Toward a Unified State: Late Six Dynasties and Sui Dynasty

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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
apsaras
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

**Bibliography**

**Sculpture**


**Calligraphy**