

(BRIEF ABSTRACT)

Irony and Anguish in the Buddhist Art of Chen Hongshou

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An analysis of the Buddhist figurative art of Chen Hongshou (陳洪綬 1598-1652), examples of which will be presented together with evidence drawn from his literary collection (the *Baoluntang ji* 寶綸堂集) and from later critical and biographical writing about him, designed to show that the features of his *oeuvre* most often noted as distinctive — its so-called “eccentricity,” “archaism” “modernism,” or “strangeness” — are to be understood not only as a “painter’s aesthetic” but also as expressive of a religious sensibility. The distinctiveness of Chen’s Buddhist (and to some extent also his secular) art will be shown to be deeply rooted in his Buddhist piety and convictions as refracted in both the difficult circumstances of his personal life and the distressing turbulence of the age in which he lived, i.e., the period of the Ming-Qing transition.