

Arts of Asia Lecture Series Spring 2016
Patronage in Asian Art: Monarchs, Merchants, and Devotees
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Court Patronage in Early China

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Inscriptional Evidence for Patronage, 1.22.16

Chu-Tsing Li 李鑄晉 (1920-2014), “China: Patronage,” *Grove Art Online*

“Early court patronage was an expression of the power of rulers over the economy, for kings and emperors controlled material resources and could command the work of craftsmen and artists.”

Dou Wan 竇綰 (d. ca. 118-113 BCE), wife of Prince Liu Sheng 劉勝 (d. 113 BCE), Mancheng 滿城, Hebei Province

Changxin 長信 Palace; household of Yangxin Princess 陽信家

Early Western Zhou dynasty, King Cheng (r. 1042-1021 BCE)

He 何尊, 1038 BCE

Northern Wei dynasty, 386-534

Longmen Grottoes 龍門石窟, Luoyang, Henan Province

Lianhua (Lotus) Grotto 蓮花洞, western cliffs, Longmen

Song Jingfei 宋景妃 (12-13 years old in 527)

her older sister Song Lingfei 宋靈妃 (513-533), her father Song Wei 宋維 (d. 525)

Tang dynasty, 618-907

Xiangshan Monastery 香山寺, eastern hills, Longmen

Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846), poet and governor of Henan

“Record of the Repair of Xiangshan (Incense Mountain) Monastery”

Yuan Weizhi, his late friend, and their monk friend Qingxian

Suggested Readings:

Artists and Patrons: Some Social and Economic Aspects of Chinese Painting. Edited by Chu-tsing Li. Lawrence, Kans.: Kress Foundation Department of Art History, University of Kansas, 1989.

Anthony J. Barbieri-Low. *Artisans in Early Imperial China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007.

The Great Bronze Age of China: an Exhibition from the People's Republic of China. Edited by Wen Fong. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980.

Amy McNair. *Donors of Longmen: Faith, Politics, and Patronage in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Sculpture*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.

Complex Court Patronage around the Veneration of the Finger Bone of the Buddha

Famen Monastery 法門寺, Fufeng County, Shaanxi Province

Emperor Yizong 懿宗 (r. 860-873); translation of the relic on 8 May 873

Emperor Xizong 僖宗 (r. 873-888); return of the relic on 5 January 874

‘secret-color’ *mise* 秘色 Yue 越 ware

A monstrance in the form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin 觀音), offered by monk Dengyi 澄依 on 29 December 871, the emperor’s birthday, with Esoteric imagery:

On the base: eight seated vidyārājas in flaming mandorlas and eight Sanskrit “seed syllables” on lotus petals that may represent the Eight Great Bodhisattvas.

On the stem: four lokapālas (dharma-guardians of the four directions)

On the lotus flower: seated figures of the Sixteen Great Bodhisattvas. Hidden: five inscribed “seed syllables” symbolizing Mahāvairocana and the Four Directional Buddhas of the Diamond World Mandala.

Set of five nested reliquary containers for a finger bone, from the hidden compartment:

Iron, gilded silver,* sandalwood, crystal coffin, white jade coffin, finger bone.

*Gilded silver box, engraved with images of the divinities of the Diamond World Mandala, offered to Emperor Yizong in 871 by monk Zhiying 智英, “for the purpose of worshipping it for evermore.”

Tea implements for offering tea in worship before the finger bone in the palace:

A gilded silver basket, in a coin-pattern lattice with pairs of flying geese in relief attached, sent to court as tribute from an official in Guizhou 桂州 (in modern Guangxi province).

A gilded silver tortoise-shaped container that probably held powdered tea.

Silver salt cellars, donated by monk Zhihuilun 智慧輪 (d. 876), held salt to flavor the tea.

A gilded silver tea mortar with a roller to grind up tea and a sieve to refine the ground tea, made by Wensi yuan 文思院, the eunuch-staffed Crafts Institute in Daming Palace, inscribed Wuge 五哥, or Fifth Brother, Emperor Xizong’s infant name.

Suggested Readings:

Secrets of the Fallen Pagoda: The Famen Temple and Tang Court Culture. Edited by Alan Chong. Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum, 2014.

Robert H. Sharf. “The Buddha’s Finger Bones at Famensi and the Art of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism.” *The Art Bulletin* 93.1 (2011): 38-59.

Helmut Brinker. *Secrets of the Sacred: Empowering Buddhist Images in Clear, in Code, and in Cache*. Seattle: Spencer Museum of Art in association with the University of Washington Press, 2011.

Eugene Y. Wang. “Of the True Body: the Famen Monastery Relics and Corporeal Transformation in Tang Imperial Culture. In *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture*. Edited by Wu Hung and Katherine R. Tsiang. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005.

Carol Michaelson. *Gilded Dragons: Buried Treasures from China’s Golden Ages*. London: British Museum Press, 1999.