

Week 11 Buddhism

Historical Overview

The medieval period is a complex history of division between north and south. It begins with the dissolution of the Han dynasty and the establishment of Three Kingdoms, which divided China between the kingdom of Wei in the north, Shu in the west, and Wu in the south. Although none of these kingdoms could successfully restore order in China, the Jin dynasty superseded the Wei and defeated the kingdom of Wu in 280, briefly reunifying China for just over 30 years until invading northern tribes sacked the central plains and the Jin court was forced south.

The fragmentation of the Han into three kingdoms brings us back to the uprising of the yellow turbans, a religious group that preached about a way of great peace and challenged the authority of Han government. The armies raised to suppress this uprising eventually grew more powerful than the state. And civil war ensued. One powerful general, Cao Cao, joined forces with the Han and assumed real political power as dictator in northern China, although he never took the name "emperor" during his lifetime. His son, Cao Pi, forced the abdication of the last Han emperor and declared the Wei dynasty in 220 A.D.

After Wei defeated Shu in 263, the Sima family usurped the throne and declared the Jin Dynasty in 265. They finally defeated Wu in the south in 280. In the capital at Luoyang, however, tensions grew between Chinese, or Hanren, people culturally identified with the state of Han, and non-Chinese northern tribes.

A sinified Xiongnu by the name of Liu Yuan declared himself King of Han in 304. His son sacked Luoyang in 311, sending inhabitants in flight south across the Yangtze River. For over a century in what's known as the Period of 16 Kingdoms, tribal groups dominated politics, society, and economy.

Although some of the northern states showed an interest in Buddhism or even Chinese models of government, these northern tribes were better suited to winning wars than maintaining power. The most successful of the northern states was the Northern Wei, ruled by the Xianbei Tuoba clan who originated from southern Manchuria. Eventually, the Tuoba even adopted a Chinese surname and ordered the use of Chinese language and dress at court in Luoyang, a new magnificent city of over half a million people with ornate palaces and around 1,000 Buddhist monasteries. But the north was soon devastated again with tribal feuds and civil war until the Northern Zhou restored unity in the north in 577.

After escaping the destruction of northern China, officials installed a Jin prince in Jiankang, or modern Nanjing, in 316, which became the new capital of the south. This Eastern Jin dynasty lasted until 420 and was followed by the Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen, the southern dynasties. The hereditary aristocracy and northern émigré families that had arrived in the south culturally identified with the Han civilization and sought to maintain Chinese civic ideals in the tradition of the scholar official.

However, at the same time, they discovered a new space for individual expression and literature, calligraphy, and painting. In 548, however, the tribal leader Hou Jing instigated a rebellion and sieged Jiankang with a new general declaring the Chen dynasty. The Chen was finally defeated in 589 by the Sui who brought an end to the period of division between north and south but faced new challenges in maintaining power over a unified empire.

Section 1: Buddhism in China - Universal Religion and Foreign Teaching

Today we're going to talk about Buddhism in China and the role that Buddhism played in China's history. Perhaps why China adopted Buddhism, or why many in China adopted Buddhism. One might think about this in terms of whether this was a Buddhist conquest of China or a Chinese conquest of Buddhism.

Here's something you can find in many places in China today. It's a rosary. It's the sort of thing you might sit and count off as you went through it. Say nanmoemituofo, which is, I pledge my allegiance to Amida Buddha. Why that should be something you would do is one of the things we'll explain today.

Now, that's from today. But we know rosaries go way back in time. Here I have something else. This is a portable shrine, a traveling shrine, from the Qianlong period, that's the 18th century. And when you open it up, you see the Buddha, and disciples, and two other Buddha figures to the side. An icon.

Something that one can meditate on, one can look at. I bought it in a small market in-- street market in Dongyang County in Zhejiang province for not very much money, maybe 80 renminbi. And then saw that he sold it to the next person, the same thing for 70. It's not original. It's resin; it's not even wood.

Well, during the medieval period, Buddhism was introduced by missionaries from Central Asia and India. And it became part of China's landscape. It's, in fact, the first religion in Chinese history that became a national religion, a popular religion that was shared by all levels of the population from rulers, through the court elites, down to the common person.

Buddhism has left an extraordinary material legacy. Not only a shrine like that. Small part of the story. But giant cave architecture, the Longmen and Yungang Grottos, with giant Buddhas carved, out in Sichuan. Enormous Buddhists, carved into side of cliffs.

Some of the oldest wooden buildings in China are Buddhist monasteries going back to the Tang Dynasty. That material legacy of Buddhism was created through patronage. It's not as if Buddhists had sources of wealth except what people gave them. Much of the patronage was private, from the wealthy and the poor. The wealthy, who might give a mansion which could be transformed into a Buddhist monastery, to the poor making an offering for the well-being of their parents who had passed away.

But government was also a major patron. And if we look at those great grottos, the stone cliff carvings, those are paid for by government. And yet, the government had, often in Chinese history, and many Confucian officials shared this, or they were the government. So that's why government acted like this, was antagonistic toward Buddhism, tried to suppress it, tried to limit it.

And even when we look today, we find that the havoc wreaked upon the Buddhist church, the closing of monasteries during the Cultural Revolution, the limits on building new monasteries today, the limits on the ordination of monks today, even as religion is spreading, government still maintains that antagonism. But it's important to see that the modern antagonism towards Buddhism is not unique. The criticism of Buddhism in the past would make sense to certain officials today.

And the criticism of Buddhism by officials today would make sense in very different terms, perhaps, to people in the past. And I've included here a recent document called "top party official affirms the policy that party members are not allowed to practice religion." And then you can see that. And you get a sense of that antagonism. This comes from May 24, 2013.

Now, in this module we're going to give an overview of major aspects of Buddhism. And we're going to turn to a series of biographies that will help us understand how Buddhism got established in China. And we're going to take a trip, kind of a trip, a virtual trip if you will, to a temple outside of Hangzhou, the Lingyin Si, Temple of the Soul's Retreat, the Monastery of the Soul's Retreat, where we'll see people engaged in Buddhist practices. And finally we want to have a talk with Professor James Robson about Buddhism in China's history, but also Daoism in China's history.

Section 2: Introduction to Buddhism – The Three Treasures

1. Buddhism: An Introduction

Let's begin with an overview of Buddhism. One easy way of getting this overview, not an historical view but an overview of the different components of Buddhism, is the notion of the Three Treasures. The Three Treasures being the Buddha, the law, the Dharma, the law, the teachings, and the Sangha, or the community of monks and nuns.

2. The Buddha

Now, there are lots of Buddhas. This is the first of the Three Treasures. There are lots of Buddhas. A Buddha becomes eventually a transcended being, a god, but there's also an historical Buddha. Probably born somewhere in northern India or southern Nepal of the Gautama family.

The son of a king of the Shakya clan, or the Shakya tribe. And Buddha, the historical Buddha, would eventually be known as Shakyamuni, the sage of the Shakyas. He was given the name Siddhartha, which means somebody who achieves his goal. And he's now thought to have lived in the fifth century BCE.

But the inexactness of this-- some people will still argue for the sixth century, some for the fifth century. The inexactness of-- the inability to give precise datings, even precise locations for the Buddha's history is worth remarking on, although I'm not yet sure what to make of it. There are key events.

Apparently, when he was born, or so the story goes, an astrologer said, when you grow up, this child will become either a great king or a great religious figure. And since the father wanted the son to be a king, to be a successor, he made sure that he was not exposed to any of the suffering in the world. Into his late 20s, he had a wife, he had child. He had lived a life of perfect luxury. He'd never seen anything to upset him, disconcert him.

But one day, it's said when he was 29, for the first time, he goes out of the palace and he sees a man aging, an old man. And he learns that people age and eventually die. Then he goes out of the palace again and sees a sick man. And he learns that people suffer. And he goes out of the palace once more and he sees a rotting corpse.

At that point, he also sees a mendicant monk, a begging monk, an ascetic, a man who practices all sorts of forms of self-denial to discipline himself, to wean himself from worldly desires and to seek salvation in that manner. The Buddha, Siddhartha, decides-- the person who will become the Buddha-- Siddhartha decides

he will follow the way of the ascetic monks, the mendicants, and try to adopt these practices to wean himself from worldly goods, to break totally with his family. And for a number of years he practices various forms of self-discipline.

But he's not entirely happy with it. And one day, sitting under a tree meditating, he has his great enlightenment. That leads him to the conclusion that there's a middle way between worldly self-indulgence and extreme asceticism and self-denial. And that's the way he decides that he will promote. And he goes out to preach, and he gains followers.

3. The Dharma

We turn now to the second of the Three Treasures-- the law, the teachings, the Dharma. And we can begin with what are called the Four Noble Truths. The first of these is about the nature of life itself.

I often ask students in class, if they had one word with which to sum up the nature of life, what would it be? Sometimes you get happiness. Sometimes you get love. Some by and large pretty positive things.

And once in awhile, a student who knows something about Buddhism will say no no no, the one word that sums up life is suffering. And that's the first of the Four Noble Truths. And then Buddha says, but why do we suffer? What's the cause of suffering?

We suffer because we crave. We desire. And ultimately in life, our desires will not be met. The one thing we desire most-- life itself-- will be taken from us.

So we suffer because we desire. What can we do about that? And the Buddha's answer is the third of the Four Noble Truths. We have to cease desiring. That's the only solution.

And then he turns to the fourth-- there is a path we can follow to learn how to cease desiring. But that path begins with a recognition of our ignorance. That unless we understand that life is suffering and that suffering comes from desire, we will never get on the path toward our own salvation.

Why is that? Because-- and this here, the Buddha is adopting a common belief in that part of India at the time-- we are reincarnated. We're reborn again and again and again. And until we can stop being reborn, we will always go through a life of suffering. This notion of rebirth has to do with karma.

During our lives, we build up karmic seeds, if you will, for better or for worse. And they are carried over into our next life. And they influence how we will be reborn.

How is it possible for these karmic seeds to be passed on? From this life, I die, and then reborn. How does one get to the other?

In the example that's sometimes used-- and I think that it's a very clever example-- is the life of a candle that as I take this candle of my life and I light another candle with it. And then this candle is blown out. That karmic flame, if you will, carries over into the next life.

But it's important to understand that the reason that we stay attached to things, that we desire things, is that we give them value for us. Because we desire something. Because I desire, let's say, salvation, I count off the Buddhist rosary. Because I desire power, I seek to make connections to more powerful people.

But these desires are not real. They're just that-- they're desires. If I were to take away all those desires, what would be left? Emptiness. And that's the real foundation of existence, of my existence-- emptiness.

So what is the goal, then, of this form of cultivation? Of the Dharma? It is to get rid of desires and thus to arrive at emptiness. When that happens, then the karma is gone.

That cessation of desire-- the moment when we enter emptiness-- is called nirvana. It's then that the candle is blown out without transmission of the flame to another candle and there is no longer rebirth. And we live in a perfect state of reality-- the reality of emptiness.

How does the Buddha communicate these teachings? Or how are these teachings communicated? How is the law that-- this word law is interesting. Dharma, because it's not only the law, it's also reality.

And the Buddhist claim is that their teachings are the teachings of reality. They're passed on through sutra. Such as this, the Miaofa lianhua jing-- the Lotus Sutra. In an old copy-- a replica of an old copy here.

4. The Sangha

The third of the Three Treasures is the community of monks and nuns-- the Sangha. These are people who've chosen to live apart. And Chinese phrase is "chujia".

They've left the family to live in communities apart from political society and apart from kinship society. They create their own communities. They live in monasteries.

Section 3: Mahayana Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra

1. Mahayana Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra

When Buddhism first comes to China, it comes in what might be called a later version. It comes as what's called greater vehicle or Mahayana Buddhism. The first mention of Buddhism is in Eastern Han. It comes in with traders.

It actually seems to belong to foreign traders more than anything else. They're also Buddhist communities in South Asia and there's a sea route that connects China with that. And the south Asian communities of Buddhism are still today practicing what's called Theravada Buddhism-- a different kind of Buddhism.

Mahayana has some certain qualities that are worth noting. Because in the third and fourth century-- when Buddhism really gets established-- this is the kind of Buddhism that becomes popular. In this Buddhism, Buddha exists to save the world. The Buddha is a transcendent divinity-- could be worshipped, he can be honored. And you can have faith in this Buddha.

He is the person, the figure, who's come to save the world from suffering. So note the shift now, that's taken place from, if life was suffering I have to empty myself of desires. I have to cease desires in order to be saved, from now, the Buddha as somebody I can turn to for salvation. That's a characteristic of Mahayana.

There are Bodhisattvas. These are beings that are enlightened and want to save the world-- to help save the world too, but have not entered nirvana by their own choice because they're staying here to help us. The most important of these Bodhisattvas today in China is Guanyin Pusa. The Bodhisattva Guanyin who hears the suffering of the world.

The great texts of Mahayana Buddhism-- in fact, the greatest text-- Mahayana Buddhism, is this Miaofa lianhua jing-- the Lotus Sutra. And the Lotus Sutra brings with it a very important doctrine-- the doctrine of expedient means.

What that means-- in Chinese, fangbian-- what that means is simply that the Buddha preaches at the level people can understand. At the level people are capable of understanding. It's a text constructed from poetic portions that are restated in prose form. But it also has within it a series of parables.

The final part of Mahayana Buddhism I want to point to is that Mahayana Buddhism claims that salvation is possible for laypeople. Not only for monks and nuns, but laypeople can be saved as well. Now I mentioned that the Lotus Sutra contains parables. And the first of the parables in the Lotus Sutra is the parable of the burning house, the most important of all the parables.

We have included it here. We'd like you to read it and give us an account of in what way this parable can serve as an introduction to Buddhist faith. And when you've done that, I'll come back and I'll give you my quick read on it.

2. The Parable of the Burning House

So here's my assessment. In this parable of the burning house, who are the children? They're us. Who's the father? That's the Buddha. The Buddha wants to save us, and yet we're incapable of hearing the truth when he preaches it. When he tells us the house is going to burn down, we don't understand what "burning house" means. When he says if we stay there we're going to die, we don't understand what death means.

And that's why he has to entice us out of the house and save us by offering exactly what we desire, more toys to play with. Now those toys are illusions and so when we come out, when the children come out and they say, hey dad, where are these jeweled elephant carts that you promised us? He makes them magically appear, reminding us that things are illusions.

But the problem of this parable is it seems to be saying that if desire is the reason we suffer, hasn't the Buddha just reinforced desire in people? Has he saved them? He saved them in some sense, but aren't they still on the same track? Well, have they learned anything?

And some of you have answered that question, I think, and answered in a very interesting way. You say what they learned actually is of fundamental importance to Buddhism as a religion. They've learned to have faith. They've learned to have faith in the father who saved them. And that's part of the story of Mahayana. To preach at a level people understand and relate to, that they can have faith in the Buddha and by having faith, they can be saved.

Now it's interesting that as you read to the end of the Lotus Sutra, you find descriptions of ways in which people can earn merit and improve their karmic merit, even if they can't completely get rid of all their

karma. You could contribute to the Sangha. You can copy this text, a very important idea, copy this text. Spread the message. Proselytize. Give to the Sangha community of monks and nuns; help build monasteries and so on. So in fact it's a text that preaches its own proselytization, but it also contains some of the fundamental ideas of Mahayana Buddhism.

Section 4: The Transformation of Buddhism in China during the 4th and 5th Centuries – Fotudeng

1. Fotudeng

Three figures that are going to help us understand how Buddhism took hold in China. And yet as you listen to these accounts, think of this. It does not stand to reason that Buddhism would be successful.

The monks who come in carrying it are not Chinese at all. They don't even speak Chinese. They can't read Chinese. They're foreign monks. The language, the terms of Buddhism, the conceptual vocabulary, the conceptual vocabulary of Buddhism does not line up with Chinese. And eventually, at first, they want to make it line up with, let's say Daoist terms. But eventually they discover it doesn't line up at all. It really is foreign.

The styles of argument that Buddhist monks employ are unknown from earlier Chinese history. And yet, this religion was successful, more successful than anything had been before as an import from abroad.

Let me turn to our first case. Our first case is one of these monks who is a foreigner who probably does not learn-- certainly didn't know Chinese when he came, he may have learned it eventually. He was in China a fairly long time.

And then we'll talk about one of his Chinese disciples. And then we'll talk about a disciple of that disciple. And this will give us three points in time. And it's sort of a chain of development.

This story is about Fotudeng. "Fotu" probably means Buddha, or something, Buddha-deng. Perhaps Buddha Dharma was his original name. We're not sure.

Fotudeng dies in 349 AD. He comes to Luoyang in 310. He comes from Kucha in Central Asia. He had visited the great Buddhist sites, like Kashmir, for example, great centers of Buddhist knowledge and learning. He arrives in Luoyang in 310 to establish a religious center.

But the next year chaos breaks out in the capital. The Jin Dynasty princes had started to fight each other. And some of them had brought in northern tribal armies from the Xiongnu to help them in their civil war. But the Xiongnu decided they were stronger and that they could stay.

The Chinese, the Jin princes, and the great clans, the aristocratic clans of Jin left the North-- left Luoyang-- and fled south. And you've heard about the southern émigré clans already. That's them.

The people who took over the North were not Chinese. They were foreign tribes. And they were a diverse set of foreign tribes. Fotudeng decides to stay in the North. He joins up with a warlord named Shi Hu, who is of the Jie Tribe, which is associated with the Later Zhao Dynasty in Hebei, and who's actually fighting the warlords in Luoyang.

He becomes the house Chaplin to the Shi family. He persuades them to support Buddhism, and with them converts many other foreign invaders, and some Chinese officials as well.

Now this seems to be a very typical first generation story-- a foreign monk, foreign conquerors. They get together. He provides religious services to them. They convert. And some of the Chinese who serve the foreign conquerors convert as well to be on the good side with their foreign masters.

In fact the story is much more interesting and perhaps a little bit more complicated. When we read his biography-- a biography is told by other Buddhists. It turns out that Fotudeng made his way by playing three rules. In the first instance-- and certainly the most important. In the first instance he was a wizard and could perform powerful magic. In the second, he was a political adviser to the clan. And in the third, he was a religious teacher.

Notice the order in which I've done this. As a wizard he is good at casting magic spells. He puts a spell over a bowl of water and a Blue Lotus flower emerges. I should note, by the way, that doing magic was something the Jesuits did when they came to China in the 16th century and the 17th century as well.

Actually we have a record from one of the Jesuit missionaries who talks about dropping a powder, moving his hand over water, and casting a spell by dropping a powder into the water that turns it blue. That may have been what Fotudeng was doing, as well. And that seemed to be a Blue Lotus flower.

When the ruler's son dies, or appears to die, he takes a toothpick and intones a spell over it, and the ruler's son revives. He has knowledge of medicine. And, in fact, the ruler sends his sons to live with Fotudeng in his monastery because he thinks it will keep them safe.

He has the ability to see across time. So he can hear the language of bells. He can hear the bells ringing. And he can tell the ruler whether he will succeed. The ruler wants to go on a campaign. The generals are against it. Fotudeng listens to the bells. And he says, you will succeed. And sure enough the war succeeds.

He can see across space. He takes some rouge and some oil and rubs it in his palm. And he can see events taking place elsewhere, far away. All of these are compelling. And his wizardly power makes him very, very useful to the ruler. After all, if you're going to go into battle, wouldn't it be a good idea to know what the outcome would be.

And I guess Fotudeng was right often enough so that it worked. He came to be called the protector of the state. When there was a minor civil war within the family, he continues to be honored as a jewel of the state.

Is Fotudeng more than self-interested? Well, we'll make the argument that he certainly is. He lives in a state that's devoted to war, that sets out to exterminate its enemies, that practices a very harsh and arbitrary justice.

And he is able to persuade the ruler that killing so many people is a problem. And the ruler says, I see that killing is a great sin. So if I kill so many people I won't be saved. On the other hand, if I don't kill people I won't be able to stay as ruler. Is that OK with me?

What's the solution? And Fotudeng gives them an answer. He says, don't kill the innocent. This is very much like the Japanese warlord, the Japanese daimyo in the 16th century, when confronted with the Jesuits by the Ten Commandments, sees that the First Commandment is, thou shalt not kill.

And he says, I'm a samurai. I'm in the business of killing. How can I do this? And the Jesuit answered. And they said, oh, it means don't kill the innocent. So we can see that this redefinition of religion-- well, it seems that everyone practices expedient means.

2. Who is Buddhism for?

There's some tensions in the early church that Fotudeng brings out. First, who is Buddhism for? From the ruler's perspective, Buddhism should be for rulers.

Buddhism is powerful. If Buddhist monks can do magic, why should we let other people have access to that? Why allow them to worship the Buddha?

Fotudeng argues that Buddhism actually is for everybody. And he persuades the ruler to provide enormous amounts of patronage. He is said to have built, by getting patronage from rulers and the wealthy and powerful, some 993 monasteries. Clearly, he's spreading Buddhism to a very large group of the population, not just the rulers.

Second question, is Buddhism for all peoples? Many of the conquerors feel that Buddhism is their religion. It's for them as non-Chinese coming from outside. Buddhism comes from outside as well. That the Chinese should not be allowed to participate in Buddhism. Then Fotudeng exists. That Buddhism is for everybody. It's a universal religion.

Third question, is Buddhism only for males, or may women participate in Buddhism as well? There's a case of a daughter of a powerful person who wants to join the clergy to become a nun. The father objects vociferously.

And Fotudeng says, I have had a vision of this woman living as a nun. She was my daughter in a former life. If she is allowed to become a nun, your family will benefit greatly. It will bring power and wealth to your family. She will help guide you across the ocean of suffering, and so on. So women can now become part of the sangha as well.

Section 5: The Transformation of Buddhism in China during the 4th and 5th Centuries – Dao'an

1. Dao'an and Building the Chinese Sangha

Let's leave Fotudeng behind and talk about Dao'an, who was one of his leading disciples. The point that I want to stress with Dao'an is that he is the one who starts to build the Sangha-- the community of monks and nuns in China. And figures out how to do it in a way that is enduring.

Fotudeng has certainly succeeded in making Buddhism the religion of the foreign conquerors. By 349 when he dies, there's a new turmoil. War in the north. Many of the disciples flee. Dao'an spends the next 16 years in the north before he too, is forced to flee. And he moved south to Xiangyang.

He creates the earliest known community of Chinese believers. And there are practical needs to build a community. You have to get a temple. And Dao'an shows this by getting the private donation of a mansion and building it out, renovating it with more donations so that 400 monks can live there. He builds a pagoda,

basically a hall in which to worship the Buddha. He collects 10,000 pounds of bronze in order to build a great statue-- a 16-foot statue of the Buddha that could be venerated.

Buddhist monasteries like this would in fact, during the medieval period, become the centers of economic life in the countryside. They would have flourmills. They would have markets. They were in fact on their way-- in it's very much thanks to Dao'an-- to becoming that which held the agrarian world together.

Dao'an turns to defining the rules for monastic life. But he doesn't know much about how to do it. So he seeks out books that will tell him how--in India, for example-- monasteries were organized.

How monks would spend the day. How they would burn incense. How they would recite sutra. How they would eat their meals and what they were going to eat.

He decides that all the monks and nuns will adopt a new naming procedure. Henceforth, they will adopt the Chinese equivalent of the name Shakyas as their surname. They will give up their old family names and adopt the name of Shakyas-- Chinese Shi-- for Shakyamuni.

They all become members of a new family, a family in which the Buddha is the patriarch. But it's also reminiscent of a clan and of a tribe, where everyone is joined together. We know that at the time, for example, there were generals who insisted that all their soldiers take on the surname of the general. In some sense, we're seeing the same thing being replicated, the same habit being replicated in the Buddhist Sangha.

There's a Chinese gentleman who comes by and sees this monastery and has great praise for them. I'll just read what he wrote. They do not practice the magical arts. They do not try to frighten people. They are a community of teachers and students who share mutual reverence and respect. Dao'an is learned Buddhist texts, but also in Yin-Yang. Also in arithmetic and even in Confucian learning.

Dao'an has to establish as well, an intellectual identity for these Buddhists. It's still very open-- remember that Fotudeng did magic, he worshipped. But we don't see a great deal about him creating this scholarly or intellectual identity.

Dao'an goes in that direction. He learns about Mahayana Buddhism, that salvation can be shared by people, that not everyone has to follow an ascetic practices. And he begins to understand that Buddhism is different from Chinese ideas.

Now hitherto they had a practice, what's called matching concepts. That is, you would take a new term coming from Central Asia, coming from Sanskrit. And you would try to find the Chinese equivalent.

So, for example, the all-important word emptiness gets translated into Chinese as wu-- nothingness, based on Laozi's Daodejing. But the difference was that, in the Daodejing, wu begets you. Or emptiness, nothingness, is this source from which phenomena arise. That's not the case in Buddhism.

It's not something that generates the phenomenal world. It's the absolute. The phenomenal world is a world of illusion. Emptiness is the ultimate and true reality. Now it's more complicated than that. Eventually there's a notion that the worldly and the absolute are in some way the same.

But it's enough to understand that for Dao'an, recognizing that Buddhist ideas were new and had to be understood in their own terms. That was an important breakthrough for him. And then he has to deal with the following problem.

If I know that these are new terms. If I know that these are not ideas that I already had, how do I know if I am interpreting them correctly? How do I break out of the hermetic circle-- which I project onto the text I'm

reading-- ideas that I've learned from some other source? How do I make sure I understand what the text really means?

Now we can talk about all sorts of scholarly ways of pursuing that. And it's clear that Dao'an was collecting texts. He's interested in commentaries and so on. But his solution, in fact, was to create a cult to worship Maitreya-- the future Buddha. Maitreya resides in Tushita Heaven until he will be reborn as a human and become a Buddha.

Maitreya's special quality, and this is why Dao'an builds a cult around the worship of Maitreya-- is Maitreya can guide people to correct understanding. So Dao'an is saying, if we all worship Maitreya, we will take a vow that we should be reborn in Tushita Heaven so that we can gain a correct understanding of the Buddhist Dharma.

The worship of Maitreya thus, is a way of trying to make sure there's a correct understanding. But note now, a very important difference with Daoism. Daoism had text, too, but they were revelations.

Buddhist texts are coming from outside. They're coming from the West. And they're not presented as revelations. They're represented as teachings from a person who had gained great enlightenment.

2. Buddhist Text and Translation

Dao'an, in his lifetime, probably the greatest of all the Chinese monks. He collects texts. He tries to have a correct understanding of things. He does a catalog of texts. He's concerned with all the different aspects of Buddhism as a community.

But at the same time that he lived, there was a stream of foreign monks coming into China from central Asia. And they were bringing new texts with them. And the government, the court, was sponsoring translation procedures.

In the beginning of the fifth century, 402, the greatest translator, a foreign translator, of all arrives in Chang'an. This is Kumarajiva, another monk from Kucha, a nobleman also trained deeply in Buddhist centers and Buddhist learning. And he had adopted the Mahayana view of emptiness. He takes a whole set of Buddhist sutra and oversees a translation project, which is still today regarded as perhaps not technically correct because technically correct literal translations don't really appear till the seventh century, but certainly the most readable of translations.

The process of translation would go something like this. The foreign monk comes in with texts. He reads and explains the text in his own language. A translator translates these into Chinese, and then a group of scholars tries to take this Chinese oral translation and translate that into good literary form, into good literary Chinese. And that's how Kumarajiva worked as well.

Section 6: The Transformation of Buddhism in China during the 4th and 5th Centuries – Huiyuan

1. Intellectual Centrality and Political Independence

The third and final stage was Huiyuan, Dao'an's greatest disciple. And the point that I think that Huiyuan alerts us to is the idea that the Buddhist Sangha, the Buddhist community, and Buddhism could have intellectual centrality in the Chinese landscape, but would also have political independence within the Chinese landscape.

It is said that Huiyuan began his studies as a Confucian, believing that ritual would be a way to end the chaos of the times. He then turns to Daoist philosophy and then turns to Buddhism. And after he's turned to Buddhism, he seeks out Dao'an and becomes his disciple.

He builds a monastery at Mount Lu, high up in the mountains of Jiangxi, an extraordinarily beautiful natural landscape. You can get there by cable car today, by the way. And he has the idea that the mountain retreat should be where Buddhism is located.

Until this point, we think that most Buddhist monasteries would've been in the cities where, after all, the money was, where the patronage was, where people could give alms to Buddhist monks. Dao'an moves it into the countryside, and he makes it an intellectual center. People begin to flock to Mount Lu. Poets, writers, painters, calligraphers, philosophers start to congregate there at this place in the mountains, in a beautiful landscape and makes it into an intellectual center.

At the same time, Huiyuan looks and says, the Sangha must be independent. He says, I am a stranger to the world. I will not go down the mountain. I will not participate in politics. And yet the warlords around him want his participation. They want him at court. They want a famous person. And his solution is not to take sides. Over the objections of his disciples he welcomes all sides. Within the context of Buddhism, all people can be saved, and there's no need for him as a monk to choose one side over the other.

But the military wants control over the clergy. They suspect that the clergy is intriguing. They don't like the fact that if you become a monk you are not responsible for taxes, for military service, that you acquire all this bronze and this copper in your monasteries. After all, copper is used in coinage. It's pure wealth in that sense. And at various points in history, pogroms are launched at the Buddhists.

But Huiyuan sets out to explain why it is that Buddhism can and should remain independent. He writes a treatise called Monks do not bow down before kings. I'd like to pause now and ask you to start to read it and discuss that.

2. Buddhist Religious Experience

There was an extreme anti-Buddhist position, one that blamed all the ills of the times on the Buddhist Sangha. And in the fifth century, there is a pogrom to try to destroy Buddhism, destroy the monasteries, lay aside the monks and nuns. And yet eventually, it fails or it's not carried out. And these caves at Yungang that we see, these great Buddhist statuary, many times larger than life, carved into the side of the mountain, they were actually built by the government as an apology for having tried to destroy Buddhism.

There's another aspect to Huiyuan that I want to talk about. Huiyuan is interested in trying to make religious experience available to all people, to the common man. Not just that they should make offerings and give gifts and be saved by their faith in the Buddha, but he wants them to have real religious experience

as well. And that's, I guess, where this icon comes into play in some sense. That the icon is an object of veneration.

Huiyuan proposes actually that there's a way in which you can see Buddha. And his solution is to, he tells us-- this is the simple method, by the way-- if you want to see the Buddha and be able to call up the Buddha at any moment and really see the Buddha before your eyes, you begin by going for three months without thinking about food or clothes or any kind of material comfort. Then you go to a secluded spot, and you concentrate on Amitabha, Amida Buddha, or Amitufo for 24 hours to one week, day and night. The Buddha, he says, will then manifest himself to you and preach the doctrine, preach the dharma to you.

3. Digression on Seeing Bodhisattva Guanyin

I have to tell you a story at this point. Many years ago, I was a student in Japan. And in Kyoto, the place where I was staying, there met a good number of Americans who practiced Zen Buddhism, Chan Buddhism, were going to sit in monasteries under the guidance of a Chan or Zen teacher.

One of my friends told me the following story. One morning, he was sitting in the monastery, sitting, meditating, and Guanyin Pusa, Guanyin Bodhisattva, walked into the meditation room. There were a number of people lined up meditating. Guanyin, with her acolytes, walked into the room and started to walk around him, burning incense and chanting. And he knew at that moment that he had been saved, that Guanyin had come to him and had anointed him in some way, that he was now in the process of great enlightenment.

Now the rule in this monastery was that after two hours of meditation, you have to go and you have to see the teacher, your meditation teacher. And he walks in to see his meditation teacher, and he's walking on air. He's delighted. He says, Guanyin came to see me in the meditations. Teacher says, ignore her. She'll go away.

Section 7: Some Reasons for Buddhism's Success

1. Why was Buddhism Successful in China?

Why was Buddhism successful in China? Buddhism continues, now firmly embedded in society, and will prove itself ineradicable, even today.

We've seen a monk come in from abroad with magical powers to gain support of a foreign conqueror. A Chinese monk who wants to understand Buddhist concepts correctly and who wants to build up a Buddhist community that has certain rules and procedures.

And a final Chinese monk who transforms Buddhism into an intellectual pursuit of the elite, open to all, not just the devout. Who makes the monastery the center of Chinese cultural life, and who tries to make sure that all people can experience religion in person. But above all, somebody who understands that the independence of the monastery from social and political demands must be defended. That's a difficult task when so much of the patronage comes exactly from families and from politicians and rulers who want your support.

What are the reasons Buddhism succeeds in China? That's something we should discuss, and I ask that you do so.

2. Some Reasons for Buddhism's Success

Well, I can offer some of my reasons. It's a new civilization with its own texts, its own antiquity, its own philosophy, its own magic, its own architecture, its own medicine. It's a clerical community of people who try to live a good life, a good life apart from others, a refuge in a time of chaos. It's a new life of discipline, a model of how people can discipline themselves and live a simple and frugal life. And it offers salvation to all people capable of faith.

But I think there's another element, too. Buddhism, with its ideas about karmic merit, gives people a reason to be good for themselves. It makes being good something of self-interest.

Now we're going to meet with Professor Robson at this point and take a look at what he sees as the history of Buddhism, but before we do that, I want to go to the Lingyin Si, outside of Hangzhou. We went there in May, 2013. And we went with the following problem. We know that major Buddhist monuments have become tourist centers. You have to pay a fee to get in. The government takes some of the fee. Maybe if there is a functioning monastery, the monastery gets some of the money, too. Not necessarily, however.

Well, why don't you look around in this monastery and come back and give us a sense of what you think people are doing. Are they tourists? Is this religious life? What's going on? And then we'll talk to Professor Robson about what he sees, both in the past and in the present.

Section 8: Lingyin Temple

1. A Trip to Lingyin Temple

One of the most famous Buddhist temples in China, the Lingyin Si, a Buddhist monastery, sometimes called the Monastery of the Soul's Retreat in English. It began in the 300s. Probably around 1,700 years old. The founder is reputed to be a monk who came from India. At one point around 1,000 years ago, they had 3,000 monks here.

But in more recent times, it played a very important role, too. During the Cultural Revolution, as the temples of Zhejiang Province were closed, the monks were sent here. And the temple was closed off to the public as a refuge for the monks.

If you look behind me, you'll see that great wall, which has the legend "zhichixitian," you're a step away from paradise. In other words, that one step into belief will bring you salvation. We're going to go into this temple and show you what people are doing. What the buildings are. Tell you something about that.

But we come in with a question in mind. We've looked at China and we've seen that there's an enormous amount of tourism today. But is there also religious activity? In other words, is this temple simply a tourist site, which it certainly is. But is it also still a religious site? And we can only answer that question by going inside and seeing what's happening.

We're here in the main courtyard of the Lingyin Temple-- the Lingyin Monastery. I'm facing what's usually called the "tianwangdian"-- The Hall of the Heavenly Kings. Which is the Guardian Kings of the Buddhist temple. And traditionally, you would come in through that hall. And after you enter that, could come into the central square.

We're looking at a building called, in Chinese, the "Daxiong Baodian"-- The Mahavira Hall-- which contains the Statue of the great Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha. In this case, the statue is built in 1956. Because the earlier statue, made of camphor wood, coated with gold, had collapsed as a beam came down. The hall itself is around 33 meters tall. So it's a giant hall.

And the thing that I'd like you to pay attention to, as I step out of the camera, is what people are doing in this area. We can talk about that later. But let's first take a look at what people are doing.

[BUDDHIST CHANTING]

So we're right outside of the Lingyin Si monastery. And along this ridge called the "Feilai Feng," we see innumerable carvings, probably around almost 400 carvings in stone. But they're not from the Tang Dynasty, like the famous stone carvings of Longmen and other places. These are begun really in the year 951, during the Wuyue Kingdom. The Five Dynasties period, the southern kingdom based in Hangzhou.

And they continue to be carved until the Ming Dynasty. You can see the popularity of the place. The stones I'm standing on have been worn down, worn smooth. Here, too, by endless pilgrims coming to worship.

The two statues next to me are from the Yuan Dynasty. And remember that the Yuan Dynasty is the period when the Mongols controlled China. When the Mongols came to China, they brought with them the Buddhism of Tibet. And they went and put Tibetan monks in charge of Buddhism in China proper.

These are two statues of the Yuan Dynasty. And within this complex of statues, you in fact have around 50 Tibetan Buddhist statues. And that's because during the Yuan period, when most of these statues were done, the Buddhist monks from Tibet had such power within China.

You'll notice that the stream that runs down along the front of the temple has been blocked up here. And within this stream, you see fish, you see some turtles. But what this is, this pool is a very distinctive part of a Buddhist temple. It's called the pool for releasing life, in Chinese a "fangshengchi."

And the idea is that Buddhists regard all sentient beings-- all animals-- as having value, having life. And that's why they're vegetarians-- in principle vegetarians. And so one act of merit is to save an animal, to save a sentient being from being killed. And that brings you karmic merit.

And so you can come to a place like this and you can take a fish. And rather than bringing it home to eat, you bring it here and let it free, so that it can live. That's gaining Buddhist merit.

2. Lingyin Temple and Chinese Buddhism with Professor James Robson

Professor Bol: This past May, we went to Hangzhou and visited Lingyin Si, Lingyin monastery, Lingyin temple, to get a sense of what religious practice in China today was like, Buddhist religious practice, in particular. But Lingyin Si is a very interesting temple. It has a long history and it's on a mountain in a set of religious sites, and I thought today we would ask Professor James Robson from Harvard University, the

Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, to tell us something about what we've been seeing and to give us insights from his own work about the situatedness, the place in which Chinese religion, particularly Buddhism, unfolds. Now he's actually written extensively about this looking at mountains which are populated by many religious sites and today we want to see what insight he could offer us about Lingyin Si in Hangzhou. OK. So James, you've been to Lingyin Si, I take it?

Professor Robson: Yes. In fact, I went in the late '80s when it had just opened up again.

Professor Bol: And has it grown today or has it simply been refurbished? Because it looks in many ways very modern.

Professor Robson: It has. Yeah. One of the very interesting things the Lingyin Si is that it has undergone a number of renovations over time and so there's been some very large destruction that's happened there at times, burnings of wooden temples, but then it's always been revived and today it's probably the largest and wealthiest Buddhist monastery in all of China.

Professor Bol: Oh really?

Professor Robson: Yeah. Most of the buildings were redone around 2002, if I remember, and it was added to at that time.

Professor Bol: How old is the temple?

Professor Robson: Well the nice thing about the Lingyin Si is that it actually is like a small capsule which you can read Buddhist history through. So it was founded in the fourth century by a monk named Huili, who established the center there, at least they traced their lineage there. And then it reached different peaks at certain times throughout Chinese history, particularly in the Song dynasty, then in the Yuan dynasty, and again in the modern period. It's flourishing in the contemporary China.

Professor Bol: We also noticed that people were actively engaged in burning incense and things like this. When we see that, should we consider these people Buddhist believers or Buddhists, or what's their relationship to Buddhism, to the temple?

Professor Robson: All right. That's a good question that's often confusing for people too because people tend to think of Buddhist monasteries as set off from society, as something-- a quiet place for monks to practice meditation and contemplate Buddhist doctrines and things like that, but we now realize that even from the very beginning, these were social institutions that have connections with the outside world, indeed, were dependent upon them, and people who come to visit those sites, you have religious practitioners inside. You have believers who will come. But I think even from the Song dynasty on, you also have these centers which are set up on mountains, beautiful places, aesthetically appealing, with imagery and all kinds of grandiose architecture. So people have come there also as tourists or sightseeing.

Professor Bol: So tourism isn't just a modern invention in this case.

Professor Robson: Absolutely not.

Professor Bol: Normally if you were to be walking into the temple, you'd be passing through the Hall of the Four Guardian Kings?

Professor Robson: Yes. Yeah, so the Lingyin Si is actually a very good example of traditional Song architecture related to Chan or Zen Buddhism. It's one of the best examples today, even. And the structure is very precise, set up like an imperial residence. So, in fact, there's a north-south axis. And as you enter into the main gate, which is either called the shanmen, the mountain gate, or the sanmen, the three gates,

which has three openings. You come inside and then you will go first through the Buddha Hall, and then there's a building behind it. Now, on that north-south axis, there are five main buildings. Some of those are newly constructed in order to match the older design and then, you'll have buildings to the west and to the east. The buildings to the west are traditionally places where visitors, the tourists, wouldn't go. That's the domain of the ordained practicing monks.

Professor Bol: That's, in fact, to even today, that where the dormitories are for the monks?

Professor Robson: Yes. Exactly. So that would be where the ordained monks live, practice, and it's closed off. Very complicated though-- it's very much like a complex institution or corporation even, with all kinds of jobs.

Professor Bol: So as we walk in, we have the Hall of the Guardian kings, and then we have the courtyard. We see people burning incense, and then it rises up and you have this massive Buddha Hall. It's 33 meters tall.

Professor Robson: Yes.

Professor Bol: What's going on in there?

Professor Robson: That's where the main religious function of the monastery plays out. Today, people will visit it but that's also the place where rituals are done and you have a large image of Shakyamuni, Buddha, inside of that Hall. And so that-- the nice thing about the Lingyin Si is also how it connects all the way back-- even though, they claim the beginning in the fourth century-- they make connections all the way back to India and Buddhism at the time of the Buddha himself. And, in fact, one of the interesting features of the Lingyin Monastery is this Feilai Feng. Or The Peak That Came Flying. The claim is that site and one of the inscriptions above the doorways for the hall has that inscription on it, the idea is that is the vulture peak the Buddha preached on that flew to China and this is the location of it now.

Professor Bol: So it may have been far away to the west, but then it came to this central country to have its--

Professor Robson: Have its place.

Professor Bol: Permanent existence.

Professor Robson: Yes. And then it flew-- then the Japanese will claim that it flew onto Japan. So they--

Professor Bol: It keeps moving around?

Professor Robson: Yes.

Professor Bol: So as we go up this mountain-- up the hillside and we go to the main hall, then above that we have another hall called, I think, the Cangjing Lou, a library.

Professor Robson: Yes

Professor Bol: This historian Sutra building. What's that for?

Professor Robson: So those-- they keep the entire Buddhist canon in there.

Professor Bol: You said the Buddhist canon. What do you mean?

Professor Robson: So this is the collection of all of the Buddha's teachings and the rules that govern the monastics and so it's divided into those different sections. For the most part, laity would now not open the pages of a Buddhist text, but they might be devotees to a particular Sutra or scripture within that body of text.

Professor Bol: We have, for example, right, I think, below the hall, there's an inscription of the Prajnaparamita

Professor Robson: The Prajnaparamita.

Professor Bol: Prajnaparamita

Professor Robson: The Heart Sutra.

Professor Bol: The Heart Sutra, right? That would be something that people would know? Or would recite or--?

Professor Robson: Yeah. Some people would because it's the most commonly chanted text.

Professor Bol: And it's not very long.

Professor Robson: And it's very short, in fact. The Heart Sutra is one of the most philosophically deep texts related to a certain school of Chinese Buddhist philosophy that deals with-- basically telling us that we perceive the world in ways that are different than the ultimate reality of what that world is, and so they have a concept of emptiness that things are empty of the qualities or the ideas we ascribe to them. But most people who chant that text really often have no idea what the content is. It's a pure-- it becomes what we call a mantra or a powerful saying. Then that actually is very important, because many of the people who come to the Linying Si today are worshipping Buddhism less as a philosophical tradition and more for its apotropeic powers, for healing, for safe childbirth, very practical concerns.

Professor Bol: There's one more building which I saw there which I wasn't sure what it was doing. And that was the Huayan or the Flower Garland Hall.

Professor Robson: Yes.

Professor Bol: Now I've understood Huayan, Flower Garland, to be a sort of sect of Buddhism but here was a hall named it. Could you tell us something about that?

Professor Robson: You know, it's an anomaly in the Lingyin Si, actually, as one of the buildings that was added later in order to provide the symmetry to the new buildings. But it relates to the Flower Garland Sutra, the Huayan Jing.

Professor Bol: It does relate to that?

Professor Robson: Yes, and so again, even though the Lingyin Temple is primarily a Chan or a Zen temple, it actually is tied up with-- the Buddhist temples weren't exclusive to one single tradition. In fact, the term Chan or Zen monastery was just a general term for a certain type of monastery, but it could include monks who specialized in other forms of Buddhism as well. And that's very common throughout its history.

Professor Bol: Well as we walk out of the building, we go along a cliff into which have been carved all sorts of Buddha figures. And when we look at this, when we see that the rocks of been worn smooth in places where people touching them, feeling them, walking across, walking through the rocks, this--

certainly a lot of these statues seem to be dating from the curious Yuan period. And there's one that's a particular interest for us -- well this one right here-- fat, happy looking figure. What are we seeing?

Professor Robson: Well, this-- often people will call this the Laughing Buddha or the Happy Buddha, right, which is Maitreya of Mile in Chinese. And that's a very-- again, interesting case of the mixing of Buddhism with popular beliefs. So the Maitreya image looks very different in traditional iconography, but became mixed with a legend a monk by the name of Budai or Cloth Bag, which was a popular figure who traveled around with a large sack cloth over his shoulder and dispensed wishes or candy to children. And the belief was that if you worship this figure, and nowadays if you rub his belly-- that's the key devotional act-- then you would get riches in return. Or nowadays, you would get the birth of a child or there are many different things that are mixed up with it.

Professor Bol: But this is very much a popular notion of the relationship between us and the gods, right?

Professor Robson: Yes.

Professor Bol: In that we ask them for favors and they give them--

Professor Robson: They give them back. Yes. But I like-- the tactile dimension of this is very important. I think even from the inside of the temple. You mentioned the incense. A very common practice you see in temples all over China today is people standing around the incense burner and taking the smoke and then touching parts of their body, either a sore back or their head for headaches or many different types of things. So that's, again, this conjoining with popular belief with Buddhism. But back to the statues. Again, the Lingyin Si is like a microcosm of Buddhist history in China, because you mentioned the Yuan dynasty. And those images, many of those-- at least a hundred of the total number there were carved in the Yuan dynasty and those show the mixing of Tibetan Buddhism into the Chinese world and representations there-- so different deities that are brought in with a special school of Buddhism which we refer to as esoteric Buddhism.

Professor Bol: I would like to close this with asking you a question which I was asking myself as we went there which is the state of religious practice in China today. I went to China for the first time in 1985 and there were a couple of religious sites that were open. Very few people in them. Tourism mainly, really, but not popular, particularly. Foreign tourists, sometimes. Very few monks. Very few people engaged in religious activities. Well, for 60 years, 50 years, religious activity in China was suppressed. Did people largely fall away or is it something that's going to be coming back, do you think? Or is this sort of that the religious history of-- religious activity in China really has receded in many ways and is not going to be recovered?

Professor Robson: Actually, I think just the opposite, in fact.

Professor Bol: Oh, really?

Professor Robson: That, as you know, when you press something down, it can often come back with a vengeance. And I think there were short periods clearly where religion was on the decline and Buddhism was hit pretty hard. The interesting thing to connect it to the Lingyin Si is that it survived the hardest persecutions and particularly a lot of the mass destruction that went on during the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, there were troops of students who are coming out of Hangzhou that we're supposed to go and smash the images of the Lingyin Temple, but college students came in and protected the route out there. And then Zhou Enlai stepped in and preserved it.

So, initially, you could make a case for preserving it as a cultural center and then, in fact, it became a place that avoided a lot of that destruction. And it came back very quickly then once religion was eased up in the '80s and into the '90s. It was interesting. Some of the first places that sprang back as part of kind of tourism

were religious sites. So the government had to make a decision what to do. And Deng Xiaoping actually said something very interesting. He said well, let them come, but just treat them as tourists.

Professor Bol: So what we see in fact is manifestations of a resurgence of Buddhism, of religious activity after a period of suppression. But this wasn't the first period of suppression in Chinese history, was it?

Professor Robson: No. In fact, again the Linying Si is a good example of a site that has gone through many of these, at the end of the Tang Dynasty, in the Song, in the Qing, you have periodic moments where Buddhism is cracked down on. In fact, some imperial decrees would say make all Buddhist temples-- convert them into Daoist temples.

Professor Bol: That's true. In the early 12th century, there was such a decree.

Professor Robson: Yes. And then they'll go back. And so what's interesting to me is that in spite of these fluctuations back and forth, the site is usually the place that remains the same and that tends to be related to, I think, the sacrality of that site and I think, the interesting notion that the architecture can function in either way. It's not like the kinds of destruction you find in Europe, for example, where you might destroy a church and build a mosque or something like that. Here they use the same site and it just moves in and out of these different religions.

Professor Bol: And the same style of building to some extent, as well.

Professor Robson: Yes,

Professor Bol: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it and I think our audience out there appreciates it as well.

Professor Robson: Thank you very much.

Section 9: Buddhism Art at Sackler Museum

A Tour of Chinese Buddhist Art at the Sackler Museum

Professor Bol: This week we've been talking about Buddhism in lecture and your readings. And we're here at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum of the Harvard Art museums to take a look at some of the objects in their collection of Buddhist art. Now one of the things that we've talked about with Buddhism is the distinction between Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. And you've told me that this we're looking at here right behind you is a Buddha.

Doctor Mowry: That's correct. Yes.

Professor Kirby: How do you know it's not a Bodhisattva?

Doctor Mowry: Very simple-- first of all, Buddha means the enlightened one. Bodhisattva means enlightened being and we'll distinguish them. The Buddha is the enlightened one. It's gained enlightenment,

has entered into final Nirvana. The most important-- the single distinguishing characteristic of the Buddha is the bump or the cranial protuberance atop the head.

Professor Bol: You mean that's not just a hairstyle?

Doctor Mowry: No. Not at all. That is a cranial protuberance which has been covered with hair to give it the gloss of naturalism. But in Buddhism, the symbols tend to be very readily observable and understandable. That is, they're very literal. The ushnisha, or the cranial bump signals the expanded wisdom that the Buddha gained at the time his enlightenment. Only the Buddha has the ushnisha. It may be shown this way with sort of waves of hair over it. It may be shown with small snail shell curls of hair over it, so it's integrated into the coiffure, but at the same time it is an ushnisha and it signals his expanded wisdom.

Professor Bol: How about the two base relief carvings to the sides?

Doctor Mowry: These represent monks. In this case, they're the Buddha's disciples-- the younger disciple, Ananda, the oldest of the disciples, Kasyapa with his wrinkled face. These were done in relief. They were a little bit earlier. But you notice that the Buddhist monks have the shaven pate or shaven head and that's what's represented here. In general, the Buddha is presented in the guise of a Buddhist monk, with monk's clothing, without jewelry, without crowns, anything like that. And so you have the presentation of the monk or disciple here. If the Buddha is presented in the guise of a monk, how do you tell the difference from a monk and the Buddha? Well, the chief thing is the ushnisha on top of the head. It's not here. It's not there. But look how bold it is there. In some periods, in some styles, it may be more subtle than we see it here, but that's the classic appearance of the ushnisha in China.

Professor Kirby: Well, Bobby, this Buddha seems, compared to the Bodhisattva that we have from Dunhuang much more austere. It's very simple monochrome. Is that deliberate or is this simply a matter of how it has aged over time.

Doctor Mowry: It's definitely a matter of how it's aged over time. Sculpture all over the world, religious sculpture, whether it's in India, whether it's ancient Greece, medieval Europe, Tang China-- the religious sculptures were all fully painted. You see hints of that here or bits of original pigment-- the green on the scarf there or a little bit of the saffron on the robe there. You realize that yes, it's sandstone. It's sort of a buff sandstone but originally the sculpture was fully covered with a white gesso which is simply a calcium ground, so that the pigments are applied to a white ground and to a smooth surface rather than to a grainy, buff surface.

You see where the face looks a little bit whiter up here. For whatever reason, even though the pigment is gone, some of that white gesso ground, traces of it, still remain there. They disappeared here, although the white blotches through here-- that's not damage. That's a little bit of the original white gesso ground. And then you have still some of the pigment here and if you zoom in on the piece, you can see that in these areas where there is some saffron pigment, there's quite a bit more of the white. Where you see the white, the pigment has simply disappeared. This is the usual state of most sculptures from China. Having been produced in the early eighth century, so many centuries ago, the pigment has simply disappeared and has not been refreshed. At Dunhuang, because of the stable climate, the original pigment has been preserved.

Professor Bol: Now, you brought up the word Dunhuang. Well, it turns out that this museum also has some really extraordinary objects from Dunhuang and I'd like to ask Doctor Mowry to introduce them to us.

Doctor Mowry: With pleasure. Now, several museums in the United States but also principally, the British Museum, the British Library, the Guimet in Paris, a museum there, the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris have scrolls and Sutras from Dunhuang. This is the only museum in the West that has a sculpture from Dunhuang and fragments of wall paintings from Dunhuang. Like the big Buddha from Tianlong Shan that we discussed, these also come from the early eighth century. The differences in style have basically to do with different locales of production, Tianlong Shan in central Shanxi Province, Dunhuang in the far

Northwest. But Dunhuang, in particular, as Peter mentioned, was on the Silk Route, so there are lots of influences that are passing through that area. If you look here, look at the richness of the brocade in the Bodhisattva's garment. Excuse me.

If the Buddha is dressed in the guise of a Buddhist monk, the Bodhisattva is dressed in the guise of an Indian Prince. The reason for that, looking at the Buddha's life chronologically, you'll remember that the Buddha was born as a prince of a small state in the foothills of the Himalayas, born a crown prince, as a matter of fact. When he decided to take up the religious life, he rejected all claim to his father's throne. He rejected his inheritance. But all that, notwithstanding, he was born a prince and dressed in the robes of a prince.

So the monks were trying to figure out, how should we portray a Bodhisattva? They looked at the life of the Buddha and say, well, before becoming a Buddha, he was a prince. And so they dressed the Bodhisattva in the guise of a prince. And of course, the Bodhisattva is an enlightened being, but one who has postponed entry into final Nirvana in order to help other sentient things gain enlightenment.

Professor Bol: So I have a question, gentlemen. So we just were told that that protuberance coming out of the head was a sign of a Buddha. If you looked at this, wouldn't you think it's the same thing?

Professor Kirby: Well, if it was the Buddha at a young age, with a younger hairdo?

Doctor Mowry: No. We don't know what the Buddha's hair arrangement might have been when he actually lived. But in this particular instance, it's supposed to be a high coiffure piled on top of the head. And what distinguishes it is the Buddha will either have, in most cases, the wavy locks that you see over there, or even over the ushnisha or will have short snail shell curls of hair. Here, it's obviously long strands of hair though which a comb has been pulled. One never finds that with the Buddha.

Professor Bol: Which Bodhisattva is this?

Doctor Mowry: We don't know. This is an attendant Bodhisattva. According to the Sutras, there are thousands of different Bodhisattvas, a few of which we know by name. The principal ones are in China. Guanyin, the one over there.

Professor Bol: So you mentioned Guanyin, which is well known to everybody in China, perhaps the most popular Bodhisattva. Could we take a look at that and learn something about what we're seeing there?

Doctor Mowry: Sure.

Professor Bol: There's a lot of ornamentation on this Guanyin, right? When is it from and where is it from?

Doctor Mowry: OK. This particular sculpture dates to the Sui Dynasty.

Professor Bol: So that'd be the sixth century AD.

Doctor Mowry: The late sixth to early seventh century. Yes. We don't know exactly where it's from. It is probably from Henan, possibly from

Professor Bol: In the North China Plain--

Doctor Mowry: In the North China Plain. Probably from Henan, possibly from Hebei, possibly from Shanxi.

Professor Bol: And it's from Stone? Made out of stone?

Doctor Mowry: Yes. It's carved in stone. Even here, there are some pigments preserved, the green here, the bright red in the halo. But something that is preserved here that we very seldom find on early stone sculptures-- I mean, we don't find it today. It was original there-- but notice the gilding on the face, on the hands. All of the flesh portions were originally gilded. And this was probably true of many--

Professor Bol: Gilded meaning sort of covered in gold.

Doctor Mowry: Covered in gold. Exactly how it was applied, we don't know-- probably with gold leaf but possibly with gold pigment. And by gold pigment, we simply mean gold that's been ground to a fine powder, mixed with the glue and spread over the surface. But anyway, it's real gold.

And part of it is because, as with the gilt bronzes that we have looked at briefly and will look at again, for that greater glory of god, if you will, but the main reason is the Buddhists texts say that light emanated from the body of the Buddha and presumably, the Bodhisattvas as well. And what better way to represent that than to coat the surface, the flesh portions of the surface with gold. Now this is a little bit earlier than some of the ones that we have looked at. It's not quite as naturalistic, in particular in its pose, but it's moving from the very stiff to slightly less stiff with the opening carved between the arms and the torso.

Professor Bol: Now you talked about the flesh parts of it being covered and gilded, covered in gold, and I see here, in another part of the room, a whole series of small statues that are gilded.

Doctor Mowry: That's right.

Professor Bol: Let's talk about that.

Doctor Mowry: OK.

Professor Bol: And to begin with, I guess, what are they for?

Doctor Mowry: These images were not meant to be seen individually. Perhaps the one in the center was meant to be seen individually. We don't know. But even that had a mandorla. And a mandorla simply means a full body halo that would have surrounded it. And surrounding the periphery of the mandorla or of the halo, there would have little sculptures like the ones that are on the backboard of little angels. We call them Apsarasas or Feitian in Chinese. And these are playing musical instruments and they're there to celebrate the Buddha.

But by and large, these were in assemblages for altar pieces, with a Buddha in the center, perhaps Bodhisattva on either side, and then various donor figures, monks, like we have here. When we talk about an ensemble or an assemblage, if you can focus on the little plaque in the back, it reminds us that in this kind of assemblage, you will have a Buddha in the center, flanked by Bodhisattvas. And there are monks. There are attendant Bodhisattvas down below looking up at the Buddha and offering prayers. Then there are little Apsarasas or the flying angels up at the top. The little attendant Bodhisattvas that you see down here, each one kneeling on a lotus blossom are the equivalent of the one from Dunhuang over there. And that's the reason simply because they are attendant Bodhisattva's and don't have names that we don't know exactly their identity.

Professor Bol: There's one very small piece down here in the lower left which-- can you tell me something about that?

Doctor Mowry: Sure. Now this one is not Chinese. There are several-- the group over here on the side of the case are not Chinese, per se but they relate to the Chinese pieces. This one, in particular, is part of the

greater Indian culture that comes from an area that today would be in Northwestern Pakistan, the Swat Valley. Here we see reflected the Gandharan style. The Gandharan style originated much earlier, around the time of Christ, coincidentally, in the West. But the style originated in what today would be Pakistan, Afghanistan, and such, and it reflects the influence of the Greco-Roman tradition. Alexander the Great had been in that area, left a lingering sort of Greco-type civilization, but they were also extensive trade contacts with ancient Rome.

And so the first images of the Buddha came about in this region and in India in first century AD. When they were wanting to dream up, how should we make the Buddha look? I mean it's one thing to say, let's make the Buddha look like a monk, but for an artistic prototype, they took the Roman image of Apollo as the prototype. So you have the figure dressed in a Roman toga-like garment with all these heavy folds. The treatment of the face is very Greco-Roman. Now, the reason that that's in here-- when you move over here, look at this wonderful figure from China.

Professor Bol: I need to interrupt just to say that this piece they'll be able to look at in 3D.

Doctor Mowry: That's right.

Professor Bol: Right. So also tell us what you want us to see and pay attention to when we look at it.

Doctor Mowry: OK. Now what is so interesting about this piece apart from its style? Let's say, when does it date? It dates into the fourth century and this, very possibly-- the scholarly opinion is beginning to concur-- that this is the earliest iconic Chinese representation of the Buddha extant. There might have been ones that are slightly earlier, but this is thought to be the earliest iconic representation as opposed to decorative image.

Now the earliest images from China-- remember, Buddhism is an Indian religion that found its way, partly over the silk route, partly through other routes, into China. It flourished there but the earliest Chinese images of the Buddha, of course, are imitating Indian images. They are looking at images produced at Buddhism's source. And so they're copying, in some cases, they Gandharan style. So you see the treatment of the robes take on a life of their own and really masks the presence and the anatomy of the body underneath the robes, as you see there. The heavy, toga-type collar. Even the face with its distinctive moustache is very Greco-Roman typeface of the Indian Gandharan style. He is in meditation. The Buddha's will all be presented with their hands in a particular mudra.

And the mudra is a particular hand gesture indicating a certain action or attitude. And associated with the historical Buddha, that is, the one who actually lived in Nepal, Shakyamuni, there are couples of Buddhas associated with him, basically the meditation mudra. He's sitting in meditation just before his enlightenment. He's sitting on the ground under the Bodhi tree, the tree of knowledge, hands in his lap. And that's the meditation mudra. Like I say, these symbols tend to be very literal in Buddhism.

The next mudra that we have associated with the historical Buddha is the one of his enlightenment. Remember, he just goes from this position. He want someone to witnesses his enlightenment, but there's no one around. So he calls the earth itself to witnesses his enlightenment. He simply reaches his right hand over his right knee and hits the ground. Come and look at this momentous event is what he is saying that's the Bhūmisparśha, or enlightenment mudra. Then you have a first sermon where the hands are up here as if he's setting the wheel of law in motion and that's just a reference to Buddhist teachings.

And then the most typical mudra is the one with the hand raised where that's a preaching mudra, but he's often said to be preaching the Lotus Supra.

Professor Bol: So I have a last question about all the Buddhist objects in this room and again, this is sort of my cynical historian sort of question, which is, somebody had to pay for them.

Doctor Mowry: At the time or now or both?

Professor Bol: Then, then. Then, of course.

Doctor Mowry: Right.

Professor Bol: Who paid for them? How did they get them? Was there a whole? Were there factories that produced them? Were there individual craftsmen who traveled around and did it for people? Could you tell us anything about that?

Doctor Mowry: Sure, there were workshops, not so much factories although it might be equated with a small factory, there were workshops that specialized in the production of stone sculpture, stone sculpture in the round such as the Guanyin that we looked at. There were other workshops that specialized in the production of the cave temples. And remember that with many of the cave temples, most of the cave temples in China, these were hewn from the living stone, if you will.

That is, you go into a stone cliff, basically limestone, sandstone, not granite, marble, something like that-- but you excavate a U-shaped cave into the cliff. Then the sculptures are actually carved into the walls so that there's sculpture in very high relief, not structure in the round. So there's one set of workshop people who do the cave temples and the associated sculpture. Who did they do them for? Others did that. Others did the bronzes. Who for? Whoever could afford them. Now with the cave temples, of course, some of the largest ones and some of them you have at Yungang for example, up at northern Shanxi near Datong. There you have some that are absolutely monumental or near Luoyang with Longmen. Those, of course, are done under imperial patronage, with huge amounts of money from the state going in.

Professor Bol: So you mentioned before that you thought that most people in China at this point were Buddhist, which I think what we should understand that to mean is they in some way patronize Buddhist sites.

Doctor Mowry: That's right. They were not exclusively Buddhist.

Professor Bol: But would everyone have something like this in their home or is this really for people of a higher standing, for officials, for elites and so on.

Doctor Mowry: This is really for people of elevated means, whether officials or not. Sculptures like this would have been very expensive. A stone sculpture would have been very expensive. So some of these-- one can imagine that a rather grand altar piece, such as this one that dates to 484, or a few that are even larger might have been made for temple use or they might have been made for the private chapel of a very wealthy person. But when we're dealing with lots of the larger stone sculptures that are not from cave temples or even some of the other bronze sculptures, they may have been made for temples.

Now temples, as churches in the West today, are exempt from taxation-- I mean, at the time in China, were exempt from taxation.

Professor Bol: That's right.

Doctor Mowry: People would give money. They would make offerings to the temple. Wealthy people would often give large amounts of money. And of course, when the temple needed a new building, when they wanted more sculpture, just like today, they were engaged in fund-raising to support these activities. Often the donors are represented. As I mentioned this exquisite figure right here is a donor figure, a female donor. There was probably her husband, a matching male figure on the other side of the grand altar piece that they were associated with.

Professor Bol: Bill, you had a question.

Professor Kirby: Well, I was just saying that today, of course, Buddhist temples are being rebuilt all over China. Buddhism has come back in a very substantial way. There are, of course, state subsidies for temples that had been destroyed in the Cultural Revolution and otherwise. But also, there's an enormous amount of private philanthropy. Whether or not there are artistic manifestations of it like this, I don't know. Certainly not what I've ever seen of this quality. But you could go to Hong Kong and there's are at least two new large Buddhist temples that have been recently rebuilt and I, personally, have bought a brick for one in which my name, for 200 kuai, 200 Hong Kong dollars I should say is now right next to the largest outdoor sitting Buddha in the world near the Grand Hong Kong--

Professor Bol: And in fact, in the countryside in Zhejiang, I've seen places which specialize in doing Buddhist scrolls and producing new objects for new temples being founded and so on.

Doctor Mowry: And I've done exactly the same thing in Korea, not with a brick, but with a roof tile.

Professor Bol: Yes, and in Japan too.

Doctor Mowry: I wrote my name on the underside of a roof tile, which, with any luck now, I'm bearing perpetual witness at a temple.

Professor Kirby: But you know, there's another answer to our question of who paid for all this? And the answer to any visitor to our gallery here is Mr. Grenville L. Winthrop. He paid for all of this, or he acquired all of this art. We're going to talk more about this in a moment, the question of how all these things come into a museum. But Mr. Grenville Winthrop was one of the great benefactors of the Harvard Art Museums and of the Sackler Museum and I am told, at least when one reads a little bit about Grenville Winthrop, that he became a full time and really quite extraordinary collector when his daughters broke his heart by eloping, one with a chauffeur, and the other with a butler, leaving him alone and bereft and we, at least at Harvard are in part, the beneficiaries of his unhappiness.

Professor Bol: Yu Wen you've been a student. I met you because you've been teaching in the course, but you actually had a question for us about this.

Yu Wen: [SPEAKING Chinese]

Professor Kirby: The question is, how the hell did all this magnificent art, particularly these frescoes--

Professor Bol: And these are just two of eleven.

Professor Kirby: Two of eleven frescoes. How did they end up here in Cambridge, Massachusetts at the Arthur M. Sackler Museum. And there are multiple answers to this question. But the short answer is that it is a professor who brought them here. A professor--

Professor Bol: Langdon Warner.

Prof. Kirby: Langdon Warner, who some say is the model for Indiana Jones, but Professors Warner collected things the old-fashioned way. He took them. And he went out to Dunhuang in 1924, by no means the first of the Western, what many Chinese would say, pillagers of Dunhuang, but he came and he applied a certain technique to take these frescoes from the walls of Dunhuang caves. He ripped this kneeling Bodhisattva out of the socket where he was to be found, and guides at Dunhuang will point to you what is called the Harvard hole. Actually, Harvard is a famous part of the tour.

Professor Bol: So we should say something about Dunhuang which is now one of the greatest tourist sites in China today because it has this extraordinary collection of caves. You know it's interesting-- those caves. I don't know if you know this, but the caves have been completely photographed at very high quality. But they weren't photographed by the Chinese government or the Chinese Tourist Bureau, they were photographed with money from the Mellon Foundation. So in some sense, although these are here, the United States has given something very important back, which is a full, detailed photographic record of all the caves in Dunhuang.

Professor Kirby: So we'll take your art and we'll give you the negatives. Is that your answer?

Professor Bol: Well, I think that one of the things to think about in the movement of all these things that we've seen in this museum, whether it was bronzes that we've given by lords to vassals, or put in graves so that the living and the dead could share goods, or whether it's ceramics which were exported abroad, sent to the court, put on the market, or whether it's Buddhist objects which were bought and sold and made by foreign craftsmen very often who came to China, which left China and went to Korea and Japan, I think that, in fact, what we should be thinking about is not a notion of a nation as possessing an art, but the world possessing art and culture and watching that diffuse and move back and forth across the world.

Professor Kirby: In Langdon Warner's defense, one could say, and he certainly did say, that he was among the last of those to take from Dunhuang, as he put it, in order to preserve the art. There was much pillaging. There was much defacing of the murals in the late '19s and early '20s and a period of comparative disunity in that part of the empire. And he brought them back here in order to preserve them, in order, also, to make Harvard a competitive art museum in this realm with some of the great European collections that had been there before him. And the other thing that one can say, that when you go to Dunhuang you can see the original art in its magnificent current state, but if you want to see a kneeling attendant Bodhisattva unencumbered by large numbers of tour groups, you should come to the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.

Professor Bol: Does that answer your question in some way?

Yu Wen: I need to think about it.

Professor Bol: Ah.