

TIANSHU ZHU

## The Influence from Khotan: The Standing Buddha Images in Kucha

Kucha, which is located in today's Xinjiang Province, China, was once the most important Buddhist centre on the northern route of the Silk Road. Buddhist art that survives in this region is known by two very different styles of two phases in terms of the subject matter and style of the wall paintings. One is the indigenous Kucha style, which was replaced by the Chinese/Uighur style. However, in between these two successive styles, standing Buddha figures used to be popular for a short period of time. This feature is often overlooked in the study of Buddhist art along the Silk Road. More intriguingly, the inspiration for this subject derives from Khotan, the Buddhist and cultural centre on the southern route of the Silk Road, on the other side of the Takla-Makan Desert in the Tarim Basin. The ancient Silk Road is known today mainly for its facilitation of culture exchange between the East and West; whereas so little is known about the exchanges between the regional centres, which for certain must have been active. The study of the standing Buddha figures in Kucha not only reveals an important aspect of Buddhist art, but also a facet of the interaction between the northern route and southern route in Central Asia.

### STANDING BUDDHA IMAGES IN THE CHRONOLOGY OF KUCHA BUDDHIST ART

About ten Buddhist cave sites are found in Kucha, with Kizil of 335 caves and Kumtura of 114 caves as the largest and also the best studied sites (Map 1). Kizil was active from the fifth to seventh centuries, and after its decline beginning in the eighth century, Kumtura flourished under the Chinese and Uighur occupations (Wu Zhuo 吳焯 2000: 183–208). The two sites represent the two styles of Buddhist

paintings at Kucha respectively. Other cave sites are usually much smaller. Cave paintings from those small cave sites are comparable to those at Kizil, and largely belong to the traditional Kucha phase.

In the traditional Kucha phase, paintings are mainly decorated in the central pillar caves in a highly repetitive manner—narrative scenes with Śākyamuni sitting in the middle of an assembly are painted on the side walls of the main hall, *jātaka* and *avadāna* stories framed within diamond-shaped mountain peaks are decorated on the ceiling vault of the main hall, and the *parinirvāṇa* and related scenes cover walls behind the central pillar in the back of the corridor. Overall, the Buddha images in this phase are usually shown seated on a platform. Shown in the extant trace, most of the main niches on the central pillar were enshrined with a seated Buddha image, which unfortunately have not survived to the present day. The Chinese/Uighur phase is distinguished by images of multiple Buddhas, bodhisattvas and paradise-like scenes, which are comparable to those contemporary Dunhuang paintings in the Chinese tradition. They are often painted in the square caves. Paintings in the traditional phase often feature a green and blue colour scheme, and the vibrant blue colour is believed to be the result of imported mineral pigments from the Near East. As the trading route was blocked by the Turks, the Buddhist cave paintings after the seventh century in the Tarim Basin and Turfan were dominated by earthen red colours from pigments easily obtained from local resources.

In the period between these two phases, seated Buddhas amidst narrative scenes on the side wall were once replaced by life-sized standing Buddhas before the Chinese/Uighur style became fully entrenched. The standing Buddha subject is so distinct that it has be-

come the benchmark in the chronologies of the caves in the study on Kizil site. Su Bai first recognized the importance of this subject in his study of the Kizil Caves—the standing Buddha as the main subject on the wall is one of the characteristics that define the last phase at Kizil (Su Bai 宿白 1989: 10–23).

Following Su Bai's study, Chinese archaeologists, who may vary in detail regarding the particular dates of individual caves, have a consensus on the standing Buddha figures in the chronology of the site.<sup>1</sup> In short, paintings of the standing Buddha were known at Kucha since the early time, but only as a minor subject in the side corridors, as in Kizil Cave 4 (Fig. 1), 17, 27, 47, 48, 98, 104, 163, 176, 192, 219, and 224 (Map 2). At a later time in the history of Kizil, this subject became the main theme on the walls, and then was followed by the sloppy thousand-Buddha subject, clearly a sign of the decline of the site.

As seen in Kizil Cave 63 (sculpture), 100, 123, 154 (sculpture), and 176, the standing Buddha figures can extend to the back corridor, replacing the painting of *parinirvāṇa*. This subject also appears in

<sup>1</sup> In his study of central-pillar caves from India to China, Li Chongfeng 李崇峰 incorporated the datable inscriptions from Cave 69 and 205 and the history of Kucha in addition to typology studies and C<sup>14</sup> tests. He classified central-pillar caves at Kizil into four phases:

Phase I:	end third – mid fourth centuries	Caves 13, 7, 38, and 32
Phase II:	mid fourth – end fifth centuries	Caves 172, 171, 4, 98, 17, 114, 87, 91, 80, 155, 101, 34, 219, 196, 104, and 195
Phase III:	end fifth – mid seventh centuries	Caves 58, 63, 175, 99, 193, 192, 179, 178, 205, 224, 198, 159, 206, 207, 100, 163, 160, 123, 199, 69, and Now Cave 1
Phase IV:	mid seventh – late eighth centuries	Caves 176, 97, 126, 43, 186, 184, 8, 197, 180, 27, 227, 107A, 107B, 201, 181, and 23

The standing Buddha images emerged in his Phase III, which ended in 647, the year when the Chinese arrived. Giuseppe Vignato conducted a full archaeological survey that includes all the cave types except meditation caves. In his 2004 dissertation, he classified the Kizil caves into four phases, by including a group of newly discovered caves dated to the third century:

Phase I:	the third century
Phase II:	the fourth century and the early fifth century
Phase III:	the fifth and sixth centuries
Phase IV:	the seventh and eighth centuries

According to Vignato, the standing Buddha images were a new subject that came to be popular during the last phase after 530. However, Phase IV consists of 43 central-pillar caves, more than two thirds of the total of the 60 central-pillar caves at the site. This phase spans two centuries and includes both the flourishing and declining periods of the Kizil site. His study does not provide a close date for the emanated Buddha images.

the back chamber of the colossal caves: 47, and 48. Most notably, as shown in Kizil Cave 43, 01 (sculpture), 69 (sculpture), and 123, it appears in the main hall replacing the panels of the Buddhist assemblies. In addition, the standing Buddha also became a new subject for the main niche of seven caves: Kizil Cave 27, 155, 193, 197, 201, 160, and 227.<sup>2</sup> Besides central pillar caves, it also makes an appearance in a number of square caves as well in the late phase: Kizil Caves 33, 76, 81, 183, 185, and 188 (Fig. 2). Standing Buddha figures as the main subject of the painting on the side wall also emerge at other Buddhist sites: Mazhabaha Cave 12, Taitai'er Cave 16, Kumtura Cave 9 and A'ai Cave (Map 1). The former three are central-pillar caves; and the last one is a square cave. In the latter two caves, the standing bodhisattvas are also placed beside the standing Buddha figures and the paintings are clearly in the Chinese/Uighur standing Buddha style that is a cross between the two. Most of them appear in the central-pillar caves in the style of the traditional Kucha phase; whereas paintings in a few caves, such as Kizil Cave 188, Kumtura Cave 9, and A'ai Cave, feature the Chinese/Uighur style.

The shift from a seated Buddha to a standing Buddha in side wall paintings is not simply about a change in the figure's posture. It is a shift from representing the historical Buddha in a narrative to the transcendent Buddha in abstract space. The depictions in the traditional Kucha phase show Buddhist assemblies of specific events that took place during the Buddha's lifetime. As shown in Fig. 3, a view including the side wall, ceiling painting and the main niche on the central pillar of Kizil Cave 8, the Buddha figures on the side wall and the ceiling are all depicted sitting on a rectangular plate form. On the side wall, he is surrounded by his disciples, lay devotees and gods in an earthly setting. The surrounding secondary figures are only slightly smaller than the Buddha. In contrast, whether in the early phase when the standing Buddha was only depicted in the corridor (Fig. 1, Kizil Cave 4) or in the late phase when the standing Buddha figures occupied the entire walls in a square cave (Fig. 2, Kizil Cave 188), most of the standing Buddha figures appear in non-narrative settings with several new elements.

First, the Buddha stands on a cosmic lotus flower, against an empty space in the background, in contrast to placing the Buddha sitting on a rectangular platform in a relatively natural setting in the earlier depictions. Showing in both Figs. 1 and 2, the Buddha steps each foot on one lotus flower.

Second, the attendants of the standing Buddha images are reduced in number and size. These attending figures, usually at the

<sup>2</sup> Su Bai 1989: 18; Vignato 2004: 15.

four corners, perform simple acts of worship, such as making offerings or performing *añjalimudrā*. The emphasis of the subject matter then shifts from recalling a specific event in the Buddha's life, to venerating the Buddha. Kizil Cave 4 is a typical central-pillar cave of the traditional phase. Two standing Buddhas are painted in each of the side corridors. A blue colour scheme is evident in the painting. The attendant figures are also standing, coming up to the upper arm of the Buddha. Kizil Cave 188 is a square cave of the late phase of the site. The painting is predominantly in the earthen red colour. Large standing Buddha figures are lined up on all side walls. Attending figures are only shown in the upper and lower corners between two Buddhas. They appear much smaller than the Buddha.

Third, images of local Kuchean devotees in Central Asian costume begin to appear, making offerings to the Buddha. Incorporating contemporary figures enhances the expression of devotion to a transcendent Buddha. Taitai'er Cave 16 is a central-pillar cave with fifteen standing Buddhas painted on all side walls, from the entrance and the main hall to the corridors around the central pillar at the back (Fig. 4). Attending figures are depicted on the lower corner between two Buddhas and sometimes a seated Buddha in a meditation posture (*dhyānamudrā*) painted in the upper corner. Shown in the following table, eleven of these attending figures in the lower corner have survived, and eight of them are lay devotees in Kuchean-style costume. Fig. 5 shows the painting on the right-hand wall (standing Buddha no. 10 in the table) of the rear corridor. The male devotee is shown standing and is smaller than the attending figures in Kizil Cave 188 and even smaller than that in Kizil Cave 4.

Main Buddha	Lower corner	Upper corner
No. 1	?	
No. 2	?	
No. 3	? (damaged)	
No. 4	2 Kuchean devotees	
No. 5	1 seated Buddha in a <i>stūpa</i>	1 seated Buddha in <i>dhyānamudrā</i>
No. 6	1 devotee	
No. 7	1 <i>stūpa</i> with a meditation Buddha seated inside	
No. 8	Buddha's right: 1 <i>stūpa</i> with a meditation Buddha seated inside Buddha's left: 1 male Kuchean devotee, holding an incense burner	1 seated Buddha in <i>dhyānamudrā</i>
No. 9	1 male Kuchean devotee	
No. 10	1 male Kuchean devotee	

No. 11	1 male Kuchean devotee holding an incense burner	1 seated Buddha in <i>dhyānamudrā</i>
No. 12	Buddha's right: 1 male Kuchean devotee Buddha's left: 1 <i>stūpa</i> with a seated Buddha inside in <i>abhayamudrā</i>	1 seated Buddha in <i>dhyānamudrā</i>
No. 13	1 <i>stūpa</i> with a meditation Buddha seated inside	1 seated Buddha in <i>dhyānamudrā</i>
No. 14	1 male Kuchean devotee holding an incense burner	
No. 15	? (damaged)	

Table 1: The small images between the standing Buddhas in Taitai'er Cave 16 (For the location of each number of the Buddhas, see the diagram in Fig. 4.)

Only in a few caves, namely Kizil Caves 69, 123, and 189, are the standing Buddha figures depicted with narratives, the theme on the side wall in the main hall of the central-pillar caves of the traditional phase. In Kizil Cave 69, the side walls of the main hall and corridors are decorated with a row of life-size standing Buddhas, of which the two at the entrance to the corridors are narratives. The one on the left wall (Fig. 6) depicts Megha offering flowers to Dīpaṃkara Buddha, and the one on the right is unidentified. In Kizil Cave 123, standing Buddha figures cover the front walls, side walls of the main hall and the corridors. The two paintings on the side walls of the main hall are narrative, the subjects of which have not been carefully studied. The Kizil Cave 189 is an exceptional case. It is a square cave but covered with paintings from wall to wall like a central pillar cave and in the red colour scheme. The two paintings flanking the window on the side wall are narratives with a standing Buddha in the centre.<sup>3</sup> In Kizil Cave 69 and 123, non-narrative and narrative type depictions of the standing Buddha appear in the same cave. Therefore there is no absolute chronological difference between the two. Overall these are all unusual examples of the typical iconographic plan of Kizil caves. The standing Buddha figures appeared in Kizil largely as the transcendent type of Buddha.

The rise and fall of the Kizil and the Kumtura sites were tied up with the history of Kucha. Beginning in the seventh century, the Tibetans and the western Türks (Tuqishi 突騎施) mounted a vigorous resistance to Tang rule (618–907) in the Tarim Basin. The Tibetans came through Khotan. The Türks spilled through the passes of Tianshan. They moved via the Muzart River to invade Kucha. Being located along the mountain cliff on the side of the Muzart River, the Kizil site became the strategic western gateway of the capital of Kucha.

<sup>3</sup> Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuan hui 1989–1997 III: figs. 63, 64, 75, and 77.

Much archaeological evidence at Kizil suggests that Kizil may have been under military occupation by the eighth century. These wars attacking Kucha may have been a direct reason for the decline of the Kizil site (Wu Zhuo 2000: 183–208). Today, the ruins of a sentry station/tower built during the Tang period are still extant atop the highest peak at the valley mouth at Kizil.<sup>4</sup> A broken stele, commemorating a Chinese battle victory over the Tibetans in 715 was found at Kizil in the early eighteenth century (Chao Huashan 2003: 38, 39). Kizil was far from any densely populated area. Such a stele would not have been set up there unless the location was of military significance. Several fragments of Chinese military documents, datable to 724, were found in Kizil Caves 18 and 105 (monk's residential caves) (Huang Wenbi 1957: 36, 37). A number of tourist inscriptions from the early to late eighth century, written by Chinese visitors, can be found on the walls of some of the Kizil caves.<sup>5</sup> Actually, when the Chinese were defeated and withdrew from the Tarim Basin, they did not gain firm control of the area until the end of the seventh century. Shortly after Emperor Gaozong (628–683) began his reign (in 650), the Tibetans invaded Kucha and were not defeated until 658 (Liu Xu 劉煦 1975: 189 [5304]). Then the Tibetans occupied Kucha again for as long as 22 years, from 670 to 693.<sup>6</sup> Based on all the above evidence, it is reasonable to believe that the Kizil site declined since the second half of the seventh century or at least by the early eighth century. Caves dating to after the eighth century mainly appear at the Kumtura site.

The two datable caves with standing Buddha figures as the major theme of the side wall painting are Kizil Cave 69 and A'ai Cave. In Kizil Cave 69, the painting of the first sermon, which is depicted on the lunette above the entrance, includes images of a king and queen of Kucha. A line of Brāhmī script is written in Tocharian in the

king's halo, claiming that the cave temple was constructed for the deceased King Suvarṇapuṣpa (Jinhua Wang 金花王) by his son. King Suvarṇapuṣpa ruled Kucha during the first quarter of the seventh century and all his three sons died in 647. Kizil Cave 69 can therefore be dated to 625–647 (Pinault 1987: 84–85).

As mentioned above, the side walls of Kizil Cave 69 are decorated with standing Buddhas. In the main hall, the holes and marks of paint on the walls suggest that originally there were four life-sized standing sculptures placed on a low platform on each side. The background painting shows flowers, gems, Vajrapāṇi and devotees dressed in the local Central Asian costume. Vajrapāṇi is usually depicted as attending to the Buddha. Therefore the sculptures are probably Buddhas, not bodhisattvas or other types of figures. The rear wall is adorned with the reclining Buddha. The border of the halo and the aura of the reclining Buddha image are decorated with a row of flying geese holding a wreath in their beaks (Fig. 6). Kizil Cave 123 and 47 can be further dated to the same time as Kizil Cave 69 with its flying geese motif.

The flying geese holding a wreath is a very distinctive Sasanian motif that was absorbed into Chinese decorative art. Decorative patterns are usually significant for dating. Sasanian motifs were also used in textiles. In Xinjiang, Sasanian motifs also appeared on silks from the seventh century, which re-confirms the seventh-century date of the cave (Wu Min 武敏 1962: 64–75). The same pattern of “flying geese holding a wreath” is found in two other caves at Kizil as well, all of which have standing Buddha images: Kizil Caves 47 and 123 (Fig. 8).<sup>7</sup> In both Cave 69 and 47, the subject appears in conjunction with the reclining Buddha image.

The iconographic plan of central-pillar caves of the traditional Kucha phase features the narratives of the Buddha's assembly on the side walls and the reclining Buddha on the back wall. In the development of decoration of central-pillar caves, Cave 69, 47<sup>8</sup> and 123 exemplify the new standing Buddha scheme, but still with the traditional element of the reclining Buddha at the back. Furthermore, Cave 47 is a colossal Buddha-image cave, and the quality of paintings in these three caves represents the best of Kizil paintings. The

<sup>4</sup> Chao Huashan 晁華山 2003: 39, n. 1; Wu Zhuo 2000: 207. Huang Wenbi 黃文弼 (1990: 348) dates it to the Qing Dynasty.

<sup>5</sup> In Kizil Cave 105, which is a residential cave, there is a visitor's poem in Chinese inscribed on the wall that is dated to 726. The two inscriptions in Caves 220 and 222 (square caves) are dated to 754. One inscription in Cave 220 is dated to 766–779. The one in Cave 222 is dated to 794. Chao Huashan 2003: 39–42.

<sup>6</sup> Three caves at Kizil, Caves 93, 95 and 131, are extensively inscribed with images of goats, horses, camels, birds and human figures on the wall. Su Bai points out that they resemble the cliff carvings throughout western Tibet and the Jiayuguan area in Gansu province in both style and subject matter and therefore attributes them to Tibetan painting of the ninth century. Wu Zhuo discovered some unidentifiable writing in Cave 131, which looks like an archaic form of Tibetan writing. He suggests that these traces could be dated to the Tibetan occupation in the late seventh century, which would thus be the date of the site's decline. Su Bai 1980: 31; Wu Zhuo 1986: 55–62.

<sup>7</sup> The motif of the “flying geese holding the wreath” can also be found at Tumshuk (Toumchouq), another Buddhist site on the Northern Route. See Ham-bis 1961–1964: 26, pl. XVII.

<sup>8</sup> In Kizil Cave 47, a colossal image cave, the standing Buddha images are depicted in the right-hand side corridor and on the side and back walls of the central pillar. In the open space in the front, which would be equivalent to the main hall of a standard central-pillar cave, two rows of standing Buddha statues probably originally stood along the side walls.

quality of these cave paintings indicates that these caves were built when the site was still flourishing. Presumably, the date of these caves, 625–647, is the time when the standing Buddha image began to become the major subject on the side wall.

A'ai Cave, in its very different style, represents a very late phase of the standing Buddha subject in Kucha. It is a medium-sized square cave, with the western paradise of Amitāyus/Amitābha on the back wall, a thousand-Buddha subject on the ceiling vault and a row of standing Buddhas and bodhisattvas on the two side walls. Fig. 10 shows the extant images on the left wall, on which Vairocana Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, and Bhaiṣajyaguru and Mañjuśrī can be identified by the inscriptions beside them. The painting on the other side wall is basically symmetrical, but more damaged. Seventeen pieces of dedicative inscriptions are found in the cave. These inscriptions were written in Chinese, not Brahmi as in the traditional Kucha phase. In one inscription, the donor bears a title of *xingguan* 行官, a low rank officer in the Chinese bureaucratic system. Therefore the cave can be dated to the eighth century when the area was under the control of Chinese (Peng Jie 彭傑 2001: 76). The subject matter in the cave also reflects the Mahāyāna beliefs commonly seen in Chinese Buddhism.

To discuss the date of the few early examples of the standing Buddha depicted only in the corridor, which is basically the date of the early caves in Kizil, it is unavoidable to touch on the controversy of the date of the Kizil caves. Alfred Grünwedel and A. von Le Coq first studied and dated the different painting styles in Xinjiang. Alfred Grünwedel classified various paintings, including those in Kucha.<sup>9</sup> Based upon palaeographic study, the Turkestan-Brāhmī script and a few inscriptions found in the caves, Le Coq and Waldschmidt attributed the blue-collared paintings in central-pillar cave to the seventh

century.<sup>10</sup> Most western scholars adhere to this dating with slight variations.<sup>11</sup>

The problem with this dating becomes evident when the Kizil paintings are compared to those in the Dunhuang caves. Dunhuang is another renowned Buddhist cave site in China and its chronology and date are more certain. Some stylistic features of the Northern Liang (421–439 CE) caves of the early fifth century at Dunhuang resemble and are probably even indebted to those from Kizil. The Kizil caves should therefore be dated earlier. Alexander Soper and Benjamin Rowland have pointed out this problem. Based on stylistic analysis, they concluded that the Kizil caves can be dated earlier, to the late fourth to sixth centuries.<sup>12</sup>

With better access to the caves and more systematic typology studies, Chinese archaeologists conducted further detailed studies on the chronology and dating of the Kizil caves.<sup>13</sup> Among them, Su Bai's theory has become the most influential. Based on a typological analysis of the structure and painting of the caves, with reference to C<sup>14</sup> testing, Su Bai established a three-phase chronology starting from the fourth century.<sup>14</sup> Angela Howard introduced Su Bai's theory to the western language world in combination with Soper and Rowland's approaches (Howard 1991: 68–83). With the references of C<sup>14</sup> test results, and the fifth-century paintings at Dunhuang of the similar style, I agree with Howard that the early paintings of Kizil central-pillar caves can be dated to the fourth and fifth century.

To sum up, the standing Buddha subject appeared in Kucha as early as the fourth and fifth centuries as a minor subject occasionally appearing only in the corridor. In the second quarter of the seventh

<sup>9</sup> Albert Grünwedel first classifies paintings from Xinjiang into five styles, two of which can be found at Kizil. Style I, which is found in a few square caves (76, 77, 83, 84, 92, 149A, 167, 207, and 212), usually features dark cinnabar backgrounds. It is believed to be derived from the Gandhāra style. Style II, which includes the majority of the paintings, is characterized by strong blue and green colors and appears primarily in the central-pillar caves (4, 7, 8, 17, 38, 58, 63, 67, 80, 114, 123, 193, 198, 205, 206, 219, and 224). This style has been associated with the Sasanian tradition. He dates the Kizil caves from the mid-fourth to eighth centuries. See Grünwedel 1912: 5–6, 42–43; Grünwedel 1920, vol. 1: 17, 32. Le Coq accepts Grünwedel's stylistic analysis but dates the early phase to the six and seventh centuries and the late phase to the first half of the eighth century. See Le Coq 1923–1933, vol. 3: 21–23; vol. 7: 27–29. It is still questionable whether the two styles developed simultaneously or sequentially. See Kumagai 1962: 114. Now more scholars tend to believe Styles I and II may be co-existent not consecutive. Rhie 1999–2002, vol. 2: 706.

<sup>10</sup> Le Coq and Waldschmidt attributed Grünwedel's Style I to the sixth century and Style II to the seventh century:

Style I:	ca. 500 C.E.	
Style II:	500–600 C.E.	(Kizil Caves 67, 198, 199, 110, and 129)
	600–650 C.E.	(Kizil Caves 114, 38, 205, 224, 7, 206, 8, 219, 3, 4, 63, 58, 178, 175, and 181)
	650~ C.E.	(Kizil Caves 123, 186, and 184)

(Grünwedel 1912: 5–6, 42–43; Le Coq 1923–1933: 27–29).

<sup>11</sup> For reviews of the chronology and dating of the Kizil caves, see Nagai 1977: 39–49; Howard 1991: 68–83.

<sup>12</sup> Soper 1958: 131–164; Rowland 1964–65: 258; Rowland 1974: 154.

<sup>13</sup> For other studies, see Chang Shuhong 常書鴻 1996: 67–117; Yan Wenru 閻文儒 1962: 41–47; Huo Xuchu 霍旭初 and Wang Jianlin 王建林 1993: 201–228.

<sup>14</sup> Phase I: 310 ± 80 – 350 ± 60 C.E.  
 Phase II: 395 ± 65 – 465 ± 65 C.E.  
 Phase III: 545 ± 75 – 685 ± 65 C.E.  
 (Su Bai 1989: 10–23). For a review of the problems of this dating, see Lesbre 2001: 346–348.



century, this subject began to flourish and could be used as the only subject on the side walls. As evident in A'ai Cave, this short-lived trend lasted until the eighth century.

#### CONNECTION WITH KHOTAN

In the world of Buddhist art during the fifth to eighth centuries, which places on temple walls did people decorate with rows of life-sized standing Buddha/bodhisattva figures? Such a fashion is only found in Khotan, not in central China, Turfan or India. Walls inside a temple or surrounding a *stūpa* are commonly covered by large standing Buddhas either as paintings or sculptures. Occasionally, standing bodhisattva figures may also appear, such as at the Rawak site. Fig. 9 shows the side-wall painting in a very small temple (Temple I) recently discovered at Damago, Qira County, in Khotan.<sup>15</sup> As is typical in Buddhist temple sites in Khotan, the upper part of the wall has not survived. The large standing Buddha figures are basically unidentifiable as to their specific identities. This is similar to the thousand Buddha images, another very popular subject in Khotan Buddhist art. They are generally understood as a representation of the infinite Buddhas in the cosmic space in the Mahāyāna belief. In Damago Temple I, a small bodhisattva figure was painted in the space between two standing Buddhas. This composition is very close to the paintings in Kucha as seen in Figs. 1 and 2. On other sides of the walls in this temple, the space between two standing Buddhas can also be filled with a thousand-Buddha figure. This manner of decoration can be found in Kucha in Taitai'er Cave 16 (Table 1 and Fig. 5). The resemblance between the Kucha and Khotan representations of the standing Buddhas is evident.

Although blocked by the Takla-Makan Desert, Kucha and Khotan are connected with a route along with the Khotan River cutting through the desert. A connection between the two areas has always existed. When Xuanzang (646–648 CE) passed by Khotan, he recorded the presence of a Kucha Buddha statue in Khotan in his *Da Tang xiyuji* (*The Buddhist Record of the Western World*; Xuanzang 玄奘 1911: 943c). And recently scholars have identified some similarities in the styles of Buddha and bodhisattva images from the two areas (Yim 2001: 37–46). So why in particular during the seventh and eighth century did the connection seem to become strong? Kucha and Khotan are located on the northern route and southern route of the Silk Road respectively. The two are independent of each other.

The connection between the two in the past has something to do with the travel route and the establishment of Chinese control over the area during the Tang dynasty.

The southern route flourished and was the preferred route before the climate change which began in the first century CE. As result of the increasingly dry and hot weather, rivers flowing from the Kunlun Mountains did not run so far into the desert. Several cities along the southern route on the side of these rivers, such as Karadong and Niya, were abandoned by the end of the third century.<sup>16</sup> The Tarim and Kongque rivers, which supply the water for Lop Nor lake, changed course in the early fourth century, so Lop Nor “moved” with them. Loulan, which relied on Lop Nor, was abandoned entirely during the fourth to the early fifth century. From this time on, the main east-west travel route was shifted to the north, namely to Kucha and Aqsu (de la Vaissière 2004: 112; Millward 2007: 26–27). Faxian (399–413) was a renowned Chinese monk who went on a pilgrimage to India and passed by the Tarim basin in the time when this shift had just occurred. His route is quite revealing—he first chose the northern route passing by Kucha, then crossed the Takla-Makan Desert from Aqsu to arrive at Khotan. From Khotan to further west, he took the southern route.

Kucha and Khotan, as well as other small kingdoms in the Tarim Basin, were independent city states but constantly under the control/influence of the big empires in the neighbourhood, Kushan, Xiongnu, Han China (ca. 60 BCE–8 CE, 127–150 CE), Ruanruan (ca. 350–450), Hephthalities (ca. 450–560), Tang China (ca. 640–790), Kök Türks (Ch. Tujue) and Tibet (Millward 2007: 15). When the nomad empires extended into the Tarim Basin, they only collected tax, without much interference with these cities in the area. For various reasons, it was only the Chinese government that established a unified administrative system to manage the various city states, which were originally less connected. Overall in the dynastic periods, China was able to keep effective control in Xinjiang only for a limited time, mainly during the Han (206 BCE–220 CE), Tang (618–907) and Qing Dynasties (1644–1911). In the Han Dynasty, in order to defeat Xiongnu, Chinese extended into the Turfan and Hami areas and the southern route (e.g. Shanshan, and Khotan) (Millward 2007: 17–39). It was not until the Tang period that Chinese gained control of the whole Tarim Basin. And it is during the Tang occupation, the seventh and eighth centuries, which was exactly the period when the standing Buddha subject became popular in Kucha, that the connection between Kucha and Khotan was strengthened.

<sup>15</sup> Zhongguo Shehui Kexue yuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Xinjiang dui 中國社會科學院考古所新疆隊 2007: 489–525.

<sup>16</sup> Mutsumi 1975: 85–113; Issared 2003: 68; Zhong Wei 鐘巍 *et al.* 2001: 1–6.

The seventh and eighth centuries witnessed three major powers fighting over the control of the Central Asia area, Kōk Türks (split into Eastern Türks and Western Türks), Tang China and Tibet. By 630, the Tang had defeated the Eastern Türks. In the 630s the Tang conquered the oasis city-states in Turfan and Tarim Basin. Khotan, Kashgar and Yarkand in Tarim submitted themselves to the rule of the Tang; whereas Gaochang in Turfan and Kucha were bloodily subdued in the 640s by military forces.

To control the so-called Western Region (Ch. Xiyu), the Chinese established the Anxi (Pacified West) Protectorate-general (Anxi Duhufu 安西都護府) in Gaochang in 640. In order to better confront the Western Türks, the seat of the government (Anxi Duhufu) was moved to Kucha when Chinese conquered Kucha in 648 (Liu Xu 劉洵 1975, vol. 4: 78). Four major cities, Kucha, Karashahr, Kashgar and Khotan, comprised the so called "Four Garrisons of the Anxi Protectorate-General." About 30,000 Chinese soldiers were sent to Anxi from central China. However, after the Tang defeated the Western Türks, the Tibetans began to extend into this area, from the 660s threatening Tang authority. In 670, the Tibetans took over the Four Garrisons of the Anxi Protectorate-General. Not until 693 did the Tang defeat the Tibetans, re-enter the Tarim and consolidate the seat of the Anxi Protectorate-General at Kucha. And finally, by the end of the eighth century (790) the Tibetans had completely driven the Chinese out of the Tarim Basin. Because of the constant threat from the Western Türks and Tibetans, as well as frequent warfare with them, the seat of the government and other cities in the Tarim Basin became rather important for securing the safety of the road between Kucha and passing on military information quickly. During this period of Tang control, military fortresses of different levels were built along the major routes between the Four Garrisons, including the connection between Kucha and Khotan.

The major road to cross the Taka-Makan Desert is the route along the Khotan river from Khotan to Aqsu (called Bohuan during the Tang), about 400km (or a thousand *li*). With a modern highway, today it takes one-day's drive by car to cross the desert; however, in the past it used to be a fifteen-day journey by horse. Recorded in the *Xin Tang shu* (1060) and the *Taiping huanyuji* 太平寰宇記 (976~983), the Tang established two fortress cities, Kun'gang 昆崗 and Sanyi 三義, on the Aqsu side, and four fortresses on the Khotan side: Shenshan 神山, Suiyang 睢陽, Xianbo 鹹泊 and Shushu 疏樹 (Zhang Ping 張平 2010: 264–300). Below the level of garrison (Ch. Junzhen 軍鎮), the Tang multi-level military defensive system consisted of Shouzhuo 守捉, Cheng 城, Shu 戍, and Bao 堡 according to the size of the fort and the numbers of the soldiers in it. The two on the Aqsu side belonged

to the upper three levels, and the four on the Khotan side were at the level of Bao.

Chinese archaeologists have conducted complete surveys of the Chinese military fortresses in the Tarim Basin. Map 3 shows the Tang military fortress sites around Kucha confirmed by archaeologists. Between Aqsu and Khotan, Chinese archaeologists found the ancient city of Aqsu, two walled cities near Aqsu called Boshilike Gucheng 伯什力克古城 and Duolang Gucheng 多浪古城 in present terminology, and one fortress in the heart of desert called Mazhatage 麻紮塔格. It is difficult to determine whether the former two are Kun'gang and Sanyi as documented in the *Taiping huanyuji*. The latter has been proved to be the Shenshan (Sacred Mountain) Bao of the Tang. In the system of the Tang dynasty, below the level of the military fortresses, there were also stations and checkpoints called Fu 鋪 ("shop"), Guan 館 ("hotel"), or Guan 關 ("gate") to guard the road between Khotan and the seat of Anxi Duhufu in Kucha. Based on careful study of the manuscripts excavated in Khotan, scholars also found four sub-divisions called Guan, literally meaning hotel or station, affiliated to the Shenshan Bao. They are Caoze Guan, Xinheng Guan, Mouchang Guan and Shenshan Guan (Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 1992: 56–64).

Boshilike Gucheng and Duolang Gucheng, located at 40°42'57"N and 80°26'11"E, and at 40°27'20"N and 80°50'22"E respectively, are both about 100 m x 100 m square. The city wall is 4–6 m thick at the bottom (Zhang Ping 張平 2010: 264–300). Located at 38°30'N and 80°45'E, ruins of the fortress, called Mazhatage 麻紮塔格, still stand above the ground to the present day. The name Mazhatage (which literally means Tomb Mountain) comes from a mountain right in the central area of the desert. Because of its strategic location, Mazhatage is the natural hub of the route. About 1800 km north of Khotan, a fortress was built on the mountain, right by the side of the Khotan River. The fortress occupies an area of total of 1,160 m<sup>2</sup>. Numerous small objects which can be dated back to the Tang dynasty have been found here, including Chinese, Khotan, and Tibetan manuscripts. To the north of the fortress, there was a small Buddhist temple. 50 meters to the west of the fortress a 10-meter-high military watchtower was built to guard the route (Hou Chan 侯燦 1987: 63–75).

The effectiveness of the strengthened connection between Khotan and Kucha can also be traced from the Chinese military manuscripts found in Kucha. One manuscript from the Subashi site recorded the presence of Khotan soldiers in Kucha. The other manuscript from the Kizil Cave site recorded that the army at Kucha once withdrew materials from the Khotan base (Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 1992: 61). The con-

nection between Kucha and Khotan was no doubt enhanced during this period. This could be one of the reasons why Khotan elements became popular at Kucha in the seventh century.

\* \* \* \* \*

Compared to the Buddhist assemblies, which were the traditional subject matter of the paintings on side walls, a row of standing Buddhas is much simpler. In a way, such a less-demanding way to decorate the side wall of a Buddhist cave is suitable for common people to commission a Buddhist cave at a lower cost. This could be one of the reasons why this subject was chosen for cave temple decoration in some of the cases. For example, A'ai Cave was patronized collectively by a community of people, most of whom had no official titles.

In Khotan, the life-sized standing figures on the side wall often have no attending figures; whereas in Kucha, it is common to have attending figures at the four corners. Such preference at Kucha can be considered as a local characteristic that is related to the Kucha tradition of Buddhist paintings. With four attendants at the four corners, the depiction of the standing Buddha appears to be a simplification of the Buddhist assemblies, in which Buddha is always surrounded with many figures filling up the space almost in a manner of horror vacui.

It is well known that Mahāyāna Buddhism predominated in Khotan and Sarvāstivāda (a school of mainstream Buddhism) predominated in Kucha. This is the ultimate reason why the subjects of Buddhist art and the way they represent the Buddha are fundamentally different in the two areas. However, a sitting or standing posture itself has no direct *yanic* affiliation. In Kucha the standing posture was also applied to a few narrative depictions of the life of the Buddha as mentioned above; and only in A'ai Cave and Kumtura Cave 9 is the standing pose depicted with Buddhas and bodhisattvas exclusive to Mahāyāna Buddhism. Therefore, depicting a row of standing Buddhas on the side wall was likely accepted in Kucha mainly as another subject detached from its ideological implications in Khotan.

The interactions along the ancient trade road are organic and complex. The main theme of the East and West interactions are accompanied by mutual influences between local regions. And for the mode of transmission, a cultural phenomenon did not just naturally diffuse from one centre to other places in the ten directions. The transmission is often facilitated and interrupted by complicated situations in a history which is punctuated by important events. In the history of the Silk Road, the connection between Khotan and Kucha was enhanced during the period when the Tarim Basin was under the

control of a unified government of Anxi Duhufu. The presence of the standing Buddha images surviving in Kucha gives concrete form to this intricate aspect of history.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

- Xuanzang 玄奘 [602–664]. 1911. *Da Tang Xiyuji* 大唐西域記. *Taishō* 51: 2087. Kyoto.
- Liu Xu 劉詢 [887–946] *et al.* 1975. *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

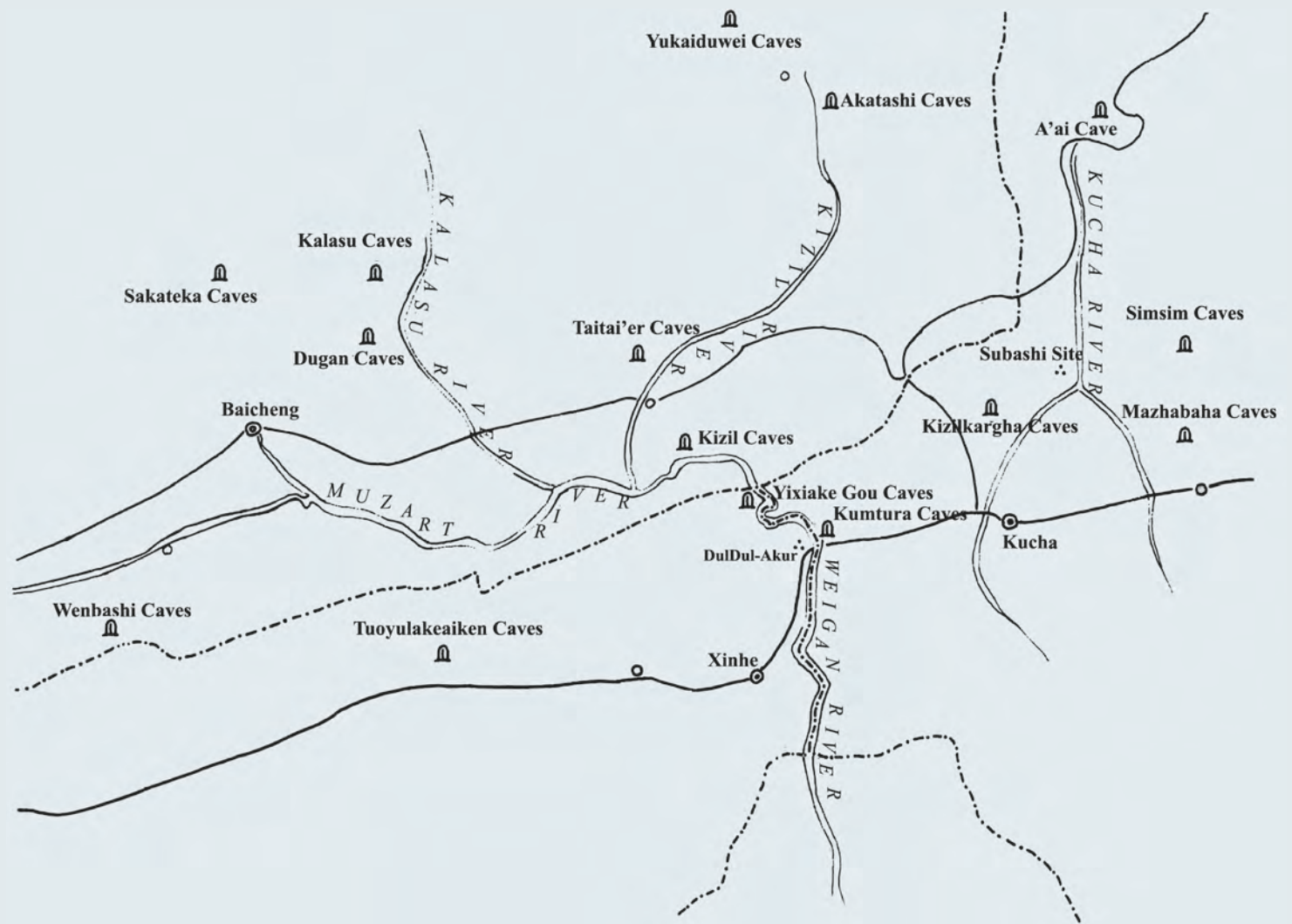
### Secondary Sources

- CHANG SHUHONG 常書鴻. 1996. *Xinjiang shiku yishu* 新疆石窟藝術. Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe.
- CHAO HUASHAN 晁華山. 2003. Kizil shiku de dongku fenlei yu shiku siyuan de zucheng 克孜爾石窟的洞窟分類與石窟寺院的組成. (M.A. thesis, Beijing University, 1984), vol. 84 of *Zhongguo fojiao xueshu lundian* 中國佛教學術論典. Gaoxiong: Foguang chubanshe, 2003: 1–55.
- GRÜNWEDEL, Albert. 1912. *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch Turkestan*. Berlin: Georg Reimer.
- . 1920. *Alt-Kutscha*, 2 vols. Berlin: Elsner.
- HAMBIS, Louis, HALLADE, Madeleine and Madeleine PAUL-DAVID. 1961–1964. *Toumchouq (Mission Paul Pelliot, Documents archéologiques)*, 2 vols. Paris: Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve.
- HOU CHAN 侯燦. 1987. Mazhatage gusubao ji qi zai sichou zhilu shang de zhongyao weizhi 麻筍塔格古戍堡及其在絲綢之路上的重要位置. In: *Wenwu*, 3: 63–75.
- HOWARD, Angela. 1991. In support of a new chronology for the Kizil mural paintings. In: *Archives of Asian Art*, 46(1991): 68–83.
- HUANG WENBI. 1990. *Mengxin kaocha riji* 蒙新考古日記. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe.
- HUANG WENBI 黃文弼. 1957. *Tarim pendu kaogu lun* 塔里木盆地考古論. Beijing: Kexue chubanshe.
- HUO XUCHU 霍旭初 and WANG JIANLIN 王建林. 1993. Danqing banbo qianqiu zhangguan: Kizil shiku bihua yishu fenqi gaishu 丹青斑駁千秋壯觀:克孜爾石窟壁畫藝術分期概述. In: *Qiuci fojiao wenhua lunji* 龜茲佛教文化論集. Urumchi: Xinjiang meishu shuying chubanshe, 201–228.
- ISSARED, Arie S. 2003. *Climate Changes during the Holocene and Their Impact on Hydrological Systems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- KUMAGAI, Nobuo 熊谷宣夫. 1962. Seiki no bijutsu 西域の美術 (The art of Chinese Turkestan). In: *Seiki bunka kenkyū*, 5(1962): 31–170.
- LE COQ, Albert von and Ernst WALDSCHMIDT. 1923–1933. *Buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien*, 7 vols. Berlin: Reimer.



- LESBRE, Emmanuelle. 2001. An attempt to identify and classify scenes with a Central Buddha depicted on ceilings of the Kizil caves. In: *Artibus Asiae* 61(2001): 346–348.
- LI LI 李麗. 2000. Small and medium-sized caves in the Kucha Region of Xinjiang 新疆龜茲地區中小型石窟調查. In: Wu Hong 巫鴻 (ed.) *Between Han and Tang—Religious Art and Archaeology in a Transformative Period* 漢唐之間的宗教藝術與考古. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 163–182.
- MILLWARD, James. 2007. *Eurasian Crossroads—A History of Xinjiang*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- MUTSUMI, Hoyanagi. 1975. Natural changes of the region along the Old Silk Road in the Tarim Basin in historical times. In: *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* (The Oriental Library), 33: 85–113.
- NAGAI, Evelyn Naruye. 1977. *Iconographic Innovations in Kuchean Buddhist Art*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
- PENG JIE 彭傑. 2001. Xinjiang Kuche xin faxian de Lushena fo zhouyi 新疆庫車新發現的廬舍那佛譚議. In: *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan*, 2(2001): 73–77.
- PINAULT, Georges J. 1987. Épigraphie Koutchéenne. In: Chao Huashan et al. (eds) *Sites divers de la région de Koutcha: épigraphie Koutchéenne*. Paris: Collège de France, Instituts d'Asie, Centre de recherche sur l'Asie Centrale et la Haute Asie, 60–196.
- RHIE, Marilyn. 1999–2002. *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia*. Leiden: Brill.
- RONG XINJIANG 榮新江. 1992. Yutianzai tangchao Anxi sizhen zhong de diwei 於闐在唐朝安息四鎮中的地位. In: *Xiyuyanjiu*, 3(1992): 56–64.
- ROWLAND, Benjamin. 1964–65. Art along the Silk Roads: a reappraisal of Central Asian art. In: *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 25: 248–264.
- . 1974. *The Art of Central Asia*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- SHENG CHUNSHOU 盛春壽. 2001. *Ershi shiji mo de xin faxian – A'ishiku 20* 世紀末的新發現-阿艾石窟. Ulumuqi: Xinjiang meishu sheying chubanshe.
- SOPER, Alexander C. 1958. Northern Liang and Northern Wei in Gansu. In: *Artibus Asiae*, 21: 131–164.
- SU BAI. 1989. Kizil bufen dongku jieduan huafen yu niandai deng wenti de chubu tansuo 克孜爾部分洞窟階段化分與年代等問題的初步探討. In: *Zhongguo shiku—Kizil shiku I* 中國石窟—克孜爾石窟 I. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe: 10–23.
- SU BAI 宿白. 1980. Diaocha Xinjiang fojiao yiji yingyu zhuyi de jige wenti 調查新疆佛教遺跡應予注意的幾個問題. In: *Xinjiang shixue*, 1: 29–33.
- DE LA VAISSIÈRE, Étienne. 2004. *Histoire des marchands Sogdiens* (Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, vol. 32). Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises.
- VIGNATO, Giuseppe. 2004. *Kizil dongku zuhe diaocha yu yanjiu—dui Qiuci fojiao de xin tansuo* 克孜爾洞窟組合調查與研究—對龜茲佛教的新探索 [An Archaeological Study of Groups of Caves in Kizil: A New Perspective of Buddhism in Kucha]. Ph.D. Dissertation, Beijing University.
- WU MIN 武敏. 1962. Xijiang chutu Ha-Tang sizhipin chutan 新疆出土漢-唐絲織品初探. In: *Wenwu*, 7–8: 64–75.
- WU ZHUO. 2000. On the rise and decline of the Kizil caves and the Weigan River Valley Transportation Route. 克孜爾石窟廢興與渭幹河谷道交通. In: Wu Hong 巫鴻 (ed.) *Between Han and Tang—Religious Art and Archaeology in a Transformative Period* 漢唐之間的宗教藝術與考古. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe: 183–208.
- WU ZHUO 吳焯. 1986. Kizil shiku kehua tuhua de neirong, zhuzhe he shidai 克孜爾石窟刻劃圖畫的內容,作者和時代. In: *Wenwu*, 10: 55–62.
- XINJIANG QIUCI SHIKU YANJIUSUO 新疆龜茲石窟研究所. 2000. *Kizil shiku neirong zonglu* 克孜爾石窟內容總錄. Urumchi: Xinjiang meishu sheying chubanshe.
- XINJIANG WEIWU'ER ZIZHIQU WENWU GUANLI WEIYUAN HUI et al. (eds). 1989–1997. *Zhongguo shiku—Kizil shiku*, 3 vols. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe.
- YAN WENRU. 閻文儒. 1962. Xinjiang Tianshan yinan de shiku 新疆天山以南的石窟. In: *Wenwu*, 7–8: 41–47.
- YIM, Young-ae. 2001. Central Asian Buddhist sculptures: a reconsideration of the interchange between the northern and southern Silk Road. In: *Oriental Art*, 1: 37–46.
- ZHANG PING 張平. 2010. Tangdai Qiuci fengshu shouzhuo yizhi kaoshi 唐代龜茲烽戍守捉遺址考實. In: Zhang Ping *Qiuci wenming—Qiuci shidi kaogu yanjiu* 龜茲文明—龜茲史地考古研究. Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 264–300.
- ZHONG WEI 鐘巍, SHU QIANG 舒強 and XIONG HEIGANG 熊黑鋼. 2001. Tali-mu pendi nanyuan Niya pomian de baofen zuhe ji qi dui lishi shiqi huanjing yanhua de fanying 塔里木盆地南緣尼雅剖面的孢粉組合及其對歷史時期環境演化的反應 [Sporo-pollen assemblage of a section from Niya, on the southern margin of the Tarim Basin, and what it reflects regarding environmental change in the historical period]. In: Xiong Heigang (ed.) *Xinjiang ziyuan huanjing yu kechixu fazhan* 新疆資源環境可持續發展 [Resources Environment and Sustainable Development in Xinjiang]. Urumchi: Xinjiang daxue chubanshe.
- ZHONGGUO SHEHUI KEXUE YUAN KAOGU YANJIUSUO XINJIANG DUI 中國社會科學院考古所新疆隊. 2007. Xinjiang Hetian diqu Celixian Damago fosi yizhi fajue baogao 新疆和田地區策勒縣達瑪溝佛寺遺址發掘報告. In: *Kaogu xuebao*, 4: 489–525.





**Map 1:** Buddhist cave sites in Kucha  
(drawing: Tianshu Zhu).



**Map 2:** Buddhist caves at Kizil site  
(after Xinjiang Qiuci shiku yanjiusuo 2000, title page).



**Map 3:** Military fortress sites in Tarim Basin  
(adapted from Zhang Ping 2010: 266, fig. 20-1).



Fig. 1: Kizil Cave 4, the left side of the corridor  
(after Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuan  
hui 1989–1997, vol. I: fig. 11).







Fig. 2: Kizil Cave 188, the back wall  
(after Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuan hui 1989–1997, vol. III: fig. 56).

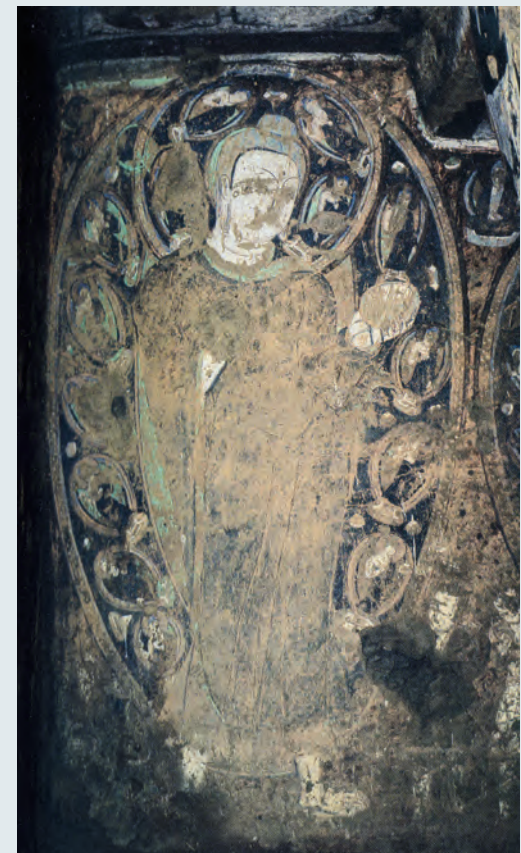
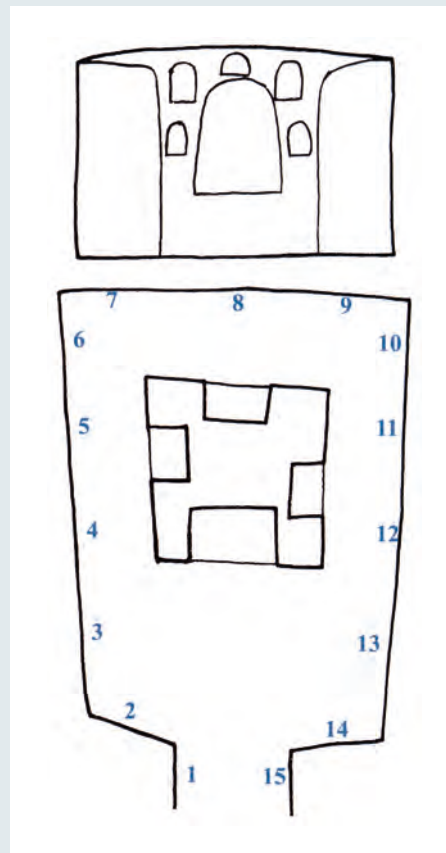


Fig. 3: Kizil Cave 8 (after Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuan hui 1989–1997, vol. I: fig. 16).



**Fig. 4:** Ground plan and elevation of Taitai'er Cave 16 (adapted from Li Li 李麗 2000: 176, fig. 20).

**Fig. 5:** Standing Buddha with Kuchean devotee. Right wall of back corridor, Taitai'er Cave 16, Xinjiang, China; seventh century; wall painting (after Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuan hui 1989–1997, vol. I: fig. 176).



**Fig. 6:** Dipamkara and Sumegha. Wall painting (ca. 625–647), Kizil Cave 69, Xinjiang, China (after Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuan hui 1989–1997, vol. II: fig. 3).

**Fig. 7:** Flying geese hlding wreath. Wall painting (ca. 625–647), Kizil Cave 69, back wall of back corridor, Xinjiang, China (after Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuan hui 1989–1997, vol. II: fig. 174).







Fig. 8: Standing Buddha in the corridor. Wall painting, seventh century, Kizil Cave 123, Xinjiang, China (after Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuan hui 1989–1997, vol. II: fig. 158).

Fig. 9: Right wall of Damago Temple 1 (detail). Wall painting, sixth-seventh centuries, Qira County, Khotan, China (after Zhongguo Shehui Kexue yuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Xinjiang dui 2007: plate 4, no. 4).



Fig. 10: Overview of the left wall. Wall painting, eighth century, A'ai Cave, Xinjiang, China (after Sheng Chunshou 盛春壽 2001: 22).



