

Housing Maitreya: Depictions of the Tuṣita Heaven at Dunhuang

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Professor Roderick Whitfield is an eminent scholar of many wonders, to say the very least. During my five years of study at SOAS under his supervision, Professor Whitfield never ceased to impress me—often in the most delightful of ways. In the summer of 1992 when the artist Wu Guanzhong had a retrospective exhibition at the British Museum, he also gave a lecture on his artistic journey. Like many in the audience, I was unable to grasp much of Wu's presentation because of his prominent Jiangsu accent. To our amazement, Roderick understood Wu's soft and melodic Jiangsu dialect like a native, and rendered an accurate and eloquent interpretation. This is just one instance of Roderick's many and astonishing talents.

Throughout my time at SOAS, I was impressed not only by Professor Whitfield's linguistic talents, but also his thorough knowledge of references across a wide spectrum of books and journals related to East Asian art and architecture. He could refer me to exact pages of a reference without having to look it up first. I had studied at a professional school of architecture where research did not garner genuine interest and attention; Professor Whitfield was an excellent mentor who showed me the path of true research, and opened the door to my academic life. He set a high standard on scholarly pursuit with an emphasis on rigour in academic research. Professor Whitfield was and continues to be an inspiration to me as an academic. It is thus with great pleasure and gratitude that I offer the following.

The belief in Maitreya bodhisattva 彌勒菩薩 was very popular during the fourth-seventh centuries from India to Central China. Corroborated by scriptural evidence, Matsumoto Bunzaburō suggests that the belief in Maitreya had a widespread following among both Theravāda and Mahāyāna schools during this period.¹ In particular, such belief was prevalent in the kingdoms around the rim of the Taklamakan Desert. Apart from textual evidence, there are a large number of extant images of Maitreya from Gandhāra to central China in the form of freestanding images, stelae, carved images and paintings in cave temples. The iconography of Maitreya is distinctive throughout these regions, making it relatively simple to identify the image.² While the representation of Maitreya shares common iconography in this vast geographical spread, each region along this route of transmission of Buddhism adopts a different convention based on local belief systems, ritual practices and artistic principles. This is particularly evident in the way Maitreya is framed by the setting, his retinue and details

in the illustration of the Maitreya sutra. In this offering to Roderick Whitfield I will concentrate on the depiction of Maitreya at the Dunhuang grottoes, situated mid-way between Central Asia and Central China, to elucidate the changing pattern and meaning of the representation of the bodhisattva.

Notwithstanding the debates among Buddhist scholars about the origin of bodhisattva Maitreya, it is generally accepted that the form of Maitreya belief from its appearance to around the seventh century can be summarized into four dimensions: Maitreya as a post-Śākyamuni Buddha in the chronological development; Maitreya as *cakravartin*, the universal monarch; Maitreya as the lord of Tuṣita heaven 兜率天; and Maitreya as future Buddha who would descend on earth to claim his kingdom.³ These four dimensions can be regarded as different roles played by Maitreya to fulfill the different needs of the devotees: for encountering with the Bodhisattva, for immediate rebirth in a heavenly realm, and for gaining enlightenment in the new heaven and new earth when Maitreya returns to earth.⁴

The last two roles are related to two sutras, the *Fo shuo Guan Mile pusa shangsheng doushuaituotian jing* 佛說觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率陀天經 [Sutra taught by the Buddha on Visualization of Maitreya Bodhisattva's Rebirth Above in Tuṣita heaven, abbreviated as Shangsheng jing] and *Mile xiasheng jing* 彌勒下生經 [Sutra on Maitreya's Rebirth Below, abbreviated as Xiasheng jing].⁵ The main teaching of the former sutra is about Maitreya Bodhisattva's current rule over the Tuṣita heaven, while the latter sutra is about Maitreya's descend to earth at a future date. In the former sutra, Tuṣita heaven where Maitreya is now residing is portrayed as the land of choice for rebirth, much like Sukhāvatī that was already popular in China at the time.

The widespread nature of the belief in Maitreya is attested both by the records of travel by Chinese monks and the extant images and paintings found along the silk routes. It is well known that Maitreya was worshipped along this route as a future Buddha who will return to create a new purified kingdom.⁶ During the visit to India, the monk Faxian came across a number of cities in which he recorded every image of Maitreya that he saw. Many Gandhāra images had been identified as Maitreya, seated as a bodhisattva in either *bhadrāsana* or cross-ankled pose, holding a vase (*kuṇḍikā*) in one hand and displaying the *dharmacakra mudrā*. To this simple iconography is often added an architectural niche to signify the setting for the Bodhisattva.⁷ Images of Maitreya depicted within a canopy

from Gandhāra sites had been systematically traced by Lee Yu-Min.⁸ One interesting example of Maitreya seated in an architectural setting is an early image from Shotorak, dated to the Kushan period (third-fifth centuries) and now in the Kabul Museum, showing the Bodhisattva seated in the cross-ankled posture displaying the *dharmacakra mudrā*.⁹ The architectural niche is very carefully constructed with an ogee arch supported on short columns with a lion capital. Many images flanked the bodhisattva, and the register above depicts a row of smaller niches with a pair of heavenly beings in each niche. Another example is a bas-relief also from Shotorak of the same period, now in the Musée Guimet. Maitreya is depicted as a bodhisattva seated cross-ankled and displaying the *dharmacakra mudrā*. The architectural niche is divided into three parts: the central bay in which Maitreya is housed has a trapezoid-shaped arch, supported on short columns with floral capitals, inspired by the Corinthian order, and bays to either side, each of which contain an attending bodhisattva. A horizontal balustrade runs through the top of the image and many figures flank the central niche, with two large size guardians placed at each side. There must be many more such images of Maitreya in Tuṣita heaven that are now lost.

The depiction of Maitreya as the future Buddha was very popular in cave temples in Chinese Central Asia, Dunhuang and central China. In caves around Kizil, on the outskirts of the oasis kingdom of Kucha (Qiuzhi 龜茲), Maitreya is depicted over the doorway of a rectangular cave, opposite the image of Śākyamuni on the main facing wall of the cave. As the devotee entered the cave, he was confronted with the historical Buddha, with his avadāna and jātaḥ stories spread out on the wall and the ceiling. The devotee would then circumambulate the central pillar and encountered Buddha in nirvāṇa at the back of the pillar. Finally, when the devotee turned to leave the cave, he would have gazed at the Maitreya seated majestically over the doorway with his attendants, a vivid reminder of the land of the future Buddha.

The architectural niche that probably represents the palace of Tuṣita Heaven in Gandhāran art is not found in images in Central Asia, but resurfaces in Dunhuang and cave temples along the Hexi corridor. This prototype was then adopted in the Yungang grottoes (Fig. 1) and also influenced later representations in the Longmen grottoes. At Dunhuang, most early caves had Maitreya bodhisattva housed in a single architectural niche, constructed with Chinese elements, rather than using the pillars inspired by the Corinthian order known in the Gandhāra style. This adoption of Chinese elements, which imitated the wooden structure of Chinese buildings, as in cave 275 of the Northern Liang, and in caves 259, 254, 257, 437 and others from the Northern Wei, must have been influenced by the artistic convention of the Han dynasty. In funerary stone reliefs, architectural niches and ceremonial gates and columns had been used in the depiction of historical events.

The architectural niches at Dunhuang are built of three parts as seen in the roof construction (Fig. 2). The central

pitched-roof hall is flanked by taller towers on either side, with Maitreya bodhisattva seated cross-legged in the hall. The flanking towers are possibly derived from the *que* 闕 towers [paired of gate posts] of the Han dynasty especially from Sichuan province, which were symbolic structures erected in front of important buildings and tombs. In some cases, depictions of a pair of *que* towers found on sarcophagi of the second – third centuries CE contain a guardian positioned between the two *que*, a cross bar of some sorts either symbolizing a roof or a curtain, and most interestingly, a plaque inscribed with two characters- *tianmen* 天門 [Gate of Heaven].¹⁰ There are precedents for heavenly gates in funerary objects, such as the sarcophagus banner from Mawangtui 馬王堆 that shows two gate posts with two officials guarding the heavenly realm.

In Sichuan examples, the meaning is very apparent, the gate marks the entry to Heaven through which the soul of the deceased might travel. Thus the niche around Maitreya that is seen in the early caves of Dunhuang has a multiple meaning, both as the gate of Tuṣita heaven and the palatial hall where Maitreya is seated. However, what is unclear is why there are several Maitreya niches appearing in one cave, such as in caves 275 and 259. In Dunhuang caves, the niched images are clearly positioned in the upper part of the cave wall signifying the heavenly realm. Cave 275 is one of the earliest caves excavated at Dunhuang; its main image is that of a cross-ankled Maitreya, displaying similar iconographic details as the Maitreya of the Kizil caves. In addition, in the upper registry of the side walls are the same niched images. All images seem to reinforce the idea of the realm of Maitreya, the Tuṣita heaven.

During the Sui dynasty, such simple architectural niches developed into a full building of five *jian* 間 [intercolumnal bay], flanked by towers of two or three stories (Fig. 3). This expanded version of the singular niche can be considered as the natural evolution of the artistic style. However, in all nine caves that this convention is adopted during the Sui dynasty, the location of the Maitreya image is found on the sloping ceiling above the central niche. This central and prominent position assigned to Maitreya signifies the increased popularity of the belief in Dunhuang, and also the changing nature of the depiction. The central buildings in these illustrations are much more elaborate, and usually have five *jian*. There are many more figures surrounding Maitreya including guardians, musicians, apsarasas, attending bodhisattvas, offering bodhisattvas, and reborn beings in the heaven. It is clear that these paintings in Sui dynasty caves at Dunhuang were illustrations of the *Shangsheng jing*, adopting a convention that was influenced by the western prototype, developed from indigenous adaptation, but uniquely local to Dunhuang.

These images are usually taken to represent Maitreya's teaching from his Maṇi Pearl Hall that is said to have been set up on a Seven-jeweled Platform in Tuṣita heaven (T 14:419c21). This might have been the intention of the artists painting these illustrations or sculpting the niches and images. However, Śākyamuni Buddha is also said to be preaching from a lecture

hall, so why is his preaching image not represented with in an architectural setting? Could it be that the depiction of Maitreya within a building is an iconographic detail specific to the bodhisattva?

Illustrations of Maitreya Bodhisattva at Dunhuang take a more elaborate form from the beginning of the seventh century. This might have to do with the method of cultivation of the Maitreya faith. Daoan 道安 (312-85), the earliest and most vocal promoter of the faith,¹¹ advocated a cultivation method of *guanxiang nianfo* 觀想念佛, meditation upon Maitreya Buddha. With the translation of the *Shangsheng jing* around 455 CE, the meditation on Maitreya becomes more formalised.

The Buddha spoke to Upāli, ... if any *bhikṣu* and all sentient beings who would like to be reborn in the [Tuṣita] heaven, and escape from [the cycle of] life and death, ... and desirous of being a disciple of Maitreya, he should practice meditation. Those who meditate should keep the five precepts, ... and proceed to meditate in stages on the supreme happiness of Tuṣita heaven.

若我住世一小劫中廣說一生補處菩薩報應及十善果者不能窮盡。今為汝等略而解說佛告優波離。若有比丘及一切大眾。不厭生死樂生天者。愛敬無上菩提心者。欲為彌勒作弟子者。當作是觀。作是觀者應持五戒八齋具足戒身心精進不求斷結修十善法——思惟兜率陀天上妙快樂。作是觀者名為正觀。若他觀者名為邪觀。(T 14: 419c.4-10)

The method for rebirth to the land of Maitreya is said to be through acquiring various merits, *xiu zhu gongde* 修住功德; meditating on the image of the Buddha, *nian fo xingxiang* 念佛形相; calling on the name of Maitreya, *cheng mile ming* 稱彌勒名, etc.; and upon one's death, it is said that in a quick moment, the deceased will be reborn in Tuṣita Heaven, appearing seated on the lotus in the posture of *dhyānāsana*. No exposition of the Maitreya sutras prior to the Tang made it into the canonical Tripiṭaka. There are only three expositions collected in the Taishō Tripiṭaka: one written by the famous monk Xuanzang's 玄奘 disciple Kuiji 窺基, another by the Silla monk Wōnhyo 元曉 (617-686). In the extant exposition of Wōnhyo, it is suggested that: "Visualization here is of two kinds. The first is to visualize the majestic adornments (*alaṃkāra*) of [Tuṣita] Heaven as the setting for rebirth, and the second is to visualize the superiority of receiving rebirth [there] as a bodhisattva."¹² The visualization practice and the description of the Tuṣita Heaven are very similar to that of visualizing Sukhāvatī of Amitābha Buddha as expounded in the Pure Land sutras, which was popular during the sixth – seventh centuries.¹³

What then is the shape of Tuṣita Heaven for visualization? In the *Shangsheng jing*, it is said that in Maitreya Heaven are jewels of different kinds, and each is said to contain a transformed image of 49 layers of palaces, and each palace has balustrades made of *maṇi* pearls (T 14/ 419a.12-24). Other aspects of the heavenly palace described include channels of water built with eight-coloured glass, with flowers growing in the

channel and from the flower heavenly girls arise to serve the assembly of the Buddha with music and other precious offerings. Because there is no detailed description of the palaces, it is not certain how these palaces might have looked. The general tone of the passage describing the Tuṣita Heaven of Maitreya is one of dazzling splendour contributed by the light shining from the precious *maṇi* pearls, the 500 billion precious pearls, the seven-jeweled lion thrones, the precious canopy etc. With these multiple numbers, the palaces are perhaps meant to aid visualization and meditation.

With the advocacy of a method of cultivation based on visualization of the heavenly realm of Maitreya (much like the practice for the Pure Land school) the representation of the Tuṣita Heaven was changed from a simple hall to an elaborate architectural setting. The earliest evidence of such a shift in the architectural depiction of the Maitreya sutra can be seen in a stele excavated from the site of Wanfosi 萬佛寺, Chengdu 成都. On this stele, dated to the mid-sixth century, the preaching Maitreya is seated in a tent-like structure crowned by five stupa-type finials (Fig. 4). Two tall poles flank the building in front.¹⁴ The palaces of Tuṣita Heaven are formed by only a simple hall within a walled compound. However, what distinguished this depiction from those in Sui dynasty caves is the creation of pictorial depth through the careful placement of the tent, buildings, figures and different episodes from the Maitreya sutras. While another stele excavated from the same site contains elaborate rendition of palaces to illustrate a Pure Land sutra, the artist of this stele chose to use a simple structure to represent the Tuṣita Heaven. What is interesting is the use of curtained canopy for the setting of Maitreya, rather than a building. It is not certain why the representations on the two stelae are different, whether this is due either to artistic convention or doctrinal differences?

When one traces the development of the illustration of the realm of Maitreya and Amitābha in the sixth – seventh centuries, it is interesting to note that since the fourth century, Tuṣita Heaven of Maitreya Bodhisattva had always been represented by architectural elements, either a sculpted niche or a painting of the lecture hall with three or five *jian* flanked by multistoried towers. This can be seen in Dunhuang and Yungang. However, the earliest extant illustrations of the Western Pure Land with architectural elements are dated to the middle of sixth century, seen in the Xiangtangshan 響堂山 grottoes and also on the Wanfosi 萬佛寺 stele. Similar depictions with architectural elements in perspectival construction only appeared in Dunhuang during the seventh century. It is difficult to generalize due to the small number of extant examples outside Dunhuang. However, the time lapse might be due to the process of transmission of artistic ideas.

By the late seventh century, at Dunhuang, the way architectural elements were employed in the illustration of Western Pure Land became similar to that of Tuṣita Heaven. This can be seen most vividly in caves 71, 78, 329, 331, and 341. On the cliff face, these five caves are located in two clusters, caves 71

and 78 in the central section of the site and caves 329, 331, and 341 to the north of the site, all excavated at the lowest level of the extant cliff face. In caves 329, 331, and 341, both the scenes of Maitreya in Tuṣita heaven and his descend to earth are depicted one above the other. In cave 329, Maitreya bodhisattva is depicted within a complex of a heavenly palace (Fig. 5). The architecture is carefully depicted with bracket sets clearly delineated, thereby rendering the architecture believable. The same can be said of the depiction of the balustraded platforms. Structural and constructional details are clearly shown as well as the spatial form.

In contrast to Sui architectural depictions, these illustrations use multiple perspective systems in the construction of the buildings and the platforms to give the pictorial composition a sense of depth and space. The centralized buildings are basically elevations, constructed with one point perspective with the underside of the eaves clearly shown. The buildings on the side are constructed with two-point perspective vanishing into several points: the eaves are exposed as if the viewpoint is taken very close to the building while the base of the first storey and the ground shown with convergence to a vanishing point. The balustrades of the platforms are prominently delineated with clear definition and constructed with a parallel oblique perspective, or a fish-bone perspective. These different perspective systems employed in a single illustration allow the viewer to concentrate on the image of the preaching Maitreya located at the center of the composition while at the same time participating in the pictorial space. Thus the requirement for visualizing a resplendent Tuṣita Heaven is more than satisfied in these illustrations. This is substantiated by other architectural configurations showing a hall in the middle where Maitreya is depicted seated and connected to two side pavilions with covered corridors. Many figures were depicted within and outside the building complex, those outside are clearly portrayed in worship, or in visualization (Fig. 6).

Finally, there is a type of architectural depiction only seen related to Maitreya. This is to represent the Tuṣita Heaven in a fully enclosed courtyard compound. These are seen first in eighth century caves, such as caves 208, 148, 445 and middle Tang caves 159, 202, 231 and 358. In all these examples, both *Shangsheng jing* and *Xiasheng jing* are illustrated. The *Shangsheng* illustration takes the form of a full architectural complex. For example, on the north wall of cave 208, the palace of Tuṣita Heaven is made up of a complex complete with a moat and high surrounding wall (Fig. 7). The central complex is accessible through a bridge in each side of the complex. The complex consists of a three *jian* hall, flanked by a double-storied pavilion on either side and is enclosed with a U-shaped corridor. In cave 148, dated to the mid- eighth century, the palace of Tuṣita Heaven is a complex of three courtyards (Fig. 8). The central courtyard has at the centre a lecture hall with widely spread eaves and enclosed by a full corridor. The courtyard seems to be filled with water entirely, with Maitreya depicted seated as a Bodhisattva in the courtyard. Two smaller side

courtyards are accessed through a double-storied pavilion, in which there is also a large hall. The perspective system used here is simply a one-point perspective with the vanishing point located far to the back of the picture, resulting in a bird's eye perspective. In some cases, the central hall is depicted with a lower viewpoint, thus showing the underside of the eaves.

Interestingly, in the illustration of the same two sutras found on the north wall of cave 445, Tuṣita Heaven is represented by many palace compounds, each complete with a surrounding wall, drawn in circular form, and a hall in the centre (Fig. 9). At the centre of the composition is the palace of the Bodhisattva, depicted with two layers of wall. These compounds were all drawn to be situated on hill tops, possibly a faithful illustration of the sutra in which it is said that many splendid palaces are found in Tuṣita Heaven. Parallel lines were drawn to the side of the upper part of the illustration to indicate the extended horizon with many layers of heaven above Tuṣita Heaven. It is clear that in this period a full architectural complex is used to represent the abode of Maitreya Bodhisattva and palaces are shown for those who wish to be reborn into this heaven. Everyone wanting to enter the heaven is assured of a place to dwell.

In this paper, I have outlined three forms of representation of Tuṣita Heaven of Maitreya Bodhisattva between the fourth - eighth centuries. During the earliest period up to the seventh century, Maitreya is housed in a simple niche with a hall and flanking towers. The architecture is secondary to the large size Bodhisattva, thus the architectural niche is simply for identification of the Bodhisattva in his palatial setting. In the second period during the seventh century, the influence of the illustration of Pure Land sutras can be seen in the use of more complicated perspective systems for depicting Tuṣita Heaven. The size of the Bodhisattva was diminished with respect to the architectural setting. Thus the highlighted architecture and the perspective construction would aid visualization practices, as required by the *Shangsheng jing*. This can be seen in the equal proportion devoted to both the illustration of the *Shangsheng* and *Xiasheng jing*. The last period of development in the eighth century ushered in a more formal setting for Tuṣita Heaven with a complete architectural complex used as the palace of Maitreya. The name of the palace is even written over the gate, as in the case in cave 148. In this period, the palace is simply a formal representation with no particular role in the visualization practice. The proportion of the palace is reduced compared to the illustration of the *Xiasheng jing*.

Perspective construction is not only about lines and the representation of buildings. It is a mechanism whereby a space is constructed. A space is a three-dimensional reality in which objects are placed and maneuvered. Perspectival construction is thus the means by which such reality may be re-created and apprehended, a 'transformed window', as Erwin Panofsky suggests, through which we believe we see the represented space.¹⁵ Thus the success of the painting, and its painting technique, lies in its ability to allow such a framed view into the space

formed through the employment of various perspectival constructions into a believable arena of Tuṣita Heaven. The transformation of the two-dimensional surface into an illusion of a three-dimensional space is achieved through the clever manipulation of the perspectival construction during the second

period, as I outlined. As a result, apart from serving as a meditation device, Tuṣita Heaven is depicted in the greatest detail in order to appeal to devotees who wished to be reborn there to achieve the certainty of eternal bliss.

Notes

¹ See Bunzaburō Matsumoto 松本文三郎, *Mile jingtu lun* 彌勒淨土論 [On the Pure Land of Maitreya], [first published as *Miroku jodo ron*, Tokyo: Heigo shuppansha, 1911], trans. Zhang Yuanlin 張元林, (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2001), 4-5 and 91-108.

² The history of the Maitreya cult and its art in India and Central Asia is traced in Lee Yu-Min, *The Maitreya Cult and its Art in Early China* (PhD dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1983), 140-259.

³ These four dimensions are summarized in some chapters in Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre, eds., *Maitreya, the Future Buddha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), see particularly chapters 1-3.

⁴ See Jan Nattier, "The Meanings of the Maitreya Myth: A Typological Analysis," in Sponberg and Hardacre, *Maitreya*, 23-47.

⁵ *Shangsheng jing* was translated into Chinese by Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠京聲 during the Southern Liu Song dynasty (420-479), in T vol. 14, no. 452, and *Xiasheng jing* was translated by Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 during the Western Jin dynasty (281-316) in T vol. 14, no. 453 and Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什 during the Later Qin dynasty (384-417), in T vol. 14, no. 454.

⁶ See Alexander C. Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1959), 212-17 for a summary of the Maitreya belief and his representation.

⁷ See the sculpture of Maitreya Buddha as described in Pratyutpanna samādhi sutra depicted at the head of a stele, now housed in the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, Haryana, India, ca. late fifth century, in Huntington archive 008653. Amitābha in Sukhavātī, Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh, Haryana, India, ca. sixth century, Pakistan, Huntington archive 008658. See also a scene from cave 17 of Ajanta, late fifth century, identified as Maitreya seated on a throne, which shows an architectural setting with receding platform in some sort of perspective construction (Susan L Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* [Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1985], pl. 8).

⁸ Lee, *The Maitreya Cult*, 209-15.

⁹ Lee, *The Maitreya Cult*, 224-25.

¹⁰ See images and discussions in Robert Bagley, ed., *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2001), 53-54; and Michael Nylan: "Ordinary Mysteries: Interpreting the Archaeological Record of Han Sichuan," *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 5/1-4 (2003): 385-86.

¹¹ Daoan is said to have vowed with seven disciples in front of a Maitreya image for rebirth to the Tuṣita Heaven, see Huijiao 慧皎, *Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳, in T 50/353b.27-c.8. This is probably in line with the teaching of the Maitreya sutra for making vows for rebirth.

¹² See the analysis of Wōnhyo commentary in Alan Sponberg, "Wōnhyo on Maitreya Visualization," in Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre, eds., *Maitreya, the Future Buddha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 94-109, the translation is taken from p. 98.

¹³ See the comparison of the sutras of the two belief systems and the description of the Pure Land and the Tuṣita Heaven in Matsumoto, *Mile jingtu lun*, 147-76, in which it is concluded that much of the description of the two Pure Land are the same.

¹⁴ It is suggested by Zhao Shengliang 趙聲良 that a certain pattern existed in the fifth century with the use of architectural depictions and landscape for the illustration of the heavenly realms. See Zhao, "Chengdu Nanchao fudiao mile jingbian yu fahua jingbian kao lun" 成都南朝浮雕彌勒經變與法華經變考論 [Research and discussion about the illustrations of Maitreya sutra and Saddhamapuṇḍarika sutra in shallow sculpture found at Wanfosi in Chengdu], *Dunhuang Yanjiu* 1 (2001), 34-42.

¹⁵ See Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 27.



Fig. 1. Maitreya Bodhisattva sitting cross-ankled in an architectural niche with three bays flanked by attending bodhisattvas in pensive pose, Yungang grottoes, cave 12, east wall. (Author's photograph). (See Colour Plate 1)

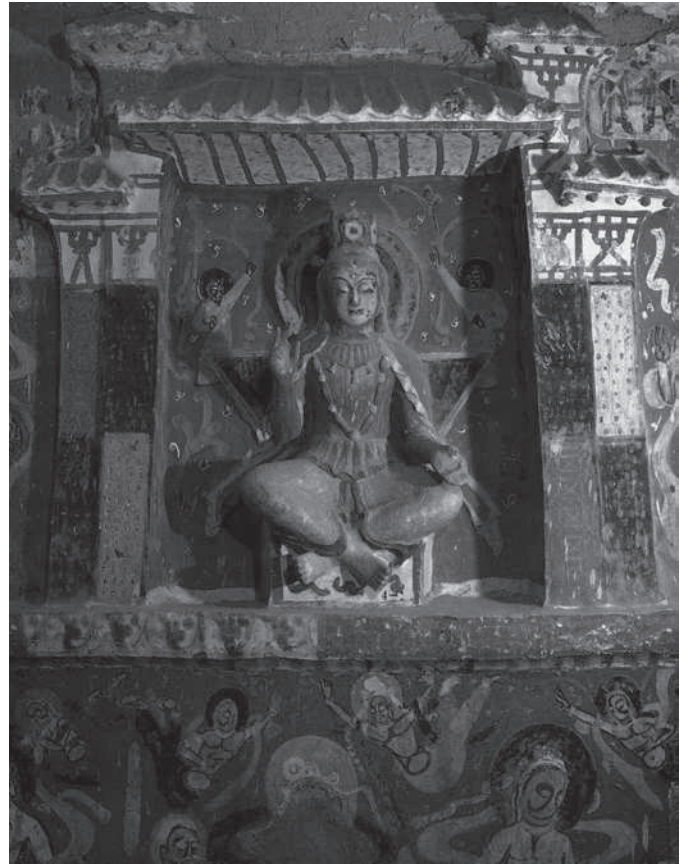


Fig. 2. Maitreya seated in an architectural niche, north wall, cave 275, Northern Zhou. After Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku* 1 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1982), pl. 18. (See Colour Plate 2)

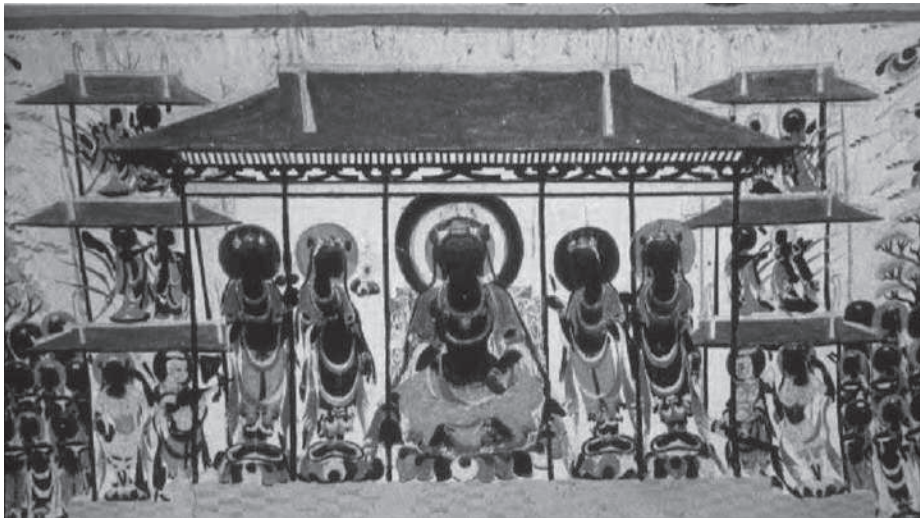


Fig. 3. Maitreya Bodhisattva seated in a five-jian building, west slope, cave 423, Sui. After Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku* 2 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1984), pl. 34.



Fig. 4. Illustration of the Tuṣita heaven of Maitreya Bodhisattva, stele excavated at the site of Wanfosi, Chengdu. After James Watt et al.: *China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200-750 AD* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), 225.



Fig. 5. Illustration of Maitreya *Shangshengjing* and *Xiashengjing*, north wall, cave 329, Early Tang. After Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku* 3 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), pl. 45.

Fig. 6. Illustration of Maitreya *Shangshengjing*, above main niche, west wall, cave 338, High Tang. After Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku* 3 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), pl. 62. (See Colour Plate 3)



Fig. 7. Illustration of the Tuṣita heaven of Maitreya Bodhisattva, north wall, cave 208, High Tang. After Wang Huimin ed.: *Mile jing huajuan*, in Dunhuang Academy ed., *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, 6 (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2002), Fig. 33. (See Colour Plate 4)



Fig. 8. Illustration of Maitreya Shangsheng and Xiasheng jing, south wall, cave 148, High Tang. After Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku* 4 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), pl. 28. (See Colour Plate 5)



Fig. 9. Illustration of Maitreya Shangsheng and Xiasheng jing, north wall, cave 445, High Tang. After Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku* 3 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), pl. 175.



Plate 1. Maitreya Bodhisattva sitting cross-ankled in an architectural niche with three bays flanked by attending bodhisattvas in pensive pose, Yungang grottoes, cave 12, east wall. (Author's photograph).



Plate 2. Maitreya seated in an architectural niche, north wall, cave 275, Northern Zhou. After Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku* 1 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1982), pl. 18.



Plate 3. Illustration of Maitreya Shangsheng jing, above main niche, west wall, cave 338, High Tang. After Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku* 3 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), pl. 62.

Plate 4. Illustration of the Tusita heaven of Maitreya Bodhisattva, north wall, cave 208, High Tang. After Wang Huimin ed.: *Mile jing huajuan*, in Dunhuang Academy ed., *Dunhuang shiku quanji*, 6 (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2002), Fig. 33.



Plate 5. Illustration of Maitreya Shangsheng and Xiasheng jing, south wall, cave 148, High Tang. After Dunhuang Wenwu Yanjiusuo ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Dunhuang Mogaoku* 4 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), pl. 28.