

New Directions in 20th Century Buddhist Studies in China: Dunhuang's Mogaoku as Case Study

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Introduction

Beginning at the end of the 19th century and ending in the third decade of the twentieth century, foreign archaeological explorers mounted a number of independent and more or less systematic explorations of northwestern China, including Tibet, Xinjiang and Gansu Province. These included expeditions from Sweden, Great Britain, Germany, Russia, Japan, France and the United States. Although the territories covered were ostensibly under the control of the Qing, and later, Republican, governments, these expeditions (with the exception of a few of the later ones) were not under the control of Chinese authorities. Due to the lack of Chinese oversight, large amounts of archaeological materials were taken out of the country.

In the West, modern archaeological theory and methodology were at the time still in their early stages. International treaties protecting the cultural heritage of sovereign nations did not exist. The expeditions in the west of China were in fact unregulated grabs of anything of value by the explorers, who had little to fear from the Chinese government, at least at first.

Each of these expeditions possessed among their members varying degrees of expertise and competency in the archaeological arts (see Hopkirk 1980; Meyer 1999). Despite a deficiency in modern theoretical frameworks and techniques, most of these expeditions managed to discover, remove and bring back to their countries vast quantities of art and relics, the knowledge of which had long been forgotten or ignored by the local populace, in what Arthur Waley called an “archaeological free-for all” (1960: 237-239).

Despite the Qing resurgence of power in the northwest and the re-conquest of Xinjiang and suppression of local rebellions which were realized by the 1880s (Millward and Purdue 2004: 62), there was at the time little academic interest in the area by Chinese scholars. This was due to several factors, among them being the tenuous control over the region by the Qing government, the general breakdown of the imperial polity, disinterest in local Islamic culture, and traditional Confucian disdain for Buddhist writings and art. Traditional Chinese historiography and antiquarianism were stumbling

blocks to new approaches to the old sites and materials.

In contrast, the Western explorers and their sponsors were able to take advantage of the administrative and military weaknesses of the central and provincial governments to their own ends. Many of the foreign expeditions were sponsored by governmental offices seeking geographic and strategic knowledge of the region, while museums and other institutions were seeking to expand their collections, at the expense of weaker nations.

Despite the rigorous climate in this arid region, these explorers were able to make important discoveries and remove many of them from the country. Among the more important of these discoveries were Buddhist murals, paintings and writings; manuscripts in previously unknown scripts; textiles; and ceramic, wooden and metal artifacts. Many of these provided evidence for mercantile and cultural contacts along the ancient Silk Road.

In 1900, an ancient room sealed a thousand years previously was discovered at Mogaoku 莫高窟, a Buddhist cave site near Dunhuang, Gansu. The so-called "Library Cave" contained tens of thousands of manuscripts, paintings, banners, and other valuable articles, not all of them Buddhist in nature. The discovery, the news of which reached a few of the European travelers in the coming years, initiated a rush to acquire them, and eventually spawned a new discipline of study in China, Dunhuangology or Dunhuang Studies ("Dunhuang *xue*" 敦煌学). It is this discovery and accompanying body of material that I will refer to continuously in this paper, an examination of the evolution of Buddhist studies in China since the early 20th century.

In determining how discoveries influenced and changed early 20th century Chinese academic scholarship on Buddhism, an examination of traditional Chinese historiography and antiquarianism is in order. After summarizing Western exploration, I will examine the traditional Chinese views toward archaeology and antiquarianism, and how the archaeological incursions in western China influenced the direction and focus of these disciplines. Secondly, I will examine the how these outside influences may have helped shape a Chinese academic interest in Buddhist studies and related disciplines. Lastly, I wish to examine how both of the aforementioned were shaped by such philosophical influences as Confucianism, Hegelism and Marxism in the early years of the late Qing, the Republic and People's Republic of China, including the theoretical frameworks through which historians and archaeologists of the periods approached archaeological work, with specific reference to the Dunhuang Buddhist material.

It is my view that during this century-long period, Buddhism and Buddhist art was the victim of Chinese philosophical and political prejudices against religion in general and Buddhism in particular. Whether it was radical nationalism, traditional Confucianism or Marxist dialectic, Buddhist writings and art were subject to unfavorable ideological interpretations. In this paper I want to explore the nature of these interpretations.

Euro-American and Japanese archaeological incursions into West China

Interest in filling in the blank spaces on the map of Inner Asia began in earnest in Europe during the mid-nineteenth century, spurred by Great Britain's control of the Indian subcontinent and Tsarist expansion into Central Asia, an imperial rivalry popularly called "The Great Game" in Great Britain and "Tournament of Shadows" in Russia. Both empires competed for political influence and control of Central Asia, Tibet and western China (Xinjiang), the last two regions ruled tenuously by the Qing government. Explorations of the region were either explicitly or quasi-political, as were the travels, for example, of British officer Sir Francis Younghusband and Russian Colonel Nikolai Przhevalsky, both of whom wrote of their journeys (Younghusband 1994; Rayfield 1976). Other explorations, while ostensibly cultural in nature, were in fact geological and geographical data-gathering and map-making missions to the region. The data was provided to foreign governments, for example—in the instance of Stein—with the British government (Waley 1960: 237; Whitfield 2004: 84; Yang 1999: 26-27)

The discipline of field archaeology in the West was by the turn of the century beginning to crystallize into a more systematic and scientific discipline, in part as a reaction to the unsystematic and destructive excavations of Pompeii, Herculaneum, Mycenae, and Troy in the 18th and 19th centuries on the one hand, and a burgeoning interest about the ancient world through more methodical studies of antiquity on the other, which demanded that such exploration become more responsible, professional and scientific and which could provide answers to age-old questions about the origins of ancient civilizations. The purpose of much early archaeology was to verify history and test the veracity of historical documents and to help prove or disprove myths that had come down through antiquity. It also began to provide the Western academic world with ever new and exciting discoveries in China revealing a hitherto unknown and very early antiquity.

Traditional Chinese historiography

The writing of history in China has a long and illustrious past. Chinese historians were for the

most part Confucian in their philosophical persuasion. With that came a view of history as recordings that illustrated the moral successes or failures of the men and women of the past. As Arthur F. Wright puts it (Chang 1981: 156-157),

“[T]he successes and failures of the past provide sure guidance for one’s own time...The Confucian tradition, as it developed, perpetuated the injunction to study the past as a repository of relevant experience. A second justification for history...was that, whereas the Classics--the corpus of traditional wisdom-- provided the guiding principles, history provided the instances and the proofs of those principles in the affairs of men. To add to the historical record was to participate in the greater work the sages had begun, and to study history was to understand in clusters of concrete instances how men had fared when they lived in accord with or in defiance of the moral injunctions of the Classics.”

Chinese historiography is almost as old as Chinese civilization itself (K.C. Chang 1986: 5). It is also said to have itself a history apart from Chinese history. According to Yu Ying-shih, “Chinese historiography has two major characteristics: the first is that it has had a long history, and the second is that the historiographic tradition has its own continuous strain, not interrupted by political and social changes” (1976: 172). This historiographic view of the past laid down a thick foundation for historical writing ever since the tradition began.

Early historical writing in China is permeated with the linkage of disparate causes and effects, a notion first exemplified by Confucius in his editing of the *Chunqiu*, the annals of Confucius’ home state of Lu, in which there was an implicit connection made between heaven, earth and man and the moral and ethical examples provided by the entries. To these early historians the *Chunqiu* was “less a history book than a textbook of political ethics” (Wiethoff 1975: 19).

From this tradition arose the particular historical institution of *bao-bian* 褒贬, or ‘praise and blame’, the historian’s commentary on the actions of historical personages. This institution was an integral part of the work of Sima Tan and his son Sima Qian, the *Shi Ji* 史记 (*Records of the Historian*), China’s first comprehensive history, finished at the beginning of the first century B.C.E. This history, like others to come, became in essence a guidebook for posterity (Wiethoff 1975: 20).

After the Han (206 B.C.E.--C.E. 220), the writing of history became an instrument of the state. By the Tang (C.E. 618-906), that instrument was institutionalized with the setting up of a Historiographical Office (*shi guan* 史官) (Wiethoff 1975: 20). The ethical, edifying characteristic of the writing of Chinese history took a comprehensive shape in the work of two Song dynasty historical writers, Sima Guang (1018-1086) and Zhu Xi (1130-1200). Both Sima’s *Zizhi Tongjian*

(*Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*) and Zhu's *Tongjian Gangmu (Outlines and Details Based on the Comprehensive Mirror)* are unambiguously meant to be practical guides on the functionality of historiography and the ethical and moral guidelines it provides (Wiethoff 1975: 21).

The new historiography of China and the end of history

In the late 19th century however, Chinese scholars began to examine ancient Chinese history with a more critical eye. This critical approach gained much momentum following the May 4th Movement in 1919. The Movement encouraged a more skeptical approach to history and antiquity, and the infusion of Marxist and other Western philosophical thought not only provided substitute frameworks upon which to hang Chinese history, but also gave a new justification for campaigns of religious suppression in the 1920s and later during the Communist period.

Gu Jiegang [Ku Chieh-gang] (1893-1980), considered the first major “New Historian” of China, was influenced by the writings of the reformer Kang Youwei and of the scholar Zhang Taiyan (Schnieder 1971: 46-50). Though not the first to do so, Gu questioned the authenticity of Chinese history and utilized textual criticism to further his scholarship. He focused much of his study on the Warring States period and the development of Confucianism and other schools of thought. He was indirectly influenced by John Dewey's Pragmatism and Empiricism through his mentor Hu Shi, who had studied under Dewey (Schnieder 1971: 54-55). Although criticized by right and left for his pains, he nevertheless broke the ancient taboos with regard to the questioning the Confucian historical narrative, and is considered to be the starting point for “scientific” social history of China (Schnieder 1971: 251; Yang 1999: 31).

Gu and his students, says Falkenhausen (1993: 841),

“...the self-styled ‘Doubters of the old’ (*yigupai*), raised troubling questions about the authenticity of the transmitted classics. Building upon the ‘evidential scholarship’ (*kaozhengxue*) of the Qing dynasty, they emphasized the multi-layered nature of the ancient books, the vagaries of their transmission and the likelihood of contamination and forgery. These ‘New Historians’ discarded much of the early Chinese historiography as mythical, and they went so far as to call into question the historical existence of the earliest dynasties.”

It was at this point in the 1920s that archaeologists and modern archaeology came to the rescue of Chinese antiquity. Fieldwork at Anyang proved without a doubt that the Shang—considered by Gu as mythical—was a true historical dynasty.

Chinese reformers, even before the establishment of the Republic in 1912, sought out the new

ideas of Western thinkers. Hegel and Weber had profound and lasting influence on some of the more leftist thinkers, especially the concept of "the end of history", an idea which posits that a society or nation must make a break with past, and that "those in possession of the Truth of self-consciousness would make the perfect world" (Duara 1995: 93). The students of Hegel, including Karl Marx, sought to clarify Hegel's ideas and promoted the notion of an era of human freedom through the possession of a sense of self-consciousness. This idea of the end of history would manifest itself in China in both the May 4th Movement in 1919 and in the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76.

Marxist influence on Chinese historians came well before 1949, but with the establishment of the People's Republic, the study of Chinese history and archaeology changed direction. According to K.C. Chang, "[f]irst, Marxist historical materialism became the leading theoretical light guiding archaeological interpretation. Second archaeology became, bureaucratically, financially, and ideological, a state-directed enterprise" (Chang 1986: 18). The most important figure in early Chinese Marxist interpretation of Chinese history was Guo Moruo, who provided the first serious attempt to interpret that history on the model of Marxist model of social evolution. Guo "placed his emphasis on the forces and relationships of production, thereby offering a constructive contrast to the traditional emphasis on art, religion, and other aspects of ideology" (Chang 1986: 19).

What were the traditional roles of antiquarianism and archaeology in China?

Antiquarianism and archaeology in traditional China

Many scholars consider the function of archaeology to serve the purposes of history, and in that respect we can look at early archaeology and antiquarianism in China in that way. The two have close affiliations in the Chinese world of historical scholarship. In *Zhongguo kaoguxue shi* [A History of Chinese Archaeology], Wei Juxian points out the difference between the amateur antiquarian and the specialist or connoisseur. Those who practice *wan gu* 玩古 (literally "play [with] antiquity") are often called antiquarians (*gudong* 古董). They lack the time or expertise to pursue an academic knowledge of the objects but collect and catalog them. These people should be classed as antiquarians, says Wei. On the other hand, well-known collectors and museum curators who understand ancient objects and who are able to distinguish the spurious from the genuine should be classed as specialists in the field of antiquarianism. Those who were experts in the field of epigraphy who utilize artifacts or manuscripts for comparison, are the ones who truly practice the investigation of antiquity (*kaogu* 考古). Only those who undertake investigation, excavation, and classification can rightly be doing archaeology

(*kaoguxue* 考古学). Wei describes what he calls archaeology as being practiced more or less since the Eastern Zhou period (770-221 B.C.E.) (Wei: 1977: 6).

As has been stated, one of the function of archaeology has been to support historiography (and not only in China). In China two events have heralded the study of China's past, according to Kwang-chih Chang: the publication of *Kaogutu* 考古图 by Lu Dalin in 1092, which ushered in the age of Chinese antiquarianism, and the discovery of the first Stone Age sites in 1920, which in "China heralded the age of scientific archaeological discoveries" (Chang 1986: 50). Ever since the time of Lu Dalin, the pursuit of antiquity in order to understand the ages of the past have consumed the antiquarian. The study of inscriptions on metal and stone (*jinshixue* 金石学) became increasingly the focus of scholars of antiquity. Sixty-one scholars of the Song have been identified as antiquarians (Chang 1986: 8). We can thus see that the study of ancient objects is not new to China.

An interesting window on *jinshixue* is the remarkable description by the Song poet Li Qingzhao about her husband Zhao Defu (s. Mingcheng) and his consuming passion for collecting and cataloging such manuscripts, vessels and rubbings, a passion that in the end far outstripped her own. Li's epilogue to Zhao's work *Jinshilu* 金石录 (*Records on Metal and Stone*) was a memoir, a tribute to Zhao's monumental catalog of his collection, and in the end it included a warning about the dangers of too great an attachment to things, as most of the collection was scattered or destroyed during their move from Shandong in the north to Hangzhou, the new Song capital in the south, to escape the invading Jurchen (Li 1996).

Modern Chinese archaeologists had much difficulty setting modern archaeology apart from traditional Chinese antiquarianism. While the same term used by the Song antiquarians, *kaoguxue*—the investigation of the ancient—was applied to the modern discipline (Falkenhansen 1993: 842), it established a solid foundation for the modern discipline. (Yang 1999). The scholarly studies of Luo Zenyu (1866-1940) and Wang Guowei (1877-1927) contributed much to the early systematic archaeological studies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Yang 1999: 20). But as far as modern archaeological fieldwork in China is concerned, a Japanese—Torii Ryuzo—is believed to be the first trained archaeologist to work in China (Yang 1999: 26-27).

Influence of modern archaeology on Chinese historiography

It was only after China's disastrous encounters with the western powers in the mid-19th century

that Chinese scholars began to be influenced by and accept much of the western scientific and historiographical approaches to antiquity. It is notable that the fields of geology, paleontology and archaeology had the most profound impact on the study of antiquity in China through the work of the Geological Survey of China. Founded in 1916, the scientific work done by the Survey established once and for all the great age of human presence in East Asia, with the discovery of Paleolithic remains of Peking Man in Hebei province and Neolithic cultures at Yang-shao in Gansu province. In the late 19th century, Torii Ryuzo had already found Neolithic tools in northeast China (Yang 1999: 26). Among the most influential western scientists doing fieldwork in China were A. W. Grabau, J. G. Andersson, Davidson Black, J. F. Weidenreich, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. These scientists brought to bear a generation of modern disciplines on the antiquity of China.

The actions of a number of early 20th century western collectors and archaeologists such as Berthold Laufer, and later Johan Gunnar Andersson and Orvar Karlbeck, perhaps exerted an influence on many of the Chinese scholars of the period who had inhibitions about collecting tomb materials, up to this time a rather taboo activity. Very few Chinese collectors chose to catalog and display *mingqi* 明器, or tomb objects (Fontein & Wu 1973: 14, 16). Laufer, from the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago; Andersson, a Swedish archaeologist and a member of the Geological Survey of China; and Karlbeck, a voracious collector who was responsible for most of the Bronze Age material in Swedish museums; had no inhibitions about collecting tomb objects and even excavating tombs. The construction of the first railroad between Luoyang and Xi'an early in the century uncovered many tombs, and many of the objects therein were exposed. The tomb objects first interested Western railroad engineers who began to collect and send them off to Europe and America (Fontein & Wu 1973: 16). In turn, this foreign interest in Chinese antiquities led some of the contemporary Chinese scholars to overcome their reticence to collect such objects. The scholar Luo Zhenyu somewhat hesitatingly acquired his first tomb object in 1907.

Among the earliest Chinese scholars to employ new archaeological techniques in China was Li Chi, who earned his Ph.D. in anthropology from Harvard in 1923. Li's approach was nothing short of revolutionary in terms of producing archaeological evidence proving the historical existence of the early Bronze Age dynasties. He organized the excavation of early historic sites at Yinxu near Anyang in Hebei, for the first time proving the historicity of the Shang dynasty. The excavations were important because they brought together the new discipline of scientific archaeology and traditional historiography under one roof (Chang 1986: 17-18).

Archaeological exploration was interrupted by the Japanese invasion, but was continued by the Japanese, especially Torii, in occupied China. In western China, it was carried out by scholars and archaeologists who had fled the Japanese. It was resumed in the 1950s under the new Communist leadership. In China's northwest, archaeological investigation continued to be carried out by Huang Wenbi [Huang Wen-pi] and others.

Chinese historiographic emphasis on the written word

The importance placed on ancient inscriptions, as I have mentioned, has been central to archaeological studies in China, with the obvious exceptions of Paleolithic and Neolithic archaeology. In Chinese art circles, while visual arts such as painting are greatly appreciated, most well educated and cultured Chinese would consider calligraphy—the art of the written word—to be the quintessential Chinese visual form of fine art. In the West, while Chinese calligraphy is not completely ignored, it sits in the back of the bus when it comes to any genuine appreciation. This is, of course, due to its lack of aesthetic accessibility by Western audiences. Westerners have little understanding or grasp of Chinese calligraphy and there is no longer a parallel art form in the West (we lost our own appreciation of the calligraphic arts in the West long ago), nor can many Westerners read or write Chinese.

Prof. Wang Pei-yueh, the writer's teacher of seal engraving (*zhuan ke* 篆刻) during his academic residence in Taiwan in the 1970s and '80s, even went so far as to say that calligraphy in itself was not the highest form of fine art in Chinese culture. That position was reserved for the lapidary art of the engraved seal on soapstone, an accomplishment that was the work of a scholar who was calligrapher, epigrapher, and engraver—in other words, one who appreciates the written word in its myriad forms, who can express it through the brush, knows the history of the written character, and is able to express the essence of the written word on stone.

How did this emphasis on the written word come about? Mark Lewis has examined this question in great depth in his masterful work *Writing and Authority in Early China* (1999). He concludes that "Writing created a literary double of the actual world, and this invented world became the highest reality. This process was facilitated by the fact that early state administration drew many of its forms and practices, above all its uses of writing, from the religious sphere.... [F]rom its origins the Chinese bureaucratic state was tied to a parallel, imaginary world generated in texts" (1999: 363). In early historical accounts, "...writing originated with kings and kingship with writing, shifted to ministers who doubled as kings, and culminated in the figure of Confucius who without any attribute

of kingship acted as a ruler in the parallel realm of writing" (1999: 354).

Thus to Confucians as well as to many non-Confucians in pre-Qin times, the transmission of the past and the proliferation of edicts and laws were dependant upon writing. The word was the vehicle by which the empire was governed, upon which law and order rode, and through which the expression of didactic moral lessons were passed down. Throughout imperial history, from the time of Ying Zheng (reigned as First Emperor of Qin 221-211 B.C.E.), monumental imperial edicts were engraved on stone slabs and set up in various locations around the empire. Once Confucianism gained influence in the subsequent Han period, the orthodox Confucian canon was carved upon stelae and set up in the major centers of Confucian education, in the great Confucian temples. As late as the early 20th century, the written word was held so sacred that each town and city would have a special collector who would wander the streets collecting such inscribed paper for special disposal. The calligraphic art was considered the pinnacle of Chinese fine art, as it gave the calligrapher the ability to express his or her feelings and personality.

During the late imperial period, many Ming and Qing scholars concentrated much of their study on epigraphy and the inscriptions found on bronze vessels, stone, and ancient paper and silk manuscripts. This study went hand in hand with the interest in antiquarianism and the popularity of collecting ancient artifacts.

With the advent of modern archaeology in China in the 20th century, considering the long tradition and centrality of text-based knowledge of China's history, China's new archaeologists had to adjust the discipline to the Chinese environment. "They sought to lodge archaeology firmly within the contemporary historical discourses" (Falkenhansen 1993: 842). In addition, the influence of new archaeological and historiographical methodologies gave rise to a transition from pure connoisseurship of ancient writings in support of the calligraphic and sillographic arts, to one that approached ancient inscriptions as historical documents to be put to use as sources for reconstructing Chinese history, a discipline called paleography (*guwenzixue* 古文字学) (Falkenhansen 1993: 843).

From publications over the last century, we also see that in Dunhuang Studies the study of manuscripts and inscriptions holds a heavier weight than that of painting. While Cave 17 did indeed give up much Buddhist art in the form of painted scrolls and banners, what many Chinese scholars found more valuable were the writings that were discovered along with them. Among the many works of the word found in Cave 17 was the earliest printed book, a copy of the Diamond Sutra (dated 868), and now in the British Museum.

Chinese Historiography, Confucianism and Buddhism

Chinese historians have paid remarkable attention to a significant number of aspects of Chinese history, including chronological tables, politics, philosophy, mythology, society, biography and genealogy, economics, geography, wars and rebellions, and it is noteworthy that there are some aspects of China's history that have been incompletely described partly due to the historian's Confucian bias. This includes the study of Buddhism in China. There are few sympathetic discussions of Buddhism in the Chinese institutional histories. One of the few is a monograph found in the *Wei Shu* 魏书 (Wilkinson 1998: 593).

The objections of Confucian-based officialdom to Buddhism and the Buddhist church in China (as well as certain other religious traditions and practices) are well known. They are said to originate in the sayings of Confucius himself, when in the *Analects* he is said to have commented that the wise are those who "...by respect for the spirits keeps them at a distance" (Waley 1938: 120). Confucianism was a human- and society-based ethical system and, other than the emphasis on rituals and sacrifices to the Son of Heaven and sanctioned deities in the imperial cult and in the sacrifices given to the ancestors, Confucian scholars often possessed skepticism about religious matters.

The rivalries between Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist factions are well-documented, and Confucian polemics regarding Buddhism in particular are well-attested to. There is evidence to support the existence of anti-Buddhist sentiment occurring as early as the Three Kingdoms period (220-280) (Zurcher 1972: 52), and Confucian and Daoist anti-Buddhist activism led to four major suppressions of the religion by the court, the first during the Northern Wei dynasty in 444, the second under the Northern Zhou in 571, and the largest and most destructive in the late Tang dynasty in 845. The last major persecution was at the end of the Five Dynasties in 955 (Bonn-Muller 2008a; 2008b; Yang 1970: 122).

There was, according to de Groot (1910: 196-197),

"...[a]bundant reason...for the Confucians to despise and scorn Buddhism; to assail it without mercy, wherever found and under whatever conditions; to consider the use of any weapons justifiable, even those of exaggeration, satire, gall, and venom. Slander in particular often plays an important part in anti-buddhist writings, especially on the score of sexual immorality among the clergy. How, in truth, could a church fare differently at the hands of its sworn enemies, if it admits women into its pale, placing them in matters of salvation and the means thereto on a level with men, while at the same time preaching celibacy?"

De Groot's argument is somewhat exaggerated in itself, for the Confucians tended to be more

rational in their objections to Buddhism than the Daoists. (De Groot's work in itself is permeated with a rather blatant anti-Confucian and anti-Chinese religion bias).The Confucians argued that the Buddhist idea of karma was invalidated by the Chinese concept of the Mandate of Heaven; they also objected to it merely because it was foreign (Hucker 1975: 216).

Zurcher enumerates the four main anti-Buddhist ideological arguments during the 4th and 5th centuries made by the newly powered and literate gentry class, a social group "more than other social groups fettered by tradition, mentally confined within the narrow horizon of classical Chinese culture and ready to oppose...anything that seemed to threaten the time-honoured ideals and vested interests of their class." First, on political and economic grounds, the Church's activities were detrimental to governance and to the stability and prosperity of the state. Further, on utilitarian grounds, the monastic life produces no concrete results in the world, and so it is therefore useless and unproductive. Third, on nationalistic and cultural bases, Buddhism was a barbarian creed. The sages of the past did not know it, nor did they need it. And lastly, a moral argument that the "monastic life means an unnatural violation of the sacred canons of social behaviour; it is therefore asocial and highly immoral" (Zurcher 1972: 255).

Throughout its existence in China, Buddhism attempted to gain acceptance and to refute attacks by appearing to support Confucian rituals and ideology, in that it promoted the well-being of the state, and acts of filial piety and ancestor worship among the masses given in honor of parents and prayers for their salvation (Seckel 1968: 82).

In the north, Buddhist leaders felt that in order to survive at all Buddhism must make accommodation to the ruler by placing the Buddhist laity and clergy in a subservient position to the emperor, and identifying him, as was done during the Northern Wei, as a manifestation of the Tathagata (Ch'en 1954: 266). In the south, Buddhism proved less accommodating to the royal court, and there anti-Buddhist sentiment there was more propaganda than the persecution that occurred in the north (Ch'en 1952; 1954: 261-273).

The Northern Wei emperor, under the influence of Confucian and Daoist advisors, instigated the suppression for a number of the economic and ideological reasons cite above. First, they saw the clergy reject the moral authority of the three basic Confucian relationships: emperor-subject, father-son, and husband-wife; this was seditious, unfilial, and prevented the growth of families through marriage and childbirth. Second, the removal of males from the family to the monastery, from the field to the cloister, reduced agricultural production. Third, tax avoidance by families that placed some or all of

their property under the nominal ownership of temples and monasteries reduced governmental tax revenues (Ch'en 1968: 144). Lastly, Buddhist clergy even fomented rebellion, which was repeatedly suppressed by the court (Yang 1970: 122).

Wu Di of the Northern Zhou, a short-lived dynasty in the late 6th century, ordered the destruction of Buddhist temples and monasteries and the return of monks to their farms, ostensibly to return agricultural land to revenue-paying real estate, considered by the Confucians to be the economic basis of the state (Bonn-Muller 2008a, 2008b).

The polemics of some Tang thinkers outlined and reiterated specific objections which Confucians had about Buddhism. In the early 7th and 8th centuries, Confucian officials sought the banning of the Buddhist church. A bit later the court official and literary stylist Han Yu (786-824) made a famously strenuous objection to the emperor's reception of a bone relic of the Buddha, describing it as a barbarian religion ignorant of the Chinese world and devoid of the various Confucian virtues (Han 1960: 427-428). Han Yu, as described in his biography in the *Xin Tang Shu*, "...rejected the two schools of Taoism and Buddhism. In his destroying of confusion and restoring of orthodoxy, he equals Mencius in merit and doubles him in energy" (Fung 1952: 409). A commentator notes that, "[a]nti-foreignism of this sort, which had not previously been characteristic of Confucianism, became an important element in the Neo-Confucian revival later" (de Bary et al 1960: 427). In addition, the suspicion of religious activity in general as potentially seditious became prevalent in the later imperial period, and as such suppression was justified (Jones n.d.). However, this does not account for the fact that during the Tang a number of literati were Confucian in practice as court officials but Buddhist in their private lives. A good example of this phenomenon is the official-poet-painter and Buddhist Wang Wei.

The subsequent Tang suppression in the mid-9th century was even greater than those of the Northern Wei and Northern Zhou. The Tang Wu-zong emperor, under the influence of Daoist priests who agitated for the suppression of their rival religion, issued an edict in 845 that was still largely Confucian in character. Many of the same objections against Buddhism that were cited as reasons for persecution in the Northern Wei were reiterated, such as the loss of tax revenues due to exemptions given to Buddhist temple lands, wealth and labor (de Bary 1960: 435; Ch'en 1956).

Following the persecution of 845, which was in fact a policy against all foreign religions, Buddhism began a long decline in China, which only exacerbated the hostility of the Confucians toward the faith. It never again attained the power it held during its height during the Northern Wei,

Sui and Tang dynasties.

Nevertheless, the imperial court had uses for Buddhism. The Sui and Tang emperors used Buddhism to knit a divided China together after the lengthy period of disunity. The emperor was recognized as “mahadanapati” (great patron) of Buddhism, and indeed became such. At the same time, however, the emperors sought strict control of the religion. Monks were required to have official certificates, temples were given official charters and unauthorized temple building was forbidden (Wright 1970: 66-68; Hucker 1975: 218).

Despite these controls, Buddhism had a strong impact upon Song Confucianism, with the development of Neo-Confucianism under the philosopher Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi was strongly influenced by Chan (Zen) Buddhism, yet the intellectual and Confucian reaction against Buddhism begun by Han Yu in the Tang dynasty, and against Zhu Xi’s Buddhist leanings by contemporaries such as the Idealist Lu Jiuyuan, were factors in cementing the Confucian prejudice against Buddhism in later imperial times (Fung 1952: 577-578). Zhu Xi’s “Dao Xue” (“The study of the Way”, i.e., Neo-Confucianism, as it is called in the West) was a revival of Confucianism and a strong response to mainstream Buddhism’s popularity during the Song. Neo-Confucianism developed a comprehensive metaphysical system similar to the Buddhists’, and this drew many well-educated people away from Buddhism along with their donations. Buddhism itself by this time had devolved into a vulgarized form of the religion, with Daoist deities and alchemical and magical practices, along with popular Chinese gods and legendary figures mixed together with it (Seckel: 1968: 91-92). It became, in Arthur Wright’s words, “the victim of its own adaptability” (1970: 92). The opinion of the educated about Buddhism likewise declined as the religion degenerated into an eclectic mass of contradictory practices and beliefs. Buddhism became rather unpopular with the elite by the time of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

As already pointed out, however, Buddhism was patronized at various times by the imperial clan. David M. Farquhar has drawn attention to the sacred status of the Manchu rulers of Qing China (1644-1911), who were regarded as bodhisattvas by the Buddhist lamas, an identification the emperors surreptitiously promoted for political ends (Farquhar 1978). They, like emperors before them, sought to control religion by co-opting it. And they, like many prior rulers, ruled on Confucian principles while practicing Buddhism in their personal lives.

Confucian disinterest in Buddhist art and writings

The nature and purpose of Buddhist art in China might reveal clues about the Confucian

attitude toward Buddhism in general and Buddhist art in particular.

Buddhist iconic art has its origins in the religious art of Mathura and Gandhara in India. Figural Buddhist art is noteworthy for its relatively late start in India, for even though there was no real and apparant proscription on images of the Buddha, there was a strong tradition of aniconic art in which the Buddha was depicted not through images of his human form but through symbols that represented him, such as footprints, wheel, throne, umbrella, and deer. The fateful meeting of the Mahayanist Buddhist faith and the Greek artistic tradition of iconic portraiture in Hellenistic Gandhara probably in the first century C.E. led to the widespread depiction of the Buddha's image.

The image of Buddha was of a devotional purpose, and along with that image in the sacred grottoes of both India (Ajanta) and China (Kizil, Kumtura and Mogaoku) was the depiction of pedagogical *jataka* stories, fables of the lives of the historical and previous Buddhas, used to instruct the illiterate in the dharma. Within a few centuries following the introduction of Buddhism into China in the first century C.E., the dissemination of the Buddhist sutra "Lotus of the True Doctrine" (*Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*) led to the founding of the Tiantai 天台 school of Buddhism, which had a lasting impact on Buddhist art in China in the wealth of Buddhist art motifs (Seckel 1968: 86-87). In addition, there was the popularity of a particularly Chinese brand of Mahayana Buddhism deriving from the *Prajna* (Wisdom) texts in the fourth century, the Pure Land (Jing-tu 净土) sect, which focused on the Amitabha Buddha of the Western Paradise, and which promoted the practice of the repetition of the Buddha's name as a way of gaining spiritual merit (Fisher 1993: 106-107). By the beginning of the fifth century, there was an urgency in the sect for a concrete object of worship. Zurcher says, "Everywhere...we find the same stress on visual representation: the use of icons in meditation, visualization of Amitabha, his hymns to the "shadow of the Buddha", the *dharmakaya* (transcendent body) of the Buddha and that of the Bodhisattva..." (1972: 220).

Also influential was the Sanchi-Gandharan concept of the Thousand Buddhas as an expression of the infinite number of Buddhas, all manifestations of the One Absolute Buddha, each representing the Buddha of each of the myriad successive ages in the world. Dietrich Seckel notes that "[i]n many texts the Buddha himself is made to declare that the production and veneration of his image is meritorious act, which would bring its due reward. Eventually the point was reached where the real Buddha was thought to reside in his image; by the 'eye-opening' rite and by depositing sacred objects inside the image it was believed that the latter could acquire a numinous vitality and even a magical miracle-working power" (Seckel 1968: 172, 173). Gaulier and Jera-Bezard further write that "[w]ith

the Mahayana, the supernatural vision heralded in the Great Miracle of Sravasti [when the Buddha multiplied his presence in the form of little Buddhas seated on lotuses] culminates in the myriad Buddhas of the universe, which began to appear in the third and fourth centuries CE and were subsequently painted over and over on sanctuary walls and sculpted or modeled on temples and stupas" (1989: 344).

Thus the demand for concrete images and the idea of meritorious repetition translated very easily into the visual arts and led to the building of various "Thousand Buddha Caves" (chianfodong 千佛洞) in many parts of China, named for the myriad painted Buddha images adorning the walls.

In the grottoes of later date at Mogaoku near Dunhuang, the *jataka* stories so important in the earliest grottoes (for example, of Northern Wei date) gradually disappear, replaced by repeated and near identical Buddha icons on the walls and ceilings (almost as a kind of wall paper) (Whitfield & Ferrar 1990: 88; pl. 70, 71), large images of bodhisattvas, depictions of the Amitabha Buddha's Western Paradise, and ubiquitous registers of donors. Fraser argues that the use of pounces and stencils were derived from Tibetan sources (2004: 104-108).

As purely devotional images, Buddhist sculpture and paintings did not attract the attention of the Confucian literati. After the decline of Buddhism in the 9th century, fewer Buddhist works were commissioned by the gentry and aristocracy. By the mid-Qing in the 18th century, the grand art collection of the Manchu Qianlong emperor (now known as the Palace Museum collection), few Buddhist works of art collected as such. Such art "never had much attraction for Chinese collectors, and in any case was not considered sufficiently elegant in taste to have a place in the imperial collection." Such was still the opinion of the curators of the exhibition of the Palace Museum works in the 1960s. (Chinese Art Treasures 1961-1962: 17).

What was the Confucians' attitude toward art? Early on, painting was viewed (as was poetry of the *Shi Jing* or *Classic of Poetry*) as a didactic vehicle to illustrate moralizing texts (Cahill 1977: 15). Later, the traditional theory of painting held that beholding an image of a given object or scene should evoke in the person viewing it the "...thoughts and feelings akin to those that the actual object or scene..." would evoke (Cahill 1977: 89).

While this theory changed and matured after the 11th century with the appearance and popularity of unorthodox styles and techniques introduced by the amateur painters and calligraphers (Cahill 1977: 89), most Buddhist art became the work of craftsmen (albeit some very skilled

craftsmen), who produced myriad images for the Buddhist population on paper and silk, in wood, textiles, metal and ceramics and which were consumed by the ordinary public. Although art continued the didactic function in order to propagate the Buddhist religion and promote an upright living, it was now in the service of a foreign religion and “a tool for religious propaganda” (Cheng 1983: 4).

James Cahill (1977: 89-91) succinctly encapsulates the later Confucian literati ideals of art:

“The theory of painting held by these scholar-artists reflected their Confucian background. Poetry and music, and later calligraphy, had long been treated in Confucian writings as vehicles for embodying one’s personal thought and feeling, for conveying to others something of one’s very nature. In calligraphy, this was accomplished through abstract means, the expressiveness of line and form, interest and individuality of brushwork.... The quality of a painting, said the literati writers, reflects the personal quality of the artist; its expressive content derives from his mind, and has no necessary relationship to anything the artist or the viewer thinks or feels about the object represented.”

In this view, Buddhist art did not reflect the personal thoughts and feelings of the artist, but instead attempted to convey the qualities of the deity represented, and even embody the numinous quality of the deity. Thus it was an art which reflected an outmoded didactic theory of art, an art more illustrative of moral rectitude and spiritual doctrine. Buddhist art was also criticized by these literati for its lack of inventiveness. While Buddhist painting and sculpture did evolve to reflect new developments in contemporary secular art from the 4th to the 9th centuries, the importance of the transmittal of an “original” image of the Buddha and associated figures, was never far from the theory of Buddhist art, in which the transmission of the pattern of an image from what was considered to be an original portrait of Siddharta Gautama made during his life has guided the evolution of Buddhist art from its early years. Archaeological evidence that supports this and which also illustrates the craft-nature of much Buddhist painting by professional painters is seen in the usage of stencils and patterns that were used to draw the outlines for Buddha images of the murals in many of the grottoes at Mogaoku near Dunhuang (Whitfield & Ferrar 1990: 17, 88; pl. 70, 71; Fraser 2004: 104-108)).

The impact of the Dunhuang discoveries

An ignorance of Buddhist writings was endemic in classical Confucian education. The British explorer Aurel Stein’s Chinese secretary is a case in point. Jiang Siye (also known as Jiang Xiaoyuan) was hired by Stein to help read and evaluate the written documents the expedition would uncover. For his part, Jiang was unable to read Buddhist texts from the Mogao Grottoes that he and Stein were able to view, “having no training in classical Buddhist terminology” (Whitfield 2004: 67; Hopkirk 1980:

159). If such ignorance was a factor, indifference was also a force that led to some of the manuscripts from Cave 17 at Mogao Grottoes to be stolen or sold by the authorities sent to guard and collect them and subsequently scattered about. Following Stein and Pelliot's appropriation of many of the scrolls, imperial authorities ordered the remaining portion of the collection transferred to the capital. Susan Whitfield writes that "Stein did not realize it but, when the manuscripts reached the Ministry of Education in Beijing, some were stolen. The culprit was never identified but a famous bibliophile, Li Shengduo, had many Dunhuang manuscripts in his collection" (Whitfield 2004: 88).

To be fair, the imperial and provincial authorities who became aware of the discovery of the walled-up library were for their part busy with other matters, and the cost of transport to Lanzhou (Lanchou), according to Stein, was probably discouraging. The authorities finally ordered the cache to remain at the caves under the charge of the discoverer, Wang Yuanlu (Hopkirk 1980: 161-162). Still, the factors of ignorance of and indifference to Buddhist writings may well have contributed to the decision to leave them behind. It was not until well into the 20th century that Chinese scholars turned seriously to the material from the library cave.

The grottoes attracted certain Chinese scholars, such as the noted calligrapher Ye Changshuo (1849-1917), Rui Fang (1861-1911), Su Zipei, Lu Jilang, and others. Ye, who visited the caves during his explorations of Gansu between 1902 and 1904, was given scrolls and paintings by Abbot Wang, the self-appointed Daoist caretaker of the grottoes. Ye's diary provides some early information about the grottoes around the turn of the century. Some of the material was obtained by Wang Guowei and Lo Zhenyu, and some eventually ended up in the Freer Gallery of Art (Rong 2001: 53-56). These early collectors of material from the Library Cave showed that there was at least some early interest in the material.

Some of the earliest foreign visitors to Mogaoku were not in fact interested in art and antiquities. Before 1900, the Russian Przhevalsky, the Hungarian Lajos Loczy, and the Frenchman Charles Eudes Bonin, all of whom visited the caves, were interested only in gathering geographical data only, and the existence of the grottoes was not widely known (Rong 2001: 49). With the visits of Stein and Pelliot, the grottoes came to the attention foreign scholars. It is true that much of the haul from Cave 17 at Mogao Grottoes ended up in the hands of Western and Japanese explorers and their institutions.

It is acknowledged that Western scholars such as Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot, both of whom carried off large numbers of manuscripts from the cave were no match for Chinese scholars such as

Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei in their scholarship in their abilities to evaluate the manuscripts (Fontein & Wu 1973: 16). In addition to this weakness, according to Falkenhansen, despite their undeniable contributions to scholarship, the expeditions into Xinjiang by Western explorers before WW I "...can hardly be considered as archaeological fieldwork in a strict sense" (1993: 841).

The Republican suppression of religion: a transitional period

Duara (1995: 85ff) discusses the revolutionary period of the late Qing and early Republican attempts at controlling and suppressing popular religious activity. Some of the reasons for suppression presented above, including economic and nationalistic, were invoked to justify these campaigns, which were of varying success. In the first period, from 1900 to 1915, religious institutions were seen by political leaders as sources of revenue for the government. Yuan Shikai, the Qing general and first Republican president, as conservative as he seemed to be, possessed a zeal to eradicate "superstition". "Confucian distain toward some of the gods of popular culture," says Duara, "reinforced the commitment to destroy this realm" (1995: 97).

In the second, KMT phase of religious suppression (1927-1930), important Nationalist leaders were fundamentally anti-religious, and sought state control over revenues from religious properties. Religious authority and superstition were seen as "obstacle to progress". Radical Nationalists sought to destroy religion altogether, with a desired result of in an "end of history" scenario, after which "the nation would then display its artifacts and artistic products--which it would not permit foreigners to buy--in museums in the way that one does with products of a bygone era" (Duara 1995: 102). The KMT government and particularly the radicals within it were committed to modernity and the removal of such obstacles as religion to progress, but it was crippled by the contending pressures from the populace, organized clergy, and an assertive local party. It issued a directive in 1928, "Standards for Preserving and Abandoning Gods and Shrines", which in the end pleased no one and had little effect (Duara 1995: 108-109). "By the time of the New Life Movement of the mid-1930s,[the regime] succeeded in producing an elitist 'tradition' that incorporated Confucianism, organized religions, and perhaps, even the ideals of the campaign against superstition" (Duara 1995: 110).

With regard to the anti-religious campaigns, Buddhism bore the brunt. Even the scholar Hu Shih (Hu Shi) took part in much of the attack, blaming Buddhism for weakening the country and encouraging passivity (Duara 1995: 104). Reactions, however, occurred in response to local KMT crackdowns. A rebellion broke out in 1928-1929. This armed resistance to attempts by local KMT

parties to suppress Buddhist authority and practices was only put down after wide-spread fighting (Duara 1995: 104).

While much of this disdain for religion was rooted in Confucian thinking, Marxism was equally persuasive in intellectual circles regarding the suppression of religion. The anti-religious rhetoric of the early Republican period takes on a decidedly Marxist tone in calling religion an "instrument of the despotic ruling classes,.. keeping the masses enslaved to the passive and ignorant mentality of orthodox religion" (Duara 1995: 102). From the first, the Chinese Communist state sought to suppress--and if it could not, then control--religious activity within territory subject to its control, because it was seen as tool of the feudal classes, and--like early Republicans before them--as an obstacle to science and to progress. The post-1949 world was to be an era of scientific progress, a transitional age into historical self-consciousness in which religious belief and fervor would be replaced by a new-found freedom. This ideology permeated the writings of the social scientists who began to rewrite the history of China in light of Marxist historical theory. This rewriting went hand in hand with attempts to eradicate religion as a living, thriving lifestyle and make it an artifact of the past. Throughout the Communist period, there was a confidence that religious practices would gradually disappear. Prior to that happening, however, it must be subject to study in order to gradually bring that about. Huang Shiping writes, for example, that "[w]ith the development of economic and cultural construction and the enhancement of the levels of scientific knowledge, this situation [i.e., lively religious activities] will be changed. To change it, however, we must first study it thoroughly and earnestly" (Huang 1990: 172).

It has not been a successful campaign, however diligent the authorities have been. The religious underpinnings of the Chinese people have manifested themselves, for all intents and purposes, as more lively, not less, in this 21st century. The substitution of scientific knowledge and self-consciousness for religious activity so sought after by Marxist philosophers and Communist cadres alike has failed to take hold, as traditional religious practice, so widespread before Liberation, sees an retrenchment among the population. A discussion of the reasons for this retrenchment is beyond the confines of this paper, but we do see a resurgence of religious activity even in museums and state-protected historical sites were the symbols of a decadent, feudal society become the objects of veneration. The little shrines and kneelers with their donation boxes set up before the murals in the Mogao Grottoes are but one kind of example of this resurgence.

The influence of modern archaeology, historiography and Marxism on Dunhuang Studies

The influence of modern archaeology and historiography on Dunhuangology is many layered. The Dunhuang discoveries fostered the interest of Chinese painters and art historians, since the material covered fully an thousand years of artistic development, leading to the founding the Dunhuang Research Institute in 1943 (Cheng 1983: 16).

It was not until the 1940s that anything resembling an academic institution was established. In 1940 the painter Zhang Dachien (1899-1983) led a group of artists to Mogao Grottoes, where they copied over 200 paintings (Wan & Mum 2009). A year later, Yu You visited the grottoes to find them in great disarray. With the help of the wartime government in Chongqing, Yu rallied the support of scholars and painters to help protect the site (Vincent 1953: 74-76). With the establishment of the Dunhuang Art Institute on January 1, 1943, the study of Buddhist painting, sculpture and writings there began to be institutionalized (Research Academy 2008). The painter Chang Shuhong was named director. In 1950, the Institute was renamed the Dunhuang Research Institute of Cultural Properties, again with Chang as its director until the leadership was given to Duan Wenjie. Systematic study on the caves began in the early 1980s. In 1984 Duan was able to establish an office in the Gansu provincial capital Lanzhou and the institute was enlarged and the name changed to the Dunhuang Research Academy. Departments included those dedicated to conservation, archaeology, fine arts, manuscript studies, and dance and music (Research Academy 2008).

Prior to the modern period, the Chinese approach to Buddhism was ontological in nature and there was little of academic interest to orthodox scholars. With the criticism and subsequent breakdown of traditional historiographical approaches to Chinese history, and with the introduction of modern theoretical frameworks that approached religion in an epistemological manner, the way was cleared for a new generation of scholars to study Buddhism as an academic discipline, relatively (but not completely) detached from the ontological blinders that framed the views toward religion.

A new Marxist approach to history paved the way for an ideological struggle about the purposes of archaeology, and how archaeological materials (including Buddhist material) should be interpreted. Cheng Te-k'un (1983: 24, 25) writes that the

“Ideological struggle in Chinese archaeology was soon channeled into a more positive movement of learning from Marxism-Leninism. It claimed that only through such a study could Chinese archaeology be redeemed from the traditional capitalistic attitude and practice.... [I]t was resolved that archaeological activities should seek the support of the masses and the work should proceed side by side with the people and for the people.... The ultimate aim and purpose of modern archaeology in China remain the development of a socialist society. The

basic principles are to serve the common people as well as socialism and proletarian politics and to implement the doctrine of *ku wei chin yung* 古为今用 “make the past serve the present” and *t’ui ch’en ch’u hsin* 推陈出新 “weed through the old to bring forth the new.”

Archaeology in “New China” became the vehicle for providing evidence to support the unilinear evolutionary theory of Lewis Henry Morgan, and later Friedrich Engels, which proposed a sequence of social evolution from primitive band to patrilineal society (Tong 1995: 180). It became the discipline for studying the means of production in ancient (especially prehistoric) times, and included the development of tools and the techniques of production, for the socio-cultural evolutionary model of society, the appearance of a class-based society, spiritual culture in the arts and religion, and the development of a “multi-national” aspect of China (Hsia 1963). There was also a clear desire, at least in the early years after Liberation, to glorify the worker, the peasant, and the craftsman of ancient China through the public exhibition of the most spectacular works of art. However, there was little questioning of the basic tenets of the Marxist theoretical foundation. The purpose of archaeology was instead, “to prove that ancient Chinese history followed Marxist social developmental theory” (Tong 1995: 181). According to Tong Enzheng, Xia Nai’s expressed goal for archaeology was “to serve the politics of the proletariat” (1995: 183). That idea, expressed during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, had disastrous effects for archaeology between 1966 and 1976.

Clearly, Chinese nationalism was also a priority in the minds of China’s political leaders in the 1950s and thereafter (see Tong 1995). In Philip Kohl’s review of nationalism and archaeology, he points out that the use of archaeology in support of a national ideology is not a foreign concept to the present rulers of China, but for different reasons than in other examples such as the Soviet Union’s search for *ethnos*, or France’s search for nationalistic glory in the acquisition of antiquities:

“The case of Chinese archaeology and its relationship to nationalism presents a special case. The millennia-long continuity of Chinese civilization sets it apart, as does the traditional respect accorded its antiquities and the humiliation--perceived and real--it suffered at the hands of Western powers during the nineteenth century. The development of Chinese archaeology during this century cannot be understood apart from the early Western-initiated excavations (e.g. JG Andersson at Yangshao, Davidson Black at Zhoukoudian) and the anti-imperialist sentiments they fueled, particularly in terms of what were perceived to be their denigration of Chinese civilization and assessment of its derivative character. The consequent backlash still profoundly affects the practice of archaeology in China today. Whether the cradle or nuclear center of Chinese civilization is restricted to the middle reaches of the Yellow River or extended to encompass essentially all the Han-dominated regions of contemporary China, its origins are pure and unsullied by any diffusionary processes, especially those emanating from the West. After the revolution and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the infrastructural state support of archaeology and its guiding theoretical model—Marxism--were

initially patterned on the Soviet model, but expanded or contracted for internal reasons, such as the Great Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), during which time archaeologists were persecuted and antiquities destroyed on a massive scale. Archaeology and nationalism in China remain closely interrelated today.” (Kohl 1998: 237)

There is no doubt that the new historians and archaeologists, Marxist-Leninists that they were in their view of society and history, still carried with them a strong sense of that history and usefulness for nationalism. L. Carrington Goodrich’s wish that “this concern for the past, however much it reveals of individualism, of feudalism, of a slave-owning society, of a propertied, class, and of such barbarities as human sacrifice, is strong evidence of their nationalism...” has been proven again and again (Goodrich 1957: 12).

It also reflected the notion of the end of history. As mentioned above, religion, while an obstacle to progress and an instrument of the despotic ruling classes, still could serve a useful purpose by being displayed as artifacts of a bygone era. The Chinese people would achieve a sense of self-consciousness, according to this view, and realize the break with past history. Only in this way could a new society be created. Buddhist and other art would be displayed as symbols of a past long since extinct.

After the establishment of the People’s Republic, the art of Dunhuang was soon put in the service of the national ideology, to propagate the unity of workers across national and cultural lines, and finally as a source of anti-imperialist rhetoric. The government extended protection to the Dunhuang Institute and its work. An exhibition of copies of the murals was described in the press in this way: “The art of Tun Huang shows the harmonious relationship of the past several thousand years between the Indian, Chinese and Burmese peoples. The exhibition will consolidate the great unity between the Asian peoples” (Vincent 1953: 106). Further, the paintings were praised as “cultural relics created by the labouring people a thousand years ago, valuable relics inherited from our great ancestors [and the] cave-chapels were finally returned to the Chinese people after much robbery by American, French and Japanese imperialists” (Vincent 1953: 107).

This new approach to Dunhuang’s art was molded from the Marxist theory of history and framed in Marxist terminology, and it gave archaeologists a different prism through which to study Buddhist art. Rather than being studied purely for their religious content, the wall paintings, for example, “have provided valuable data for the study of the histories of architecture, music, drama and the dance” (Hsia 1963: 182).

The introduction to a recent catalog of Dunhuang art expresses succinctly the range of new

approaches in academic disciplines and political roles that the discoveries at Dunhuang have contributed. It states that “Dunhuang frescoes are a part of religious art to propagate Buddhist ideology” (Dunhuang shiku 1999: 14). This is at first glance not too different, we might think, from what traditional scholars might have said of the art. But there is more to it. It continues:

“[W]e can take them as direct or indirect images of various classes and nationalities during different periods.... The architecture, composition and plastic art of the heroes or figures, colors and lines used, etc. make us know the art style of different periods and the fusion history of Chinese and western arts.... In the study of these rare treasures left by our ancestors, we are able to know the politics, economy, thought and culture of ancient China and make some research of the law of artistic development in Chinese history...They emit rays of Chinese workers’ great wisdom and creative talent... [There] are Buddhist sutras, social documents, ancient classics as well as documents in ancient Tibetan, Sanskrit, Ouigour [i.e., Uyghur], Yutian language, Qiuci language, etc. These lost paintings and books are of various kinds of social and natural sciences: politics, economics, military sciences, history, geography, nationality, folklore, religious art, literature, philology, music, dance, calligraphy, architecture, sport, medicine, science and technology, communication, international commerce, cultural exchange...” (Dunhuang shiku 1999: 14-15)

Thus, the art and writings found at Mogao Grottoes have become, in the view of the new Chinese scholarship, historical windows to the past, rather than merely vehicles for either religious or Marxist pedagogy. Modern scholarship in China, especially with its Marxist-influenced ideology, has come to view such art as an example of the universal expression of religion through art. Duan Wenjie, head of the Dunhuang Research Academy, stresses the relationship between religion and art. “Dunhuang’s art is profoundly religious...,” he writes. “All religions are born of history and develop along with human societies. And all religions are intimately intertwined with the fine arts. This has been true from the native religions of primitive man to the sophisticated religions that emerged after society had become stratified into classes. Religions use art to transmit their teachings and the arts, too, develop with religion.” (Dunhuang Research 1989: 5)

While Duan’s statement addresses the fundamental functions of Buddhist art in the context of the Marxist dialectic, he tends to avoid the classic Marxist rhetoric previously utilized to vigorously attack the very foundations of religion and their influence on society. This is a kinder, gentler theoretical approach, yet there is still little questioning of the basic premises of Marxist socio-evolutionary theory which had come more and more under scrutiny in more recent scholarship (Tong 1995).

We are fortunate that archaeologists such as Xia Nai sought to separate archaeological

fieldwork from interpretation. Nevertheless we are able to understand the ideological underpinning of the post-1949 approach to archaeology and art. Marxist theory is an integral and inseparable part to the modern Chinese approach to the artifacts of the past. "What archaeology studies," writes Xia Nai, "are the attributes and traditions of a society or an archaeological culture, not the creations of any individual person. This would be the distinction between the archaeology of art and the study of art history" (1990: 64-65). He insists that in the study of history and its artifacts, the Marxist principle of historical materialism provides a fundamental and true law which can guide historians.

The impact of Dunhuang studies on the history of Buddhist art in China has been profound. Study of the pillars of China's fine arts—the traditional subjects of calligraphy and painting—never suffered from a lack of study, even in the darkest days of the revolution, though they were at times put to use in support of that revolution. My view is that art historians today inside and outside China consider the Dunhuang material as reflecting a representation of both the evolutionary development of artistic styles in China, an example of the influence of foreign art styles that merged with the predominant Chinese style, and an illustration of the great creativity of China's artists. Today, Marxist theory is often ignored in the process of detailed analysis of the art, though the historical material gleaned from the study of the paintings and documents is utilized to support the Marxist historical dialectic. Now, unlike at the height of the Cultural Revolution, condemnation of the art itself as representing feudal society and thought is lacking. Such rhetoric led to the destruction of much religious—including Buddhist—art throughout China.

Duan summarizes the national Chinese style represented by the Dunhuang material thus (Dunhuang Research 1989: 11):

1. "Methodologically, the art of Dunhuang carried on the tradition of combining imagination and realism. Realistic forms from life were manipulated to illustrate visionary deities, spirits and illusory realms. Religious and artistic imagination...integrated into one, and imagination and illusion provided powerfully driving forces for artistic creation.
2. "Traditionally, Chinese techniques and principles for creating beauty, as in the use of lines, colours, the peculiarly Chinese form of multiple perspectives, and rules for portraiture dominated Dunhuang. The exotic religious contents and certainly the human figures, their costumes and coiffures, their manners and postures, depicted in sutra and other stories were sinicized by various method.
3. "The folk artists of Dunhuang boldly assimilated elements from foreign sources. This helped to transform their concept of the beauty of the human figure and enabled the art of Dunhuang to move from a combination of the beautiful and the good, to a combination of the beautiful and the genuine. Ultimately, there was a synthesis of the genuine, the good and the beautiful."

Duan has no hesitation in stating the importance of the art at Dunhuang in Chinese and world

contexts due to the synthesis of styles the art works in the caves reveal. The “new national style and spirit” was the product of this synthesis (Dunhuang Research 1989: 11). This non-religious, epistemological approach to Buddhist art gave scholars a more objective and pragmatic platform from which to study the art, regardless of the bundled Marxist rhetoric, archaic aesthetic theories, and circular reasoning.

Conclusion

The ultimate purpose of this paper is to follow the transition in China from a traditionally scholarly but ultimately ideological disinterest in and disdain for Buddhism and Buddhist art as an ontological system in pre-Republican times, to a more academic, epistemological approach to the subjects, one guided by more modern historical theoretical principles. This transition passed through a period of strong nationalist and Marxist ideology that influenced the approach to Buddhist, but that ultimately receded and which will eventually fade away. I believe that I have made a reasonable argument for such a transition. This development can be seen in the approach to Buddhist materials found at Mogao Grottoes near Dunhuang, Gansu.

In traditional Confucian-based historiography, history was viewed as a guide to moral behavior, and examples of figures from China's past were utilized in this pedagogical way. Buddhism, while there was a recognition by Confucians of its capacity for moral teachings, was generally disparaged by Confucian writers. This disdain, in my view, was a contributing factor in the initial lack of interest in the Buddhist art and manuscripts found at Mogao Grottoes and other places in China, many of which were spirited away to foreign countries.

During the medieval period of Chinese history, there was a history of suppression of Buddhism, usually for more pragmatic and rational reasons than religious, but the traditional Confucian suspicion of sectarian movements is also one factor in the continuing policy of subsequent Chinese governments toward sectarian movements.

With its long traditions of historiography and antiquarianism, China laid a strong foundation for the introduction of modern historical and archaeological methodology in the early 20th century. New theoretical frameworks came to be used not only to research China's antiquity, but also were brought to bear on religious art, including Buddhist art.

The introduction of Marxist and Marxist-Maoist political theory encouraged the ideological view of Buddhist art as the decadent work of feudal society, and the art itself was also utilized for

nationalistic purposes. While this approach has had some value in establishing a framework and rationale for the protection of Buddhist art as a representation of the art of the *Chinese people*, it also encouraged natives and anti-foreign rhetoric, in the defense of China as a nation which developed independent of foreign influence. This type of rhetoric, which flourished during the Mao years and especially during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, disappeared for the most part following the end of that cataclysmic period.

After 1940 the Nationalist Chinese government recognized the cultural value of Buddhist art like that found at the Mogao Grottoes, and acknowledged the value of the documents retrieved from Cave 17. For the first time it assisted in the establishment of a special academic discipline known as Dunhuang Studies. After 1949, the communist government also recognized its value, and expanded the institute first established to study the art and manuscripts. Dunhuang Studies is a major academic discipline today. One of the reasons for this attention was the traditional emphasis on written documents, there being a considerable amount of the Dunhuang material of this nature. The importance of this discipline is reflected in the international cooperation among the many the many institutions around the globe which hold Dunhuang material such as the International Dunhuang Project (<http://idp.bl.uk/>).

From the evidence presented in this paper we can conclude that despite the traditional hostility of Chinese orthodox Confucians toward Buddhism and Buddhist art, the ancient historiographical and antiquarian traditions prepared the way for new approaches to these subjects. The introduction of modern historiographical and archaeological methodology, as well as the establishment of new theoretical frameworks in the early 20th century, and the political demands of nationalism and ideology after the founding of the People's Republic of China, resulted in a new paradigm in the study of Buddhism and Buddhist art in China today.

Nevertheless, we can see an historical convergence of criticism of Buddhism, based on different ideological approaches--one Confucian, the other Marxist--which led in the 20th century to polemical attacks on Buddhism. Both political ideologies viewed Buddhism as detrimental to the state and to society, and strived to suppress the religion. However, subsequent influence on Marxist thought of the Hegelian notion of the "end of history" and the subversion of the history of Buddhism in China to the purposes of historical dialectics, has in recent years softened. While commentary on Buddhism even today in China still utilizes the ideology and terminology of Marxist-Leninist thought, the demands of nationalism (and tourism!) has encouraged the government to protect and preserve the

Buddhist art of Mogao Grottoes and encouraged scholars to study the history of Buddhist art, especially that found at Dunhuang, as independent from Marxist ideology, in the manner of Xia Nai, where ideological interpretation is separated from serious critical art description and commentary. Historical parallels occur. We have seen that the Sui and Tang courts used Buddhism to help unify the country, and the Chinese government in recent years has used Buddhist art in the service of nationalism and national pride. These convergent--and somewhat cynical--uses of Buddhism are in the end but examples of the more or less pragmatic approach by the Chinese to Buddhism, and show that those in power can either suppress or exploit the religion for their own ends. Whether or not Chinese scholars today begin look beyond the Marxist-Maoist framework and interpretation of Chinese history and Buddhist art therein, the historiography on that is yet to be written.

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Dunhuang - Apsaras and Bodhisattvas on the ceiling of an early Tang cave. The Indian influence and emotional ecstasy lasted into the 7th century as did the strong, Central Asian colors, before they were extinguished by the influence of a more muted, monochrome Chinese sensibility. Cave 321, Early Tang, 7th century. See more. Dunhuang mural: An ancient Chinese concert, Tang Dynasty. China Discovery Top 10 Buddhist Grottoes Caves In China Famous Buddha Art. Dunhuang mural: An ancient Chinese concert, Tang Dynasty -. Dunhuang has 492 caves, with square meters of frescos, 415 painted statues and five wooden-structured caves. Study in China. Scholarships. Directories. An overview of statistics on Chinese students studying abroad between 1978 and 2017 reveals that the number of students returning from overseas studies, especially high-caliber graduates, has been growing steadily. In total, 3,132,000 students or 83.73% of all students pursuing further studies abroad returned to China after graduation. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2012, in particular, 2,313,600 students have returned home, accounting for 78.73% of all students having studied outside the country. China is competing with the most prestigious study destinations around the globe and is becoming a top choice for international students. The Chinese Education System Today. In 2012, the Chinese government embarked on an effort to make the country an international hub for education. Those who study in China have greater opportunities to receive a financial award, making a degree even more affordable. #6 Cultural Immersion. More people speak Chinese than any other language in the world. Considering the fast-paced economic growth of the country and its position as the second-largest economy in the world, a spoken and written command of the Chinese language is a valuable asset for your career.