

Ancient Buddhist Reliquaries in China and Korea

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I. A Survey of Ancient Chinese Buddhist Reliquaries

With the eastward transmission of Buddhism to China, the custom of building pagodas for the sepulchral burial of Buddhist relics (Sanskrit: *sarira*, Chinese: *sheli*, Korean: *sari*) were also transmitted to China. However, the extant ancient Buddhist pagodas in China are differ-

ent from the ancient Indian Buddhist stupas that are in the shape of inverted bowls. The Chinese style of the Buddhist stupa is a combination of the traditional Chinese architectural form of the tower with a miniature version of the inverted bowl-shaped Indian stupa and discs (Sanskrit: *chattras*) as rooftop decorations. The form of the Buddhist *sarira* receptacle for interment beneath the pagoda foundation as well as the very custom of sepulchral burial also changed as they adopted Chinese characteristics.

Among the archaeological remains of *sarira* receptacles interred in pagoda foundations, none can be dated before the 5th century in China. The earliest pagoda foundation is dated fifth year of the Taihe Era of the Northern Wei (481 CE). More *sarira* receptacles from the Sui and Tang Dynasties have been found, with a total of twenty examples. A survey of all relevant archaeological finds indicates that the custom of sepulchral burial of *sarira* underwent four stages of development between the Northern Dynasties and the Tang Dynasty:

The first stage corresponds to the period of the early Northern Dynasties. Deposited inside the foundation of the pagoda built in the fifth year of the Taihe Era of the Northern Wei in Dingxian County, Hebei, is a stone chest with a chamfered lid incised with an inscription that describes how, during a hunting excursion at the Xincheng Palace in Zhongshan, the emperor commands his officials to deploy bureaucratic funds for the construction of a five-story pagoda for the sepulchral burial of a stone *sarira* casket (Figure 1). Placed inside the stone casket is a glass bottle that serves as the *sarira* receptacle, a bowl, and in addition there are pearls, jade

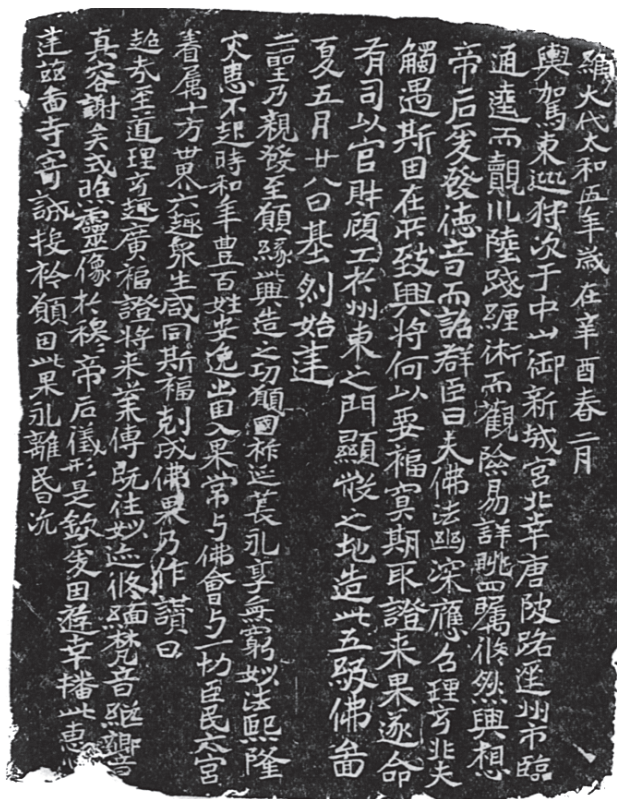


Figure 1. Rubbing of the Inscription on the Northern Wei Stone Casket, Dingxian

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and coins, etc., including 41 Sasanian silver coins from Persia. At the time, the stone *sarira* casket was directly buried inside the rammed earth foundation of the pagoda. However, the *sarira* receptacle had already acquired the form of the traditional Chinese square chest with a chamfered lid. This is a deviation from the Buddhism of ancient India, a sign that the reliquary is gradually adopting Chinese characteristics.

The second stage corresponds to the late Northern Dynasties, Sui and early Tang. Discovered inside the pagoda foundation of the monastery Yongningsi in Northern Wei Luoyang is a vertical pit that may have been the site of the sepulchral burial of *sarira*. As it had been robbed and disturbed, the original conditions are no longer evident. While excavating the foundation of the Buddhist pagoda in the Southern Ye City, the capital of the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi, a square earthenware box was uncovered inside the rammed earth foundation of the pagoda beneath the stone base of the pagoda's central shaft. The square earthenware box measures 70cm in length, width and height, and may have originally been used for the sepulchral burial of *sarira*; having been robbed long ago, it is now empty (Figure 2).

Yang Jian, the Sui Emperor Wen passed an edict in the first year of the Renshou Era (601 CE), ordering thirty prefectures to erect *sarira* pagodas, and to “place the *sarira* in a gilt glass bottle....then deposit the *sarira* inside a bronze chest, then a stone chest” for interment beneath the pagoda. In this way, the ancient Chinese practice of sepulchral burial of *sarira* came to be regulated by the guidelines established by the emperor. Between the second year of Renshou Era (602 CE) and fourth year of the Renshou Era, prefectures that had such pagodas constructed numbered over a hundred throughout the country. As for the sites of Sui *sarira* pagodas, the foundation of the Shendesi pagoda in Siping, Yaoxian County, Shaanxi Province, has been systematically excavated. Found inside the pagoda foundation is a brick wall safeguarding the stone *sarira* casket, and the stone casket is further shielded by protective rocks. On the chamfered lid of the stone *sarira* casket are nine characters incised in seal script: “*Da Sui Huangdi Sheli Baota Ming* 大隋皇帝舍利宝塔铭 (Inscription of the Precious *Sarira* Pagoda of the Great Sui Emperor)”. Fitted over the second of the two-tiered compartment of the casket is a stone epitaph of the pagoda recording various events, such as how the *sarira* carrier *Sramana* of Great Virtue



Figure 2. Base of Central Pillar and the Brick Reliquary of the Buddhist Pagoda in Southern Ye City

Senghui, by order of the emperor, respectfully built the sepulchral pagoda to enshrine the *sarira* at the monastery Shendesi in Yijun county, Yizhou Prefecture, on the eighth day of the fourth month of the fourth year of the Renshou Era (604 CE). The four sides of the main body of the casket are incised with line engravings depicting Sariputra, the Great Kasyapa, Ananda, Maudgalyayana and other disciples, the Four Lokapalas, Vajrapana, etc. Inside the casket is a gilt bronze box with a chamfered lid containing three grains of *sarira*; in addition, there are many other objects such as wuzhu coins of the Sui, Sasanian silver coins from Persia, gold, silver and jade rings, etc. The *sarira* containers mentioned above reflect the practice as systematized by the Sui Emperor Wen. Four more examples of *sarira* containers dated after the Renshou Era have been found. There is the square stone casket from the first year of the Daye Era (605 CE) from the pagoda foundation in Baidian Village, Zhengding, Hebei; the surface is plain

on all four sides and the chamfered lid is incised with an inscription on top. There is the Sui bronze square casket with chamfered lid dated second year of the Daye Era, a second burial inside the underground crypt of the Song Dynasty pagoda of the monastery Jingzhisi in Dingzhou, Hebei. There is the square stone casket with chamfered lid of the Leiyingdong, Yunjusi, Beijing, dated twelfth year of the Daye Era (616 CE). There is the stone square casket with chamfered lid deposited in the foundation of the *sarira* pagoda of Hongfanchi, Pingyin County, Shandong. They all share the same form as a square casket with a chamfered lid and the position of the inscription is identical. From this one can see that since Sui Emperor Wen's establishment of regulations governing the form of *sarira* receptacles, such regulations were basically continued throughout the entire Sui Dynasty. Until the early Tang Dynasty, the sepulchral burial of reliquaries continued to adhere to the earlier guidelines of the Sui Dynasty, as exemplified by the square stone casket with incised inscription on the chamfered lid excavated from the former site of the Tang Dynasty monastery Fachisi in Lantian County, Shaanxi.

The third stage corresponds to the period from Tang Emperor Gaozong and Empress Wu through Tang Emperor Wuzong's Buddhist proscription of the Huichang Era. During the Xianqing Era (656–661 CE) of Tang Emperor Gaozong, *sarira* receptacles began to take on a different outward form, and the person who initiated the change is Empress Wu Zetian. In the third month of the fifth year of the Xianqing Era (660 CE), the Bud-

dhist *sarira* from the monastery Famensi was ceremoniously transported into the palace of the Eastern Capital Luoyang for worship, "donating the money equivalent to the value of one thousand bolts of silk designated for the canopy furnishings of the inner quarters of the empress, a gold inner coffin and a silver outer sarcophagus were made to enshrine the *sarira* with one container fitting inside another up to nine nested layers; the carvings and openwork designs push the limits of the fantastic." This trend spread far and wide, generating imitations in every region, and reliquaries were made according to the new mode initiated by Empress Wu. Illustrating this transformation is the archaeologically excavated reliquary from the underground crypt of the monastery Dayunsi in Jingchuan, Gansu. The underground crypt with vaulted ceiling is a brick structure completed in the first year of the Yanzai Era (694 CE) of the Great Zhou Dynasty of Empress Wu. The interred reliquary comprises four nested containers; from the outermost to the innermost, there is a stone casket with a chamfered lid incised with an inscription, a gilt bronze casket with silver lotus flowers on its chamfered lid, a silver sarcophagus, and a gold coffin encrusted with pearls and gold lotus flowers. The interior of the coffin is lined in brocade, and on top of a cushion is a glass bottle containing fourteen grains of *sarira* (Figure 3). The reliquary from the underground crypt of the pagoda foundation of the Qingshansi monastery in Lintong, Shaanxi also conforms to the style of a silver outer sarcophagus and a gold inner coffin. The underground crypt

was completed in the twenty-ninth year of the Kaiyuan Era (741 CE). Of brick construction, the underground crypt has a passage tunnel in which is installed a stone stele with an inscription commemorating the venerable *sarira* pagoda of the monastery Qingshansi in the Kaiyuan Era of the Great Tang. Along the back and lateral walls of the inner chamber of the underground crypt are brick bases that are shaped to look like *sumeru* thrones. Mounted on top of these bases is a "Treasure



Figure 3. Reliquary Excavated from the Pagoda Foundation of the Monastery Dayunsi, Jingchuan, Gansu

Canopy for the *sarira* of Tathagata” assembled from six components made of bluestone. The canopy is 109cm in height, and placed inside the canopy is a silver outer sarcophagus with a gold inner coffin; the interior of the coffin is lined in brocade, and arrayed on top are two green glass bottles both containing “*sarira*” with gold lotus pedestals. In the South, reliquaries reburied by Li Deyu in the monasteries Changgansi and Chanzhongsi have been found; they were buried once more during the Yuanfeng Era (1078–1085 CE) of the Northern Song Dynasty in the underground crypt of the Iron Pagoda of the monastery Ganlusi in Zhenjiang. The reliquary from the monastery Changgansi was made when Li Deyu served in such official positions as inspector of the West Circuit of Zhejiang during the third year of the Taihe Era (829 CE) of the Tang Emperor Wenzong. It comprises four nested containers, a stone casket (lid missing), a silver sarcophagus, a gold coffin, and a smaller gold coffin. The innermost diminutive coffin is only 1cm in height, and it contains eleven grains of *sarira*. The reliquary from the monastery Chanzhongsi comprises three nested containers, a stone casket (only the lid remains), a silver casket, a gold coffin, and inside this inner coffin are 156 grains of *sarira*. These gold and silver *sarira* receptacles have finely detailed, tightly packed and intricate designs; the motifs are those of *kalavinkas* (human-headed birds) and cranes flying among clouds. By synthesizing all the above examples together, one can see that after Empress Wu started the trend in using the traditional form of the Chinese inner coffin and outer sarcophagus as models for *sarira* containers in sepulchral burial, the use of miniature gold coffins and silver sarcophagi as reliquaries became the standard practice to be followed by high-ranking officials and eminent monks of the Tang Dynasty. The sepulchral burial beneath the pagoda is an imitation of the tomb with an underground crypt of brick construction. Besides following tradition in depositing the gold coffin and silver sarcophagus inside a larger stone casket, the entire set is further ensconced under a sepulchral canopy fashioned out of carved stone. Sepulchral canopies emulate the luxuriant four-poster canopies with chamfered awnings installed in palatial chambers. They are the legacy of the treasure canopies used to enshrine Buddha images for worship in Buddhist halls during the Northern Dynasties. Their canopy form is based on the canopy of the Han-Wei period with chamfered awning, with the addition of hill-shaped, floral and banana-leaf patterned

ornaments and dangling tassels. One can visualize their appearance on the basis of canopy-shaped niches in stone grottoes, such as the canopy-shaped niches in the rock-cut cave temples at Gongxian (Figure 4). As for examples of stone treasure canopies from the Tang Dynasty, there is the sepulchral canopy with double awnings carved out of Han white jade, buried for the second time in the underground crypt of the monastery Famensi in the second year of the Jinglong Era (708 CE, Figure 5), and the “Treasure Canopy for the *sarira* of the Thus-Come-One Sakyamuni” of the monastery Qingshansi. In the mural illustrating the “Transformation of the *Nirvana Sutra*” on the west wall of the High Tang Cave 148 in

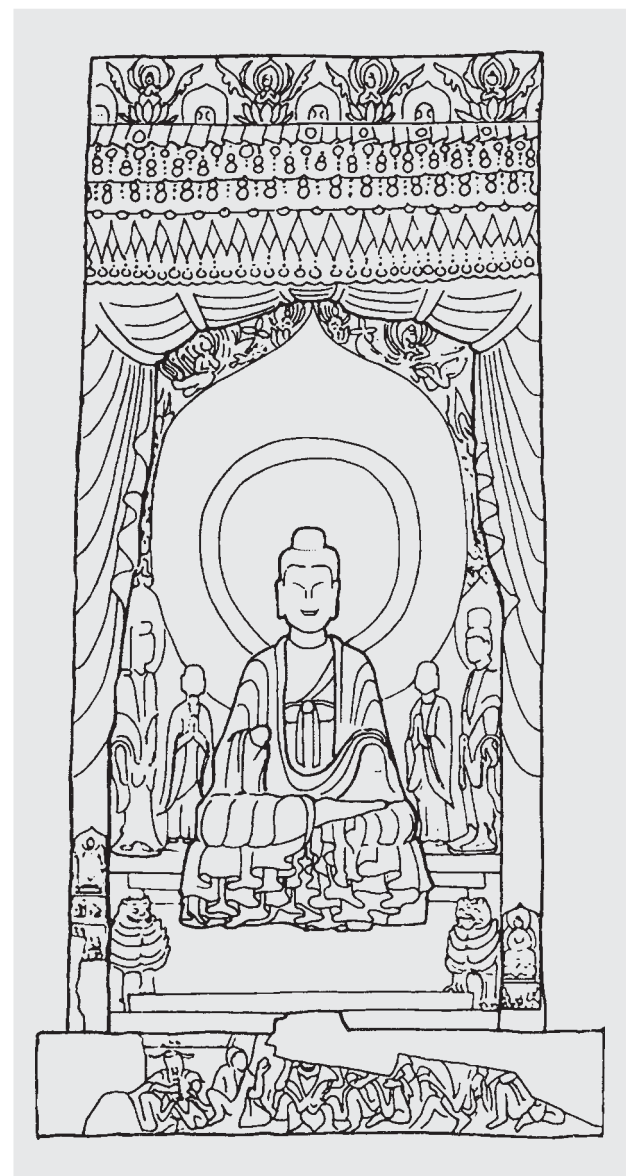


Figure 4. Niche in the Shape of a Precious Canopy from the Cave Temples of Gongxian

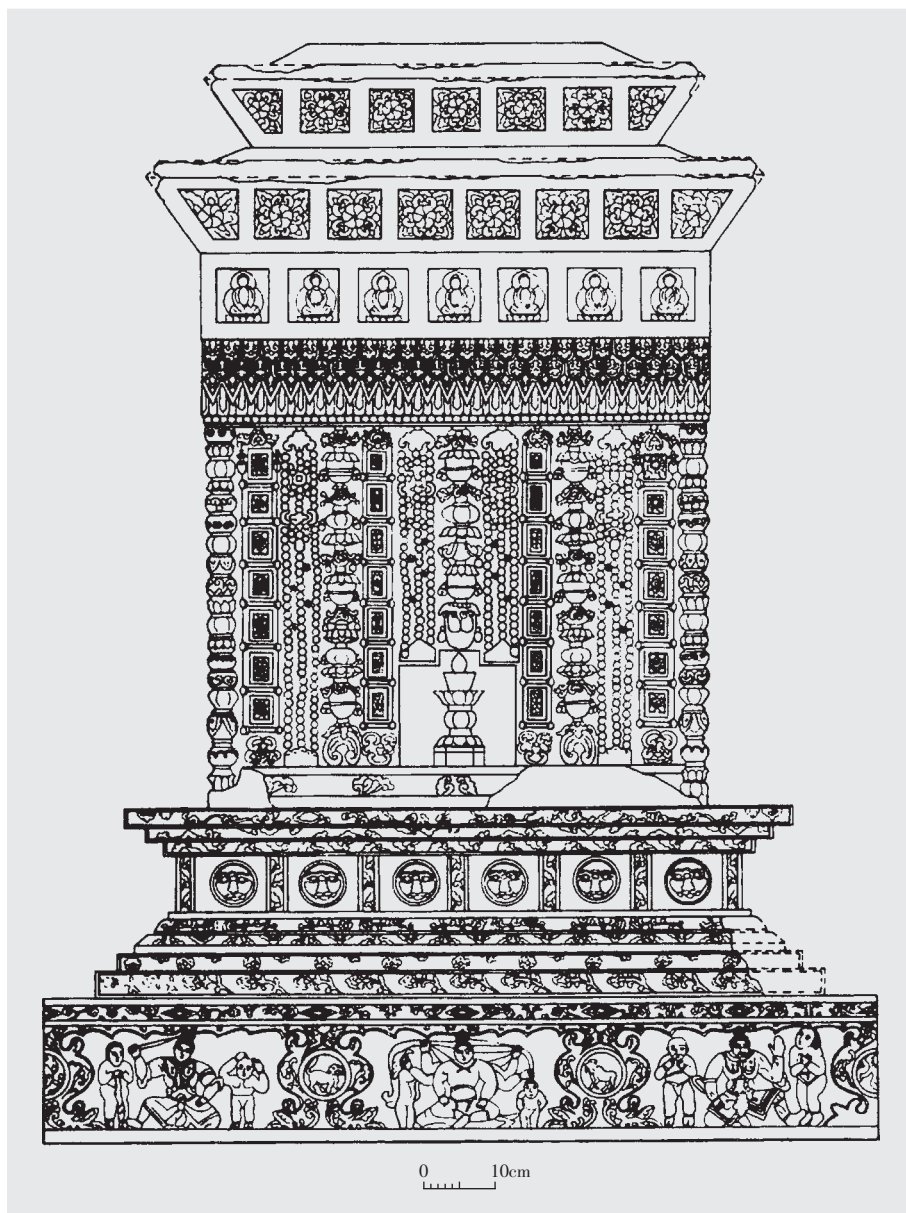


Figure 5. Stone Sepulchral Canopy from the Underground Crypt of the Monastery Famensi

the cave temples of Mogao, Dunhuang, there is also a depiction of a magnificent set of coffin/sarcophagus on top of which is installed a treasure canopy with chamfered awning (Figure 6). Besides these, reliquaries found in Shanxi, Jiangsu, Sichuan and other areas are mostly ensembles of a silver sarcophagus and a gold coffin, or a silver sarcophagus and a gilt bronze coffin, etc., indicating that the sepulchral burial of *sarira* in gold coffins and silver sarcophagi must have been widely transmitted throughout the country. Reliquaries in the form of Chinese inner and outer coffins are more attuned to the social customs of Chinese Buddhist devotees; they are also representative examples of the Sinification of Bud-

dhist art.

The fourth stage corresponds to the period from the restoration of Buddhism under the Tang Emperor Xuanzong through the end of the Tang Dynasty. During the Buddhist proscription of the Huichang Era of Tang Emperor Wuzong, temples were dismantled and images were smashed; naturally reliquaries were included among artifacts destroyed. After the restoration of Buddhism under Emperor Xuanzong, the making of *sarira* receptacles was resumed and further development was once again possible. Besides continuing such traditional forms as the gold coffin and silver sarcophagus, there were other innovative styles. A representative example of late Tang reliquary is the treasure chest of eight nested containers dedicated by the Tang Emperor Yizong in the fifteenth year of the Xiantong Era (874 CE) in paying homage to the Buddhist *sarira* in the underground crypt beneath the pagoda of the monastery Famensi. The underground

crypt is modeled after the Tang Dynasty imperial mausoleum with triple burial chambers in the front, middle and back. The treasure chest of eight nested containers dedicated by Tang Emperor Yizong is set in the back chamber. In succeeding order from the outermost to the innermost is a sandalwood casket with a lattice-patterned openwork casing in parcel-gilt silver and fitted with hinges, a silver casket with parcel-gilt decorations worked in *repoussé*, a plain silver casket, a silver casket with parcel-gilt silver decorations worked in *repoussé*, a pure gold casket with gold cloisonné inlaid with semiprecious stones and pearls, a jadestone casket with gold cloisonné inlaid with semiprecious stones and pearls,

and a small pure gold pagoda (with a single silver pillar in the interior). This small pagoda is shaped like a square single-story pagoda with a single roof and four doors, and inside the pagoda fitted on top of the silver pillar is a finger bone *sarira*. Preserved in the underground crypt beneath the Song Dynasty Jingzhisi monastery in Dingzhou is one hexagonal, single-story *sarira* pagoda made of silver, dated in the fourth year of the Dazhong Era of the Tang (850 CE, Figure 7). Apart from the treasure chest of eight nested containers dedicated by Yizong, placed in the underground crypt of the Famensi pagoda is another treasure chest as a reliquary for the True Body *sarira* dedicated by the monk Zhiying in the twelfth year of the Xiantong Era (871 CE), as well as the gold and silver square caskets with chamfered lids as reliquaries for the True Body *sarira* dedicated by Prajñācakra, the “Great Master of Perfect Enlightenment”. Obviously, after the restoration of Buddhism by the Tang Emperor Xuanzong, besides the continued use of gold coffins and silver sarcophagi a new trend emerged in which reliquaries came in the form of miniature pagodas fitted inside multiple nested square containers with chamfered lids. Worthy of note is that research has led to the identification of the Buddhist images on the lid and body of the treasure chest dedicated by the monk Zhiying as the realized bodies in the Assembly of the Great Diamond World Mandala (*vajradhatu-mandala*); as such, they reflect the flourishing of Esoteric Buddhism at the time, and are extremely valuable for the study of Tang Dynasty Esoteric Buddhist iconology.

Since the Five Dynasties Period, Buddhist beliefs became increasingly secularized. Meanwhile, the construction of *sarira* pagodas and the making of *sarira* receptacles broke away from established norms and branched out into multiple trends, a subject that should be considered in a separate inquiry.

II. The Close Relationship between Ancient Buddhist Reliquaries in China and Korea

After Buddhism became established in China, it was further transmitted eastward to other ancient kingdoms



Figure 6. Detail of the Mural Illustrating the Transformation of the Nirvana Sutra in Cave 148 of the Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang



Figure 7. Reliquary in the Form of a Silver Pagoda Dated the Fourth Year of the Dazhong Era (850 CE)

on the Korean Peninsula. What was transmitted there was a Sinified form of Buddhism. For this reason, the Buddhist reliquaries found in Korea from the ancient Baekje and Silla Kingdoms show an intimate connection with the Buddhist reliquaries from ancient China. Buddhist culture was transmitted to Baekje through its frequent interchanges with the Southern Dynasties.

According to the *Samguk Yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms), when the Baekje “King Shenliu (Ch’imnyu) ascended the throne in the *Jiashen* year, the foreign monk Malananda was invited from the [Eastern] Jin and received in the palace with honor. The next year of *Yiyu*, [the monk] founded the first Buddhist monastery in the new capital Hanshanzhou (Hansongju), and ordained ten monks. This marks the beginning of Buddhism in Baekje.” The year *Jiashen* is the third year of the Taiyuan Era of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (384 CE). The *Chapter on Baekje* of *Liang Shu* (The Book of Liang) records that during the reign of the Liang Emperor Wu, “in the sixth year of the Zhongdatong Era (534 CE) and the seventh year of the Datong Era (541 CE), (Baekje) sent emissaries bringing tribute gifts of regional produce and entreated for scriptural commentaries such as that on the *Nirvana Sutra*, and further requested for an erudite scholar specializing on the *Mao Shi* (*Shi Jing*), as well as craftsmen, painters, etc.” *Samguk Yusa* also records that during the reign of the Silla “King Zhenxing (Jinheung), in the *Jisi* year, third year of the Taiqing Era (549 CE), the envoy from the Liang Dynasty Shen Hu brought a gift of several grains of *sarira*.” However, there were no established direct relations with the Liang Dynasty at the time and the envoy from Silla had accompanied the envoy from Baekje to Liang. If it were true that the Liang envoy brought *sarira*, he would have to go through the intermediary of Baekje in order to reach Silla. Naturally, the ancient Chinese practice of sepulchral burial of Buddhist *sarira* and the style of the containers would have made an impact in such kingdoms as Baekje and Silla. Recorded in the *Fayuan Zhulin* (A Grove of Pearls in a Dharma Garden) is the essay *Memorial on the Response to the Veneration of Relics* in which it is said that during the time of Sui Emperor Wen, “envoys came from the three Kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla, each seeking to bring back one *sarira* for worship in a pagoda to be constructed in each respective kingdom, and their requests were granted by the emperor.” If the recorded event did occur, it would provide further evidence that the sepulchral burial of Buddhist relics of the Sui Dynasty was transmitted to the various kingdoms in the Korean Peninsula. During the Tang Dynasty, Unified Silla maintained close ties with the Tang, and there were frequent Buddhist evangelical missions and interchanges. According to the entry “*Sarira* Received in the Past and Present” in the *Samguk Yusa*, fascicle 3,

“during the reign of Queen Seongdeok, in the *Guimao* year, the seventeenth year of the Zhenguan Era (643 CE), the Dharma Master Jajang brought back a bone from Buddha’s skull, a tooth of Buddha, one hundred grains of *sarira* of Buddha, and one red gold-flecked monastic robe (*kasaya*) worn by Buddha. The *sarira* was divided into three portions: one portion was placed in the Hwangnyong-sa; one portion was placed in the pagoda T’aewatap, and one portion, together with the monastic robes, was placed in the tonsure platform of the monastery T’ongto-sa. There is no mention of the whereabouts of the remaining artifacts.” Through the above events recorded in the ancient texts of both China and Korea, one can get a better understanding of the historical transmission of Buddhist relics and other Buddhist cultural artifacts from China to Baekje and Silla. Complementing the textual record is the extant material evidence of ancient reliquaries found in Korea; such evidence sheds further light on the intimate relationship between the ancient Buddhist reliquaries found in Korea and those found in China. Some of the representative archaeological examples are chosen for comparison as follows.

Corresponding to the first and second stages of development from the Northern Dynasties to the Sui and early Tang in ancient China are the following representative examples of ancient Buddhist reliquaries discovered in Korea: a stone *sarira* chapel excavated from the monastery site in Neungsan-ri, and a reliquary found in the pagoda foundation of the monastery Wangheung-sa in Buyeo. The stone *sarira* chapel from the site of the monastery Neungsan-ri is placed above the foundation stone of the central pillar of the wooden pagoda. The stone chapel is shaped like a dome, and the front opens into a niche with a domed ceiling. On either side of the niche opening is an incised inscription. The one on the right says: “the thirteenth year of King Chang of Baekje, when Taisui (the planet Jupiter) is present.” The one on the left says, “Princess Muiheung pays homage” (Figure 8). This indicates that it was completed in the year equivalent to 567 CE. Unfortunately the interior of the niche had been robbed and is now empty. The reliquary recovered from the pagoda foundation of the monastery Wangheung-sa is an ensemble comprising a round gilt bronze box, a silver ewer and small gold bottle. The inscription on the box says: “The year of *Dingyou*, fifteenth day of the second month, Baekje King Chang set up this pagoda on behalf of his deceased son the prince; originally there were two grains of *sarira*, but as they

were being interred, they were transformed into three parts by supernatural intervention” (Figure 9). This indicates that the sepulchral burial occurred in the year equivalent to 577 CE. Among the precious objects accompanying the dedicated *sarira* is a “Changping *wuzhu*” coin. The floor-plan of the monastery Wangheung-sa is shaped as a rectangle enclosed by a wall, and the entrance to the monastery is in the middle of the south wall. To enter the interior, one would follow the central axis that leads first to the Buddhist pagoda with a square pedestal. At the center of the monastery is the *Geumdang* (Golden Hall), and the *Gangdang* (Lecture Hall) is in the back (Figure 10). As indicated by the excavated sites of the monastery Jeongrim-sa in Buyeo, the monastery Geumgang-sa, the ancient monastery in Neungsan-ri, the ancient monastery in Gunsuri, etc., all the floor-plans are basically the same. By comparing the monastery sites of Baekje mentioned above with the site of the monastery Yongningsi in Northern Wei Luoyang in China, one can see that the Baekje monasteries were influenced by those of the Southern Dynasties in China, especially those of the Southern Liang Dynasty. Accordingly, the design and construction of the monastery Wangheung-sa is inseparable from the influence of Liang. The manner in which the reliquary was directly deposited into a vertical pit excavated inside the foundation stone of the pagoda is also similar to the sepulchral burial of reliquaries beneath pagoda foundations as practiced during the Southern and Northern Dynasties.

The third stage of sepulchral burial of Buddhist reliquaries in ancient China corresponds to the Unified Silla period with the unification of the Korean Peninsula. As Silla maintained frequent contact with the Tang, Buddhist cultural interchanges continued to be regularly reinforced. The third stage when the placing of reliquaries inside precious canopies became fashionable in China also influenced Unified Silla. Evidence of this can be found in the reliquaries excavated from both foundations of the east and west pagodas of the monastery Gameun-sa in Gyeongju, and in the pagoda



Figure 8. Stone reliquary with the inscription of King Chang of Baekje



Figure 9. Reliquary Excavated from the Pagoda Foundation in the Ruins of the Monastery Wangheung-sa, Buyeo, Baekje

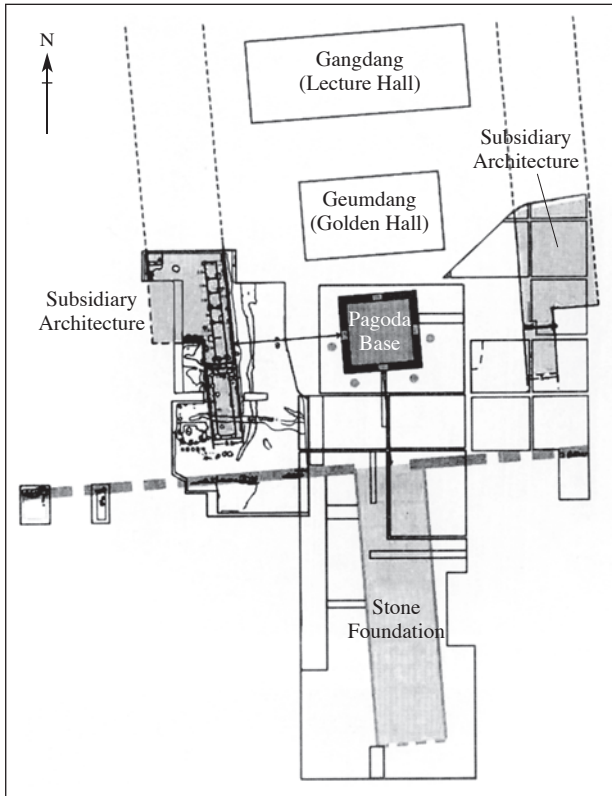


Figure 10. Ground Plan of the Ruins of the Monastery Wangheung-sa, Buyeo, Baekje

foundation of the Songrim-sa. According to the *Samguk Yusa* the monastery Gameun-sa in Gyeongju was built by King Sinmun the Great, and the date corresponds to the second year of the Kaiyao Era of the Tang Emperor Gaozong (682 CE). Reliquaries were found while the foundations of the east and west pagodas were undergoing restorative repairs. The reliquary interred beneath the west pagoda is a square treasure chest fashioned out of gilt bronze; it contains a treasure canopy, and placed inside the canopy is a crystal bottle (Figure 11). Also found were a ladle and a pair of tongs used in *sarira* ritual services. The reliquary interred beneath the east pagoda is a gilt bronze square chest also containing a treasure canopy, and ensconced inside the canopy is a crystal *sarira* bottle. The gilt bronze treasure chest is square in shape, decorated with the Four Lokapalas (Sacheonwang) on all four sides and fitted with a clasp in the shape of a *pushou* (animal mask) door-knocker with a ring attached (Figure 12). The treasure canopy excavated from the east pagoda is in relatively good condition. At the base is a *sumeru* throne supported by a double inverted lotus base; a balustrade is also attached. The treasure canopy has a chamfered top with four posts,



Figure 11. Reliquary From the West Pagoda of the Monastery Gameun-sa, Gyeongju, Silla



Figure 12. Reliquary From the East Pagoda of the Monastery Gameun-sa, Gyeongju, Silla

and dangling along the rim of the canopy are banana-leaf ornaments as well as tassels and floral decorations. At the monastery Songrim-sa, Chilgok, there is a five-story brick pagoda dated from the end of the Unified Silla period to the early Goryeo period (around 935 CE). Recovered from the second story of the pagoda is a stone reliquary casket shaped like a tortoise. This casket contains a gold treasure canopy mounted over a green glass cup on a gold lotus base, and placed inside this cup is a *sarira* bottle. This is probably made in the second half of the 7th century CE. The treasure canopy has four posts and a chamfered awning, adorned on top and along the sides with banana-leaf shaped ornaments, and festoons dangle from the rim. At the base is a balustrade supported on a pedestal with an inverted lotus design (Figure 13). The three sets of reliquaries from the monasteries Gameun-sa and Songrim-sa all contain gold treasure canopies with a square layout, four posts, a chamfered awning embellished with hill-shaped ornaments and dangling tassels and floral decorations around the rim, a style that is similar to that of the Tang Dynasty stone-



Figure 13. Reliquary From the Monastery Songrim-sa, Silla

carved treasure canopies used in sepulchral burials of *sarira*, and also with that of *sarira* treasure canopies depicted in the High Tang murals of the cave temples of Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang. Although the gilt bronze reliquary from Gameun-sa has a lid with four corners and a pointed top, a slight variation from the lid with chamfered edges, the body of the casket is still square in shape, and the iconography of the Four Lokapalas on all four sides, especially the “bright brilliant armor” worn by the Lokapalas, is obviously modeled after Tang military uniforms. Details like these clearly illustrate the intimate relationship between the Buddhist reliquaries of the Unified Silla and those of the Tang.

The fourth stage of sepulchral burial of *sarira* in China shows a predilection for small metallic pagodas as reliquaries, as illustrated by the single-story hexagonal silver pagoda dated in the fourth year of the Dazhong Era (850 CE), and the four-sided gold pagoda dated in the fifteenth year of the Xiantong Era mentioned earlier. Similar examples of reliquaries from the Unified Silla period in the shape of four-sided or hexagonal pagodas have also been found. An example of a reliquary in the form of a hexagonal pagoda is from the monastery Dori-sa, Seonsan-eup, from the 9th century (Figure 14).

One must also note that after the Chinese style of



Figure 14. Reliquary From the Monastery Dori-sa, Silla

Buddhist reliquaries was transmitted to Baekje and Silla, it was integrated with native cultural traditions, leading to subsequent changes in style. For example, the chamfered lid of the square casket is changed to one with four corners and a pointed top, the vertical posts of the ornate canopy is turned into bamboo stalks with nodes embedded in the middle with strings of pearls, etc. These are manifestations of regional and epochal characteristics. In sum, the Buddhist reliquaries from ancient China and ancient Korea illustrate the interaction and close relationship between the ancient cultures of the two nations.

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