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The Emergence and Spread of Relic Veneration in Medieval China: A Study with a Special Focus on the Relics Produced by Miracles

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Abstract: Miracle tales are almost the sole source for the investigation of the emergence and spread of the relic cult in the early phase of Chinese Buddhism. The earliest excavated relic casket dates back to 453 CE, over four centuries after Buddhism was introduced to China. Through a critical textual analysis of *Ji Shenzhou Sanbao Gantonglu*, it is evident that the initial form of relic veneration was based on miraculous responses. Legends about imperial relic worship before the 3rd century are all later fabrications. Two archeological finds—the alleged relic murals in a Han tomb at Horinger, Inner Mongolia, and the stūpa-shaped bronze vessel in Gongyi, Henan—are not directly related to relic veneration. Based on the available evidence, it is tentatively concluded that relic worship first emerged around the 3rd century in the vicinity of Luoyang, the capital of the Western Jin, and later spread to the south of the Yangtze River after the Yongjia chaos. The early worshippers included both monks and lay Buddhists, such as merchants and lower-ranking officials. Royal interest in relics did not arise until the 5th century. The rise of relic veneration in China occured two or three centuries later than that in Gandhāra, from which Chinese Buddhism was significantly influenced. Compared to the cult of images or scriptures, relic veneration also emerged relatively late in China. The reluctance to adopt relics as worship objects can be partly explained by (the mahāyāna) Buddhist doctrines and the Chinese cultural mentality.

Keywords: relic veneration; miracle tales; Daoxuan; stimulus–response

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1. Introduction

As a unique mode of existence after the Buddha entered his *parinirvāṇa*, relics have always been at the center of Buddhist devotion. Current studies on Buddhist relics in East Asia are mainly confined to the fields of art history and archeology. These studies were concerned with the form of reliquaries, the procedure of the relic interment,[1] and the political performance of the relics in imperial ceremonies (refer to J. Chen 2002a, 2002b). However, when examining archeological remains, the deposits within relic caskets largely escape scholarly attention, and the mode of relic production is even more rarely discussed. Before the rise of imperial patronage, there was a relatively long period during which relic worship was disseminated among the lower social strata. The unique manner in which the relics appeared and the social identity of the earliest relic worshipers are the primary concerns of this paper.

It is worth noting that the earliest excavated relic casket in China dates back to the year of 453 CE. If one considers the fact that Buddhism was introduced to China around the 1st century CE, there are many miracle tales that provide arguably the sole source of how relic veneration emerged and spread in the following several centuries.

Buddhist scholars, when talking about the Chinese relic tradition in its earliest phase, often cited later accounts casually or equated the legends with historical facts. Since the narratives of miracles have undergone a series of copying, alterations, and additions to the plot, it is necessary to treat these documents with caution.

2. Buddhist Miracle Tales as a Distinct Genre

Buddhist miracle tales have traditionally been classified under the genre of *zhiguai* 志怪 narratives ("records of anomalies"). The authors believed that they were recording the events that actually took place. An eyewitness to the event was usually mentioned towards the end of each story. The conception of "zhiguai" is in sharp contrast to the fictional narratives known as *chuanqi* 傳奇 (legends), which were considered as purely imaginative literature and flourished in the Tang. On the other hand, the authors of anomaly writings were fully aware of the supernatural nature of the events they described, which differed from historical works.

Although the origin of the supernatural tales can be traced back to antiquity, *zhiguai* as a genre flourished during the Jin dynasty (266–420). The Buddhist motif first appeared in a collection of supernatural tales with the title *Xunshi linggui zhi* 荀氏靈鬼志 [*Xun's Records of Spirits and Ghosts*], which was compiled around the mid-Eastern Jin period (c.350s). Approximately in the same period, Xie Fu 謝敷 (313–362) began to collect the miracle manifestations promoting the cult of Avalokitesvara. After a temporary loss, Fu Liang 傅亮 (374–426) reconstructed seven stories and added some new accounts. The corpus was further expanded over the subsequent decades by two other authors. Most collections of supernatural tales compiled in the six dynasties do not survive in their complete form, which could only be restored from the treatises or compendia. The only exception is the above-mentioned three collections of Avalokitesvara miracle tales, which were copied successively in one single scroll in Kamakura, Japan. The manuscript is now preserved at *Shoren-in* temple 青蓮院 in Kyoto, Japan (Makita 1970).

Among the collections devoted to the Buddhist motif exclusively, *Xuanyanji* 宣驗記 [*Records Proclaiming Manifestations*] is a milestone work. The collections of Guanyin miracles by Fu Liang and Zhang Yan 張演, though composed a few decades earlier, are relatively sparse in terms of the number of entries they include. Liu Yiqing 劉義慶, Prince of Linchuan 臨川王 during the Liu Song dynasty, was well known for his fondness for gathering scholars and literati. Buddhist miracle tales appeared in two collections that were compiled under his name, i.e., *Youming lu* 幽明錄 [*Records of the Hidden and Visible Worlds*] and *Xuanyan ji.* The two works differ markedly in their aims. According to Li Jianguo 李劍國, "the former is a collection of miscellaneous strange and wondrous tales, which belongs to the secular anomaly writings, whereas the latter is devoted to the Buddhist miracle tales exclusively" (J. Li 2011, p. 485). *Xuanyan ji* is listed in the bibliographical catalog of *Sui Shu* as containing 15 fascicles, which is a considerable length. Unfortunately, only some 30 stories survive.[2] Judging from the extant entries, there is no hint that the authors had organized the stories according to various themes.

In the late 5th century, Wang Yan 王琰 (fl. 454–501) compiled *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記 [*Signs from the Unseen Realm*], which is the largest collection of miracle tales that comes down to us and the most representative of this genre composed in the six dynasties. The preface preserved in *Fayuan Zhulin* 法苑珠林 [*A Forest of Pearls From the Dharma Garden*] reveals the structure of the entire work. By the end of the preface, the author declares,

> For receiving and mirroring the feelings of intimacy, there is nothing that surpasses the ceremonial image. Many auspicious confirming signs emanate from them…. In the case of manifestations involving sūtras and stūpas, the meanings and proofs are of the same sort [as those of images]. The cases should not be

> gathered in another cycle, so I have arranged those stories right after the miracles of the images. 夫鏡接近情，莫踰儀像，瑞驗之發，多自是興。……若夫經塔顯効， 旨證亦同。事非殊貫，故繼其末。[3]

Clearly, *Mingxiang ji* organized the miracle tales according to different sacred objects. The vast majority of the stories are miraculous manifestations of Buddha images, followed by those of the Buddhist scriptures and stūpas (including the relics).

The three-volume *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantonglu* 集神州三寶感通錄 [*Collected Records of Miracles Relating to the Three Treasures in China*, *T* no.2105, henceforth *GTL*], was compiled by Daoxuan in the first year of the Linde 麟德 era of Tang (664).[4] This work follows the framework of *Mingxiang ji,* where the stories are arranged under different sacred objects, albeit with a revised order. The preface states that the book "begins with the manifestations of relics and stūpas, followed by a list of divine images descending [to the mortal realm], and concludes with sacred temples, auspicious scriptures as well as holy monks".[5] Here, the order of the images and relics has been reversed. The first fascicle is devoted to the miracles of the relics, which is further divided into three categories: first is the relics under the stūpas built by king Aśokan; second is so-called "Miraculous Responses of the Relics in the Divine Land *Cīna-sthāna*"; and lastly, the relics bestowed during the Renshou campaign of relic distribution.

The adjusted order of sacred objects undoubtedly reflects Daoxuan's 道宣 sustaining interest in relic worship. Several months before he died, Daoxuan established an ordination platform, of which the relic was the crucial unit.[6] In the mysterious conversations with celestial beings that took place after the establishment of the ordination platform, a recurring theme was the omnipresence of relics of Kāśyapa Buddha throughout the Chinese territory. The tooth relic was claimed to have been delivered by Nezha, son of Vaiśravan, who achieved the greatest fame in Chang'an and far beyond (Strong 2004, pp. 185–87).

The tripartite classification reveals Daoxuan's insight into the entire tradition of relic veneration in China. It implies three different ways of invoking and performing the relics, and roughly corresponds to the periods in which the three types of relics were most favored and prevalent. In other words, they represent three traditions of relic worship in China, from the relics produced by miracles, through the Aśokan relics, and finally to the relic distribution campaign of the Sui dynasty. The present study primarily focuses on the first subcategory. I will give some brief remarks on its distinction from the Aśokan relics and its impact on the relic distribution campaign during the Sui dynasty.

3. Historical Survey of Several Legends

Concerning the introduction and earliest history of the relic worship, there are some legends that have been accepted as historical facts by modern scholars on some occasions. The most widely circulated accounts are documented in the first three entries under the title "Miraculous Responses of the Relics in Divine Land Cīna-sthāna" in fascicle 1 of *GTL*. A critical examination of the historical sources casts doubt on the authenticity of these accounts and thus presents a scenario of the rise and development of relic veneration with more precision.

3.1. The Relics in a Buddho-Daoist Contest in Front of Emperor Ming of Later Han

The commonly accepted tradition asserts that Chinese Buddhism started with a dream by Emperor Ming of the later Han. This event became a popular theme in later sources, the number of which, prior to Daoxuan, amounts to fourteen. Previous studies have examined the intertextual relationships among various sources (Maspero 1910, pp. 95–130; Tang 1983, pp. 11–21). We shall not repeat their arguments here. Suffice it to say that the relic miracle only occurred in the *Han faben neizhuan* 漢法本內傳, compiled in

the early Tang dynasty.[7] The apocryphal text relates a contest between the monks and the Daoist priests, when the Buddha's relics emitted a radiance. This episode is purely a piece of fiction because institutionalized Daoism emerged in the 3rd century.

3.2. The Relics Under a Stūpa to the West of the Imperial Palace of the Emperor Ming of Wei

Another widely circulated legend deals with a miracle witnessed by Emperor Ming of the Wei dynasty (r. 205–239) when he intended to destroy a Buddhist stūpa. The *GTL* recounts that:

> During the reign of Emperor Ming of Wei, there were originally three temples in Luoyang. One of them was located to the west of the palace. When people hoisted the banners on the pinnacle of the temple, they would be able to observe the view within the palace. The emperor was upset and intended to dismantle the temple. At that time, a few foreign monks resided in the temple. They brought a golden plate filled with water to store the relics, which emitted a five-colored brilliance, with flames continuously rising. The emperor exclaimed, "If it were not for the divine power, how could this be?" Therefore, he built a hundred rooms [around the stūpa] to the east of the road, and named the temple as the official Buddhist shrine/vihara. 魏明帝洛城中，本有三寺。其一在宮之西，每繫幡剎頭，輒斥見宮內。帝患之，將毀除壞。時外國沙門居寺，乃齎金盤盛水，以貯舍利，五色光明，騰焰不息。帝歎曰："非夫神効，安得爾乎？"乃於道東造周閭百間，名為官佛圖精舍云。[8]

The narrative seems to be a revised version of a passage from the "Treatise on Buddhism and Daoism" in the dynastic history *Weishu* 魏書 [*The History of Northern Wei*]. The term "official Buddhist shrine" (*guanfotu* 官佛圖) does not appear in *Weishu.* The *Weishu* narrative ends with the sentence that is not found in Daoxuan's work: "the site of the stūpa was excavated to form a Mengfan Lake, in which lotus flowers were planted".[9] This description clearly indicates the location of the stūpa, which provides us with clues to explore the circumstances in which this legend was created.

First, it should be noted that the term "official Buddhist shrine" in *GTL* is obviously a later interpolation. The "official Buddhist shrine" or the official monastery generally refers to monasteries funded by the state, in contrast to those temples donated by individuals.[10] From the Han to the early Jin dynasties, it was illegal for Chinese citizens to be tonsured as monks; thus, the existence of the state-sponsored monastery was improbable.

The narrative in *Wei shu* is also questionable. Emperor Ming of Wei 魏明帝 did commission a large-scale construction of the imperial palace in Luoyang. The connection between Mengfan lake and the emperor was further corroborated by a local gazetteer *Henan zhi* 河南志 [*Gazetteer of Henan*], compiled by a 19th-century historian Xu Song 徐松.[11] In addition, Zhang Zai 張載 (fl. 280–289) provided a more detailed description of this area in his "Rhapsody on Mengfan Lake".[12] According to his words, water flowed into the lake from the Qianjin canal to the north of the city and then went eastward into the inner palace complex.[13] There were red lotus flowers in the lake, where the emperor often took a boat excursion.

However, Buddhist architecture is not attested by contemporary descriptions. It was not until the Northern Wei dynasty that the former Mengfan lake became the site where the Changqiu temple was established. The founder of this temple was Liu Teng 劉騰, the head of palace domestic service (*Changqiu ling* 長秋令). *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 [*A Record of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*] states that the temple had a three-story stūpa adorned with shining golden umbrellas. There was an annual procession of statues in April at this temple, with thousands of beholders. It can be imagined that the tall stūpa was very striking for the residents of Luoyang. The episode of the towering stūpa over-

looking the palace is presumably rooted in the experience of the Northern Wei rather than the former Wei. Actually, we find a similar episode in which the emperor of the Northern Wei forbade his subjects from ascending the stūpa in Yongning monastery 永寧寺.[14] Nonetheless, it is hardly conceivable that such a towering Buddhist structure would have been established in close proximity to the palace precincts.

3.3. The Relics Obtained by Kang Senghui

The Sogdian monk Kang Senghui 康僧會 (229–280) struck the relics to demonstrate their miraculous power, prompting the sovereign to construct the Jianchu monastery 建初寺 (literally meaning the initial establishment). This event was traditionally considered the beginning of Buddhist history in South China and is arguably the earliest evidence of relic veneration in China. Of the three legends we discussed so far, the apocryphal character of this tradition is the least discernible. There are four versions of this account before Daoxuan, which can be categorized into three groups according to their dates of composition.

The earlier records are the three passages from *Xuanyan ji* and the lesser-known *Wu lu* 吳錄 [*Records of Wu*], as cited in *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論 [*Treatise on Refuting the Heresies*]. Both texts recount how Kang Senghui, facing the tyrannous sovereign Sun Hao 孫皓, obtained the relics *ex nihilo* after pious prayers, and that the relics remained intact when people struck them with hammers. Sun Hao established a monastery to the north of the grand market, which was thus called Dashi monastery 大市寺. *Xuanyan ji* tells another story that Sun Hao was punished for his profane deeds and finally received the five-precept ordination. And *Wu lu* documents the discussions between Kang Senghui and the sovereign on the affinities and differences between Confucianism and Buddhism.

The narrative in the biography of Kang Senghui in *Chusanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 [*A Collection of Records of Translating the Tripitaka*, *T* no.2145) by Sengyou 僧祐 represents an intermediary state. Sengyou appeared to be attempting to weave the independent episodes into a coherent narrative. In the earlier account, Sun Hao was converted to Buddhism after his conversation with Kang Senghui. In order to make the subsequent penalty for Sun Hao's evil deeds reasonable, he inserted the phrase "although the sovereign heard the true Dharma, his brutal nature could not overcome his cruelty".

In Sengyou's version, the holiness of the relics is remarkably developed:

> At that time, Sun Quan had the actual control of the region east of the Yangtze River, where Buddhism had not yet been established. Kang Senghui wished to spread the great Dharma, and thus he traveled eastward. In the tenth year of the Chiwu era (247), he arrived in Jianye, where he built up a thatched hut, and established statues to practice the way. An official reported, "There is a foreigner who has entered the country and claims to be a monk, with unusual attire. This matter shall be inspected and verified". Quan said, "I have heard that Emperor Ming of Han had a dream of a deity, who was called Buddha; is what he believes in and worships a tradition passed down from that era?" He immediately summoned the monk for questioning, asking for any miraculous signs. Kang Senghui replied, "Though the Tathāgata has passed away for more than a thousand years, his body remains as relics manifest miracles in all directions. In ancient times, King Aśoka built as many as eighty-four thousand stūpas. The prosperity of stūpa and temples vividly demonstrates the immense influence of the Buddha". Quan thought his words was exaggerated and thus said to the monk, "If you can obtain the relics, I will build a stūpa for them. If you are caught cheating, beware of the consequences under the national law". (Omitted) On the evening of the 21st day, there was still nothing to appear. Everyone was terrified. After the fifth watch of the night, suddenly there was a sound like a bell

from the bottle. Kang Senghui went to see for himself and indeed found the relics. The next morning, he presented them to Sun Quan, and all court officials gathered to watch. The five-colored light radiated, illuminating the bottle. Quan held the bottle with hand and poured it into a bronze plate, and the plate shattered where the relics struck. Quan stood up with solemn surprise, "what a rare auspicious sign!" 時孫權稱制江左，而未有佛教。會欲運流大法，乃振錫東遊。以赤烏十年（247） 至建業，營立茅茨，設像行道。有司奏曰："有胡人入境自稱沙門，容服非恒， 事應驗察。"權曰："吾聞漢明夢神，號稱為佛，彼之所事，豈其遺風耶？"即召會詰問，有何靈驗。會曰："如來遷跡忽逾千載，遺骨舍利神曜無方。昔阿育起塔，乃八萬四千。夫塔寺之興，所以表遺化也。"權以為誇誕，乃謂會曰："若能得舍利，當為造塔。如其虛妄，國有常刑。"（中略）三七日暮，猶無所見。莫不震懼。既入五更，忽聞瓶中鎗然有聲，會自往視，果獲舍利。明旦呈權舉朝集觀，五色光燭，照耀瓶上。權手自執瓶，瀉于銅盤，舍利所衝，盤即破碎。權肅然驚起曰："希有之瑞也。"

The monk further said, "The divine power of the relics is not merely their luminous appearance; they are not to be burnt by the conflagration at the end of a *kalpa*, nor can they be shattered by the strike of a diamond scepter". Sun Quan ordered a strong man to strike them with an iron anvil and hammer. As a result, both the anvil and hammer were dented, while the relics remained unscathed. Sun Quan was deeply convinced and filled with awe. He immediately ordered the construction of a stūpa. Since this is the beginning of the Buddhist monasteries, the temple was named Jianchu si, and the place was called the Buddha district. From then on, the great Dharma flourished in the region east of the Yangtze River. 會進而言曰："舍利威神，豈直光相而已，乃劫燒之火不能燔，金剛之杵不能壞矣。"權命取鐵槌砧，使力士擊之，砧搥並陷，而舍利無異。權大嗟服，即為建塔以始有佛寺，故曰建初寺，因名其地為佛陀里，由是江左大法遂興。[15]

Here, it is Sun Quan 孫權 (182–252), the founder of the Wu kingdom, rather than the notorious last emperor, who asked for a manifestation of relic miracle and who ordered the first Buddhist monastery to be built. The name of the monastery has also changed from *Dashi si* to the glorious *Jianchu si*. In my view, the intention behind such alterations is clear: to trace the royal patronage of Buddhism and the relic worship tradition of South China back to the moment when Sun Quan declared the independence domain from the unified Han empire. In addition, Keng Senghui's description of the relics mentions the legend of the Aśokan stūpa and their indestructibility despite the apocalyptic fire, which shows a glaring anachronism. The Buddhist literature recounting King Aśoka's distribution of the relics was translated no earlier than the 4th century,[16] while the latter detail, to the best of my knowledge, is alluded to in a passage in *Buddhacarita,* traditionally attributed to Aśvaghosa, which was translated in the 5th century.[17] It is very likely that the scholar-monks, if not Sengyou himself, interpolated these episodes based on the newly translated Buddhist scriptures.

The biography of Kang Senghui in *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 [*Biographies of Eminent Monks*, *T* no.2059] represents an even more complicated narrative. The most significant alteration here is the insertion of Zhi Qian's 支謙 biographical sketches. Zhi Qian was very important to the early history of Chinese Buddhism, but *Gaoseng zhuan* should not include a biography of a lay Buddhist. The solution is to incorporate his life account into the biography of a monk. The author may have encountered trouble when piecing together the two biographies. A colophon preserved in *Chu sanzang jiji* clearly verifies that Zhi Qian arrived in South China earlier than Keng Senghui did and served as an official in the Wu court.

As a consequence, before Kang Senghui's initial encounter with Sun Quan, the sovereign must have known about Buddhism. The relic miracle, if it really happened so early, is not the beginning of Buddhism in South China. Huijiao, the author of *Gaoseng zhuan*, added one more sentence to bridge the potential contradiction: "At that time, the land of the Wu kingdom was newly imbued with the great Dharma, but the transformation was not yet complete".

Based on the analysis above, I would like to make some remarks. First, drastic changes in Kang Senghui's biographical account occurred in the late 5th century. The heroic Sun Quan as a protagonist, the name of the monastery as Jianchu, and the scriptural allusions of the relic miracle, these elements appeared for the first time in Sengyou's narrative.

Second, while the Daishi monastery witnessed repeated miracles during the Jin and Song dynasties, these records were absent in earlier sources. When the famous Śrīmitra, known as the High-seat Monk, arrived at Jiankang in the Yongjia 永嘉 era (307–313) of the Jin dynasty, the biography written by a contemporary lay disciple attests that he "stayed at the grand market", rather than "settled in the Jianchu monastery".[18] It seems that no temple existed at this site until the beginning of the fourth century. This detail also explains why the monk practiced ascetic deeds in the cemetery and why people eventually built a temple there.

Third, the account of Sun Hao's penalty for his evil deeds is obviously fictional. In the story, he knew the existence of the Buddha from his palace consort. This episode contradicts the fact that he claimed to perform a bathing ceremony earlier. Kamata Shigeo has noticed a passage in *Records of the Three Kingdoms*, which testifies that Sun Chen 孫綝 (?–258), an obscure sovereign of Wu, "destroyed the Buddhist shrines and executed the [Buddhist] priests", and that the Changgan monastery was damaged in this persecution.[19] Kamata suggests a hypothesis that the story of Sun Hao was created in the model of Sun Chen (Kamata 1985, pp. 212–14). In Sengyou's biography, we have seen similar manipulations, which is a common phenomenon in the miraculous writings.

To what extent should we accept the episode of Keng Senghui's test for the relics? Even if we envisage a possibility of a nucleus of historical facts despite all of the later alterations, this event could only occur towards the end of the Wu kingdom, rather than in the beginning.

Through a detailed analysis, the authenticity of the three legends appears to be questionable. A common feature is that the protagonists are all emperors, and they all emphasize the significance of the beginning. The dream of Emperor Ming of the later Han signals the beginning of Chinese Buddhism; the relics of the Jianchu monastery signal the beginning of the Buddhist tradition in South China. The invention of the official shrine with the stūpa reflects a revivalist enthusiasm of the Northern Wei to continue the Han-wei tradition in Luoyang.[20]

4. Two Archeological Excavations Re-Examined

4.1. The Mural Paintings of Relics in an Eastern Han Tomb at Horinger 和林格爾, Inner Mongolia

In 1971, a tomb with mural paintings was discovered at Horinger, Inner Mongolia. The occupant of the tomb was proven to be a military governor of the later Han dynasty. The tomb was first reported by Yu Weichao 俞偉超 in the 1980s, who claims that the paintings feature a number of Buddhist themes, such as the white elephant and the lotus. The focus of controversy concerns a now-vanished inscription on the eastern ceiling wall of the antechamber, which reads *sheli* 猞猁. Yu argues that this is a phonetic transliteration of the word *śarīra*, which is usually written as 舍利 in Buddhist literature.

The paintings disintegrated before the photo techniques were used. Yu Weichao relies on his assumption based on a personal memory of Li Zuozhi 李作之, a staff member of the Museum of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. According to Li,

> In the area slightly below the King Father of the East to the north, there is a depiction of a pan-like vessel, within which "four globularnobjects" remained. To the upper right of this depiction, there is a two-character inscription that reads "sheli 猞猁" (Weichao Yu 1980, pp. 68–72).

This discovery has been cited by many scholars to be evidence of the existence of the relic cult in the later Han. Erik Zürcher developed Yu's argument by pointing out more allusions to the relics in Buddhist scriptures and literary works (Zürcher 2014a, pp. 355–56).

On the other hand, there are scholars who doubt whether the emendation of the more complicated inscription "猞猁" to the simple "舍利" is justifiable (Ruan 1987, pp. 205–12). The controversy has been clarified as more murals with similar inscribed paintings were unearthed. Art historians have convincingly proved that the identification of the inscription of 猞猁 as a Buddhist relic is tenable. The corresponding visual representation of 猞猁 is an auspicious animal, thus rejecting any Buddhist interpretation (Kim 2014; Zhu 2020).

4.2. The Stūpa-Shaped Bronze Vessel at Gongyi 鞏義, Henan

The second excavation was carried out under similar circumstances. In 1972, while digging a reservoir in the southeast of the village for the *Zhitian* 芝田 commune, a cellar was discovered. According to the report by the local museum, "the cellar is 2 m deep from the ground, with a large pottery jar placed right in the middle, filled with red and green stone beads weighing about 50 kg approximately. Around the jar, there are 71 pieces of bronze vessels stacked, weighing some 80 kg; in addition, there are two pieces of iron vessels, weighing about 50 kg". The bronze vessels were included in the collection of the Gongxian museum in 1980. A striking discovery among the bronze vessels is a stūpa-shaped artifact.

This stūpa-shaped bronze artifact is 50 cm tall in total and hollow inside. It consists of two parts: the body of the stūpa and the base, which are detachable. The base is square and features four holes on its surface. The body of the stūpa comprises a cylindrical drum and a hemispherical dome, connected by a single string pattern. The superstructure is decorated with a four-pointed shape that flares out in a square form. The lower edge of the drum has three supporting nails that fit into the holes of the base (Figure 1). The authors of the archeological report judge that this piece is "unique in shape, which was never seen in Han dynasty tombs, but was similar to the decorative items on the stūpas after the Wei and Jin dynasties" (Gongxian Wenhua Guan 1974, p. 123).

This artifact did not attract scholarly attention until 2019, when Huang Pan 黃盼 conducted a detailed analysis. She examined the date of the production of the bronze vessels at the same site and speculated on the possible uses of the stūpa-shaped bronze ware. Judging from the shapes and decorations, the owners of these artifacts are mostly from the royal or noble classes.

Huang cited a passage from *the Sūtra on Lady Yuye,* which mentions that the lady made jeweled curtains with well-adorned embroidery, chanting the hymns around the stūpa[21], and argued that the curtain hooks and jewels were used in conjunction with a bronze stūpa model, which constitutes rare evidence of stūpa worship practices in the later Han (Huang 2019, pp. 11–34).



Figure 1. Stūpa-shaped bronze vessel excavated in Gongxian county[22] (photograph by the author).

For our purposes, it is important to point out that the bronze vessel is not likely to be a reliquary. If we compare the Gandharan reliquaries to the shape of a miniature stūpa, the standard form is half-hollow to receive a nested casket and has a hollow base as a relic container (Jongeward 2012, p. 70). In contrast, the base of the bronze vessel from Gongyi is hollow underneath. Because there is no support for containing the relic deposits (Figure 2), the stūpa-shaped vessel is presumably a votive stūpa or had other uses, but it is by no means a reliquary.[23]



Figure 2. The base of the bronze vessel (photograph by the author).

5. The Relic Veneration in Its Earliest Phase—With a Comparison to the Gandhāran Tradition

Excluding the questionable items discussed above, we have compiled all the stories from the second section of fascicle one of the *GTL*, along with additional accounts that tell how the relics were miraculously obtained, as detailed in Appendix A.

The stories, 21 in total, are arranged in the chronological order of the events they depict. Entries that cannot be accurately dated are placed after the datable ones. We try to make some observations through an analysis of the materials.

5.1. The Mechanism of Stimulus Response and Its Significance

As we have demonstrated above, Daoxuan categorized the miracle tales of the relics into three types: relics obtained through spiritual response, relics established by King Aśoka, and relics bestowed in the distribution campaign in the Renshou period of the Sui dynasty. By examining the entries under the title "Miraculous Response of the Buddha's Relics Within the Holy Land of Cīnasthāna" along with the additional accounts in Appendix A, a striking feature becomes readily apparent: the emergence of relics, or rather, the process of their production, is often invoked through the devout prayer of believers from the void; the origin of the relics in terms of actual time and space—such as specific famous temples in India, the Western Regions they may hail from, or their connection to the historical Buddha Sakyamuni—is not the primary focus that substantiates the authenticity of the relics. In his study of relic veneration in medieval Europe, Patrick Geary states,

> The identification of false relics and the determination of genuine claims ultimately rested on very pragmatic, functional evidence: if the relics worked, that is, if they were channels for supernatural intervention, then they were genuine. If they did not, they were not authentic, regardless of the strength of external evidence (Geary 1986, p. 178).

This remark is also applicable to the earliest miracle tales of relics in the Chinese Buddhist tradition. In the preface to his work on miraculously produced relics, Daoxuan enumerates a series of sacred sites housing Buddha relics across India and the Western Regions, and the relics enshrined within the Aśokan stūpas. To some extent, these sites could be supported by the external evidence. In contrast, the relics examined in the present study are governed by an entirely distinct mechanism. Daoxuan describes these relics as "manifesting in diverse forms during their specific spiritual response processes, and emerging based on the circumstances". Here, it is emphasized that the relics described in the earliest miracle tales, their manifestation or disappearance, all obey the principle of "spiritual response". The supernatural forces in the invisible realm perceive (*gan* 感) human beings' devotional practice or karmic merit and respond (*ying* 應) accordingly.[24] Unlike the Christian tradition of relics, "spiritual response" is not only a basis for determining the authenticity of relics but also the driving force that brings them into existence. As the narrator summarizes in the story of Xu Chun [15], "as a rule, one may gain the relics with reverence, and lose them with negligence".

Another characteristic related to the one above, which I call "the proliferation of relics", forms a stark contrast to the understanding of relics found in mainstream Buddhist scriptures. In classical descriptions, the paucity of relics is a recurring theme. According to *the Mahāparinibbhāna-suttanta*, the relics produced after Sakyamuni's cremation led to a dispute among eight kings. To resolve the conflict, a Brahmin lay follower named Droṇa evenly divided the relics into eight parts. The *Aśokāvadāna*, which was supposedly written in the 2nd century, narrates that King Aśoka excavated the relics that were previously buried by the seven kings (all but the share of Rāmagrāma) and constructed eighty-four thousand stūpas, spreading throughout Jambudvīpa. The principle of distribution was that a region with a population of more than one hundred million households could receive one share of the relics. However, a problem stood out. The people of Takṣaśilā, which had a population of 3.6 billion, requested to build 36 stūpas, leading to a shortage of relics. In response, King Aśoka threatened to slaughter 3.5 billion of the populace, and only then did the Takṣaśilans withdraw their request, settling for only a single stūpa (Strong 2004, pp. 116–22, 124–48).

On the other hand, if we look at the earliest accounts of relic miracles in Chinese Buddhism, they could be acquired through devotional practices, during fasting ceremonies, or by the power of karmic merit on ordinary occasions. In the examples of An Fakai 安法開 [05] and Meng Jing 孟景 [06], the protagonists were obviously well aware of the tradition that it is necessary to install the relics beneath the stūpa prior to its construction, yet they found themselves in the predicament of lacking relics. Eventually, they were able to effortlessly overcome this scarcity through the conduct of rituals. In the story of Xuchun [15], the relics became divisible and proliferated.

If the Aśokan relics represent a tradition that emphasizes divine provenance, and relics produced through spiritual response can increase in quantity, then the Renshou distribution campaign of relics clearly merges these two traditions. According to *Sheli ganying ji* 舍利感應記 [*The Account of the Stimulus and Responses*] by Wang Shao 王邵 (d. ca. 610), Emperor Wendi of the Sui obtained a pack of relics from a mysterious Brahman monk. Later, the emperor and the monk Tanqian each counted the relics many times by putting them on the palms of their hands. Each time, they arrived at a different number and could not determine it.[25] In the tenth month of the year 601, the emperor ordered the construction of one stūpa in each of the 30 prefectures to enshrine the relics (J. Chen 2002a, p. 89). Apparently, this movement imitates the deeds of King Aśoka's construction of 84,000 stūpas. And the design of the stūpa follows exactly the model of Aśokan stūpas. At the same time,

The emperor Wendi and his empress often found relics in their food. They floated one in a silver bowl of water and presented it to the officials; in a moment, they suddenly saw (it split into) two that were swirling to the right and joined together. On bestowing some clams (*xian* 蜆) to two of his royal concubines (*guiren* 貴人) and two princes, Yang Zhao 楊昭 (579–606) and Yang Jian 楊暕, the emperor ordered them to check the clams carefully. It turned out that each of them found a relic inside one of the clams. In less than twenty days, nineteen "relics" in total were found in the palace alone. Most of these emanated rays of light. From then on, both the clergy and laity offered to the court whatever they believed to have been relics. Hearing of the emperor's suspicion of their authenticity, some śramaṇas tested the "relics" with hammers. Thirteen of them turned out to be grains of jade, while the true relics remained undamaged. 每因食於齒下得舍利，皇后亦然。以銀盌水浮其一，出示百官，須臾忽見有兩右旋相著。二貴人及晉王昭、豫章王暕蒙賜蜆，勅令審視之，各於蜆內得舍利一。未過二旬，宮內凡得十九，多放光明。自是遠近道俗，所有舍利率奉獻焉。皇帝曰："何必皆是真。諸沙門相與推試之，果有十三玉粟。其真舍利鐵甲而無損。[26]

Here, the emperor Wendi of Sui and his wife obtained relics from food, a motif frequently found in the miracle tales of the Southern dynasties, as seen in Appendix A items [14], [15], [17], and [19]. In order to test the authenticity of relics, people often make them float on water and observe a clockwise rotation. This plot is also recorded in Appendix A items [03], [07], [10], [12], and [13]. I do not find doctrinal justifications for these practices.[27] The similarities in these episodes indicate that the examples from the Sui dynasty clearly inherit the traditions of the Southern dynasties.

Upon analyzing the large-scale relic distribution movement during the Sui Dynasty, it becomes evident that the principles of distribution and the architectural design of the stūpas were modeled after the traditions of Aśokan relics. Meanwhile, the rituals for producing or testing relics still followed the tradition of miracle-produced relics that had been prominent in the Southern dynasties.

5.2. The Chronological Range and the Geographical Distribution

The protagonists Zhu Changshu 竺長舒 [01] and the wife of Zhousong 周嵩, with the natal surname Humu 胡母 [02], were the earliest examples of relic worship in China. We know from *GTL* that Zhu Changshu lived at the beginning of the Jin dynasty, while

Guang Shiyin Yingyan Ji 光世音應驗記 [*Miracle Tales of the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin*] reports that his ancestors may have been Central Asian merchants. During the Yuankang 元康 period (291–299), they settled in Luoyang (Dong 2002, p. 3). It is probable that the relics were brought to Luoyang by their ancestors from the Western Regions, no later than the end of the 3rd century.

Lady Humu lived in Luoyang as well. There is an episode in *Gaoseng zhuan* that she obtained a Buddhist sūtra written on silk from the Central Asian monk An Huize 安慧則, who resided at the Dashi temple (the temple near the great market) in Luoyang. This event took place on the eve of the Yongjia Turmoil (317).[28] The relics she possessed might have been acquired in the same period. Based on the two examples, we have arrived at the statement that relic veneration emerged in the vicinity of Luoyang, the capital, around the turn of the 3rd to 4th century.

After the collapse of the Western Jin, the monk Fayan 法顏, son of Zhu Changshu, and lady Humu, carried the relics to the Jiangxia 江夏 prefecture and Jiankang 建康, respectively. And notice the fact that the monks who constructed the stūpas in Guangling 廣陵 and Yuhang 餘杭 [04][05] are all from the north, let alone the famous Dao'an 道安 together with his disciple Tanyi 曇翼. Jiangling 江陵 and Guangling, which frequently appeared in the miracle tales, are the focal points for the influx of immigrants seeking refuge. These accounts vividly illustrate the spread of the relic cult to the populous urban sites in Southern China.

The vast majority of the miracle tales happened in the south, with only one exception [21]. The protagonist Lu Zai 陸載 was originally from the south. In a battle with northern troops, he was captured and subsequently served in the court of the Northern Wei.[29] Though the descendants of this family held prominent positions in the northern regimes, they deliberately maintained their customs and cultural identity.[30] In his later years, Lu Zai chanted the *Lotus Sūtra* and frequently obtained the relics thereafter. The pattern of stimulus–response echoes the episode of Xu Chun, among others. Lu's worship of relics is in line with the tradition from the south.

The absence of miracle tales in the north is quite puzzling. Relic worship had already been established in the 3rd century in Luoyang. And archeologists have unearthed numerous reliquaries that date back to the Northern dynasties.[31] The excavations are the testimony of highly advanced techniques in the north, and the lack of miracle narratives[32] probably reflects the differing conceptions of relic veneration during the periods of division or a rupture between the northern regimes and the unified empire.

5.3. The Practitioners and the Royal Patronage

The initial practitioners of relic veneration consisted of monastics and laity. Relics may have been passed down within families, donated to the monasteries [01], or they might have been taken from monasteries to be venerated at home by lay followers [09]. The cult of relics is not confined to the monastic community or the circle of lay people.

During the reign of the Jin dynasty, practitioners were commoners or lower-ranking officials in most cases. High-rank officials (the governor of Guangzhou in [09]), members of the royal family (Prince of Linchuan in [12]; Empress Dowager Chen in [18]), and the emperor (Emperor Ming of the Song in [17]) began to figure in the miracle tales of the Liu Song dynasty. Here, we observe a tendency for social dissemination that originates from the grassroots level and ascends.

The fact that Emperor Ming of the Liu Song dynasty was the first emperor in the south to venerate relics is no accident. In Chinese history, there have been many monarchs who showed kindness to Buddhist monks and supported Buddhist monasteries. It is the act of receiving the ordination that signifies the monarch's complete conversion, which signals

a new phase in the development of Buddhism. Emperor Ming of the Song was the first emperor to receive the Bodhisattva precepts.

We should keep in mind the fact that relic veneration emerged around the turn of the 3rd to 4th century (in Luoyang), and the period when the relic worship attracted the interest of a monarch for the first time was around the year 460. This half-century period is the period when Chinese Buddhist relic worship permeated from the folk to the court. If we compare this chronological framework to the case in the Gandhāran tradition, of which Chinese Buddhism had a sustained and strong influence, it would yield some insights.

Richard Salomon conducted an exhaustive survey of the inscribed reliquaries in the greater Gandhāra region. The earliest example is the Shinkot reliquary, which bears several inscriptions. The earliest inscription dates from the reign of the Indo-Greek king Menandros/Menander around the mid-second century. And the majority of the reliquaries are from the first century CE. From the reign of Kushan emperor Huvishka in the mid-second century CE onward, the number reduces significantly (Jongeward 2012, p. 165). As for the royal patronage, we find numerous inscriptions of the reliquaries written by the regional Saka subordinates, such as the Apraca king and the Odi king, in the last half of the first century BCE and the early decades of the first century CE.[33]

Previous scholars may have drawn upon the extant evidence of early Chinese Buddhism, with an eye on the development of Buddhism in Gandhāra or the Indian subcontinent. The scenario they suggest is that the rise of relic veneration in Chinese Buddhism coincides with or comes a step behind the development in Gandhāra (Palumbo 2014, p. 294). Here, I repeat the points we discussed above, excluding the unreliable literary evidence and the excavations unrelated to our topic, and another picture emerges. The rise of relic veneration in China postdates the counterpart in Gandhāra for two or three centuries, and the royal veneration of relics comes 400 years later than in the Gandhāra region.

Before any attempt to propose an explanation, I would like to call to attention a classic hypothesis by Erik Zürcher and re-evaluate the content and nature of Buddhist practices in the court during the earliest phase of Chinese Buddhism. In a seminal study, Zürcher distinguishes Buddhism in the later Han dynasty as consisting of three well-defined spheres: "first, a hybrid cult centered upon the court and the imperial family; secondly, the first nucleus of 'canonical' monastic Buddhism, and, in the third place, the diffuse and unsystematic adoption of Buddhist elements in indigenous beliefs and cults" (Zürcher 2014a, p. 354). He defines the court Buddhism as centered upon devotional practice, with monks acting in the guise of ritual specialists. In another essay written later in his career, he repeats his points that royal patronage played a crucial role in the history of Buddhism but asserts that "court Buddhism developed in the last decades of the fourth century CE, some three hundred years after the first recorded existence of Buddhism in Chinese soil" (Zürcher 2014b, p. 587). In his view, court Buddhism became fully developed in some of the northern states at the turn of 4–5th century; the development in the south was a gradual process due to its cultural isolation. A leap forward from the mid-5th century onwards was driven by the arrival of foreign monks from the maritime route.

This raises the question of how to evaluate the change in Buddhism in the circle of the imperial court during the four centuries. Our observation on the rise and spread of relic veneration could shed some light on this problem. As shown above, Zürcher based his assumption on the misinterpretation of some evidence. Any evidence related to relic worship before the 3rd century should be excluded. It is not difficult to discover that image worship stands at the center of the devotional practice in the earliest phase of Chinese Buddhism. Regarding the dream of Emperor Ming, though not to be accepted as historical fact, if we consider the fact that the earliest version of this story appeared in the *Treatise of Mouzi*, composed in the 2nd century, it still reflects the contemporary conception of

Buddhism. Emperor Huan of the later Han is said to "have set up a well-decorated canopy to enshrine the Buddha and Laozi".[34] It is still the visual representation that touches the monarch. Another famous example is the huge golden image cast by the warlord Zuorong in the period of the Three Kingdoms.

In contrast, there is no evidence that the monarch showed any interest in Buddhist doctrines, nor did they read the translated scriptures or promote the worship of sutras. The monarch's interest in Buddhist doctrines emerged in the mid-period of the Eastern Jin dynasty, under the circumstance of witty debates among the scholar monks and literati intellectuals, known as *qingtan* 清談 (philosophical conversations), which I will deal with in another article. The enthusiasm for copying scriptures still arose later in the middle to late period of the Six Dynasties.[35]

6. Concluding Remarks

This paper attempts to use miracle tales as the primary historical source to examine how relic veneration emerged in medieval China. I argue that relic veneration first appeared around the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries in the vicinity of Luoyang, the imperial capital, and then gradually spread to the south. The social strata of the worshippers expanded from obscure monks and lower-ranking officials to the royal family. Relics produced by miracles were the result of pious worship and were divisible. This contrasts sharply with the relic legends recorded in Buddhist scriptures, where relics are often objects of contention among believers.

Through critical analysis of the various layers of narrative accounts, we have confirmed that the first three entries of miraculously obtained relics in the *Ji Shenzhou Sanbao Gantonglu* show signs of later interpolation. This rules out the possibility of relic veneration existing during the later Han to Three Kingdoms period. The absence of relic worship implies that in the early stages of Buddhism, the objects of worship in the court circle were primarily Buddhist statues, not relics. This picture also raises another curious question: the different sequences in which various objects of veneration were accepted.

It is commonly accepted among scholars of Indian Buddhism that the Buddhist *samgha* was full of schisms, conflicts, and rivalries. Different sects claimed the superiority of some practices over others. When talking about Chinese Buddhism, as a receptacle of the ideas and practices from the Indian or Central Asian traditions, perhaps we should also pay attention to the potential competition between diverse practices. Different practices have met with varying degrees of acceptance in their integration into Chinese society. The relic veneration has never been a topic of controversy in the polemic works during the six dynasties. However, the fact that its rise and development occurred in a particularly late period probably implies the silent resistance it may have encountered. Relic veneration, as a marginal practice, secondary to image worship, could partly be explained by mahāyāna Buddhist doctrines, which claim the superiority of scriptures over relic worship, or the aversion to the bodily remains of the deceased, which is deeply rooted in the Chinese cultural mentality.

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Abbreviations

T	*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*; see (Takakusu and Watanabe 1924–1934).
X	*Man shinsan dainihon Zokuzōkyō*卍新纂大日本續藏經; see (Kawamura 1975–1989).
GTL tr.	Waseda Daigaku Daigakuin Tōyō Bijutsushi早稲田大學大學院東洋美術史[The East Asian art History Seminar at Waseda University]. 2014. *Bijutsu shiryō to shite yomu Shū shinchū sampō Kantsū roku—Shakudoku to kenkyū (5–7)* 美術史料として読む『集神州三寶感通錄』—釈読と研究（五~七）[*Reading Jishenzhou sanbao gantonglu As the* Source Material of Art History]. Tokyo: East Asian Art History Seminar.

Appendix A. The Accounts of Relics Obtained Through a Miracle

This collection is mainly based on the entries in the second section of fascicle one of *GTL*, except for those that are of questionable authenticity. It further includes the relic-related narratives scattered in *Mingseng zhuan*名僧傳 (*Biographies of the Renowned Monks*), *GAOSENG ZHUAN*, and other miraculous tales during the Six Dynasties. The stories, 21 in total, are arranged in the chronological order of the events they depict. Entries that cannot be accurately dated are placed after the datable ones.

For *GAOSENG ZHUAN*, I have consulted the excellent Japanese translations by Yoshikawa Tadao in collaboration with Funayama Tōru, and for *GTL*, the translation by the East Asian Art History Seminar at Waseda University.[36] Both translations provide ample annotations, which are very helpful. For *Mingxiang ji*, another core text for our purposes, I borrowed the English translation by Robert Company,[37] with only minor modifications.

While *MSZ* does not survive in a complete form, we still find one text entitled *Meisō-denshō*名僧傳抄 (*Excerpts from MSZ, X* no.1523) in the *XZJ*. This text, as previous studies demonstrated, is a result of modern editing. It comprises three collections of biographies, namely the *Meisōden shijishō* 名僧傳指示抄, the *Meisōden yōbunshō*名僧傳要文抄, and the compendium of the Maitreya cult, *Miroku Nyorai kannōshō* 彌勒如來感應抄. These three collections were compiled by the Japanese monk Sōshō 宗性 (1202–1278) living in the Heian period, and the manuscripts are preserved in the Tōdaiji Library.[38] The *XZJ* edition contains many errors and is therefore not reliable. Some puzzling expressions are the result of misreading the characters. I am grateful to the Tōdaiji Library for providing photos of the manuscripts. In several cases, I suggest the appropriate interpretation based on the manuscripts.

00

振旦神州佛舍利感通序

> **原夫大聖謀權，通濟為本，容光或隨緣隱，遺景有可承真。故將事拘尸，從於俗化，入金剛定，碎此金軀，欲使福被天人，功流海陸。至於牙齒髮爪之屬，頂蓋目精之流，衣鉢瓶杖之具，坐處足蹈之迹，備滿中天，罕被東夏。而齒牙髮骨，時聞視聽。昔育王土中之塔，略顯於前，而偏感別應之形，隨機又出，自漢洎唐，無時不有。 既稱靈骨， 不可以事求，任緣而舉，止得以敬。及通信之士，舉神光而應心；懷疑之夫，假琢磨而發念。所以討尋往傳，及以現祥，故依纘序，庶有披者，識釋門之骨鯁，萬載之後，難可塵沒矣。 （《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.410a22-b5）**

Preface to the Miraculous Response of the Buddha's Relics Within the Holy Land of Cīnasthāna

> The Great Sage's strategic use of expedient means took universal benefit as the foundation. The bodily radiance might vanish depending on the circumstance, yet the traces left behind can still carry the truth. As Buddha was about to approach the city of Kuśīnagarā, he conformed to the worldly ritual of passing away, entering the Vajra Samadhi, and shattering this golden body. The in-

tention is to spread blessings to heavenly beings and humans, and to let the merit prevail across the seas and lands. Therefore, Buddha's relics, such as teeth, hair, nails, skull, and eyeballs, as well as objects like robes, bowls, bottles, and staffs, along with traces of sitting and footsteps, are abundant in Madhyadeśa but rarely reach the eastern lands (i.e., China). The teeth, hair, and bones were occasionally heard and witnessed (by the pilgrim monks). While the stūpas established by King Aśoka within the central territory were listed above, the relics, which manifested in various forms in their specific processes of spiritual response, emerged according to the circumstances. From the Han to the Tang, there was never a time without them. Since the relics are called holy bones, they are not subject to worldly pursuits; instead, they emerge through karmic conditions and command our utmost respect. Enlightened practitioners worship the divine radiance to affirm the faith within their hearts; skeptics, through repeated contemplation, arouse their good thoughts. Hence, I have sought out the records of the past and the auspicious signs till the present, arranging them in a coherent sequence. Hopefully, readers may recognize the indestructibility of the Buddhist Dharma, which will not easily be buried by dust even after ten thousand years. （*GTL1*，*T* no.2106, 52.410a22-b5）

01

晉初竺長舒，先有舍利，重之。其子為沙門，名法顏，每欲還俗。笑曰："是沙石耳，何足何貴？"父投之水，五色三匝，光高數尺，遂不還俗。長舒死後，還發俗念，輒病委頓，卒為沙門，以舍利安江夏塔中。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.410c14-18）

At the beginning of the Jin dynasty, there was a man named Zhu Changshu[39] who had relics (inherited from his ancestors). He cherished them greatly. His son, being a monk named Fayan, always desired to return to secular life. He laughed and said, "These are simply sand and stones, what's so precious about them?" His father threw the relics into the water, and they became five-colored and revolved for three circles,[40] emitting a light that reached several *chi* in height. Seeing this, the son did not return to secular life. After Changshu's death, whenever the secular thoughts arose, he would become sick and listless. He finally became a monk and installed the relics in a stūpa at Jiangxia prefecture.[41] (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.410c14-18)

02

一說云：周嵩婦胡母氏有素書《大品》[42]，素廣五寸，而《大品》一部盡在焉。又并有舍利，銀甕貯之，並緘于深篋。永嘉之亂，胡母將避兵南奔，經及舍利自出篋外，因取懷之，以渡江東。又嘗遇火，不暇取經，及屋盡火滅，得之於灰燼之下，儼然如故。（《冥祥記》，《法苑珠林》卷一八引，*T* no.2122, 53.417b11-17)

Another story goes as follows. The wife of Zhou Song was of the Humu clan. They owned a copy of the *Larger Perfection of Wisdom* written on pure silk. Although the strip of silk was only five cun wide, the entire sutra fit on it. The family also owned a relic, which they safeguarded in a silver vase. Both sutra and relic were kept stored in a deep chest. During the disorder of the Yongjia period (317), when the Humu clan was about to leave hastily to flee south to avoid the advancing enemy troops, the sutra and the relic both emerged of themselves from the chest. The family thus carried them on their persons when they fled and crossed the river to the southeast. They also once had an outbreak of fire. There was no time to retrieve the sutra. But although the entire household was consumed in

flames, they later found the sutra completely intact beneath the ashes.[43] (*Mingxiang ji*, as cited in *Fayuan zhulin* 18, *T* no.2122, 53.417b11-17)

03

晉大興（318–321）中，於潛董汪信尚木像，夜有光明。後像側有聲投地，視乃舍利，水中浮沈，五色晃昱，左右行三匝。後沙門法恒看之，遙起四五，投恒懷中。恒曰：“若使恒興立寺宇，更見威神。”又耀于前。於即恒建寺塔於潛，入法者日以十數焉。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.410c18-23）

法恒於像前得舍利事。（《名僧傳說處》第二十五，*X* no.1523,77.362a9-10）

During Daxing era (318–321) of the Jin dynasty, Dong Wang, a native of Yuqian county,[44] worshipped a wooden statue, which emitted radiance at night. Later, a sound was heard from the side of the statue as if something had dropped on the ground. Upon inspection, it was found that there were relics floating and sinking in the water. They shone with five colors, swirling around three circles.[45] When a monk named Faheng looked at them, they rose four to five feet high[46] and fell into his arms. Faheng said, “If I were to build a temple, I pray to see more divine power”. The relics shone even more brightly in front of him. Thereupon, Faheng built a temple with stūpa in Yuqian, and the number of people entering the Dharma increased by tens each day. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.410c18-23)

The account that Fa Heng obtained relics in front of a statue. (the topical notes from *MSZ* juan 25, X no.1523, 77.362a9-10)

04

晉大興（318–321）中，北人流播廣陵，日有千數。有將舍利者，建立小寺立剎[47]，舍利放光，至于剎杪，遂感動遠近信心云。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.410c23-26）

During the Daxing era of the Jin dynasty (318–321), there were thousands of northern immigrants arriving at Guangling prefecture[48] every day. A man who carried relics established a small temple and erected a stūpa. The relics emitted light that reached the pinnacle of the central pillar, thereby inspiring the faith of people both near and far. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.410c23-26)

05

晉咸和（326–334）中，北僧安法開，至餘杭欲建立寺。無地欠財，手索錢貫，貨之積年，得錢三萬，市地作屋，常以索貫為資。欲立剎無舍利。有羅幼者，先自有之，開求不許。及開至寺禮佛，見幼舍利囊已在座前。即告幼，幼隨來，見之喜悅，與開共立寺宇於餘杭云。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.410c26-411a2）

During the Xianhe period of the Jin dynasty (326–334), a monk from the north named An Faka arrived in Yuhang county[49] with the intention of establishing a temple. Lacking land and funds, he manually tied the coins with strings.[50] With the income from this service, he accumulated a sum of thirty thousand over many years, which he used to purchase land and construct buildings. He desired to erect a stūpa but did not have any relics. There was a man named Luo You who already possessed some, but he declined Fakai’s request. However, when Faka visited the temple to worship the Buddha, he saw that the relic pouch of Luo You was already in front of the Buddha’s throne. He immediately informed Luo You, who followed him [to the temple]. Luo was delighted to see the relics. They finally established a temple in Yuhang county in collaboration. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.410c26-411a2)

06

晉咸康（335–342）中，建安太守孟景，欲建剎孟寺，於夕聞床頭鏘然，視得舍利三枚。景立剎。時元嘉十六年（439）六月，舍利放光，通照上下，七夕乃止，一切咸見。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.411a2-6）

During the Xiankang era of the Jin dynasty (335–342), Meng Jing, the governor of Jian'an prefecture,[51] intended to build a temple called the Mengs' Temple. One night, he heard a ringing sound by his bedside and found three relic beads. Jing thus erected the stūpa. In June of the sixteenth year of the Yuanjia era (439)[52], the relics emitted light illuminating the entire stūpa, which lasted for seven nights. Everyone witnessed this miracle. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.411a2-6)

07

（曇翼）後還長沙寺，復加開祐造大塔，并丈六金像。未有舍利，祈請累年，忽爾而得。即集僧尼五百人，燒香讚唱，請一鉢水，以汎舍利，舍利右旋，五色光耀，清徹滿室。（《名僧傳抄·曇翼傳》，*X* no.1523, 77.352c5-8）

群寇既盪，復還江陵，修復長沙寺。丹誠祈請，遂感舍利。盛以金瓶，置于齋座。翼乃頂禮立誓曰："若必是金剛餘蔭，願放光明。"至乎中夜，有五色光彩，從瓶漸出，照滿一堂。舉眾驚嗟，莫不以翼神感。當于爾時，雖復富蘭等見，亦迴偽歸真也。（《高僧傳》卷五《曇翼傳》，*T* no.2059, 50.355c13-19）

(Tanyi) later returned to Changsha monastery[53]. He expanded the monastery and further constructed a great stūpa together with a six *zhang* high golden statue. There were no relics at first, but after years of prayer and request, they suddenly appeared. Tanyi summoned five hundred monks and nuns, burned incense, and chanted eulogies. He asked for a bowl of water and made the relics floating. They revolved clockwise, and the brilliant lights of five-color filled the room with clarity and radiance. ("biography of Tanyi" in *Meisōdenshō*, X77. 1523.352c5-8)

After the invaders had been quelled, he returned to Jiangling prefecture[54] and restored the Changsha monastery. With sincere prayers, he obtained the relics through his pious action. They were placed in a golden vase on the altar for the abstinence ritual. Tanyi then bowed and made a vow, saying, "If this is indeed the remaining of Buddha's Vajra body, may it emit light". By midnight, a five-colored radiance gradually emerged from the vase, illuminating the entire hall. The mass was astonished and marveled, all attributing this to Tanyi's divine stimulus. At that time, even if [the non-believers like] Pūraṇa-kāśyapa[55] saw this scene, he would also turn from falsehood to the true dharma. (*Gaoseng zhuan* juan 5, *T* no.2059, 50.355c13-19)

08

道安令弟子銅佛像，頂上有一舍利，晃然放光，照於室內事。（《名僧傳說處》卷五，*X* no.1523, 77.360a3-5）

有一外國銅像形製古異，時眾不甚恭重。安曰："像形相致佳，但髻形未稱。"令弟子爐冶其髻。既而光焰煥炳，耀滿一堂。詳視髻中，見一舍利，眾咸愧服。安曰："像既靈異，不煩復治。"乃止。識者咸謂安知有舍利，故出以示眾。（《高僧傳》卷五《道安傳》，T50.2059.352b17-22）

The story that Dao'an ordered his disciple to [recast] a bronze Buddha statue, which had a relic on top that shone brightly, illuminating the room. (the topical notes from *MSZ* juan 5, *X* no.1523, 77.360a3-5)

There was an ancient and peculiarly shaped foreign bronze statue, which at that time was not highly revered by the people. Dao'an said, "The statue's form is

quite good, but the hair-knot is imperfect". He ordered his disciples to recast the statue's hair-knot. Afterward, the statue's radiance was resplendent, illuminating the entire hall. Upon closer inspection, they found a relic bead within the *uśniṣa*. The mass felt guilty and was filled with respect [for the master]. Dao'an said, "Since the statue is holy and extraordinary, there is no need for further treatment". Thus, the mass no longer proposed to recast the statute. The wise men believed that Dao'an knew about the existence of the relic from the beginning and deliberately revealed it to the public. (*Gaoseng zhuan* 5, T50.2059.352b17-22)

09

晉義熙元年（405），有林邑人，嘗有一舍利，每齋日放光。沙門慧邃隨廣州刺史刁逵在南，敬其光相欲請之。未及發言，而舍利自分為二。逵聞心悅，又請留敬，而又分為三。逵欲模長干像，寺主固執不許，夜夢人長數丈告曰："像貴宣導，何故恪耶？明報聽模。"既成，逵以舍利著像髻中。西來諸像放光者，多懷舍利故也。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.411a7-14）

In the first year of the Yixi era of the Jin dynasty (405), there was a person from the kingdom of Linyi[56] who once had a piece of relic that radiated on the abstinence days. The monk Hui Chu, following Diao Kui, the governor of Guangzhou, to the south, he was marveled at its luminous appearance and wished to request it. Before he could speak, the relic spontaneously divided into two. Upon hearing this, Kui was delighted and continued to request to keep the respect, and it divided further into three. Kui wished to cast a statue modeled after the one at Changgan monastery, but the abbot firmly refused. One night, the abbot dreamed of a person several *zhang* tall who said, "The statue is precious for propagation, why are you so stingy? Go and tell him that he is permitted to duplicate a statue". Once it was completed, Diao Kui installed the relic in the statue's *uśniṣa*. Those statues from the west that emitted light were because they often contained the relics. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.411a7-14)

10

以宋永初三年（422），始至江陵，住長沙寺。旬日之中，得一舍利。形質雖小，光色異常。以鉢水汎之，遙漾右轉，乍浮乍沈，光藻炳煥。眾皆驚此神奇，嗟歎盈路。（《名僧傳抄·曇摩蜜多傳》，*X* no.1523, 77.355b4-6）

曇摩蜜多旬日之中得一舍利，形質雖小，光色異常事。（《名僧傳說處》卷十九，*X* no.1523, 77.361b7-9）

以宋元嘉元年（424）展轉至蜀，俄而出峽，止荊州，於長沙寺造立禪閣。翹誠懇惻，祈請舍利，旬有餘日，遂感一枚。衝器出聲，放光滿室。門徒道俗莫不更增勇猛，人百其心。（《高僧傳》卷三《曇摩蜜多傳》，*T* no.2059, 50.342c25-29）

In the third year of the Yongchu era of the Song dynasty (422), he eventually arrived in Jiangling and resided at Changsha monastery. Within a dozen of days, he obtained a relic bead. Though small in form and substance, it had extraordinary luster and colors. When placed in a bowl of water, it drifted[57] and revolved clockwise, floating and sinking intermittently, with a radiant and splendid light. Everyone who was astonished by this miracle crowded in the streets, with sighs of amazement. ("the biography of Dharmamitra" in *Meisōdenshō*, *X* no.1523, 77.355b4-6)

The account that Dharmamitra obtained a relic bead within a dozen of days, which had extraordinary luster and colors, though small in form and substance. (the topical notes from *MSZ* juan 19, *X* no.1523, 77.361b7-9)

In the first year of the Yuanjia era of the Song dynasty (424),[58] Dharmamitra eventually traveled to the region of Shu.[59] After a short stay, he left the gorges and settled in Jiangling, where he built a meditation pavilion at the Changsha monastery. He prayed for the relics with utmost sincerity, and finally obtained one relic bead more than ten days later. The relic bead struck the vessel with a sound, lightening the entire room. His disciples, monastics and the laity alike, were even more courageous and pious. (*Gaoseng zhuan* 3, *T* no.2059, 50.342c25-29)

11

宋元嘉六年（429），賈道子行荊上明，見芙蓉方發，聊取還家。聞華有聲，怪尋之，得一舍利，白如真珠，焰照梁棟。敬之，擎以箱盛，懸于屋壁。家人每見佛僧外來，解所被，躍坐案上。有人寄宿不知，污慢之，乃夢人告曰：“此有釋迦真身，眾聖來敬。爾何行惡？死墮地獄，出為尼婢，何得不怖？”其人大懼，無幾癩死。舍利屋地生荷八枚，六旬乃枯，歲餘失之，不知所去。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.411a15-22）

In the sixth year of the Yuanjia era of the Song dynasty (429), Jia Daozi traveled to Shangming monastery in Jingzhou,[60] where he saw a few burgeoning lotus flowers. He casually plucked some and took them back home. Upon hearing a sound from the flowers, he was curious and searched, finding a relic bead as white as a pearl. The flame from the relic illuminated the beams and rafters. He paid homage to it and placed it in a chest, hanging it on the wall of his house. When Buddhist monks from other places visited, Jia's family would take off their outer garments and let them sit on the table. Once a man who stayed overnight was unaware and besmirched the relic, showing no respect. Then he dreamed of someone telling him: "Here resides the true body of Sakyamuni, to which all saints pay homage. Why did you commit such evil deeds? You will die and fall into hell, and to be reborn as a female slave.[61] It is horrible, isn't it?" The man was greatly frightened and soon died of leprosy. Eight lotus flowers grew on the ground surrounding the relic house, and withered after sixty days. More than one year later, they finally disappeared, no one knew where they went. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.411a15-22)

12

宋元嘉八年（431），會稽安千載者，家世奉佛。夜有扣門者，出見十餘人著赤衣，運材積門內，云官使作佛圖，忽無所見。明至他家齋食，上得一舍利紫金色，椎打不碎。以水行之，光明照發，便自舉敬，常有異香。後出欲禮，忽而失之。尋覓備至，半日還得。

臨川王鎮江陵，迎而行之，雜光間出。佐吏沙門，咸見不同。王捧水器呪曰：（詞多如別辯之）呪訖，輒應聲光出。夜見百餘人，遶舍利屋燒香，特如佛狀。及明，人及舍利俱失矣。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.411a23-b3）

In the eighth year of the Yuanjia era of the Song dynasty (431), there was a man named An Qianzai from Kuaiji prefecture, whose family had believed in Buddhism for generations. One night, there was a knock on the gate. When he stepped out, he saw more than ten people dressed in red carrying wood and loading it inside the gate. They claimed to have been commissioned by the government to build a stūpa,[62] and suddenly vanished from sight. The next day, when he

went to the house of another person for an abstinence meal, he found a relic of purple-gold color right on top of the food, which could not be shattered even when struck. When floating on the water, it moved with a brilliant light shining. He thus picked it up and paid homage to it, which always had an unusual fragrance. Later, when he intended to take it out for worship, it suddenly disappeared. After a thorough search, it was found again after half a day.

When the Prince of Linchuan was to be the local official in Jiangling prefecture, he welcomed the relic to accompany him. On his journey, multi-colored lights intermittently emerged. Both the officials and the monks had different visions. The prince held a vessel full of water and chanted a spell (the words, which were quite lengthy, have been recorded elsewhere), and upon finishing the spell, lights immediately glowed in response. At night, he saw more than a hundred people surrounding the house that enshrined the relic, burning incense, as if they were worship the Buddha. By dawn, both the people and the relic were gone. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.411a23-b3)

13

宋元嘉九年（432），尋陽張須元家設八關齋，道俗數十人，見像前花上似冰雪，視得舍利數十。便以水行之，光焰相屬。後遂失之。數十日開厨更視，獲牙盒，中有白氈，裹舍利十枚，光焰屬天。諸處咸來請之。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.411b4-8）

In the ninth year of the Yuanjia era of the Song dynasty (432), a man named Zhang Xuyuan from Xunyang[63] convened an Eight Precepts abstinence assembly[64] within his family. Dozens of lay and monastic participants saw something like ice and snow on the flowers in front of the statue. As they took a closer look, they discovered tens of relic beads. They then placed the relics in the water, and as a result, they moved with a continuous flame and light. After a while, the relics vanished. Dozens of days later, when they opened the kitchen[65] to look again, they found an ivory box containing ten relic beads wrapped in white fine cloth, with a shining flame reaching to the heavens. People from all places came to request them. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.411b4-8)

14

宋元嘉十五年（438），南郡凝之隱衡山，徵不出，奉五斗米道，不信佛法。夢見人去地數丈，曰：“汝疑方解。”覺，及悟，旦夕勤至，半年禮佛。忽見額下有紫光，瑞光處得舍利二枚。剖擊不損，水行光出。後於食時，口中隱齒，吐出有光。妻息又獲一枚。合有五枚。後又失之，尋爾又得云。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.411b9-15）

In the fifteenth year of the Yuanjia era of the Song dynasty (438 AD), a man named Ningzhi from Nanjun Prefecture[66] lived a secluded life in Mount Heng. He refused to serve in the government when summoned, and practiced the Daoist Way of the Five Pecks of Rice, not believing in Buddhism. Once he dreamt of a man rising several *zhang* above the ground, saying, “Your doubts will soon be resolved”. Upon waking, he was enlightened and became diligent in his practice day and night, worshipping Buddha for half a year. Suddenly, he saw a purple light under his forehead, and where the auspicious light shone, he found two relic beads. They could not be damaged by striking, and emitted light when moving in water. Later, during a meal, he felt something in the shape of a tooth hidden in his mouth. When he spat it out, he saw it shining. His wife and children also obtained one

for each. In total, there were five relic beads. Later, they were lost, but soon found again. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.411b9-15)

15

宋元嘉十九年（442），高平徐椿讀經，及食，得二舍利，盛銀瓶中。後看漸增，乃至二十。後寄廣陵令馥，私開之空罌。椿在都忽自得之，後退轉皆失。舍利應現，值者甚多，皆敬而得之，慢而失也。（《集神州三寶感通錄》卷上，*T* no.2106, 52.411b16-20）

In the nineteenth year of the Yuanjia era of the Song dynasty (442), there was a man named Xu Chun from Gaoping prefecture.[67] When he had recited the scripture and started his meal, he found two relic beads and placed them in a silver vase. Later, he checked the relics and noticed the number gradually increased to twenty. He later entrusted them to governor of Guangling prefecture, named Fu. Fu opened the vase privately, and found it empty. Xuchun found them in the capital soon afterwards. Later, his devotion declined and the relics were gone.

There were numerous witnesses to the manifestation of relics. As a rule, one may gain the relics with reverence, and lose them with negligence. (*GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52.411b16-20)

16

本姓高，涼洲人也。志力勇猛。聞弗樓沙國有佛鉢，鉢今在罽賓臺寺，恒有五百羅漢供養鉢。鉢經騰空至涼洲，有十二羅漢，隨鉢停六年，後還罽賓。僧表恨不及見，乃至西踰葱嶺，欲致誠禮。并至于賓（=寘）國。值罽賓路梗，于賓（=寘）王寄表有張志，模寫佛鉢與之，又問："寧復有所願不？"對曰："讚摩伽羅（=藍）有寶勝像。外國相傳云最似真相，願得供養。"王即命工巧，營造金薄像，金光陝高一丈，以真舍利置于頂上。僧表接還涼州，知涼土將亡，欲反淮海。經蜀欣平縣，沙門道汪求停鉢像供養，今在彼龍華寺。（《名僧傳抄·道表傳》，*X* no.1523, 77.358b13-23）

造金薄像以真舍利置于頂上事。（《名僧傳說處》第二十六，*X* no.1523, 77.362b1-2）

[The monk Daobiao] was surnamed Gao, a native of Liangzhou.[68] He was passionate and courageous. He heard that the Buddha's alms bowl, originally in the kingdom of Puruṣapura,[69] was now preserved in the imperial Monastery of Jibin,[70] where it was venerated by five hundred arhats. The bowl once flew through the air to Liangzhou, accompanied by twelve arhats who stayed for six years before returning to Jibin. Regretting not being able to see it, Sengbiao traveled to the west and crossed the Pamir mountains. He wished to pay his respects [to the bowl] with sincerity and to visit the kingdom of Kotan. When the road to Jibin was blocked, the king of Kotan wished for him to be ambitious in propagating [Buddhism],[71] so he ordered the craftsman to draw a picture of the bowl and asked, "Is there anything else you wish for?" He replied, "There was a statute in Tsarma Vihāra.[72] The foreigners said that it bears the closest resemblance to the true appearance, so I wish to [make a copy of the statue and] worship [on my return]". The king immediately ordered craftsmen to cast a gilded image, with a golden light that was one *zhang* tall,[73] and the genuine relics on the top. The monk received it and returned to Liangzhou. Knowing that the territory of Liang was about to be conquered, he wished to withdraw further to the region between Huaihe river and the sea.[74] When he passed through Xinping County in the region of Shu,[75] the monk Daowang requested to stop and venerate the

bowl and the statue, which are now still in the Longhua monastery there. (the biography of Daobiao from *Meisōdenshō*, *X* no.1523, 77.358b13-23)

The account of placing the genuine relics at the top of a gilded statue. (the topical notes from *MSZ* juan 26, *X* no.1523, 77.362b1-2)

17

宋太宗明皇帝 至治克昌，口誦《般若》，造丈八金像四軀，鑄不成，改為丈四，立即圓滿，莊嚴成就，還高丈八。旦食解齋，爰感舍利。造弘普中寺以召名僧。（《辯正論》卷三，*T* no.2110. 52.503a7-9）

Emperor Ming of the Song dynasty (r. 466–472), with the ancestral title of taizong. The period [under his reign] was peaceful and prosperous. He chanted the *Prajñāpāramitā Sutra* and had planned to cast four golden statues, with the height of 1.8 *zhang* for each, which turned out be a failure. When the height was reduced to 1.4 *zhang*, the statues were completed all of a sudden, with splendid ornaments, and restored to 1.8 *zhang* again. When the emperor had the meal in the morning after the abstinence day, the relics emerged with the power of his devotion. He also built the inner Hongpu monastery[76] to house renowned monks. (*Bianzheng lun* 3, *T* no.2110, 52.503a7-9)

18

晉建元寺，建康太清里[77]，寺基本宋北第。元徽二年（474）宮人陳太妃[78]造寺塔。舍利靈應相仍，每夕放光。（下略）（《法苑珠林》卷三九，*T* no.2122, 53.594b2-8）

The Jianyuan Temple of the [eastern] Jin dynasty, was located in the *taiqing* district of Jiankang. Its foundation was originally the residence of the nobles near the northern palace gate during the Song dynasty.[79] In the second year of the Yuanhui era (474), the Empress Dowager Chen constructed the temple with a stūpa, where the relics manifested the miracles incessantly, shining every night. (*Fayuan zhulin* 39, *T* no.2122, 53.594b2-8)

19

張導之母吐焰暉盤（張導母王氏，素篤信。四月八日齋食，感得舍利。流光出口，暉映食盤。出《宣驗記》也）（《宣驗記》，《辯正論》卷七引，*T* no.2110, 52.539c8-9）

Zhang Dao's mother exhaled the flames illuminating the plate. (Zhang Dao's mother, with her natal surname Wang, was deeply devout. On the eighth day of the fourth month, when taking her abstinence meal, she obtained the relics with the power of her devotion. The radiant light flowed out of her mouth, illuminating and reflecting upon the plate. Originally from *the Records Proclaiming Manifestations.* (*Xuanyan ji*, as cited in *Bianzheng lun* 7, *T* no.2110, 52.539c8-9)

20

本姓凡，燉煌人也。……每中食，輒得舍利。諸有起塔者，皆給與之。自爾以後，氣力康勝。復得十年，年至六十餘，卒竹林寺。（《名僧傳抄·道韶傳》，*X* no.1523, 77.355c16-18）

道韶得舍利起塔事。（《名僧傳說處》第二十，*X* no.1523, 77.361b16-17）

[The monk Daoshao] was originally surnamed Fan, a native of Dunhuang. … Whenever he had a meal at noon, he would acquire relics. When someone intended to erect a stūpa, he would provide them with relics. From then on, he

became strong and healthy. Ten years later, he passed away at the Bamboo Forest Temple at the age of over sixty. (the biography of Daoshao from *Meisōdenshō*, *X* no.1523, 77.355c16-18)

The account that the monk Daoshao acquired relics with the power of his devotion and established the stūpas. (the topical notes from *MSZ* juan 20, *X* no.1523, 77.361b16-17)

21

魏太子中庶子御史中丞陸載（載本吳人，為宋咸陽王義真行軍大都督史。後沒赫連，因即仕魏。有才調，善談謔，為魏朝貴公所見稱重，而性愛虛靜，常以佛法為意。每讀眾經，讚揚玄旨。末年精到，經字放光，口誦《法華》，時感舍利。）（《辯正論》卷三，*T* no.2110, 52.515c26-516a2）

Lu Zai, the Crown Prince's Assistant Minister and Deputy Censor-in-chief of northern Wei. (Lu Zai was originally a native of the Wu region and served as the grand commandant for the army of Prince Xianyang of the Song, Yi Zhen. Later, he was captured by the Helian troops and subsequently became an official in the northern Wei court. He was talented, known for his witty conversation, and was highly regarded by the nobles of the Wei court. However, he had a fondness for tranquility and devoted to the Buddhist dharma. He always read the scriptures and unveiled the profound meanings. In his later years, he became even more dedicated, so that the characters of the scriptures radiated. While reciting the *Lotus Sutra*, he would sometimes feel the presence of relics.) (*Bianzheng Lun* 3, *T* no.2110, 52.515c26-516a2)

Notes

1 For comprehensive studies on relic burial in China, see (Ran 2013; Zheng 2016; Wei Yu 2018; J. Gao 2019). In addition, (Mukai 2020) section II and (Shen 2018) chapter 3 are devoted to a discussion of relic caskets.

2 For the entries of *Youming lu* and *Xuanyan ji* restored by modern scholars, see (J. Li 2011, pp. 483–86, 586–90).

3 *Fayuan zhulin* juan 14, *T* no.2122, 53: 388c20-29.

4 I am immensely indebted to the Japanese annotation performed by the East Asian Art History Seminar at Waseda University, *Bijutsu shiryō to shite yomu Shū shinchū sampō Kantsū roku—Shakudoku to kenkyū (1–15)* 美術史料として読む『集神州三寶感通錄』—釈読と研究（一-十五）(Tokyo: East Asian Art History Seminar, 2011–2023), especially vol. 5, henceforth *GTL tr.*

5 *GTL* 1, *T* no.2106, 52: 404a17-18: 初明舍利表塔，次列靈像垂降，後引聖寺瑞經神僧。

6 For the design and function of the ordination platform, see (Ōchō 1941, pp. 15–41; McRae 2005, pp. 68–100).

7 *Han faben neizhuan*漢法本內傳 [*Inner Transmission Regarding the Origin of the Dharma in the Han Dynasty*], incorporated in *Poxie lun* 破邪論 [*Treatise on Refuting the Heresies*] *juan* 1, *T* no.2109, 52:480a22-24: 佛舍利光明五色，直上空中，旋環如蓋。遍覆大眾，映蔽日輪。 For the date of this apocryphal text, see (Yoshioka 1970, pp. 276–308; Yoneda 2007, pp. 119–36).

8 *GTL* juan 1, *T* no.2106, 52:410b12-17.

9 *Weishu* 114.3028-29: 佛圖故處，鑿為濛氾池，種芙蓉於中。

10 The earliest usage of *guansi*官寺 can be found in the *Biography of Fotucheng*, *Gaosengzhuan*, juan 9: 澄與弟子自官寺至中寺（Cheng went from the official temple to the central temple with his disciples.) (T no.2059, 50.384b1) Furthermore, from three instances in *Xu Gaosengzhuan* 續高僧傳 [*Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*], it can be clearly determined that there was a distinction between state-sponsored and privately funded temples during the late Northern dynasties period. See *Xu Gaosengzhuan*, juan 9, "Biography of Ling Yu" (*T* no.2060, 50.496a2-4); juan 25, "Biography of Yuantong" (*T* no.2060, 50.648 a16–18); juan 27, "Biography of Pu'an" (*T* no.2060, 50.681b14-16).

11 *Henan zhi* 1.66.

12 *Mengfanchi Fu*濛氾池賦 [*Rhapsody on Mengfan Lake*], composed by Zhang Zai 張載 (fl.280–289) and later incorporated in *Yiwen leiju*藝文類聚[#]. See *Yiwen leiju* 9.173.

13 For an archeological survey of the water supply system, see (Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 2018, pp. 37–38).

14 (Fan 1978, pp. 4–5): 與太后共登之，視宮內如掌中，臨京師若家庭。以其目見宮中，禁人不聽升。

15 *Chu sanzang jiji* 13, *T* no.2145, 55:96b5-c1.

16 For the acceptance of the Asokan legends in medieval China, see (Palumbo 2014).

17 *Fo suoxing zan* 佛所行讚 [*Buddhacarita or In Praise of Buddha's Acts*] *juan* 5, *T* no.192, 04:52a28-b2:內絕煩惱火，外火不能燒，雖燒外皮肉，金剛真骨存。香油悉燒盡，盛骨以金瓶，如法界不盡，骨不盡亦然。Also refer to (Schopen 1997).

18 *Gaozuo biezhuan*高座別傳 [*Biography of the High Seat Monk*], included in the notes of (J. Yu 2006, p. 119).

19 *Sanguo zhi* 64.1449: 又壞浮屠祠，斬道人. *Liangshu* 54.790–91: 吳時有尼居其地，為小精舍，孫綝尋毀除之，塔亦同泯。吳平後，諸道人復於舊處建立焉。

20 For a panoramic view of the revivalist zest to retrospect the Han-wei heritage, refer to (Wei 2023).

21 *Foshuo yuyenu jing* 佛說玉耶女經 [*Sūtra on Lady Yuye*], *T* no.142a, 02: 864b27-28: 彫刻錦繡，作珠寶帳，懸繒幡蓋，燒眾名香，遶塔歌唄，聲徹十方。

22 In terms of dimensions, the base is 18 cm high and 22–24 cm wide. The body of the stūpa is 23 cm high with a diameter of 14 cm. The superstructure is 9 cm high and 8 cm wide.

23 (Mukai 2020, pp. 39–44) held the same opinion in his analysis of the vessel, but he did not mention the Gandharan precedents of the reliquaries as miniature stupas.

24 "*ganying*" is not only an important concept in Buddhist narrative but also a long-standing tradition in pre-Buddhist Chinese philosophy. Robert Sharf provides a systematic survey of this concept, see (Sharf 2005, pp. 77–136).

25 *Guang hongmingji juan* 廣弘明集 [*An Expansion of the Collection for Glorifying and Elucidating [Buddhism]*) *juan* 17, *T* no.2103. 52.213b26-29: 皇帝昔在潛龍，有婆羅門沙門來詣宅，出舍利一裹曰："檀越好心。故留與供養。沙門既去，求之不知所在。其後皇帝與沙門曇遷，各置舍利於掌而數之，或少或多，並不能定。

26 *Xu gaosengzhuan*, *juan* 18, "the Biography of Tanqian", *T* no.2060, 50.573c1-2. The memorial of Xuzhou許州 mentioned a work entitled *Yuwang zaota benji*育王造塔本記, *Guang hongmingji, juan* 17, *T* no.2103, 52.219b27. *Guang hongmingji juan*17, *T* no.2103, 52:216b28-c6. The English translation is from (J. Chen 2002a, p. 106), note 49, with minor modifications.

27 It is plausible that the relics in food imply that the abstinence ritual could make the Buddha manifest before the worshiper, while the rotation of the relics on water imitates the clockwise circumambulation surrounding the stūpa (a place where the relics are enshrined). However, to the best of my knowledge, no scholarly treatises or Vinaya literature have provided explanations for these phenomena.

28 *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 [*Biographies of the Eminent Monks*] *juan* 10, *T* no.2059, 50:389b13-17: 後止洛陽大市寺，手自細書黃縑，寫《大品經》一部，合為一卷。字如小豆，而分明可識，凡十餘本。以一本與汝南周仲智妻胡母氏供養。For the transmission of the manuscript, see (Z. Chen 2020, pp. 31–33).

29 *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論 [*Treatise on the Orthodoxy of Buddhism*] *juan* 4, *T* no.2110, 52:515c27-28: 為宋咸陽王義真行軍大都督史，後沒赫連，因即仕魏。

30 For the descendants of the northern branch of the Lu family, see (S. Gao 2013, pp. 26–29).

31 Refer to the appendix of (J. Gao 2019, pp. 327–28).

32 Though there are records of relic miracles which took place in Northern China, the paradigm of worship of the Asokan relics is different, which I will discuss elsewhere.

33 The domain of the Apracas was probably centered in Bajaur and the Odi in the Swat Valley; refer to (Neelis 2010, pp. 17–19).

34 *Hou hanshu* 7.320: 飾芳林而考濯龍之宮，設華蓋以祠浮圖、老子。

35 For a study of copying scriptures as a devotional practice, see (Murata 2013).

36 For the Japanese translations of *Gaoseng zhuan*, see (Yoshikawa and Funayama 2009–2010). *GTL* 1, T no.2106, 52.404a17-18.

37 Refer to (Campany 2012).

38 For the manuscripts and the modern edition of *MSZ*, see (Kasuga 1936).

39 According to *Guang Shiyin Yingyan Ji*, by Fu Liang傅亮 (374–426), Zhu Changshu's ancestors were Westerners, who possessed goods and were wealthy. They resided in the Jin territory, and during the Yuan Kang period (291–299), they settled in Luoyang. Fu Liang also records a miracle tale related to the cult of Guanyin, which, as pointed out by Sato Taishun, is the earliest known miracle tale of Guanyin to date. See *GTL tr.*, 38, note 36. See also Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 98–99, item 13.

40 The Japanese translators render this phrase as "the light revolved for three circles", and further cite the descriptions in Buddhist scriptures and visual representations in Buddhist art, in which the light goes in a cursive line; see *GTL tr.*, 38–39, note 38. However, based on the descriptions of the relics in other miracle narratives, I am inclined to believe that here the subject of the verb "revolve" is the relics.

41 Jiangxia prefecture is located east of present-day Yunmeng county, Hubei province.

42 *Gaoseng zhuan* testifies that this sūtra, written on silk, was obtained from the Central Asian monk An Huize, who resided at the Dashi temple (the temple near the great market) in Luoyang. See *Gaoseng zhuan* 10, T50.2059.389b13-17. On the transmission of the manuscript, see (Z. Chen 2020).

43 See Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, 110–11, item 21, with slight modifications.

44 Yuqian county is located near present-day Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

45 The parallel passage in *Fayuan zhulin* reads "右行三匝" (rotating clockwise for three circles). *Fayuan zhulin* 40. T53.2122. 601a17.

46 The Japanese translators notice that the parallel passage in *Fayuan zhulin* reads “遂騰踊高四五尺”([the relics] bounced up four or five *chi* in height) juan 40, *T* no.2122, 53.601a17-18, see *GTL tr.*, 39–40, note 41.

47 The term “剎” is a transliteration of the Sanskrit word “*chattera*”, which refers to the umbrella-shaped structure at the top of a stūpa; see (Karashima 2017). It can also represent a generic term encompassing the central pillar of a stūpa, the stūpa itself, or even the entirety of the monastic complex, according to the context. (Kosugi 1980) argues that during the Six Dynasties, there was a common practice to insert a short wooden stake into the ground as a marker before constructing a stūpa. This wooden stake was called “*cha*”. See *GTL tr.*, 43–44, note 45. I translate “*cha*” as stūpa or the central pillar of the stūpa according to different contexts.

48 Guangling prefecture is located in present-day Yangzhou, Jiangsu province.

49 Yuhang county is located near present-day Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

50 The Japanese translators render this phrase as “made money boxes with his hands”(手ずから銭差しを作る); see *GTL tr.*, 40. I suggest that the verb 索 means to thread together, and 銭貫 as a noun refers to the string of coins rather than the container.

51 Jian’an prefecture is located near present-day Jian’ou, Fujian province.

52 It is somewhat astonishing that the miracle of the relics occurred nearly a hundred years after the founding of the temple. However, it can be confirmed that the year 439 was not the date when Meng Jing built the temple.

53 The Changsha monastery was founded by Tanyi and was famous for the enormous “Aśokan Image”, as is narrated in *GTL* 2, *T* no.2106, 52.415b8-416b23.

54 Jiangling prefecture is located in present-day Jingzhou, Hubei province.

55 Pūraṇa-kāśyapa is one of the six heterodox teachers seen in the “Disciples Chapter” of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*.

56 The kingdom of Linyi is located in the eastern part of the Indochina Peninsula, which roughly corresponds to the central coastal region of present-day Vietnam.

57 The *XZJ* edition reads this phrase as “遙淥”(literally meaning distant green), which is difficult to understand. The second character in the manuscript appears to be 漾 （）, which means to drift on the water. And the first character 遙 might have been a mistake or a variant of 搖 (to rock back and forth); therefore, I interpret the phrase as a compound word.

58 The date of Dharmamitra’s arrival at Jiangling, as narrated in *Gaoseng zhuan,* differs from that in *MSZ*. Here, Huijiao may have followed the date recorded in *Chusanzang jiji*; see Dharmamitra’s biography in *Chusanzang jiji* juan 14, *T* no.2145, 55.105a17-18.

59 The region of Shu refers to present-day Sichuan province.

60 The Japanese edition is punctuated between “上” and “明”, thus interpreting the whole sentence as “[Jia Daozi] walked alongside the Jingxi. At dawn of the second day…”（荊溪のほとりをいった。明けがたに）, *GTL tr.*, 47. I suggest that 上明 was the name of a monastery located in Jingzhou. When Fu Jian’s army invaded the city of Jiangling, Tanyi, the disciple of Dao’an, had sought refuge at Shangming monastery. The fact that the lotus flowers were growing within the monastery partly explains the emergence of the relics.

61 The text reads 尼婢 (a Buddhist nun or a maid). It is confusing why being reborn as a nun is the evil retribution. The Japanese translation notes a variant reading in *Fayuan zhulin* as “奴婢”(female slave). I follow this reading in my translation.

62 浮圖, or 浮屠, was originally a phonetic transcription associated with “Buddha”, and the two words were used interchangeably. In later sources, especially literary works, the term usually refers to the stūpa or a Buddhist monastery or temple. See (Kaneko 1993; Junko Miyajima 2006).

63 Xunyang prefecture is located near present-day Jiujiang, Jiangxi province.

64 A one-day abstinence that lay Buddhists are supposed to undergo to uphold the Eight Precepts on six days of the month, the 8, 14, 15, 23, 29, and 30 of the lunar calendar.

65 The Japanese translators point out that the term “chu廚” can denote kitchen (くりや) or box/cabinet(はこ、ひつ), *GTL tr.*, 59, note 75. Here, I agree with the Japanese translation, which renders the term as a kitchen, since the story occurred during the Eight Precepts abstinence ritual, which is closely connected with food.

66 Nanjun prefecture is located in present-day Jiangling county, Hubei province.

67 Gaoping prefecture is located close to present-day Jining, Shandong province. The Japanese translators have identified the location in Longhui county, Hubei province, which is incorrect. The family of Xu was a prestigious clan in this area.

68 The administrative center of Liangzhou was located in present-day Wuwei, Gansu province.

69 Puruṣapura is located close to the city of Peshawar, in present-day Afghanistan.

70 The term “臺” (literally meaning a terrace) usually denotes the inner city where the central government and the imperial palace are located. Therefore, I translate the term “臺寺” as the imperial monastery. Kuwayama Shōshin argues that in 4th–5th century sources, the term “jibin” designated the greater Gandhāra area, including Swat, Taxila, Peshawar, and Haḍḍa. See (Kuwayama 2006).

71 The meaning of this sentence is not clear. I interpret the word “寄” as the verb to wish, and “張志” as the ambition of propagating, but neither is the common usage in classical Chinese.

[72] "羅" must have been a mistake for "藍". The phrase has been correctly identified by Rong Xinjiang 榮新江and Zhang Guangda張廣達 as the Tsarma monastery in Khotan, which was frequently mentioned in documents in Chinese, Khotanese, and Tibetan. See (Zhang and Rong 1993).

[73] I cannot find any appropriate interpretation of the word "陝".

[74] This was the core region under the Southern dynasties' rule.

[75] Xinping county is located to the northeast of present-day Chengdu, Sichuan province.

[76] "Hongpu" might have been a mistake for "Puhong". The term "zhong" seems to imply that the monastery is situated within the imperial palace or a residence. Later in the Southern Qi, Prince Xiao Ziliang convened several assemblies for doctrinal discussions at the Puhong monastery; see (M. Li 2021).

[77] Taiqingli was located six *li* to the southwest of Shang Yuan county of the Tang. Emperor Wu of the Liang had established a Jietuo temple here in the tenth year of the Tianjian era 天監 (511). *Jiankang Shilu* 17.676-77.

[78] Empress Dowager Chen, whose personal name was Miaodeng, was originally a daughter of a butcher's family in Jiankang. She was entitled as a noble consort during the reign of Emperor Ming of Song; see *Songshu* 41.1296.

[79] The term "北第" (northern residence), as explained by Yan Shigu顏師古 in his commentary on *the Book of Han*, refers to "the residences close to the northern palace gate", indicating the mansions of noble families and distinguished officials.

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