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## Luminous Remains

### *On Relics, Jewels, and Glass in Chinese Buddhism*

Francesca Tarocco

The spread of Buddhism to China during the first centuries of the Common Era facilitated the diffusion of ritual practices centered on the numinous efficacy (*ling* 靈) of special persons and the things associated with them. Likewise, the diffusion and worship of sacred objects—most crucially relics and images—was decisive for the growth of the religion. Like images, relics firmly belong to the same category of the Buddhist miraculous—their spectacular materiality prompted the Chinese to name Buddhism “the teaching of images” (*xiangjiao* 像教). In what follows, I will analyze the affinities and interactions among relics, jewels, and glass, a substance with unique characteristics and a long (if little studied) Buddhist lineage. Glass was not widely known in medieval China if not among Buddhists, who associated it with the West (India and beyond). It was cherished, among other things, for its transparency. Glass objects could be given as offerings; in particular, exquisitely decorated vessels imported from Persia and the eastern Mediterranean areas were highly prized exotica. In Dunhuang mural paintings we see representations of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara holding a glass flask in his hands.<sup>1</sup> Of course, not every glass object or every relic was transported to East Asia from elsewhere as the new Buddhist regions started to “produce” their own sacred things. This is important, as histories of Buddhist practices can usefully be understood as embedded in a wider network of connections with histories of trade, ritual, and iconography, as well as technology. Chinese Buddhists elaborated their own material assemblages and ritual protocols based on Indian models. Descriptions of *śarīra* relics, and their Chinese equivalent, *shelizi* (舍利子), as “pearl-like” substances point to

many potential affinities with jewels and other gemlike substances and luminous materials including crystal and glass.<sup>2</sup> These materials could also stand in as relics. Conceived of as being produced by cremating the remains of an accomplished Buddhist, *shelizi* could actually be the result of more sophisticated processes. Buddhist practices, including funerary ones, I argue, may have facilitated the diffusion of glass in China from India, the Middle East, and Europe from medieval times down to the present day. The reverse may also be true—namely, that the use of glass or glass beads in funerary pyres gave origin to some of the language used to describe relics in both earlier and more recent eyewitness accounts. Such language alludes in fact to the vitreous appearance of the relics, which are often described as translucent, white, or multi-colored. Similar to jewels and precious stones in appearance, glass is made with fire, one of the governing forces of Buddhist funerals.

### Relics

Buddhism, suggests Robert Sharf, is “among other things, a religion of relics.”<sup>3</sup> In his study of the Buddha’s finger bone relics at Famen Temple 法門寺—beautiful objects made of white jade encased in superbly crafted reliquaries—he reminds us that when we think about relics, we should be mindful of the actual materials that constitute Buddhist aesthetics and material culture. The English term “relic”—from the Latin *reliquiae*, or “remains,” and *relinquere*, “to leave behind”—is somewhat inadequate to decode the broad semantic field and the variety of metaphoric associations of the Sanskrit *śarīra* and its Chinese equivalent *shelizi*.<sup>4</sup> The word indicates the variety of media through which a devotee can gain connection to a special figure after his or her death.<sup>5</sup> These can include various forms of bodily remains and personal articles.<sup>6</sup> Relics can be conceptualized as direct conduits to spiritual forces and serve as objects of devotion and veneration. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes as relics the bodily remains of saints, objects belonging to or used by saints, and items that came into contact with either of the other two types.<sup>7</sup> Studies of Buddhism now routinely acknowledge the important role relics played in ritual and devotional practices in the context of the religion’s spread to Asia. Once one starts looking for them, relics are everywhere.<sup>8</sup> No relic exists without a reliquary. The *stūpa*, then, as a funerary structure, highlights the Buddha’s absence because it reminds devotees of his death.

And yet, since the relic also enlivens its container, stūpas and other objects can suggest the presence of the soteriological power radiated by the physical remains.<sup>9</sup> Phyllis Granoff has argued that the widespread belief in the power of bodily remains should be seen as a pan-Indic phenomenon rather than a specifically Buddhist one. Reading of a wide range of Indian medieval texts, Granoff showed that “the belief that body parts can turn into precious substances worthy of being objects of worship or tools of worship is both ancient and fundamental in Indian religion.”<sup>10</sup> The Pali text *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* contains precise instructions on how to deal with the body of the Buddha after cremation: the corporeal remains are divided into eight shares and enshrined in the stūpa reliquaries. Worshipers who make offerings to them receive blessings and salvation.<sup>11</sup> A popular story (visualized in myriad ways) taken from the Lotus Sutra shows the Buddha’s instructions to the Bodhisattva Medicine King to build eighty-four thousand reliquaries for the dissemination of his relics: “After my passage into extinction, whatever *śarīra* there may be I entrust to you also. You are to spread them about and broadly arrange for offerings to them. You are to erect several thousand *stūpa*.”<sup>12</sup>

In China, the popularity of relics facilitated the appropriation of preexisting sacred sites by Buddhist monastic elites; the country was made into a sacred Buddhist land. Reliquaries attributed to Aśoka could “manifest” themselves there, appearing miraculously on their own. Relics occupied a central position in monastic compounds.<sup>13</sup> Sites where relics are present are inspiring destinations for Buddhist pilgrims seeking to benefit from divine power. The cult of Buddhist relics encompasses materiality, affect, and ritual behavior. In China, the minute *shelizi*, crystalline or vitreous in appearance, are conceived of as being the concentration of the remains of an enlightened person that occurs during the process of cremation. Ultimately, they function as a technology of embodied sacredness: once the human form has been destroyed in the funerary pyre, the corporeal materiality is understood as being distilled into a spiritual essence. Once placed inside an image—a statue or other support—the charisma of the relic infuses it with life and transforms it into a numinous icon. It is intriguing that Chinese Buddhists also worship “whole-body relics” (*quanshen sheli* 全身舍利), the mummified remains of eminent masters whose desiccated “flesh bodies” (*roushen* 肉身) are wrapped in layers of cloth, adorned with fine robes and other paraphernalia, and enshrined.<sup>14</sup>

## Luminous Remains

If this *sūtra* is installed inside a Buddha image, or a *stūpa*, this image should be fabricated from seven gems, or this *stūpa* should have a canopy of seven gems.<sup>15</sup>

Stories about the finding of relics and the incorruptibility of monks' bodies are used in China to illustrate the real existence of the Buddha in the world. Incorporated into Buddhist hagiographies, they are signs of faith attesting to the efficacy of the religion.<sup>16</sup> Not limited to cremation remains, relics can also be created through monastic ritual, prayer, and meditation, thus continually increasing in quantity.<sup>17</sup> By the tenth century, relics were understood as comprising two distinct types, those from the Buddha and those from eminent monks (and some nuns).<sup>18</sup> The deaths of charismatic monks could augment the supply whether their bodies were cremated or miraculously preserved intact. It is important, as John Kieschnick has pointed out, that before the introduction of Buddhism, China had no cult that focused on the physical remains of any great person; the numinous power attributed to Buddhist relics was a major factor in the religion's success.<sup>19</sup> In Buddhism, visions of divine light and radiance are often associated with any object taken to be sacred or spiritually potent. Often described as "jewels" or "pearls," relics are said to emit light.<sup>20</sup> The medieval hagiographies of monks and nuns contain numerous stories of relics that can work miracles and cause supernatural events. Numinous efficacy evokes a "miraculous response" (*ganying* 感應). Thus the hagiographies assimilate the well-established ideas of "resonance" (*gantong* 感通, *ganying* 感應) as signs of faith attesting to the efficacy of Buddhism. In fact, the two major collections of monastic life stories, compiled by Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) and Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001), point to the production of relics as a measure of the saintliness of their protagonists. In the "Song Biographies of Eminent Monks" (*Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳), the cremation of certain monks is reported to have produced hundreds, even thousands, of *śarīra* whose shape and color are construed as signs of spiritual attainment. Zanning tells us that after the cremation of the Chan monk Hui'an 慧安 "eighty *śarīra* grains, crystalline relics, were retrieved from among the ashes. Five of them emitted a purple light and were sent to the imperial palace."<sup>21</sup> Another eyewitness, Su E 蘇鶚 (fl. 876–886), recorded the portentous signs that accompanied the ceremonial display of relics: "Rays from the Buddha relic and auspicious clouds lighted up the

roadside and this was regarded repeatedly as a supernatural sign by the happy people.”<sup>22</sup> With similar enthusiasm, the Japanese pilgrim monk Ennin 圓仁 (794–864) records the story of the miraculous manifestation in China and discovery of three precious vessels—a golden one, a blue lapis lazuli one, and a white one—each containing relics whose radiance illuminated the whole room in which a monk was reciting the scriptures.<sup>23</sup> Juhyung Rhi has argued that jewels could be used in China to replace bone fragments and other corporeal remains. One among many examples of this practice is the gilded-bronze seated Buddha icon in the Sackler Museum at Harvard University. It is important that the hagiography of the scholar monk and gifted exegete Dao’an 道安 (314–385) tells us that “a bronze image from a foreign country emitted splendid light to fill the entire hall.” In the story, a relic was discovered in the *uṣṇīṣa* (ji 髻) of the icon whose miraculous radiance was attributed to the relic itself.<sup>24</sup> When Dao’an tells us that the icon is efficacious because of its shimmering relic, it may well be that he is already looking at something that emits light because it is, in fact, a precious or semiprecious stone, a jewel. Rhi points out that the Chinese tradition of replacing bone fragments with shining jewels is well attested and dates back as early as the second century CE.<sup>25</sup>

### Glass

The term “glass,” from the Late Latin term *glesum*, designates a transparent, gleaming substance made by cooling molten ingredients such as silica sand.<sup>26</sup> Glass has been made into practical and decorative objects since ancient times in Egypt, Syria, and India, among other places. The oldest type of glass is silicate glass, based on the chemical compound silica, the primary constituent of sand. It can be colored by adding metallic salts. Many glass samples have been excavated in Chinese tombs dating from the fifth century BCE, and barium-rich glass was cast (but not blown) in China by the second century BCE. There is also much evidence that glass was regularly imported from abroad.<sup>27</sup> The earliest known glass objects, dating back to the mid-third-millennium BCE, are glass beads. In all probability these were created fortuitously as by-products of metal working or as a pre-glass vitreous material made by a process similar to glazing. In China, glass appears to have been used mostly for religious purposes. Examples of Roman glass have been found in India as well as China. The oldest glass-based forms of material culture found in China date to the late Spring and Autumn

and early Warring States periods (ca. 500–400 BCE). Many scholars accept this as the earliest phase of glass making in China. Polychrome beads may have also entered China during this time and contributed to the creation of a local glass industry. The stylistic similarity between these beads and locally produced Chinese beads makes this argument compelling.<sup>28</sup> During the period of the Six Dynasties relatively few pieces were found in excavated tombs, and it is perhaps the rarity of glass that made it so valued to the Chinese.<sup>29</sup> We know that blue glass ingots were deliberately fabricated as a synthetic replacement of lapis lazuli, a naturally occurring blue-colored stone. A metamorphic rock only mined in northeast Afghanistan, it was used as a semiprecious stone and widely traded in Eurasia.<sup>30</sup>

Scholars have shown that Buddhism was crucial to the development of trade between India and China from the first centuries of the Common Era, demonstrating that the role of foreign luxury goods was inseparable from the growing popularity of the religion.<sup>31</sup> From the Han period onward, the influence of Buddhism on Chinese material culture is a critical factor to consider. The use of precious and luminous substances did change significantly as a result of the encounter with Buddhist doctrines and technologies. Doris Dohrenwend divides Chinese glass into two categories: *liuli* (琉璃) and *boli* (玻璃). Both terms have Sanskrit origins and enter usage after contact with western regions. For Xinru Liu, the origin of *liuli* is “*vaidūrya*, which means lapis lazuli, beryl or cat’s eye gem.”<sup>32</sup> In Buddhist texts translated into Chinese during the fourth and fifth centuries, *liuli* is of a sky-blue color and is associated with the hair of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, and other deities. The *liuli* traded with the Chinese, notes Liu, was in fact blue glass, not lapis lazuli or other types of precious stones. It is possible that Chinese craftsmen may also have learned to make this type of glass. *Boli* underwent a similar path. In the early Buddhist context, *boli* and crystal (*shuijing* 水晶) are synonymous. Eventually, the Chinese came to realize that so-called crystal and *boli* were not stones but artefacts made by humans.<sup>33</sup> By the Tang period (618–907), the Chinese had already been familiar with glasses for centuries. In his pioneering study of Tang exotica, Edward Shafer notes that *liuli* was sometimes confused with real blue-colored stones such as lapis lazuli, beryl, and turquoise. *Boli*, on the other hand, was transparent and either colorless, like rock crystal and compared with water and ice, or else palely tinted. By the Tang, *liuli* was regarded as an “old thing,” but blown vessels of *boli* were still a novelty.<sup>34</sup>

Chinese Buddhists in all likelihood viewed glass as one of the “seven treasures” (*qibao* 七寶) of Buddhism. The list of Sanskrit terms and their Chinese equivalents includes gold, silver, *vaidūrya*, pearl, a red coral, ammonite, agate or coral, and something else that may be transparent glass or rock crystal.<sup>35</sup> All these materials were regarded as suitable offerings for the Buddha. Some of them were brighter than others or easier to obtain or more rare, and so on. Glass enjoyed “a very high status within the hierarchy of materials” that could be used in the making of Buddhist reliquaries.<sup>36</sup> In the “Biography of the Eminent Monk Faxian” (*Gaoseng Faxian zhuan* 高僧法顯轉), we read that the Chinese pilgrim to India Faxian (法顯; ca. 336–ca. 423) saw *stūpas* covered in gold and decorated with the seven treasures. The monk described a relic covering in the shape of a bell as literally made of *liuli* and decorated with pearls and precious stones.<sup>37</sup> Relics and glass can be found in close proximity to one another in excavated sites.<sup>38</sup> For instance, in 1987, archaeologists discovered a crypt underneath the pagoda at Famen Temple that had been sealed and left untouched since 874 CE.<sup>39</sup> They found more than four hundred objects made of silver and gold metalwork, as well as rare Chinese and foreign glass.<sup>40</sup> This case is far from unique. In *Surviving Nirvana*, Sonya Lee lists the findings at various sites, including those at Jingzhi Temple, which, again, consisted of hundreds of pieces of jade, ceramicware, and glassware.<sup>41</sup>

### Burning

In China, relics have charisma and can perform miracles. Eventually, Chinese Buddhists envisioned a nomenclature and taxonomy of relics—their radiance, colors, and size mattered the most to Buddhist practitioners of the past. In his pioneering study *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* (1967), based on extensive fieldwork in monasteries in China and Hong Kong, Holmes Welch noted that *śarīras* are “crystalline morsels believed to be left in the ashes of any saintly monk” and added that several modern biographies (*nianpu* 年譜) of Buddhist monks included photographs of relics in “neat piles, graded by size and color.”<sup>42</sup> Not only does the possession of relics inspire reverence, but relics also bring prestige and reputation to the temples that own them.<sup>43</sup> For practitioners, relics are empirical evidence of Buddhist cosmology. As they set out to fabricate and then “discover” the relics of their masters, Buddhists create sites of thaumaturgy and talismanic power. Relics recovered from the pyre can appear as brightly colored crystallized minerals or else as

bits of opaque glass-like matter. One wonders what these objects are made of. Might glass be present in the funerary pyre? Or sand? Could the bodies of Buddhist clerics be burned together with rosaries made of glass? Is a batch of glass-producing raw materials also thrown in? As a rule, Buddhist clerics are cremated rather than buried. And from the Tang period down to the present day, funerals that have incorporated ideas and practices surrounding rebirth in the Pure Land and the cult of Amitābha have been prevalent among Buddhist death practices.<sup>44</sup>

The cult of Amitābha and of rebirth in his Land of Bliss can be traced back as far as the Eastern Jin period (317–420). By the seventh century, Vinaya formulations already emphasized “Pure Land aspirations in a more obvious and technical manner.”<sup>45</sup> Beliefs in rebirth in the Pure Land were widespread. Robert Sharf points out that the Chan monastic code, *Chanyuan qinggui* (禪苑清規; 1103), also “explicitly mentions the recitation of Amitābha’s name ten times in conjunction with monastic funerals, and during the more elaborate rites for a deceased abbot, the invocations of Amitābha’s name are followed by the distribution of money called *nien-fo ch’ien* 念佛錢.”<sup>46</sup> During the medieval period, *ling* appeared often in Buddhist and non-Buddhist mortuary ritual contexts. The *lingzuo* (靈座 or “spirit seat”) of Chan abbots was displayed together with objects that belonged to the deceased in Song-period funerals.<sup>47</sup> Around this time, an increasing number of texts described miracles associated with the ritual distribution of relics.<sup>48</sup> These, together with the odor of sanctity—a fragrance held to proceed from the person of a saint after death—were understood as residues of such “efficacy.” It is important that to this day, in Pure Land Buddhist funerary practices, the specially prepared bodies of eminent clerics are cremated in sealed encasements. The body is placed in a sealed niche (*kan* 龕; also “shrine”) and cremated (*fenhua* 焚化) or “transformed by fire.” Almost always, the desired outcome of these funerary practices is the production of relics, a process, as noted above, already outlined in early medieval sources.

### Not Ash, Not Bone

Chinese Buddhist practices always refer to relics of monks and nuns as sites of devotion and veneration. When recovered from the funerary pyres of saintly clerics, relics manifest themselves in various shapes yet must shimmer and gleam. Once the relics are made, the followers of eminent monks employ multiple media to disseminate their

power and presence. In a recent example, the followers of the Pure Land charismatic monk Yinguang 印光 (1861–1940)—one of modern China’s most prominent clerics—not only took photographs of the relics, but also decided to display them under a microscope. The disciples of other revered clerics took similar steps. In fact, one can see how the twentieth-century Buddhist shrine became not only the protective shell practitioners fashioned for themselves, but also the locus of optical devices and philosophical toys of all sorts—the camera, the microscope—that seem to open the viewer’s gaze onto a different world under the dominion of the image and semblance. A modern optical apparatus is put to the service of the Buddhist miraculous to show the brightly colored *śarīra* as empirical evidence that the charismatic teacher has successfully entered the Pure Land.<sup>49</sup> What are Yinguang’s relics actually made of? We know that, beginning in the late imperial period, the Qing court established its own glass workshop (1696). Under the patronage of the court, there was a renewed interest in the appearance and the technology connected with glass. Glass making entered a new phase in which Europe and European glass played an important role.<sup>50</sup> We also know that in the early twentieth century, rosaries could be present in the enclosure prepared for the funerary pyre. In fact, Walter Perceval Yetts (1878–1957), who witnessed and studied Buddhist mortuary practices in modern times, tells us that rosaries were placed in the hands of the monks when their bodies were being prepared for cremation.<sup>51</sup> He pointedly noted that bodies were carefully prepared for cremation with the precise intent to provide relics—relics that would not only attract the public to the temples, but also inspire “generous contributions.”<sup>52</sup>

Generally less than a day is allowed to elapse between the demise and cremation of a monk, but sometimes, when an abbot or priest of conspicuous sanctity dies, the body is kept for a week or more while special masses are being celebrated. In such a case the corpse is quickly fitted either into a *kan*, or into a wooden box, and packed round with charcoal mixed with fragments of sandal-wood. The receptacle is made quite airtight. When the time for burning comes the bier and its contents are put on the pyre just as they are, except in the case of a *kan*, when the vent-hole in its lid is opened. After cremation a handful or two of relics 舍利 are collected from among the ashes and deposited in an urn or in a red calico bag, which is then consigned to a room set apart for the purpose.<sup>53</sup>

Many Chinese eyewitness accounts of the cremation of eminent monks in modern times—for instance, that of Chan master Xuyun 虛雲 (ca.1840–1959), who is also said to have died in *odor sanctitatis*—echo earlier accounts. When Xuyun’s cremation site was opened, one hundred large, five-color relics were found and an incalculable number of smaller ones, prevalently white but clear and bright.<sup>54</sup> Stories of shimmering relics are continuously circulated. In 1897, Xuyun conducted a pilgrimage to the Ayuwang Temple (阿育王寺) in Ningbo, whose Buddha relic had been the object of pilgrimage and devotion for centuries.<sup>55</sup> While there, he decided to burn off the ring finger of his left hand as an offering to the Buddha and to repay his debt of gratitude to his mother. The self-mortification practice of finger burning (*ran zhi* 燃指) in front of the relic at Ayuwang is well documented and can be accompanied by visions of the relics as shining and emitting multi-colored light.<sup>56</sup> In a dharma lesson I witnessed in 2016, the abbot of a temple located near Ningbo told his disciples of his own experiences of worshiping that same relic: it glimmered in front of his eyes and emitted mesmerizing beams of radiant light.<sup>57</sup>

One can find striking evidence of the connections among fire, relics, and glass in *To the Land of Bliss* (2001), the thoughtful ethnographic film by Wen-jie Qin—herself a Pure Land practitioner—that trails closely the cremation of a revered elderly monk with a large following.<sup>58</sup> After his body is burned, his disciples wait for about twenty-four hours before opening the enclosure. Just before those in charge start returning to the cremation site, Wen is told that the deceased master had just manifested himself to a group of nuns: a “golden light came out of the chimney,” says a young nun; “his whole body appeared in the sky,” and then the master left, “radiating a golden light.”<sup>59</sup> Eventually, the clerics gather to search the ashes. This is done matter of factly, with plastic chopsticks. “Ordinary people won’t be able to produce relics,” proclaims a monk; “Spiritual practices transform the body,” notes another. They appear to say these things to one another in order to instruct the laypersons who are there with them. As the ashes are carefully examined, the clerics start picking up tiny objects with their chopsticks: “This must be glass,” says one of the small group of clerics, both monks and nuns. “No, it isn’t!” says another. “Yes, it is; I have seen a Buddha relic just like this one,” a third person exclaims conclusively. A few round objects of vitreous appearance are placed in plastic containers.<sup>60</sup> According to one of my informants, Yu Lan 余藍, a Shanghai-based laywoman in her early fifties, relics still play a key role within communities of Pure Land Buddhists. It

is the discovery of relics in the ashes, their number, size, and color, that points to one's attainment and rebirth in the Pure Land. Yu Lan herself witnessed one such event in 2015, when she took part in a ritual *nianfo* 念佛 recitation period to "accompany a saintly woman," a member of her community. After the cremation, everyone searched through the ashes in the hopes of finding relics. Their hopes were realized: they found dozens of them. They were bright and "looked like glass, not ash, not bone" (*xiang gen boli yiyang, bu shi hui bu shi gutou* 像跟玻璃一样, 不是灰不是骨头).<sup>61</sup>

### Affinities

In this chapter, I have explored the affinities Chinese Buddhists discovered between relics and jewels and among fire, relics, and glass, a shimmering material created with molten sand. First of all, the fact that glass can be transparent made it suitable to contain and enshrine relics. What if, given the metonymic slippages characteristic of many Buddhist replication processes, the material of the reliquary became that of the relic, and vice versa? Glass glimmers like a jewel and, exactly like a jewel, can be made into a relic. I suggest that since Chinese Buddhist relics are assemblages and multilayered fabrications, we must further explore the possibility that what emerges from the funerary pyre of saintly clerics is some form of vitreous matter. Also, as excavations of several Buddhist sites clearly attest, glass beads were scattered around *stūpas* and enshrined in reliquaries inside them because of their connection with relics. It is precisely in this context that they were exported from India to China.<sup>62</sup> For instance, over 150,000 glass beads have been excavated from the site of the Yongning Temple 永寧寺 in Loyang, an important temple built in the early sixth century.<sup>63</sup> For centuries, glass beads proliferated in China thanks to Buddhism. Indian glass beads, and maybe even the Venetian *conterie* at a later stage, became increasingly more widespread.<sup>64</sup> What was the holy light that led Dao'an to discover a relic in the *uṣṇīṣa* of an icon? Perhaps we should understand the radiance of the bejeweled relic as not merely symbolic. Technological affinities served the religio-aesthetic and practical needs of a particular group of people and therefore must be very carefully considered. Moreover, at any one time and as one of the materials accessible to the Buddhist ritual repertoire, glass may have deliberately been put to work in the process of making the luminous remains of eminent clerics. This possibility appears even more likely in modern

times and in light of the expectation of the faithful to “discover” a large number of fine-looking relics among the ashes of their dead as evidence of their successful passage to the Pure Land.<sup>65</sup> For Buddhist communities in China, Taiwan, and elsewhere in the Chinese Buddhist world, the objects that materialize among the cremation ashes as vitreous smidgens are vibrant and alive. Making large numbers of *shelizi* through cremation is imperative.

## Notes

I am grateful to Vanessa Sasson, Nancy Lin, and Aldo Mignucci for their helpful feedback at various stages of preparation of this chapter.

1. Susan Whitfield and Ursula Sims-Williams, *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel War and Faith* (London: British Library, 2004), 157; see also Hsueh-Man Shen, “Luxury or Necessity: Glassware in Sarīra Relic Pagodas of the Tang and Northern Song Periods,” in *Chinese Glass: Archaeological Studies on the Uses and Social Context of Glass Artefacts from the Warring States to the Northern Song Period*, edited by Cecilia Braghin (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2002); Albert E. Dien *Six Dynasties Civilization*, 288–292.
2. See also John Strong in this volume.
3. Robert H. Sharf “The Buddha’s Finger Bones at Famensi and the Art of Chinese Esoteric Buddhism,” *Art Bulletin* 93, no. 1 (2011): 38.
4. For the other term for relic, *dbatu*, meaning “constituent part,” “ingredient,” see Gregory Schopen, “Relic,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 256.
5. On Christian relics see Martina Bagnoli, et al., eds., *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe* (Cleveland, OH: Walters Art Museum, 2010).
6. See especially Brian D. Ruppert, *Jewel in the Ashes: Buddha Relics and Power in Early Medieval Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000; Harvard East Asian Monographs 188); Bernard Faure: “Dato,” in fasc. 8 of *Hōbōgirin* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 2003), 1127–1158; *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 132–147; “Relics and Flesh Bodies: The Creation of Ch’an Pilgrimage Sites,” in *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, edited by Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 150–189; and “Les cloches de la terre: Un aspect du culte des reliques dans

- le bouddhisme chinois,” in *Bouddhisme et lettrés dans la Chine médiévale*, edited by Catherine Despeux (Paris: Peeters, 2002), 25–44. On the cult of relics in China, see, for instance, John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 29–52.
7. Martina Bagnoli et al., *Treasures of Heaven*.
  8. On the cult of relics in Asia, see especially John Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1997); David Germano and Kevin Trainor, eds., *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004). See also Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*; Sonya S. Lee, *Surviving Nirvana: Death of the Buddha in Chinese Visual Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010); Rupert, *Jewel in the Ashes*; Schopen, “Relic”; Dan Martin, “Pearls from Bones: Relics, Chortens, Tertons and the Signs of Saintly Death in Tibet,” *Numen* 41 (1994): 273–323. See also the chapters by Strong and Lin in this volume.
  9. For further discussion, see Lin’s chapter in this volume. See also Strong, *Relics of the Buddha*. For some of Gregory Schopen’s works related to these issues, see the following: “The Stūpa Cult and the Extant Pali Vinaya,” *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 13 (1989): 83–100; “Monks and the Relic Cult in the Mahāparinibbāna-sutta: An Old Misunderstanding in Regard to Monastic Buddhism,” in *From Benares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion*, edited by Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1991), 187–201; and “Burial *Ad Sanctos* and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism: A Study in the Archaeology of Religions,” *Religion* 17 (1987): 193–225.
  10. Phyllis Granoff, “Relics, Rubies and Ritual: Some Comments on the Distinctiveness of the Buddhist Relic Cult,” *Rivista degli studi orientali, Nuova Serie* 81, nos. 1–4 (2008): 70.
  11. See T. W. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3 vols. (London: Pali Text Society, 1890–1924), 2:71–191.
  12. Leon Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, 272; in T., no. 262, vol. 9, 53c14–15.
  13. Huaiyu Chen, *The Revival of Buddhist Monasticism in Medieval China* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 62–64.

14. See, for example, Faure: *The Rhetoric of Immediacy*, and *The Will to Orthodoxy: A Critical Genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997); Lee, *Surviving Nirvana*; Sharf, "The Buddha's Finger Bones."
15. Translation of the *Baoqieyin Sūtra* (Sūtra of the Precious Jewel Mudrā) by Zhiru Shi, "From Bodily Relic to Dharma Relic Stūpa: Chinese Materialization of the Aśoka Legend in the Wuyue Period," in *India in the Chinese Imagination: Myth, Religion, and Thought*, edited by John Kieschnick and Meir Shahar (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 105.
16. Tiziana Lippiello has shown how auspicious omens played an important role in politics in the medieval period as they foretold the coming of an era of peace and prosperity or a new reign or dynasty or appeared in response to good government. See Tiziana Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China: Han, Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).
17. Faure, "Relics and Flesh Bodies," 214.
18. Lee, *Surviving Nirvana*, 256.
19. Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 30–32.
20. See Brian D. Ruppert, "Pearl in the Shrine: A Genealogy of the Buddhist Jewel of the Japanese Sovereign," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29, nos. 1–2 (2002): 1–33.
21. See the passage in the *Taishō Tripitaka* 大正新脩大藏經, T. 2061: 823b.
22. Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 281.
23. Edwin O. Reischauer, *Emmū's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955), 300–303. When the Shingon monk and polymath Kūkai 空海 (774–835) returned to Japan from China, he brought back ritual paraphernalia and objects, including a number of pearl-like relics. For the relation between the imperial jewel, the Wish-Fulfilling Jewel (*cintamani*), and relics in Japan, see Richard Payne's chapter in this volume. See also Ruppert, "Pearl in the Shrine."
24. See the passage in the *Taishō Tripitaka* 大正新脩大藏經, T. 2059: 352b: 有一外國銅像像，形製古異，時眾不甚恭重。安曰：「像形相致佳但髻形未稱。」令弟子爐冶其髻，既而光焰煥炳，耀滿一堂。詳視髻中，見一舍利，眾咸愧服。安曰：「像既靈異，不煩復冶。」乃止。識者咸謂安知有舍利，故出以示眾。

25. Juhyung Rhi, "Images, Relics, and Jewels: The Assimilation of Images in the Buddhist Relic Cult of Gandhāra: Or Vice Versa." *Artibus Asiae* 65, no. 2 (2005): 183, 184, 201.
26. The melting temperature for the batch, the mixture of raw materials (often silica, soda or potash, and lime) that is melted in a pot or tank to make glass, is quite high. The heating causes the sand to undergo a chemical transformation. A cross between a solid and a liquid, glass features some crystalline structures generally found in solids. Scholars are still asking some fundamental questions with regard to the initial invention (or, indeed, multiple inventions) of glasses and glass-making recipes and techniques and about the spread and long-distance trade of the material. See Thilo Rehren, and Ian C. Freestone. "Ancient Glass: From Kaleidoscope to Crystal Ball," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 56 (2015): 233–241. In glassmaking, one can use alkali, a soluble salt consisting mainly of potassium carbonate or sodium carbonate. It is one of the essential ingredients of glass, generally accounting for about 15–20 percent of the batch. The alkali is a flux, which reduces the melting point of the major constituent of glass, silica.
27. See Dien, *Six Dynasties Civilization*, and Rehren and Freestone, "Ancient Glass."
28. Doris Dohrenwend, "Glass in China: A Review Based on the Collection in the Royal Ontario Museum," *Oriental Art Richmond-Surrey* 26, no. 4 (1980): 426–446; Cecilia Braghin, "Polychrome and Monochrome Glass of the Warring States and Han Periods" in Braghin, *Chinese Glass*, 3–43.
29. Dien, *Six Dynasties Civilization*, 286–290.
30. Andrew J. Shortland, *Lapis Lazuli from the Kiln: Glass and Glassmaking in the Late Bronze Age* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012).
31. Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges AD 1–600* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988); Shen, "Luxury or Necessity."
32. X. Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China*, 59.
33. X. Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China*, 59.
34. Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of Tang Exotica* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 236.
35. Shen, "Luxury or Necessity," 73n8.
36. Shen, "Luxury or Necessity," 73.
37. See *Taishō Tripitaka* 大正新脩大藏經T. 2085.
38. Relics are frequently preserved and displayed in glass containers and reliquaries. In Venice, in the Treasury of St. Mark's Basilica, gold and

- enameled gold-work reliquaries sit side by side with striking late-antique vases of glass.
39. “Pagodas” are the tower-like architectural reliquaries housing the relics of the Buddha in East Asia and are rather different from the reliquarial mounds of India. Smaller portable reliquaries are also extremely popular.
  40. Sharf, “The Buddha’s Finger Bones,” 38.
  41. Lee, *Surviving Nirvana*, 212–220.
  42. See Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism: 1900–1950* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 345.
  43. Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, 36–50.
  44. The corpus of so-called Pure Land scriptures comprises two Indian texts: the Larger and Smaller Sukhāvāṭīvyūha sūtra (Scriptures on the Land of Bliss), which exist in various Chinese translations, as well as the *Guan Wuliangshoufo jing* 觀無量壽佛經 (Scripture on the contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life), which is likely of Central Asian origin. These were interpreted and commented upon by eminent medieval monks and Pure Land patriarchs, notably Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542), Daocho 道綽 (562–645), and Shandao 善導 (613–681). On Pure Land funerary practices, see, for instance, Daniel B. Steverson, “Death-Bed Testimonials of the Pure Land Faithful,” in *Buddhism in Practice*, edited by Donald S. Lopez (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 592–602. For a translation, see Luis Gómez, *The Land of Bliss* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1997).
  45. Alan Cole, “Upside Down/Right Side Up: A Revisionist History of Funerals in China,” *History of Religions* 35, no. 4 (1996): 322.
  46. See Sharf, “On Pure Land Buddhism,” 310.
  47. See Sharf, “On Pure Land Buddhism,” 319.
  48. See Faure: “Relics and Flesh Bodies” and “Les cloches de la terre.”
  49. See Jan Kiely, “The Charismatic Monk and the Chanting Masses: Master Yinguang and His Pure Land Revival Movement,” in *Making Saints in Modern China*, edited by David Ownby, Vincent Goossaert, and Ji Zhe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 70.
  50. See Jiayao An, “Glass Beads Found at the Yongningsi Temple,” *Journal of Glass Studies* 42 (2000): 81–84; Dohrenwend, “Glass in China”; and Braghin, “Polychrome and Monochrome Glass of the Warring States and Han Periods.”
  51. W. Perceval Yetts, “Notes on the Disposal of the Buddhist Dead in China,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, July 1911, 703.

52. Yetts, “Notes on the Disposal of the Buddhist Dead in China,” 712.
53. Yetts, “Notes on the Disposal of the Buddhist Dead in China,” 706. In 1930, Yetts became the first lecturer in Chinese art and archaeology at the School of Oriental Studies at the University of London. In 1932, he became Professor of Chinese Art and Archaeology at London University until his retirement in 1946.
54. See Cen Xuelü 岑學呂, *Xuyun fashi nianpu* 虛云法師年譜 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 1995). For Xuyun, see also Daniela Campo, *La construction de la sainteté dans la Chine moderne: La vie du maître bouddhiste Xuyun* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2013). See also Xuyun, *Empty Cloud: The Autobiography of the Chinese Zen Master*, translated by Charles Luk (Longmead: Element Books, 1988).
55. Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 277–280.
56. See Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, 324–325, and Johannes Prip-Møller, *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries: Their Plan and Function as a Setting for Buddhist Monastic Life* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1967).
57. Francesca Tarocco, “Charismatic Communications: The Intimate Publics of Chinese Buddhism,” in *Concepts and Methods for the Study of Chinese Religions III: Key Concepts in Practice*, edited by S. Trevagnin and P. Katz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 113–132.
58. Wen-jie Qin, *To the Land of Bliss*, 2001. Distributed by Documentary Educational Resources, Watertown, MA. docued@der.org.
59. Qin, *To the Land of Bliss*, min. 32.23.
60. Qin, *To the Land of Bliss*, min. 37.10.
61. Personal communication to author, Shanghai, November 22, 2018.
62. X. Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China*, 63.
63. An, “Glass Beads Found at the Yongningsi Temple.” The temple was built in 516 and destroyed by lightning in 534. The site was excavated in 1994. Its “magnificent nine storey pagoda” is mentioned in the famous record of Luoyang’s Buddhist temples, the *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記, compiled by Yan Xuanzhi 楊銜之. See W. J. F. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsiian-chih and the Lost Capital (493–534)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), and Yi-t’ung Wang, *Record of the Buddhist Monasteries in Loyang* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).
64. On Venetian glass and the *conterie* see Francesca Trivellato, *Fondamenta dei Vetrai: Lavoro, tecnologia e mercato a Venezia tra sei e settecento* (Roma: Donzelli, 2000).

65. For a recent example of the continuing relevance of Xuyun relics in contemporary China, see the blog of the prominent Buddhist nun Shengong, available at <http://www.skamrta.com/contents/1175/12309.html> (accessed December 18, 2019).