

*Arts of Asia Lecture Series Fall 2012*  
*The Culture and Arts of China: From the Neolithic Age Through the Tang Dynasty*  
*Sponsored by The Society for Asian Art*

Toward a Unified State: Late Six Dynasties and Sui Dynasty

Amy McNair, University of Kansas

In Confucian ideology, Heaven will grant its Mandate to the righteous man, who will unify the land and rule from the center. When a ruler feels uncertain of the Mandate, other ideologies of unity may be adopted to supplant or bolster Confucian ideas of geo-political unification. One is the notion of the Buddhist utopia, a classless society undivided by gender and race, ruled by an enlightened *cakravartin* ('wheel-turner,' or universal king). Revered as such was the Indian emperor Aśoka, who served as a model for several rulers of the late Six Dynasties and Sui dynasty. Evidence of this ideology is found in Buddhist sculpture of the time. A second is the notion of cultural unity through written expression. In the Sui dynasty, the monk Zhiyong, a direct descendant of the great calligrapher Wang Xizhi (303-361), made 800 copies of the *Thousand Character Classic* in Wang's style and distributed them to monasteries throughout Zhejiang in the south. This created the notion of a unifying style for elites to practice, which was taken up by Emperor Taizong (r. 626-649) of the Tang dynasty, a northerner who promoted the calligraphic style of Wang Xizhi as a kind of national style to be practiced by government officials.

Northern Wei, 386-534, capital at Luoyang

Western Wei, 535-556, capital at Chang'an

Eastern Wei, 534-550, capital at Yecheng, puppet emperor under control of Gao Huan

Northern Qi, 550-577, capital at Yecheng, founded by Gao Huan's second son Gao Yang

Yecheng, modern Handan area, border of Henan and Hebei Provinces

Gupta period, Mathura, India

Aśoka stupa reliquary

apsarases

pensive prince (*siwei taizi* 思維太子)

dragon-flower tree

Aśoka Maurya, r. ca. 273-232 BCE

*cakravartin*, 'wheel-turner' (universal king)

The Ending of the Dharma, *mofa* 末法

Maitreya bodhisattva, Tusita Heaven (now)

Maitreya Buddha, Buddha of the Future

Save-from-suffering Guanyin, Northern Qi-Sui dynasty, B60S45

willow branch, kundika vase

Sui dynasty, 581-618

Amitabha, Buddha of Measureless Light

Sukhavati, Pure Land in the West

Avalokiteśvara = Guanyin

Mahasthamaprapta = Dashizhi

Ananda and Kaśyapa

Wang Xizhi  
Running script (*xing shu* 行書)  
Preface to the Poems written at the Orchid Pavilion (*Lantingxu*)  
Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty, r. 626-649  
Zhiyong  
*Thousand Character Classic*  
Yu Shinan (558-638)  
Xiao Yi Seizes the Orchid Pavilion Preface by Trickery  
Biancai  
Chu Suiliang (596-658)  
Feng Chengsu  
Wang Xizhi, *Kong Shizhong Letter*, Tokyo

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