WEI SHOU ON BUDDHISM 1)

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INTRODUCTION.

Wei Shou 魏收 is the author of the Wei shu a History of the Wei Dynasty, which, according to our author, ruled over varying portions of North China from 399 to 550 A.D. A more impartial view, however, recognizes the end of the Northern Wei in 534 when it split into two halves, an Eastern and a Western, which reigned on to 550 and 556, respectively. This is not the place to give a detailed biography of the author and his ancestors, yet a few words regarding them are necessary to a fuller understanding of the work which is here translated.

We know from the table of contents of his history that Wei Shou composed an autobiography, but the fortunes of time have

1) It is a pleasant duty to acknowledge here the great debt owed to my friends for help in the preparation of this article. The work was undertaken at the suggestion of mon maître, Professor Paul Pelliot, who gave generously of his time to help me with whatever I deemed a difficulty. Since leaving Paris in the summer of 1930, I have read thru the essay with my friend and teacher, Professor Mei Ti-shêng 梅迪生 (Kuang-ti 光迪 ). May they accept this expression of my profound gratitude.

For a brief history of the compilation which contains this essay v. JAOS, 52, pp. 35—45.

This article has been accepted by Harvard University as my thesis for a Ph.D. in Chinese.
preserved it to us only as quoted by later historians. Therefore, of the three biographies of Wei Shou which are to be found in the Dynastic Histories (Wei shu 104, Pei Ch'i shu 37, and Pei shih 56) I use more particularly that of the Pei shih, also the other two are useful for textual comparisons.

Our author's ancestry is traced back to a certain Wei Wu-chih 無知 (unknown elsewhere) of the Former Han, but we receive no information beyond names until he reaches his grandfather, Wei Yüeh 順, and especially his father Wei Tzu-chien 子建. The former was prefect of Chi-yin 濟陰 (in western Shantung), probably in the third quarter of the fifth century (he married the daughter of Li IIsiao-po 李孝伯, who died in 457, v. Wei shu 53, and Pei shih 33. The latter held several important positions as governor of province in the last years of the Northern Wei, and died in 533 at the real age of 59 or 62, our sources varying. That the family was Buddhist we know from two facts: Tzu-chien had as house-guest the monk T'an-ts' an 瑩燦 (unknown elsewhere), and Shou's childhood style 小字 was Fo-chu 佛助 (Buddha-helper, or The-Buddha-helps[-him]).

Wei Shou, the second son of Wei Tzu-chien, was a native of Hsia-ch'ü 下曲 in the prefecture of Chü-lu 鉅鹿 in the south central part of the modern Hopei. Born in 506 (he died in 572), his whole life was passed in an atmosphere quite similar to that which exists in China today: a period of transition, of banditry and guerilla warfare, such as has marked the beginning and end of every Chinese dynasty. Having received the Chinese boy's usual education, he entered, inevitably, the government service and, because of his literary capacities, held important posts in the imperial secretariat, where he remained, even when his own official position as governor of a province should have demanded his presence else-