Asia Major (2019) 3d ser. *Vol.* 32.2: 57–112

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Icons of Contemplation: The Pensive Bodhisattva and Local Meditation Culture in Sixth-Century Hebei

ABSTRACT:
The image of the pensive bodhisattva was widely reproduced in East Asian Buddhist art between the fifth and the eighth centuries, but the majority of surviving examples were carved at a small number of sites in central and southern Hebei over a period spanning just four decades (ca. 540–580). During this period, Hebei artisans elevated the pensive bodhisattva image to a new level of prominence by making it a central figure in their iconographic schemes. I argue on the basis of iconographic, epigraphic, and literary evidence that these innovative pensive bodhisattva images functioned as icons expressing patrons' reverence for an ideal of meditative contemplation. Considered together with hagiographic accounts, this interpretation of the Hebei pensive bodhisattva images sheds new light on the history of Buddhist meditation by revealing the existence of a distinctive local culture of meditation practices and associated beliefs in sixth-century Hebei.

KEYWORDS:
Siwei, Buddhist statue, Maitreya, Siddhārtha, Northern Qi dynasty

Between the fifth and the eighth centuries, Buddhist patrons across East Asia sponsored the carving of numerous images of the pensive bodhisattva. Seated with one leg pendent and one hand pointing towards its cheek (figure 1, overleaf), the pensive bodhisattva possesses a radiant introspective quality that has proven greatly attractive to modern viewers. Korean and Japanese examples have been designated as national treasures, and even today young artists continue to take inspiration from these figures for their own work.[1] Yet despite widespread

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I THANK He Liqun 何利群, Deputy Director of the Hebei Archaeological Team of the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who welcomed me when I conducted fieldwork in Linzhang, shared his thoughts on Buddhist history and material evidence, and provided me with information from new archaeological findings. I am also grateful to Mark Strange for his detailed comments on the manuscript. The work described in this paper was supported by a grant from the Research Grants Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China (Project No. PolyU 559713).

[1] The National Museum of Korea held a special exhibition of Buddhist art in 2015 and devoted a section to the Korean pensive bodhisattva images. In it, the National Treasures nos.

Figure 1. Pensive Bodhisattva Statue, 540 AD

Excavated at Quyang, Hebei. From Matsubara Saburō, Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkoku shiron *(full citation, n. 8, below), pl. 266.*

recognition of their artistic quality and extensive debates among art historians, there is still no consensus about the meanings that these images held for their original patrons.[2] The pensive bodhisattva remains one of the most enigmatic icons of Chinese Buddhist art.

The iconographic development of the pensive bodhisattva traced a long path as it made its way across Central and East Asia, from the earliest examples of the pensive bodhisattva carved in Gandhara in the second century AD, to the early Chinese examples in Mogao Cave 275 of Dunhuang, to the celebrated seventh-century examples from Korea and Japan.[3] However, Buddhist patrons and artisans in different geographic and cultural contexts adopted the pensive bodhisattva image for their own idiosyncratic purposes and, as a result, over time it accreted a diverse range of religious meanings.

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78 and 83 were juxtaposed in one room. For the exhibition catalogue, see Kim Seunghee, Kim Haewon, and Kim Hyekyong, eds., *Masterpieces of Early Buddhist Sculpture, 100 BC–700 AD* (Seoul: National Museum of Korea, 2015). The Tokyo National Museum held a special exhibition featuring two pensive bodhisattva statues, the Chūgū-ji 中宮寺 statue and Korean National Treasure no. 78, to commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Normalization of Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. For the exhibition catalogue, see Committee for the Japan-Korea Exhibition of Pensive Buddhas, ed., *Smiling in Contemplation: Two Bodhisattvas from Japan and Korea* (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 2016). The Korean artist Shin Hoyoon 申昊潤 (b. 1975) created a pensive bodhisattva image in paper based on Korean National Treasure no. 78, titled "There Is No Essence–Pensive Bodhisattva" 無本質, 半跏思維像, exhibited in Hong Kong in 2014.

2 Some examples of these debates include Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一, "Hanka shiyuizō ni tsuite" 半跏思惟像について (1940), printed in *Chūgoku no Bukkyō bijutsu* 中国の仏教美術 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1968), pp. 243–50; Matsubara Saburō 松原三郎, "Hokusei no Teiken yōshiki hakukyoku zō: tokuni hanka shiyuizō ni tsuite" 北斉の定県様式白玉像, 特に半跏思惟像について, in idem, *Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkokushi kenkyū* 中国仏教彫刻史研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kobunkan, 1966) 1, pp. 129–48; Sasaguchi Rei, "The Image of the Contemplative Bodhisattva in Chinese Buddhist Sculpture of the Sixth Century," Ph.D. diss. (Harvard University, 1975); Tamura Enchō 田村圓澄 and Hwang Su-yŏng 黃壽永, eds., *Hanka shiyuizō no kenkyū* 半跏思惟像の研究 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1985); Lee Yu-min 李玉珉, "Banjia siwei xiang zaitan" 半跏思惟像再探, *The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly* 3.3 (1986), pp. 41–55; Denise Patry Leidy, "The Ssu-Wei Figure in Sixth-Century A.D. Chinese Buddhist Sculpture," *Archives of Asian Art* 43 (1990), pp. 21–37; Junghee Lee, "The Origins and Development of the Pensive Bodhisattva Images of Asia," *Artibus Asiae* 53.3–4 (1993), pp. 311–41; ōnishi Shūya 大西修也, "Santōshō Seishū shutsudo sekizō hankazō no imi suru mono" 山東省青州出土石造半跏像の意味するもの, *Ars Buddhica* 248 (January 2000), pp. 53–67; Eileen Hsiang-ling Hsu, "Visualization Meditation and the Siwei Icon in Chinese Buddhist Sculpture," *Artibus Asiae* 62.1 (2002), pp. 5–32; Katherine Tsiang, "Resolve to Become a Buddha (*Chengfo*)–Changing Aspiration and Imagery in Sixth-Century Chinese Buddhism," *Early Medieval China* (2008), pp. 115–69.

3 For discussion of the pensive images in India, Gandhara, and Central Asia, see Inchang Kim, *The Future Buddha Maitreya* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 1997), pp. 223–28; Junghee Lee, "Pensive Bodhisattva," pp. 311–17; Sasaguchi, "Contemplating Bodhisattva," pp. 62–63; Martin Lerner, "The Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara Seated in Meditation," in idem, ed., *The Flame and The Lotus: Indian and Southeast Asian Art from the Kronos Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1984), pp. 30–35.

In this overall trajectory of development, a crucial iconographic transformation took place during the sixth century in an area corresponding to the south and west of the modern province of Hebei. Hebei artisans were the first in East Asia to carve the pensive bodhisattva as a primary deity, breaking with earlier Chinese traditions that had included pensive bodhisattvas merely as subordinate components of larger iconographic schemes.[4] The images these artisans produced were probably the direct inspiration for the later production of independent pensive bodhisattva images in Korea and Japan.

The production of pensive bodhisattva images in Hebei during the sixth century was not only iconographically innovative but also exceptionally prolific. More than a hundred independent pensive bodhisattva sculptures from this period have been recovered from the Hebei area, surpassing the total from all other locations in East Asia combined. This remarkable proliferation of pensive bodhisattva images hints at the existence of a set of local Buddhist beliefs and practices: in particular, the distinctive culture of Buddhist meditation that flourished in this region over a period of approximately half a century.

Surviving literary evidence for the history of Buddhism in sixth-century Hebei comes primarily from hagiographic writings focusing on the lives of "eminent monks," which are often poorly suited to inform us about more mundane and commonplace religious practices.[5] Historians such as Eric Zürcher, Stephen Teiser, Zhiru, and Yü Chün-fang have argued that popular religious beliefs and practices in medieval China were intimately connected to the lived experiences of ordinary people, whose concerns were often quite different from those of later hagiographers.[6] My approach here follows that of scholars who have

[4] A story in *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄 (664) mentions the production of a thousand statues of Prince Siddhārtha in contemplation during the Eastern Jin dynasty, but no material evidence of the pensive images from such an early date has been discovered. For the story, see *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 et al. (Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932; hereafter T), 2106.52.417A-B. All such Buddhist scriptures from *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* are cited as follows: T followed by "sutra number.volume number.page number.register" (the latter being A, B, or C).

[5] For discussion of this hagiographic literature, see John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1997).

[6] Erik Zürcher, "Perspectives in the Study of Chinese Buddhism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1 (1982), pp. 161–76; Stephen Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1988); idem, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the Making of Buddhist Purgatory in Medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1994); idem, *Reinventing the Wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist Temples* (Seattle, London: U. Washington P., 2006); Zhiru, *The Making of a Savior Bodhisattva: Dizang in Medieval China* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2007); Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2001); Liu Shufen 劉淑芬, "Zhongguo zhuanshu jingdian yu Beichao Fojiao de chuanbu: cong Beichao kejing zaoxiangbei tanqi" 中

sought to exploit new types of visual and material evidence to compensate for the inadequacies of transmitted textual records concerning the religious beliefs and practices of non-elites. When the content of the hagiographies is placed in the context of the epigraphic and iconographic evidence a much more comprehensive view of sixth-century Buddhist society and culture emerges.

Sixth-century Hebei offers a particularly rich body of epigraphic evidence for the study of popular Buddhism. Inscriptions associated with Buddhist images often contain clues to the social identities of their patrons and explicit declarations of the beliefs and aspirations that led them to commission the works. In contrast to the imperially-supported Buddhist caves at Longmen, where the epigraphic evidence predominantly expresses the concerns of elite patrons, the Hebei pensive statues are mostly small images, approximately 30–70 cm tall, and belonged to individuals and small households.[7] Their inscriptions, rendered in crude calligraphy, rarely make reference to official ranks or titles. They are thus examples of what Stanley Abe has called "ordinary images – modest in scale, mass-produced, at times incomplete," and their inscriptions tell us about the concerns of ordinary lay and monastic Buddhist believers.[8] The beliefs and practices associated with the production of pensive bodhisattva images flourished in this milieu – socially and culturally distant from political power and mercantile wealth.

In what follows, I first show how the independent pensive bodhisattva images of Hebei were preceded and perhaps inspired by iconographic experimentation at Longmen during the first decades of the sixth century. I then argue that a detailed analysis of the inscriptions on Hebei statues reveals that the term *siwei* 思惟 in these inscriptions was understood not only as an adjective meaning "pensive," but also as the proper name of a deity who is not otherwise recorded in the Bud-

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國撰述經典與北朝佛教的傳布, 從北朝刻經造像碑談起, in idem, *Zhonggu de Fojiao yu shehui* 中古的佛教與社會 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2006), pp. 145–67; Hou Xudong 侯旭東, *Wuliu shiji beifang minzhong Fojiao xinyang: yi zaoxiangji wei zhongxin de kaocha* 五六世紀北方民眾佛教信仰, 以造像記爲中心的考察 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1998). For a parallel argument concerning a later period of Chinese history, see Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1990).

7 For an analysis of Buddhist image-making at Longmen based on extensive study of the epigraphic evidence, see Amy McNair, *Donors of Longmen: Faith, Politics, and Patronage in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Sculpture* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2007).

8 Stanley Abe, *Ordinary Images* (Chicago: U. Chicago P., 2002), p. 1. Matsubara Saburō pointed out that the Buddhist sculptures from Dingzhou were produced for ordinary believers: Matsubara Saburō, "Tōgi, Hokusei no Kahoku ha hakugyokuzō: toku ni hanka shiyuizō ni tsuite" 東魏, 北齊の河北派白玉像, とくに半跏思惟像について, in *Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkoku shiron* 中國佛教彫刻史論 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1995) 4, p. 116.

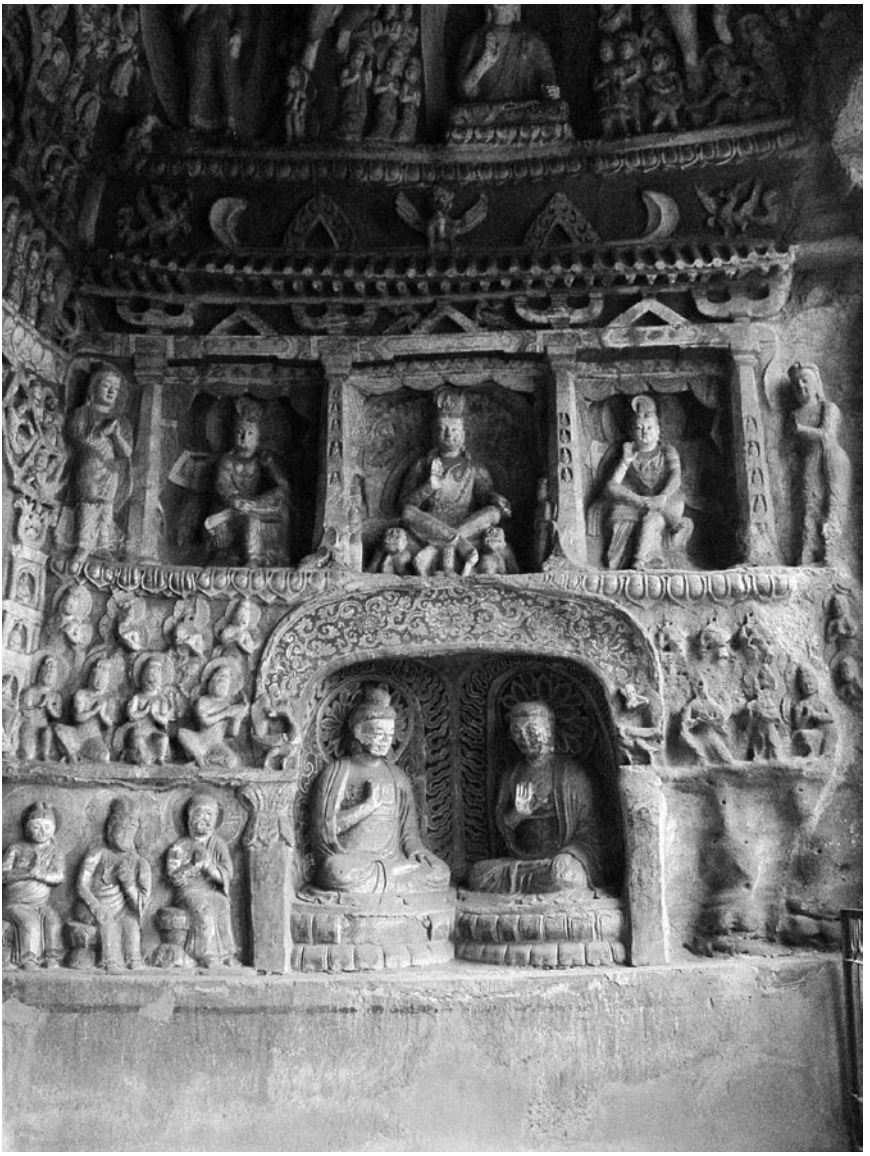

Figure 2. Pair of Pensive Attendants to a Cross-Legged Maitreya

Located in antechamber of Yungang Cave 12. Photograph by Li-kuei Chien. (The remaining figures are all presented at the end of the article.)

dhist canon. By examining the uses of the term *siwei* in textual sources, I show that it had a close association with Buddhist meditation practices. Finally, I argue that the innovative iconography of the pensive bodhisattva images is best understood in the context of the flourishing culture of Buddhist meditation in sixth-century Hebei.

FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTER

If we compare the pensive bodhisattva images from sixth-century Hebei with earlier examples from Dunhuang 敦煌, Pingcheng 平城, and Luoyang 洛陽, their iconographic novelty becomes immediately apparent. Earlier Chinese pensive bodhisattva figures in the fifth century had appeared only as subordinate elements of larger iconographic schemes (figure 2).[9] By contrast, the sixth-century Hebei pensive bodhisattva figures were generally carved in the round as primary deities (figure 1). This iconographic shift of the pensive bodhisattva from the margins to the center suggests that the religious ideas that this figure represented had acquired new importance among the Buddhist communities of this region. Before we examine these ideas, however, it is first necessary to clarify the stages of the iconographic development of the pensive image.

During the fifth century, pensive bodhisattva images most commonly appeared in an iconographic scheme composed of a pair of pensive figures positioned symmetrically around a central cross-legged Maitreya. In Mogao Cave 275 at Dunhuang, dated to approximately 410 AD, two pensive bodhisattvas occupy niches on the side walls of a chamber containing a massive cross-legged Maitreya figure (see the schematic of this in figure 3). Although the motivation for such a scheme cannot be definitively established, it hints at a close relationship between the act of contemplation signified by the pensive pose and the religious aspirations evoked by the central Maitreya figure. The implied relationship should be understood simultaneously on multiple levels. At the cosmic level, it evokes the life of the future Buddha Maitreya, who is said to undertake contemplative reflection during his multiple incarnations before assuming his final form as a Buddha; at the level

9 The earliest pensive bodhisattva image discovered in China appears on a bronze mirror from Echeng 鄂城 in Hubei 湖北, dated to the 3d c. AD; Wu Hung, "Buddhist Elements in Early Chinese Art," *Artibus Asiae* 74.3–4 (1986), pp. 281–82; Abe, *Ordinary Images*, pp. 52–53. However, there is no evidence connecting this isolated example to the numerous examples in later Buddhist art. Mizuno Seiichi discussed two pensive images discovered in Japan on a Chinese Han-style mirror; "Chūgoku ni okeru Butsuzō no hajimari" 中國における仏像のはじまり, in idem, *Chūgoku no Bukkyō bijutsu*, p. 24.

of individual lay worshippers and monks visiting the cave, it hints that the practice of contemplative reflection itself might have been a pathway towards eventual rebirth in Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven.[10]

This type of iconographic scheme was extensively reproduced in the late-fifth century. The cave-temples of Yungang, near Pingcheng, capital of the Northern Wei dynasty from 398 to 494, contain at least seventy surviving examples of such triads (figure 4), dating from the beginning to the end of the constructions at Yungang (ca. 460–530).[11] A number of other examples also survive on steles from the same period.[12]

New modes of iconographic experimentation with the pensive bodhisattva figure appeared after the transfer of the Northern Wei capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang in 494 and the cutting of new cave-temples at Longmen shortly thereafter.[13] At Longmen, the earlier tradition of paired pensive bodhisattvas flanking a central cross-legged Maitreya figures faded in significance. Instead, paired pensive bodhisattvas were more commonly carved as attendants for other types of central figures, in particular seated Buddhas.[14] The Longmen caves also contained more unusual pensive images, such as a pensive Buddha and a cross-legged pensive bodhisattva (figures 5, 6). Both of these images are thought to have been originally located in the Guyang Cave and dated to the period 510–520. The cross-legged pensive bodhisattva figure apparently recalls the older linkage between pensive bodhisatt-

10 For discussion of Maitreya's incarnations, see Lee Yu-min, "Banjia siwei xiang," pp. 41–55.

11 The triad of a pair of pensive deities flanking the cross-legged Maitreya at Yungang was probably introduced by the monks and artisans who migrated from Dunhuang after 439 when it fell to the Northern Wei: Wei Shou 魏收, *Weishu* 魏書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1974) 114, p. 3032. See also Su Bai 宿白, "Pingcheng shili de juji he Yungang moshi de xingcheng yu fazhan" 平城實力的聚集和雲岡模式的形成與發展, in *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu* 中國石窟寺研究 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1996), pp. 114–44. During my fieldwork in 2007, I documented seventy instances of such triads at Yungang.

12 Matsubara, *Chūgoku Bukkyō* 1, pll. 70, 115.

13 The imperial construction of cave-temples at Longmen started during the Jingming 景明 reign (500–504); Wei, *Weishu* 114, p. 3043. On the foundation of the Longmen Cave-temples, see Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, "Ryūmon sekkutsu ni arawareru Hoku Gi Bukkyō" 龍門石窟に現れたる北魏佛教, in Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 and Nagahiro Toshio 長広敏雄, eds., *Kanan Rakuyō Ryūmon sekkutsu no kenkyū* 河南洛陽龍門石窟の研究 (Tokyo: Zayūhō kankōkai, 1941), p. 144.

14 The only two extant examples of paired pensive deities flanking a central cross-legged bodhisattva currently at Longmen appear in niches 209 and 156 of the Guyang Cave. Both dated to the 520s. For these images, see Liu Jinglong 劉景龍, ed., *Guyang dong: Longmen shiku di 1443 ku* 古陽洞, 龍門石窟第1443窟 (Beijing: Kexue, 2001), pll. 56, 288. The earliest example of paired pensive deities flanking a central Buddha in China is seen on a sculpture dated to 455, but this iconography was rare in the fifth century; Jin Shen 金申, *Zhongguo lidai Foxiang jinian tudian* 中國歷代佛像紀年圖典 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1994), pl. 13.

vas and the cross-legged Maitreya, fusing these attributes into a single hybrid figure. More detailed interpretation has been made difficult by their removal from the cave, which has deprived them of their original iconographic contexts. Nevertheless, they indicate an increasing willingness on the part of Longmen patrons to support iconographic experimentation with the pensive image.

One iconographic innovation at Longmen has attracted great scholarly attention and has been used as evidence for identifying the pensive deity as Siddhārtha. In this type of image, each pensive deity has its own worshippers of high political and social status paying homage to him. On the southern wall of the Lotus Cave, a central seated Buddha figure in Niche 41 (figure 7), dated to the 520s, is flanked by two symmetrically arranged pensive bodhisattva figures carved in low relief on the rear niche wall. The image on the viewer's left shows the pensive bodhisattva under a tree with a worshiper kneeling before him (figure 8). This worshiper is depicted wearing the ceremonial headdress of Chinese emperors, and his attendants carry elaborate regalia.[15] The image on the viewer's right shows a pensive bodhisattva with a standing worshiper presenting an offering (figure 9). The worshiper's cap and the ceremonial axe (*yue* 鉞) carried by his attendants identify him as an aristocrat or a high-ranking official.[16] A similar pair of pensive images receiving homage from an emperor and a high official can also be found on the rear wall of another niche in the Lotus Cave, also flanking a seated Buddha.[17]

Since Mizuno Seiichi's 水野清一 seminal article published in 1940, scholars have generally interpreted such images as episodes from the life of Prince Siddhārtha.[18] Junghee Lee has explained the image to the viewer's left, shown in figure 8, as a depiction of Siddhārtha's fa-

[15] For the illustration and a description of the *gunmien* 衮冕 ceremonial attire, see François Louis, *Design by the Book: Chinese Ritual Objects and the Sanli tu* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2017), pp. 5–6. A similar headdress from the sixth century can be seen in the image of the emperor's procession in the imperial Central Binyang Cave 賓陽中洞; Mizuno and Nagahiro, eds., *Kanan Rakuyō*, p. 23.

[16] The *yue* 鉞 or *jia huangyue* 假黃鉞, had represented ruling authority since the pre-Qin period. It was used in the sixth century as a symbol of prestige bestowed upon high ministers. For the archaeology and pre-Qin military uses of *yue*, see Liu Jing 劉靜, "Xian Qin shiqi qingtong yue de zai yanjiu" 先秦時期青銅鉞的再研究, *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 故宮博物院院刊 130.2 (2007), pp. 52–79. For the uses of *jia huang yue* for high-ranking officials, see Zhang Zhengliang 張政烺, ed., *Zhongguo gudai zhiguan dacidian* 中國古代職官大辭典 (Zhengzhou: Henan renmin, 1990), p. 919. For examples of *jia huangyue* as a prestige object in 6th-c. Northern Wei, see Wei, *Weishu* 12, p. 298; 14, p. 356; 19, p. 480.

[17] Liu Jinglong, ed., *Lianhua dong: Longmen shiku di 712 ku* 蓮花洞, 龍門石窟第712窟 (Beijing: Kexue, 2002), p. 114.

[18] Mizuno, "Hanka shiyuizō," p. 247.

ther, King Śuddhodana, paying homage to his son in recognition of the miracle of the tree's bending of its branches to shade him during his contemplation.[19] Amy McNair has further suggested that the symmetric counterpart to this image, to the right of the central Buddha image for the viewer (figure 9), should be understood in the light of the scriptural story of merchants and Heavenly Kings offering food to Prince Siddhārtha during his second and final meditation.[20] However, there are reasons to question each of these identifications, and a more comprehensive survey of images of this genre at Longmen suggests an alternative interpretation.

A number of other pairs of pensive images at Longmen have iconographic structures similar to those in the Lotus Cave. One set of such images can be found beside a niche housing a triad in the Weizi Cave 魏字洞, dated to the 520s (figure 10). The image on the viewer's left shows two primary worshipers kneeling in front of the deity with an array of attendants standing behind (figure 11), whereas the image on the right shows only one person paying homage to the deity (figure 12). The ceremonial regalia of the worshippers in these images are less lavish than those in the Lotus Cave images, seemingly indicating their humbler status; the two worshipers in figure 11, for example, may represent a wife and husband or father and son. Another image in the Huoshao Cave 火燒洞 shows a further possible variation: no tree is visible, but a group of monks and nuns surrounds the pensive figure (figure 13).

The diversity of the types of figures depicted as worshippers in these images is difficult to reconcile with the idea that they were all intended as narrative illustrations of scenes from scriptures. Instead, I propose that these figures shown paying homage to pensive bodhisattvas should be understood as a type of donor image. They represent either donors who contributed funds or the intended recipients of the karmic merit that the carving of these niches generated.[21] None of the worshippers in the Longmen images is identified as such by inscriptions, but a stele unearthed in Hebei, now held by the Cultural Relics Management and Protection Agency of Handan 邯鄲, lends support to this identifi-

[19] Junghee Lee, "Pensive Bodhisattva," p. 339.

[20] McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, pp. 68–70.

[21] My interpretation here is in partial agreement with that of Eileen Hsiang-Ling Hsu, who has also identified the worshippers in these images as representations of donors. However, I do not share her confidence that they can be used to draw conclusions about the existence of a "Siddhārtha cult" among the Northern Wei nobility: the range of iconographic contexts in which pensive images appear during this period is too diverse for such an identification to be sustainable; Hsu, "Siwei Icon," p. 13.

cation.[22] Dated to 540, it features a seated Śakyamuni flanked by two attendants. On the reverse of the mandorla is a low-relief carving of a pensive bodhisattva figure receiving homage from a man and a woman, labeled as "Father, Nansheng 父難生" and "Mother, Dong 母董." The inscription on the base states that the stele was carved for the deceased parents of the donor. So the worshipers paying homage to the pensive bodhisattva here were unambiguously intended to be representations of the recipients of karmic merit from image making activity, and it is plausible to assume that the intended meaning of iconographically similar images in the Longmen caves was also similar.

More tentatively, I further suggest that the pairs of images in the Lotus Cave depicting rulers, aristocrats, and officials paying homage to symmetrically arranged pensive bodhisattvas may have been expressions of spiritual and political allegiance. The carving of cave-temples at Longmen was initiated and continuously supported by the imperial family; and as Amy McNair has shown, local elites' sponsorship of Buddhist art at Longmen helped to consolidate their political alliances with the imperial family through the exchange and circulation of karmic merit.[23] The inclusion of an image of the emperor paying homage to a pensive bodhisattva, marking him as a recipient of karmic merit, thus implied that the merit accrued through their production would be shared between the sponsoring officials and the Wei emperor. It constituted a visual analogue of the rhetoric seen in Buddhist inscriptions, which frequently listed the emperor as the first recipient of the merit accrued through image production.

The invasion of Luoyang by a rebel army in 528 and the mass slaughter of imperial family members, aristocrats, and officials cut off the Longmen cave-temples' main source of patronage. Although the production of Buddhist images there never ceased, it suffered a serious decline.[24] Six years later, the military leader Gao Huan 高歡 (496–547) installed a puppet emperor and moved the court to Ye 鄴 (modern Linzhang 臨漳, in southern Hebei), which subsequently became one of the most important centers for the production of Buddhist art in northern China.

In contrast to the previous half century, the majority of pensive bodhisattva images from sixth-century Hebei were carved in the round as primary deities (figures 1, 14–21, 26–28). This new centrality of the

[22] For the image and the inscription, see Handanshi wenwu yanjiusuo 邯鄲市文物研究所, *Handan gudai diaosu jingcui* 邯鄲古代雕塑精粹 (Beijing: Wenwu, 2007), fig. 40, p. 219.

[23] McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, pp. 11, 20–24.

[24] Tsukamoto, "Ryūmon sekkutsu ni arawareru Hoku Gi Bukkyō," p. 172.

pensive figure appeared not only in the regions around Ye but also in Dingzhou 定州 in central Hebei.[25] The recent discovery of the Beiwuzhuang 北吳庄 pit in Linzhang in 2012 has confirmed Ye as a production center of Buddhist images. The excavation in 2012 included many pensive statues, but a more complete archaeological report has not yet been published. The Yecheng Archaeology Team 鄴城考古隊 in charge of the excavation suggested that the restoration work will take at least ten years to complete and a full archaeological report shall be published after that.[26] For the time being, the most important fully described set of Buddhist statues from sixth-century Hebei comes from a single pit at the Xiude Temple 修德寺 in Quyang 曲陽 (in Dingzhou). When this pit was excavated in the 1950s, it yielded nearly 2,000 pieces of Buddhist sculpture, including 47 pensive bodhisattva images among the 271 inscribed stone statues, with dated examples ranging from the early-Eastern Wei to the Sui 隋 dynasty.[27]

[25] The sites of discoveries in the areas around Dingzhou and its adjacent areas include Quyang 曲陽, Gaocheng 藁城, Weixian 威縣, Xingtang 行唐, Tangxian 唐縣, Zhengding 正定, Lixian 蠡縣, Jingxian 景縣, and Cangzhou 滄州. See Yang Boda 楊伯達, *Umoreta Chūgoku sekibutsu no kenkyū: Kahokushō Kyokuyū shutsudo no hakugyokuzō to hennen meibun* 埋もれた中國石仏の研究, 河北省曲陽出土の白玉像と編年銘文, trans. Matsubara Saburō (Tokyo: Tokyo bijutsu, 1985); Zhang Limin 張麗敏 and Sun Yanping 孫彥平, "Dingzhoushi bowuguan shoucang de yipi hanbaiyu Fozaoxiang" 定州市博物館收藏的一批漢白玉佛造像, *Wenwu chunqiu* 文物春秋 (2002, issue 3), pp. 43–50; Wang Qiaolian 王巧蓮 and Liu Youheng 劉友恒, "Zhengding shoucang de bufen Beichao Fojiao shi zaoxiang" 正定收藏的部分北朝佛教石造像, *WW* 1998.5, pp. 70–74; Chen Yinfeng 陳銀風, Guo Lingti 郭玲娣 and Fan Ruiping 樊瑞平, "Jieshao liangjian guancang wenwu zhenpin" 介紹兩件館藏文物珍品, *Wenwu chunqiu* (2007, issue 6), pp. 76–78; Zheng Shaozong 鄭紹宗, "Tangxian Sicheng jiancun chutu shike zaoxiang" 唐縣寺城澗村出土石刻造像, *Wenwu chunqiu* (1990, issue 3), pp. 21–28; Shen Mingjie 沈銘傑, "Hebeisheng Jingxian chutu Beichao zaoxiang kao" 河北省景縣出土北朝造像考, *Wenwu chunqiu* (1994, issue 3), pp. 57–60 and 54; Cheng Jizhong 程紀中, "Hebei Gaochengxian faxian yipi Bei Qi shizaoxiang" 河北藁城縣發現一批北齊石造像, *KG* 1980.3, pp. 242–45, 294–95; Wang Limin 王麗敏 and Lü Xingjuan 呂興娟, "Hebei Quyangxian chutu shizaoxiang" 河北曲陽縣出土石造像, *Wenwu chunqiu* (2002, issue 6), pp. 45–48; Liang Jixiang 梁紀想 and Xing Enze 邢恩澤, "Da Qi Tianbao sannian Foxiangzuo qianxi" 大齊天保三年佛像座淺析, *Wenwu chunqiu* (2008, issue 3), pp. 77–78; Qiu Zhongming 邱忠鳴, Li Xuanpeng 李宣鵬, and Wang Xin 王新, "Hebei Weixian faxian Beichao Fozaoxiang" 河北威縣發現北朝佛造像, *WW* 2014.3, pp. 68–71, 22; Discoveries of Buddhist sculptures from Cangzhou can be seen on display in the Cangzhou Museum, but they have not yet been published.

[26] Interview with He Liqun 何利群, Deputy Director of the Hebei Archeological Team of the Institute of Archeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, May 2016. The discoveries from Linzhang have been partially published: He Liqun, "Cong Beiwuzhuang Foxiang maicanken lun Yecheng zaoxiang de fazhangjiedun yu Yecheng moshi" 從北吳庄佛像埋藏坑論鄴城造像的發展階段與鄴城模式, *KG* 2014.5, pp. 76–87; idem, "Yecheng diqu Fojiao zaoxiang de faxian ji xiangjguan wenti de tansuo" 鄴城地區佛教造像的發現及相關問題的探索, *Hua Xia Kaogu* 2015.3, pp. 88–93, pll. 12, 13, 14; idem, "Bei Qi longshu beikanshi zaoxiang de jishu chuancheng he goutu tezheng" 北齊龍樹背龕式造像的技術傳承和構圖特徵, *Zhongyuan wenwu* 4 (2017), pp. 73–78.

[27] Feng Hejun 馮賀軍, *Quyang baishi zaoxiang yanjiu* 曲陽白石造像研究 (Beijing: Zijincheng, 2005), pp. 82–83.

The pensive bodhisattva figures of sixth-century Hebei appear in three main formats: single images, triads, and pentads, using monks, bodhisattvas, and *pratyekabuddhas* (Chin. *pizhifo* 辟支佛, or *dujue* 獨覺) as attendants (figures 1, 14–21, 26–28).[28] Many of the Hebei pensive statues also include images of monks meditating in caves and reborn beings (*huasheng* 化生) achieving birth in the Western Pure Land. Each of these iconographic elements can help us understand the religious meanings that the pensive figure held for Buddhist worshippers in sixth-century Hebei.

NAMING THE BODHISATTVA

Art historians have written extensively on the puzzle of the pensive figure's identity, generally adopting one of the following two approaches. The first, pursued vigorously in iconographical studies by scholars such as Mizuno Seiichi, Matsubara Saburō 松原三郎, Lee Yumin 李玉珉, and Junghee Lee, identifies pensive images as representations of canonical Buddhist figures such as Siddhārtha or Maitreya. This approach has generated a substantial body of knowledge about the history of the pensive image, but it faces the difficulty that iconographic and epigraphic evidence points in multiple directions. Iconographic attributes or inscriptions on some images can suggest an identification of the pensive figure as Prince Siddhārtha or Maitreya.[29] Often, however, direct and unambiguous evidence of this type is lacking, leaving us without any way to decide which of the attested identities is appropriate for a given individual image.

A second approach, adopted by scholars such as Hou Xudong 侯旭東, is to simply treat the pensive bodhisattva as a distinctive genre of Buddhist image, deferring the question of what deity or deities this type images might have represented.[30] Although this approach avoids the

[28] For discussion of the images of *pratyekabuddha*s, see Sasaguchi, "Contemplating Bodhisattva," pp. 119–26; Denise Patry Leidy and Birgitta Augustin, "Buddha, Deva, or Devotee? A Sculpture from Xiangtangshan in the Detroit Institute of Arts," *Orientations* 44.7 (2013), pp. 66–69. For an alternative identification of the figures as *brahmā*, see Kim Lena 金理那, trans. Lim Nan Su 林南壽, "Roku seiki Chūgoku shichi sonbutsu ni mieru rakei zō ni tsuite: *Yuimakyō* no rakei bon'ō to sono zuzō" 六世紀中国七尊仏にみえる螺髻像について, "維摩経" の螺髻像梵王とその図像, *Ars Buddhica* 219 (1995), pp. 40–55.

[29] Junghee Lee has claimed that "There appears... to be no evidence to support the identification of the pensive bodhisattva in Chinese art as Maitreya." ("Pensive Bodhisattva," p. 344.) However, at least one pensive statue from Hebei, dated 557 and now in the Cangzhou Museum, is identified by the accompanying inscription as an image of Maitreya.

[30] Hou Xudong, "The Buddhist Pantheon," trans. John Kieschnick, in John Lagerwey and Pengzhi Lü, eds., *Early Chinese Religion. Part Two: The Period of Division (220–589)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 1105–6; see also Hou, *Wuliu shiji beifang minzhong*, pp. 120–21. Eileen

risk of erroneous identification, it does not lead us to any conclusions about the intriguing phenomenon about which these images provide evidence: the new forms of Buddhist belief and practice that flourished in sixth-century Hebei and prompted such great enthusiasm for the production of pensive images.

In this section, I argue that a close analysis of the epigraphic evidence supports a third approach to understanding the identity of the pensive figure: namely, that image-making and inscriptional practices in sixth-century Hebei gave birth to a belief in the existence of an independent deity named Siwei 思惟.[31] The increasing iconographic prominence of the pensive figure in the 520s, as seen in the Longmen images discussed above, together with a new inscriptional practice of referring to this figure simply as "Siwei," may have encouraged viewers and patrons to think of it as representing an independent deity in its own right. The belief in a Buddhist deity called Siwei appears to have begun at least as early as the 520s, and it persisted until the fall of the Northern Qi dynasty in 577.

Extant epigraphic evidence shows that by the early 520s pensive deities already had the term *siwei* carved next to their images. This tendency probably began in the Luoyang metropolis. On one stele dated 523, discovered at Yanshi 偃師, less than forty kilometers from Luoyang, a pair of pensive bodhisattvas is shown flanking a central niche, with inscriptions identifying the donors of the pensive images as "Donor of the Siwei image, Song Laode 思維像主宋老德" and "Pure woman believer, Han Mingji, Donor of the Siwei image 清信女韓明姬思維主."[32] Another stele dated 528, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has a single pensive bodhisattva figure carved on the side, with the inscription "Donor for the eye-opening of the Siwei [image], Guan ...*nü* 思惟開明主關□女." In addition, a seated Maitreya statue, also dated to the 520s, has a pair of pensive figures dressed as bodhisattvas on the rear of its mandorla, inscribed respectively with the words "Donor for the eye-opening of the Siwei Buddha, Wang Funu 思惟佛光明主王伏奴" and

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Hsiang-Ling Hsu has proposed a third approach: "a large number of sixth-century pensive figures represent not Buddhist deities in a traditional sense, but rather the actual *devotees* of the Maitreya cult" ("Siwei Icon," p. 8). I find this interpretation unpersuasive, since images of devotees represented as divine beings were not part of the iconographic range of sixth-century China.

31 This approach was suggested by Sasaguchi Rei in her 1975 doctoral dissertation, but has been mostly ignored by subsequent scholarship; Sasaguchi, "Contemplating Bodhisattva," pp. 61–73.

32 Li Xianqi 李獻奇, "Bei Wei Zhengguang si nian Zhai Xingzu dengren zaoxiangbei" 北魏正光四年翟興祖等人造像碑, *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物 2 (1985), pp. 21–26.

"Donor for the eye-opening of the Siwei Buddha, ... *jing* 思惟佛光明主□□景."[33] The absence of any explicit reference to Prince Siddhārtha in these inscriptions suggests that the donors considered the "pensive" quality of these images to be their most salient characteristic. Although at this stage the pensive bodhisattva figure was not yet depicted as a primary deity, the custom of allowing patrons to offer donations for a specific "Siwei image" might have encouraged them to think of this image as representing a deity in its own right.

Compelling evidence that the term *siwei* was used as the proper name of a deity comes from inscriptional practices associated with independent pensive bodhisattva statues produced in sixth-century Hebei. These inscriptions often follow a common structural pattern, recording the date of production, the names of the patrons, the identity of the deity, the recipients of karmic merit, and in some cases, an expressed wish. Table 1 analyzes four complete inscriptions from Hebei for statues of different divinities, including Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya, Śākyamuni, and the pensive bodhisattva.

[33] Sasaguchi, "Contemplating Bodhisattva," pp. 61–62.

Table 1. Inscriptions on Buddhist Statues from Sixth-Century Hebei[34]

SUBJECTS	SIWEI STATUE, 539 INSCRIPTION	AVALOKITEŚVARA STATUE, 548 INSCRIPTION	MAITREYA STATUE, 560 INSCRIPTION	ŚĀKYAMUNI STATUE, 566 INSCRIPTION
Date	元象二年正月一日 On the 1st day, 1st month, 2d year of the Yuanxiang period,	武定六年五月十三日 On the 13th day, 5th month, 6th year of the Wuding period,	乾明元年七月八日 On the 8th day, 7th month, 1st year of the Qianming period,	大齊天統二年四月八日 On the 8th day, 4th month, 2d year of the Tiantong period of the Great Qi,
Patron	佛弟子比丘尼惠照 [I,] Buddhist disciple, Nun Huizhao	張慶和從戍東西 [I,] Zhang Qinghe stationed with the military to the east and the west,	莊嚴寺共寺下諸趙邑人等 the Zhaos of the *yi* [society] collectively under the Zhuangyan Temple,	比丘尼靜藏 [I,] Nun Jingzang,
Identity of deity	造思惟玉像一區 had a jade Siwei statue made.	發願敬造白玉觀音像一區 vowed to respectfully have a white jade Guanyin statue made.	敬造彌勒下生像一區 respectfully had a statue of the descent of Mile made.	敬造釋迦白玉像一區 respectfully had a white jade Shijia statue made.
Beneficiary and wish	上爲國主先亡父母己身眷屬合家大小一切有形同昇妙樂 May the emperor, [my] late parents, [all] my family members, old and young, and all [sentient beings that have] physical forms together ascend to [the realm of] wonder and joy.	爲亡父母居家眷屬七世先亡普及無邊眾生一切眾生同登妙淨所願如是 May [my] late parents, lay relatives, the deceased ancestors of my seven lives, extending to all sentient beings without limit, together ascend to marvellous purity. My wish is thus.	仰爲皇帝陛下師僧父母法界有形一時成佛 May the emperor, preceptor monks, [my] parents, and [the sentient beings that have] physical forms attain enlightenment.	上爲國王帝主師僧父母己身眷屬邊地含生俱登正道 May the emperor, preceptor monks, [my] parents, my relatives, and the sentient beings of all lands all attain the correct path (enlightenment).

[34] Feng, *Quyang*, pp. 150 (Siwei), 165 (Avalokiteśvara), 185–86 (Maitreya), 198 (Śākyamuni).

In the inscription of 539, the term *siwei* is used analogously to the proper names of other Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the other inscriptions analyzed here. In other words, *siwei* was not restricted to use as an adjective or a verb describing the state of the figure; it could also serve as a proper noun.

A passage in another inscription, listing the images on a stele, dated 558, from Gaoping 高平 in Shanxi 山西, provides further support for the possibility of interpreting *siwei* as a proper noun:

> … had a stele of Śākyamuni made with images of Maitreya the Benevolent One, the Buddha of Limitless Life [Amitāyus], the Healing [Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru], the Oil-lamp [Buddha, Dīpaṃkara], Siwei, the Many-Jeweled [Buddha, Prabhūtaratna], Ānanda, Kāśyapa, and various bodhisattvas…
>
> … 造釋迦碑像一區, 弥勒慈氏, 及无量壽佛、藥師、定光、思惟、多寶、阿難、迦葉, 并諸菩薩…[35]

The most natural interpretation of the term *siwei* appearing in the midst of this list of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and prominent disciples of Śākyamuni is that the term Siwei was also understood to be the name of a divine figure. Furthermore, the listing of this figure separately from Śākyamuni and Maitreya suggests that the author of the inscription did not identify Siwei with either of those two deities.

Notably, the donor of the pensive image on the stele is listed as "Donor of the Siwei image, Hejian Governor Wang Zhuer 思惟像主河間太守王朱兒." It is possible that this Wang Zhuer became familiar with the Hebei tradition of treating the pensive bodhisattva as an independent deity during his period of service as governor of Hejian (in central Hebei). This would explain the presence of an image identified as Siwei on this stele from Shanxi, a region where there is otherwise little evidence for patrons showing a specific interest in the pensive figure.

In contrast with the material evidence available to us, surviving written sources offer no reference to a Buddha or a bodhisattva of this name. As scholars such as Zhiru and Yü Chün-fang have argued in their studies of Buddhist deity cults, however, popular understandings of the pantheon were determined not directly by the content of sutras,

35 The rubbing is held in the collection of Academia Sinica in Taipei: "Dong Huangtou deng qishiren zao Shijia beixiang bing Mile Wuliangshou Yaoshi Dingguang Siwei Doubao deng xiangji" 董黃頭等七十人造釋迦碑像并彌勒无量壽藥師定光思惟多寶等像記, *Union Catalog of Digital Archives Taiwan* 數位典藏聯合目錄, Dec. 26, 2008 <http://catalog.ndap.org.tw/?URN=1811863> .
The box framing the character *ding* indicates that it has been editorially inserted because the original (on the stone or rubbing) was illegible.

but by people's experiences of visual representations, oral traditions, and devotional practices.[36] During the early-sixth century, pensive bodhisattva images began to appear in increasingly diverse iconographic contexts. The inscriptional practice of identifying donors for individual iconographic elements on Buddhist steles and the custom of labeling the pensive image simply as *siwei xiang* 思惟像 combined to make it possible for some Buddhist believers to reinterpret these images as representations of a bodhisattva called Siwei.

It is not my intention here to argue that every pensive image from mid-sixth-century Hebei that cannot be definitively identified as a different Buddhist figure should be interpreted as "Siwei bodhisattva." Some pensive images were probably understood by donors, artisans, and viewers to be representations of the contemplating Prince Siddhārtha or Maitreya, since a number of them bear inscriptions identifying them as "Crown Prince" (*taizi* 太子) or Maitreya (*Mile* 彌勒).[37] However, the extent to which the pensive images were understood as representations of an independent deity called Siwei was probably much larger than contemporary scholarship has recognized. Full archaeological reports have not yet been published for a number of recent finds, but based on my fieldwork at various sites in Hebei, I estimate that a majority of sixth-century pensive images from central Hebei (around Dingzhou) are inscribed as *siwei* and were understood as images of Siwei bodhisattva, while images from southern Hebei (around the Ye metropolis) were more likely to be inscribed as *taizi* 太子 or *taizi siwei* 太子思惟, indicating that pensive images were probably more generally understood in southern Hebei as representations of Prince Siddhārtha.[38]

Whatever a quantitative analysis may eventually prove, the emergence of belief in a deity called Siwei is of immediate interest, because this is a rare instance in which we can catch a glimpse of the local historical processes involved in the formation of a belief in a new Bud-

36 Zhiru, *Dizang*; Yü, *Kuan-yin*.

37 Three inscriptions from Quyang identify the pensive statues as "*taizi siwei* 太子思惟," presumably referring to Prince Siddhārtha. For the statistics, see Feng, *Quyang*, p. 83. To date, there is one known pensive bodhisattva statue inscribed as "Mile 彌勒." The statue is on display in the Cangzhou Museum. The full inscription on the side of its base reads: "大齊天保八年歲次丁亥五月己丑朔十五日, 比丘僧慶敬造彌勒一區, 爲皇帝陛下、太皇太后、州郡令長、師僧父母, 僧... ." (I was unable to view or transcribe any text on the rear of the statue.) Lee Yu-min has proposed that pensive statues inscribed with the term "*longshu siwei* 龍樹思惟" should also be considered as images of Maitreya; see Lee Yu-min, "Nanbeichao Mile tuxiang yu xinyang" 南北朝彌勒圖像與信仰, *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 30.2 (2012), p. 38.

38 For recent archaeological discoveries including the pensive images from Linzhang, see He, "Cong Beiwuzhuang," pp. 76–87; idem, "Yecheng," pp. 88–93, pll. 12, 13, 14; idem, "Bei Qi longshu beikanshi," pp. 73–78.

dhist deity. The emergence of such a belief highlights the importance of the pensive image in Hebei Buddhism, and raises the question of the meanings of the term *siwei* in the Buddhism of this period.

THE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCES OF *SIWEI*

The term *siwei* was used in pre-Buddhist writings to refer to rational thought processes requiring a certain amount of education or instruction: reflecting, considering, reckoning, judging.[39] Buddhist translators built on this range of usage, adopting the term *siwei* to refer to various forms of mental and intellectual practices. One of the earliest Buddhist translators, An Shigao 安世高 (2d c. AD), used *siwei* to refer to the intellectual practice and mental training needed to make progress towards enlightenment.[40] A century later, Dharmarakṣa's (239–316) translation of the *Lotus Sutra* (286 AD) associated *siwei* with *chanding* 禪定 (meditative concentration) and *chansi* 禪思 (meditative contemplation).[41]

The work of later translators continued to strengthen the relationship between *siwei* and other Buddhist meditation practices. Faju 法炬 (fl. third to fourth cc.), who at one stage served as a scribe (*bishou* 筆受) in Dharmarakṣa's translation workshop, combined *siwei* with the idea of "tranquil concentration" (*jiding* 寂定), denoting a high level of mental state in meditation leading to enlightenment.[42] He also used *siwei* in conjunction with *zhiguan* 止觀, "cessation and observation":

> She performed the contemplation of cessation and observation and immediately attained the status of *luohan*. 思惟止觀即得羅漢[43]

The phrase *zhiguan* combines two characters referring to two different stages of meditation: *zhi* 止 (Skt. *śamatha*) indicates the "development of the ability to concentrate the mind on certain chosen subjects" and *guan* 觀 (Skt. *vipaśyanā*) refers to "the application of such concentrated awareness toward understanding of or insight into the realities of human existence and the religious truths of Buddhism."[44]

[39] The earliest occurrences of the term *siwei* are in Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2013) 56, p. 2512; 59, p. 2648; 69, p. 2982; 75, p. 3179.

[40] For the uses of *siwei* in *Foshuo shifa feifa jing* 佛說是法非法經 and *Foshuo da anban shouyi jing* 佛說大安般守意經, see T48.1.838c and T602.15.163c.

[41] For *siwei chanding* 思惟禪定, see T263.9.112a. For *chansi siwei* 禪思思惟, see T263.9.64a.

[42] T211.4.585a, "思惟寂定即得羅漢道."

[43] T211.4.576c.

[44] John Robert McRae, "The Northern School of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," Ph.D. diss. (Yale University, 1983), p. 15.

Another passage has to do with five monks who dwelt in the mountains and who were exhausted from their daily journeys to a city to beg for food. Faju's translation reads:

> They were so fatigued by the journey that they could not perform seated meditation, contemplation, or correct concentration. 往還疲極不堪坐禪思惟正定[45]

In this case, *siwei* is linked with "seated meditation" (*zuochan*) and "correct concentration" (*zhengding*). A comparison of these renderings shows that by the beginning of the fourth century, the term *siwei* was closely associated with the ideas, practice, and techniques of Buddhist meditation, especially *chan*, *zhiguan* and *ding*. Later translators continued to employ these established translations and interpretations.[46]

Around the beginning of the fifth century, Kumārajīva (fl. 401–413) wrote in his translation of the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Scripture* (Skt. *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*; Chin. *Dazhidu lun* 大智度論) referred to "*dhyāna*, called in Chinese 'contemplation practice' 禪, 秦言思惟修."[47] This passage explicitly shows Kumārajīva's understanding of the use of the term *siwei* in fifth-century China as a synonym of *chan*, the loanword from Sanskrit *dhyāna*, meaning meditation.

In some of Kumārajīva's translations, the term *siwei* acquired new meaning as a close synonym for *guan* 觀, a style of meditative practice that modern scholars conventionally describe as "visualization meditation."[48] An example of this innovative use of the term *siwei* occurs in his translation of a series of scriptures brought to China by Kashmiri meditation experts. One of the texts in this compilation, *Siwei lueyao fa* 思惟略要法 (*Concise Compendium on the Methods of Contemplation*), has ten sections, each bearing a title containing the character *guan*.[49] The content of this text provided guidance on concentrating

[45] T211.4.580B.

[46] Dharmakṣema 曇無讖 (385–433) inherited this usage and combined *siwei* with *ruding* 入定 ("entering concentration") in his translation (ca. 420) of *Beihua jing* 悲華經 (*Lotus of Compassion Sutra*) (T157.3.182C). For the possible date of translation of *Beihua jing*, see Jinhua Chen, "The Indian Buddhist Missionary Dharmakṣema (385–433): A New Dating of his Arrival in Guzang and of His Translations," *TP* 90.4–5 (2004), pp. 215–63.

[47] T1509.25.185B.

[48] Hsu, "Siwei Icon," pp. 25–26. Alexander Soper pointed out that "*Kuan* means a systematic building up of visual images... in a sequence from the simple towards the complex"; Alexander Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1959), p. 144. For a detailed analysis of the meanings of *guan* and a critique of the conventional English translation as "visualization," see Eric M. Greene, "Visions and Visualizations: In Fifth-century Chinese Buddhism and Nineteenth-century Experimental Psychology," *History of Religions* 55.3 (2016), pp. 289–328.

[49] T617.15.297C–300B. The ten section titles are "Si wuliang guanfa" 四無量觀法 ("Method of Visualizing the Four Immeasurable Minds"), "Bujing guanfa" 不淨觀法 ("Method of Visual-

one's thoughts, imagining the shape and colors of the Buddha's body, visualizing the decay of human bodies in order to realize the truth of mortality, and similar meditation techniques.[50] Kumārajīva's use of *siwei* as a synonym for *guan* indicates the increasing tendency for Buddhist meditation practices to be described in terms of *siwei*.

Kumārajīva's other translations of meditation scriptures use the term *siwei* with a variety of meanings: the creation and analysis of visual insight, the observation of Buddhist teachings and truths, or rational consideration, reckoning, and judging in general. In his *Zuochan sanmei jing* 坐禪三昧經 (*Sutra on the Samādhi of Seated Meditation*), *siwei* appears forty-seven times, referring to all types of mindful thinking.[51] In his *Chanmi yaofa jing* 禪祕要法經 (*Manual of the Secret Essentials of Meditation*), *siwei* appears forty times, in many cases in reference to visualization meditation.[52] Kumārajīva's elegant translations circulated widely and laid the foundations for the understanding of the doctrines and practices that later became associated with the "meditation school" (*Chan zong* 禪宗).[53]

Over the course of time, the meanings and associations of the term *siwei* were enriched through the activities of translators and other Buddhist writers. By the sixth century, readers should have been able

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izing the Filthy"), "Baigu guanfa" 白骨觀法 ("Method of Visualising Skeletons"), "Guanfo sanmei fa" 觀佛三昧法 ("Method of Visualizing the Samadhi of the Buddha"), "Shengshen guanfa" 生身觀法 ("Method of Visualizing the Physical Body of the Buddha"), "Fashen guanfa" 法身觀法 ("Method of Visualizing the Dharma Body of the Buddha"), "Shifang zhufo guanfa" 十方諸佛觀法 ("Method of Visualizing All Buddhas of the Ten Directions"), "Guan Wuliangshoufo fa" 觀無量壽佛法 ("Method of Visualizing the Wuliangshou Buddha"), "Zhufa shixiang guanfa" 諸法實相觀法 ("Method of Visualizing the True Marks of All Elemental Constructs"), and "Fahua sanmei guanfa" 法華三昧觀法 ("Method of Visualizing the Teaching of Samadhi in the Lotus Sutra"). For Kumārajīva's translation of Kashmiri meditative scriptures, see Chen Jinhua, "Meditation Traditions in Fifth-Century Northern China: With a Special Note on a Forgotten Kaśmiri Meditation Tradition Brought to China by Buddhabhadra (359–429)," in Tansen Sen, ed., *Buddhism Across Asia: Networks of Material, Intellectual and Cultural Exchange* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Singapore, 2014) 1, pp. 101–29.

50 The sutra is discussed in detail in Nobuyoshi Yamabe, "The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi of the Visualization of the Buddha: The Interfusion of the Chinese and Indian Cultures in Central Asia as Reflection in a Fifth Century Apocryphal Sutra," Ph.D. diss. (Yale University, 1999), pp. 84–100. Yamabe categorized *Siwei lueyao fa* as a meditation sutra that explains visualization techniques.

51 T614.15.269c–386a.

52 E.g., "今觀此身無一可愛. 如朽敗物. 作是思惟. 時諸骨人. 皆來逼己"; T613.15.250b.

53 Chen, "Meditation Traditions," pp. 101–29. John McRae, "Northern School," pp. 23–25. Kumārajīva's two prominent Chinese translation collaborators and disciples, Daosheng 道生 (355–434), and Sengzhao 僧肇 (384–415), are often mentioned as pioneers of the sudden and gradual enlightenment doctrines in the discussions of the meditation traditions; Whalen Lai, "Tao-sheng's Theory of Sudden Enlightenment Re-examined," in ed. Peter Gregory, ed., *Sudden and Gradual Enlightenment* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1987), pp. 169–200.

to take the term *siwei* as a nexus of several different ideas, all relating to intellectual and mental training for enlightenment. Even illiterate Buddhist followers probably had some exposure to the term through lectures or tutorials given by monks in the voluntarily organized Buddhist *yiyi* 義邑 societies to which they belonged.[54] The pensive statues therefore served not only as devotional images to which prayers might be directed, but also as reminders of the need to dedicate oneself to mental and intellectual practices.

BUDDHIST ASCETIC MEDITATION CULTURE IN SIXTH-CENTURY HEBEI

Hebei was a vital center for the development of Buddhist meditation practices during the sixth century. Among the six prominent groups that Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) discussed in his chapter on meditation practitioners, two, led respectively by Sengchou 僧稠 (480–560) and Huizan 慧瓚 (536–607), were centered on Dingzhou. A third group, led by Bodhidharma's (d. 536) disciple Huike 慧可 (487–593), advocated a different style of meditation practice, and was centered on Ye.[55] Yet although Daoxuan's account highlights the importance of Hebei as a center of meditation, it focuses on a small number of prominent monks and does not reflect the religious life of ordinary monks and nuns. By paying attention to the surviving material evidence, in particular the inscriptional and iconographic evidence of pensive bodhisattva images, we can gain access to complementary perspectives that yield a deeper understanding of the religious beliefs and practices associated with meditation.

Inscriptions on statues from the Xiude Temple in Quyang, the site of the largest findings of Buddhist sculptures from Dingzhou, re-

[54] For the roles of the *yiyi* organizations in society, see Liu Shufen, "Cibei xishe: zhonggu shiqi Fojiaotu de shehui fuli shiye" 慈悲喜捨, 中古時期佛教徒的社會福利事業, in idem, *Zhonggu de Fojiao yu shehui*, pp. 168–79; idem, "Zhonggu Fojiao zhengce yu sheyi de zhuanxing" 中古佛政策與社邑的轉型, *Tang yanjiu* 唐研究 13 (2007), pp. 233–91; Hao Chunwen 郝春文, "Dong Jin Nanbeichao shiqi de Fojiao jieshe" 東晉南北朝時期的佛教結社, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 1 (1992), pp. 90–105.

[55] For the discussion of the meditation groups, see Chen Jinhua, *Monks and Monarchs, Kinship and Kingship: Tanqian in Sui Buddhism and Politics* (Kyoto: Scuola Italiana di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 2002), pp. 149–79; idem, "An Alternative View of the Meditation Tradition in China: Meditation in the Life and Works of Daoxuan (596–667)," *TP* 88.4–5 (2002), pp. 345–67. Wendi Adamek contends that Chen Jinhua overemphasizes the rivalry between the camps centered on Sengchou and the Bodhidharma-Huike lineage; Wendi Adamek, *The Mystique of Transmission: On an Early Chan History and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2007), pp. 141–45. Eric M. Greene suggests that Daoxuan presented Sengchou's and Bodhidharma's meditation methods as complementary; Eric M. Greene, "Another Look at Early Chan: Daoxuan, Bodhidharma, and the Three Levels Movement," *TP* 94.1–3 (2008), pp. 50–78.

veal that monastic sponsorship showed greater interest in the pensive statues than did lay patronage in the mid-sixth century. Among the 176 inscribed Buddhist statues, dating from the Northern Wei to the demise of the Northern Qi, 34 had monks or nuns as sponsors. The dates associated with pensive bodhisattva images sponsored by monks and nuns span the period 539–564. Although no inscriptions from the Xiude Temple indicate monastic sponsorship of pensive bodhisattva images after 564, other inscriptions demonstrate that the pensive bodhisattva image remained popular among lay disciples well into the Sui dynasty. The statistics presented in table 2 suggest that during this period, Avalokiteśvara enjoyed unmatched popularity among lay Buddhists, whereas monks and nuns showed a greater interest in sponsoring images of the pensive bodhisattva. The desires expressed in the inscriptions on the Avalokiteśvara statues frequently record that the image was commissioned with a view to gaining this-worldly desires, such as physical health and longevity, relief from illness, or safe return home from military service.[56] But the expression of such desires is entirely absent from inscriptions on pensive statues.

Table 2. Sponsorship of Inscribed Buddhist Statues from the Xiude Temple, Quyang, 539–564[57]

	MONASTIC SPONSORSHIP		LAY SPONSORSHIP	
Pensive Bodhisattva	8	38%	19	22%
siwei	(5)		(8)	
longshu siwei[58]	(1)		(2)	
taizi	(0)		(3)	
taizi siwei	(0)		(1)	
unspecified	(2)		(5)	
Avalokiteśvara	7	33%	55	63%
Buddha	6	29%	12	14%
Other	0	0%	2	2%
Total	21	100%	88	100%

[56] For the inscriptions on Avalokiteśvara statues, see Feng, *Quyang*, pp. 188, 164, 151–52, 173.

[57] The source of the inscriptions: Feng, *Quyang*, pp. 141–218. Statues dated after the Northern Zhou suppression of Buddhism are not included here. Statues whose sponsors included both monastic and lay patrons are counted in the monastic group.

[58] The correct interpretation of the phrase *longshu siwei* in these inscriptions has been the subject of extensive but inconclusive debate. See Mizuno, "Hanka shiyui zō," p. 247; Sasaguchi, "Contemplating Bodhisattva," pp. 104–26; Lee Yu-min, "Banjia siwei xiang," p. 52;

Since the statistics suggest that the pensive bodhisattva statues were popular among monks and nuns and that the term *siwei* refers to a group of meanings relating to monastic practices, in particular meditation, we can set this inscriptional evidence in relation to the local meditation culture described by Daoxuan. During this period, the most influential meditation master was Sengchou, active in Dingzhou during the Eastern Wei and in the Ye metropolis during the Northern Qi.[59] Sengchou entered the monastic order in Dingzhou (ca. 508), studied meditation in Zhaozhou 趙州 (between Dingzhou and Ye), traveled to Henan to further his learning under the Indian meditation master Bhadra (Chin. Batuo 跋陀; dates unknown). At their very short, first encounter, Bhadra commented that Sengchou's meditation achievement was the best in China. After his studies with Bhadra and a period of travel in Henan, Sengchou returned to Dingzhou in the 530s and lived there until he was summoned to Ye by emperor Wenxuan 文宣帝 (Gao Yang 高洋; r. 550–559) in 551. During his two decades in Dingzhou, Sengchou traveled and resided at various places in the mountains for meditation but also propagated the benefits of meditation to lay people, preaching basic doctrines and precepts such as the observance of a vegetarian diet.

After his move to the capital, Sengchou became the emperor's meditation mentor and continued his own practice of meditation. Compared with the meditation methods propagated by the Bodhidharma-Huike lineage, which emphasized the concept of "emptiness," Sengchou's meditation methods were easier to grasp.[60] For this reason, his meditation methods became very popular throughout Hebei during the Northern Qi. According to Daoxuan, Sengchou's instruction of the

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Junghee Lee, "Pensive Bodhisattva," p. 343; Hsu, "Siwei Icon," p. 21; Lee Yu-min, "Nanbeichao Mile," p. 38.

59 For Sengchou's biography, see Daoxuan's account in *Xu gaosengzhuan* 續高僧傳, T2060.50.553B–56A, and Eileen Hsiang-Ling Hsu, "The Sengchou Cave and Early Imagery of Sukhāvatī," *Artibus Asiae* 71.2 (2011), pp. 283–91. For discussion and evaluation of Sengchou's meditation, see John Robert McRae, "Northern School," p. 34; Jan Yün-hua 冉雲華, "Zhongguo zaoqi chanfa de liuchuan he tedian: Huijiao Daoxuan suozhu Xichanpian yanjiu" 中國早期禪法的流傳和特點, 慧皎、道宣所著習禪篇研究, *Hua-Kang Buddhist Journal* 7 (1984), pp. 63–99; idem, "Seng-ch'ou's Method of Dhyāna," in Lewis Lancaster and Whalen Lai, eds., *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1983), pp. 51–63.

60 Modern scholars generally agree that Sengchou's techniques were based on the meditation tradition that started from visualizing or observing the filthiness of the body and proceeded to awareness of the feelings of suffering, the impermanence of the mind, and the reality of non-self (*sinienchu* 四念處; Skt. *catuḥ-smṛty-upasthāna*). McRae, "Northern School," pp. 45–46; Yen Chuan-ying 顏娟英, "Bei Qi changuanku de tuxiangkao: cong Xiaonanhai shiku dao Xiangtangshan shiku" 北齊禪觀窟的圖像考, 從小南海石窟到響堂山石窟, *THGH* 70 (1998), pp. 398–99, 429–30.

emperor Wenxuan rapidly led him to experience "deep concentration" (*shending* 深定) and inspired his establishment of meditation workshops (*chansi* 禪肆) around the country with adept meditation practitioners as instructors.[61] Moreover, the emperor took the bodhisattva precepts under Sengchou's supervision, compassionately ordering the release of hawks kept in the imperial park for hunting and abolishing the unnecessary killing of animals.

After forty days in the palace with the emperor, Sengchou asked for permission to return to the mountains in Dingzhou. Instead, the emperor sought to keep Sengchou close to him by erecting the Yunmen Temple 雲門寺 to house him and asking him to take charge of imperial cave-temples. Despite this imperial patronage, Sengchou probably maintained a lifestyle similar to the one he had previously kept in Dingzhou, practicing meditation in a cave in the mountains.[62]

After Sengchou left for Ye, the eminent vinaya and meditation master Huizan remained in Dingzhou until 577, but fled to the south during the suppression of Buddhism under the Northern Zhou regime.[63] After the revival of Buddhism under the Sui, he returned to Dingzhou and gathered two hundred monks and lay followers to practice meditation in the Fenglong Mountains 封龍山 (near modern Shijiazhuang 石家莊), studied sutras and precepts, and observed extreme asceticism of *toutuo* 頭陀 (Skt. *dhūta*) and *lanruo* 蘭若 (Skt. *araṇya*), possibly involving begging for food, eating only one meal a day before noon, residing beside graves or in the wilderness, and sitting under a tree or in a cave rather than under a roof.[64] His success in attracting so many followers from the areas around Dingzhou after the Zhou suppression hints at the resilience of this region's culture of ascetic meditation.

61 For discussion about the meditation workshops, see McRae, "Northern School," pp. 46–47.

62 An inscription at a meditation cave (L 1.19m, W 1.34m, H 1.78m), the middle grotto of the the Xiaonanhai Cave-temples 小南海石窟, indicates that Sengchou refurbished the cave in 555. For the size and the date of the cave, see Yen, "Bei Qi Changuanku," pp. 379, 396. In 2017, archaeologists investigated a cave at Baituzhen 白土鎮 in Cixian 磁縣, fifty kilometers west of Ye. They discovered an inscription of a "Commemoration Record of the Refurbishment of the Chou Meditation Monastery" (*Chongxiu Chou chansi ji* 重修稠禪寺記), dated 1183. The cave is high up on the cliff, facing south and overlooking the beautiful landscape of the Zhang River 漳河 and its surroundings. The inscription relates that for hundreds of years the site had been a base of meditation for Sengchou's lineage. The cave was possibly one of Sengchou's bases in the Ye metropolis. (Personal communication from He Liqun; November 8–10, 2018.)

63 For discussion of Huizan, see Jan, "Zhongguo zaoqi chanfa de liuchuan he tedian," p. 89; Chen, "Alternative View," pp. 358–60.

64 For Huizan's asceticism, see T2060.50.575A. For *lanruo* asceticism, see T2060.50.558C, T2060.50.575A.

In both *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 and *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, monks categorized as meditation practitioners often dwelt as hermits in solitary places in the wilderness and practiced meditation "under trees" (*shuxia* 樹下), in "rock chambers" (*shishi* 石室), or in "cliff caves" (*yanxue* 巖穴).[65] By distancing themselves from the secular world and living in the wilderness, these monks sought a secluded environment to allow for the concentration and austerity needed to refine their minds. Nevertheless, the hagiographies also record that when these monks reached a certain level of achievement they would, out of compassion for all sentient beings, begin to guide fellow practitioners or return to society to instruct lay followers in the way of meditation, explain Buddhist teachings, or participate in charitable activities.[66]

A number of such monks who moved between periods of solitary meditation and social interactions were active in Dingzhou and its adjacent areas. Like Sengchou, they alternated between periods of isolated ascetic meditation and periods of more active social interaction in which they gave lectures on Buddhist teachings and led *yiyi* organizations in their collective rituals and image-making activities.[67] Zhishun 智舜 (532–604), a monk from Zhaozhou, spent long years in the mountains around modern Shijiazhuang. He avoided handling money but organized charity activities during the spring and autumn and concentrated on meditation in the forest during the summer and winter.[68] Daozheng 道正, a monk from Cangzhou 滄州, approximately 120 kilometers from Dingzhou, dwelt in the forest without a fixed abode and begged for food in a neighboring village. Although he isolated himself from society, he responded to questions posed by fellow practitioners and lay Buddhists and participated in lectures on scriptures.[69] Liu Shufen 劉淑芬 has argued that these types of monks were the most important actors in the propagation of Buddhism outside major urban centers during the fifth and sixth centuries.

65 For ascetic monks dwelling or meditating under trees, see T2060.50.568A, T2060.50.661C, T2059.50.399C, T2059.50.389C, T2059.50.400A. For reference to rock chambers, see T2059.50.395C, T2059.50.396C, T2059.50.400B. For reference to cliff caves, see T2059.50.399A, T2060.50.550B.

66 Xu Yanling 徐燕玲, *Huijiao Gaosengzhuan ji qi fenke zhi yanjiu* 慧皎高僧傳及其分科之研究 (Taipei: Huamulan, 2006), pp. 159–61. John Kieschnick pointed out that in the hagiographic descriptions the isolation of the life of ascetic monks was exaggerated to differentiate monastic from lay lifestyles; Kieschnick, *Eminent Monk*, pp. 34–35.

67 Liu, "Zhongguo zhuanshu jingdian," pp. 145–67.

68 T2060.50.569C–70B.

69 T2060.50.558C–59A.

Direct evidence of an association between this culture of ascetic meditation and the pensive bodhisattva can be found in the images of meditating monks in caves or under trees that we see on a number of pensive bodhisattva statues (figures 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21). Although images of meditating monks also are found in a number of caves at Yungang and steles from Henan, on extant independent sculptures from Hebei they appear only on Buddha and pensive bodhisattva statues. The meditating monks in these images are uniformly depicted covering their heads and bodies with robes to protect themselves from insect bites and to keep them warm in caves. Mountains and trees are often carved around the caves to suggest a secluded natural environment (figures 16, 23, 25, 29), reminiscent of the types of meditation sites preferred by many of the practitioners described above. One possible interpretation of these figures is that they represented the preceptor monks (*shi seng* 師僧) or instructors of *yiyi* organizations (*yi shi* 邑師) who advocated meditation over other Buddhist practices such as the recitation or translation of sutras. However, because of the absence of inscriptions on these statues, it is unclear whether these figures represented individual monks who had sponsored the carving of these statues or whether they represented an idealized ascetic lifestyle admired by the images' sponsors.

In other examples, although the pensive bodhisattva does not play the primary role, the iconographic designs show explicit connections between the meditating monks, the pensive bodhisattva, and the Western Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha. A statue of Amitâbha Buddha excavated from Linzhang, dated by inscription to 555, has a pensive bodhisattva painted on the reverse of the mandorla, with three monks or nuns depicted standing in front of him (figures 22, 23). Below the pensive bodhisattva are carvings of three meditating monks seated in mountain caves. The inscription identifies the donor as a woman Lu 陸 who commissioned the statue for her late husband Zhangsun Jian 長孫柬; no monks or nuns are mentioned. Another statue from Hebei dated to the Northern Qi, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, has a similar iconographic scheme: a standing Buddha flanked by attendants, with a pensive bodhisattva carved in relief on the rear of the mandorla (figures 24, 25). The base of the sculpture on which the inscription would have been carved has been lost, but the iconographic parallels with the Linzhang example suggest that the Buddha on the front was also intended to represent Amitâbha.

As Hou Xudong and Kuramoto Shōtoku 倉本尙德 have pointed out, Hebei was an especially significant site for the rise of the belief in

the Western Pure Land. Hebei had a longer tradition of Western Pure Land than other parts of northern China, and sixth-century meditation monks (*chanshi* 禪師) in Hebei were important advocates for Western Pure Land beliefs.[70] The frequent depiction of reborn beings on pensive bodhisattva statues provides further support for the hypothesis that the enthusiasm for the pensive deity in sixth-century Hebei was sometimes linked to the desires for rebirth in the Western Pure Land.[71] These reborn beings, portrayed in the form of children, are most commonly seen on the mandorlas of statues depicting Buddhas or pensive bodhisattvas (figures 22, 26), but are rarely seen on Avalokiteśvara statues from Hebei. According to *Foshuo guan Wuliangshuofo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經, a guide to the visualization of Amitāyus (another name for Amitābha) and his paradise, souls of the deceased could enter the Pure Land of the West by means of nine levels of rebirth from a lotus bud in the Pond of Seven Treasures (*qibao chi* 七寶池).[72] This conception of the Pure Land held particular significance for Sengchou, as can be seen from the iconographic scheme of the middle grotto of the Xiaonanhai Cave-Temples, refurbished by Sengchou in 555: whereas the eastern wall of this grotto carried images of Śākyamuni's first sermon in the Deer Park and Maitreya in his Tuṣita Heaven, the western wall was adorned with the earliest known depiction of the nine levels of rebirth in the Pure Land of the West.[73] In the meditation culture of sixth-century Hebei within which Sengchou was one of the most prominent practitioners, the Pure Land of the West was apparently regarded as having importance equal to Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven. The meditation practitioners associated with Sengchou thus thought of the Pure Land of the West as an ideal future abode and believed that their practice of visualization meditation could enable them to reach it.

Although the reborn beings typically appear as a minor iconographic motif on steles or in cave-temples, in some cases they are given greater prominence. A pensive bodhisattva statue now in the Hebei Museum, unearthed at Quyang and dated to 554, has two unusually large reborn beings flanking the central pensive figure (figure 27). Another pensive bodhisattva statue, dated to the Northern Qi and now

[70] Kuramoto Shōtoku, *Hokuchō Bukkyō zōzōmei kenkyū* 北朝仏教造像銘研究 (Kyoto: Hossōkan, 2016), pp. 508–10. Hou, *Wuliu shiji beifang minzhong*, p. 181.

[71] For the rise of Pure Land beliefs in 6th-c. northern China, see Hou, ibid., pp. 189–90; Kuramoto, *Hokuchō Bukkyō*, pp. 472–544.

[72] T365.12.344C–46B.

[73] Yen Chuan-ying, "Bei Qi Xiaonanhai shiku yu Sengchou" 北齊小南海石窟與僧稠, in Shi Hengqing 釋恆清, ed., *Fojiao sixiang de chuancheng yu fazhan* 佛教思想的傳承與發展 (Taipei: Dongda, 1995), pp. 561–75; Yen, "Bei Qi Changuanku," pp. 386–89; Eileen Hsu, "Sengchou Cave," pp. 309–12.

in the Freer Gallery, has an elaborate tableau carved on its base, in which several reborn beings are shown emerging from lotus buds in the pond (figures 28, 30).[74] The rear of this base also depicts two meditating monks seated in caves (figure 29), confirming the connection between the pensive bodhisattva image, *lanruo* asceticism, meditation, and Pure Land beliefs.

The Zhai Xingzu stele discussed above provides further evidence for the connection between meditation, Pure Land beliefs and the pensive bodhisattva images. On the rear of this stele, a reborn being and a meditating monk are carved on either side of a central Buddha figure (figure 31). An inscription names the donor of the image of the reborn being (*huasheng zhu* 化生主) as Song Laode, the same individual named as the donor for one of the pensive bodhisattva images on the front of the stele. Since Buddhist patrons presumably preferred to sponsor images with religious meanings that held personal significance, this stele hints at a connection between Pure Land beliefs and the pensive bodhisattva figure in the region of Luoyang dating back to the early 520s.

Even for statues that lack visual depictions of reborn beings, the language of the inscriptions, especially those for monks and nuns, often includes phrases referring to aspirations towards rebirth in the Pure Land. The inscription for the nun Huizhao, for example, mentions "ascending together to [the realm of] bliss and happiness 同昇妙樂" (see table 1). The inscription for the monk Falian 法練 specifically mentions the "Western Land of Sublime Bliss 先[西]方妙洛[樂]國土."[75] These inscriptions do not always specify a particular Buddhist paradise, but phrases such as *jingmiao guotu* 淨妙國土 (the realm of purity and sublimity) and *qingguo* 清國 (pure kingdom), *jingyu* 淨域 (pure realm), *jingtu* 淨土 (Pure Land), *bi'an* 彼岸 (the other shore), and *xifang* 西方 (the West) recurred in Amitāyus-related scriptures and treatises, where they most likely referred to the Pure Land of the West.[76] These terms scarcely appear in fifth-century inscriptions from Hebei, when Maitreya's Tuṣita Heaven was the most prominent subject of Pure Land beliefs.[77] But the iconographic and inscriptional evidence, when taken together, suggests that by the sixth century the pensive bodhisattva

74 Denise Leidy noted the reborn beings on the front side of the base; Leidy, "Ssu-Wei Figure," p. 24.

75 Feng, *Quyang*, p. 196.

76 Feng, *Quyang*, pp. 152 (*jingmiao guotu*), 159 (*jingyu*), 198 (*jingtu*). For *qingguo*, see Zheng, "Tangxian," p. 22. For *bi'an*, see Matsubara, *Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkoku shiron honbunhen*, p. 307; Feng, *Quyang*, p. 245. For *xifang*, see Cheng, "Gaocheng xian," p. 244.

77 For fifth-century inscriptions from Hebei, see Lee Yu-min, "Hebei zaoqi de fojiao zaoxiang: Shiliuguo he Bei Wei shiqi" 河北早期的佛教造像, 十六國和北魏時期, *The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly* 11.4 (1994), pp. 42–63.

image had become commonly associated with meditational practices directed towards rebirth in the Pure Land of the West.

The motives of the monastic and lay donors who commissioned statues of the pensive bodhisattva were complex and manifold, including devotion to the deity, creation of religious merit for the donor, their family members and ancestors, and prayers for rebirth in a Pure Land. However, the apparent enthusiasm for the pensive bodhisattva image among monastic donors suggests it had a distinctive role in the Buddhist culture of sixth-century Hebei setting it apart from other types of Buddhist imagery. The figure's contemplative posture suggested the processes of introspective reflection needed to make progress along the individual path towards enlightenment; at the same time, its status as a bodhisattva implied a willingness and ability to provide assistance to other sentient beings. More than any other Buddhist icon, therefore, the image of the pensive bodhisattva illustrated in a single figure both pursuit of solitary meditation and compassionate engagement with the world, the two potentially contradictory Buddhist ideals that many monks and nuns of sixth-century Hebei sought to reconcile through the practices they adopted in their own lives.

CONCLUSION

Ascetic meditation was one of the ideals that had been present in Buddhism since the time of Śākyamuni, but the realizations of this ideal in both practice and imaginative representation across time and space were diverse. Our understanding of the early history of Buddhist meditation in China has been profoundly shaped by the transmitted textual record, from canonical treatises on meditation to the accounts of meditation masters in the hagiographies of Huijiao and Daoxuan. But this textual record has preserved only a tiny sample of the variety in the history of Chinese meditation culture. Canonical ideas could serve to inspire local practices, but very few of these local practices entered into the canonical tradition, and many were quickly forgotten.

The Buddhist meditation culture of sixth-century Hebei that took the pensive bodhisattva as its icon is one of these forgotten traditions in the history of Buddhism, and the surviving textual evidence allows us little more than a glimpse of its existence. Daoxuan's hagiographies hint at the importance of the Hebei region as a center of Buddhist meditation, but yield few insights into the distinctive ideas and practices that developed in this region, especially among the majority of ordinary monks and nuns who were insufficiently eminent to merit hagiog-

raphies of their own. By supplementing Daoxuan's accounts with the epigraphic evidence from inscriptions on pensive bodhisattva statues, however, we see that these monks and nuns (and perhaps also the lay Buddhists with whom they associated) found the pensive bodhisattva particularly appealing as an image that captured their notions of Buddhist meditation and Buddhist religion as a whole.

From this alternative type of evidence, we see that the association between the image of the pensive bodhisattva and the monastic meditation culture of sixth-century Hebei developed through the conjunction of a number of contingent factors: iconographic experimentation with pensive bodhisattva imagery by northern Chinese artisans at various sites from the fifth century onwards, the custom of referring to the image as *siwei xiang* and the association of the term *siwei* with a variety of forms of Buddhist mental practice, and the rapid growth of Hebei as a center for Buddhist meditation through the influence of eminent monks who practiced and taught with imperial support.

In one sense, this culture was short lived. Buddhism was soon suppressed under the Northern Zhou. When it flourished again under the Sui, with lavish patronage from emperor Wen 文帝, renewed imperial support did not simply restore Buddhism as it had been prior to the Northern Zhou suppression, but rather involved deliberate efforts towards religious standardization and unification across the newly formed empire. The Sui emperors Wen and Yang 煬帝 recruited meditation masters from across their empire to a new meditation center in the capital Daxing 大興 (later Chang'an).[78] The spatial heterogeneity that had allowed a distinctive regional culture of ascetic meditation to flourish in sixth-century Hebei was replaced by a greater uniformity of Buddhist ideas and practices. The transfer of monks from places such as Dingzhou to the new imperial center also disrupted the networks of social interactions between monks and lay followers that had been the essential basis for the sixth-century meditation culture of Hebei. Despite the importance of Hebei meditation masters in the Buddhist culture of the Sui capital, the use of the pensive bodhisattva figure as an icon of meditation was quickly marginalized. Under the Tang dynasty, when the meditation practices in the style of Bodhidharma's lineage rose to a dominant position, the significance that the pensive bodhisattva had once held for Hebei Buddhists was forgotten altogether.

[78] Chen, *Monks and Monarchs,* pp. 181–211.

But although the specific meanings that Hebei patrons attributed to the pensive bodhisattva image—in particular, the idea that this image represented an independent deity called Siwei—did not survive into the Tang dynasty, their enthusiastic sponsorship of this image proved a source of inspiration for later Buddhists in other regions of East Asia. The celebrated Korean and Japanese pensive bodhisattva statues, although most likely intended as images of Maitreya rather than of Prince Siddhārtha or Siwei, contain iconographic details that suggest that the artisans who carved them drew directly or indirectly on Hebei examples. Thus, even as the meditation culture of sixth-century Hebei eventually dwindled in significance, the visual image of this culture nevertheless survived through its susceptibility to reinterpretation and reappropriation in different religious contexts.

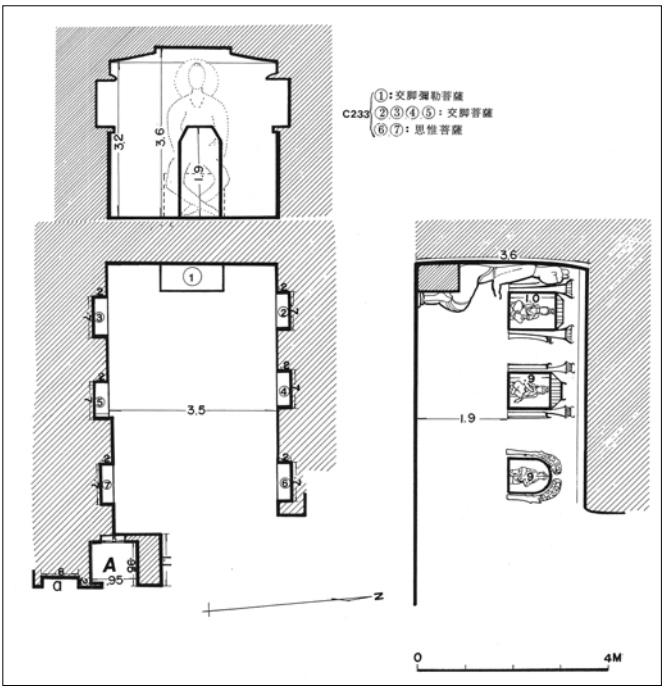

Figure 3. Plan and Sections of Mogao Cave 275

The pensive figures are in the positions marked ❻ *and* ❼*. Adapted from Shi Zhangru* 石璋如*, ed.,* Mogaokuxing 莫高窟形 *(Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 1986) 2, fig. 195.*

Figure 4. Niche of Cross-Legged Maitreya, Yungang Cave 5
Flanked by a pair of pensive bodhisattvas. Photograph by Li-kuei Chien.

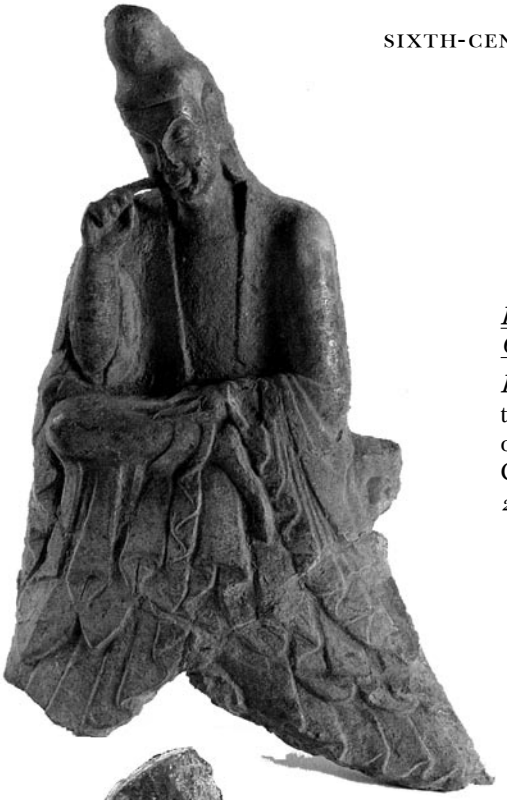

Figure 5. Pensive Buddha; Originally in Guyang Cave, Longmen

From Jan Van Alphen, ed., The Buddha in the Dragon Gate: Buddhist Sculptures of the 5th-9th Centuries from Longmen, China *(Antwerp: Etnografisch Museum, 2001), p. 101.*

Figure 6. Cross-Legged Pensive Bodhisattva; Originally in Guyang Cave, Longmen

From Van Alphen Buddha in the Dragon Gate, *p. 103.*

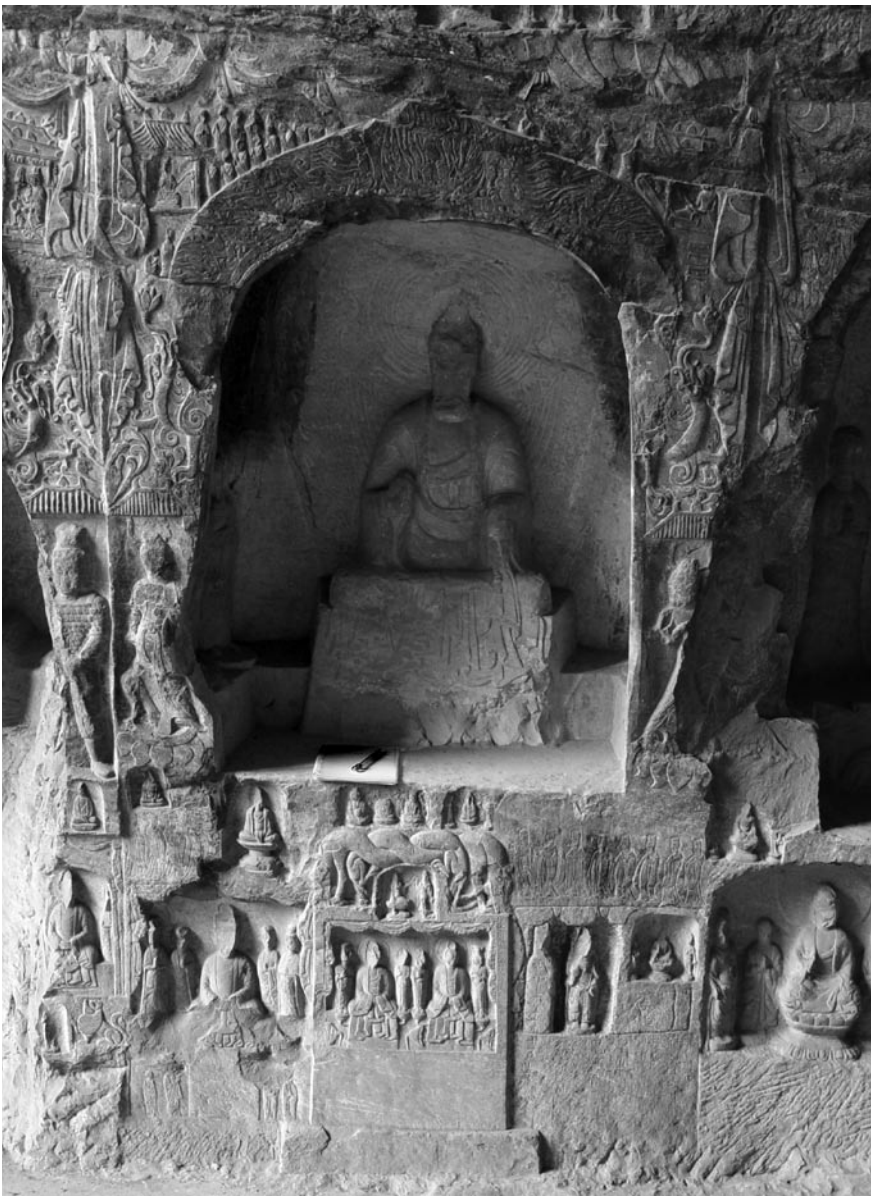

Figure 7. Niche 41, South Wall of Lotus Cave, Longmen
Photograph by Li-kuei Chien.

Figure 8. Pensive Bodhisattva in Niche 41, Lotus Cave, Longmen

This image is the ink-darkened area in the left part of the rear niche wall of fig. 7 (viewer's left). The ink had been rubbed on in order to make the images. Liu Jinglong, Lianhuadong: Longmen shiku di 712 ku *(full citn. n. 17, above), fig. 59.*

Figure 9. Pensive Bodhisattva in Niche 41, Lotus Cave, Longmen

Ink-darkened area in the right part of the rear niche wall (viewer's right). Liu, Lianhuadong, *fig. 59.*

Figure 10. Niche 20, North Wall of the Weizi Cave, Longmen
Photograph by Li-kuei Chien.

Figure 11. Pensive Bodhisattva Image; Arch of Niche 20, Weizi Cave, Longmen
See fig. 10. This image is on viewer's left, above the standing smaller, defaced, figure. Photograph by Li-kuei Chien.

Figure 12. Pensive Bodhisattva Image: Arch of Niche 20, Weizi Cave, Longmen
This image is on viewer's right, above the standing smaller, intact, figure. Photograph by Li-kuei Chien.

Figure 13. Pensive Bodhisattva Image, Huoshao Cave, Longmen
On the arch of Niche 16, west wall. Photograph by Li-kuei Chien.

Figure 14. Pensive Bodhisattva Triad, Hebei

Hamamatsu Municipal Museum of Art. Matsubara, Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkoku shiron *2, pl. 396a.*

Figure 15. Pensive Bodhisattva Pentad, Hebei

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Matsubara, Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkoku shiron *2, pl. 393b.*

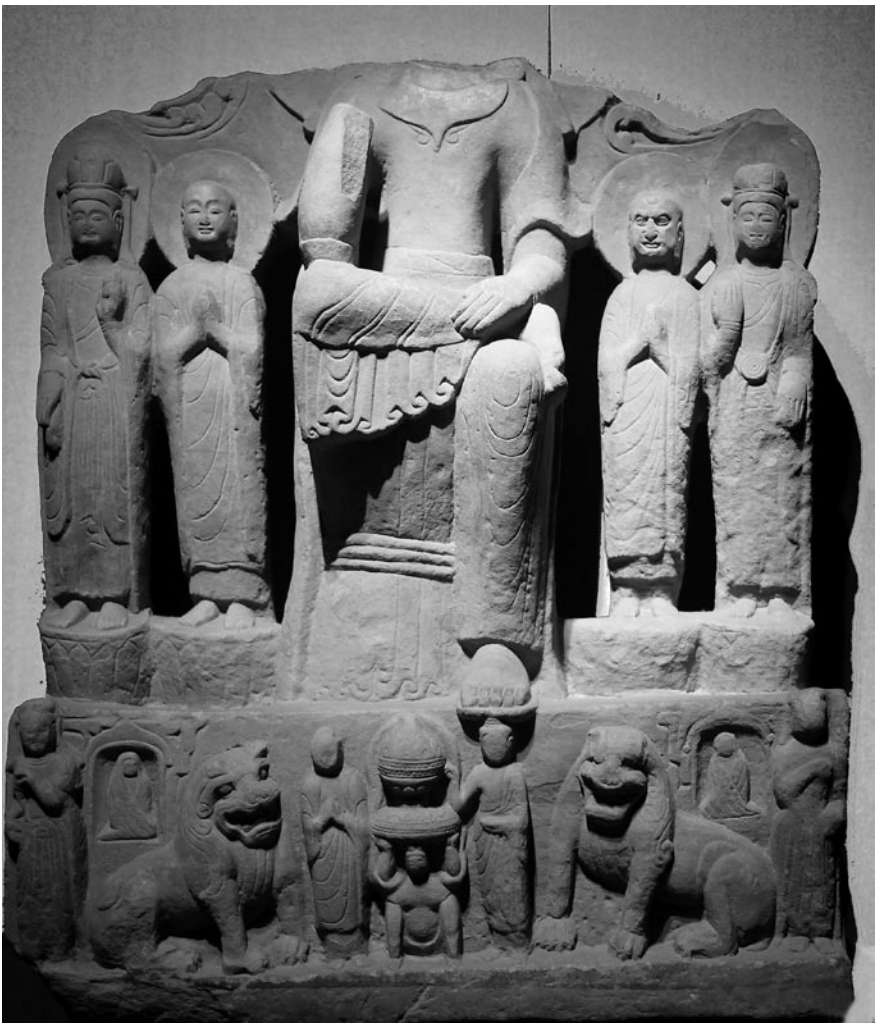

Figure 16. Pensive Bodhisattva Pentad, Hebei

On the base are two monks meditating in mountain caves. Shanghai Museum. Photograph by Li-kuei Chien.

Figure 17. Pensive Bodhisattva Triad, 559 AD, Hebei

On the base are two monks meditating in caves. Private collection in Japan. Jin, Zhongguo lidai Foxiang jinan tudian *(full citation, n. 14, above), fig. 202.*

Figure 18. Pensive Bodhisattva Statue, Northern Qi Era

Matsubara, Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkoku shiron *2, pl. 426a.*

Figure 19. Rear View of Fig. 18

Matsubara, Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkoku shiron *2, pl. 426b.*

Figure 20. Pensive Bodhisattva Statue, 565 AD

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1913.27.

Figure 21. Rear View of Fig. 20

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1913.27.

Figure 22. Statue of Amitābha, 555 AD

Courtesy of the Joint Ye City Archeological Team of the Institute of Archeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Research Institute of Cultural Relics of Hebei Province.

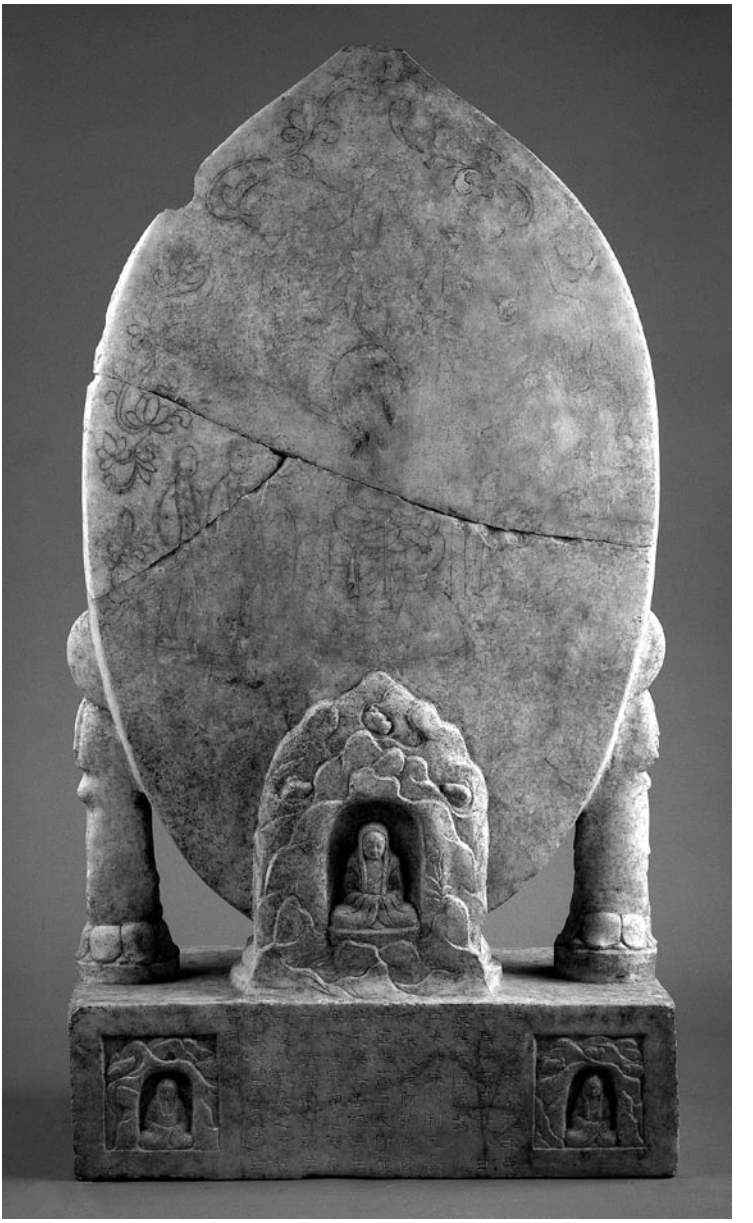

Figure 23. Rear View of Fig. 22

Courtesy of the Joint Ye City Archeological Team of the Institute of Archeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Research Institute of Cultural Relics of Hebei Province.

Figure 24. Buddha Statue, Northern Qi Era
Courtesy of Eskenazi Limited, London (now in the Cleveland Museum of Art).

Figure 25. Rear View of Fig. 24
Courtesy of Eskenazi Limited, London.

Figure 26. Pensive Bodhisattva Statue, Quyang, Hebei

On the extant mandorla is a reborn shown on a lotus. From Hu Guoqiang 胡國強, Gugong buowuyuan cangpin daxi diaosupian, VII 故宮博物院藏品大系雕塑篇七 *(Beijing: Zijinchang, 2011), pl. 150.*

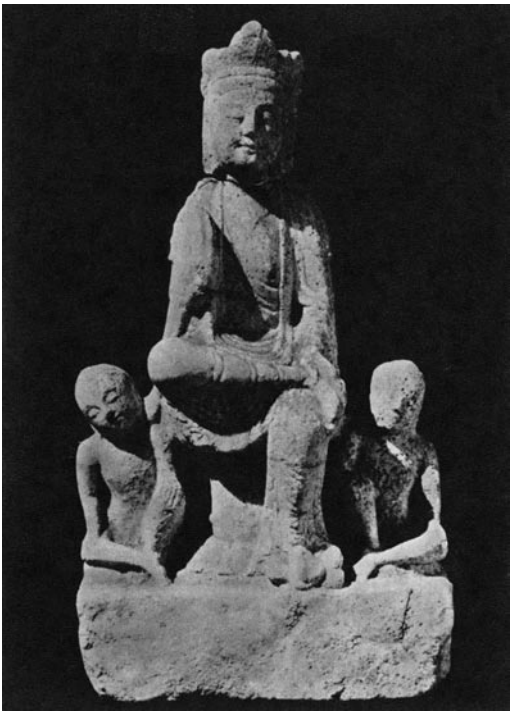

Figure 27. Pensive Bodhisattva, 554 AD

The pensive figure is flanked by two large reborn beings. From Shao Chuangu 邵傳谷, *ed.,* Zhongguo diaosushi tulu 中國雕塑史圖錄 *(Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 1987) 2, fig. 888.*

Figure 28. Pensive Statue, Hebei

On the front of the base are two reborn beings in the form of children. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1911.411.

Figure 29. Rear View of Fig. 28

Two meditating monks in mountain caves are carved on the base. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1911.411.

Figure 30. Right Side of Base of Fig. 28

Four reborn beings are carved on the base. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1911.411 (detail).

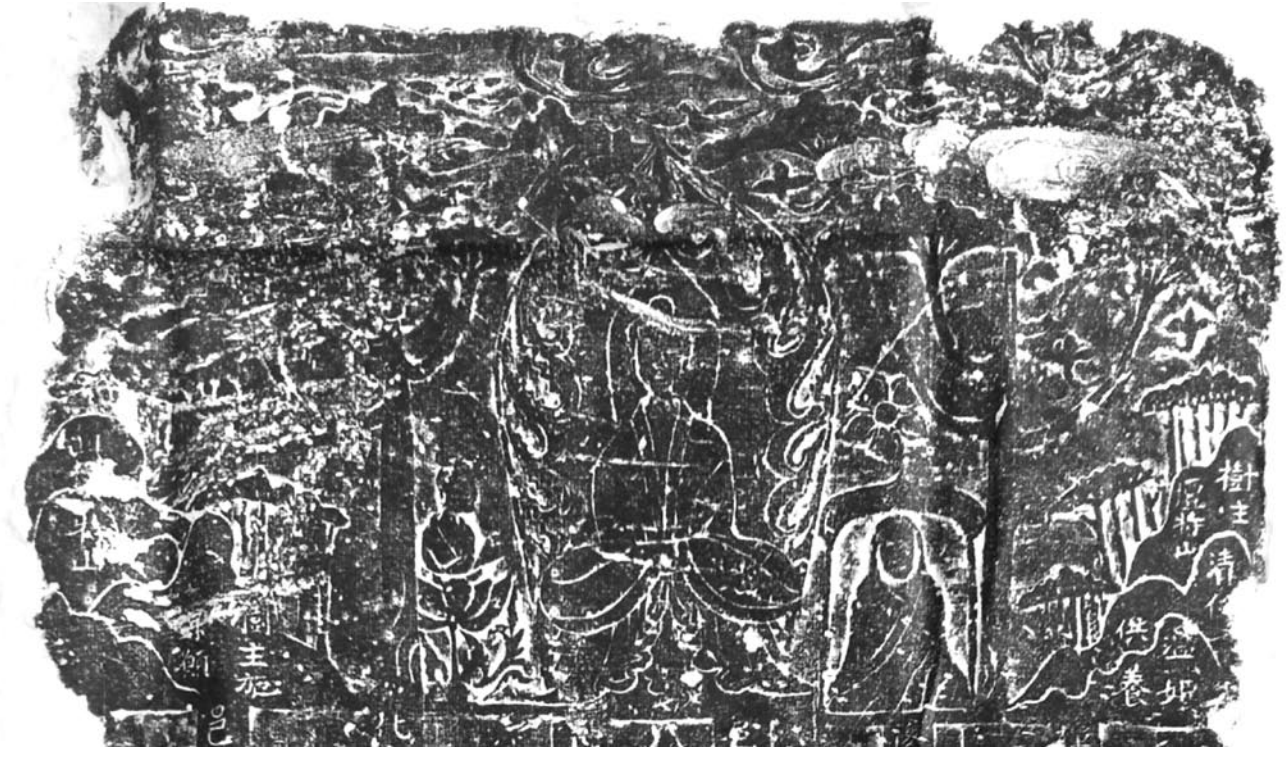

Figure 31. Primary Icon on Rear Side of Zhai Xingzu Stele, 523 AD

"Bei Wei Zhai Xingzu zaoxiangbei taben" 北魏翟兴祖造像碑拓本, *Kongfuzi jiushuwang* 孔夫子舊書網, *Jan. 12, 2019.* <*http://mbook.kongfz.com/256181/862118701*>