

Abstract

This PhD thesis focuses on additional decorative and iconographic motifs of Western origin that were transmitted to China during the Period of Disunity and penetrated Chinese Buddhist art. Many of these elements are not limited to Buddhist art, but also found use in profane art and became one of the sources from which later Chinese style was formed. Due to a very high concentration of the above mentioned motifs the complex of Buddhist caves at Yungang (Shanxi), cut during the reign of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–535 A. D.), was chosen as a basis of the comparative study. As this thesis proves, the influence of the Gandhāran art, whose elements were being spread to China especially through the region of modern Xinjiang, played an important role in the development of these patterns. At the same time it also shows, that Buddhist art was just one of the media of transmission of the foreign motifs and that this transmission occurred repeatedly during centuries, in several waves. This dissertation attempts, through the comparative analysis of the artifacts as well as through analysis of cultural and historical background and preserved information about work and life of craftsmen making the Buddhist and other works obtained by the study of primary literary sources, to shed light on the complexity of the whole phenomenon.