

General Munthe's Chinese Buddhist Sculpture: An Embarrassment of Riches?

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Chinese Buddhist stone sculpture after the Tang dynasty

In 1942, Osvald Sirén reconsidered a number of Chinese Buddhist figures first published by him in 1925, in order to present a more coherent picture of the production of stone sculpture made in north China between the end of the Tang (618–906) and the beginning of the Yuan (1279–1368).¹

An interesting aspect of his 1942 foray into what was then relatively uncharted territory was the identification of two 12th-century tendencies, separate but related by some of the same features: a more naturalistic 'baroque' manner, ranging from the truly expressive to the merely decorative, and an archaistic one, referring directly back to 6th-century modes of representation. Although he had previously thought that some dated to the latter part of the Tang, Sirén now reassigned almost all of the images, naturalistic and archaistic, to the Jin period, seeing them as an expression of the enthusiasm for Buddhism by a nomadic conquering power.

The artistic landscape mapped out in 'Chinese Sculptures of the Sung, Liao and Chin Dynasties' was revisited in 1984 in an article entitled "Buddhist Sculptures of the Liao Dynasty, A reassessment of Osvald Sirén's Study", by Angela Falco Howard.² Because Sirén's study made little difference between the Khitan Liao (907–1125) and the Jurchen Jin (1115–1234), Howard felt it necessary to distinguish more precisely the sculpture made under the two dynasties, and in particular to examine Liao production.³ In an epilogue, she

¹ O. Sirén, "Chinese Sculptures of the Sung, Liao and Chin Dynasties", *BMFEA*, 14, 1942, 45–64; Sirén, *Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*, 4 vols, London, 1925, pls. 541–6 are attributed to the Tang, pls. 584–5 to the Liao and Jin.

² A.F. Howard, "Buddhist Sculptures of the Liao Dynasty, A Reassessment of Osvald Sirén's Study", *BMFEA*, 56, 1984, 1–95.

³ The Liao co-existed with the Northern Song (906–1127); the greater part of their territory was north of the Great Wall. The Jin occupied the whole of north China down to the Huai River, the boundary with the Southern Song (1127–1279).

revised his Jin dating of at least some of the naturalistic images, placing them firmly into the 8th century by comparison with material excavated in 1950 from the ruins of a pagoda in Shanxi province.

The images that Howard thus dated were part of a rather homogenous body of work recorded by Sirén (in 1925) as having come from a pagoda in Dingzhou, west Hebei.⁴ In 1942, Sirén reported that:

“They were all said to have come from a place ‘near Pao-ting or Ting-chou’, an indication that is fully supported by the quality of the marble and the workmanship, and to judge from the fact that some of these figures are attached to slabs of varying size and form, they must have formed part of the decoration of an architectural monument, probably a pagoda. I have seen at least a dozen of them, all about one metre high, executed in the round, though in many cases attached to background slabs, partly cut off, and in addition to these there are some larger statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas belonging to the same group.”⁵

He also remarked that a number of the images had passed through the hands of various dealers in Peking some twenty years previously. At least eighteen images from the ‘architectural’ group are known to exist, and thirteen of the larger ‘free-standing’ group (the tallest over two metres). Sirén was taken by the smaller figures, finding two images in particular remarkable for their emotional enervation—guardian warrior (*lishi*) and the *luohan* Kāśyapa; the Kāśyapa he described thus:

“The monk, who stands absolutely motionless, steeped in fervent prayer, appears like a symbol of deep spiritual devotion. The figure, which is completely covered up by the thick mantle and placed almost in profile against the background slab, is quite simple, but so striking is the attitude that the monk may be considered one of the most expressive human representations in Chinese sculpture.”⁶

He thought that the large Buddhas failed to reach the level of the metre-high images; they were carved for the pagoda’s parent temple perhaps two or three decades later. The larger seated Bodhisattvas (Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra) were somewhat effeminate. More satisfactory were the tall standing figures. They all represented “the most naturalistic phase of what we have called the dec-

⁴ O. Sirén, *Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*, pls. 541–6. Zhou and Xian are Chinese administrative districts. Prior to the 20th century, the region was known as Dingzhou, as was the city; in the 20th century, Dingxian has also been used to describe the city and its surrounds (e. g. recent gazettes are the *Zhili Dingzhou zhi*, 1849, and the *Dingxian zhi*, 1934).

⁵ O. Sirén, “Chinese Sculptures of the Sung, Liao and Chin Dynasties”, 55–6.

⁶ *ibid.*, 56.

orative style of this epoch” made “while the Chin dynasty was in its heyday”.⁷ The images were compared, on the one hand, with architectural decoration on datable pagodas and memorial pillars, and on the other with sculpture in the round.⁸ Laurence Sickman commented on the material thus:

“One of the most important centres for sculpture of this kind was the Hopei school centred around Pao-ting, Chü-yang, and Ting-chou, where so much excellent work in white marble had been produced from the latter part of the sixth century to the end of the T’ang Dynasty... There is also a large group of sculpture that combines certain purely twelfth-century elements of naturalism, of pictorial composition and dramatic modelling, with archaic stiffness, grooved drapery, and flat folds of a much earlier time. These elements appear to be not so much conscious revivals of an archaic style as merely provincial relapses into relatively flat and linear manners of representation. They are for the most part heavy, ill-conditioned products of fairly skilled but uninspired stone-cutters... The true spirit of the age found its happiest expression in sculpture done in the more pliable materials of clay and wood.”⁹

The discussion of 12th-century Hebei marble carving highlights the general decline of Buddhist stone sculpture from the later 9th century on. Chinese Buddhism recovered from the devastating suppression of 845, (although, as is often noted, the vigour of the Sino-Buddhist philosophical schools was now a thing of the past); yet apart from additions to the walls of existing cave temples, both in the north and south—most notably at Dazu in Sichuan during the Song, and Feilaifeng, near Hangzhou, in the Yuan—and bas-relief carving on Yuan and Ming Buddhist monuments in and around Peking, there seems to have been a general run down of free-standing Buddhist stone sculpture. By contrast, a

⁷ *ibid.*, 59. “The work of decorating the pagoda and the temple, for which all these sculptures were made, may have continued for some time, the architectural pieces being executed a little earlier than the free standing cult-figures, but they must all have been products of the same workshop and were probably made within two or three decades.”

⁸ O. Sirén related the style firstly to decoration on the Southern Pagoda (Nan ta) and its associated octagonal pillars at the Yunju temple, Fangshan, near Peking (in the southern part of Liao territory)—the Nan ta is dated to 1117 and one of the pillars to 1118, the other is probably contemporary; secondly, to several free-standing figures, including two Jin dynasty *luohan* (*arhats*), one found in the Bao’an temple, Baidu village, Tangxian, west Hebei, dated 1146, and the other dated to 1158 (inscribed with a village name, illegible in reproduction). It is not evident from the 1878 Tangxian gazette that there was a Baidu in the district; it is possible that Sirén has mis-transcribed the name of Baita cun (‘white pagoda’ village), which lies a short distance to the south-west of Tangxian city (see *Tangxian zhi*, preface 1878, *Zhong’guo fangzhi congshu*, 183, 1969, 154).

⁹ L. Sickman and A. Soper, *The Art and Architecture of China*, Harmondsworth, 1971, 189.

Confucian tradition continued strongly in the monumental spirit figures at the Song and Ming tombs. What emerges from Sirén's 12th-century dating of the Hebei material is something of an oasis in the context of later Buddhist sculptural production. Although another significant body of stone sculpture, this time in sandstone (mostly) and limestone, was made around 1159 for the Chang'le temple, near Handan, south Hebei, in general little has been published to contradict the impression that energy was diverted after the Tang into other materials.¹⁰

By the 10th century, for large-scale images clay and wood were probably the most widely used materials in the metropolitan areas of China. Clay was surely always a cheaper alternative to stone. The evidence of temple decoration from the Song, Liao and Jin points not only to widespread use of such imagery, but also to an increase in the number of images. Very noticeable from the 10th century in both painting and sculpture, for example, is the development of the cult of the *luohan*, represented in groups of eight to five hundred.¹¹

The more images commissioned for a temple, the more attractive the price of clay would have become to patrons (although economic considerations are always relative). It was also a natural medium to depict a wide range of facial expressions, and we certainly see Song, Liao and Jin sculptors exploring naturalism in different but no less interesting ways than that seen in the 7th and 8th centuries. In the longer term, we might say that clay lost out, the archaeological record constantly reminding us of the great stone monuments of the Six Dynasties and Tang Buddhism, and only infrequently of the more fragile and friable work.¹² On reflection then, the architectural images reported by Sirén as

¹⁰ The Chang'le si was reconstructed and re-equipped ca. 1159; a guardian king, *tianwang*, found there, resembles quite closely one of the free-standing figures under discussion, cf. figure 3 and *Wenwu*, 1982, 10, 41, pl. 53. Monika Thowsen, a student from Oslo with a special interest in the 'Dingzhou' pagoda/temple sculpture visited the site in 1991.

¹¹ Until the end of the Tang, *luohan* were generally represented in sculpture by the disciples Ānanda and Kāśyapa, flanking the historical Buddha Śākyamuni along with the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, in hieratic representations of paradise. The pentad became widespread from the 6th century onwards, with the spread of the *Lotus Sutra*, encouraged by Tiantai Buddhism. Wen Fong has surveyed the textual authority for the grouping of sixteen, eighteen and five hundred *luohan*, the cult of which has been linked with Chan Buddhism (Wen Fong, *The Lohans and a Bridge to Heaven*, Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers, vol. 3, no. 1, Washington, 1958, 23–43). The addition of *luohan* halls to Chinese temple complexes was probably, at least in part, to stimulate pilgrim visits.

¹² See D. Gillman, "Chinese Buddhist Art", *Apollo*, 122 (285), 1985, 328–331, for a discussion of the importance of clay sculpture in Chinese Buddhist art. It was common in the north, where the earth is naturally rich in alumina and very plastic; mixed with fibre to bond it, modelled over armatures, and dried in the air, the material is described in Western texts as stucco, although it obviously materially differs from western stucco. The earliest surviving examples are 5th century, in the dry desert oases of west China—images in cave 169 at Bingling si, Gansu province, can be dated to the 420s. Apart from tomb figurines, larger scale fired ceramic images are quite rare in the north until the Ming, when polychrome stoneware figures were produced in quantity at Yangcheng, Shanxi province, during the 16th and 17th centuries. The magnificent exception is the 11th century set of *luohan* from the Yizhou region, some 200 miles north of Dingzhou (see below, f.n. 60).

having been removed from a Dingzhou pagoda together with a group of free-standing images (from the parent temple) should be understood not so much as representing the end of a long tradition, but as an intrusion into something else that had become well-established; hence Sickman's comment about 'provincial relapses'. Whether we regard individual pieces as amongst "the most expressive representations in Chinese culture" or the product of "fairly skilled but uninspired stone-cutters", the investment in this rather substantial body of work was considerable, both in time and money.

The purpose of this paper is firstly to look afresh at the 'naturalistic' figures, consider some very damaging comments made about them within the last few years, and look again at Angela Howard's dating; secondly, to investigate further the context for the production of Buddhist marble sculpture in west-central Hebei during the Jin.

The marble sculpture at Bergen

The Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum (West Norway Museum of Applied Art) at Bergen is not one of the places traditionally visited by specialists in Chinese art. Known for its collections of European art, particularly 20th-century Norwegian art and crafts, it nevertheless holds a significant collection of Chinese art, including bronze vessels, paintings, sculpture and ceramics.¹³ All of these were acquired for the city by Johan Munthe, a native of Bergen who lived in China from the closing years of the Qing Dynasty to the Japanese occupation of the thirties.

Born in 1864, Munthe grew up in Oslo, and trained as a young man with the Norwegian cavalry. In 1886 he left for China, where he was accepted into the Customs Service, then under British administration.¹⁴ After China's defeat by

¹³ The Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum is one of three such museums of applied art in Norway; it was founded on the model of the Victoria and Albert to promote good design in industry. The Munthe Collection is about two thousand five hundred pieces strong.

¹⁴ P. Ankar and P. O. Leijon, *Chinese Sculpture and Painting in General J. W. N. Munthe's Collection in the West Norway Museum of Applied Art*, Bergen, 1980, 4. The Customs Service was a major point of contact between the foreign powers and the Chinese government. Munthe arrived during a period when Britain, Germany, France, the U. S., Russia and Japan were competing vigorously for territorial and economic advantages in China. The Chinese for their part were willing to exploit foreign skills where it was expedient, as with, for example, von Mollendorf, appointed customs commissioner and foreign affairs adviser in Korea in 1882; see I.C. Y. Hsu, "Late Ch'ing foreign relations 1866–1905", in J.K. Fairbank and Liu Kwang-Ching, eds., *Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11, *Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911*, part 2, Cambridge, 1980, 104.

Japan in 1895, when moves were being made to reorganize the Chinese military, Munthe asked for secondment from the Customs Service to assist with the cavalry. That December, he moved to the brigade base of the so-called Newly Created Army, under the command of Yuan Shikai, together with two German military instructors. As an aide to Yuan Shikai, his position was unusual insofar as it allowed him to move easily between one of the strongest Chinese military cliques of the time and the foreign powers.¹⁵ At the time of Yuan's death in 1916, Munthe was responsible for the protection of the legation quarter at Peking.¹⁶

He began acquiring Chinese works of art before the turn of the century, perhaps as early as the late 1880s, and from 1907 was sending works back to the Bergen Museum on a periodic basis. Munthe started collecting sculpture in 1914, and in July 1915 we find him considering the logistics of shipping over to Norway a three-metre high Sui dynasty (581–618) marble Bodhisattva, which originally accompanied the great Amitābha Buddha now in the British Museum.¹⁷ Probably between 1915 and 1917, Munthe acquired four of the architectural pieces and twelve of the free-standing figures discussed by Sirén.¹⁸

¹⁵ He first joined a brigade under the command of Hu Yufen, together with a German instructor named Schaller. The brigade base of the Newly Created Army (Xinjian lujun) was Xiaochan, near Tianjin. The three foreign instructors were responsible for infantry, artillery and cavalry (R. L. Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power 1895–1912*, Princeton, 1955, 77). When the Boxers laid siege to Peking in 1900, we hear from an English witness of Munthe's place in the thick of the action:

“Captain Munthe, a Norwegian cavalry officer in the Chinese Customs, who had volunteered to go with the Russians as interpreter, greatly distinguished himself during this attack, General Vasilievski and he being the first to rush through the Tung-pien gate when it was blown in. He it is who has reconstructed Yuan-Shih-Kai's army and brought it to so remarkable a condition of efficiency. His services all through the campaign were, indeed, invaluable, no one having so intimate a knowledge of the organisation of the Chinese troops, and of what they were capable, as he had.”

(H. C. Thompson, *China and the Powers, A Narrative of the Outbreak of 1900*, London, 1902, 102).

¹⁶ P. Anker and P. O. Leijon, *op. cit.*, 4. He eventually reached the rank of general; Powell refers to him as colonel (R. L. Powell, *op. cit.*, 72-3).

¹⁷ Munthe favoured Bergen over the museum in Oslo, on account of his good relationship with the then Director, Johan Bogh (Anker and Leijon, *op. cit.*, 5). The shipment of the figure is mentioned in a letter to Bogh, dated 2 July 1915, (see also below, f.n. 68).

¹⁸ Munthe acquired twelve free-standing figures—11 but one are now at Bergen; a seated Maitreya has since been alienated from the collection.

The death of his wife in 1916 changed Munthe's attitude towards the objects he had accumulated, and by 1917 he was considering disposing of part of the collection in order to establish a charitable fund to help alleviate the poverty he saw about him; it is reasonable to suppose that he began winding down his collecting activities around this time.¹⁹ Ten years later he sent a large part of the collection over to the United States for sale, initially to the Los Angeles County Museum. Negotiations were interrupted by the Depression, and when Munthe died in Peking in 1935, his collection was still largely intact. Much of it remained in the States until the beginning of the 'sixties, when the West Norway Museum began proceedings to recover what it could.²⁰

At the time when restitution of the collection was very much an issue, John Ayers reviewed the marble sculpture at Scripps College, California, which then held the free-standing figures, as well as an associated group of small *luohan* images (not mentioned by Sirén), and some other pieces which Munthe had acquired.²¹ Ayers referred to and agreed with Sirén's assessment, concluding that many of the sculptures, despite the damage, were of distinct artistic merit and of interest for the study of Chinese sculpture of the period, and there was much to be said for ensuring their preservation, in a museum or museums in Europe.²²

Everything retrievable was back in Bergen by 1964. In 1978, the first western exhibition of Johan Munthe's collection was mounted at the National Gallery in Oslo, alongside the already widely-known Chinese works of art assembled by King Gustav VI Adolf of Sweden. In 1983, when the Museum received a visit

¹⁹ The extreme political and economic uncertainty at the beginning of the warlord era, and his prior conversation with Christian science, goes some way to explaining the change of direction. It is possible that some works may have been purchased as late as 1924.

²⁰ The fund was to be administered by the Bergen Museum. In his last year, Munthe established a foundation to complete the sale of the collection; a 25-year limit set for the disbursement of monies in China ran out in the early sixties, and the free-standing marble sculptures were released from Scripps College, a Christian missionary school in Claremont. Anker and Leijon, *op. cit.*, 5.

²¹ Ayers, then Assistant Keeper in the Far Eastern Department at the V&A, reviewed the collection at the request of the Director of the West Norway Museum, Robert Kloster.

²² Preceded by the following comments:

"In general the sculptures are of a somewhat homogenous character, both as regards style and material, suggesting common origin, and the majority are executed in a more or less white marble which is characteristic of the province of Chihli [Hebei]. Certain pieces, however, reveal a style which belongs properly to the period of the Six Dynasties, while others suggest that of the Tang; and others are frankly conceived in a manner corresponding to that of the known work of the Liao and Chin Dynasties (10th–13th centuries). It is my opinion that all are likely to have been produced at some time during this period... ." (Report for the West Norway Museum).

from Angela Falco Howard, then researching her article on Liao sculpture, the free-standing figures were still crated and she was able only to see the architectural pieces. Despite this, she was convinced that the architectural images dated to the mid-Tang, circa 750–800, and at least one of the free-standing images (photographed for the 1978 exhibition) to *ca.* 750. This was by virtue of their stylistic resemblance to two marble *luohan* and a Buddha image made for the Undefined Pure Radiance pagoda at the Foguang si, (a well-known temple some 150 miles to the west of Dingzhou at Wutai shan, itself a major centre of Chinese Buddhism since the Tang).²³ Munthe himself believed much of the ‘Dingzhou’ pagoda/temple material to be Tang.²⁴

Howard’s assertion that the Munthe sculptures were radically different from those produced under the Liao was supported by Marilyn Gridley. Gridley, however, strongly contested the mid-Tang argument, upholding instead the reliability of Sirén’s Jin dating; she also observed that the association (by Sirén) of Liao art with “this mid-twelfth century style, a style which at times can be undeniably gross, has quite likely contributed to the neglect of Liao sculpture”.²⁵

In July 1990, the museum staff were greatly disturbed by an opinion given by Ma Shizhang, from the Department of Archaeology, Peking University. In the written report on a review of the Munthe collection by several outside scholars, in which Professor Ma participated, it is recorded that he took the view that not only was almost all the sculpture of low quality, but it was also made relatively recently—some time in the latter half of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). He thought that the pieces seemingly of common origin (Sirén’s pagoda/temple figures) might conceivably have been produced in an archaistic style for a Buddhist temple in the 19th century; others were straight fakes. His analysis was based on inconsistencies in motifs and styles in individual pieces. I accepted an invitation from the West Norway Museum to give a further opinion, and visited Bergen in November last year.²⁶ The task was to assess how much of General Munthe’s riches were in fact an embarrassment.

²³ A.F. Howard, “Buddhist Sculptures of the Liao Dynasty, A Reassessment of Osvald Sirén’s Study”, *BMFEA*, 56, 1984, 18–21. In the Oslo exhibition catalogue, the free-standing figure (the *luohan* Ānanda) was coincidentally dated to the Tang.

²⁴ Attributed as such in Munthe’s personal catalogue of the collection, compiled also in 1925 with the help of an American, Charles Arrott.

²⁵ H. Gridley, *Chinese Buddhist Sculpture under the Liao, Free Standing Works in Situ and Selected Examples from Public Collections*, (doctoral dissertation, 1985, UMI), Ann Arbor, 1988, 9–10. Gridley’s late medieval dating is supported by the opinion in 1989 of Professor Luo Zhao, a member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Peking, who did believe the material to be Liao.

²⁶ Professor Ma was accompanied by Professor Lothar Ledderose from Heidelberg. My thanks are due to the Director, Professor Peter Anker, for his help in providing extracts from the Munthe archive and other information relating to the sculpture, and to Monika Thowsen, whose interest in, classification and study of the Munthe material contributed most usefully to the discussion on dating.

Archaism, fakes and the market

One problem with Ma Shizhang's hypothesis, that the figures may have been carved in an archaistic style for a late Qing temple, is that even by the 12th-century free-standing Buddhist stone sculpture in north China is notable for its relative scarcity in comparison with the production of gessoed wood and cheaper clay images—and that at a time when the *saṅgha* was still wealthy, and Buddhism a major force in Chinese religious life. Six hundred years later Chinese Buddhism was much changed. The Manchu rulers patronised Lamaism, together with the associated Sino-Tibetan style of representation. Beyond the court, the religion had absorbed elements of indigenous official and unofficial cults, and had, in turn, been partly assimilated by them. The idea that in the 19th century a non-Lamaistic temple in west Hebei had the patronage and resources to construct a suite of stone temple images on this scale is intriguing, but difficult to accept readily. The alternative 'late' hypothesis is that the material is simply fake, made in the early 20th century for sale to foreigners.

The archaistic argument would presumably run like this: a body of work in the manner of the past (reaching back before the influence of Tibetan Buddhism) was commissioned by wealthy patrons for a Buddhist temple in the Dingzhou region. The images were made locally, drawing on material to hand (Sirén's comparative sculpture and architectural decoration *in situ* in Hebei).²⁷

I should make it clear that I agree with Ma Shizhang's comments on a considerable number of the stelae, smaller figures and individual heads presently in the storerooms of the West Norway Museum, which we can readily dismiss as clumsy attempts to deceive, made in a variety of styles during the early 20th century—time when the Peking market for Chinese sculpture was mined with fakes—perhaps initially for the Japanese, but then for the French, Americans and other Westerners. Munthe's own collection has a variety of images weakly imitating Buddhist art of the 6th century, a period highly regarded by all the foreigners. Also, that some Peking dealers were capable of great resourcefulness in tricking their clients is indisputable—Grice tells about the entrapment of a party of overzealous and insufficiently sceptical European buyers.²⁸ But deviousness in selling requires different talents from production of the goods themselves. As

²⁷ The quarries of west Hebei quite probably contributed much of the material for the marble terraces and facades of Ming and Qing buildings in Peking.

²⁸ They were taken on a treasure hunt, using a map purportedly discovered in the Imperial Library. The trail ended at a large tree, amongst the roots of which was buried a rotting chest filled with jades and bronzes. It subsequently transpired that the tree had been planted over the chest six years earlier; the antiquities can hardly have been much older. J.W.H. Grice, "Faking and Selling Chinese Antiques", *Country Life*, July 29, 1954, 350–1.

fakes, the free-standing and architectural figures would be very superior examples.

In the West, the taste for early Chinese art was led from about 1900 by a select group of connoisseurs' who had already moved well beyond Whistler's appreciation of 17th and 18th century Chinese ceramics. Charles Freer and W.C. Alexander, two of Whistler's patrons were amongst them. Freer was perhaps the first major Western collector in modern terms, seeking out sculpture, archaic bronzes and paintings in north-central China, in 1909 and again in 1910.²⁹ Chinese dealers were there earlier; the Peking dealer Paul Houo-Ming-Tse, for example, was searching out antiquities in Shanxi around 1907/8.³⁰ It is worthy of note that when Johan Munthe became really interested in early Chinese sculpture, in 1914/15, it was still a relatively unknown area to Western collectors.

The early Republican period, following the Revolution of 1911, was characterised by weak central control—ever more so during the warlord era of 1916 to 1928. In a letter to Bergen, Munthe indicated that the market for Chinese sculpture had, as he saw it, taken off around 1911; certainly there was activity during the second and third decades of the century by the Japanese, Americans, French and British. The disorder of the time, and the greater access allowed to foreigners, created new conditions for the study, purchase and, sadly, vandalism of early Buddhist monuments.³¹ In Japan, Buddhism was still very much a living religion, and China a major source of religious art. When Sirén first published the 'Dingzhou' material, at least four of the architectural figures were then divided between Yamanaka's galleries in Peking, Kyoto and New York.³²

²⁹ French sinologist, Eduard Chavannes, surveyed some of the earliest monumental sculpture in north China during the 1890's. The Parisian dealer, Charles Vignier, was also a key figure in introducing early Chinese art to the avant-garde. It was from Vignier that Roger Fry purchased in 1913 a 6th century Buddhist figure, subsequently exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibition of 1915. For a history of Western collecting, see Basil Gray, "The Development of Taste in Chinese Art in the West 1872 to 1972", *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, 1971–1973, vol. 39, 19–41.

³⁰ Houo-Ming-Tse (Huo Mingzhi), a missionary-educated Chinese dealer opened his gallery in Peking around 1906/1907; Houo-Ming-Tse, *Preuves des Antiquités de Chine*, Péking, 1930, introduction.

³¹ "Regrettably, the vandals (foreign) during the time of the revolution have succeeded in persuading the inhabitants to knock off the heads of those figures", letter to Johan Bogh, 8 June 1914. Yuan Shikai's revolutionary government held power only tenuously between 1911 and 1916.

³² Yamanaka and Co. were major players in the Peking art market in the first half of the 20th century. The company expanded from Japan to Peking, New York, Boston and London. C.T. Loo also had a gallery in Paris, where another of the architectural figures was held in stock. Two more figures were probably then with Houo-Ming-Tse in Peking (see appendix).

An embarrassment of riches?

Let us put aside the miscellaneous pieces and focus now on the three groups of pagoda/temple material (architectural, free-standing and *luohan*), which together form the principal holding of sculpture at Bergen. The free-standing group comprises eleven micaceous marble figures of roughly life size, nine carved from a fine-grained greyish-white stone, and two from the coarser, yellowish-white stone used also for the smaller architectural and *luohan* images.³³

1–3. Three seated Buddhas.³⁴

4. Standing Buddha: possibly Amitābha.³⁵

5–6. Two *luohan*: the disciples Ānanda and Kāśyapa.³⁶

7. Standing Bodhisattva.³⁷

8–9. Two seated Bodhisattvas: Samantabhadra mounted on an elephant, and Mañjuśrī accompanied by, but detached from, his original lion mount.³⁸

³³ Howard notes that, mineralogically, the material is magnesian limestone, A.F. Howard, “Buddhist Sculptures of the Liao Dynasty, A reassessment of Osvald Sirén’s study”, 19.

³⁴ The three Buddha images are similarly represented: each seated on a stepped Sumeru-type throne, the right arm raised, the left lowered to the lap, hand palm-up by the right foot. The larger figure measures 200 cm from head to base. One of the smaller Buddha images now has the head of a Bodhisattva, with the nose cut off; the original height of the smaller Buddhas was approximately 145 cm (the pedestals have been switched since the sculpture was displayed in Munthe’s garden; see Sirén, “Chinese Sculptures of the Sung, Liao and Chin Dynasties”, pl. 10:3; each pedestal has a pair of lions emerging from the front, and one also has a pair of Atlantean supporters also). Munthe originally owned four seated Buddha figures; the fourth represents Maitreya seated in the so-called ‘western position’ with the legs pendent (illustrated Sirén, *Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*, pl. 542a, where the height is given as 6 ft; there are two small guardian kings at the rear of the throne).

³⁵ The standing Buddha image at Bergen possibly represents Amitābha, Buddha of the Western Paradise. Like the other Munthe Buddhas, the figure is bulky, with a wide pear-shaped head, again badly disfigured, resting on a massive neck. The full height is 211 cm, including the dowel under the lotus base.

³⁶ The overall height of the headless Ānanda is 163 cm, excluding the domed pedestal (probably Ming and unrelated to the figure it supports). The lotus pod base is incised with small circular seed pockets, as is the base of the standing Buddha. The Kāśyapa has a Buddha’s head, too small for the body. The lobed base here belongs to the body, which stands at about 162 cm—the overall height (with head) is 186 cm.

³⁷ The figure, which may represent Avalokiteśvara or Mahāsthāmaprāpta, wears looped and hanging sashes now partly broken away together with the arms; and a chamfered rectangular belt buckle of the type also worn by the two smaller Buddhas. The nose has a groove around it. Like the *luohan* Ānanda, the figure stands on a pedestal from a different scheme; disregarding that, the height is 168 cm.

³⁸ The Mañjuśrī figure, separated from the companion lion (itself broken across all four legs), sits in *lalitāsāna* with the left leg pendent (height 107 cm). A section of the lotus throne beneath the right knee has been replaced—the figure is presently cemented to yet another unrelated base—at Scripps College both Bodhisattvas were placed on such square plinths. The Samantabhadra figure, which has lost all of the left legs, was remounted at Bergen using a new lotus element to fit it sideways onto the circular socle. Taking into account the Norwegian fixings, the full height is about 220 cm. Sirén’s photographs show both Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra seated facing forwards on their mounts (Sirén, *Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*, pls. 585 a & b). The carving of the elephant and lion seems to me to be consistent with that of their riders, notwithstanding Sirén’s comment that they are “out of proportion” and “can only be explained as later substitutes”. The harness on the elephant has a toggle under the left ear for attaching a rein; the lion was led from the right side, the rein stopping above a collar studded with the already familiar chamfered buckles or studs, here used to suspend a series of tassles.

10–11. Two guardians.³⁹

Some of the figures, like the standing Bodhisattva and the two *luohan*, were intended, it seems, to be viewed principally from the front, others, like the seated Bodhisattvas, are conceived more fully in the round. There has been considerable ‘mixing and matching’ within the free-standing group: marriages with pedestals from other Buddhist or secular architectural schemes, bases switched, heads swapped. In addition, several of the images have neatly cut-out noses, a point noted by Sirén in 1942; we know from photographs that this was done no later than 1925.⁴⁰ If the figures are fake, then they were probably manufactured shortly before Munthe bought them, and the rather considerable damage to most, and at least some of the mismatching of heads and bodies, was designed in from the outset.

All these figures seem to have been severely cleaned, so much so that there are only traces of pigment on the flat surfaces, although the crevices reveal more extensive evidence of a pinkish-buff and maroon colour scheme (the elephant was also once painted lurid pink). One explanation for this is that Munthe or his servants, or dealers, exhaustively scrubbed the marble.⁴¹ The statuary must also have been weathered during the period (perhaps twelve years) that it stood in Munthe’s Peking garden.⁴²

³⁹ The two guardians may either be *tianwang*, heavenly kings, or attendants to Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. Both wear armour: the more complete figure has horned animal-masks emblazoned at the belt and epaulettes (height 159 cm), the other, lozenges and rosettes at the belt. Compare the groups of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra and their two attendants at Dazu Beishan, cave 136 (*Dazu Shike*, Sichuan meishu xueyuan diaosu xi, Beijing, 1962, pls. 40, 43).

⁴⁰ Munthe’s original photographs, taken under the supervision of Charles Arrott in 1925, show noses on heads where there are presently none (on the standing Buddha for example), but only incision marks. This indicates that the restoration had taken place before Munthe acquired them.

⁴¹ Munthe writes that he had cleaned a Wei head, hoping thereby to ascertain the period from the composition and state of the marble; letter to Bogh, 12 January, 1915.

⁴² Sirén, “Chinese Sculptures of the Sung, Liao and Chin Dynasties”, 58.

The four architectural pieces at Bergen are cut, like the free-standing guardians, from the coarser marble.⁴³

1. A Buddha carrying a staff: probably Śākyamuni.⁴⁴
2. A *luohan*: Kāśyapa.
3. An eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara.
4. A guardian warrior, *lishi*.

The description by an American visitor to Munthe's house in 1925 gives the barest glimpse of how the sculpture was shown:

"On our knocking we were admitted by a servant into a quiet and sombre garden of breath-taking beauty, the chief feature of which was an avenue of tall trees leading toward the house with large stelae and sculptured figures of stone placed between the trees on either side of the path—stelae and figures which, I was to learn later, dated back two, three and even four thousand years."⁴⁵

Among these sculptures must have been placed the five *luohan* figures that make up the third distinctive group at Bergen, in size and material similar to the architectural figures. Four are seated (three of them headless), and one is standing. From the carving, it is evident that they form a further part of the 'Dingzhou' material: the rounded sleeve bunches of the complete seated *luohan* echo those of the free-standing *luohan* Kāśyapa (figure 4).⁴⁶

Two of the *luohan* sit on tall plinths, a combination both unfamiliar and unsettling, since the fancy flower vase and scrollwork decoration is reminiscent of Qing dynasty art made under European influence. Intriguing though the plinths are, they have nothing to do with the *luohan* they bear. The Munthe Collection is rich in such prints, and I suspect that all were made for the Old Summer Palace in north-west Peking, obliterated during the Second Opium War.⁴⁷

⁴³ See appendix for the full list. There is a fragment of a fifth figure at Bergen—the head and shoulders of a guardian—which probably also relates to the architectural group.

⁴⁴ Compare the staff-carrying Buddha to a Kamakura painting of Śākyamuni in the Kozan-ji Temple, Kyoto (*Special Exhibition: Arts of Buddha Śākyamuni*, Nara National Museum, 1984, 214, pl. 42); Howard describes the figure as Kṣitigarbha.

⁴⁵ Charles Arrott, then travelling the world, paused for longer than anticipated in Peking, persuaded by Munthe to assist in photographing and recording the entire collection (*ms.* with the Vestlandske Kunsthindustrimuseum).

⁴⁶ Catalogued by Munthe as Song.

⁴⁷ The Yuan Ming Yuan was an expansive exercise in 'sino-Versailles', designed in the mid-18th century under the supervision of the Jesuit, Guiseppe Castiglione. The palace was destroyed by Lord Elgin as personal reprisal against the emperor for the death of twenty British troops seized while under a flag of truce; its ruins have lain scattered for over a century. Sales of the more salvagable architectural fragments are easily imagined, particularly in the years immediately following the dissolution of the dynasty. The flower vases mostly follow an ancient bronze shape, *fang'gu*; as much as we can tell from surviving engravings, the Yuan Ming Yuan 'belvedere' (Fangwai Guan) seems to have had balustrades of just this type; C.M. Beurdeley, *Guiseppe Castiglione, A Jesuit Painter at the Court of the Chinese Emperors*, London, 1972, 71.

The free-standing figures in particular reveal, when we examine them, Tang, Northern Song and Jin features, the compound of which explains why stylistically they might appear ‘inconsistent’. To understand further the disposition of these elements, let us look at five specific aspects.

1. *The Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra*

In medieval Chinese painting and sculpture, when Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are shown with pendent legs, the two are often mirror-images. The Munthe figures part from that convention (figure 1). Mañjuśrī sits in *lalitāsana* with the left leg pendent; the carving around the missing left leg of the Samantabhadra suggests that the Bodhisattva was seated in *dhyānāsana*, with both legs folded on the lotus; (if the image was fake, there would have likely never been a leg).⁴⁸ In a painting executed by Zhang Shengwen during the 1170’s for the Da Li court in present day Yunnan province, south-west China, we see the two Bodhisattvas represented so: Mañjuśrī with both legs on the lotus; Samantabhadra with the right leg pendent.⁴⁹ More significantly, the painted figure of Mañjuśrī resembles in general appearance the Munthe Mañjuśrī, and we should note in each case the frontal scarf snaking down over the lap, tied with a broad decorative ring (figure 2). When Helen Chapin first saw the painting in Peking during the winter of 1931–32, it was relatively unknown.⁵⁰ The Munthe Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra seem, therefore, to be representing a mode of depicting Bodhisattvas current in the 12th century.

2. *The rectangular buckles*

Although rectangular buckles are worn by Bodhisattvas and guardians from the Tang onwards, the chamfered studs or clasps on the Mañjuśrī figure, and several of the architectural images, are very distinctive.⁵¹ Identical to these is the belt

⁴⁸ Sirén’s 1925 photograph shows the figure damaged as it is now.

⁴⁹ H. Chapin, *A Long Roll of Buddhist Images*, revised by Alexander C. Soper, Ascona, 1972, pls. 26, 27.

⁵⁰ At a meeting of the Committee on Paintings of the Palace Museum:

“At the time I first saw the long roll, only about three tenths of the paintings in the museum had been examined by the committee. This one among others was brought out on that memorable day from the hidden closets of the Palace, probably for the first time since the fall of the empire.” (*ibid.*, 7).

⁵¹ Bodhisattvas of the architectural group now in the University Museum, Philadelphia, and Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, wear these buckles. Rectangular buckles can be seen in 9th and 10th century banners from Dunhuang (see Whitfield and Farrer, *Caves of the Thousand Buddhas*, Chinese art from the Silk Route, London, 1990, pls. 9, 10). Something close to the pierced buckles on the smaller seated Buddhas and standing Bodhisattva of the free-standing group is worn by a small clay figure excavated from the White Elephant pagoda at Wenzhou, south-east China, dating from the 990’s, Wenwu, 1987, 5, 23, pl. 11. Although Chinese Buddha images rarely wear buckles, an 11th century Liao example is illustrated by Howard; A.F. Howard “Buddhist Sculptures of the Liao Dynasty, A Reassessment of Osvald Siren’s study”, pl. 22.

stud worn by a small gilt bronze guardian, excavated in 1969 at the Jingzhi temple, in the north-east sector of Dingzhou (Dingxian) city.⁵² Dated to the early Northern Song, *ca.* 977, this image not only has the same belt decoration, but the pleating on the underskirt is of a type that appears frequently on the Munthe images.

3. Relationship with the images found at the Undefined Pure Radiance pagoda, Foguang temple, Wutai shan, Shanxi province

In 1950, five white marble figures were unearthed from the site of the Undefined Pure Radiance pagoda (Wugou jing'guang ta), attached to the Foguang si at Wutai shan, east Shanxi, the neighbouring province to Hebei. The images were two *luohan* (Ānanda and Kāśyapa), each just under a meter high, a guardian king (*tianwang*), a guardian warrior (*lishi*), and a small Bodhisattva. The *luohan* are dated to *ca.* 752 by comparison with the base of a marble Buddha also made for the pagoda.⁵³

Within the framework of known examples of Chinese Buddhist sculpture it is hard to deny a direct stylistic link between the two free-standing Munthe *luohan* and those found at the Foguang si (figures 3–5). The relationship between the pairs of images is close indeed, and although the hands of the Ānandas are

⁵² Shi Yan, *Zhong'guo Meishu Quanji, Wudai Song diaosu, diaosu bian 5* (sculpture, vol. 5, Five Dynasties and Song), Beijing, 1988, pl. 78; for the archaeological report on the foundations of the Zhenshen sheli pagoda, Jingzhi si, Dingzhou, see Wenwu, 1972, 8, 39–47. Two similarly made gilt bronzes were excavated, the *tianwang* (15.4 cm), and a *lishi* (15.2 cm). The *lishi* is illustrated in Shi, *Zhong'guo Meishu Quanji, Sui Tang diaosu, diaosu bian 4*, (sculpture, vol. 4, Sui and Tang), Beijing, 1988, pl. 58, where it is dated to 713–765; a strong case can be made, however, for giving it the same date as the *tianwang*.

⁵³ The base of the Foguang si Ānanda is inscribed, but not dated; the calligraphy is believed to be identical in style to that on the dated base of the Buddha figure. The latter was removed by 1924 to the Mañjuśrī Hall of the main temple, and is now located with the two *luohan* in the main (eastern) shrine hall. Also discovered was the head of another Bodhisattva, resembling in its pear-shaped outline the head wrongly fitted onto one of the two smaller Buddhas at Bergen. The Ānanda is 88 cm high, the Kāśyapa 83 cm, and the Buddha 112 cm. See *Shanxi wenwu jieshao*, Beijing, 1953 (section on the Foguang si); Shi, *Zhong'guo Meishu Quanji, Sui Tang diaosu, diaosu bian 4*, pls. 47, 48; also A.F. Howard, "Buddhist Sculptures of the Liao Dynasty, A Reassessment of Osvald Siren's study", 19–20. The Wugou jing'guang ta was formerly raised up on the hill behind the Foguang si.

crossed differently, the disposition of the robe folds is almost parallel.⁵⁴ The two Munthe figures were either made contemporaneously with the Foguang si *luohan* as Howard thought, or were copied later from them, or from very similar Tang images that are no longer known.⁵⁵

There is also a strong resemblance between the three Munthe seated Buddhas, and the metre-high Foguang si Buddha (figures 6,7). Gridley believed that the Foguang si Buddha was itself a 12th-century replacement, fixed to a mid-Tang base, but the better photograph recently available makes the 8th century date reasonably convincing.⁵⁶ The two Munthe *luohan* point quite precisely in style towards the mid-8th century, as Howard observed. The seated Buddhas do so in a more general manner; a Buddha image from the Xiude hoard, dated to 746, where the baldachin is carved with rounded-over folds as we see on the throne-drapes of the Munthe Buddhas, lends further weight to this conclusion (figure 8).⁵⁷ However, that the Bergen figures were actually made in the Tang is not proven.

4. Relationship to clay images

Sirén noted that on some of the free-standing figures, the Ānanda and the standing Buddha in particular, the robes were represented with unusually smooth and rounded folds and pleats; he accommodated this as a development of style.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ The shoes on the two Ānanda figures are identical: the Munthe Kāśyapa has lobed shoes whereas the Foguang si Kāśyapa is barefoot. Another point of note is that a similar arrangement of lotus petals decorated with rosettes enclosing a ring of stamens features on the bases both of the Foguang si Ānanda and the Munthe large standing Buddha (the Ānanda has one tier, the Buddha two).

⁵⁵ A.F. Howard dated the free-standing Ānanda (from its photograph) to *ca.* 750 by comparison with the Foguang si Ānanda; A.F. Howard, “Buddhist Sculptures of the Liao Dynasty, A Reassessment of Osvald Siren’s study”, pl. 56. We should remember that when she visited Bergen, the free-standing figures were still crated.

⁵⁶ M. Gridley, *Chinese Buddhist Sculpture under the Liao* 9. Howard thought the Buddha contemporary with the mid-8th century base; *op. cit.*, 20. The device of alternate lozenges and rosettes on the Sumeru throne of the Buddha also appears on the belt of the headless free-standing guardian.

⁵⁷ 29 cm high. A hoard of over two thousand white marble figures was excavated in 1954 from the site of the Xiude temple, Quyang district (adjacent to Dingzhou); they are now held in the Palace Museum, Peking. See Yang Boda, “Quyang Xiude si chutu jinian zaoxiang de yishu fengge yu tezheng”, Weng and Yang, *The Palace Museum Peking, Treasures of the Forbidden City*, 237, pl. 134.

⁵⁸ Sirén, “Chinese Sculptures of the Sung, Liao and Chin Dynasties”, 59:

“The tall standing figures are perhaps more satisfactory from a sculptural point of view [than the other free-standing figures] particularly the Buddha and the monk, both of whom are draped in mantles of soft and heavy material, which fall from the shoulders over the elbows and lifted arms in broad folds without any sharp edges. The linear stylisation of the folds which seemed so prominent in some of the preceding statues [e. g. the architectural group and large seated Buddhas] is here substituted by a more naturalistic treatment, which may be a sign of a somewhat more advanced stage in the evolution of style...”

We can find a little of this both on the architectural Kāśyapa, and also on the Foguang si *luohan*, but the fluency of the drapery treatment compares particularly well with clay modelling of the 11th and 12th centuries, notably with the figures surviving in temples in Shanxi and Shandong. Although not a new feature in Chinese sculpture (*cf.* also the Xiude Buddha, above, and footnote 57), the rounding off of edges is especially developed in clay imagery.

For example, there is similarity between the handling of the upper edge of the outer robe of a *luohan* (datable to 1079) in the Chongqing temple, Shanxi, province, and that of the Munthe large standing Buddha. Whilst the Buddha also resembles generally the architectural Śākyamuni, the former's robes are closer in manner to the clay *luohan* (figures 11, 12, 9). Further, the bunching of the robe in the lap of the Chongqing figure can be usefully compared with the lobes of material at the right sleeve of the free-standing Kāśyapa (the genesis of which was a Tang image).

The gentle smoothing-out of the robe that we see on the left side of the free-standing Ānanda, reminiscent of waves on a pond, is likewise seen on a number of the forty *luohan* images at the Lingyan si, Shandong province, which probably date from 1124 (figure 10).⁵⁹

At once marvellous and domestic, Song, Liao and Jin images of *luohan* captured the appearance of the real monastic community in China; the Munthe free-standing Ānanda, Kāśyapa and Buddha robes seem to reflect something of this late medieval naturalism.⁶⁰ In general, the carving of detail is rather fine, for example on the braids holding up the outer robes of the standing Buddha and Ānanda, and the knuckles and fingernails of Ānanda's hands.⁶¹ What comes through from this exercise is the sense that although there was a Tang precedent for some of the free-standing images, the treatment has been modified by the in-

⁵⁹ Gridley argued that the date previously given for this set (1056–63) is too early for their appearance, and that if the bodies are mid 11th century, the faces must have been remodelled; the present author considers that scenario unlikely, and prefers to follow the later of two dating traditions connected with the Lingyan si images (1124), which would meet Gridley's reservation (Shi, *Zhong'guo Meishu Quanji, Wudai Song diaosu, diaosu bian* 5, 18).

⁶⁰ Compare also the celebrated 11th-century set of eight *luohan* from Yizhou, on the southernmost part of Liao territory from the 10th to the early 12th century. Gridley devotes a chapter of her dissertation to the set, challenging the traditional view that there were sixteen or eighteen figures. She relates them, as does Gillman, to the clay *luohan* at the Lower Huayan si, Datong, dating to 1038: M. Gridley, *Chinese Buddhist Sculpture Under the Liao*, 205–7; W. Zwalf, ed., *Buddhism: Art and Faith*, London, 1985, pl. 295.

⁶¹ The fashion in which the robes of the standing Buddha and Ānanda are fastened and drape at the left shoulder is consistent with Song and Jin practice.

fluence of the increasingly developed clay modelling tradition in the post-Tang era.

5. *The elephant's saddle cloth*

Let us move back to the Bodhisattva images, this time to Samantabhadra's elephant. Below the band of egg-and-dart lotus petals are lobed panels at either side of the saddlecloth.⁶² These are unusual insofar as the shape is rather different from the common decorative lappet used from the Tang period onwards (the so-called cloud collar, or *ruyi* head, with pointed apex and upturned side lobes).⁶³ It seems to represent the profile of a lotus leaf, in a specific form widely used on northern stonewares between the later 11th and early 13th centuries (Dingyao, Cizhou and Yaozhou celadon), on metalwork, and possibly on textiles also. This is an appropriate saddle decoration, below the tiers of lotus petals.⁶⁴

When we put together the points discussed above, the overall picture is of a group of images made sometime between the late 10th and early 13th centuries, and more probably between the late 11th and early 13th. Some of the figures are directly modelled on Tang prototypes, others are drawn straight from contemporary figuration—but even those which imitate 8th century sculpture are affected by the conventions of the time.

For the images to be archaistic or fake, the makers would have needed access to the Foguang si *luohan* (excavated in 1950), or very similar images which are presently unknown. Also, access to something like the Dingzhou guardian (excavated in 1969) for the belt clasps would have been needed, as would a familiarity with currents in Song/Jin Buddhist representation (as seen in the Zhang Shengwen painting). It is difficult to conceive how a Qing exercise in archaism could so reproduce the conditions of a late Northern Song/Jin attempt to make a suite of sculptures, where possible, in Tang style.

For the large Munthe *luohan* to be modern imitations of the Foguang si images, we would be left with a conspiracy of the sort revealed by Grice (above footnote 28). These Tang *luohan* were unearthed at the Undefined Pure Radiance

⁶² Each lotus petal terminates in a neatly made curlicue. Sirén's 1925 photograph shows that the Bodhisattva was linked to the elephant in the "twenties by another lotus support."

⁶³ For a discussion of the development of lobed panels in China, see J. Rawson, *Chinese Ornament the Lotus and the Dragon*, London, 1984, 125–138. If we flatten out the panels, we can see three lobes to the left and right.

⁶⁴ By the late 11th and 12th centuries, the side lobes have developed a distinct inward-curving profile. This type of leaf appears in scenes of lotus flowers rising from a pond, sometimes accompanied by a pair of swimming ducks; such scenes also decorated Jingdezhen blue and white porcelain in the Yuan and early Ming. Lotus foliage is seen on the saddlecloths of Samantabhadra groups in Song/Jin and Kamakura painting. Something of this leaf profile carried on into the Qing.

pagoda at least 25, if not 35 years after the Bergen figures were acquired by Munthe. The Foguang si figures would have to have been known in the late Qing or early years of the Republic, replicated and then buried. That would be an exceptional thing: dealers do not generally conspire to bury genuine antiquities.

If we reintroduce the comparative material put forward by Sirén in 1942, we are back in the 12th century, most probably in the Jin, rather than Northern Song. Of the four scenarios on offer (8th-century, 12th-century, 19th-century and early 20th-century), the evidence is firmly on Sirén's side.

Why did Ma Shizhang dismiss the pagoda/temple imagery so readily? I suspect that a contributory factor was seeing them amongst the fake stelae, figures and heads which created a distorting frame around the Jin images and skewed the whole picture. A second factor was probably the cleanness of the free-standing group; cleanness and newness tend to be associated psychologically. The process of attribution and accreditation, in which museums play a major role, can be a nervous one where doubt and conviction displace each other, and the ease with which one can move between them is at times disturbing, but the anxiety is perhaps a healthy one, reminding us of the limits of certainty. The original disposition of the architectural pieces is probably best understood by reference to mid-12th-century wall images within the Duobao (Prabhūtaratna) pagoda at Dazu Sichuan, where high-relief carvings with back slabs are set into brick niches. The question of the cut noses remains. It was done precisely, and suggests restoration rather than vandalism, but by whom and when?

Buddhist stone sculpture in 12th-century west-central Hebei

One of the seated figures from the *luohan* group bears an inscription at the front of the base recording the name of the village that donated it: Da Liu cun ('great wave' village). With the proviso that we are dealing with the 12th century, when villages appear and disappear, we do nevertheless find in the 1849 Dingzhou and 1934 Dingxian gazettes just such a place.⁶⁵ It lies in the north-west of the Dingzhou (Dingxian) region, on the south bank of the Tang river, close to the border (at Xi Pan) with Quyang to the west, and Tangxian to the north.

The nearest surviving temple to Da Liu village in 1849 was the Tiantai si, sited on the other side of the river, in the vicinity of Xi Ban village, but we have no further information about it. We may however surmise that the pagoda/temple was somewhere to the north-west of Dingzhou city, near the boundaries with Quyang and Tangxian. In itself, this clarifies the dynastic placement of the imagery, as this area was only briefly controlled by the Liao (in the 10th century), otherwise it was under the jurisdiction first of the Northern Song, then of the Jin.

⁶⁵ *Zhili Dingzhou zhi*, 1849, Zhong'guo fangzhi congshu, 204, 1969, ps. 490, 790. This is the earliest gazette for the region available in the UK.

For convenience, rather than absolute precision, I shall henceforth refer to the pagoda/temple material as the Da Liu sculpture.

Sirén also found several sizable Jin period Buddha images in the manner of the 6th century at places around Quyang and Dingzhou; the most impressive he thought was at Zhu He village, about six miles east of Quyang.⁶⁶ That area generally was a major centre for the production of Buddhist marble sculpture between the 6th and 8th centuries, responsible for the variety of images excavated from the site of the Xiude temple. It is not clear when the Xiude images were buried, it may have been in 845 (but stone figures were excluded from the edict ordering the destruction of Buddhist imagery), or alternatively at the coming of the Mongols in the early 13th century. Certainly we know that at least some larger scale 6th century sculpture survived *in situ* into the present century.

One of the greatest examples of this tradition, an almost six-metre high Amitābha Buddha dated to 585, now in the British Museum, stood most probably some six miles to the north-east of Wanxian, at the Chong'guang temple, Pushang village.⁶⁷ In 1915 Munthe purchased a three-metre high attendant

⁶⁶ Chu-ho (Sirén's transcription). Also at Xi Gu, near Quyang, and in the Dingzhou museum, Sirén, "Chinese Sculptures of the Sung, Liao and Chin Dynasties", 60–1.

⁶⁷ Given to the B. M. by the Chinese Government and C. T. Loo in 1936, following the Burlington House exhibition of 1935–1936. The full height is 578 cm. The figure was known by its inscription to have come from the Chong'guang si (temple of Lofty Radiance) in a village called Han Cui that no longer exists. Sirén wrote that its 20th century location was Hsiang-pei (Xiangbei) near Wanxian, south-west of Peking (Sirén, "Chinese Marble Sculptures of the Transition Period", *BMFEA*, 12, 1940, 494). The Amitābha was taken from Xiangbei to Fangshun qiao railway station, and from there to Peking. The Xiangbei provenance was accepted by Gray and Watson in their article on the figure for the British Museum (*BMQ*, 16, 1951–52, ps. 81, 84), where it was noted that no record of a Chong'guang si had yet been found.

Although no Xiangbei is shown on the 1934 Wanxian district map, the gazette texts record that a Chong'guang si once stood at Pushang, 'village above the reeds'. The village is shown in the 1732 Wanxian gazette, and also in the late Ming edition of the Baoding gazette. As this Chong'guang si is the only temple bearing the name in the Baoding/Dingzhou area, it seems likely to be the one in question; according to the gazettes, the hall was founded in the early Tang, between 627 and 649—the authors having 'lost' the first half century of its existence (the sculpture is 585). Sirén's Xiangbei, which he never visited, may have been a misunderstanding of local information—possibly that the figure came from "Wanxian xiang bei"—the northern part of the countryside around Wanxian. The place where Pushang village was located is marked on the 1934 map by a swastika (cartographic symbol for a Buddhist monument). See *Wanxian xinzhì*, 1934, *Zhong'guo fangzhi congshu*, series 4, 164, vol. 1, 1968, 149; *Zhili Wanxian zhi*, 1732, *Zhong'guo fangzhi congshu*, series 4, 523, 1976, 167, *Wanli Baoding fuzhi*, preface 1607, Rare Books of the National Library, Beijing, 604, j. 2, 42–3.

Bodhisattva to this Buddha, which subsequently passed via Baron Kawasaki to the Tokyo National Museum.⁶⁸

Another example is the beautiful three-metre high late Northern Qi Buddha (*ca.* 570s) in the Nezu Art Museum, Tokyo, which stood in Yamanaka's courtyard in Peking from 1921–36, reportedly having come from “a ruined temple in Dingzhou”.⁶⁹

A third example is a late 6th century headless Buddha figure, formerly in the Dingzhou Museum (on a sculptured base which Sirén believed was 12th-century, and may once have formed part of a *sūtra* pillar).⁷⁰ If west-central Hebei has yielded these marble sculptures in the 20th century, it is clear that in the 12th-century local sculptors had source material in depth, which explains a convention common to both the ‘archaistic’ and ‘naturalistic’ figures, derived from the 6th century: the use of doubly deep grooves to represent drapery folds.⁷¹

The more general question that arises is: why does the material appear at this time? Sirén put it down to the patronage of foreigners keen to participate in China's mainstream culture. Of Liao and Jin endeavour in this direction, he wrote:

“Their system of government was organized according to indigenous traditions, carried out by Chinese officials, and they made the best to

⁶⁸ Munthe wrote to Bogh of his recent purchase:

“It is from the last years of the Sui dynasty—the inscription is on the base—s far as I remember 385 AD [actually 585], it is a Kuan Yin and very beautiful, worth at least some 20,000 dollars... The figure itself is 8.1/2—9 ft high. How to get it home, I do not know yet.”

The figure is 256 cm; 305 cm with the base. At some point after 1918, the Bodhisattva passed to Baron Kawasaki in Kobe, and thence to the Tokyo National Museum. In discussing the figure in his 1940 article, Sirén was unaware of its relationship to the ‘parent’ Buddha, exhibited only 4 years earlier at Burlington House. A vague tradition had it that the figure came from a place in west Hebei (Sirén, “Chinese Marble Sculptures of the Transition Period”, 482). There is also an interesting Buddha torso at Bergen which is stylistically close to the British Museum Amitābha, particularly in the detailing of the sash and hem, and the carving of the sleeves. When the smaller figure was published (*ibid.*, pl. VII:d), it then had a head with a restored nose (in the manner of some of the free-standing figures). Sirén dated it to the early Sui dynasty, commenting on the technical skill of the sculptor, revealed both in the carving of the sash and the surface treatment of the chest. Ayers thought that, in common with the free-standing and architectural pieces, it dated to somewhere between the 10th and 13th century, and was executed in an archaistic manner.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 482, pl. IV:a; Mizuno, *Bronze and Stone Sculpture of China, from the Yin to the T'ang Dynasty*, Tokyo, 1960, pl. 61.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 485, pl. V:d.

⁷¹ The double fold is quite common on 6th century images from the region; see for example the 541 dated Maitreya from the Xiude hoard, Weng and Yang, *The Palace Museum Peking, Treasures of the Forbidden City*, pl. 132.

support the old cultural institutions of the country. Most remarkable in this respect were their efforts to protect and enliven the Buddhist religion, which at the end of the T'ang dynasty had suffered greatly through official persecution and consequent indifference on the part of the people.”⁷²

We know that in the late 1130's and 1140's a second wave of sinicisation was felt at the Jin court, supported by the emperor Wanyan Tan (r. 1123–49), who instigated reforms to emulate Chinese bureaucratic and court practice—to the extent of offering sacrifices in person at the Temple of Confucius in 1141.⁷³ To suggest however that the Jin were behind all developments in religion during the period of their rule in north China would be somewhat like suggesting that the British are behind all cultural events in Hong Kong. Admittedly, Quyang/Dingzhou was in the north of China proper, where Jin influence was strongest, but again, the Jurchen practice was to rule China where possible through Chinese civil servants. The Jin exerted their sovereignty over a vast area of China by means of an effective but numerically modest army. To put this in perspective, in the late 12th century the Chinese outnumbered them in north China by about 15:1.⁷⁴

When the Jurchen invaded, north-east Quyang was already enjoying prosperity. In the Northern Song, the ivory-glazed stonewares produced about 18 miles north of Quyang city (around Longquan) were highly regarded across China.⁷⁵ Dingware was accepted at court, and generally treasured; the pagoda at the Jingzhi si (from which the gilt bronze *tiangwang* was excavated) contained dozens of Ding pieces, including Buddhist vessels.⁷⁶ Production continued on into the Jin and ceased probably in the 13th century.

It is possible that the Jin did exercise some control over these kilns, but rather more likely that they were clients. The kilns were probably owned by Chinese landlords, who as Tregear argues, would have amassed considerable wealth from their operation.⁷⁷ If we link together the profitability for the regional gentry of the Ding kilns (and their market in Buddhist wares) with the earlier Quyang/Dingzhou tradition of Buddhist marble sculpture, we can perhaps make more sense of the later stone production. Expressions of piety and prosperity

⁷² O. Sirén, “Chinese Sculptures of the Sung, Liao and Chin Dynasties”, 50.

⁷³ J-S. Tao, *The Jurchen in Twelfth-Century China, a Study of Sinicisation*, Seattle & London, 1976, 41–2.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 51.

⁷⁵ The principal kilns were sited at present-day Jianci village.

⁷⁶ Such as water-sprinklers. Rawson has pointed to the Buddhist market for Ding ware, and the dependency of some of its ceramic shapes on Buddhist metal prototypes; J. Rawson, *Chinese Ornament the Lotus and the Dragon*, 81–3.

⁷⁷ M. Tregear, *Song Ceramics*, London, 1982, 16.

often unite in religious patronage. The Hebei material, archaistic and naturalistic, quite conspicuously signifies wealth within the context of its time, when clay and wood imagery were predominant. The Da Liu material is yet more interesting because it demonstrates a particular focus: on the Foguang si, one of the better known temples in north China, sited at Wutai shan.

Wutai shan was one of the major Buddhist centres in China from the Tang onwards, associated particularly with Mañjuśrī, its presiding deity. A brick pagoda in the vicinity of the Foguang si houses the remains of the priest Jietuo, a famous resident of the 7th century, later widely believed to have been an incarnation of the Bodhisattva.

Following the destruction of the Foguang si in Wuzong's 845 purge, the eastern (main) shrine hall was rebuilt in its present grand form. As Wutai shan became increasingly popular in the 10th century—as a destination for pilgrims, and an icon of worship itself—so the temple continued to be important. Amongst the evidence for this is a late 10th century map of the mountain painted at Dunhuang, which includes the Foguang si and the Jietuo pagoda.⁷⁸ In 1137 a Mañjuśrī hall was added at the north side, (opposite was a Samantabhadra hall, no longer standing, and for which presently there is no date).

Conclusion

Let us conclude with a hypothesis. The Da Liu material represents the pious sponsorship of a temple and pagoda (or pagoda alone if it was very large) by the families of a wealthy region; a region moreover with its own long-standing tradition of marble sculpture. Possibly inspired by new building at the Foguang si, a celebrated temple 150 miles to the west, the patrons—including the inhabitants of villages like Da Liu—commissioned a sculpture which resembled, where possible, the existing marble statuary of the Undefined Pure Radiance pagoda. This accounts for the creation of the free-standing *luohan* and seated Buddhas. The Foguang si could not provide marble prototypes for all the images required, and further figures, including Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, were made in a more contemporary manner, by clay-modelling, and perhaps also by painting and wood carving. Most of the images shared some stylistic features with other current stonework in the area. As far as the archaistic Buddhas are concerned, Sickman's 'provincial relapses' may hold some truth, but as a description of the overall Jin production in marble, it does little justice to attempt, in west-central Hebei, to build on a distinguished history of Buddhist statuary.

Appendix: Architectural Group

⁷⁸ M.M. Rhie, *The Fo-kuang ssu, Literary Evidences and Buddhist Images*, New York and London, 1977, chs. 1–4, *passim*.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Standing Bodhisattva, 3'2" ⁷⁹ | (l.) ⁸⁰ University Museum, Philadelphia;
(ill.) ⁸¹ Sirén, 1925, pl. 543a; Howard, 1984,
pl. 51. |
| 2. Standing Bodhisattva, 3'2" | (l.) University Museum, Philadelphia;
(ill.) Sirén, 1925, pl. 543b (ex. C.T. Loo,
Paris); Sirén, 1942, pl. 9:2. |
| 3. Standing Bodhisattva, 3'2" | (ill.) Sirén, 1925, pl. 544a (ex. Yamanaka,
Kyoto); Sirén, 1942, pl. 8:2. |
| 4. Standing Bodhisattva, ? 3'2"
(Avalokiteśvara) | (ill.) Sirén, 1925, pl. 544b (ex. Yamanaka,
New York). |
| 5. Standing Bodhisattva, 3'10"
(Mahāsthāmaprāpta) | (l.) Asian Art Museum, San Francisco;
(ill.) Lefebvre d'Argencé, 1974, pl. 132. |
| 6. Standing Bodhisattva, 2'7"
(11-headed Avalokiteśvara) | (l.) West Norway Museum;
(ill.) Howard, 1984, pl. 49. |
| 7. Seated Bodhisattva, 3'6" | (ill.) Sirén, 1925, pl. 542b (ex. Yamanaka,
Peking). |
| 8. Seated Bodhisattva, 2'11" | (l.) British Museum (ex. Houo-Ming-Tse,
Peking). |
| 9. Seated Bodhisattva (?) | (ill.) Houo-Ming-Tse, 1930, 30. |
| 10. Standing Buddha, 3'
(Śākyamuni) | (l.) West Norway Museum;
(ill.) Sirén, 1925, pl. 546a; Howard, 1984,
pl. 50. |
| 11. Standing Buddha, approx. 3'
(Śākyamuni) | (l.) Spink & Son, 1992. |
| 12. Standing Buddha, 3'3" | (l.) Asian Art Museum, San Francisco;
(ill.) Sirén, 1925, pl. 546b (ex. Yamanaka,
Kyoto); Lefebvre d'Argencé, 1974, pl. 131. |
| 13. Seated Buddha, 3'5"
(Cosmic Vairocana) | (l.) Asian Art Museum, San Francisco;
(ill.) Lefebvre d'Argencé, 1974, pl. 134. |
| 14. Seated Buddha, 2'7" | (ill.) Eskenazi, Ancient Chinese Sculpture,,
1978, no. 27. |
| 15. Seated Buddha Trinity, 2' | (ill.) Sotheby's New York, 9.12.87, |

⁷⁹ Dimensions are given in feet, following Sirén, 1925.

⁸⁰ (l.): Located

⁸¹ (ill.): Illustrated

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| (Amitābha) | No. 175a. |
| 16. Luohan, 3' | (l.) West Norway Museum; |
| (Kāśyapa) | (ill.) Sirén, 1925, pl. 545b; Sirén, 1942, pl. 8:1; Howard, 1984, pl. 47. |
| 17. Lishi, 3' | (l.) West Norway Museum; |
| | (ill.) Sirén, 1925, pl. 545a; Sirén, 1942, pl. 8:3; Howard, 1984, pl. 48. |
| 18. Tianwang, 2'4" ⁸² | (ill.) Sirén, 1925, pl. 541 (ex. Rousset Coll., Paris). |

Figures

1. Free-standing Mañjuśrī (VK.M.64–208a)
2. Zhang Shengwen, 'The Long Roll', detail showing Mañjuśrī, 1170s, after H. Chapin, *A Long Roll of Buddhist Images*, revised by A.C. Soper, Ascona, 1972, pl. 26.
3. Free-standing Ānanda (VM.K.64–213)
4. Free-standing Kāśyapa (VM.K.64–211)
5. Foguang si Ānanda and Kāśyapa, after Shi Yan (ed.), *Zhong'guo Meishu Quanji, Sui Tang diaosu*, diaosu boan 4, Beijing, 1988, pl. 48.
6. Free-standing large Buddha (VM.K.64–216).
7. Foguang si Buddha, base d. 752, after Shi Yan (ed.), *Zhong'guo Meishu Quanji, Sui Tang diaosu*, diaosu boan 4, Beijing, 1988, pl. 47.
8. Xiude Buddha, d. 746, after Wan-go Weng and Yang Boda, *The Palace Museum: Peking, Treasures of the Forbidden City*, London, 1982, pl. 134.
9. Chongqing si luohan, 1079, after Shi Yan (ed.), *Zhong'guo Meishu Quanji, Wudai Song diaosu*, diaosu bian 5, Beijing, 1988, pl. 66.
10. Lingyan si luohan, 1124, after Shi Yan (ed.), *Zhong'guo Meishu Quanji, Wudai Song diaosu*, diaosu bian 5, Beijing, 1988, pl. 51.
11. Free-standing Buddha, possibly Amitābha (VM.K.64–212).
12. Architectural group Śākyamuni (VM.K.61–216).

⁸² This figure lacks a back-slab, but otherwise relates to the architectural group.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

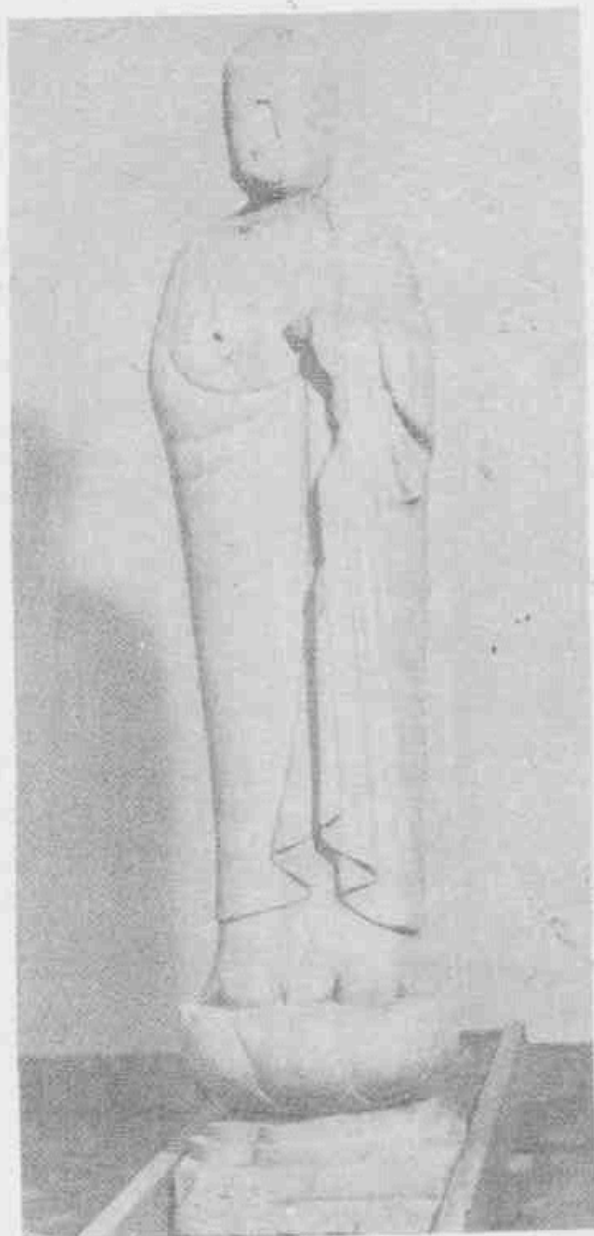


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12