

The Buddhist sculpture hoard at Bei Wuzhuang in the Ye City Site, Hebei Province

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Brief introduction to the discovery

Abstract

In 2012, nearby the Bei Wuzhuang Village, which is in the east outer city of the South Ye City, a Buddhist sculpture hoard was found and rescued. From this hoard, thousands of Buddhist sculptures were unearthed, many of which bore exact dates including the eras of the Northern Wei, Eastern Wei, Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, Sui and Tang Dynasties. Both of the discoveries powerfully proved the position of the Ye City as the center of the Buddhism in northern China during the 6th century.

The Ye City located about 20km to the southwest of the Linzhang County seat, Hebei Province, was the capital of the Wei Kingdom of the Three-Kingdoms Period via the Sixteen-Kingdoms Period to the Northern Qi Dynasty of the Northern Dynasties Period. Since 1983, the joint archaeological team organized by the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Research Institute of Cultural Relics of Hebei Province has conducted comprehensive detection and excavation work to the Ye City Site. In January 2012, the joint archaeological team made a rescue excavation to a Buddhist sculpture hoard located nearby Bei Wuzhuang Village within the (presumed) east outer city of the Ye City (Figure 1), and excavated thousands of Buddhist sculptures and their fragments.

The Buddhist sculpture hoard (numbered 2012JYNH1, and H1 hereafter) is located to the north of Bei Wuzhuang Village, Xiwen Township, Linzhang County. It is in the flood land to the north of the south levee of Zhang River, which is about 3km to the east of the east wall of the inner city of the South Ye City of the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi Dynasties, and within the outer city of the South Ye City presumed by the Ye City Archaeological Team. In 2004, some Buddhist sculpture fragments have been unearthed from the present-day Zhang River course in this area.

In the early January 2012, the Ye City Archaeological Team noticed some traces on the flood land to the north of Bei Wuzhuang Village and conducted survey first. On January 10, the Buddhist sculpture hoard was found; in view of its importance, the Ye City Archaeological Team started rescue excavation to this hoard; through 16 days of hard work, the excavation was finished on January 25.

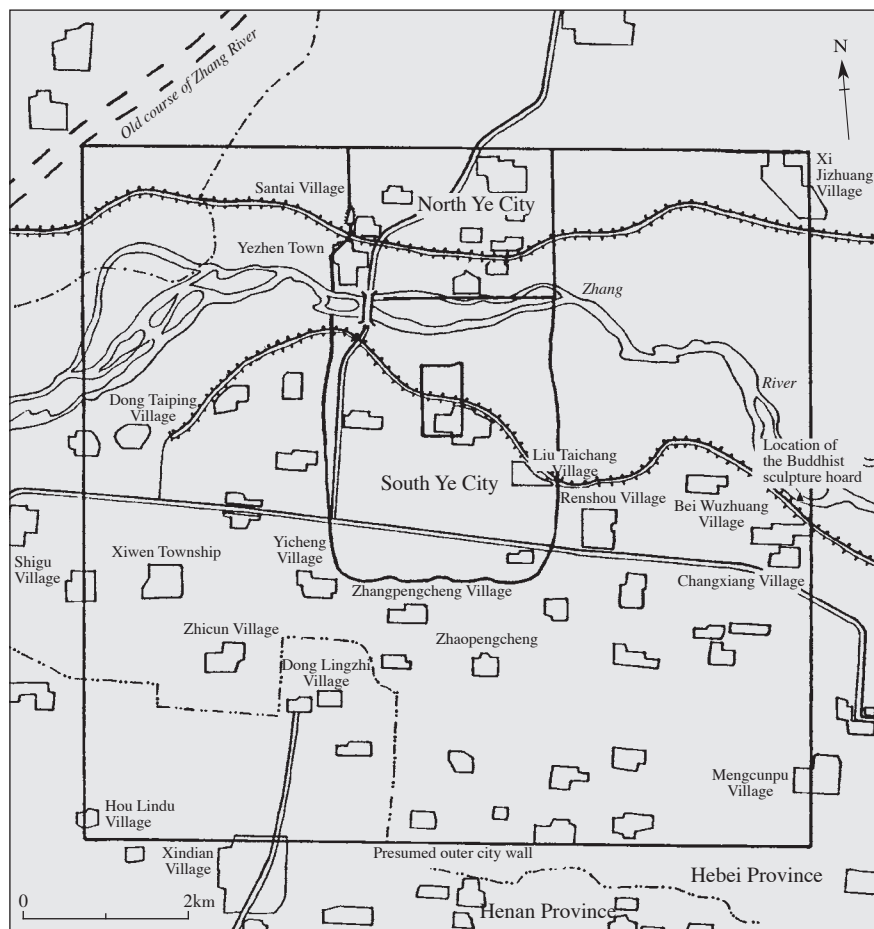


Figure 1 The location of the Buddhist sculpture hoard in the Ye City Site.

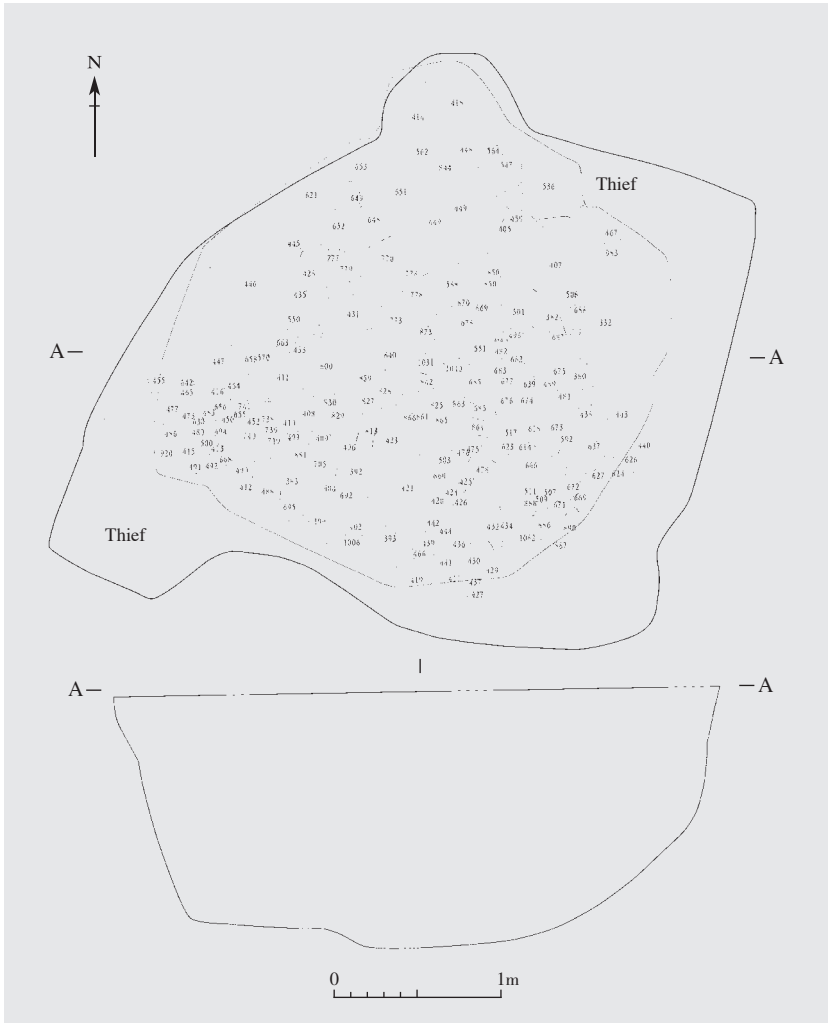


Figure 2 The plan and section of Bei Wuzhuang Buddhist sculpture hoard.

The stratigraphy and remains

The Buddhist sculpture hoard was covered by the sandy silt brought by the flood of Zhang River, which was 4.4m thick and could be divided into five layers: the first is the sandy silt layer 4m thick; the second layer, which was 4m from the ground and 0.2-0.4m thick, was grayish-brown soil layer containing large amount of brick and tile fragments, potsherds and gravels; it was directly superimposed over the opening of the Buddhist sculpture hoard. The third layer, which was 0.1-0.88m thick, was yellow fine silt mixed with brown fine clay with few artificial relics. The fourth layer, which was 0.1-1.34m thick, consisted of red burnt clay clods and grayish-brown soil, containing large amount of tile fragments and a few potsherds. The fifth layer, which was 5m from the present-day ground and 0.22-0.49m thick, was a brown soil layer containing a few brick and tile fragments, pottery and celadon sherds and gravels. Below this layer is the primary soil.

The Buddhist sculpture hoard was an earthen pit specially dug for burying Buddhist sculptures underneath the second layer and intruded into the third through the fifth layers and the primary soil. It is

in an irregular square plan 3.3m long on each side and about 1.5m deep. Except for the southeastern part, which is a slope leading to the bottom of the pit, the other walls of the pit are generally vertical and the bottom is flat (Figures 2 to 4).



Figure 3 Full-view of Bei Wuzhuang Buddhist sculpture hoard (top is north).



Figure 4 Detail of Bei Wuzhuang Buddhist sculpture hoard.



Figure 5 The Sakyamuni Buddha statue H1:500 (495 CE).



Figure 6 The *Guanshiyin* (Avalokitesvara) triad statue H1:1254 (510 CE).

Unearthed artifacts

The unearthed Buddhist sculptures have been numbered up to 2895 pieces, plus as many as about 3000 pieces of fragments. In addition, the fill of the hoard was mixed with fragments of bricks, tiles and potsherds. Most of the sculptures are made of white marble, with a few exceptions made of bluestone and pottery. They were stored tightly together without clear lines and layers. The forms of these sculptures were mainly the mid- and small-sized “back screen-style” statues (actually high reliefs carved out of the back screen), but there were also some freestanding round sculptures in rather large size; their motifs include Sakyamuni, Maitreya, Bhaisajya-guru (Master of Healing), Amitabha (Amitayus), Vairocana, *Guanshiyin* (Avalokitesvara), meditating Prince Siddharta (Sakyamuni Buddha before enlightenment), Sakyamuni Buddha and Prabhutaratna seated abreast, double (Avalokitesvara) bodhisattvas, double meditating statue, and so on. The preliminary statistics shows that about 10% of the sculptures bear inscriptions; most of the sculptures had traces of gold-plating and color-painting remnants preserved. Hereby we choose some typical ones to present to our readers.

1. The sculptures of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534 CE).

The sample H1:500 is a seated Sakyamuni Buddha statue sponsored by Liu Boyang 刘伯阳 in the nineteenth year of Taihe Era (495 CE). The main figure is seated in full lotus pose with his hands rested on the lap making a *dhyana* (meditating) *mudra* (gesture). In the center of the obverse of the square base of the statue is a censer, and on the other three sides are the portraits of Liu Boyang, his parents, wife, sister and children. On the bottom of the base is the inscription with date: “in the nineteenth year of Taihe Era...Liu Boyang, a resident of Ye County, Wei Prefecture, ...respectfully makes this stone statue of Sakyamuni Buddha [太和十九年...魏郡邺县民刘伯阳...敬造释加牟尼石像一区...].” This statue is made of bluestone, the full height of which is 31cm, and the square base is 14.7cm long on the obverse and 10.5cm high (Figure 5).

The sample H1:1254 is a *Guanshiyin* (Avalokitesvara) triad statue sponsored by certain Zhang in the third year of Yongping Era (510 CE). The main figure (Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva) and two flanking attendant bodhisattvas are all standing on circular lotus pedestal barefoot and a square tenon is stretching out of the bottom of the statue. On the reverse of the back screen is the inscription with date: “in the third year of Yongping Era...Certain Zhang (given name is damaged), the disciple of Buddha...makes this stone statue of *Guanshiyin* [永平三年...佛弟子张□...造观世音石象一区...].” This statue is made of blue stone and the remaining height is 37cm (Figure 6).

2. The sculptures of the Eastern Wei Dynasty (534–550 CE).

Sample H1:1708 is a *Guanshiyin* statue sponsored by Zhihui 智徽 in the fourth year of Tianping Era (537 CE). The *Guanshiyin* Bodhisattva is standing on the inverted lotus flower-shaped pedestal barefoot against the boat-shaped back screen; on the reverse of the back screen is the ink-painted Prince Siddharta meditating under the tree. On the reverse of the square base of the statue is the inscription with date: “in the fourth year of Tianping Era…Zhihui [, the monk] of Yonghui Monastery, respectfully makes the white stone statue of *Guanshiyin* Bodhisattva for the sake of my master, my monk colleagues and parents…[天平四年……永晖寺智徽为师僧父母敬造白石观世音像一躯……].” This statue is made of white marble, the full height of which is 30cm and the square base is 13cm long and 4.2cm high (Figure 7).

The sample H1:2105 is a Bhaiṣajya-guru (Master of Healing) triad statue sponsored by Daosheng 道胜 in the first year of Yuanxiang Era (538 CE). It is cut out of bluestone, the back screen of which is oval and has a pointed top and bas-relief flame designs, and the top is a little damaged. The main figure is seated in full lotus pose; he stretches his left arm forward and makes a *varada* (wish-granting) *mudra* with his left hand and bends his right arm in front of his right chest and makes an *abhaya* (assuring from fear) *mudra* with his right hand. In the middle of the square base is a lotus-shaped censer, flanking which are two *bhikṣu* (Buddhist monk) kneeling in offering position; to their outer sides are two squatting lions, all of which are in bas-relief. On the reverse of the square base is the inscription with the date: “in the first year of Yuanxiang Era… Daosheng, a *bhikṣunī* (Buddhist nun), respectfully makes the statue of Bhaiṣajya-guru [元象元年……比丘尼道胜敬造药师佛一区……].” The entire sculpture is 27.4cm in remaining height and the square base is 17cm long and 7.3cm high (Figures 8 and 9).

The sample H1:2725 is the *Guanshiyin* triad statue sponsored by Zhang Jingzhang 张景章 in the second year of Wuding Era (544 CE). It is cut out of white marble and bears color-painted and gold-plated traces all over. The main figure is the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva wearing long skirt with the *pībo* (draping ribbons) crossing in front of the abdomen and a necklace with a peach-shaped pendant and standing on the inverted lotus flower-shaped pedestal barefoot. The two attendant bodhisattvas wear the same costumes as the main figure but their sizes are smaller. The back screen has the intaglio scene of Prince Siddharta meditating under the tree on the reverse. In the middle of the square base is the bust of a strong guardian holding a lotus-shaped censer overhead with both hands, flanking which are two standing *bhikṣu* and two squatting lions in side view, all of which are in bas-relief. On the two sides of the square base, there are figures of two *deva* kings respectively; in the middle of the reverse is the inscription flanked by figures of two *deva* kings: “In the second year of Wuding Era, Great Wei…Zhang Jingzhang, the disciple of Buddha, respectfully makes this statue of *Guanshiyin* Bodhisattva for the deceased parents…[大魏武定二年……佛弟子张景章为亡父母



Figure 7 The *Guanshiyin* (Avalokitesvara) statue H1:1708 (537 CE).

敬造观世音像一区……].” The entire statue is 40cm in height and the square base is 22.2cm long on the obverse bottom and 10.6cm high (Figures 10 and 11).

The sample H1:920 is a statue of meditating Prince Siddharta with two disciples sponsored by He Pisha 和毗沙 and Li Huixiang 李迴香 in the second year of Wuding Era (544 CE). It is cut out of white marble with the height of 48cm. The main figure, Prince Siddharta in meditating pose, and two attendant disciples flanking him are carved against the same back screen. On the obverse of the square base of the statue, a lotus flower-shaped censer flanked by two lions face to face is carved in bas-relief; in the middle of the reverse of the square base is the inscription with date “In the second year of Wuding Era…He Pisha and Li Huixiang, the disciples of Buddha, make the statue of meditating Prince…[武定二年……佛弟子和毗沙李迴香造太子思惟一区……].” The square base is 20.7cm long on the obverse bottom and 11.2cm high (Figure 12).

The sample H1:1412 is a Sakyamuni Buddha septiad statue sponsored by Daozhi 道智 in the fourth year of Wuding Era (546 CE). It is cut out of bluestone, and the remaining height is 57.5cm. The main figure is seated in full lotus pose and makes a *dharmacakra* (preaching) *mudra* with his right hand and a *dhyana mudra* with his left hand. The six flanking attendants are all standing. On the obverse of the square base, a censer and a pair of

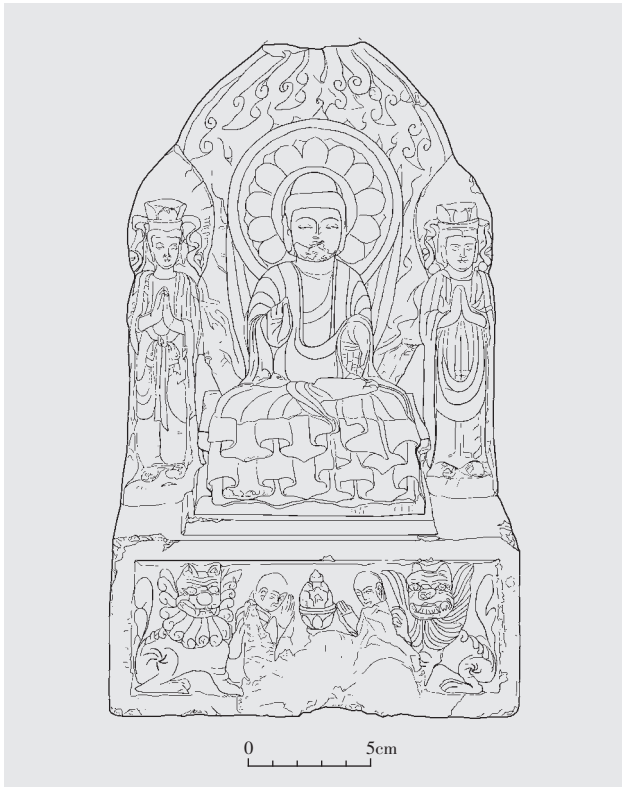


Figure 8 Bhaiṣajya-guru (Master of Healing) triad statue H1:2105 (538 CE).



Figure 9 Bhaiṣajya-guru (Master of Healing) triad statue H1:2105 (538 CE).

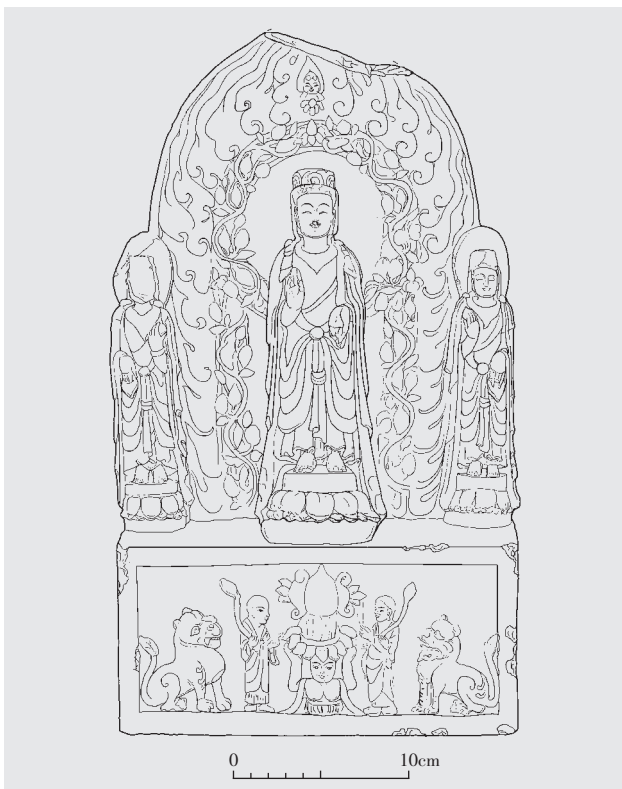


Figure 10 The *Guanshiyin* (Avalokitesvara) triad statue H1:2725 (544 CE).



Figure 11 The *Guanshiyin* (Avalokitesvara) triad statue H1:2725 (544 CE).



Figure 12 The statue of meditating Prince Siddharta (Sakyamuni Buddha before enlightenment) with two disciples H1:920 (544 CE).



Figure 13 The Sakyamuni Buddha septiad statue H1:1412 (546 CE).



Figure 14 The Maitreya triad statue H1:169 (546 CE).

lions are carved in bas-relief and a bodhisattva and two *bhiksu* are engraved in line figures. On the reverse of the square base is the inscription with date: “in the fourth year of Wuding Era, Great Wei, Daozhi, a *bhiksu*…invites craftsman from the capital to respectfully make this stone statue of Sakyamuni…[大魏武定四年……比丘僧道智……採匠京都敬造释迦石像一区……].” The square base is 29.5 to 31.8cm long on the bottom sides and 15.5cm high (Figure 13).

The sample H1:169 is a Maitreya triad statue sponsored by Sun Jinghong in the fourth year of Wuding Era. It is cut out of white marble and the height is 18.5cm. The main figure seated cross-legged in the middle and the two attendant bodhisattvas flanking him are all carved against the same back screen. On the reverse of the back screen is the figure of Prince Siddharta meditating under the tree carved in bas-relief. On the obverse of the square base, a lotus bud-shaped censer and a pair of lion flanking it face to face are carved in bas-relief, and on the other three sides, the inscription with date is carved: “in the fourth year of Wuding Era, Great Wei, …Sun Jinghong, the disciple of Buddha, respectfully makes the white stone statue of Maitreya…[大魏武定四年……佛弟子孙景蕤敬造弥勒白石像一区……].” The square base of the statue is 10cm long on the obverse bottom and 3cm high (Figure 14).

The sample H1:1253 is a bodhisattva triad statue carved out of white marble, the height of which is

54cm. The main figure, a bodhisattva, and two disciples flanking him are all carved against the same back screen and standing on lotus flower-shaped pedestals barefoot. On the obverse of the square base, a lotus flower-shaped censer and pair of lion flanking it face to face are carved in bas-relief. The square base is 26cm long and 8cm high (Figure 15).

3. The sculptures of the Northern Qi Dynasty (550–577 CE).

The sample assembled by fragments H1:282 and H1:466 is an Amitabha Buddha triad statue sponsored by Zhangsun Jian 长孙柬's wife (nee Lu 陆) in the first year of Tianbao Era (550 CE). It is carved out of white marble, the height of which is 103cm. The main figure making an *abhaya* (assuring from fear) *mudra* with his right hand and a *varada* (bestowing) *mudra* with his left hand and the two attendant bodhisattvas flanking him are carved against the same back screen and all standing on inverted lotus flower-shaped pedestals. On the reverse of the back screen, the remnants of the ink-painted figure of Prince Siddharta meditating under the tree are preserved. On the obverse of the square base, a lotus flower-shaped censer and a pair of lions flanking it face to face are carved in bas-relief; on the outer sides of the lions and the two sides of the square base, figures of eight *deva* kings are carved in bas-relief. In the middle of the reverse of the square base is the inscription with date: "It is in the first year of Tianbao Era, Great Qi··Lu, the wife of the Zhangsun



Figure 15 The Bodhisattva triad statue H1:1253.

Family, respectfully and solemnly makes this statue of Amitabha Buddha for Zhangsun Jian, my deceased husband, the *cishi* (prefect) of the Northern Xuzhou Prefecture···[维大齐天保元年····长孙氏陆谨为亡夫北徐州刺史长孙柬敬造阿弥陀像一区····].” The square base is 53.4 to 54.6cm long on the obverse bottom and 15.6 to 16cm high (Figures 16 and 17).

The sample H1:72 is a *Guanshiyin* statue sponsored by Huang Haibo 皇海伯 in the sixth year of Tianbao Era (555 CE). It is carved out of white marble and the remaining height is 30cm. The *Guanshiyin* Bodhisattva is carved against the boat-shaped back screen and standing on the inverted lotus flower-shaped pedestal barefoot. On the obverse of the square base of the statue, ink-drawn traces of a lotus flower-shaped censer flanked by a pair of lions are preserved, and on the reverse, the inscription with date is engraved, saying “in the sixth year of Tianbao Era··Huang Haibo, the disciple of Buddha, respectfully makes this white marble statue of *Guanshiyin*···[天保六年··佛弟子皇海伯敬造观世音白玉像一区··].” The square base is 14.2cm long on the obverse bottom and 7.3cm high (Figure 18).

The sample H1:160 is a *Guanshiyin* triad statue sponsored by Zhiben 枝本 (surname unknown) in the tenth year of Tianbao Era (559 CE). It is carved out of white marble and the height is 21cm. The main figure and the two attendant disciples flanking him are all carved against the same back screen and standing on lotus flower-shaped pedestals; on the reverse of the back screen is the ink-painted scene of Prince Siddharta meditating under the tree. On the obverse of the square base, the remnants of a lotus flower-shaped censer and a pair of lions flanking it are preserved. On the other three sides of the square base, the inscription with date is engraved: “in the tenth year of Tianbao Era··· [surname unknown] Zhiben, the lay disciple of Buddha···respectfully makes this statue of *Guanshiyin* Bodhisattva··· [天保十年····清信佛弟子□枝本····敬造观音像一区····].” The square base is 9.6cm wide on the obverse bottom and 4.5cm high (Figure 19).

Sample H1:2759 is a pentad (motif to be identified) statue sponsored by *bhiksuni* (Buddhist nuns) Sengjue 僧觉 and Tanhua 昙华 in the second year of Heqing Era (563 CE). It is cut out of white marble and the remaining height is 18.5cm. The main figure and the two attendant figures at the corners were wearing the same costumes and standing in the same posture barefoot, and the two disciple-like attendant figures between them were standing with hands folded in front of the chest; all five of them are standing against the same back screen, which is hollowed into the shape of a bodhi tree. On the obverse of the square base, the remnants of color-painted censer and a pair of lions flanking it are preserved; on the reverse of the square base is the inscription with date: “it is in the second year of Heqing Era, Great Qi, that the *bhiksuni* Sengjue and Tanhua make this statue to offer [唯大齐河清二年比丘尼僧觉昙华造像供□].” The square base is 17.6cm long on the obverse bottom and 5.6cm high (Figure 20).

The sample H1:1104 is a Buddha pentad statue cut out

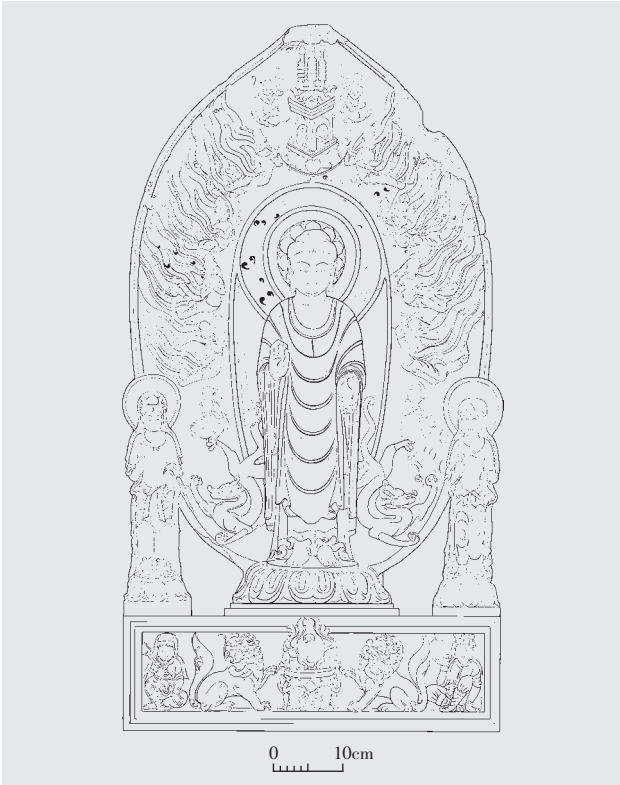


Figure 16 The Amitabha Buddha triad statue H1:282 and H1:466 (550 CE).



Figure 17 The Amitabha Buddha triad statue H1:282 and H1:466 (550 CE).



Figure 18 The *Guanshiyin* (Avalokitesvara) statue H1:72 (555 CE).



Figure 19 The *Guanshiyin* (Avalokitesvara) triad statue H1:160 (559 CE).



Figure 20 Pentad statue H1:2759 (563 CE).

of white marble, the height of which is 30cm. The main figure is seated in full lotus pose in the middle and makes an *abhaya mudra* with his right hand and a *varada mudra* with his left hand. He and his four attendant figures are all carved against the back screen, which is hollowed into the shape of two intertwined bodhi trees with flying *apsaras*. On the obverse of the square base is a censer held by a *yaksa* and flanked by a pair of lions face to face and two guardians at the corners, all of which are carved in bas-relief. On the two sides and reverse of the square base are the figures of eight *deva* kings also carved in bas-relief. The square base is 17.5cm long on the obverse bottom and 6.2cm high (Figure 21).

The sample H1:2516 is a Buddha septiad statue cut out of white marble, the height of which is 38cm. The main figure is seated in full lotus pose in the middle and makes an *abhaya mudra* with his right hand and a *varada mudra* with his left hand. The six attendant figures flanking him, which are (from the closest to the farthest) two disciples, two deities with large *kaparda* (snail shell-shaped hair knot) and two bodhisattvas, are in simple-styled costume. The arch-shaped back screen against which they are carved is hollowed into the shape of two intertwined bodhi trees. On the obverse of the square base is a lotus bud-shaped censer flanked by a pair of lions face to face and two guardians at the corners, all of which are carved in bas-relief. The square base is 23.5cm long on the obverse bottom and 8.3cm high (Figure 22).



Figure 21 The Buddha pentad statue H1:1104.



Figure 22 The Buddha septiad statue H1:2516.

The sample H1:1000 is a Buddha pentad statue cut out of white marble, the remaining height of which is 37.2cm. The main figure seated in full lotus pose in the middle and making an *abhaya mudra* with his right hand and a *varada mudra* with his left hand and the two disciples and the two deities with large *kaparda* flanking him are all carved against the hollowed screen, which has been damaged, but the figures are intact. On the reverse of the back screen, ink-drawn scene of Prince Siddharta meditating under the tree is preserved. On the obverse of the square base, a lotus bud-shaped censer flanked by a pair of lions face to face are carved in bas-relief, and on the other three sides are the figures of eight *deva* kings, which are also carved in bas-relief. The square base is 30.5cm long on the obverse bottom and 10cm high (Figures 23 and 24).

The sample H1:1968 is a bodhisattva triad statue carved in the fifth year of Wuping Era (574 CE). It is cut out of white marble and the height is 20.4cm. The main figure and two disciples flanking him are all standing on the square base barefoot against the back screen, on which two bodhi trees are carved in very shallow relief. On the reverse of the square base is the inscription with date: "in the fifth year of Wuping Era... [name of the sponsor unknown] respectfully makes this statue for Guangjing 光敬, a deceased *bhiksu* [武平五年...为亡比丘僧光敬造像(一)区]." The square base is 10.3cm long on the obverse bottom and 3cm high (Figure 25).

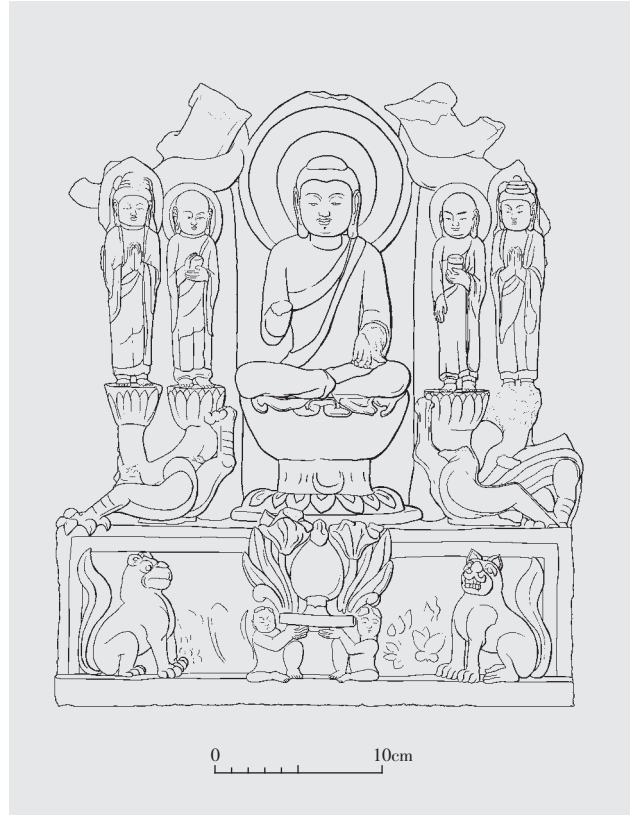


Figure 23 The Buddha pentad statue H1:1000.



Figure 24 The Buddha pentad statue H1:1000.



Figure 25 Bodhisattva triad statue H1:1968 (574 CE).



Figure 26 Bodhisattva triad statue H1:508.

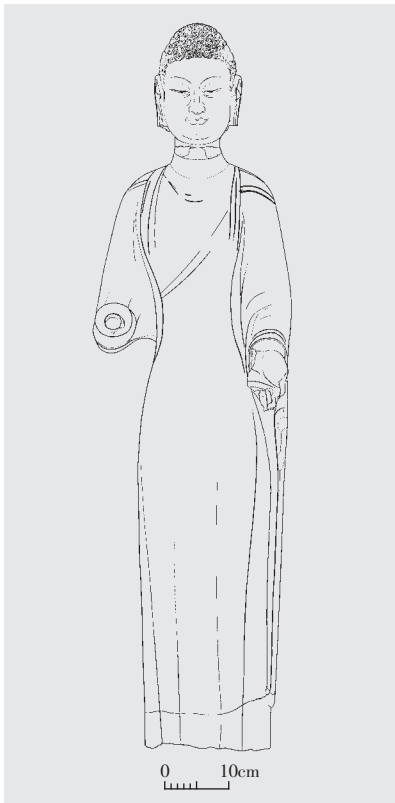


Figure 27 The standing Buddha statue H1:52 and H1:585.



Figure 28 The standing Buddha statue H1:52 and H1:585.

The sample H1:508 is a bodhisattva triad statue cut out of white marble, the height of which is 20.5cm. The main figure and two disciples flanking him are all standing barefoot against the back screen, out of which two bodhi trees with flying *apsaras* among the branches are carved in bas-relief. On the reverse of the back screen, remnants of color-painted bodhi tree designs are preserved. On the obverse of the square base, a censer and a pair of lions flanking it face to face are carved in bas-relief. The square base is 13cm long on the obverse bottom and 4.4cm high (Figure 26).

The sample assembled by fragments H1:52 and H1:585 is a round sculpture of standing Buddha. It is a freestanding statue cut out of bluestone, and the remaining height is 112cm. The Buddha has a slender figure and the outline of the torso is shown through the garment. His right hand is holding up in front of the chest, but the part from the elbow has been lost; at the break, there is a mortise for repairing. His left hand is slightly raised in front of the left abdomen with the palm to the front, and the fingers are lost. The parts below his ankles are also lost (Figures 27 and 28).

The sample H1:2050 is a round sculpture of a standing bodhisattva. It is a freestanding statue cut out of white marble, and the remaining height is 70cm. The bodhisattva wears floral crown, the torso is nude with jewelries worn in front of the chest; both arms are lost with mortises at the breaks. The lower part of the body is in long skirt tied with a belt around the waist, which is ornamented with a ring in the middle; below the ring are two long ribbons hanging downward, to which two chain-shaped ornaments are linked and separately turning to the rear via the outer sides of the legs. He is standing barefoot on the thick tenon (Figure 29).

4. The sculptures of the Sui and Tang Dynasties (581-907 CE).

The sample H1:1164 is a statue of meditating Prince Siddharta sponsored by Zhang Ze 张泽 in the seventh year of Daye Era (611 CE). It is carved out of white marble and the remaining height is 45.5cm. The main figure is Prince Siddharta seated with right leg rested on the left knee in a meditating posture. On the back screen are two bodhi trees carved in bas-relief flanking him. On the obverse of the square base is the inscription with date: "in the seventh year of Daye Era...Zhang Ze, the disciple of Buddha, respectfully makes this statue of meditating Prince for my deceased wife, whose name is Shuang 双...[大业七年...佛弟子张泽为亡妻双敬造白玉石太子思



Figure 29 Standing Bodhisattva statue H1:2050.

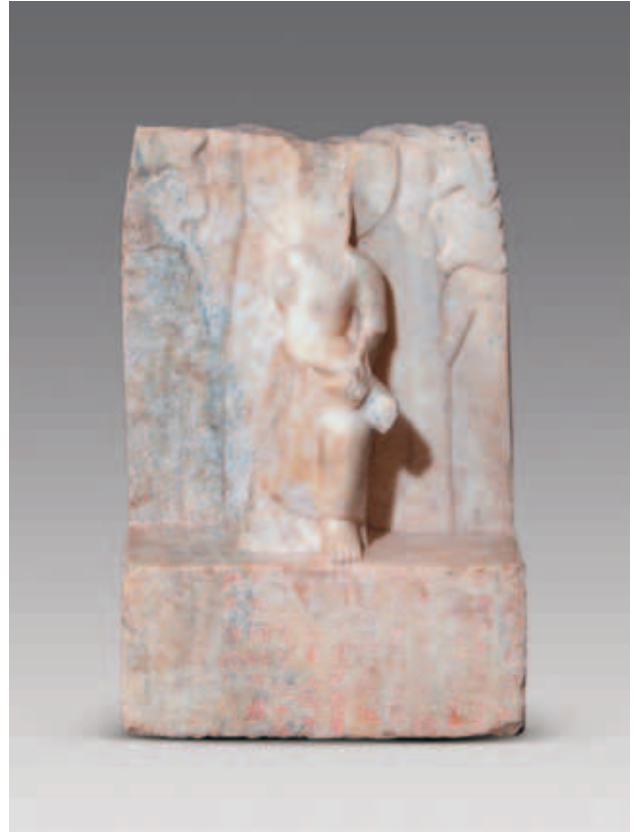


Figure 30 The statue of meditating Prince Siddharta (Sakyamuni Buddha before enlightenment) H1:1164 (611 CE).

维像一躯……]” The square base is 30 cm long on the obverse bottom and 13cm high (Figure 30).

The sample assembled by fragments H1:1478 and H1:1797 is a freestanding Maitreya statue carved out of white marble. The Maitreya is seated on a high square *sumeru* seat with the legs pendent and his feet are rested on small lotus flowers which are jointed together with stalks; his left hand is rested on the left knee and his right hand is lost (originally would be bending in front of his chest). The full height of this statue is 60cm (Figure 31).

The sample H1:2493 is an Amitabha triad shrine sponsored by Zhang Hongliang in the second year of Shangyuan Era (675 CE). It is carved out of bluestone. The main figure is seated in full lotus pose on the lotus flower-shaped throne and the two attendant bodhisattvas flanking him are standing on lotus flower-shaped pedestals, and the stalks of the pedestals and that of the main figure's throne are jointed together. Below the shrine is the inscription with date: “in the second year of Shangyuan Era…Zhang Hongliang, the disciple [of Buddha]…respectfully makes this Amitabha Buddha statue… [上元二年……弟子张弘亮……敬造阿弥陀像一铺……].” The width of the shrine on the obverse bottom is 23.6cm and the height is 30.2cm (Figures 32 and 33).



Figure 31 Maitreya statue H1:1478 and H1:1797.

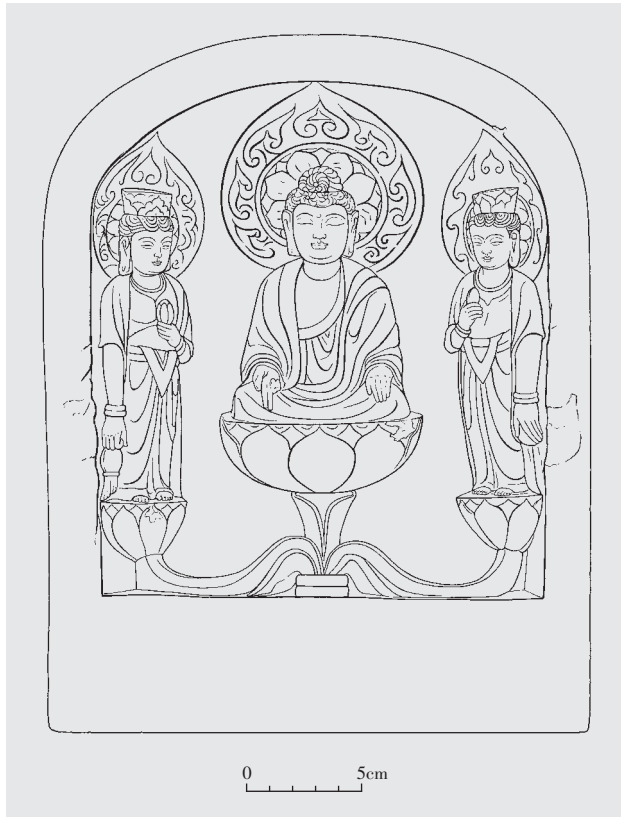


Figure 32 Amitabha Buddha statue H1:2493 (675 CE).



Figure 33 Amitabha Buddha statue H1:2493 (675 CE)

Conclusion

The excavation of the Bei Wuzhuang Buddhist sculpture hoard is one of the most important discoveries of Chinese Buddhist Archaeology in recent years; the Buddhist sculptures unearthed in this excavation have significant academic, artistic and historic values to the archaeology of the Ye City and the Buddhism of China.

1. The preliminary trimming showed that most of the unearthed sculptures are the works of the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi Dynasties, and some of them are that of the Northern Wei, Northern Zhou, Sui and Tang Dynasties. Referred to the stratigraphic relationship and the chronological features of the sculptures, the *terminus ante quem* of this hoard is the Tang Dynasty.

2. The hoard has clear stratigraphic relationship and chronological features, both of which provided important clues for the researches on the capital planning system applied to the Ye City of the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi Dynasties, the scope of the outer city and the evolution of the layout of the east outer city of the Ye City, the “dharma disasters (the repression movements against Buddhism under the imperial edicts)” and the burial institution of the Buddhist sculptures in ancient China.

3. The hoard is the one yielding the most Buddhist sculptures found since the founding of the People’s Republic, and the unearthed Buddhist sculptures are

in diversified types. These sculptures are made in superb techniques, exquisite shapes and rich motifs. Most sculptures have color-painted and gold-plated traces preserved. All of these fully demonstrated Ye City’s historic position as the centers of Buddhism, culture and art in the Central Plains and northern China during the late Northern Dynasties Period. The dates of these Buddhist sculptures included the Northern Wei through Tang Dynasties, the exact date inscriptions of all of which are seen; their dates are closely successive without wide gaps, and therefore they provided reliable standard samples for the researches on the types and motifs of the Buddhist sculptures in the Ye City area from the late Northern Dynasties Period to the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

Postscript

Some samples of this hoard have been presented in the previous issue of our journal (see *Chinese Archaeology* 13: 140–4). The original report published in *Kaogu* 考古 (Archaeology) 2013. 7: 49–68 with 38 illustrations was authored by Yanshi Zhu 朱岩石, Liqun He 何利群, Lihua Shen 沈丽华 and Jiqiao Guo 郭济桥. This abridged version is prepared by Yanshi Zhu and Lihua Shen and Translated into English by Xiaolei Ding 丁晓雷.