narrative mode while the latter are often presented in the iconic mode or as a panorama (see discussion below).

The most prominent pure land is Sukhāvātī, the Western Pure Land of Amitābha/Amitāyus (see color fig. 3.5). It is a land of bliss, and the living beings there have neither physical nor mental pain. As an adorned place of spiritual splendor, its features are distinct from those of the *sahā* world. The ground is level and is enclosed on every side by seven railings and seven rows of palm trees, all decked out with nets of tinkling bells. Lotus ponds are covered with gold sand, contain water that is cool, clear, fragrant, and are afloat with lotuses. The railings, ground, and ponds are all made of precious substances: gold, silver, emerald, rock crystal, red pearl, sapphire, and mother-of-pearl. Heavenly beings and birds perform music and songs, while flower blossoms shower down regularly, bells chime, and cool breezes blow. Beings reborn there are endowed with a multitude of virtues and enjoy fine garments, ornaments, gardens, palaces, and pavilions. They can freely travel to other buddha lands and return, while the Buddhas of the Ten Directions come to glorify Amitābha Buddha in flying pavilions. Pertaining to the concept of *alaṃkāra*, or ornament, the sensuous images of sight, sound, smell,

²⁴ Later, under the influence of Pure Land Buddhism, there were attempts to associate Maitreya's abode with a pure land, but Tuṣita is located in the realm of form and thus cannot be considered "pure."

and touch are metaphors for the panoply of wondrous qualities of a pure land.

Depictions of the Sahā World and Pure Lands

The topography of the *sahā* world includes mountains, valleys, rivers, and groupings of human communities in cities and villages. Because this is the world where humans live, Chinese artists largely drew on preexisting artistic conventions to describe its features. Since the Han dynasty, Chinese artists have devised the parallel orthogonal perspective to portray pictorial space. For example, on a Han tomb tile of a feast scene from Sichuan, this perspective is articulated through the orthogonal lines of rectangular objects such as floor mats and tables (fig. 3.6). The baselines of these objects are presumably aligned with the picture base, so the parallel inclination of their sides suggests an upwardly tilted ground plane, which in turn signifies extension into space beyond the picture plane. As the orthogonals slant upward, figures in the distance are depicted above those in the foreground. This way of disposing formal elements in a believable space is widespread in Han pictorial art.

Since the *sahā* world and the pure lands are distinctive in their features, artists devised ways to distinguish these two types of worlds pictorially. One of the rare examples for examining these two modes of representation is the relief on the back of a stele from Sichuan. Found in the Wanfosi temple site in Chengdu, Sichuan, the stele features two bodhisattvas in high relief on the front, and low-relief carvings on the back that include a complex landscape scene at the bottom and a pure land scene at the top (see color fig. 3.7). Dating to the sixth century, this represents one of the earliest depictions of a pure land, offering a rare glimpse into the beginnings of the new genre of pure land imagery that developed in China.²⁵

The relief in the lower section features a number of scenes with figures and various actions set in a landscape of rolling hills, seashore, and overlapping mountains. A bridge in the center links the landscape section to the scene above, which clearly shows the iconography of a prototypical pure land: a lotus pond with reborn beings swimming in it, and across the pond a hieratic buddha's assembly,



Fig. 3.6. Tomb tile showing feasting and entertainment scene, Chengdu, Sichuan, Chinese, Eastern Han period (25–220 CE). Zhongguo meishu quanji weiyuanhui, ed., *Zhongguo meishu quanji, Han huaxiangshi huaxiangzhuan* vol. Beijing 1988: pl. 241.

lush vegetation, and palace architecture. Despite a number of speculations, there is no evidence to firmly identify the subject matter of the narrative scenes. However, I have argued that the landscape relief depicts the *sahā* world. It includes scenes of human travails and adversity, such as shipwreck and being attacked by demons; but it also portrays religious activities, such as taking the bodhisattva vow, worshipping the Buddha, and a stupa. The path of spiritual practice is also a path of transformative action that leads to the possibility of rebirth in the pure land, symbolically represented by the bridge that links the two sections. The pictorial relief thus presents a vision of a soteriological scheme: the human condition, a program of spiritual practice, and the attainment of a religious goal.

²⁵ See Wong 2004: 151–179.

This portrayal of the *sahā* world follows the naturalistic tradition of Han art in Sichuan. Depicted from a bird's-eye point of view, the mountains and valleys are shown on a tilted ground plane. Their silhouettes overlap and are then internally modeled, creating a succession of planes that give the illusion of spatial depth. However, instead of the Han perspective of parallel orthogonals projecting in one direction, the mountains with winding paths draw one's gaze upward along the relief to focus on the buddha's assembly in the top center. This mode of perspective construction is even more clearly shown in the pure land scene above. Instead of one set of orthogonals receding into the distance in only one direction, two sets of orthogonal lines proceed symmetrically from the sides, converging on the central axis at several points. The intention is to focus the viewer's eye and attention on the central icon of Amitābha Buddha presiding over the Western Pure Land. The bridges, the rows of trees, the listeners, and the palace architecture all reinforce this directed concentration, at the same time creating the illusion of a rational, three-dimensional space.

The distinctions between the spiritual realm and the temporal world are vividly shown, for the pure land is flat and adorned, whereas the human world, uneven and unadorned, is full of dangers and temptations. In this early attempt in the Chinese interpretation of pure land cosmology, it is apparent that the Han perspective convention has undergone a revolutionary change. Chinese artists have constructed a new perspective by rotating the parallel orthogonals on a vertical, central axis. Focusing on the Buddha as the icon, this convergent multiple-point perspective effectively portrays deep recessionary space and an orderly world associated with spiritual purity. This breakthrough in perspective construction in the sixth century can be attributed to the influence of the iconic mode of representation that follows the principles of frontality, centrality, and symmetry, abundantly shown in Buddhist imagery. When the principles of symmetry and balance were applied to the traditional Han parallel orthogonal perspective, the result was two sets of orthogonals, symmetrically placed and angled, meeting on the central axis where the main icons are presented frontally.

By the seventh and eighth centuries, the panorama of grand pure land imagery had matured, and hundreds of these paintings have survived at Dunhuang (see fig. 3.5). Because of the increasing empha-

sis on devotional faith to deities, the murals usually only show the splendor of the pure land, without depicting the less-than-perfect conditions of the human world. In these eighth-century murals, the pure land is portrayed from a very high viewpoint, forcing the ground plane to tilt sharply upward. Descriptive details of the wonders of the pure land are extravagantly captured in vivid imagery, further enhanced with the magnificent Chinese-style palatial architecture and a mature, sensuous figural style. The convergent multiple-point perspective is more developed and grandiose, and experimented with in a variety of ways. In some compositions, the orthogonals at the sides direct the viewer's gaze away from rather than toward the center, resulting in the zigzag or so-called herringbone perspective. Emphasizing the salvific powers of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, the icons are presented as larger-than-life figures. Since pure land images were associated with the practice of meditation and visualization, the converging orthogonals enhance this ritual practice by directing the viewer's gaze to the central icon. The virtual space created in these images is so compelling and enticing that it draws the viewer and worshipper into this visionary world, assisting him/her in the realization of religious goals.

While the convergent perspective matured in the seventh and eighth centuries, the traditional parallel orthogonal perspective also developed into a more sophisticated rendering of pictorial space in the depiction of landscapes. Employing visual cues such as overlapping silhouettes of mountains, zigzagging shorelines, objects diminishing in size as they recede into the distance, and humans in appropriate proportion to nature, landscapes in this mode of representation were reserved for the many scenes of narratives which take place in the *sahā* world. They are usually placed as narrative vignettes along the sides or the bottom of the pictorial composition, such as the sixteen stages of Queen Videhi's meditation (see color fig. 3.8).

Between the *sahā* world and the pure lands are the sacred abodes of the great bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Samantabhadra. The bodhisattva doctrine is a key tenet of Mahāyāna teachings, and the art of Dunhuang also documents the rising cult of bodhisattvas. Advanced bodhisattvas are portrayed as cult deities in their own right, presiding over the abodes where they exert their

spiritual influence. Some important examples include the figure of Avalokiteśvara as savior who heeds the calls of suffering beings, looming large over a naturalistic landscape (see color fig. 3.9). Another example is the sacred map of Mount Wutai presided over by Mañjuśrī in Cave 61, although in this case a sculptural icon of the bodhisattva stands in front of the panorama.²⁶ Bodhisattvas remain engaged in the world, and thus their abodes are still located in the *sahā* world. But because their intermediary abodes are the sacred spaces where transformative actions occur, artists adopted the iconic mode of a convergent perspective rather than the parallel orthogonal perspective to depict them. Unlike the flat land, lotus ponds, and palatial architecture of pure lands, however, the topography of bodhisattvas' abodes is mountainous. Though naturalistically portrayed, the mountains are also shown in the iconic mode, thus presenting a semi-real, conceptual landscape.

The invention of the convergent perspective in the depiction of pure lands and bodhisattvas' sacred mountains was brought about by the synthesis of native and foreign traditions, namely, the Han Chinese parallel orthogonal perspective and the Indian Buddhist principles of iconic composition. This new perspective resembles but is not fundamentally comparable to the linear perspective with a single vanishing point discovered in Renaissance Italy, which is based on a scientific understanding of the optics of a visual pyramid. The illusory space described in pure land images is only conceptual and not based on science, but it is nonetheless a means of symbolizing the order and serenity of a supernal world.

In 1927, the renowned art historian Erwin Panofsky published his seminal *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, in which he applied to the study of visual arts the theory of symbolic forms advanced by Ernst Cassirer, the philosopher and intellectual historian who a couple of decades earlier had published *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.²⁷ To Cassirer, "symbolic forms" are the products of humans' unique symbolizing activity in different spheres of creativity, from art to myth, religion, language, and science. Panofsky argues that, from classic antiquity to the Renaissance, perspective construction is one of those

²⁶ See Wong 1993 and Natasha Heller's Chapter 2 in this volume.

²⁷ Panofsky 1991; Cassirer 1953–96.

"symbolic forms" in which "spiritual meaning is attached to a concrete, material sign and intrinsically given to this sign."²⁸ By this he means that the construction of a pictorial space is linked to the perspectival worldview—in other words, that the systematic ordering of visual phenomena is the outward expression of a specific conception of the world (namely, the objectification of the subjective). In classical antiquity, Vitruvius defines *skēnographia* (the perspective representation of a three-dimensional structure on a surface) using the compass point as a center of projection for the eye of the beholder. In this scheme, the extension of the orthogonals does not merge as a single point but converges and meets in pairs at several points along a common axis.²⁹ In the Renaissance, the invention of the single vanishing point perspective derived from the scientific understanding of the visual pyramid.³⁰ Resting on a rational experience of empirical visual space, it creates a systematic, scientific perspective through which we can experience the "infinite" experiential world. To Panofsky, the Renaissance perspective construction represents the translation of a psychophysiological space into mathematical space. It is no more and no less a symbolic form than the *skēnographia* of classical antiquity was of the Greco-Roman perspectival worldview. In a similar vein, we can consider the multiple-point perspective of pure land imagery a symbolic form, in that it translates and transforms the psychophysiological or Buddhist metaphysical space (the sacred space of the pure land cosmology) into a semi-rational, orderly virtual space.³¹

This distinctive Chinese pure land perspective was so compelling that it became the predominant mode for representing pure lands, not just the Sukhāvātī of Amitābha/Amitāyus. In turn, these pure land paintings were transmitted to Korea and Japan, where some of the surviving examples illustrate the grandeur of such visionary paintings.³² This achievement of a naturalistic mode of spatial rep-

²⁸ Panofsky 1991: 40–41.

²⁹ Some oft-cited examples include the wall paintings in the House of Augustus in Rome; see Link 1991: 35, fig. 33.

³⁰ Kemp 1990: 9–52.

³¹ See the discussion in Summers 2003: 471–473, 487–492.

³² See the discussion of the Taima Mandala in ten Grotenhuis 1999: 13–32, pl. 1.

resentation was perhaps fortuitous, in that it derived from a synthesis of the native Chinese perspective and the compositional principles of Buddhist imagery. Nevertheless, the Mahāyāna soteriology that unfolds in cosmic space predisposed the artists to seek solutions in conventions pertaining to spatial representation. In contrast, the cyclical or vertical mapping of the single-world Buddhist cosmology (see fig. 3.1) pertains to the inherent emphasis on cosmic time in the Theravāda Buddhist cosmology.

After the tenth century, however, there was a tendency to portray the great bodhisattvas in a less iconic pose, such as the popular Water Moon Guanyin—a special iconographic portrayal of Avalokiteśvara—seated in a pose of royal ease on a rock formation that symbolizes his abode, Potalaka, with the moon reflected in the waters before him. Depictions of the abodes of bodhisattvas also adopted a less formal, naturalistic mode due to the increasing influence of landscape paintings developed in China, such as depictions of the Water Moon Guanyin, Mañjuśrī, and Samantabhadra in the Yulin and East Thousand Buddhas cave-chapels.³³

The Lotus Repository World

Finally, I want to examine the transcendent world described in the *Flower Ornament Scripture* (*Avatamsaka Sūtra*, or *Huayan jing* in Chinese), one of the most developed Mahāyāna texts.³⁴ This world is the buddha-field of Vairocana Buddha, the transcendent and cosmic aspect of Śākyamuni. As discussed earlier, the representation of the cosmic or transcendent buddha Vairocana as interchangeable with the universe is already associated with the early transmission of this text from Central Asia to China. It is, however, the portrayal of the Avatamsaka cosmology that concerns us in this section. Distinct from pure lands, Vairocana's buddha-field is known as the Lotus Repository World, described with the metaphor of a giant lotus. Technically Vairocana's world is still the *sahā* world, but it embraces all worlds,

³³ Examples include the murals of the Water Moon Guanyin in Yulin Cave 2, and Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra in Yulin Cave 3, in Dunhuang Academy 1990: pls. 138, 158, 165.

³⁴ The composite text was translated into Chinese in the early fifth century and again in the late seventh century.

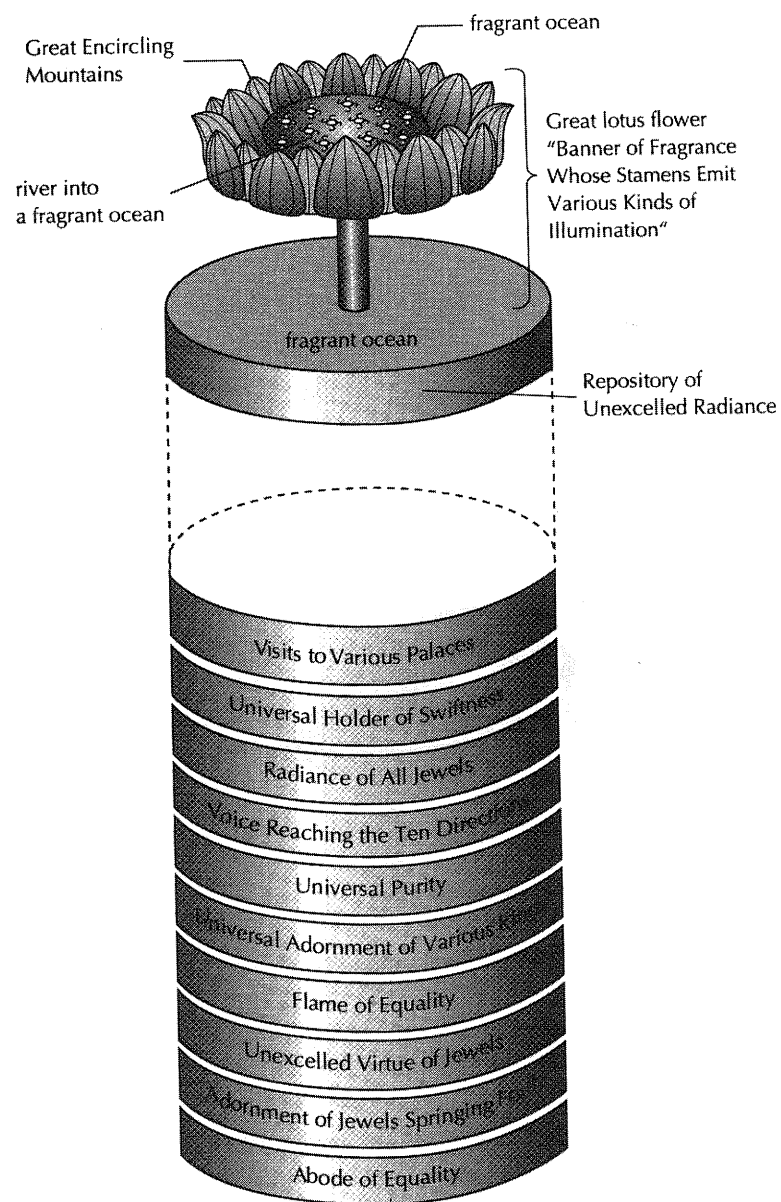


Fig. 3.10a. Diagram of the Avatamsaka cosmology based on the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*. A. Sadakata, *Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins*. Tokyo 1997: fig. 25.



Fig. 3.10b. Diagram of the Avataṃsaka cosmology based on the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*. A. Sadakata, *Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins*. Tokyo 1997: fig. 29.

including the triple-world system, the largest conception of space in pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism. As the abstract, cosmic form of Śākyamuni, Vairocana is omniscient and omnipresent, and the sutra emphasizes his multiplicity and all-pervading presence. His world is one of ineffable immensity and wonders, embracing countless numbers of world systems.

Based on the ancient cosmology, the universe with Mount Meru at its center contains layers upon layers of wind circles (fig. 3.10a–b).

Above these wind circles is a fragrant ocean, in which blooms a giant lotus flower. The flower ornament world is a world purified (and thus ornamented) by Vairocana. It represents a visionary cosmology that glorifies the cosmic aspect of the historical Buddha.³⁵ Two descriptions of this Lotus Repository World exist. In one version, based on the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* (ca. third century CE), Vairocana sits upon this thousand-petaled lotus, each petal of which supports a world. The Buddha incarnates into a thousand Śākyamuni buddhas, one for each of the worlds. On each petal, in each world, there are ten billion Mount Meru worlds. The Śākyamuni buddhas each incarnate into ten billion Śākyamuni bodhisattvas, who dwell within each of these Mount Meru worlds. Thus there are altogether one Vairocana Buddha, one thousand Śākyamuni buddhas, and ten trillion Śākyamuni bodhisattvas. The sutra also speaks of each atom of the Lotus Repository World as containing the universe of elemental cosmos, countless as the sands of the Ganges.³⁶ With such spatial metaphors for multiplicity and expansion, the cosmos is described in tandem with images of the Buddha's all-pervading nature. Flowers refer to meditative practice and good deeds, which produce spiritual fruits and seeds. The ocean of fragrant water symbolizes the "repository consciousness," a storehouse for experiential impressions.

A vivid representation of Vairocana Buddha and his Lotus Repository World is the colossal statue in the Tōdaiji (Great Eastern Temple) in Nara, Japan. Dating to the mid-eighth century, Vairocana Buddha sits atop a giant lotus. Although the buddha statue itself was destroyed and recast in the seventeenth century, the lotus pedestal is of original eighth-century date. On the petals are engravings that depict a simplified version of the Mount Meru world, with layers of wind circles and numerous buddhas representing Vairocana's incarnations in innumerable worlds.³⁷

There are some thirty examples of murals and silk paintings at Dunhuang of the so-called *Huayan bian*, or "transformation tableaux," that embody or make manifest the entirety of the teachings of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.³⁸ A tenth-century silk painting depicts the Buddha's

³⁵ Cleary 1984: 4.

³⁶ Cleary 1984: 204.

³⁷ See Rosenfield et al. 1986: 24, fig. 8.

³⁸ See Wong 2007.

magical appearances in seven mythical locations where he expounded the Huayan teachings in nine gatherings (see color fig. 3.11).³⁹ The Lotus Repository World (in this case based on the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* rather than the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*) is depicted in the bottom part of the painting, separated from the assemblies by an arc of five-colored clouds. A large lotus emerges from the oceans of fragrant water, supported by two serpent kings (*nāgas*). The walled enclosures depicted within the lotus refer to the infinity of world systems it contains, with jeweled lights displaying an array of countless buddhas. In scriptural descriptions, this ocean of worlds is square and level, and the land within is also clean and level, set with boundaries made of diamonds, gems, and other precious materials. The image of this luminous world is likened to the jeweled net of Indra, the god of gods (and the ancient Vedic storm and warrior god); in his palace Indra hangs a net adorned with innumerable pearls. The lights of the pearls reflect upon one another, and the pearls in turn reflecting their mutual reflections. This intricate image of reflective light alludes to the interdependent nature of existence. Cosmic Vairocana, the progenitor of innumerable buddhas in innumerable worlds, is one and all; he is the universe itself.

Although these Huayan paintings include the depiction of a giant lotus, the main subjects portrayed in the *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies* are (from left in color fig. 3.11):

Top register:

- 5th assembly (Tuṣita Heaven)
- 4th assembly (Suyāma Heaven)
- 6th assembly (Paranirmita-Vaśavartin Heaven)

Middle register:

- 7th assembly (Palace of the Dharma of Universal Radiance)
- 3rd assembly (Trāyastriṃśa, Vaijayanta, summit of Mount Meru)
- 8th assembly (Palace of the Dharma of Universal Radiance)

Bottom register:

- 2nd assembly (Palace of the Dharma of Universal Radiance)
- 1st assembly (Bodhigaya)
- 9th assembly (Jetavana Groves)

³⁹ The painting is published in Giès 1996: 39–45, pl. 1.

The seven mystical locations all occur within the realm of desire (*kāmadhatu*), the lowest sphere in the triple-world system in Buddhist cosmology. The realm of desire is further divided into heavens, earth (Jambudvīpa), and hells. In the Huayan scheme, the Buddha preaches the first assembly at Bodhigaya, where he achieved enlightenment, in the bottom center. The subsequent assemblies take place in the heavenly abodes of gods (including the second, seventh, and eighth assemblies). The most significant one, the third assembly, shown in the center, occurs at Trāyastriṃśa, Indra's abode. The fourth, fifth, and sixth assemblies take place in the upper levels of heaven and are shown in the upper register, culminating in the sixth heaven of Vaśavartin. The last or ninth assembly, during which the *Gaṇḍavyūha* (the last chapter of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*) was taught, occurs at the Jetavana Groves in Jambudvīpa, the site of the Buddha's first sermon. It is shown to the right of the first assembly, thus concluding the sequence of mystical visions in a kind of circular path.

This portable silk painting is identical in composition to a number of wall murals at Dunhuang, such as that of Cave 61, in the spatial-temporal arrangement of the assemblies.⁴⁰ Other Huayan murals are depicted on the sloped walls of ceilings, either with the whole composition fitted into the trapezoidal shape or divided into three slopes, each showing three assemblies. The only narrative elements found in Huayan paintings are derived from the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the last chapter of this composite text that narrates the young boy Sudhana's pilgrimage to visit fifty-three sages in search of enlightenment. The narrative vignettes at the edges of some murals show scenes of Sudhana's pilgrimage, but this subject matter soon developed independently and became very popular in China and Japan after the tenth century.⁴¹

The assemblies are more or less identical and are static, with minimal details about place and narrative content, unlike the deep recessional space and descriptive details shown in pure land depictions. Nevertheless, subtly interwoven into this diagrammatic composition we can interpret the Huayan concepts of the three worlds (*triloka*) and the three bodies (*trikāya*). For example, the locations occur both at Jambudvīpa and in the heavens of gods. While the historical

⁴⁰ Dunhuang Academy 1995: 151, pl. 100.

⁴¹ See Fontein 1967; Wong 2007.

locations provide the settings for the transformation body (*nirmāṇakāya*) of the Buddha, the mystical places in heavens furnish the environments for the apparitions of the Buddha's enjoyment body (*sambhogakāya*). The Huayan doctrine also describes the Buddha in absolute terms as the truth body (*dharmakāya*), embodied by Vairocana, the supreme lord of the universe. The world of Vairocana is the *dharmadhātu*, the realm of the Law, the absolute, symbolized by the lotus.

A second silk Huayan painting, of about the same date as the last silk *Huayan bian*, illustrates the *Daśabhūmika* chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (see color fig. 3.12).⁴² Like the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the *Daśabhūmika* was originally an independent text incorporated into the larger *Avataṃsaka* literature. It enumerates the ten stages of bodhisattvahood, shown in the painting as ten transcendent assemblies arranged into four registers, from left to right, top to bottom. In the bottom register, the two extra squares show the great bodhisattvas Samantabhadra in the lower left and Mañjuśrī in the lower right, flanking the assembly of Vairocana in the center. Vairocana, Samantabhadra, and Mañjuśrī are known as the Three Holy Ones of the *Avataṃsaka* doctrine. The presence of the young boy Sudhana among the entourages of Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī makes reference to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, suggesting that the painting embodies the meanings of both the *Daśabhūmika* and *Gaṇḍavyūha* chapters. In doctrinal terms, the painting is an exposition of the path of spiritual advancement, from a description of the progressive stages of bodhisattvahood to Sudhana's pilgrimage and realization of enlightenment under the guidance of the two great bodhisattvas.

The two silk Huayan paintings are similar in their use of a grid pattern to arrange the assemblies. They also share similar iconographic details and stylistic characteristics, suggesting that they were made about the same time. The French scholar J. Giès suggests that these two liturgical paintings are related to each other dialectically. Perhaps hung on temple walls facing each other as a ritual presentation, they set up a visual hierarchy analogous to the scholastic exposition of both a general theory and a scheme of practice. The delineation of the ten stages of bodhisattvahood essential to practice is shown in conjunction with the apparition of the buddhas' assem-

⁴² Giès 1996: 45–51, pl. 2.

blies in their mythical locations, structurally arranged according to those locations' relative positions in the Buddhist cosmos.

The compositional formula of arranging the buddhas' assemblies in a grid plan, the elimination of narrative details in favor of the iconic mode, and the diagrammatic configuration of spatial and temporal elements foreshadow the mandala-like cosmic diagrams in esoteric Buddhist art. As many scholars have noted, the geometric representation of the universe that shows the Buddha's manifold, all-embracing presence is a precursor to the development of esoteric Buddhism, and the origins of the esoteric mandala are rooted in such symbolism and mode of thinking and imagery. If the cyclical wheel of life, the vertical Buddhist map of the single-world system (see fig. 3.1), and the virtual space of the pure land cosmology (see fig. 3.5) are germane to their respective temporal and spatial emphases, then it is understandable that this abstract, diagrammatic mode of representation was devised to address both temporal and spatial dimensions in the complex *Avataṃsaka* cosmology.

The images of Buddhist cosmographies in medieval China examined in this brief overview include those introduced from India and Central Asia via the Silk Road and subsequently transformed, as well as those developed independently in China. The process of mapping Buddhist cosmographies was a diverse one that evolved in tandem with movements in Buddhist thought and practice, and also in dialogues with contemporary developments in secular landscapes and other kinds of artistic conventions. Above all, each of these modes of perception and representation is unique in translating into visual terms distinct structures of time and space in different Buddhist cosmologies. As specific spiritual meanings are assigned to the concrete, material signs, each type of these mappings of Buddhist sacred spaces is individually seen to be a "symbolic form."

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Fig. 3.2. Mural painting of heavenly domain portraying Mount Meru, Dunhuang Cave 249, north slope of ceiling. Chinese, Western Wei dynasty (535–551). Dunhuang Academy, ed., *Zhongguo shiku* series, *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, part 1. Beijing 1981: pl. 97.

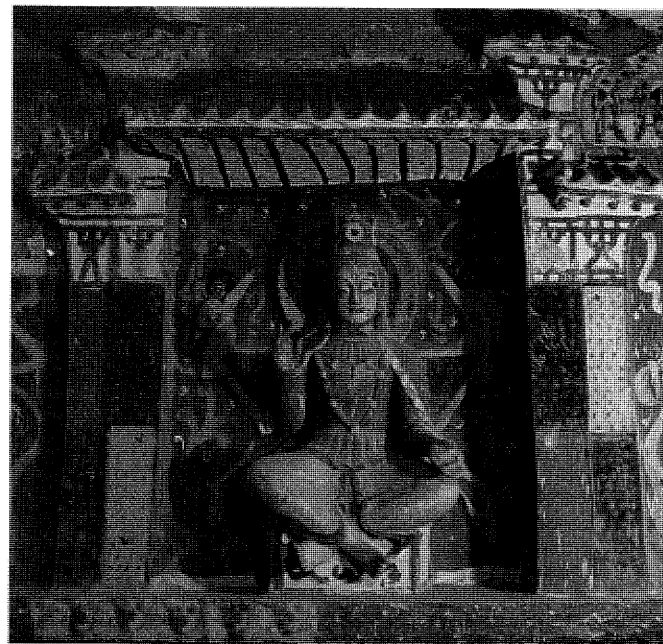


Fig. 3.4. Maitreya Bodhisattva in Tusita Heaven, in *que* niche, Dunhuang Cave 275, north wall. Chinese, Northern Liang dynasty (397–460). Dunhuang Academy, ed., *Zhongguo shiku* series, *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, part 1. Beijing 1981: pl. 18.

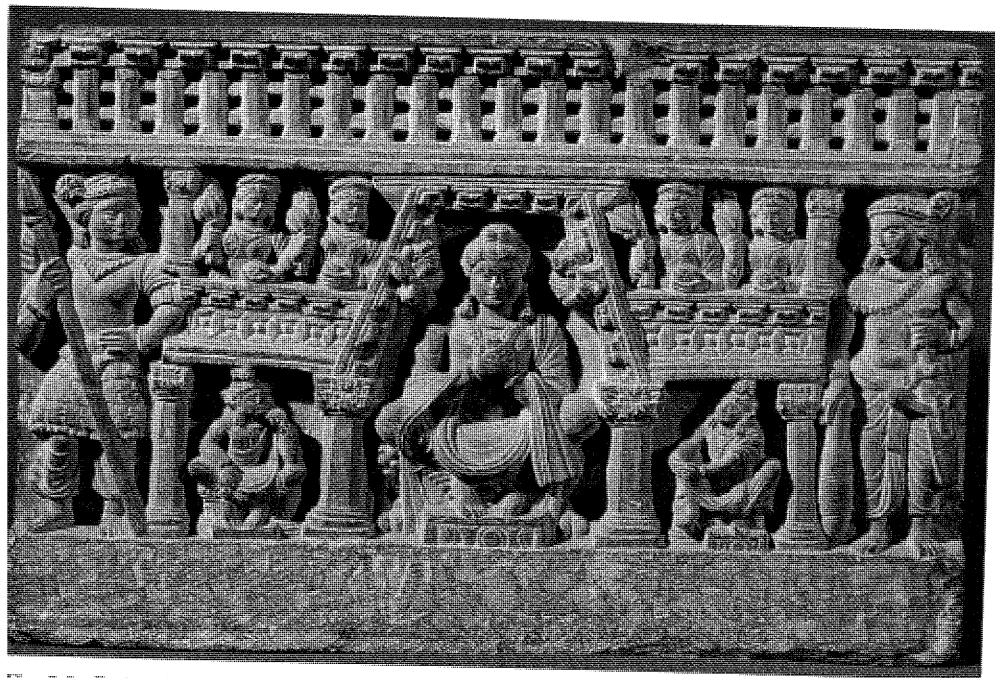


Fig. 3.3. Pedestal showing Maitreya Bodhisattva teaching in Tusita Heaven, Shotorak. Gandhāran, present-day Afghanistan, first half of third century CE. Courtesy of Musée Guimet, Paris.

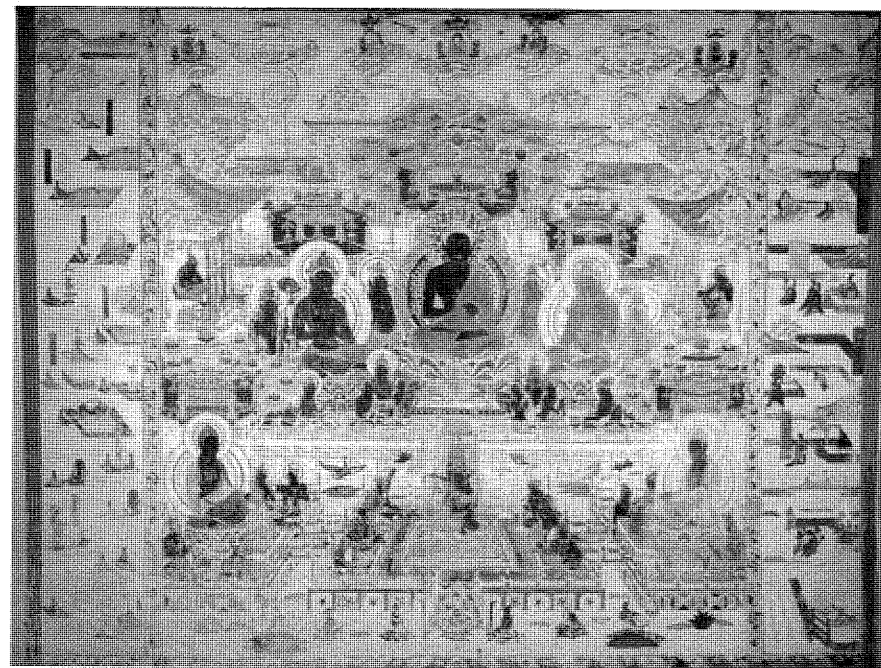


Fig. 3.5. Mural of *Western Pure Land*, Dunhuang Cave 320, north wall. Chinese, Tang dynasty (618–907), mid-eighth century. Dunhuang Academy, ed., *Zhongguo shiku* series, *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, part 4. Beijing 1987: pl. 4.



Fig. 3.7. Relief on back of Buddhist stele, from Wanfosi temple site, Chengdu, Sichuan. Chinese, sixth century. Zhongguo meishu quanji weiyuanhui, ed., *Wei, Jin, Nanbeichao diaosu* vol. Beijing 1988: pl. 63. See colorsection.

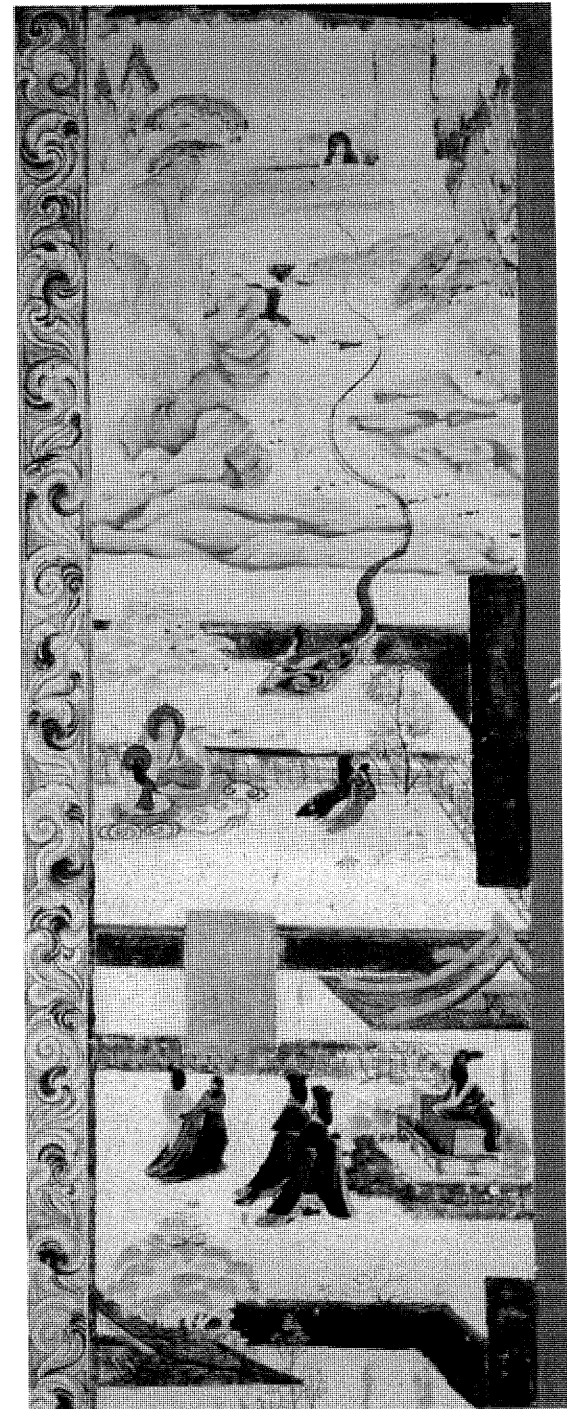


Fig. 3.8. Detail of figure 3.5, showing Queen Videhi's meditation against backdrop of naturalistic landscape. Dunhuang Academy, ed., *Zhongguo shiku* series, *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, part 4. Beijing 1987: pl. 5.

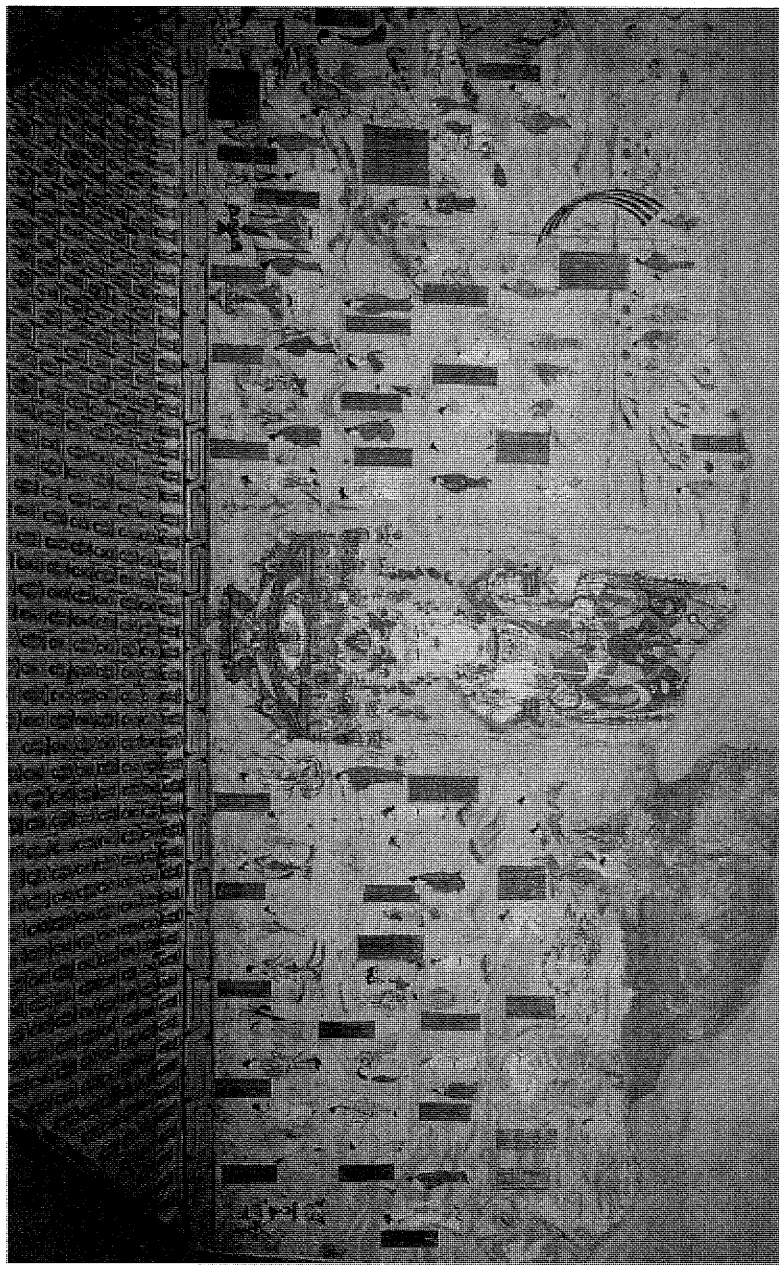


Fig. 3.9. Mural of *Avalokiteśvara as Savior*, Dunhuang Cave 45, south wall. Chinese, Tang dynasty (618–907), first half of eighth century. Dunhuang Academy, ed., *Zhongguo shiku* series, *Dunhuang Mogao*, part 3. Beijing 1987: pl. 131.

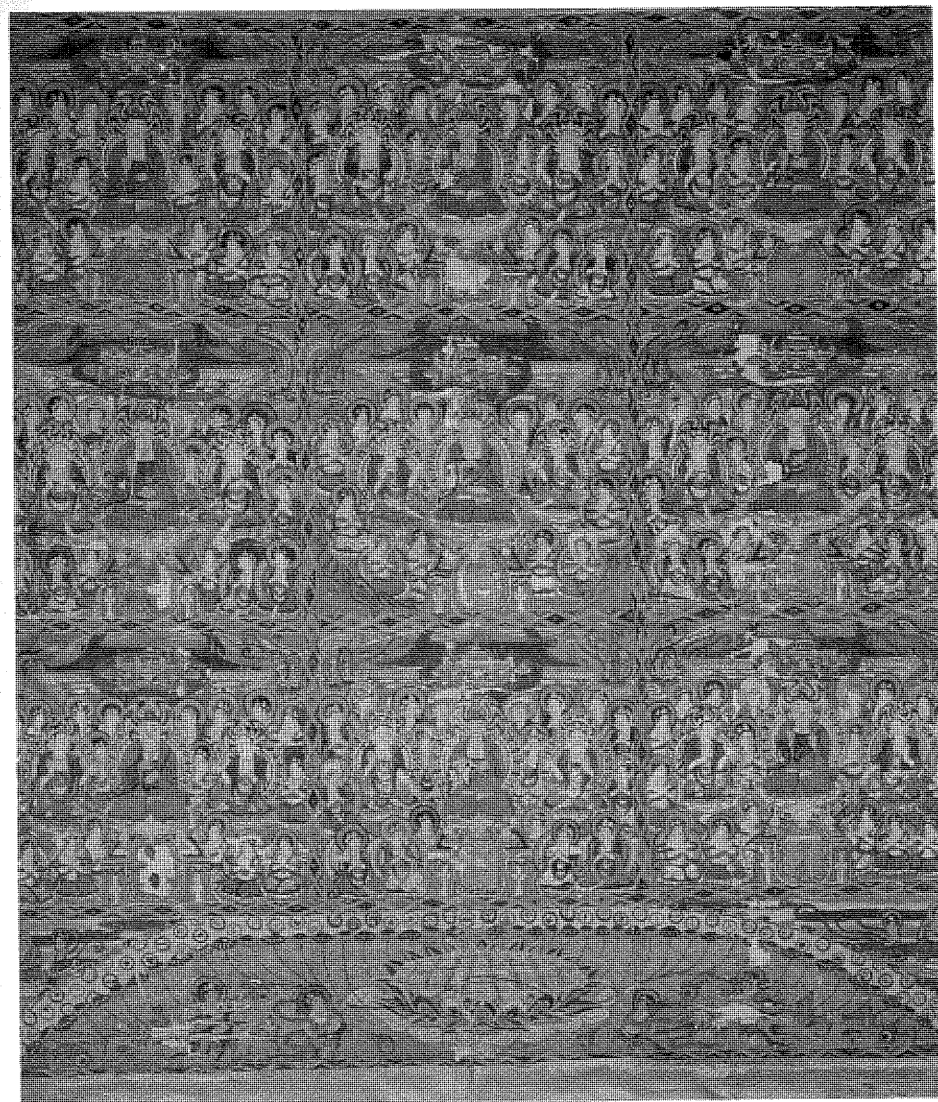


Fig. 3.11. *Huayan bian*, showing *Seven Locations and Nine Assemblies*, silk painting from Dunhuang. Chinese, tenth century. Courtesy of Musée Guimet, Paris.



Fig. 3.12. *Huayan bian*, showing the *Ten Stages of Bodhisattvahood and Assemblies of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra*, silk painting from Dunhuang. Chinese, tenth century. Courtesy of Musée Guimet, Paris.



Fig. 5.9. Paper fragment with an Arabic horoscope. Courtesy of Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrus-sammlung, A.Ch. 189.

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