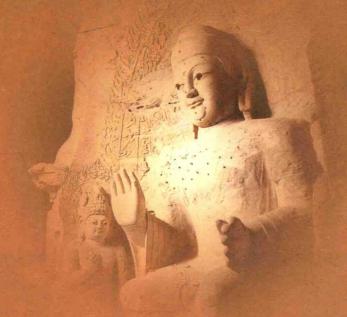


Nie Huangui Translated by Li Li and Wang Li

YUNGANG GROTTOES AND NORTHERN WEI



YUNGANG GROTTOES AND NORTHERN WEI:

A DYNASTY CARVED ITS NAME ON ROCK

NIE HUANGUI

Translated by Li Li and Wang Li

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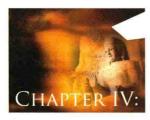
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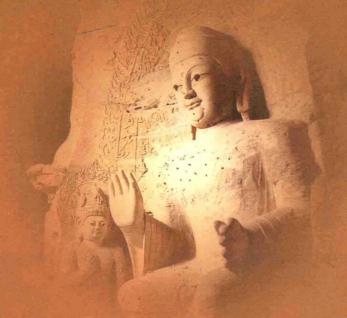


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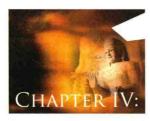


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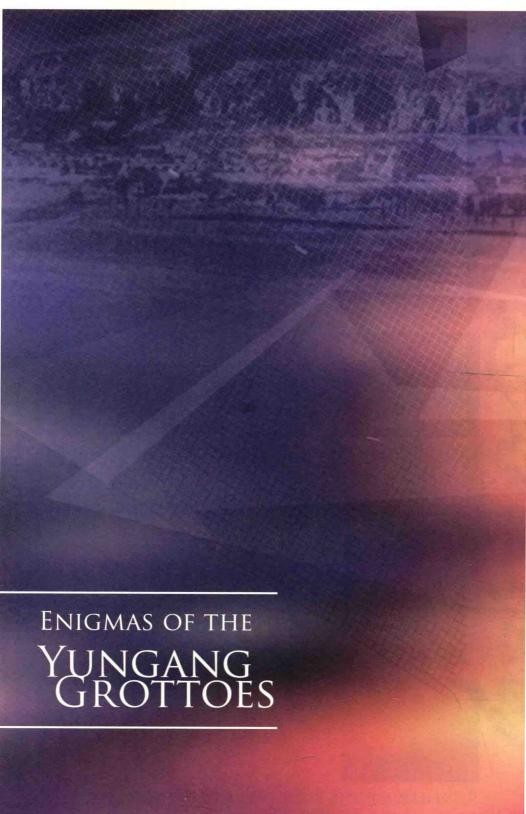


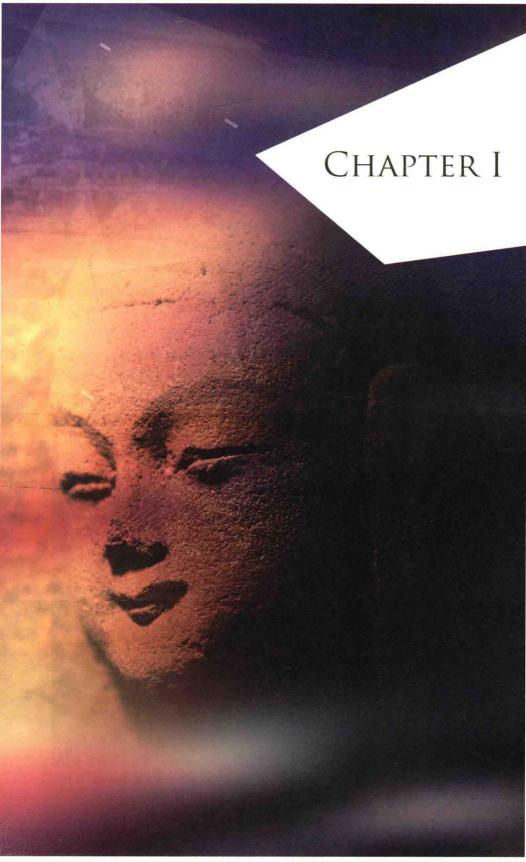
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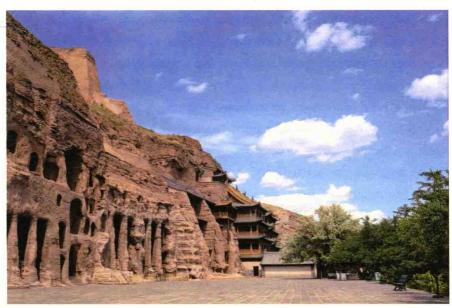
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The approach to the Yungang Grottoes requires a journey through a 1,500-year-long historical tunnel. The approach also requires the difficult task of probing the secrets of one of the most mysterious dynasties of Ancient China.

The dynasties of the Qin (221BC-206BC), Han (206BC-220AD), Tang (618-907), Song (960-1279), Yuan (1279-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) are explicit and identifiable, but the Northern Wei (386-534), which carved its name on the Yungang Grottoes in Wuzhou Mountain is rather vague and mysterious, especially the legendary Xianbei nationality.



The 5th to 13th of the Yungang Grottoes, the panoramic view from the 5th to 13th of the Yungang Grottoes.

The Dunhuang Grottoes, a sutra repository of world cultural treasures, were carved in the second year (366AD) under the reign of Jianyuan of the Qianqin Kingdom. Unfortunately, fatuities and damages have led to the loss of rare treasures. I have often been affected by this enormous national tragedy which overlapping the horrifying havoc cause to Yuanmingyuan, the garden of gardens.

The historical literature on the discovery of the Yungang Grottoes is unbelievably and sadly limited. Amid vast and numerous classics, researchers have only found a short description with dozens of characters in the Commentary on the Waterways Classic: Luoshui River (Shui Jing Zhu, Luoshui), fragmentary records in the History of Northern Wei: On Buddhism (Wei Shu, Shi Lao Zhi) and a concise inscription in the Stele for Rebuilding Grand Grotto Temple in Wuzhou Mountain in Western Capital of the Jin Dynasty (1115-1234). In addition, thousands of Buddha statues in various sizes, looks and postures have left us with numerous mysteries.

Once upon a time, I dreamed that the Yungang Grottoes might have had an undiscovered sutra repository that might one day be discovered and unveiled. It is a dream I have pursued consistently. Throughout the past 15 centuries, the Yungang Grottoes have been telling the world of their past glory and the dream of a dynasty and a nationality, and their politics, economy, culture, Buddhist history, as well as their immortal and amazing art that ranged from music to sculpture, painting, costumes and more.

A series of enigmas under the mysterious veil of the Yungang Grottoes are like a cluster of fragrant and fantastic buds on a vigorous plum branch. When and who first started carving the Yungang Grottoes? What does the "First Mountain in China" mean? Why is the third grotto was vacant at the beginning? Why does the primary statue in the thirteenth grotto have a black stone on the instep? What is the relation between the Tanyao Five Grottoes and the five kings? What does the dual-Buddha statue symbolize? What is the origin of the Six Beauties and the enigmas of the Yunzhong Stone Chamber, the Cold Spring in the second Grotto and the inscription "Deep in the Clouds" (Yun Shen Chu)"? There are many others.

It is these enigmas that highlight the unique charm and eternal enchantment of the Yungang Grottoes. They are like the glistening smile rippled on the face of the Buddha. Who can clarify the Buddha's expression? Is it noble, exclusive, merciful, compassionate, lenient, pitying, solicitous or charitable? The appreciation of the smile and expression from any angle allows one to experience lofty sentiments and plenty of poetic imagery. The smile is purely connotative and connotatively pure. It is the smile of the Xianbei nationality and an expression of the Northern Wei Dynasty.



The Sitting Buddha in the 11th Grotto built between 494 and 525.

Wuzhou Mountain shortens distances. No star is eternal in the

heavens and no flower perfect on the earth. However, a piece of a petal may bring fragrance for a whole spring, and a drop of rain may reflect a dazzling season.

The enigmas of the Yungang Grottoes present an overwhelming silence. As the saying goes "silence is Zen", thus, the Yungang Grottoes are like majestic Zen. Empty, pure and clear, Zen, the wisdom of the oriental world, stresses communication of the soul instead of literatures and sutras. Ch'ien Chung-shu gave a beautiful explanation of silence: "Dante said even the sun is silent in hell (Nell'inferno dove il sole tace). Silence can be deemed as a transparent status for the audition, just like emptiness and clearness a solemn and quiet status for the vision. Silence makes people hear the sounds unheard under normal conditions, moralists hear the words from their innermost, and poets hear the approaching of twilight and