

THE ASIAN BASELINE ESSAY ART

**By
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Epilogue By Pratipaditya Pal

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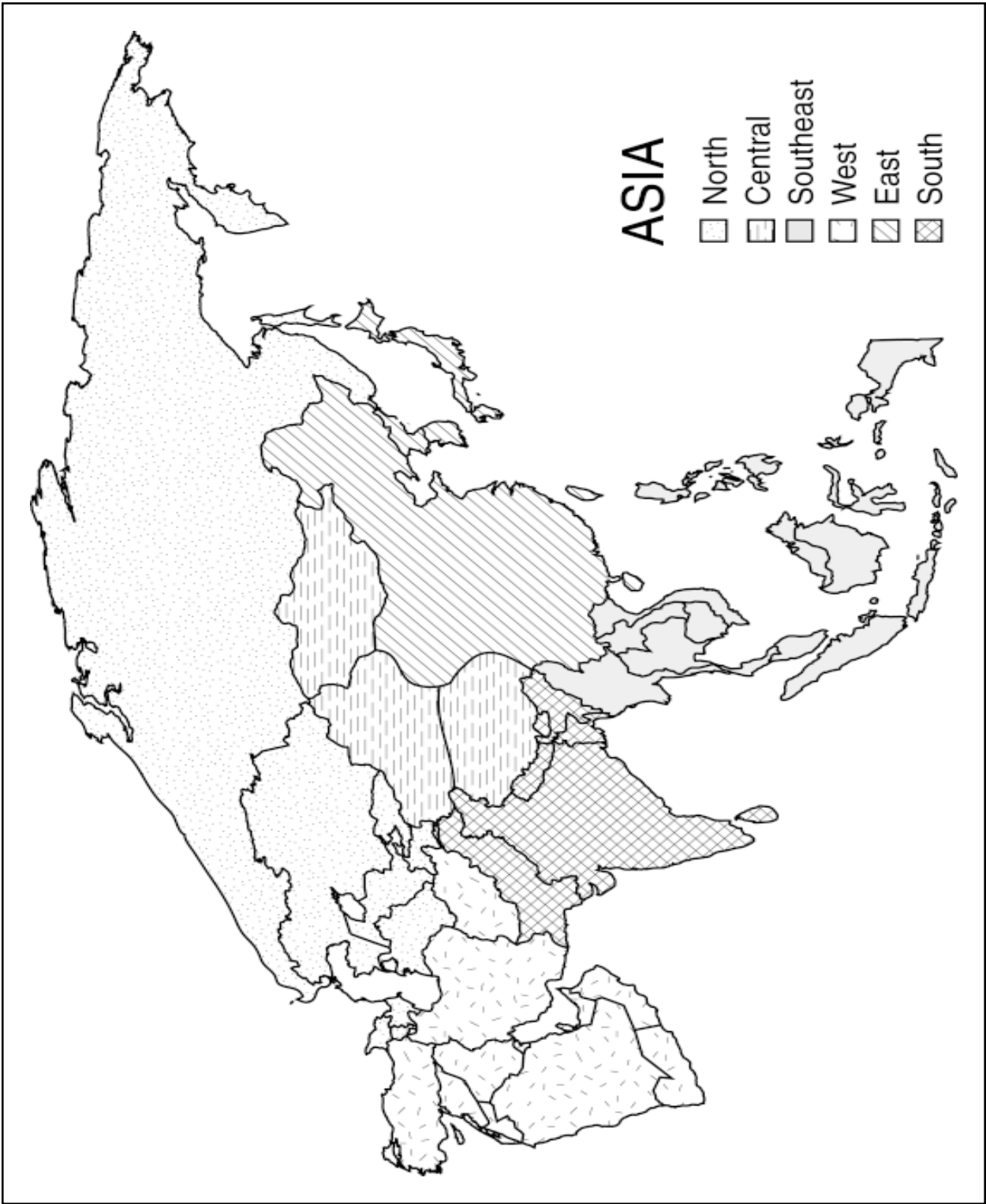
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Asian Art Essay

Introduction

The mission of this essay is to provide teachers, school administrators and other users with a resource that summarizes the major art traditions of Asia, explores the functions of the arts in the lives of Asian peoples and brings to light the contributions of Asian-American artists to 20th century culture in the United States. A specific objective is to help the reader understand the genesis of major art movements, the philosophical and religious principles that sustained them and the historical movements and events that propelled new images and ideas across the continent to distant cultures.

Exchanges of new ideas and artistic styles often occurred by peaceful means through the movement of merchants, missionaries and peaceable migrations. All too often, however, stylistic changes resulted from aggression and invasion. At such times, ironically, the vanquished people often conquered their captors by absorbing them into their culture.

Asian art is not easily described. Like Asia itself, the arts that have been created within its vast territorial limits for many centuries are extremely diverse. Artistic traditions were shaped by religion, the environment, politics and, above all, by the way each culture perceived the dimensions of existence beyond the phenomenal world.

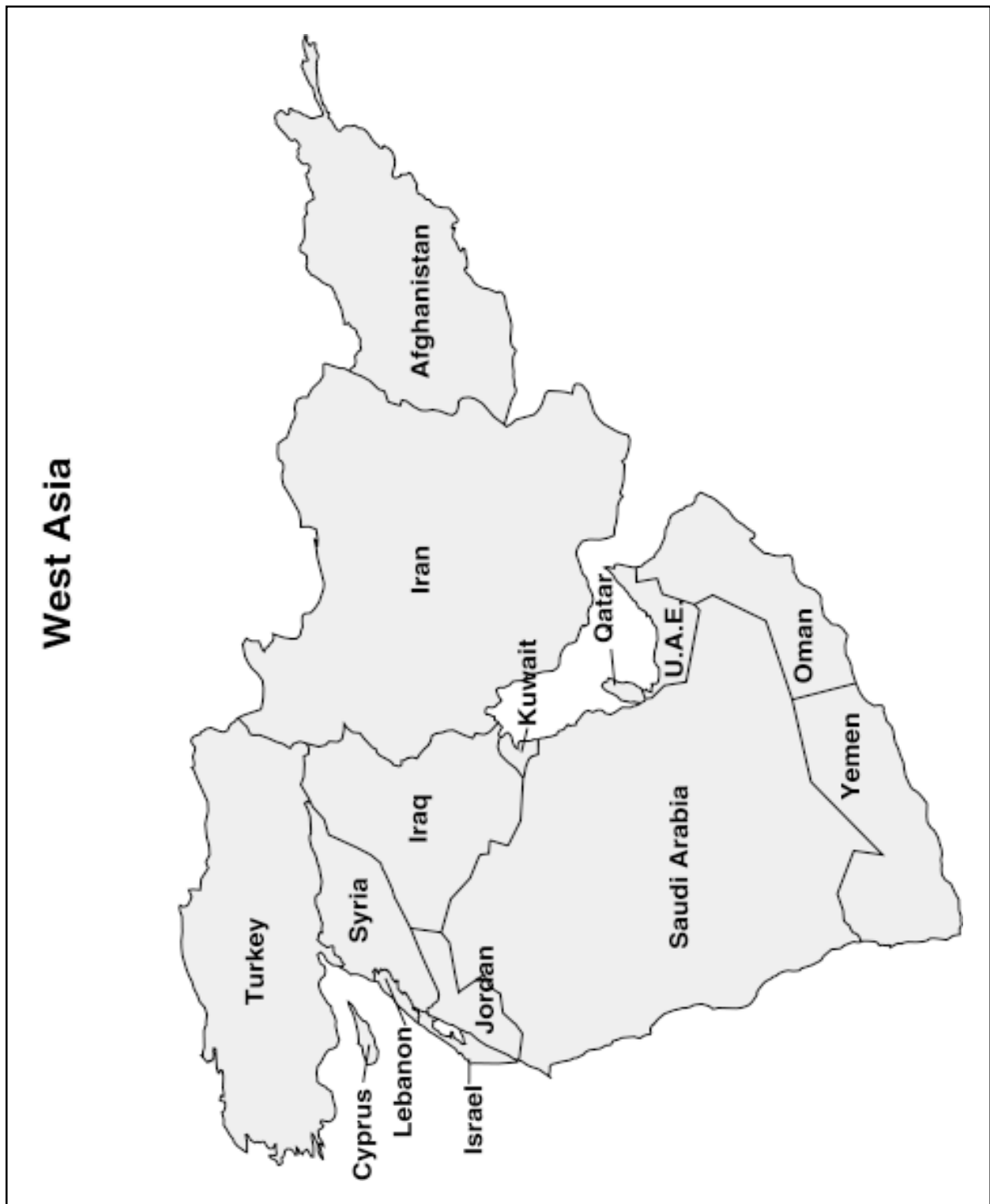
Asia is the largest continent on earth. Its western limit is set along the Ural Mountains in central Russia, above the Caspian Sea. From the Aegean coast of Turkey to its eastern most limits in Indonesia, Asia comprises a land area of 17,226,000 square miles. It has the highest mountains (Everest is 29,028 feet high) and the lowest inland depression (the Dead Sea is 1,312 feet below sea level).

Virtually every variety of landscape and type of vegetation is found in Asia: tundra at the very northern region of Siberia; prairie, grassy steppes and desert in central Asia; mountain forests, subtropical scrub and tropical rain forest on the coast of India and through-

out Southeast Asia. High mountains run across southern Anatolia into Iran, and also north to south from central Siberia to Central Asia. The Himalayan range begins in Afghanistan and develops its highest peak where it crosses northern India, Tibet and Nepal.

This configuration of landscape resulted in uneven distributions of resources and human settlements. Nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes of Turkic and Mongolian ethnicity inhabited the grassy steppes of southern Siberia and Central Asia. As their supplies of vegetation became depleted, they moved south into China and west toward Mesopotamia, seeking more favorable climates. These migrations resulted in new mixtures of populations, languages, mythologies and other cultural traditions. By 1500 BCE, migrations of Indo-European peoples entered Asian territories from the west. In East Asia, ethnic Chinese settlements were receiving movements of peoples from the north, segments of which entered Korea and ultimately Japan. Southeast Asians entered Indonesia and the Philippines, and perhaps traveled up the China coast into Japan. Thus, the encounter and mixture of “European” and “Asian” peoples who had their own ancient traditions engendered diverse cultural patterns.

The review of major historical traditions of Asian art that follows is organized chronologically in five regions: West Asia, North and Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia. Each of these regions is centered around a dominant culture that invariably exercised nurturing influences on the arts of its neighboring cultures and shared with them similar or related cultural traditions.



WEST ASIA

Introduction

This region incorporates nations of varied cultures and races that constitute the West Asian nations of Afghanistan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Within the West Asia Region we will consider such issues as the development of forms, technologies, cultural styles and interactions and their effect on creativity as West Asian cultures evolved and advanced.

To assure the success of the harvest and the well-being of the state, protective gods were afforded temples, images, altars and were gratified by offerings and rituals. Movements of pastoral, hunting and agrarian peoples searching for land had a decided impact on the dissemination of technologies among West Asian cultures. Most of all, this chapter addresses the human impulse to decorate and to make images, structures, and shapes that have functional, aesthetic and symbolic value or distinctive style. “Style” refers to the manner in which function and symbol define the intrinsic aesthetic substance of the culture.

Art Traditions of West Asia

The arts of West Asian cultures are based in traditions of pottery, metalwork, textiles, book and wall painting, stonework and calligraphy. While historical developments, conquests and cultural exchange played major roles in the formation and evolution of West Asian arts, the traditions listed above formed the core of artistic traditions. What follows are short summaries of these traditions that will later be talked about in socio-historical context.

Baked clay pots were produced by almost all West Asian peoples primarily for household use and later for decorative purposes. Pottery was usually monochrome and utilitarian. However, there were glazed wares which displayed technical virtuosity. Often decorative pottery was ornamented with themes from religious traditions and/or folk art of the specific region.

Metalwork being costly in time and materials has thus tended to be patronized by and directed at the ruling classes. Common metals used in West Asian artistry were silver, bronze, brass, copper and niello. The technical styles used were engraving, casting, and inlay. Court scenes and animal motifs were common themes in West Asian metalwork.

West Asian artistic textile works generally fall into two groups: silks and carpets. During the medieval period in West Asia, textiles were the most important artisanal industry. Silks were used mainly for ceremonial purposes. Uses included wall-hangings, robes, furniture coverings and fabrics with official inscriptions.

Carpets have an ancient and esteemed history in West Asia. Early carpets used simple geometric designs. Later, more complex designs contained varied use of color, increased geometric complexity, and floral and animal symbolism.

In West Asia, painting developed in both wall and book painting. West Asia has an ancient legacy of wall painting going back to the protoliterate period. Remains of such paintings reveal images of traditional subjects such as offerings, hunting, war and mythological scenes. Later, as royal patronage for such projects increased, estates and palaces were lavishly decorated with paintings, mosaics and relief works on the walls and ceilings of different parts of the buildings. Scenes depicted traditional subjects: enthroned princes, legendary kings and royalty enjoying the privileges of their stations.

During the Middle Ages a new class of wealthy merchants began collecting literary materials formally available only to royalty. This brought about a broadening of the subjects of West Asian book painting into history, folklore, parables, natural history, botany and astronomy. A distinctive West Asian style developed as a result. West Asian artists

created mythic worlds of bright colors and small figures set in miniaturized landscapes. This conceptual and two-dimensional approach continued uninterrupted by influence from Europe until the 17th century.

Writing has been the most honored of all of the arts in the cultures of West and East Asia for many centuries. The process of book production in workshops called upon the calligrapher to complete the text before the painter worked on illustrations and the illuminator added marginal decorations. An aspiring calligrapher spent many years under the tutelage of a master of a particular writing style absorbing the philosophical, aesthetic and technical imperatives of his craft.

The introduction of paper to West Asia after CE 751 through trade routes from China encouraged experimentation with new styles of writing. A variety of cursive styles were used. Gradually, various calligraphers standardized the proportions of letters and the spaces and connections between the letters. The imaginative master calligraphers experimented with the decorative possibilities of writing styles; designers were quick to apply calligraphic motifs to the decoration of architecture and furnishings and to a variety of objects of functional, ceremonial, personal and religious usage.

Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia, the land of two rivers (the Tigris and the Euphrates), was the well-spring of urban civilizations during the 4th millennium BCE. In the north, agriculture was a major enterprise because the land was kept fertile by means of extensive irrigation systems. However, the region was constantly plagued by devastating storms, sudden weather changes, droughts, floods and other natural disasters.

Sumer, the southern region of Mesopotamia, had few natural resources; hence, materials that were essential to architecture and sculpture (wood, metal ores and stone) were imported from neighboring regions.

During the Protoliterate Period (3500-3000 BCE) simple interchange by trade developed into complex commercial transactions which required methods of recording agreements between buyer and seller. Such necessities were managed by the use of cylinder seals and, eventually, before the end of the period, a new invention—writing. Information was “written” in cuneiform (wedge-shaped characters impressed into wet clay tablets).

The walls of these stone seals were engraved with figurative or abstract designs. When rolled on soft clay, the cylinder seal left an image of the design in relief on the clay surface. That image served as the signature of the person who owned the seal. Before writing was invented, the engraved image had to be unique to the owner, since its impression on a jug of wine or on a clay tag attached to a bushel of grain established its ownership. As Sumer prospered, the demand for seals provided a greater challenge to the artisan’s imagination. Many seals were carved of gemstone and worn as pendants.

Cylinder seals as well as flat stamp seals were used extensively throughout West Asia. They are visual documents of ancient architecture, daily life, religious beliefs and mythology. Seal designs of this period represented animals in processions, in combat, and in formal heraldic arrangements. Narrative compositions show priests and deities performing rituals before shrines and in temples.

The unit of government in Sumer was the city-state. Although the Sumerians were ruled by monarchs, city-states were owned by a patron deity, and the king was answerable to the god. The arts of this era were steeped in religious doctrine and ritual.

The gods were perceived to be inherent in all natural elements and forces. However, when represented in sculpture or painting, they were visualized as humans with special attributes. Vegetation deities, for instance, sprouted branches from their bodies. They were also perceived to behave very much like mortals—rationally and fairly at times, emotionally and violently at others. Sumerians served the needs and comforts of their deities and celebrated their majesty at festivals with affection and respect.



Temple architecture represented the Sumerians' vision of the kind of residence devout mortals must provide for their deity. The sanctuary for worship was placed on a platform or a stepped mound made of sun-dried brick roughly pyramidal in shape, known as a ziggurat. As resources of building stone were inadequate in southern Mesopotamia, sun-dried brick became the basic construction material of the region. The immense mounds of ziggurats as well as the temples were brick constructed.

Viewed from the flat arid plains of Sumer, ziggurats conveyed an image of a sacred mountain soaring toward the sky. At Warka, much of the White Temple (3200-3100 BCE) survives, the earliest of three sanctuaries known at this time. The walls of the White Temple are thick and reinforced with buttresses. The exterior was given a coat of white-wash to dress the dull brick surface and to make it visible from a distance. Sumerians took great pride in having labored to provide a fitting abode for the deity.

Late in the Protoliterate Period, stone vessels were decorated with figures of heroes, lions and bulls in combat. Carved in deep relief, these images resembled free standing sculpture. Animal combat themes symbolizing the violent collision of natural forces—a common preoccupation among Sumerians—became an important motif in West Asian art (**Figure 1**). Monstrous creatures composed of animal heads and human bodies often symbolized the presence of the deity or even represented the deity.

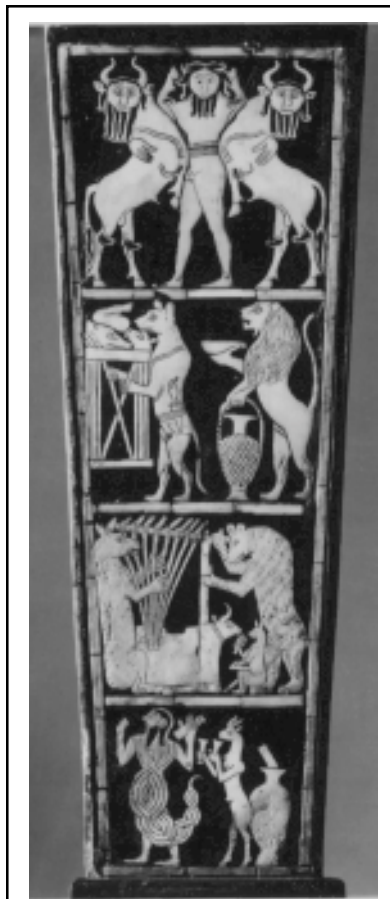


Figure 2 *Bull-Headed Lyre Plaque*. Gold, Lapis Lazuli, Shell. Ur (Iraq). By Permission of the University of Pennsylvania Museum (neg. #000000).

During the Early Dynastic Period (3000-2340 BCE), great temple complexes were built on elevated platforms in the center of the city-states. The god who ruled over the temple also ruled the city. Temple architecture was now more elaborate than in the previous period, and free-standing sculpture was added to the interior. An image of the deity was placed in a niche over the altar, and votive figures of stone and bronze were given spaces in the temple. The statue of the deity was believed to have been charged with a life-force of its own.

The West Asian genius for rich and effective surface design began at this time and developed into a strong decorative tradition throughout the Middle Ages and into the modern era. During the Early Dynastic Period the surfaces of furniture and a variety of objects were inlaid with ivory, shell and stone which were adhered to the surface with bitumen (a thick, black asphalt material). The well-known figurative decorations of shell and mother-of-pearl on the *Bull-Headed Lyre Plaque* from Ur provides an example of a superbly-skilled and imaginatively-conceived decorative composition (**Figure 2**).

The uppermost register shows a mythological hero protecting several bull-men. Scenes on the next two registers feature animals engaged in human activities: a wolf and lion serving food and drink, an ass playing a harp which is held secure by a bear, and the last register shows a scorpion-man and a gazelle standing on its hind legs holding several goblets.

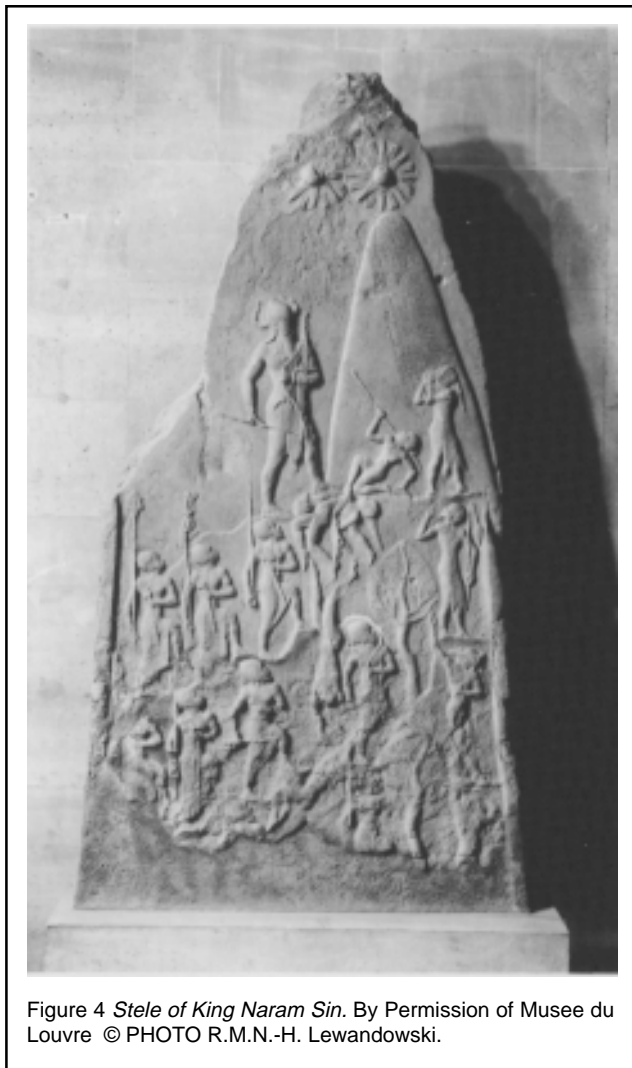


Figure 3 Assurbanipal Killing a Lion. © The British Museum

Traditional cylinder seal designs continued as new styles and subjects were developed during the Early Dynastic Period. These had a significant influence on the later arts of Mesopotamia, and also on the arts of Persia and Greece. Early in the period, seals were engraved with a variety of abstract designs that resemble woven textiles. This is called *Brocade Style* because the design had neither symbolic nor narrative content.

At a later stage, representations of mythical beings in combat and other physical entanglements, narrative scenes of bull-men and heroic figures struggling with lions and bulls, lions attacking gazelles and processions of stags and gazelles were deeply carved in high-relief with a bow drill. The impressions made by these seals resemble miniature wall reliefs, forecasting the relief sculptures that appear on commemorative steles (tablets) and on palace walls of later Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian dynasties (**Figure 3**).

In 2340 BCE Sargon of Akkad united Central and Southern Mesopotamia creating a political unit that consolidated the independent city-states under Akkadian rule (2340-2180 BCE). Despite strong cultural differences between Sumerians and Akkadians, the visual arts fared well under the rule of Sargon and his successors. Sumerian art traditions



were carried forward, but the emphasis shifted from inventive ideas and decorative excellence to a preoccupation with power and hierarchy. The *Stele of King Naram-Sin* (c. 2280 BCE) is a good example. It is a dramatic tribute to authority earned by a king and sanctioned by the gods (**Figure 4**).

Under Akkadian rule, Mesopotamian cylinder seals no longer represented a fairy-tale world of mythological beings, but instead depicted the harsh realities of aggression and violence on earth. They also demonstrated a change in the relationship between mortals and their divinities. The intimacy between worshipper and deity that was once felt by the Sumerians was now lost. Piety and submission before inaccessible and intimidating gods was to prevail throughout the remaining history of Mesopotamian civilization.

Sumerian culture was revived (2125-2025 BCE) when the Akkadians were overthrown and Sumerian rule was reestablished under the kings of Ur. The traditional arts originated by the early Sumerian culture were also carried forward by the kingdom of Lagash (modern Telloh).

With the intent of reviving ancient Sumerian culture, Gudea of Lagash returned the authority over the state to the gods, and his position as king to that of their pious servant. A number of full-figured portrait sculptures, probably of Gudea himself, were found in the remains of his temples.

In 1750 BCE, the sixth king of Babylon, Hammurabi, defeated a coalition of northern states and took total control of Mesopotamia. A famous stele shows Hammurabi as the lawgiver, personally presenting the law directly to the sun god, Shamash (**Figure 5**). This majestic relief, carved above the inscribed legal code of Hammurabi, shows the king actually confronting the deity with matters of ethical behavior and law. In the inscription, Hammurabi refers to this encounter as a rare privilege. Shamash, the “Lord of Justice,” is seated on his throne, looking intently toward the king. Hammurabi gestures as he speaks to his lord, thereby establishing a remarkable instance of interaction and communication between a deity and a mortal.

By 1350 BCE, the Assyrians had established an independent homeland in northern Mesopotamia. Assyria ultimately expanded into the most powerful empire in all of West Asia, until its demise in 612 BCE. Assyria’s early capital, Assur, was named after their patron god, who was a descendent of the ancient gods of Sumer. Assur, continuing the Akkadian tradition, represented the powers of natural forces. Assyrian kings did not approach their gods directly, worshipping divine symbols such as the sun disc with the tail of a bird, a sacred tree, a god’s throne or a sculptural likeness of the god on an altar.

An example of early Assyrian relief sculpture is seen in the *Altar of Tukultininurtia* (1243-1207 BCE). The king is portrayed in two positions, approaching and kneeling before an altar that is an exact duplicate of the actual altar (**Figure 6**). These are carved in low relief in flat linear style with details incised more than modeled, although the face, abdomen and feet of the figures are rendered with some fullness. Hair, beard and garment

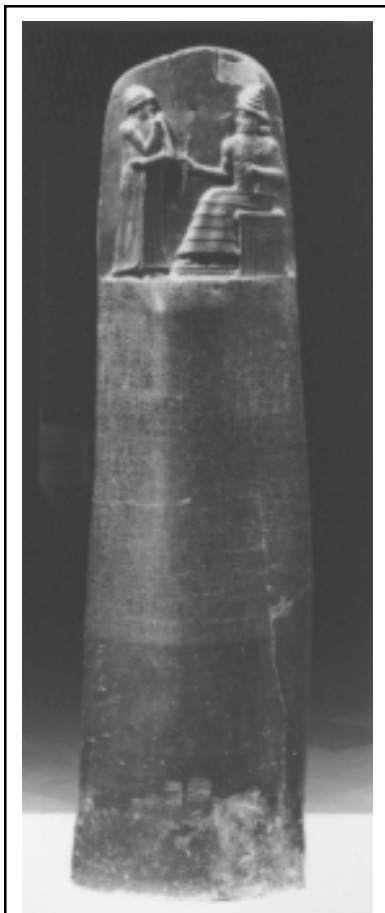


Figure 5 *Stele with the Law Code of Hammurabi*. By Permission of the Musée du Louvre. © PHOTO R.M.N.-H. Lewandowski.



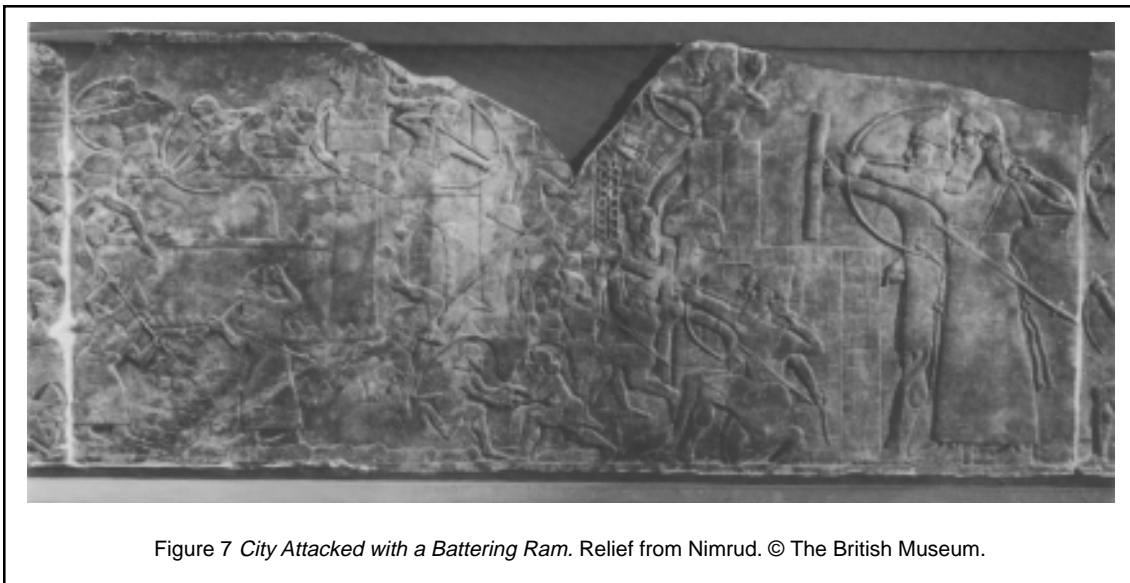
Figure 6 *Alter of Tukultinurta I. Assur.* By Permission of the SMPK Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Berlin. © BPK, Berlin 1998.

fringes are indicated as flat decorative patterns. The king's devotions are directed to a symbol of the deity, Nusku, placed on the sacred throne. Much of later Assyrian wall painting and relief carving adhere to the basic canons displayed in this work.

Mythological beings and composite creatures which adorned the walls of great palaces at Nimrud and Khorsabad reinforced Assyrian identity with the legacies of Mesopotamia's mythic past. However, what interested Assyrians most of all were the events and activities of contemporary kings and heroes. Every last detail of the processions and scenes of combat was given lavish attention by the sculptors and painters.

Through the late Assyrian Period (c. 1000-612 BCE), each Assyrian king maintained strong defenses in order to hold intruders at bay, maintain control of Babylon and protect trade routes. Assyrians adopted two architectural features from the nearby Hittite people into major sculptural components for their palaces. Orthostats (stone slabs embellished with relief sculpture), were placed as decorative elements over the plinths of palaces and fortifications. The Assyrians also adopted the Hittite practice of placing large, stone-carved guardian lions or sphinxes at their city gates.

The remains of palaces that have been unearthed from demolished cities testify to the lavish wall paintings and relief sculptures that once adorned the royal households. In Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad, the main entrance to the throne room was "guarded" by an ensemble of winged, human-headed bulls and attendant geniuses, whose gazes confronted anyone who approached the throne room. Their purpose was not just to intimidate



a potential enemy, but also to impress upon even a friendly emissary the power of the king. Within the throne room, the visitor is again confronted by a brilliantly-painted relief carving showing the king, victorious in battle, trampling his slain enemies.

At some time between 745 and 727 BCE, a period of Assyrian decline, the compositions of wall relief carvings were no longer limited to large figures that fill the space from top to bottom. The figures of kings and other protagonists were placed in the context of a narrative, in settings that were viewed from a high vantage point. This concept of representing activity in an open space enabled the sculptor to portray the king in action, the victor in combat and the hero at hunt. Examples of this method of composition may be seen in a series of orthostats from Nimrud and Kuyunjuk (**Figure 7**).

Sumerian art traditions were continued in Babylon through the period of domination by the Assyrians. After the fall of the Assyrian state in 612 BCE, Babylon renewed itself under the rule of Nabopolassar, a former Assyrian commander, and his son, Nebuchadnezzar II. A Babylonian boundary stone of the 8th century BCE (**Figure 8**) shows that the tradition of fully-rounded sculptural forms persisted from Hammurabi's time to the Neo-Babylonian period, despite Assyrian dominance over Babylon.



Figure 8 *Boundary Stone of Mardukapaliddina*. By Permission of SMPK Museum fur Ostiasiatische Kunst, Berlin. © BPK, Berlin.



Figure 9 *Ishtar Gate, Babylon*. By Permission of SMPK Museum fur Ostiasiatische Kunst, Berlin. © BPK, Berlin.

Nebuchadnezzar's *Ishtar Gate*, executed in baked-brick, which was used for the construction and repair of temples and palaces, was glazed in tones of yellow and red against a background of deep blue. Patterns of bulls and dragons against the dark blue walls were made of molded brick, enriching the texture of the surface in relief (**Figure 9**).

In 539 BCE the Persian King Cyrus the Great took over the neo-Babylonian empire. This event marks the end of a politically independent Mesopotamia. Thereafter, the region was ruled by a succession of foreign dynasties. The foregoing chronological review of Mesopotamian history and art sets the stage for a more global view of the growth of the visual and plastic arts of West Asia. Artists observed and experienced what their predecessors accomplished and what was coming forth from unfamiliar people, cultures and

sources. With hindsight we can now look at the art of 5000 years ago and marvel at the challenge of invention in the arts as knowledge and technologies were in their infancy. So far, we have followed a narrow course of art development in West Asia. However, we will not fully understand these developments until we have looked at the arts of other West Asian cultures and their relationship with those of other regions.

Persia

Iran and Persia are names that are now used interchangeably. Although the borders of Persia were once much larger, its culture, for the most part, was centered within its current borders. The ancient history of Persia is characterized by a great ethnic mix of migrating populations. The arts of Persia flourished while each group contended for land, resources and power.

The earliest indications of native artistic genius are found in ceramics dated around 3000 BCE from Susa (southwestern Persia) and Persepolis (central Persia). These inventively-shaped bowls and beakers were wheel-thrown and skillfully decorated in black over buff-colored clay with ingenious interlocking abstract patterns of birds, quadrupeds and human images. Characteristic of these wares is the stylized image of mountain sheep, whose great circular horns are admirably integrated into the particular curvature of the vessel.

Painted and unpainted pottery of unusual shape and ornamentation were found at a number of sites. Jugs of about the 8th century BCE, modeled with simplicity in the form of animal and human figures, are unique to the southwest region of the Caspian Sea around Amlash. Painted wares from Siyalk in the Kashan area (1000-900 BCE) are decorated in an unconventional manner. The base of a pitcher-like vessel is ringed with a radiating sun pattern in reddish brown brushwork over the clay bisque, with abstract patterns in seemingly random arrangements around the body (**Figure 10**).



Figure 10 *Painted Vase*. From Necropolis B at Syalk.
By Permission of Musee du Louvre. © PHOTO R.M.N.

Bronze casting by Luristan artisans in western Iran were in production early in the first millennium BCE. They include bronze belt buckles, horse trappings and processional standards employing human and animal motifs in a variety of interlocked positions, many recalling themes and motifs which originated in ancient Mesopotamia.

Standard ornaments consist of antithetically posed beasts (ibexes, goats, lions or composite beasts), sometimes grasped by a central humanoid figure, in stylized decorative shapes fashioned into openwork plaques meant to be seen held up high in funerary or ritualistic processions (**Figure 11**). These images were totemic emblems which identified the name of a tribe or clan.

Persian vessels of silver and gold go back to the 3rd millennium BCE; however some of the finest examples of Iranian gold and silver date from about 1000 BCE. Notable from the Persian Achaemenid dynasty of the 6th century BCE are drinking and libation cups called Rhytons made out of terra cotta as well as silver and gold. Rhytons are tall



Figure 11 *Pole Top*. Luristan.
By Permission of Musee du Louvre.
© PHOTO R.M.N.



Figure 12 *Rhyton*. Armenia.
© The British Museum.

cups, the base of which turns into the foreparts of animals, and sometimes even human heads. An example of a Persian Rhyton of the 6th century BCE, terminates in the foreparts of a ram (**Figure 12**).

Cyrus the Great founded the Achaemenid dynasty in 550 BCE creating a pan-Persian empire that was to rule Persia and a substantial portion of Western and Central Asia for two centuries. During the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, Darius (r. 522-486 BCE) expanded the empire to its fullest, from Egypt and portions of Greece, to the Indus Valley in India.

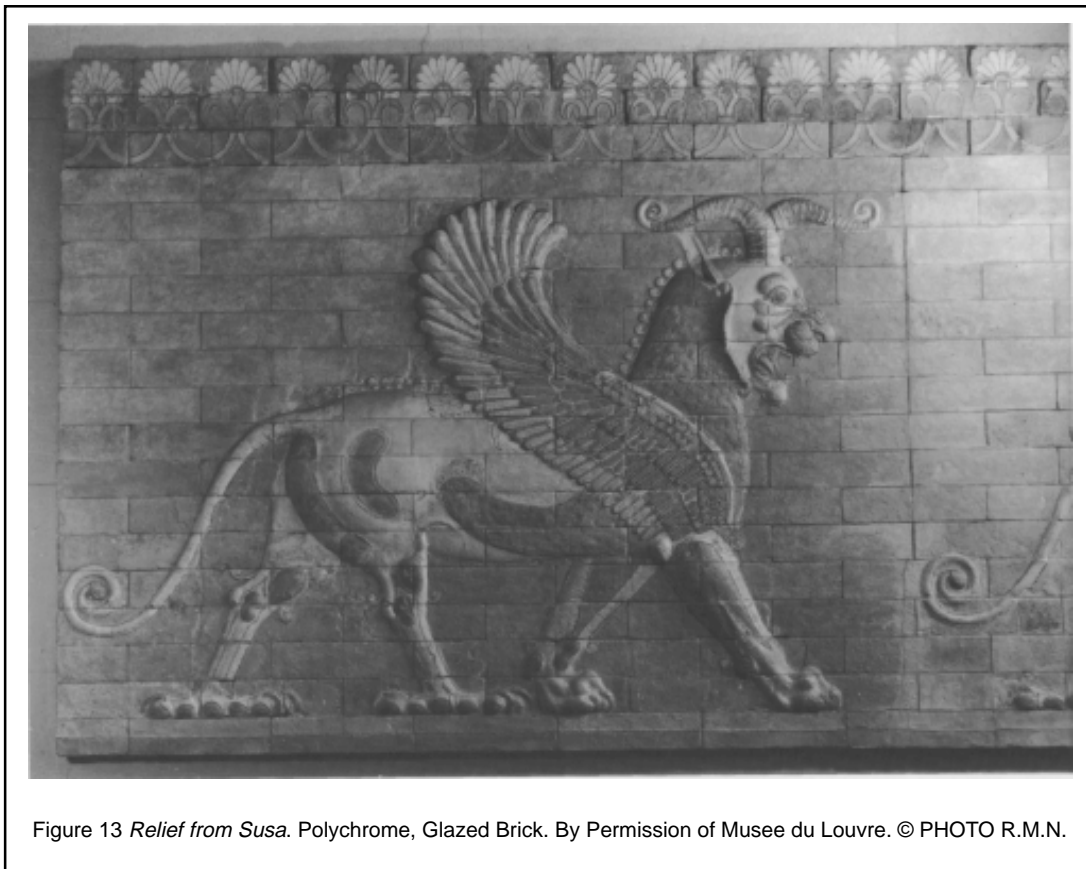


Figure 13 *Relief from Susa*. Polychrome, Glazed Brick. By Permission of Musee du Louvre. © PHOTO R.M.N.

This political development was significant for the arts of Persia. Darius had artists and artisans brought to his court from every corner of the empire. These diverse styles, techniques and motifs synthesized into a distinctive imperial Persian style which restricted sculptural depth to flattened relief. The tomb of Cyrus, one of the few remains of his capital at Pasargadae, the magnificent palace of Darius at Persepolis and the rock-hewn tombs of the Achaemenian kings at Naqsh-e Rostam display evidence of Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Greek motifs, styles and techniques.

The winter residence of Darius in Susa is now in total ruin; however, portions of the glazed brick walls of the audience hall, and the frieze of lions, bulls, dragons and archers that decorated this hall have survived (**Figure 13**).

Alexander of Macedonia conquered Persia in 323 BCE, but his early death caused the Persian Empire to be dispersed among his various allies. West Asia became the realm of the Seleucid Dynasty until it was absorbed into the Roman Empire. Ultimately, the Parthians, a migratory people from the steppes northeast of Persia, asserted their power as masters of the Persian plateau, establishing their capital at Ctesiphon, near Baghdad (250 BCE-CE 224).

Sassanian rule began in CE 224 when Ardashir, the head of a noble Persian family from Fars, and his successors saw their victory over the alien Parthian regime as a renaissance of Persian power, culture and religion.

Ardashir founded his city, built in a circular plan, in southern Fars (modern Firuzabad). The ruined shell of his suburban garden palace, which still stands, shows an interesting domed structure that features squinch supports for the domes and huge arched entryways (iwans) crowned by domes. This is an architectural form that was adapted to Persian mosque design at a later time.

At Naqsh-e Rostam, sited between Shiraz and Persepolis, a series of relief sculptures of Ardashir were carved into the base of a high cliff that also contains the rock-cut tombs of Achaemenian kings. Significant is the proximity of the image of Ardashir to that of Darius and other Achaemenian kings. This connection added great prestige to Ardashir's kingship and dynasty.

The impulse to associate Sassanian prowess and majesty with Achaemenian esteem became a tradition. In a relief of Ardashir's son Shapur (CE 241-272), the king is seen humiliating the Roman Emperor, Valerian, whom he defeated and took captive in CE 260. Mounted on his horse, Shapur looks down upon the Roman Emperor on his knees, with arms outstretched in a pleading gesture. This work breaks with the tendency of Persian art to compose symmetrically balanced figure groups and to evade intense interaction among protagonists. We see formal and casual conversations, heretofore, depicted in the reliefs of Babylon but rarely seen in Persia before the late 15th century painter Bihzad expanded the canons of Persian painting during the Timurid period.



Figure 14 *A Musical Beverage Dispenser.*
By Permission of the Topkapi Palace Museum.

The Umayyad period which began in CE 661 brought a linear style of wall painting from Central Asia into West Asia. Umayyad palaces were lavishly decorated with paintings, sculpture, mosaics and relief work. Paintings depicted a variety of traditional secular subjects, including scenes of enthroned princes and groups of legendary kings.

Representations of kings and princes enjoying entertainment by dancers and musicians, receiving gifts, drinking wine with companions and otherwise attended by servants and lovers become recurrent subjects in Persian art of later periods.

Movement of Turkish tribes from Central Asia in the 11th century had significant impact on the arts and politics of West Asia. One of the more persistent tribes, the Seljuks, invaded Persia in 1038 and Anatolia in 1071. Before Seljuk rule in Persia ended

in 1157, important innovations were achieved in the arts and the architecture of the cultures they had adopted.

Arab painting of diverse styles flourished during the 12th and 13th centuries at a time when a new middle class of wealthy merchants were collecting illustrated literary materials formerly available only to royalty. In the Byzantine world, book production focused on theological scriptures such as the Acts of the Apostles; but also drew from a rich legacy of Greek scientific treatises which captured the interest of the Arab world as well. In addition, in urban centers such as Baghdad and Damascus a broad interest also developed in history, folklore, parables, natural history, botany and astronomy (**Figures 14, 15**).

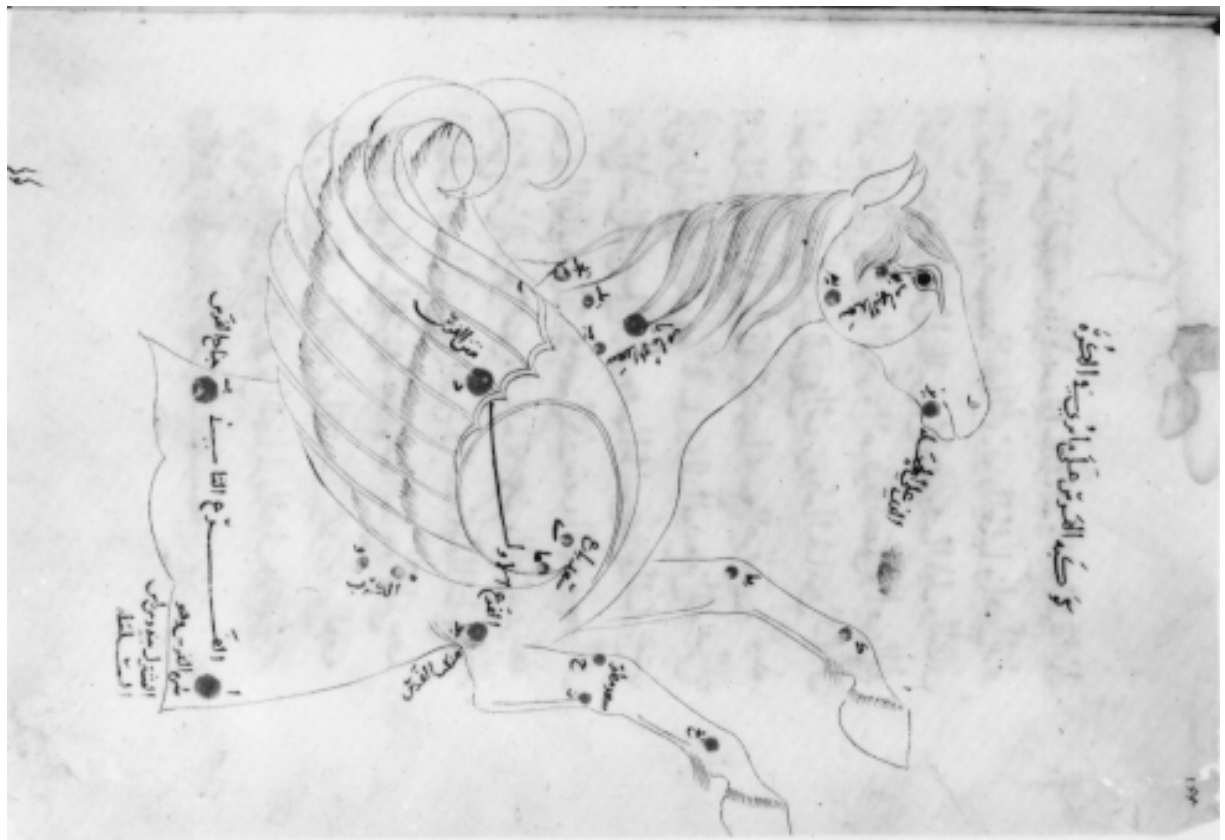


Figure 15 *The Constellation Pegasus*, from a copy of *A Treatise on the Fixed Stars*.
By Permission of The Bodleian Library, Oxford.

All across central Persia, wherever Seljuk communities were established, mausolea, minarets and mosques demonstrate how effectively they united rich decorative elements of brick to the overall masses of their structures. The bricks were arranged in infinite combinations of abstract patterns, sometimes painted with a turquoise glaze. By laying the bricks in different depths the design emerges in patterns of light and shadow subtly changing at different times of the day.

The Mongol conquest of Persia and the enthronement of the Ilkhan dynasty in Tabriz was accomplished in 1256. Persian painting which thrived at the court workshop are distinguished by the infusion of Chinese painting style and motifs into the pictorial



repertory of Persian artists. These include figures in horizontally-oriented landscapes rendered red in subtly graded tones of ink, finely executed brush work and a palette of subdued color. *Alexander Fights the Habash Monster* (**Figure 16**) portrays Alexander mounted on his steed plunging toward a winged unicorn (or rhinoceros) ready to strike with his sword. The rugged landscape is rendered in Chinese style; however, the colorfully garbed hero and his troops reflect West Asian pictorial tradition.

The period between the demise of the Ilkhanid Mongol Dynasty (1335) and the end of the 14th century was one of change in the arts of Persia. Illustrated manuscripts reflected increased interest in Persian history, mythology and poetry.

The Jalayirids, a Persian Dynasty of Turkic origins, ruled western Persia and Mesopotamia from Baghdad during the 14th century. A Jalayirid manuscript of the poet Khwaju Kirmani (dated 1396) established the classic format and quality of Persian miniature painting style that would continue through the Timurid and Safavid periods.

Two paintings from this manuscript are models for compositions representing figures in a landscape and figures in interior architectural settings. They illustrate scenes from a romantic poem which tells of the hero, Hamay, and the fair Hamayun. The two met

in combat in the clearing of a beautiful landscape. Hamay throws his helmeted opponent to the ground, but discovers Hamayun disguised as a warrior. The lovers and their horses are modestly scaled against a luxuriant landscape of exotic rock, and a flowing stream. The ground is covered with small flowering plants and birds circle overhead. The scene is one of drama and romance presented from a high vantage point—the ground tilted upward to provide a clear view of the action.

Another painting from the same manuscript depicts a scene of life in Hamay's palace the day after he and Hamayun were married (**Figure 17**). To reveal what is happening throughout the house, the artist simply removes the obstructing wall. This compositional device provides the picture with its basic composition and a serviceable method and supreme opportunity to portray a variety of architectural spaces, garden settings and figure groups.

The arts of Persia advanced into a period of high artistic achievement between 1370 and 1500 under the rule of the Timurid Dynasty whose founder, Timur, was of Turco-Mongol origin.

Paintings commissioned by Timur's son, Shahrukh, and his grandsons during the first half of the 15th century projected a world of make-believe. Perfectly proportioned people inhabited well-ordered environments of elegant palaces and gardens; a depiction of *Hamay and Hamayun in a Garden* (1430) represents a classic image among Timurid paintings.



Human emotion and action are minimized. The love felt by the two young people is expressed not by their faces or gestures, but through the poetry of the luxuriantly flowering garden, the exquisite color and the elegant demeanor of their slender figures.

At the same time, images of a different type appeared in Baghdad. A manuscript of the Diwan of the Jalayirid ruler and poet Sultan Ahmad Jalayir, dated 1403, is illustrated with marginal drawings representing pastoral scenes of nomadic life. Although the artist's brushwork is highly refined, the subjects of his black and white drawings show humble nomads caring for their flock in a rural environment, completely contrary to the formal style of the Timurid courts.

During the late Timurid Period, at the court of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, the master painter Kamal al-Din Bihzad and his circle of artists invested human images with a new naturalism, expressiveness and psychological depth of character.

One of the few manuscripts universally accepted to be by the master's hand, the *Zafarnameh* "Book of Victory" (**Figure 18**), celebrates the power and accomplishments of Timur in a series of eight double-page illustrations. A scene depicting the construction of the great mosque of Samarkand abounds with artisans, laborers, supervising foreman and architects fully engaged in the daily tasks of construction. Virtually everyone acts and interacts, and all possess individualized features and expressions. Bihzad's orchestration of color integrates the energetic activity contained within this composition.

The style and scale of Timurid architecture was established by Timur, the founder of the dynasty (r. 1370-1405) principally to convey to all who beheld his capitals, that he was a powerful world ruler. One of his earliest buildings, a shrine dedicated to a 12th century Sufi holy man, Ahmad Yavasi, forecasts essential characteristics of Timurid style. The shrine in Turkestan City combines a mausoleum and a complex of meeting and lecture rooms for visitors. Entrance through a high portal leads to a domed meeting room and beyond this a smaller domed tomb chamber. The undersides of both domes are lavishly decorated with maqurnas (stones projecting from the face of a wall). Maqurnas were used in multiple clusters to decorate the undersides of domes and vaults, the capitals of col-



Figure 18 *The Building of the Mosque at Samarqand*. By Bihzad, from the *Zafarnama*. (John Work Garrett Collection ff. 359v-360r).
By Permission of The John Work Garrett Library of the Johns Hopkins University.

umns, the lunettes over doors and many other architectural forms. The exterior reveals that the entire structure was once faced with yellow and blue glazed brick arranged in diamond-shaped geometric Kufi inscriptions and calligraphic friezes of tile mosaic. The bulbous domes covered with turquoise tiles raised high above the roof are visible from great distances.

The workshops of Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-1576) at Qazvin produced two major illustrated manuscripts which virtually define the characteristics of traditional Persian painting in its most developed phase, before it absorbed European influences. Tahmasp's rendi-



Figure 19 *Portrait of Riza*. By Mu'in, Isfahan, 1673. Garrett Collection of Islamic Manuscripts no. 96. Manuscripts Division. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. By Permission of the Princeton University Library.

tion of the *Shahnameh* (1525-1535) is virtually a compendium of traditional motifs that were handed down from one generation of artists to the next since the 14th century. However, the fashionable Safavid garments that are worn by heroes in combat and enthroned kings alike endow the images of the Tahmasp *Shahnameh* with a poetry and elegance that is distinctive to this period. Their high turbans which are wrapped around a projecting red baton and ornamented with feathers add a distinctly decorative Safavid grandeur to the dramatic content of the picture.

For his manuscript of *Khamasa* (quintet of poems) by the poet Nizami, Shah Tahmasp drew upon a collaboration of his most eminent calligraphers, painters and illuminators. The illustrations are framed by a wide margin depicting in gold illumination animals and birds dispersed among trees and flowering plants. The settings of the illustrations are mostly

based on traditional compositions of royal gardens, palace throne rooms and landscapes of open country and wilderness.

Upon the death of Shah Tahmasp, painters, calligraphers and artisans dispersed to royal patrons in other areas of Persia and India. Others offered their works and services in the open market. Single sheet pages of calligraphy, drawings and paintings were created as album pieces for collectors. Painters and gilders turned to decorating walls and ceilings of private homes.

Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629) initiated another renaissance of Persian culture, drawing upon the legacy of its art and adapting its tradition to the political and economic needs of the new era. Isfahan, his chosen capital in the Persian heartland, underscored his intent to identify his regime with the nation's glorious past. Illustrated manuscripts of the *Shahnameh* and other traditional Persian literary works continued. However, the two leading painters of the late 16th and the 17th centuries, Riza-i Abbasi (c. 1565-1635) and Mu'in Musavvir (d. 1698), Riza's student, made their reputations—and hence are best known today—for their superb album pieces (**Figure 19**).

The Arabian Peninsula

Art activity on the Arabian peninsula has not been investigated or recorded in any depth except for Yemen to the south and Jordan to the north. Four ethnic groups in South Arabia (today Yemen) have been identified: the Mineans, Hadramites, Qatabanians and Sabaeans. The Kingdom of Saba (Sheba) was mentioned in Assyrian records of the 8th century BCE and, of course, in the Old Testament. Much has been learned about the kingdom of Qataban as a result of excavations conducted in 1951.

Investigations into the cemetery of Timna, capital of Qataban, uncovered sculptures of cast bronze and stone. Most conspicuous among these are a pair of bronze sculptures representing young boys mounted on lions and funerary and votive figures of men and women, and architectural fragments of bulls and ibexes carved out of small blocks of alabaster, marble and sandstone. Funerary stele were composed of single figures in rigid frontal pose carved in high relief on a rectangular block of stone. The person's name was inscribed on the base. South Arabian figures tend to be short and stocky and carved with utter simplicity. Their wide staring eyes offer the only visual connection to the sculpture of Mesopotamia. Some figurines are simply a head with a long neck on an inscribed base. Some figurines whose heads are missing are carved in a simplified Hellenistic style with emphasis on the twist of the body and the heavy folds of their garment. Some of the stele

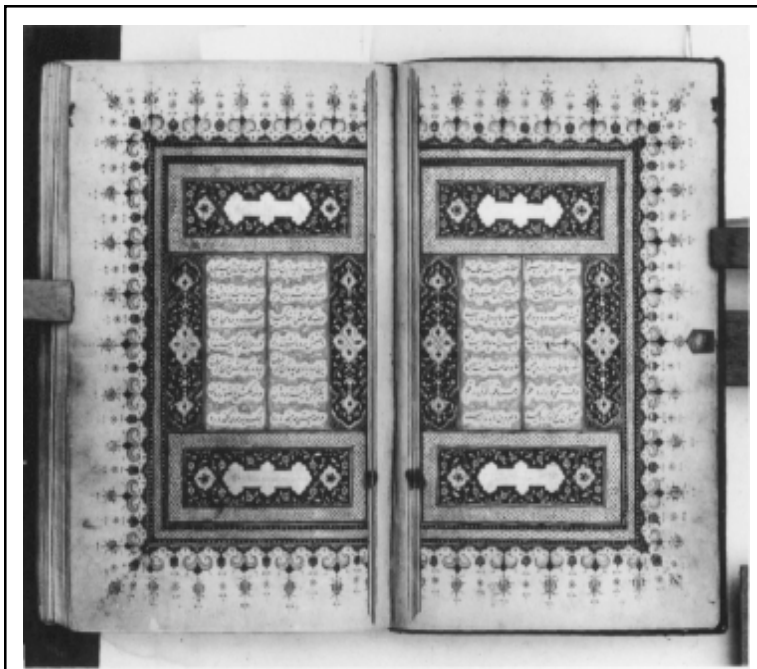


Figure 20 *Mir Khasuau*. Title Page, Delhi.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913.

are composed of a single head of a bull projecting from the back panel. Architectural decorations are made up of ibex heads, facing forward, carved in horizontal friezes along a stone beam.

About the year CE 600, in the Arabian city of Mecca, the Prophet Mohammed received divine revelations—invoking the Holy Koran, the text for the new monotheistic religion, Islam. Mohammed gained recognition as the Prophet of Islam as he preached to Meccans. Islam became the spark that propelled

Arab expansion into the Levant, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Egypt in the 7th century.

As Arab conquerors settled in other countries and regions, they could contribute little to the artistic life of their populations. In time, however, Muslim Caliphs became among the most avid supporters and collectors of all genres of art, figurative works included. Images of the human figure were used unsparingly in Arab cultures to illustrate books and to decorate walls of secular buildings and a multitude of objects. However, human images were—and still are—forbidden in mosques and tombs and for sacred scripture. For these works, it is customary to use geometric patterns, stylized plant and floral motifs and inscriptions from the Koran (**Figure 20**).

For the Arabs who eventually found themselves governing in unfamiliar environments, the mosque became a center of Arab culture. However, the mosques themselves differed in architectural style from one region to the next. Indigenous styles, available building materials, and decorative traditions determined the plan and appearance of the

mosque. When a church or a temple was converted into a mosque, interior and exterior elements specific to Islamic tradition were added to the existing building.

Whatever the form of the mosque, it had to have meaning for Arabs and for those newly converted to Islam. Two major Muslim religious monuments, the Dome of the Rock (691) in Jerusalem (**Figure 21**) and the Great Mosque of Damascus in Syria (706), proclaimed the glories of the faith and the triumph of Islam as a global power.

The Levant: Ancient Canaan and Palestine

Ancient Palestine occupied approximately the same land area as the modern state of Israel and the West Bank. Sited on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean between modern Egypt and Lebanon, The Levant served as a corridor for migration, conquest and trade. By the mid-7th century, the Levant's cultural center, Jerusalem, became sacred to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. By the end of the 1st millennium CE, this tiny domain was known by the epithet, "The Holy Land."

Prior to the 4th millennium BCE, prehistoric Levantine cultures, like those of Phoenicia and Anatolia to the north, believed that fertility figures were necessary aids to help bring about successful harvests. Amply-proportioned nude fertility goddesses of clay were produced in quantity by Levantine artisans. However, an ivory carving of a slender young female figure from Beersheba is crafted with such artistry and skill that the work is regarded as a fine piece of sculpture of the Chalcolithic Period (4500-3150 BCE), and has been dubbed the "Beersheba Venus" (**Figure 22**).

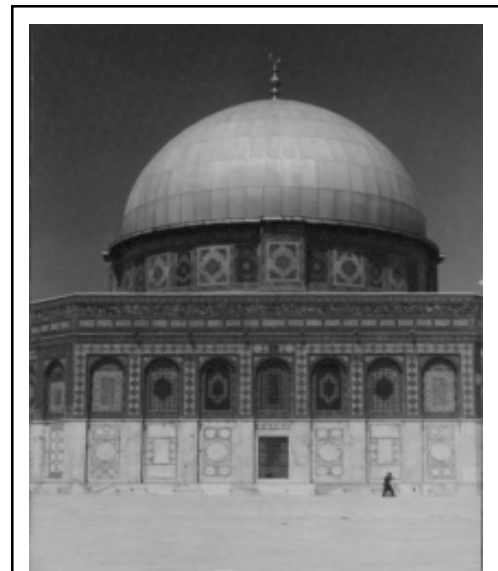


Figure 21 *Dome of the Rock*, Jerusalem.
All Rights Reserved, Bear Goodman, Portland.



Figure 22 *Ivory Figurine of Pregnant Woman*. Beer-Sheba, Chalcolithic Period. 4th millenium BCE. By Permission of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority.



Figure 23 *Lid of Box*. Ivory. By Permission of Musee du Louvre © PHOTO R.M.N.

In the late 2nd millennium BCE, carved and engraved objects of ivory were made and traded in Megiddo, often adapting motifs, techniques and styles of neighboring cultures. Most smaller ivory carvings were intended as ornamental inlays for furniture, cosmetic boxes, mirror handles and the like (**Figure 23**).

A small casket also found in Megiddo is decorated on all four sides of its exterior with two roaring lions and four winged sphinxes resembling in miniature guardian creatures of Assyrian palace gateways. The guardian beasts may have been protective symbols to safeguard precious objects contained in the casket. This work is dated around the 13th to 12th centuries BCE.

Cast copper objects of the same era, part of a hoard of over 200 objects found sequestered in a Judean Desert cave, are also of unusual interest because of their strange shapes and ornamentation. Some of these objects, such as mace heads and standards, are decorated with projecting goat and ibex heads, birds and other knobbed and horned forms. Such decorative motifs have no precedent in West Asia at this time, but they are seen later in the metalwork of other regions.

Ceramics of this period also run to unusual forms. Human and animal sculptures support vessels of different sorts. Ossuaries, or portable tombs which held the bones of the deceased for secondary burial, were imaginatively crafted into various architectural and zoomorphic shapes.

Gradually, the culture of the Levant turned to the West. Greek cults were brought in, and Greek was spoken by the cultured elite—all much to the opposition of the traditional Jewish culture.

Roman forces took the Levant from the Seleucids in 63 BCE and made it a vassal state of the Roman Empire, renaming the region Palestine. During the remaining years of Roman and Byzantine rule, Levantine arts were governed largely by imperial styles and materials. Jewish and Christian artisans used the same materials, techniques and motifs for synagogues, churches and domestic architecture. Mosaics, for example, were commonly used by Levantine artists regardless of religious affiliation.

The Levant: Phoenicia (Lebanon and Coastal Syria)

Phoenicians were great seafaring people, and as such made a significant contribution to the development of ancient West Asian art by encouraging the interchange of ideas and styles among Egyptian, West Asian and Mediterranean cultures. Phoenicia had one natural resource that was eagerly desired by all of its neighbors, and especially by Egypt: its forest of tall and resilient cedars.

Their cities of Byblos, Sidon and Tyre were built along the coast. Evidence of early Phoenician art was found in the royal tombs of Byblos, the oldest of these cities. And, since trade relations with Mycenaean Greece and the kingdom of Egypt was brisk, objects made by Phoenician artisans incorporated motifs which originated in the workshops of their Aegean and Egyptian trading partners. Phoenician ivory carvings are recognized by their frequent use of Egyptian motifs and proportions, inlays of colored glass and overlays of gold leaf.

Phoenicia's great reserves of stone made possible the construction of a huge temple complex at Baalbek in the 1st century CE. The most elaborate and ornate Corinthian-style structures known, Baalbek's temple dedicated to Jupiter is stunning by the mere height of its columns and the size of the stone blocks which support them, some measuring as much as 62 feet in length.

Syria's history and art also always have been tied to its neighboring kingdoms and cultures, sharing with them the traditions as well as the incursions that swept across Asia. Its port at Ras Shamra (Ugarit) and its trade center at Palmyra in the Syrian Desert saw the passage of commerce to and from Egypt, the Aegean and markets to the east. During the 2nd millennium BCE, Syria was importing sculpture, jewelry, metalwork and other products from Egypt, and local artisans adapted the forms, techniques and motifs to their own works.

Orthostats (relief-carved stone panels) used to cover the lower part of walls and the foundations of buildings are first seen at the palace of Yarimlin in Tel Atchana. They were later widely employed by the Hittites of Anatolia and the Assyrians. Also discovered in this palace was a stone sculpture of superior quality, perhaps a portrait of Yarimlin himself, unique among all others produced in the 18th century BCE, suggesting that highly skilled sculptors must have been working in Syria at this time.

Examples of stone stele were adapted from Egyptian originals, but executed in very flat low relief. The pose of a weather god from Ras Shamra is borrowed from the traditional stance of an Egyptian king in combat. Yet, despite this and other similarities, the

horned headdress, the long curled style of hair, the implements held in both hands and the undulating mountain design below identify the Syrian qualities of this image (**Figure 24**). Engraved and repoussé gold plates from Ras Shamra incorporate motifs of animals, animal combat and charioteers at hunt, which originated in various West Asian and Mediterranean traditions.

Syria was a major source of ivory during the 2nd millennium BCE, hence its long tradition of ivory carvings for jewelry, furniture decorations and functional objects such as combs and mirror handles.

In the 12th century BCE, a mysterious and violent people devastated Phoenicia and Anatolia. The Hittite people were driven out of central Anatolia and into northwestern Syria where they established a number of small disunited kingdoms. Here, they encountered the Aramaeans, a Semitic people who took full control of central and northern Syria by the 11th century BCE.



Figure 24 *Stele with Weather-God*. By Permission of Musée du Louvre © PHOTO R.M.N. - H. Lewandowski.

Syro-Hittite art of the 1st millennium BCE reflected the combined tastes of a new aristocracy of Syrian, Hittite and Aramaean extraction, with strong Assyrian influence. Entry gates of citadels, palaces and temples were given sculptures of guardian lions and composite mythological beasts. Crouching lions had their jaws open in a menacing grimace; other beasts included large griffins and scorpion men. Orthostats and stele were also carved with images of mythological beings such as bull-men, winged geniuses and weather gods, as well as scenes of combat and the hunt.

Mesopotamian influence prevailed into the 9th century BCE, although Anatolian influence is also discernible. The differences between the two traditions are seen in a colossal rock relief 18 feet high at Irviz, in Anatolia, showing the king of Tyana presenting an appeal directly to the god Sandas. The sculptural style is Syrian-Mesopotamian; however, interaction of mortals and gods are extremely rare in Mesopotamia, the Hammurabi stele being an exception. Hence, despite its style, this sculpture has a deep connection to the traditions of Anatolia.

Syria, like its neighbors, suffered the invasions and dominance of Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Mongols and Turks over the centuries that followed. Syrian decorative arts, manuscript painting and architecture flourished through the Byzantine, Umayyad, Abbasid and Mameluk periods.

Cyprus

The island of Cyprus is strategically sited in the upper corner of the eastern Mediterranean, where Turkey meets the northern shores of Syria. A well-watered central plain is bordered by mountains: the Krenya along the north, and the Troodos, rich in copper deposits, on the south. These resources, and a developed smelting industry, placed Cyprus in the center of international trade activities, and into the political conflicts which crisscrossed the eastern Mediterranean.

During the Bronze Period (3000-2500 BCE), Cypriot potters produced ceramics of unusual types. Some sprout horned animal heads, while others are shaped into zoomorphic vases with extensions which terminate in animal and human faces (**Figure 25**). Miniature three-dimensional models were made depicting scenes of daily life, votive images in a shrine, religious rituals enacted by devotees wearing bull masks and holding snakes.

In the Late Bronze Age (1600-1050 BCE), Cyprus extended its international contacts from the Aegean to the Nile Delta. Cypriot craftsmen were producing jewelry, ivory carvings and bronze sculpture of high quality. Close artistic relations with Phoenicia is

recognized in a palm motif that was ubiquitous in both cultures. Applied to jewelry, metalwork, and to architectural detail, this unique palm design demonstrates how popular motifs can sometimes be identified with more than one culture.

Greek migration from the Peloponnese to Cyprus began before the collapse of the Mycenaean kingdom, which occurred around 1200 BCE. Cypriot swords and daggers made of iron were found in Greek burials, suggesting that iron may have been introduced into Greece by Cyprus.

Upon the collapse of the Assyrian empire (612 BCE) Egyptian rule followed, thereby bringing to Cypriot artists a taste for Egyptian art, developing a unique style of Cypriot sculpture based upon archaic Greek styles, modified by Egyptian elements.

The art establishment of Cyprus, like those of Phoenicia, served the development of West Asian art as entrepreneurs as well as producers of fine works of art. Such enterprise was as instrumental in fostering interactions of ideas, technologies, and styles between eastern Mediterranean and West Asian worlds as were the cultural forces that traversed Central Asia at a later time generating artistic reciprocity across the continent to the Pacific Ocean

Anatolia (Turkey, Asia Minor)

The Anatolian peninsula is the westernmost part of the Asian continent. Two Neolithic settlements dating to the early and mid-6th millennium BCE were unearthed at Hacilar and Catal Huyuk in south-central Anatolia. The latter site contained clay fertility figures, fragments of paintings and painted reliefs from the walls of dwellings and shrines, the earliest known in the world.

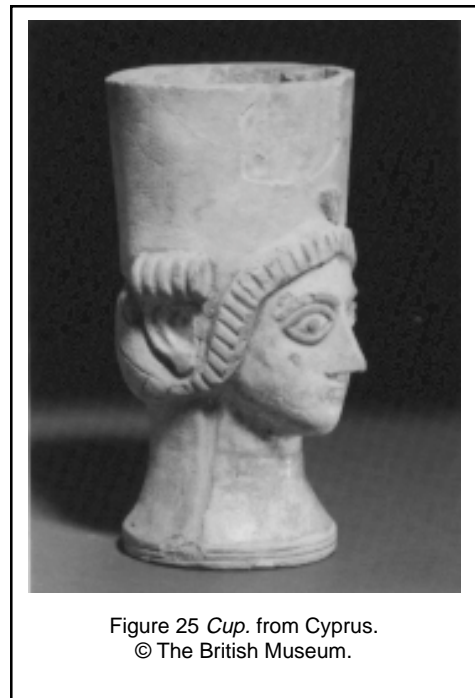


Figure 25 *Cup*. from Cyprus.
© The British Museum.

Further developments in Anatolian art occurred about 2500 BCE, after an interval of about 3,000 years. Having rich deposits of metal ores in the Anatolian highlands, artisans produced tools, weapons and ornamental objects of copper, silver and gold at a number of sites from Troy to the Kuban Valley north of the Caucasus.

Designs were inspired by jewelry and other objects from Sumerian city/states, which had advanced into the 3rd Early Dynastic Period. Having no metal resources of their own, Mesopotamian kingdoms filled their needs through trade with Anatolia. The rich material culture of Alacahuyuk, a city built by the Hattians, precursors of the Hittite people, developed during the Early Bronze Age (2500-2000 BCE).

The tombs of Alacahuyuk yielded a trove of significant bronze weapons, ornaments and gold vases. A number of the cast bronze objects are believed to be “ceremonial standard” ornaments. Some of these are circular disks, or diamond-shaped plaques, pierced with a latticework design and mounted on a horned fixture. Figures of bulls and stags were also fixed to the base.

The masterpiece of this hoard is the stag standard—a simple, but powerful image of an antlered stag, cast of solid bronze, with body decoration of silver inlay. That these objects were not merely decorative in purpose is attested to by the significance of the bull in Mesopotamia and the association of the stag to Hittite weather gods, as well as to “animal-style” art of Siberia.

Around 450 BCE, an Indo-European people who possibly were descendants of the Hatti occupied the Hatti city of Hattusas and created the New Hittite Empire (c. BCE 1450-1180). Like Alacahuyuk, the gates of huge blocks of stone were carved into guardian lions and symbolically secured by guardian deities and animals.

At an outdoor sanctuary at Yazilikaya, near Hattusas (modern Bogazkoy), relief sculptures were carved into the live rock depicting the full pantheon of Hittite gods and goddesses. One of these deities wearing a high pointed headdress and long flowing robe holds a diminutive figure of the king in his right hand. The king who is being protected by the god is identified as Tudhaliyas IV (c. 1250 BCE) by the double-headed eagle symbol carved behind the deity's head. The style of these relief sculptures is distinctly Hittite; the deep carving of the stone and the roundness of the forms reveal influence from Babylon.

About 1180 BCE, Hattusas was raided and destroyed by an unidentified people, thus precipitating the collapse of the Hittite empire. The devastation uprooted coastal communities of the eastern Mediterranean from Egypt to Anatolia and Thrace, inciting mass migrations away from these areas.

The post-Hittite period, through the 2nd millennium BCE, witnessed the formation of small kingdoms of various ethnic origins across Anatolia. The Hittite populations were driven southward out of the Anatolian plateau into northern Syria, settling at Carchemish, Zinjerli and Malatya among other kingdoms. Here they encountered Aramaeans, a Semitic Bedouin people from the Syrian desert.

"Neo-Hittite" art developed in the fragmented and unstable world of north Syria ruled by the Mitanni. Hittite émigrés maintained some aspects of their ancestral artistic traditions until Assyrian dominance began in the 9th century BCE. From this time forward, a distinctive north Syrian style advanced under Assyrian influence. Relief sculptures carved on stone slabs were widely used to decorate palace facades and orthostats, many with familiar themes: scenes of battle, weather gods, griffin, demons and kings enthroned, among others. The kingdom of Urartu developed in the Lake Van area, at the eastern end of modern Turkey, in the mid-9th century BCE and expanded east into the area that is now Armenia. Urartians excelled as metal workers. Drawing upon substantial resources of gold, silver and bronze from their mountainous environment, they produced furniture, jewelry and bronze vessels of extremely high quality. **(Figure 26)**



Figure 26 *Centauress*, part of a throne.
© The British Museum.

Émigrés from Greece began settling along the Aegean coast of Anatolia about 1000 BCE. Ionians and Aeolians were in the vanguard of this movement and thus made early contact with the indigenous cultures of the western regions of Asia. As they encountered Scythians, a people who lived in the Caucasus north of the Black Sea, a new style of ornamental metalwork was developed and dispersed across Central Asia and Siberia.

Anatolia, Syria and the Levant all came under Greco-Roman influence until the expansion of Arab forces in the 7th century. The influence of Christianity (late 3rd to 7th centuries) helped to develop a new perception of what art should express. Christianity was searching for a way to visualize the sacred image of Jesus appropriate to the aims of a church which was resisting life-like sculptures and paintings in their houses

of worship. Thus began a tradition of ornamentation of the church which used highly stylized mosaics and frescos applied to the surfaces of walls, domes and other spaces on Christian churches.

The finest producers of these were Greek artisans in Constantinople (Istanbul) who were in great demand and hence were often dispatched abroad, with the emperor's consent, even to Muslim clients such as the Umayyad Caliphs of Damascus. Christian communities were established in many areas of West Asia. Thus, churches, shrines and monasteries of local styles were constructed or hewn out of mountainsides—the focal center being Constantinople from the 4th through the 11th centuries.

The grandeur of imperial Byzantine architecture can be seen in the Hagia Sophia Church of Holy Wisdom built by the Emperor Justinian from CE 532 to 537 (**Figure 27**). It is a congregational basilica constructed so that the central nave rises to a great height,

supporting a large dome, without revealing its superstructure. Light is transmitted through arched windows at the base of the dome on the semidomes of the sanctuary, and on the side walls. The effect is an illusion of a weightless vault floating over an infinite space (**Figure 28**).

On the south side of the upper level, a portrayal of Jesus the Pantocrator from the 13th century demonstrates the masterful use of mosaic technique to create effects of light and shade and a sense of rounded form. The term Pantocrator refers to an artistic representation of the figure of Christ especially as a character from Byzantine art. Nevertheless, the artist still adhered to traditional Byzantine canon emphasizing icon-like linearity and stylization

(**Figure 29**). Nearby is a Pantocrator figure of the 11th century in a conservative Byzantine style abstracting the image, restricting modeling and emphasizing the two-dimensional linear qualities of an icon.

The bema of the apse, a semidome on the east end, has a mosaic image of the Virgin in majesty tenderly holding the Christ Child on her lap. This is a work of the late 9th century, after a century of iconoclasm was reversed and Christological images were officially allowed. In the 9th century, the interior of the church was refurbished, with icons lavishly executed in brilliantly colored mosaics. From this time through the 12th century, the arts of Byzantine cultures achieved their height in quality, craft and expression.



Figure 27 *Hagia Sophia*. Istanbul.
© Bettman Archives/Corbis Corporation.



Figure 28 *Interior, Hagia Sophia.*
By Permission of Hirmer Verlag Munchen.

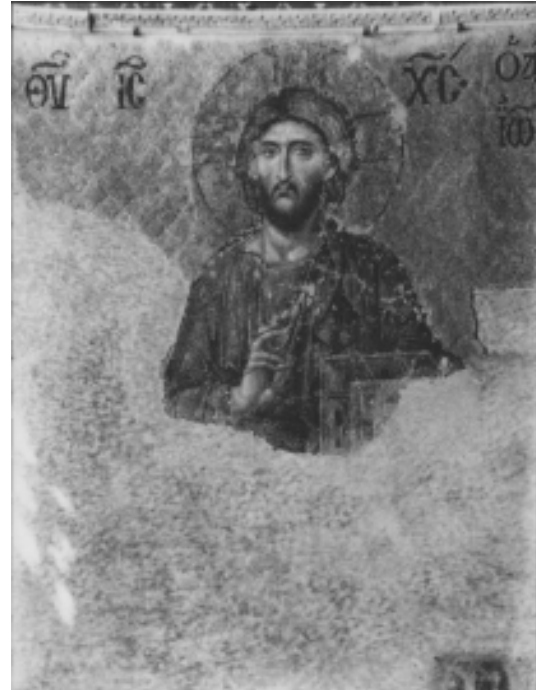


Figure 29 *Christ, mosaic at Hagia Sophia.*
By Permission of Hirmer Verlag Munchen.

The final ascendance of Byzantine art and culture corresponds in time to the advent of Islam. The expansion of Turkic forces through West and Central Asia ultimately conquered and absorbed Byzantine culture when the Ottoman Turks finally captured Constantinople in 1453 and formed the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire was the most enduring political creation of the Turkic peoples who migrated into Anatolia from Central Asia. The Imperial Ottoman state would come to be the world's most powerful empire during the 16th and 17th centuries. At the height of its power, it controlled modern day Turkey, north Africa, southwest Asia and southeast Europe until its defeat in World War I and total collapse in 1922.

The imperial studios of the Ottoman Turkish sultans employed calligraphers, painters and other book production artisans like those established by the Mongol Ilkhanid rulers of Iran during the 13th century. The content of Ottoman illustrated books centered on

the lives, activities and accomplishments of the sultans, the history of the Ottomans and the developing traditions of the culture they fostered. Ottoman painting was engendered in the 15th century from a lineage of monarchs who collected Persian manuscripts and album paintings well before the empire was centered in Constantinople. Once Mehmed II ascended the throne of his new capital (Istanbul) in 1453, the development of Turkish arts progressed at a rapid pace.

A tradition of imperial portraiture was begun during Mehmed's reign, possibly generated by portraits by two Italian artists, Costanzo de Ferrara and Gentile Bellini (**Figure 30**), who were invited to the court at Istanbul in 1481. Mehmed II was an aficionado of Western art and culture; hence his capital was frequented by European artists and writers who were recipients of his commissions.

A portrait of Mehmed II (r. 1450-1481) shows the Sultan seated cross-legged, wearing turban and caftan. Delicate modeling of his features and the strong folds of his garment are attributable to the fact that the artist, Sinan Bey, studied painting in Venice, and perhaps also to the presence in Istanbul of European artists. The rendering of his legs disproportionately smaller than the rest of his body, gives emphasis to an image of great physical and intellectual power. His expression conveys alertness and determination. This is the first Ottoman portrait to capture the sitter's likeness and expression (**Figure 31**).



Figure 30 *Mehmed II*, 1430-1481, Sultan of the Turks, 1451 (Obverse), By Constanzo de Ferrara. Samuel H. Kress Collection. © The 1998 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington



Figure 31 *Portrait of Mehmed II*. ca. 1480 (H. 2153, f. 10a) By Permission of the Topkapi Palace Museum.

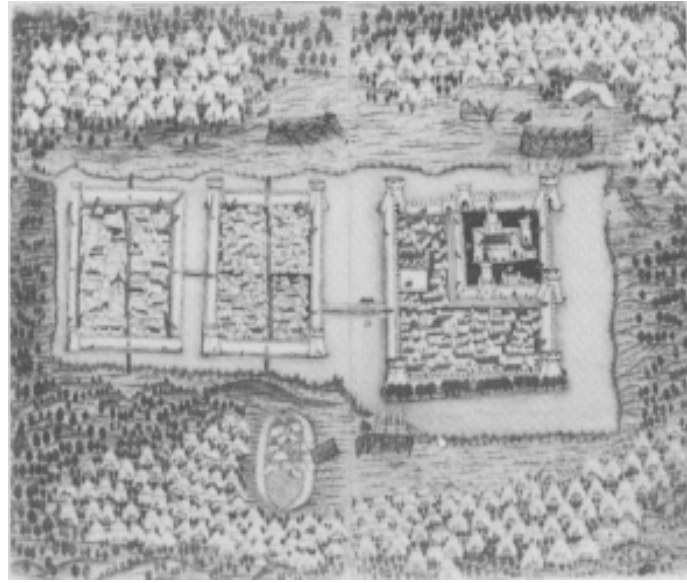


Figure 32 *Siege of Szigetvar...Ahmed Feridun Pasa*. (H. 1339, f. 32b-32a) By Permission of the Topkapi Palace Museum.

Maps of newly explored lands were a source of great interest to Turkish Sultans. In 1513, Sultan Salim had his cartographer draw a map of Central America and its coastal islands, probably based on Portuguese navigators' maps but embellished with imaginary islands then purported to have been recently discovered by Columbus. Sailing vessels were drawn along the coastline of Central America while images of parrots identified islands that were presumably known prior to Columbus's discoveries. A map of Istanbul is seen in an illustration from the book *Description of the Stages of Sultan Suleyman's Campaign in the Two Iraqs*, from CE 1537 (**Figure 32**). Colorfully rendered houses, public buildings and monuments over the land areas, and sailing ships and small boats in the Golden Horn, are all seen from a high vantage point. Some buildings are recognizable landmarks such as Hagia Sophia, Galata Tower and Constantine's Tower.

Themes of Ottoman Turkish illustrated books include dynastic, cultural and religious history, biographies of the sultans, poetry and literary works both Turkish and Persian. Historical and biographical works often represented parades and displays celebrating events.



The *Hiinernameh* ("The Book of Accomplishments"), an illustrated history of the Ottoman sultans through the reign of Sultan Suleyman was completed in 1584-85. The second volume of this work, devoted to the life of Suleyman, portrays the monarch engaged in activities befitting his exalted position: at the hunt, in battle, in procession and conferring with advisers, among others. A double-page hunting scene from this volume (1587-88) of 65 miniatures is an example of Ottoman painting in its classic phase (**Figure 33**). The Sultan mounted on his steed has just felled a wild water buffalo while courtiers, falconers and swordbearers silently observe from a discreet distance and Janissaries shoot at wild animals.

Toward the end of the 16th century, a sizeable manuscript, *Siyor-i Nabi*, produced for Sultan Mehmed III in 1594-95 traced the life of the Prophet Mohammed in five volumes (the sixth volume has been lost) containing a total of 614 illustrations. As was customary in



Figure 34 Birth of the Prophet. Darir. Sayir-i Nabi, volume one. 1594-95 (H. 1221, f. 223b). By Permission of the Topkapi Palace Museum.

Islamic pictorial representations of the Prophet, the scene depicting the miraculous birth of Mohammed has the child's face hidden by a white veil—and his mother is in purdah, the seclusion of women from the sight of men behind a curtain or screen (**Figure 34**).

In a book of festive events, *Surname-i Vehbi*, dated about 1720, one of the double-folio illustrations represents a procession of artisans before Sultan Ahmed III, a mature work of the renowned painter Levni. The setting of tents, display wagons and the throng in attendance reveals a Westernized spaciousness. European guests are seated by a tent on the left, opposite the enclosure of the Sultan, his young sons, courtiers and his leading eunuchs. Imperial support ebbed during the 17th century, resulting in a decline in

the quality of Turkish painting. However, a vigorous provincial school of painting emerged in Baghdad from about 1580 through 1610, showing a fusion of Turkish and late Safavid Persian styles.

Despite a brief upturn in the fortunes of Ottoman painting in the late 17th century, a weakening imperial power and influences from the western world created a condition that resulted in the demise of Ottoman art. Traditional Anatolian arts would continue at the local level but the grandeur and tradition of the powerful Ottoman empire was lost with the end of the empire.

Afghanistan

Modern Afghanistan is on the western threshold of Central Asia and the east-west passage for travelers across the great "Silk Road" to China. During the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, Afghanistan traded its resources of metal ores with India, Pakistan, West Asia and Egypt.

Clay sculpture and vessels related to Persian and Pakistani (Indus Valley) wares were in production about 2800 BCE. A type of stemmed cup shaped like a brandy glass and decorated with ibex and plant designs is distinctive to this area. In the city of Begram, which was founded by Alexander the Great, an extraordinary collection was discovered consisting of Greco-Roman bronze sculpture, Alexandrian painted glass goblets, Roman vessels, Chinese lacquer boxes and a trove of carved and engraved ivory furniture plaques from India. A number of these ivory carvings feature apsaras (female nature spirits), similar in style to Yakshi figures on the gateway to the great Indian Buddhist stupa at Sanchi (1st century BCE).

The Kushans, a mounted nomadic Indo-Scythian people from the Caucasus were pivotal to the early development of an art style produced by Indian as well as classically-trained Greek or Roman artists of the region. Workshops were established within the Gandhara region of north India, Pakistan and Afghanistan in the 2nd century.

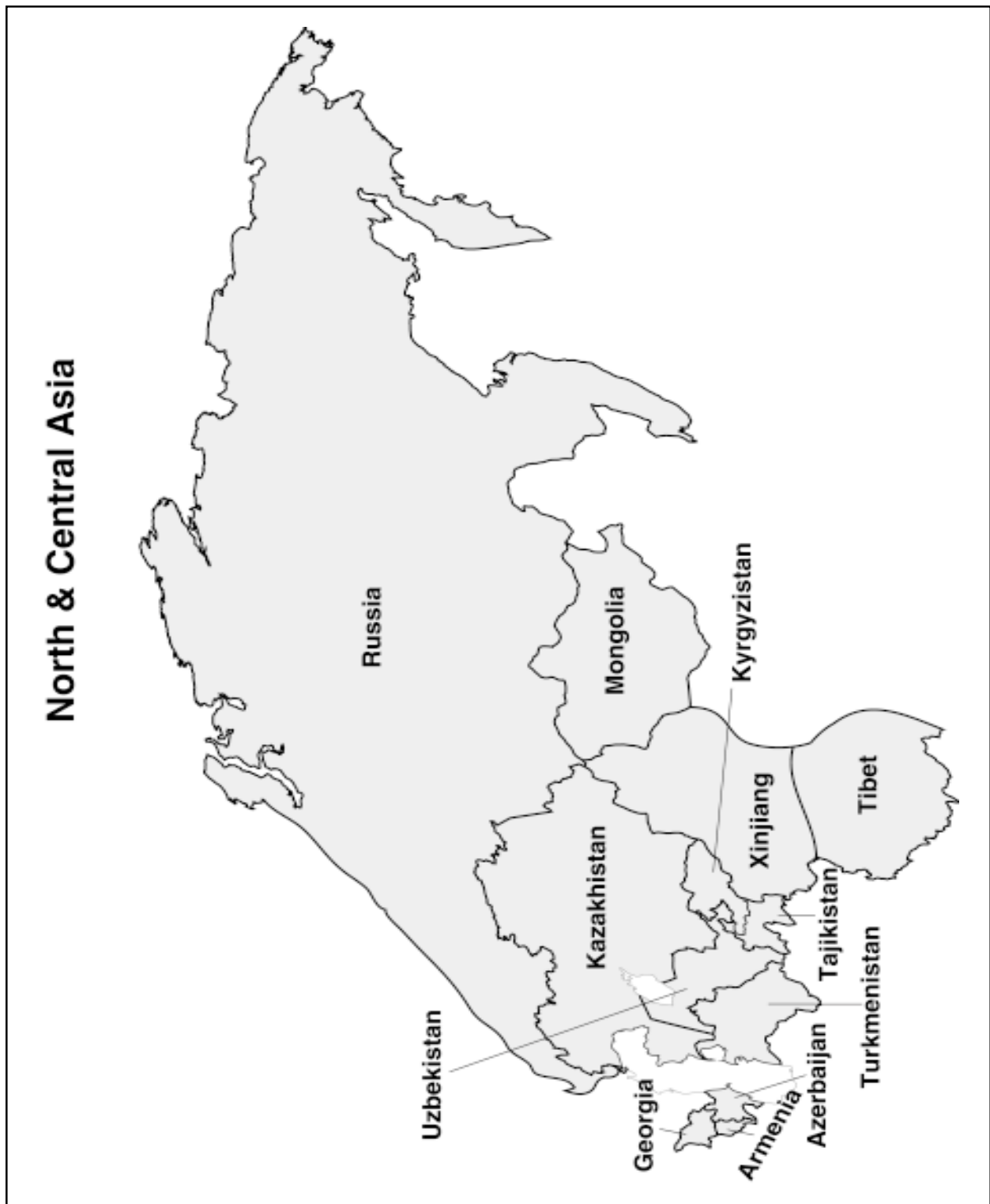


Figure 35 *Head of a Bodhisattva*. 4th-5th centuries. Unknown Artist, Gandhara, Jellalabad Region, India. By Permission of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase.

The spread of Buddhism across Asia from India and Pakistan in the second century stimulated the desire for sculptures of Buddhist divinities to adorn new shrines and monasteries. In Afghanistan, Buddhist sculptures were manufactured in quantity at a production center in Hadda from about the 3rd to the 6th centuries CE.

A fusion of Greco-Roman, Indian and Iranian features may be discerned in these sculptures, thus indicating the cultural diversity of this region. The finest of these stucco heads of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas (Buddhist divinities) express human compassion and divine omniscience—qualities that fulfilled the vision of Kushan art (**Figure 35**).

One of the great monuments of Buddhism, a complex of temples, shrines and monasteries, was hollowed out of the side of a cliff at Bamiyan in north central Afghanistan between the 4th and 7th centuries CE. At each end of this mile-wide monument is a tall niche enclosing a colossal sculpture of the Buddha. The walls and ceilings of the niches and the shrines are decorated with paintings of divinities that have symbolic reference to the Buddha. Most of the paintings depicted scenes from the past lives of the Buddha, following an ancient Indian tradition.



NORTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

Introduction

Further to the north of Afghanistan in Russian Siberia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Tibet, Mongolia and the Chinese province of Xinjiang, diverse groups of people produced art for a variety of reasons. Art served aesthetic purposes, but also basic needs for survival, social and ritualistic obligations and requirements which assured a desired afterlife.

Siberia

In the southern regions of Siberia the arid and semi-arid steppes became territories of pastoral nomads who raised herds of sheep and horses. An extensive span of virgin forest north of the steppelands was inhabited by wild animal hunters whose transportation needs were fulfilled by the hardiest domesticated reindeer that roamed the forests. Nomads of the northernmost areas of the tundra hunted reindeer for their food supplies, while settled groups on the shores of the Arctic ocean and Bering Straits hunted whales, walruses and seals.

Among the foreigners who mixed and traded with Siberians were Persians, Scythians, Mongolians and Chinese. Siberians made extensive use of animal and plant life and the rich metal resources of their environments to produce materials needed for daily life and the hereafter. Animal furs and leathers were basic materials for garments, rugs and saddles; however, these were often assembled with metals (cast bronze, gold and silver), wood, and bone for ornamental and ritualistic objects. Siberia's rich reserves of metals particularly of copper, the principal component of bronze as well as gold and silver were a boon to art production and trade relations with China and other cultures.

Bronze casting is known to have been established in Siberia, and also in China, by the 18th century BCE, hence fostering technological as well as trade relations between these two regions. Russian excavations of the burial mounds of Siberian cultures at Afanas'ev (c. 2000 BCE), Andronovo (1750-1300 BCE) and Karasuk (1300-700 BCE) developed a reliable cultural sequence by which all other cultures may be dated. Images employed by Siberian artists ranged from the simple to the complex. At one extreme were the minimal symbolic patterns devised by peoples of the steppes as narrative designs; parts of animals and plants reduced to simple curved and spiral shapes were combined to visualize incidents or activities for ornamental designs. On the other extreme is a gold plaque from Kazakhstan depicting a lion attacking a horse, a recurring theme in Siberian art. In the latter instance the action is realized as a dramatic act of violence achieved in sweeping curves and whorls. These are two aspects of "animal style," a manner of expressing the inherent qualities of natural and fantasized beasts.

Animal style may have originated in the steppelands of Siberia. Nevertheless, it was the Scythians, a Persian-related semi-nomadic people from the Caucasus, who introduced styles and techniques that added elegance and complexity to Siberian designs. Scythians were masters of design and metals technology, possibly learned from their colonial Greek neighbors. They were adept at dispersing their products wherever they journeyed across Asia. Although we tend to associate the invention of animal style ornamentation with Scythian culture, there is evidence for origins or influence in the Luristan culture of Persia, the Karasuk culture of south-central Siberia and the Shang culture of China.

Examples of animal style works from various Siberian sites will point out a few of the themes, types and styles of objects created by Siberian artists. A gold plaque representing three wild beasts in combat intensifies action and energy by repeated emphasis on curves, whorls and undulating patterns of deep grooves on the animal bodies, manes and on the ground. This Scythian work retains the inlays of semi-precious stones now missing from most examples (**Figure 36**).



Figure 36 *Scythian "Animal Art" Plaque.*
By Permission of the Hermitage State Museum, Saint Petersburg.

The Head of a griffon dragon also from Pazyryk, south of Minusinsk (5th – 4th century BCE) is carved of wood with antlers of leather and relief carvings on its neck. It holds the head of a stag in its beak. The curve of neck and beak, projecting eyes, and tufts of mane suggest influence from China (**Figure 37**).



Figure 37 *A Griffon Dragon-Head, from Pazyryk.*By
Permission of the Hermitage State Museum, Saint
Petersburg.

Settled sea hunters of the extreme northeast, the Chuchi, Koyaks and Eskimo spent their long winters of darkness carving and engraving designs on seal and walrus bones. The Ipiutak people of Alaska fashion sculptures of sea mammals, naturalistic in form and technique. Traces of animal style motifs suggest centuries-old North Asian traditions have been dispersed across the Bering Straits.

The art of Siberia extended south into the steppelands of Central Asia. Among many gold objects found in eastern Kazakhstan is a plaque in the form of a curled feline made by a Saka or Scythian artist in the 6th century BCE. The pure form and serpentine whorl of the body make this a particularly forceful ornament in animal style. Curled animals, reduced to abstract circular symbols, are frequently used to create animal style

decorative patterns in combination with a variety of other symbols. Such designs served as clan totems for diverse ceremonial and household items. The central panels of Turkmenian rugs were traditionally reserved for totemic clan motifs by Kirghiz artisans of Central Asia.

In the more recent peasant, tribal and urban arts of Central Asia, traditional ornamental motifs are either submerged into, or replaced by, West Asian design. Some ancient design elements which appear on the rugs, jewelry, woven fabric and carvings of Turkmen and other peoples of Central Asia can be isolated from overlaid West Asian elements. However, the meaning of these ancient symbols is lost.

The Spread of Buddhism

The trade route or “Silk Road” by which goods were transported from the Mediterranean to China during the 1st millennium of our era began at ports of entry on the Levantine coast. This long, arduous and risky journey was not undertaken by a single person or team, but by caravans of merchants who traveled with their goods. Hence, a network of rest stops and of trade exchanges along the roads saw to the forwarding of shipments and provided safe havens for the merchants, their caravan personnel and animal teams. Such stop-overs quickly turned into roadside oases of cultural exchange, and some developed into large, sophisticated cities with ethnically diverse populations, both permanent and itinerant, who met at the markets and discussed ideas and cultural traditions.

Among the ideas that were transported by caravan and quickly disseminated across Central Asia, Buddhism was the most tenacious of all until Islam entered the picture in the 7th century. Monks and pilgrims journeyed from East Asia to India to visit shrines and to study at monasteries, and then returned to their homelands with Buddhist sculptures, paintings, banners and manuscripts. Local kings, aristocrats, merchants and affluent families endowed Buddhist shrines and institutions. Even monks contributed manuscripts and images—all to further the cause of their faith.



Architects, sculptors, painters and artisans trained in a variety of styles and disciplines were called to the oasis cities to build and ornament the monasteries and sanctuaries. Buddhist sanctuaries were hollowed out of cliffs and shaped into shrines, assembly halls and monasteries, substituting for constructed enclosures. The artistic outcome of this international undertaking was a cross-fertilization of aesthetic traditions from India, Persia and China and the interchange of art work across the continent. Paintings and sculpture which embellish the Buddhist shrines of Central Asia represent a fusion of these traditions with indigenous Central Asian styles.

Most of the paintings in Central Asia depict images of Buddhist saints and scenes from the life of the Buddha, thus giving the artists many opportunities to extend the tradition of Indian Buddhist motifs into lively and colorful compositions (**Figure 38**). Indian style painting is recognized by the strong linear outline of figures, and the modeling of features, sometimes in bright colors, which emphasize the roundness of form. The addition of mustaches to male figures must derive from Indian images of the Bodhisattva of the Kushan Gandharan Period (**Figure 39**).

Representations of a people who were native to Central Asia were prominent in the art of Bezeklik, near Khocho, on the northern route of the "Silk Road." The Uighur Turks ruled the area corresponding to Mongolia, north of China.

By the 10th century, Buddhism was entering decline in India, and experienced severe persecution in China. Withdrawal of Buddhist support weakened the stability of the oasis cities. Moreover, Arab Muslim invaders caused irreversible damage to Buddhist temples and shrines, and to the infrastructure of many oasis cities. The Uighurs converted to Islam, and continued to occupy those towns that still had water resources. From the 10th to the 12th centuries there was a great migration of Turkish tribes from Central Asia to the west. The Ghaznavids moved into Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, as did the Juzhaks at a later time. Following them were the Seljuks who migrated further west into Persia as well as Turkey, also the destination of the Ottomans and other tribes. The majority of Turkish cultures contributed most positively to the arts of the lands they occupied, the agonies of conquest notwithstanding.

Tibet

Buddhism was brought into Tibet in the late 7th century. The first great Tibetan monastery was established in the last quarter of the 8th century. Buddhism suffered a set back in the mid-9th century, but after the 11th century became a dominant force in Tibetan culture. Monks and mystics were invited from Bengal, Bihar, Kashmir and other areas of India where Buddhism was going into decline, and major monasteries and religious orders were established during the 11th and 12th centuries. Thereafter, Tibet developed into a major creator of Buddhist art.

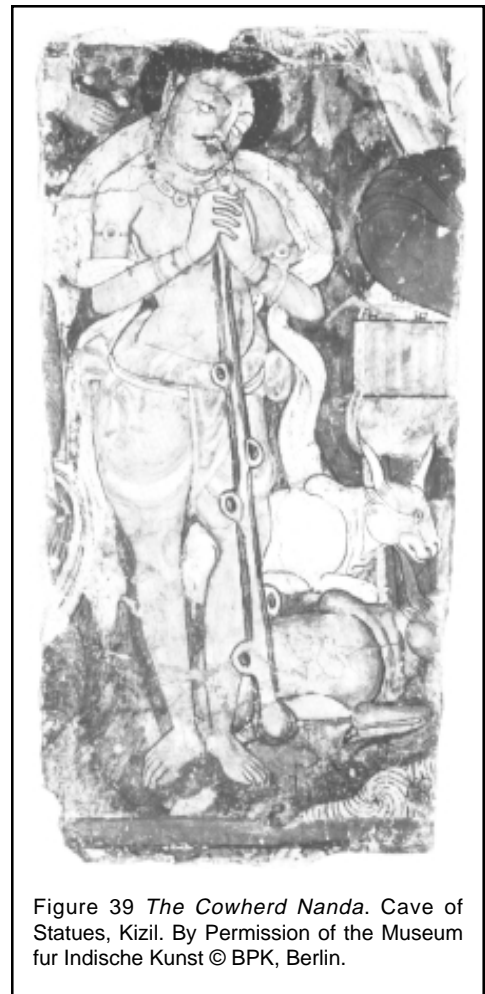


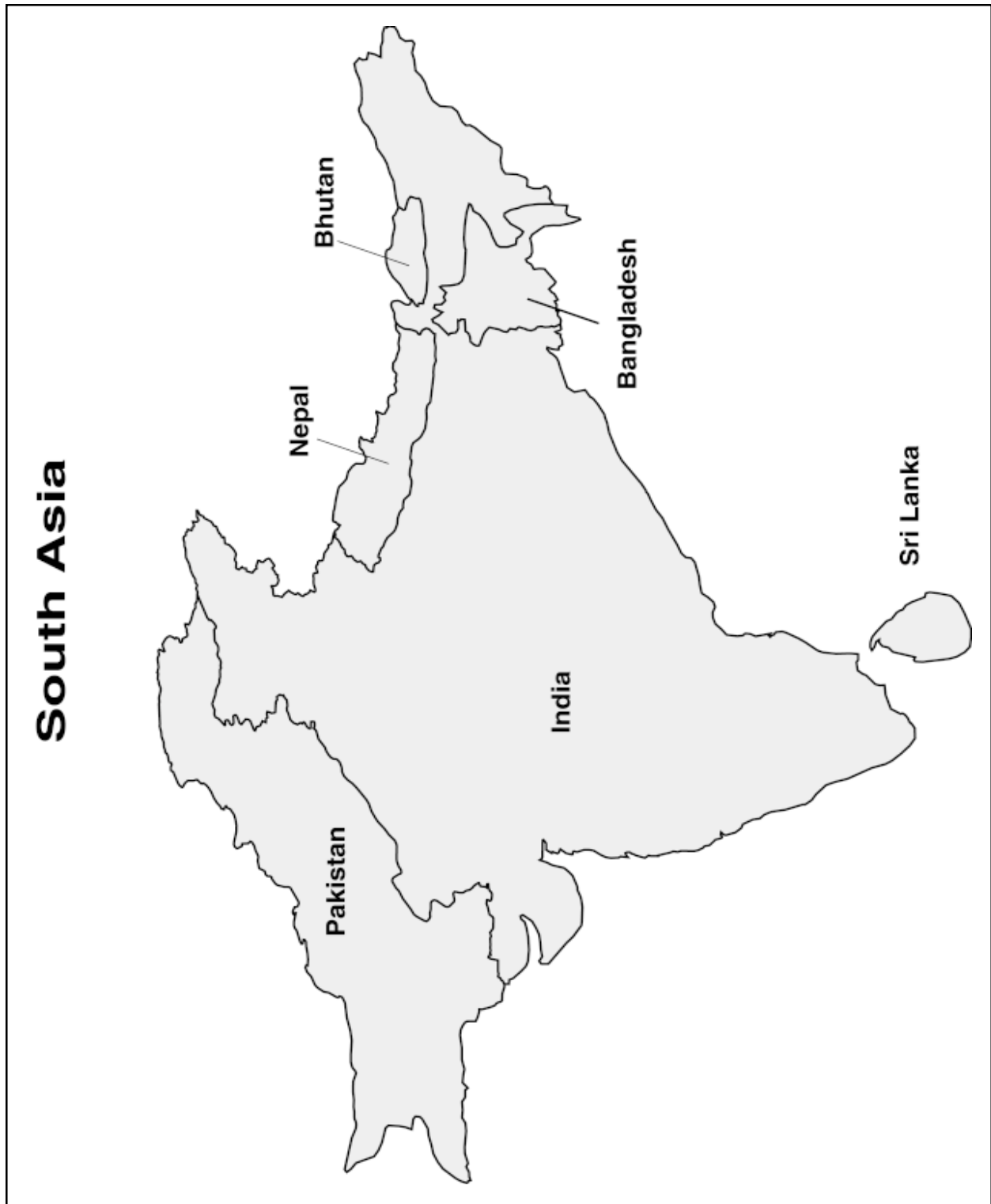
Figure 39 *The Cowherd Nanda*. Cave of Statues, Kizil. By Permission of the Museum für Indische Kunst © BPK, Berlin.

Painting, sculpture, manuscripts and ritual objects fulfilled the theological and ritualistic needs of the Tibetan monasteries. Murals, **thankas (Figure 40)**, hanging scroll paintings, illustrated sacred books, and cast bronze sculpture symbolized the presence and the word of the Buddha, the magnanimity of the Bodhisattvas (both male and female) and the virtuous deeds of holy men. These images and texts were revered for the power of their meaning and the intense expressiveness of their form. The Buddha and the Bodhisattvas who served as guardians of the faith were of Indian origin, but the Buddhist pantheon was further expanded by the Tibetans.

As we endeavor to understand why and how aesthetic and craft traditions developed in West, Central and North Asia, we find ourselves compelled to learn how they interacted with parallel developments in South, Southeast and East Asia. As we proceed into the South Asian region, we will be encountering instances of cultural interconnection with West Asia.



Figure 40 *Buddha in Earth Touching Gesture*. Late 18th century, artist unknown, Tibet. By Permission of the Los Angeles Museum of Art, Indian Art Discretionary Fund.



SOUTH ASIA

Introduction

The South Asia region incorporates the area which contains the nations of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Within this area, a diversity of cultures has formed art traditions since antiquity. The cultures and arts of these nations were affected by the development and spread of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain religious traditions. In some regions the art has been influenced by the introduction of Islam from West Asia. Out of the fusion of native and imported styles emerged new traditions distinctive of each culture.

The arts of South Asian cultures developed from the need to advance popular understanding of religious doctrine and practice with sacred symbols and images representing holy personages and deities. Indian Buddhists, Hindus and Jains revere the symbols of the deities and worship their consecrated images in the belief that the gods and goddesses actually dwell within them. The Muslim, on the other hand, venerates one God and the Islamic doctrine that was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed in the Koran.

Art of the Indian Subcontinent

Hinduism is an inclusive system of belief developed from a fusion of indigenous South Asian “Dravidian” culture and that of the Indo-Aryan people who migrated in stages to the Indian subcontinent around 1500 BCE. Out of Hindu traditions two dissenting movements crystallized into Buddhism and Jainism. However, despite differences in philosophy, iconography and forms of worship, these three faiths have co-existed for centuries, sharing an essentially Indian culture and art.

The arts of the Hindu communities of India, like their Buddhist and Jain counterparts, have a seamless relationship with theological philosophy and religious practice. Even the artist must have theological credentials. He must be a Yogi: one who, through meditation, becomes one with the painting, sculpture or monument he is creating. He must also understand that his powers of visualization and his skills and craft are gifts of the deity. Moreover, realism in art means that the artist has captured the omnipresence of the god in whatever image is committed to stone or bronze or realized in paint.

By Indian tradition, each art discipline was originated by a god, or by a great artist who was deified. Hence, appropriate subjects for painting and sculpture, and criteria for excellence of expression and aesthetic quality, were codified in sacred scripture (shastras). These ancient texts admonished artists to abide by accepted canons of proportion, appropriate color and brushwork. They also advised on matters of creating true expressions of inner feeling and mood, representing emotion through movement, and expressing movement by appropriate pose and gesture. Beyond these rules and principles of art, the shastras also asserted that the true artist benefited from knowledge of music and dance.

The Indus Valley culture (2600-1900 BCE), was one of the earliest civilizations of Asia. Two of its most well known cities, Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, both now in Pakistan, had well-designed urban plans and highly directed societies. The civilization extended over a wide area down to Gujarat in India.

Art works found in Mohenjo-daro and Harappa include small sculptures made of limestone, terra cotta, copper and stamp seals. In these objects, we begin to see forms and qualities which forecast aspects of later Hindu and Buddhist art. For example, a nude male figure carved of red sandstone, almost four inches high, captures an energy that emanates from within the body. Fullness of the body of deities and nature spirits was to become characteristic of Buddhist sculpture.

Stamp seals made of steatite, a type of soapstone, were given images of animals and humans, or gods, and inscriptions which have not been deciphered. The image of a yogi on one of the seals is the earliest known representation of a god in human form in India, possibly also the Hindu god Shiva.

Little is known about Indian culture and art between the destruction of the Indus Valley civilization and the 6th century BCE. Dwellings and shrines were built of wood, mud brick and other perishable materials which decayed in the climate of India.

Buddhism was founded in the 6th century BCE by a man called Siddhartha of the Sakya clan, better known as the Buddha. Venerated as a master teacher and spiritual leader, he was not worshipped as a god until much later. The early Buddhist thought and practice did not encourage the visual portrayal of the Buddha as a historic personage.

His presence in painting and sculpture was represented by symbols which refer to significant incidents in his earthly life as the Buddha Sakyamuni. Some of the most recurrent symbols are the stupa (the reliquary mound), the bodhi tree (under which he was enlightened), the wheel (which activates Buddhist law into motion), an empty throne (metaphor for the Buddha as king), and footprints (representing his physical presence). Narrative scenes depicting supernatural events which occurred during the Buddha's former incarnations (*Jataka Tales*) served as visual homilies of moral principles.

The artistic creativity of early Buddhism is well demonstrated in two major shrines at Bharhut and Sanchi, of the Shunga (185-72 BCE) and early Andhra (32 BCE—CE 50) periods. These monuments were hemispherical or bell-shaped burial mounds which contained relics of the Buddha. The faithful circumambulated the sacred mounds, in prayer, within a circular railing. At Bharhut, the encircling balustrade and gateways were constructed of stone shaped like wood timbers. Some of the railing pillars have full figure carvings of female (Yakshi) and male (Yaksha) nature spirits, divinities of pre-Buddhist origin that were absorbed into Buddhist art (**Figure 41 & 42**). Circular medallions along the railing are carved in patterns of rosettes and in narrative scenes from the life of the Buddha and from the *Jataka Tales*. A Yakshi represented on one of these pillars (**Figure**



Figure 41 *Yaksha*. Uttar Pradesh, India. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.



Figure 42 *Yakshi*. Madhya Pradesh, India. By Permission of Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.



Figure 43 *Shalabhanjika*. Madhya Pradesh, India. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

43) is posed embracing the trunk of a tree with her left arm and leg, simultaneously holding a branch with her right hand. Her power as a tree spirit is revealed as her touch causes the branches to burst forth with blossoms, or fruit.

One of the medallions is devoted to a representation of the miraculous conception of the Buddha. His mother, Queen Maya, dreams that a white elephant descended upon her and placed the infant in her womb (**Figure 44**). The highly stylized execution of these reliefs suggests a prior tradition of wood carving in South Asia.

The Great Stupa at Sanchi is part of a major complex of Buddhist shrines developed between the 2nd century BCE and the first half of the 1st century CE. This colossal earthen mound is faced with stone and covered with white and gilded stucco. At its summit is a three-part umbrella—triple symbols of the Buddha and his law. The stupa itself is



Figure 44 *Dream of the Queen Maya*. Mahdya Pradesh, India. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.



Figure 45 *Shalabhanijika*. Ahdya Pradesh, India. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

enclosed by a railing with gateways at the four cardinal directions. The railing is undecorated; however, the gateway columns and triple architrave cross-bars are enriched with friezes of relief carvings representing scenes from the life of the Buddha and *Jataka Tales*.

Sculptures of animals and human figures are placed in the spaces and outer projections between architraves. A circle of elephants support the base of the architrave columns. At each end of the first architrave are curved brackets composed of female fertility figures who hold themselves in suspension by grasping the flowering branches of a tree and wedging their feet against its trunk. These nature spirits (Yakshi) have shapely figures which are adorned with wrist and ankle bracelets, necklace and girdle. The sculptural carving of these figures are early examples of the full dimensional Indian sculpture style (**Figure 45**).

The Kushan Dynasty dominated the ancient kingdom of Gandhara (comprising parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan) from the second half of the 1st century through the 3rd century CE. The Kushans, a people of Scythian origin, ruled India in a time when Buddhist doc-

trine was being revised to condone the practice of worshipping images of the Buddha Sakyamuni (the historical Buddha). This emerging belief system advocating devotion to the Buddha as a deity is known as Mahayana Buddhism. Along with the spread of the Mahayana creed, paintings and sculptures of Buddha and Bodhisattvas became increasingly popular (Bodhisattvas are merciful divinities who declined to advance into Buddhahood to help people achieve salvation).

Two distinct art styles prevailed in the Kushan realm. The Gandharan workshops employed craftsmen who were trained in Greco-Roman traditions and styles (**Figure 46**). Typical Gandharan figures of the Buddha were Apollo-like in demeanor, with classical Greek facial features and abundant wavy hair. Their broad western frames were clothed in togas which were draped in deep folds. However, they were identified as the Buddha by Indian iconographic features: contemplative expression, elongated earlobes, the urna (or mark) on the forehead, the ushnisha (or metaphysical protuberance) on the head and mudra (hand gestures). Kushan Bodhisattvas were portrayed as princely figures bearing prominent mustaches, heavily draped garments and ropes of jewelry. Gandharan sculptures are usually carved in a gray schist, a stone that was quarried locally.

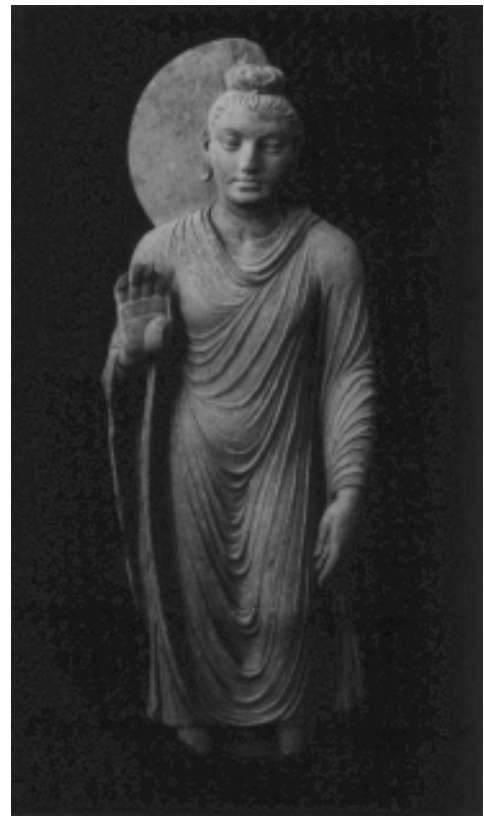


Figure 46 *Standing Sakyamuni*. India, 2nd half of the 2nd century CE. Kushan Period. Gray Schist, H. 120 cm. By Permission of the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1998, Sundry Purchase Fund, 1972.4.

Mathura sculptures, carved of a red sandstone, reveal Indian sensitivity to rounded, full body forms in the tradition of the Yakshi figures on the Sanchi gateways (**Figure 47**). Moreover, the smiling faces and open eyes of Mathura Buddha's generated immediate



Figure 47 *Seated Kopardin Buddha with Two Attendants*. AD 82, Red Sandstone; India, Mathura Region, Kushan Period. 1st-3rd centuries. 36 5/8 x 33 5/8 x 6 15/16. By Permission of the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

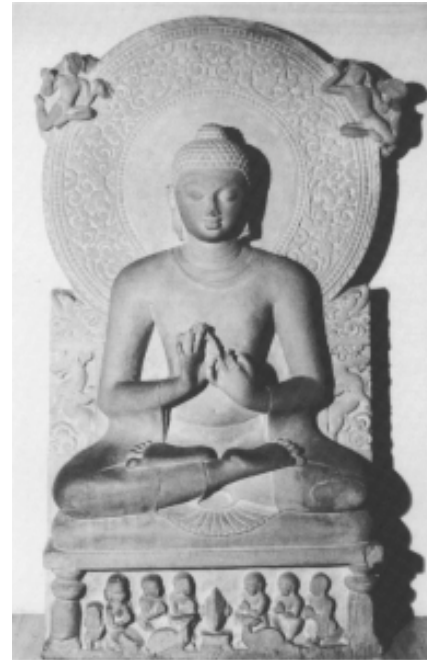


Figure 48 *The First Sermon Stele*, Uttar Pradesh, India. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

communication with the worshipper. The robe worn by Mathura Buddha figures simulates a fine, almost transparent fabric which falls off the right shoulder and hugs the full bodily form. Folds in the cloth are reduced to curved linear patterns.

Gandharan Buddhist art flourished from Pakistan to Central Asia. In the 4th and 5th centuries, Gandharan-style sculptures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas were still being produced in stucco in Hadda and Fondukistan (Afghanistan). Ultimately, Gandharan style was dispersed through Central Asia into China.

During the Gupta Dynasty (CE 320-600), North India was brought together under native rule and at the cultivated courts of the Guptas, all of the arts flourished. Buddha images of the Gupta period convey greater compassion than those of the Kushan period (**Figure 48**). Softened modeling and lowered eyelids enhance the Buddha's expression of humanity and grace. His body is a full and breathing form, its roundness affirmed by the



Figure 49 *Interior of Chaitya Hall. Ajanta Cave 26, India.*
By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

clinging robe and the elegant curves of the string folds. Buddhist images of Gupta style were dispersed to Southeast Asia and Indonesia via sea routes, and through Central Asia to China.

Unfortunately, not many architectural remains of the Gupta period have survived, but both stone and brick were used extensively for palaces as well as temples. Building temples to commemorate victories in war and to give thanks to divine power became common, especially with Hindu monarchs. They also emulated the Buddhists and excavated shrines from live rock, a practice that had begun in the Maurya period (332-185 BCE). Called Chaitya halls, such excavated shrines were used by Buddhists as prayer halls. In form, with their apsidal end and barrel-vaulted ceilings imitating earlier wooden construction, they are similar to ancient Roman buildings and Christian churches. The form continued to flourish in the Gupta period, the most well-known examples being those at Ajanta in the Deccan region (**Figure 49**).



Figure 50 *The Bodhisattva Maitreya*. 11th century AD. Bihar, India. By Permission of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase.

The great complex of some 30 rock-cut Buddhist shrines and monasteries at Ajanta was executed over a period of 700 years beginning in the 1st century BCE. All of the Ajanta caves were originally decorated with wall and ceiling paintings of the Gupta period (CE 550-642).

By the 7th century Buddhism in North India and Pakistan was entering decline. At the same time Hinduism was beginning to assert its influence throughout the subcontinent.

The era following the Gupta Dynasty (after CE 600) witnessed important developments of Hindu architecture and sculpture. Also at this time, sacred monuments were cut out of live rock, principally in the Deccan and peninsular regions of the subcontinent. This begins the Early Medieval

Period of Hindu art and the Period of the Hindu Dynasties.

The Pala and Sena dynasties dominated the Ganges Valley (Bihar and Bengal) from 750 to 1197 during the last phase of Buddhist presence in India. Buddhist art of the Pala style drew heavily on Gupta models, modified however, to accommodate theological and ritualistic change in Buddhism itself. The earthly ascetic teacher was being transformed into a deity of cosmic proportions.

This new strain of Buddhism, called Vajrayana, incorporated a variety of esoteric practices that also penetrated Hinduism. Except for the specificity of their symbolism, images of Buddhist and Hindu divinities were rendered in similar style. The bodies are slender and taut, and smoothly modeled; facial features and rich ornamentation are precisely carved. Bodhisattvas are frequently given elegant curvilinear poses, as may be seen in figures of Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future (**Figure 50**), and the Goddess Tara,

the female counterpart of Avalokitesvara (**Figure 51**), the merciful lord of compassion. Late Buddhist painting and sculpture were often conceived as Tantric images. These works combined Buddhist and Hindu elements in esoteric fusion of forms and symbols. Their meaning can be obscure to anyone who is not an initiate of Tantrism. Pala style images were acquired by monasteries in Tibet and Nepal, where they exerted a strong influence upon indigenous images of an expanding pantheon of Buddhist divinities.

At Mamallapuram, some 50 miles south of Madras, great outcroppings of granite offered opportunities to create a major complex of Hindu shrines. This stupendous enterprise, which developed during the 7th and 8th centuries, includes a diverse group of sacred monuments: five shrines (called Rath or chariot), an immense high relief sculpture entitled *The Descent of the Ganges*, and a variety of temples constructed of blocks of granite.

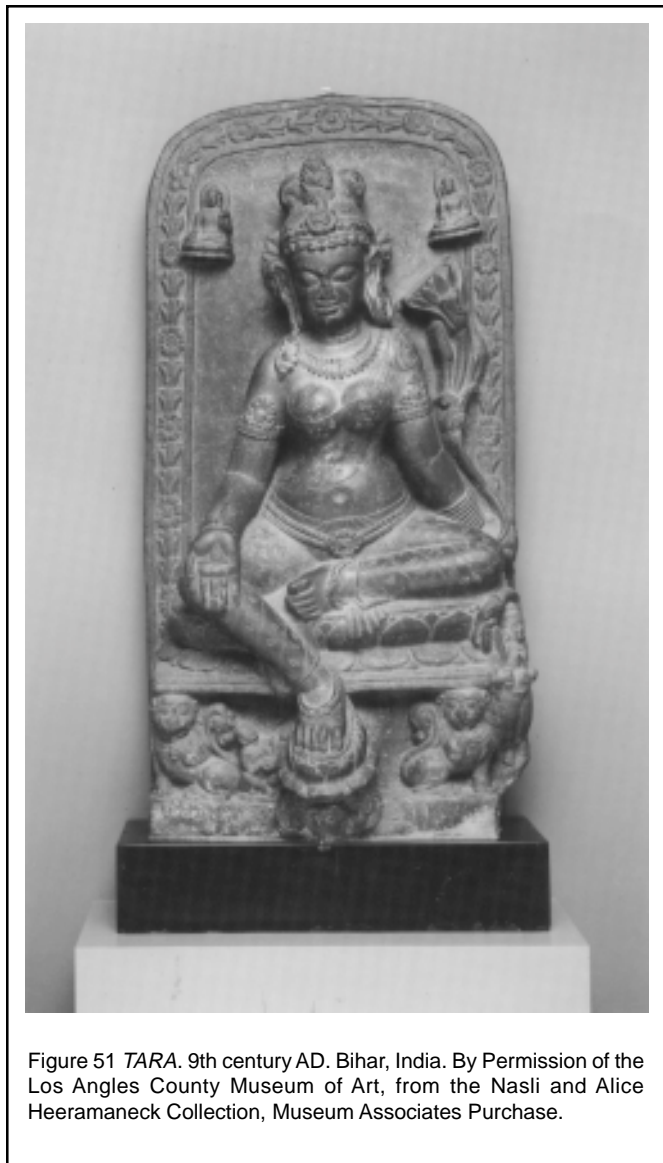


Figure 51 TARA. 9th century AD. Bihar, India. By Permission of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase.

The series of shrines excavated from live rock represent Dravidian-style architecture. Imitations of constructed prototypes, are all meticulously executed (**Figure 52**). The smallest of them is modeled after a hut, which originally would have been a bamboo structure with a thatched roof. The rock excavation faithfully replicates the bamboo in stone.



Figure 52 *The Pandava (five) Rathas*. Mamallapuram, Tamil Nadu, India.
By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

Temple towers in southern India are built on horizontal layers of stone, while those of northern temples are soaring vertical forms. Free-standing sculptures of animals, especially lions, are frequently used as supporting members and are characteristic of Pallava temple architecture.

The masterwork of Pallava sculpture is a colossal open-air relief sculpture called *The Descent of the Ganges*. The work is executed on the front surface of two enormous, adjacent granite outcroppings, 30 feet high and 89 feet wide. Approximately at the center, a natural channel runs vertically from top to bottom, directing the downward flow of rain-water which overflows a reservoir at the top. This waterfall is clearly an essential element in the sculptural program of this work. All creation: divinities, angels, water spirits, ascetics and ordinary mortals have assembled to witness the miracle, and to offer worship to Shiva. The variety of living beings represented here are endowed with characteristic behavioral

modes deftly realized in plastic form. Ascetics are seen in various states of contemplation and ecstasy. Human forms are carved as robust and active creatures emerging out of the rock (**Figure 53**).

During the period of their reign (4th-9th century CE), the Pallava kings established commercial relations with Southeast Asian and traders, and, as pilgrims from those outlying regions traveled to south India, Pallava-style art was disseminated east into the Pacific. By the 8th century, the Dravidian-style temple was established as the focus of worship, with the sanctuary marked by a stepped pyramid tower conceived as a symbol of Mount Kailasa in the Himalayas (traditionally considered to be the home of Shiva).

A series of “Kailasanatha” temples were created and dedicated to Lord Shiva in the 8th century at Ellora, in the Deccan plateau. Ellora temples share qualities of Dravidian-style with other Kailasa shrines of the 8th century. Their basic plan consisted of a front screen and entrance gate, a porch and the shrine, over which was placed the tall, stepped tower. The entire site was hewn out of a mountainside. The most stupendous of the “caves” is the Kailasantha temple, a free-standing monolith sculpted to look like a constructed temple commemorating Mount Kailasa (**Figure 54**).

All Hindu temples are profusely embellished with sculptures; the Ellora temple, however, surpasses the ornamentation program of its predecessors. In its entirety the prolific display of sacred beings in painting and sculpture within the Ellora complex is dazzling. Ceiling paintings on the temple depict delightful groups of both Hindu and Buddhist deities (**Figure 55**).



Figure 53 *Great Relief*. Mamallapuram, India. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.



Figure 54 *Kailasanatha Temple*. Maharashtra, India.
By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

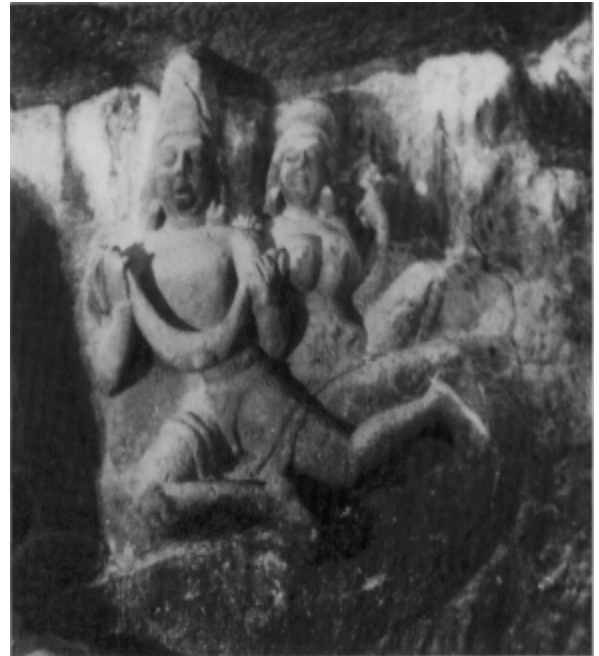


Figure 55 *Flying Figures*. Northern Deccan, Cave 32, Ellora.
By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University

Under the rule of the Chola Dynasty (c. 850-1279), traditional Hindu arts flourished in South India at a time when Muslim forces were penetrating northern India and Pakistan. The sculptors of the Chola Period in South India formulated a style of copper alloy and bronze sculptures which added measurable refinement to the Pallava style. Chola bronze sculptures are cast in the lost-wax technique, in many sizes, to suit a diversity of needs.

The particular characteristics of Chola bronze sculptures are best seen in the images of Shiva as “Lord of the Dance” (Shiva Nataraja). Shiva is portrayed as a slender and supple youth, executing his cosmic dance, with six arms and left leg extended, hair flying and encircled by a ring of flames. His movements are propelled by the bend of his right leg, causing the body to spring into action. His supporting leg crushes a dwarf, who represents ignorance. The flame and the drum Shiva holds signify his destructive force while the surrounding flames symbolize illusion. However, he promises salvation and the state of grace by his hand gestures (**Figure 56**).



Figure 56 *Siva as Lord of the Dance*. c. 950. India, Tamil Nadu. By Permission of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, given anonymously.

Hindu temple design of south India from the 15th to 17th centuries concealed the sanctuaries within a sizable complex of courtyards and colonnades. The entire complex was enclosed, surrounded by one or more walls. Battlements were sometimes installed for defensive purposes in the event of emergencies. Entry into the complexes were marked by huge gate-towers with the outermost towers being the highest. The surfaces of these structures are covered with a proliferation of sculptural images.

Medieval Indo-Aryan Hindu temple design of northern India, the type that was developed in Orissa on the northeastern coast provides striking

comparisons with the Dravidian style of the south. A characteristic plan of Orissan temples consisted of a tower built over the sanctuary, and a porch or reception room adjacent to it where rituals were performed close to the sacred image of the god. Built of a native, purplish-red stone, from the mid-7th through the 13th centuries, characteristic examples of these temples were erected in the holy city of Bhuvaneshvar.

The tower of the Rajarani Temple, one of the smaller of Bhuvaneshvara shrines, built in the early 11th century, is embellished with carved scrolled vine patterns, grotesque creatures and figures of female nature spirits whose sensually curved bodies assume the traditional poses of Yakshis. Their blissful expressions reflect their adoration of the deity who dwells in the shrine beneath the sacred mountain (**Figure 57**).



Figure 57 *Mukteshvara Temple*. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

The 13th century temple dedicated to the sun-god Surya at Konarak, also in Orissa, expands on the plan of the Rajarani temple considerably, though its tower was never completed. The platform, no longer a mere support for the temple, is made into a colossal chariot that transports the sun deity and his abode across the skies.

The celestial mountain theme was given an emotional intensity by the Chandella patrons of the vast temple complex at Khajuraho in central India. These temples were elevated on high platforms and constructed as a series of connected towers which grow sequentially taller as they advance to a culminating peak over the sanctuary. Carved images of musicians, dancers, loving couples and voluptuous celestial maidens cover the exterior surfaces of the temples. The Kandariya Mahadeo Temple, built around CE 1000, is an example of this unique development in Indo-Aryan style, which emphasized the plastic or sculptural qualities of the temples rather than their architectural clarity (**Figure 58**).



Figure 58 *Kandariya Mahadeo Temple*. Khajuraho, India. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

Temple design reflects a cosmological ground plan formulated as a sacred geometric diagram, or mandala, composed of auspiciously configured squares and circles. Indian temples and shrines are perceived as sacred mountains which mediated distance between earth and heaven. Hindu temples of the northern “Nagara” style give particular emphasis to the soaring quality of the towering mountain and the spiritual bliss it manifests upon the pious.

Indian book and manuscript painting began in the 12th century as illustrated instructional manuals for Buddhist monks in monasteries of Bihar and Bengal. The earlier manuscripts were made of palm leaves which required the artists and calligraphers to design pictures and texts on long horizontal pages.



Figure 59 *The Approach of Krishna, from the Rasamanjari*. Pahari Basohli, c. 1660-70. Color on paper, 17.5 x 26 cm. By Permission of the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1998, Edward L. Whittemore Fund, 1965.249.

Early in the 16th century, a school of Rajput painting developed in Rajasthan and the Punjab courts of independent Hindu kingdoms. Rajput painting style varied from one court studio to the next; however, they all concentrated on indigenous Hindu subject matter, largely tales of heroic exploits, episodes from mythology, tales of romance and passion and a special category of picture, known as “Ragamala” paintings. The moods of these paintings reflected the musical modes which corresponded to different hours of

each day. The favorite hero and heroine among Rajput artists were Lord Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu) and his beloved Radha (**Figure 59**). Rajput artists adhered to traditional modes of composing figures in architectural and landscape settings, rendered with vigorous line drawing and pure tones of color.

Arab and Persian culture took root in South Asia in CE 1206, when a Muslim Sultanate was established in Delhi and Islam was spreading across central India. The Indian subcontinent came under the precarious rule of the Delhi Sultanate which was constantly being challenged by Hindu kingdoms, Mongol invasions and internal dissension. It wasn't until CE 1526 when Mughal rule was established that the Indian subcontinent approached unification.

The Mughal rulers were fervent art patrons and collectors. They introduced the arts of Persia to India. Their artists observed principles and purposes of the arts similar to those upheld by West Asian cultures. Their architecture, decorative arts, painting and their

special gift for abstract and geometric decorative design, were initially influenced by Persian models. Nevertheless, they ultimately developed styles which absorbed the naturalism and the rich forms and colors of traditional Indian art.

The third Mughal ruler, Akbar (1556-1605), was a gifted leader with a belief in religious tolerance and a passion for the arts. He began the distinctive style of Mughal architecture, whose apogee and culmination is the Taj Mahal built by his grandson Shah Jahan. The setting is dominated by the tomb conceived as a cosmic mountain in a paradisaal garden. The tomb itself derives from a type of Persian palace called *Hasht Bihisht* (eight paradises). Nevertheless, the red sandstone and white marble decorative trim transformed the Taj Mahal into an evolving Indian architectural style.

Akbar's most impressive architectural project was the construction of his new capital, Fatehpur Sikri. Among the buildings that survive is a great congregational mosque complex. Secular buildings demonstrate the indigenous artisans' exceptional skill in carving stone into delicate and bold decorative patterns. Architectural details such as brackets, columns and balustrades are generally carved in deeply sculpted ornament or pierced screens. The interior of Akbar's private throne room has a striking central column made up of a great cluster of brackets which supports a circular platform and screened walkways on the second level.

Illustrated manuscripts and independent paintings focused on the Mughal rulers and the brilliance of its culture. One example, the *Akbarnama* celebrated the reign of Akbar. In an edition made c.1596-7, the ruler ceremoniously receives the first book of the



Figure 60 *Akbarnama*. Illustrated Manuscript. c. 1567. Reproduced by Kind Permission of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ms. 03, folio 177.

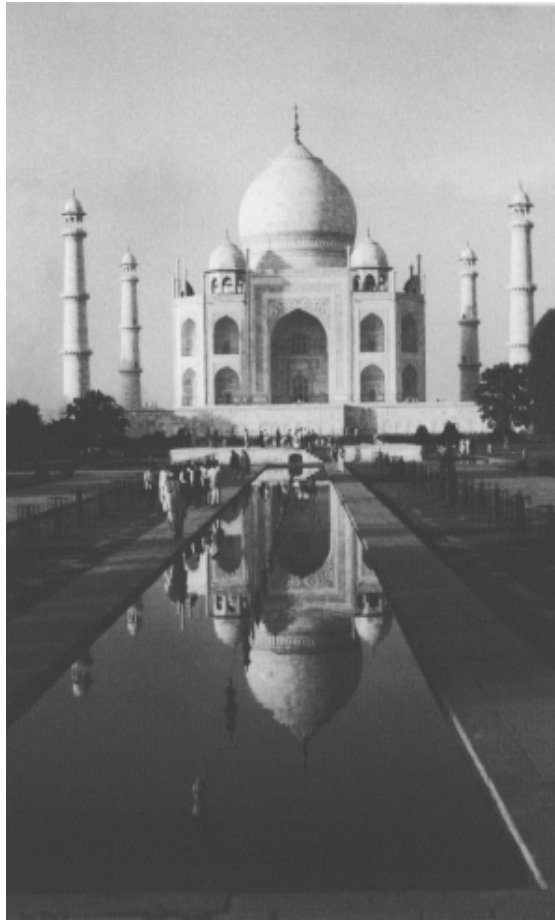


Figure 61 *Taj Mahal*, Agra, India. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

Akbarnama from the author Abu'l-Fazl (**Figure 60**). The presentation scene shows a marked adaptation of European style in the handling of depth in space, the solid structure of the emperor's throne and the naturalistic massing of the figures, though the color, the rendering of the figures and architectural features are wholly Indian in character.

Akbar's son, Jahangir (r. 1603-1628) took great pride in his connoisseurship. He favored paintings depicting significant occasions at court surrounded by nobility and important guests, as well as portraits of eminent persons. These portraits were mounted in albums along with examples of fine calligraphy.

Jahan (r. 1628-1656) continued imperial patronage of the arts with a predilection for precious gems and objects of luxury. He also favored superbly-crafted utilitarian objects of precious metals, jade, crystal, ivory, carpets and other materials.

Floral patterns in carved reliefs and inlays are applied with great restraint and sensitivity to Jahan's most renowned monument, the Taj Mahal, the memorial to his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Jahan's passion for floral decoration is vividly displayed throughout the Taj Mahal. The lower walls of interior and exterior walls are decorated with horizontal white marble panels of flowering plants carved in high relief. Inlaid inscriptions and carved floral trim complete the exquisite embellishments, which enhance the proportions and the ever-changing color of Jahan's unique memorial to his Queen (**Figure 61**).

Jain Art

Jainism arose as a faith in the 6th century BCE. Mahariva, was one of a succession of prophets (known as Jina) who formulated the basic precepts of the religion. Jains believe that there is no creator-god and that salvation can be attained only by living life as an ascetic, following a righteous path and by causing no harm to any living creature.

A typical image of a Jina in a teaching mode would also generally describe the Buddha in contemplation. In painting and sculpture, the Jina is portrayed in seated or standing positions. When seated, he assumes the position of a yogi, feet overlapping, his torso upright, head erect and hands in his lap palms up, the right lying over the left. His facial expression is one of total detachment. Like those of the Buddha Sakyamuni, representations of the Jina have extended earlobes signifying rejection of earthly materialism. Hair is treated in accordance with the style that prevailed at the time and place of its creation; sometimes Jinās have the cranial bump (ushnisha). Above all, the Jina's nudity is an essential characteristic of the image, since it gives emphasis to his commitment to the life of an ascetic (**Figure 62**).

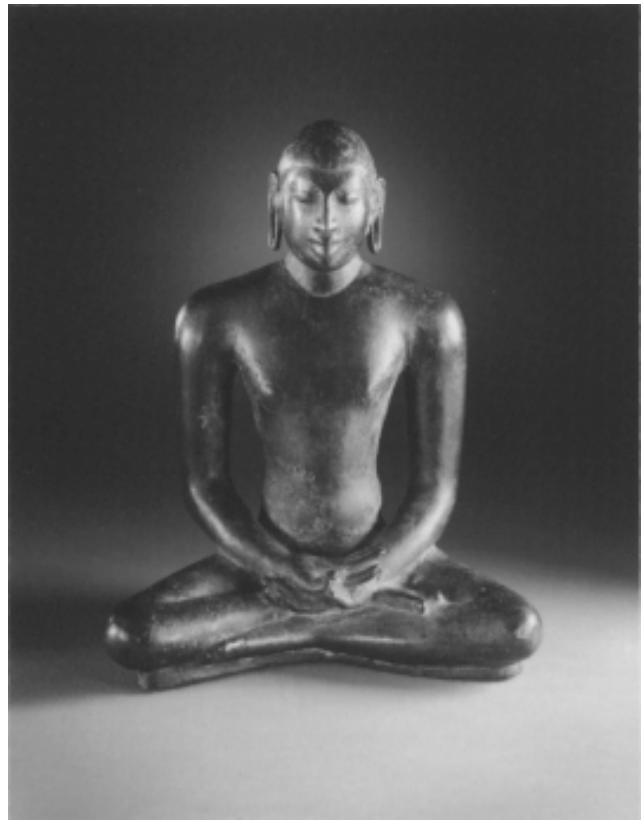


Figure 62 *Meditating Jina*. 850-900. Karnataka or Tamil Nadu, India. By Permission of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase.

Two Jain temples are of unusual interest. A temple complex on the summit of Mount Abu, in Rajputana, is noted for its elaborately carved white marble interiors. The dome of the Tejahpala Temple, for example, rises in a series of ornamented concentric bands of

foliate motifs. Figures of Jain goddesses in dancing poses are carved into brackets which encircle the lower section of the dome.

The Jain shrine at Sravana-belgola, north of Mysore, is also placed at the top of a mountain. Long a Jain pilgrimage center, the name of this site, called “White Lake of the Hermit,” refers to the tank, or “lake,” at the foot of the hill, and a colossal sculpture of the Hermit Bahubali some 60 feet in height within a shrine at the summit of the mountain. A work of the late 10th century, the hermit is carved in simple, rounded, late-Gupta style, his legs and torso disproportionately short compared to his broad shoulders and large head. His nudity symbolizes his total detachment. Two vines, which emerge from the stone base against his feet, wind around his legs and arms, conveying his state of surrender to ascetic immobility.

Jain manuscript painting began in Gujarat as early as the 12th century. These works focus on the life and sayings of Mahavira, the most revered of the 24 Jinas, or enlightened teachers, who are held sacred by the Jains. Early manuscripts were written on palm leaves, a format that was retained even after paper was introduced into northern India in the 13th century. The spunky, wide-eyed figures of these Jain manuscript illustrations were executed in a fine, wiry line enriched with bright color—red being the universal color of backgrounds. Pilgrimage pictures might be described as illustrated diagrams which chart five auspicious sites that were meaningful to the Jinas from birth to death. Pilgrimage to sacred monuments has been common practice among Buddhists and Hindus. For the Jains, pilgrimage was accepted as a vital ritualistic duty.

An early 19th century “pilgrim painting” of Satrunjaya shows an aerial view of the holy site composed in cartographic fashion with an assortment of shrines and landscape elements depicted in elevation. Images of the Jina in seated position are seen in their sanctuaries. Pilgrims, some transported on their elephants, converge upon the site to celebrate the birthday of the Jina. A band is performing before the largest of the temples and a festive air pervades the scene despite the strong geometric character of the composition.

Nepal

The coexistence and cross-fertilization which occurred between Hindu and Buddhist communities in India for many years also occurred in Nepal. Since the Kathmandu Valley, the heart of Nepal, is an area of only 200 square miles and is encircled by high mountains, the two religious communities and their temples and monasteries share the limited space at close quarters. In a land so naturally protected from its neighbors in the outside world, but where commerce and cultural interchange are unimpeded, preservation of traditions is strong. Hence, there still exist today in Patan, Nepal, Buddhist temples constructed of wood, which are thought to be surviving examples of an architectural form which originated, but is now lost, in India.



Figure 63 *The Bodhisattva Padmapani*. 12th-13th century AD. Nepal. By Permission of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase.

In Nepal the stupa has a square platform which supports the hemispherical mound. Projecting upward from the center of the mound is a superstructure composed of a box-like form, all four sides of which are decorated with a pair of enormous staring eyes. The tall spire above this terminates in a parasol and finial.

Sectarian lines in veneration of deities whose attributes and mission had particular appeal are often crossed. The 13th century bronze Bodhisattva Padmapani represents the essence of compassion. The curve of his body and thrusting hip point to the gesture of mercy of his right hand. The princely ornamentation of his dress and jewelry stem from Gandharan tradition (**Figure 63**). Vishnu, the Lord of Creation, lying on the Great Serpent floats on the World Ocean between the eras of destruction and creation. Carved from a 21 foot wide boulder, this reassuring work, like that of Padmapani, has a universal appeal for Buddhist as well as Hindu worshippers (**Figure 64**).

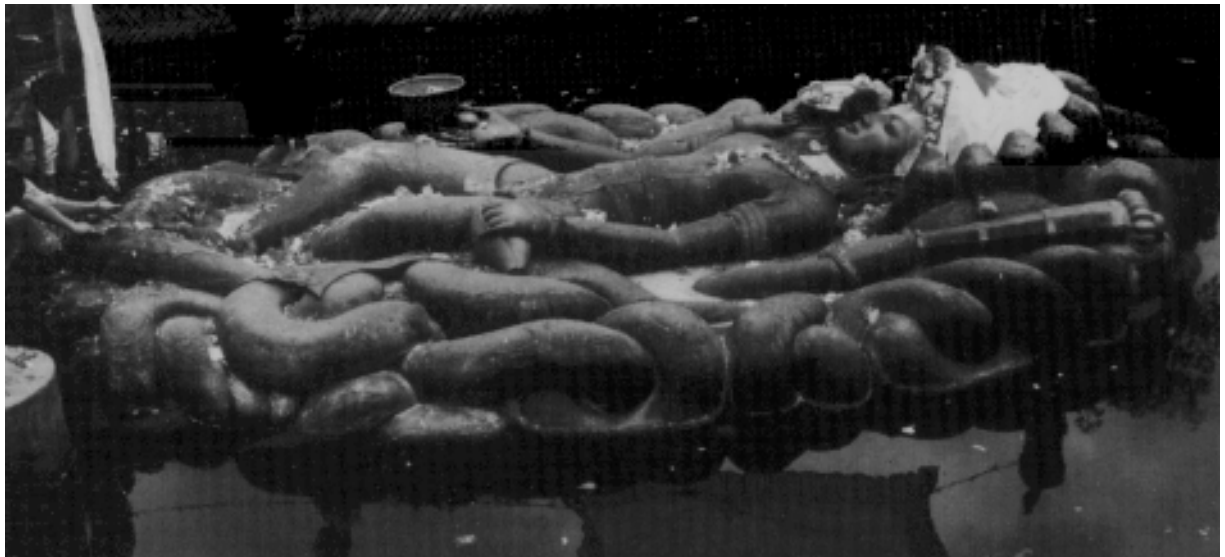


Figure 64 *Vishnu on the Sesa*. c. 641 CE. Stone 21'. Budanilkantha, near Kathmandu, Nepal.
By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

Sri Lanka

The two ancient Sinhalese capitals Anuradhapura and Polannaruwa were richly endowed with Buddhist monuments until their closure in the 8th and 15th centuries, respectively. Ancient Anuradhapura had numbers of Sinhalese dagoba or Buddhist stupas which are shaped like bells, rather than mound-like examples as in India (**Figure 65**). The dome of the typical dagoba is supported on a triple-ringed base and the top surmounted by a tall, pointed spire.

Around the 1st century CE, Duttha Gamani began the construction of the Ruvanveli dagoba in Anuradhapura, one of the largest in Sri Lanka and comparable in size to one of the smaller Giza pyramids. Ancient dagobas had exterior components such as rectangular pillared temples, altar frontpieces, and sculptured platforms. The domes were surfaced with plaster and painted white.

Sri Lanka has remained a haven for devotees of Theravada Buddhism who in principle believe the Buddha Sakyamuni was teacher and not a deity. Nevertheless, worship of the Buddha image is practiced in the temples and exterior shrines of Sri Lanka. Surviving examples of these Sinhalese larger-than-life figures from Anuradhapura show stylistic connections to south India, especially the early sites in Andhra Pradesh. An outstanding example of monumental Sinhalese stone sculpture represents the Buddha in contemplation. The granular dolomite limestone which discourages detailed carving contributed to its broad, simple forms. The loss of surface detail gives emphasis to the grand conception and the proportions of the Buddha's massive frame. His facial expression conveys the serenity of profound introspection (**Figure 66**).

At ancient Polonnaruwa, several colossal sculptures carved out of live rock demonstrate the continued high quality of Sinhalese sculpture into the 12th century. A huge full-figured portrait of a bearded king, shows the body in a relaxed standing pose. His face has a benign expression as he holds out a yoke to symbolize the weight of his responsibilities. Close by, two images of the Buddha are also somewhat unusual. One represents the Master in a state of self-absorption, standing in a relaxed pose, his arms crossed over his chest.

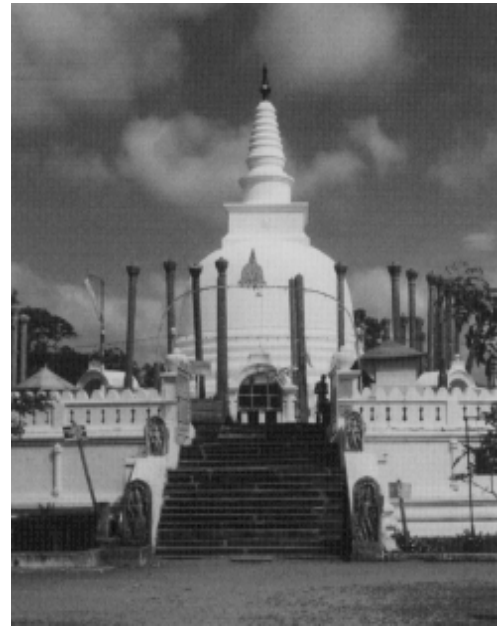


Figure 65 *Thuparama Dagoba*. Anuradhapura, By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.



Figure 66 *Seated Buddha*. Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. 6th-7th century CE. By Permission of The Fine Arts Library, Harvard College Library.

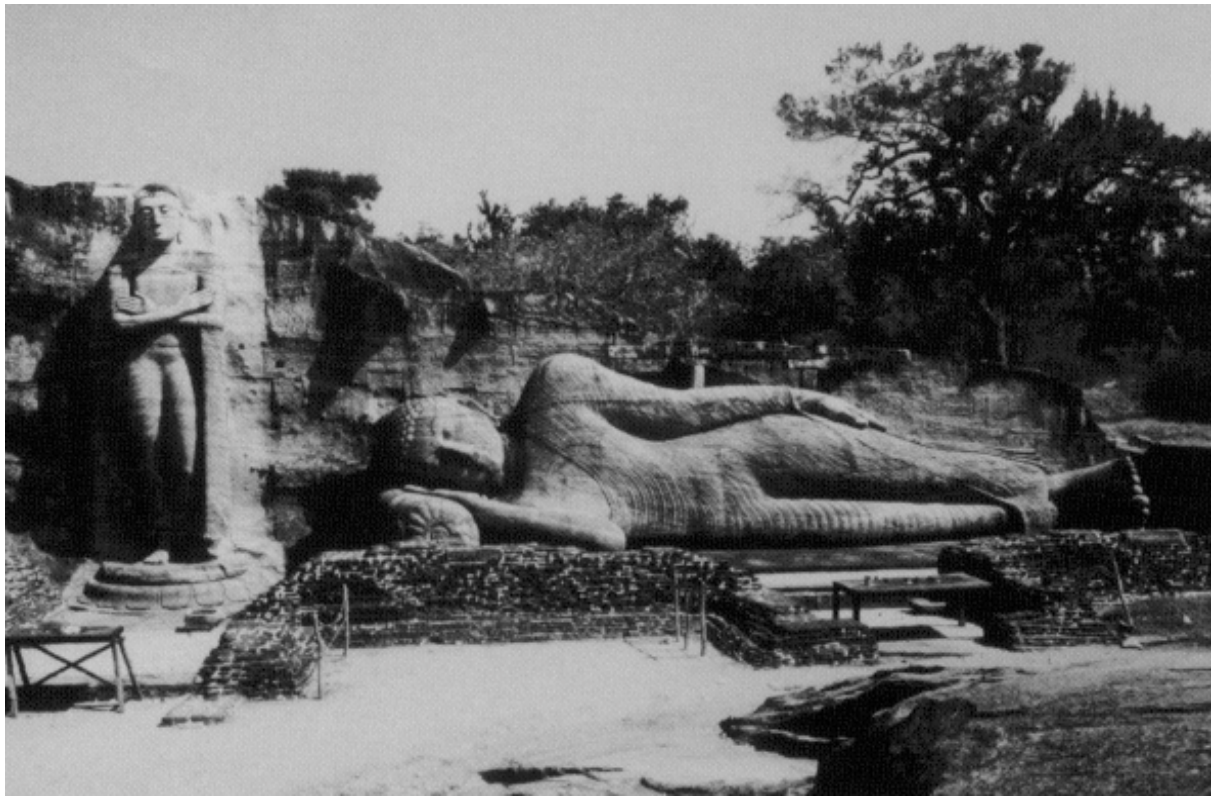


Figure 67 *Parinirvana*. Gal Vihara, Sri Lanka. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

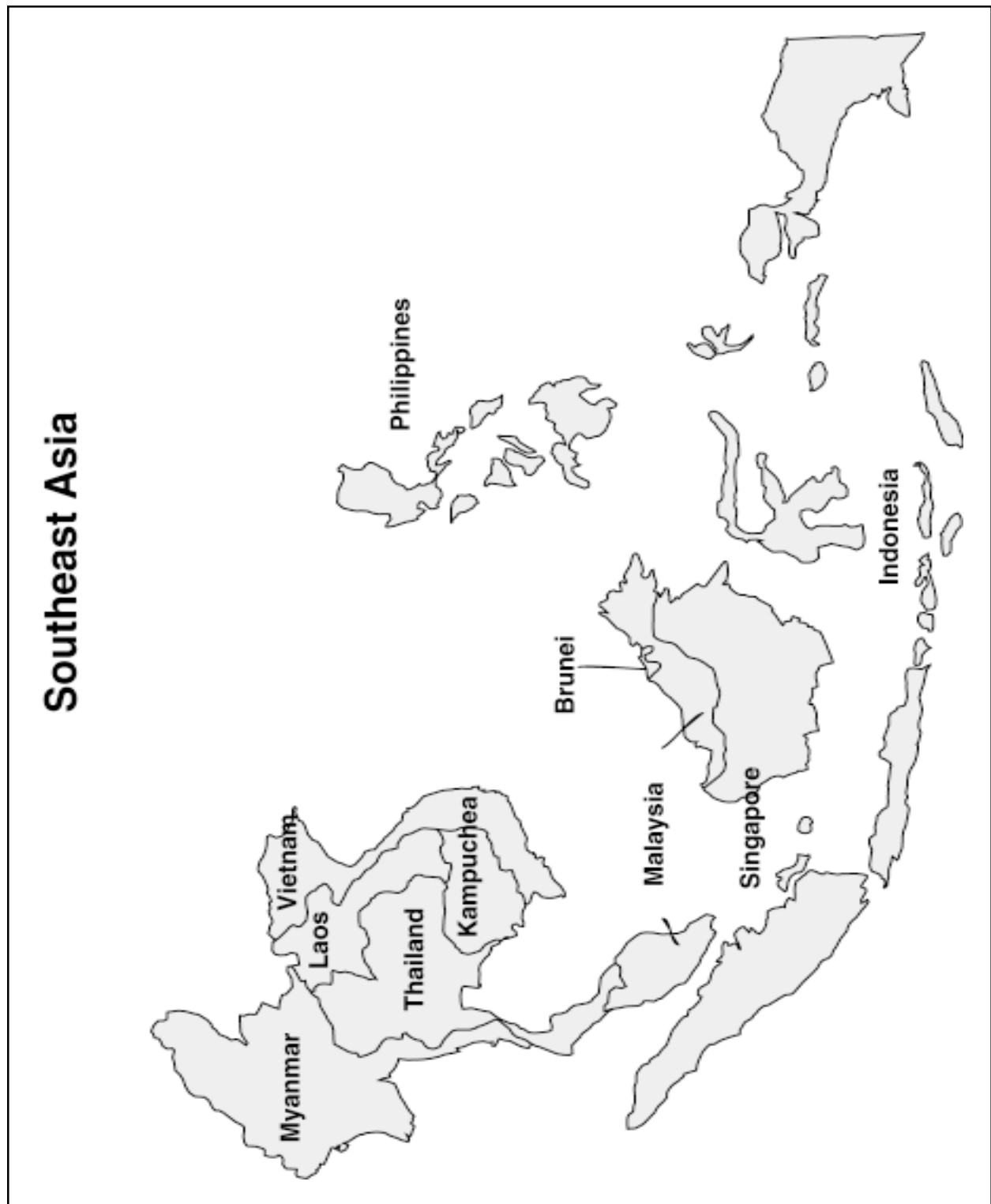
The other is a Buddha in complete serenity, lying on the ground in his final state of Parinirvana. (**Figure 67**). Although all of these sculptures recall their roots in the iconographic and formal canons of Indian art, the Sinhalese sculptors transformed the canons and styles received from India into images which affirm Sinhalese modes of expression and ethos.

Sinhalese wall paintings of great interest survive in the gallery of the fortress palace of Sigiriya ("Lion Rock") built in the 5th century. The frescoes display a gathering of celestial maidens who appear to be rising from the clouds and dispensing flowers. They are adorned with jewelry and floral arrangements. The drawing emphasizes the fullness of their form and the sensual quality of their demeanor. Soft tones of red, yellow and green add to their appearance as transcendental beings.

AUTHOR: Lillys

SUBJECT: Art

South Asia's art represents an energetic and inventive tradition whether it is Hindu, Jain, Buddhist or Arab in influence. Ancient motifs, techniques and ideas have provided ample resources for South Asia's artists to draw upon and refine. As we will soon see, South Asian artistic and religious traditions have been especially influential in Southeast and East Asian cultures which adapted elements of South Asia's artistic traditions into their own artistic traditions.



SOUTHEAST ASIA

Introduction

The Southeast Asian region includes the nations of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The cultures and arts of Southeast Asia have been affected by the spread of Buddhist and Hindu traditions from India. These traditions were brought by Indian traders, adventurers, scholars and monks who lived in Indian trading settlements throughout Southeast Asia. In addition, Arab conquerors brought Islamic religion and Arab traditions to Southeast Asia which influenced the artistic traditions of the region. Out of the fusion of native and imported styles emerged new traditions distinctive of each culture, and some of the most remarkable monuments in Asia.

Myanmar (Burma)

Myanmar has been settled by the Burmese, a Chinese-Tibetan people, the Pyu, from Central Asia, and the Mon-Khmer. These groups intermixed to create a culture distinctive to Myanmar.

The Burmese adopted Theravada Buddhism but held to their ancient folk beliefs in the ubiquitous presence of Nat spirits, disembodied beings who permeate village life and trees. Nat shrines survive from the 9th century, the most important being the Vishnu temple Nat Hlaung Gyaung (CE 931) in Pagan. Typical of Nat ornament are flame-like finials used to decorate the tall gabled roofs of buildings and to adorn images of deities in painting and sculpture.



Figure 68 *Mingalazedi* Pagan, Myanmar. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

The great period of Burmese architecture began when King Anawratha (CE 1044-1077) brought unity to the country. Anawratha encouraged the spread of Buddhism throughout his kingdom. Pagan was the capital and was to become the focus of classic Burmese architectural style. Lacking significant resources of stone, Burmese builders and sculptors developed a remarkable method of creating massive and meticulously decorated temples and stupas of brick. Surfaces were smoothed and plastered and either whitewashed or surfaced with gold. Monumental temple sculptures were also built of brick, reinforced with wood with gilded surfaces.

The basic Burmese shrine, called a pagoda, comprised of a terrace, a high basement (or plinth), a bell-shaped stupa and a conical tower terminating with a parasol. The stupa is the central, and major, element of a temple. The Mingalazedi Stupa built in Pagan in CE 1274 has a high platform of five square terraces, each with small stupa-like towers at the corners (**Figure 68**).

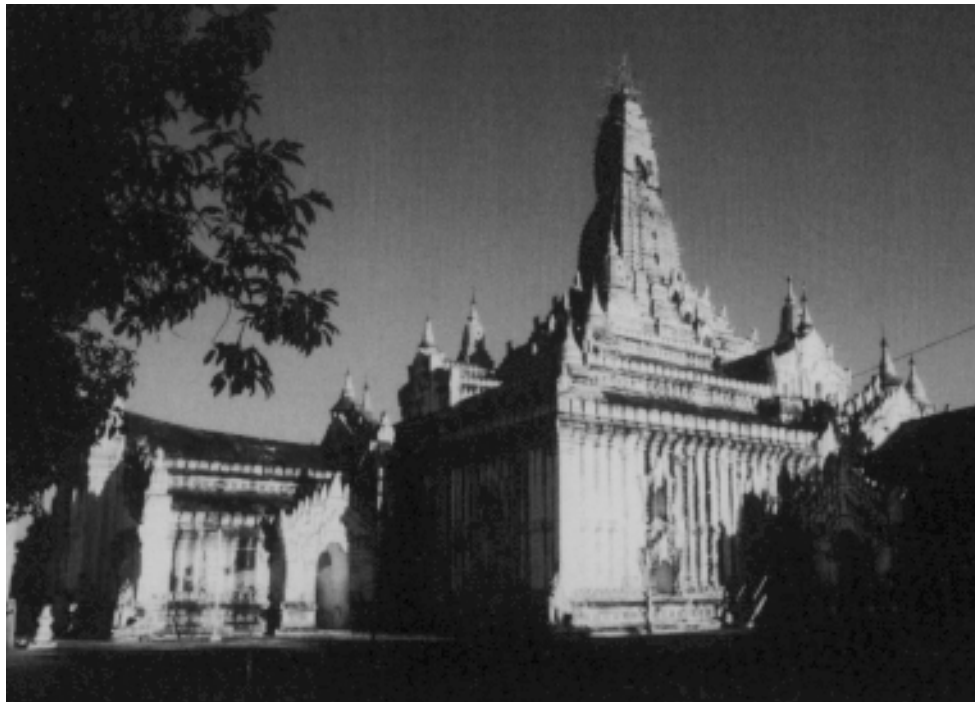


Figure 69 *Ananda Temple*. By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

The Ananda Temple in Pagan, dedicated in CE 1090, typifies the stupa turned temple. Colossal in scale, it has a huge masonry block supporting its central stupa. Four wings extend from the central mass in the four cardinal directions, and additional stupas give the entire complex the look of a vast range of mountains which ascend, peak by peak, to a climatic pinnacle (**Figure 69**). The brick structure was faced with stucco and painted white. The interior of the temple is adorned with over 1,500 relief sculptures and paintings representing narrative scenes from the *Jataka Tales* and from the life of the Buddha Sakyamuni. Glazed terra cotta plaques depict simple scenes from the previous lives of the Buddha, in direct and unsophisticated style (**Figure 70**).

Apart from their accomplishments in architecture and sculpture, Burmese artisans produced fine decorative works of lacquer, wood, stucco and precious metals. A 17th century wood chest, made for the storage of sacred manuscripts, is delicately carved in gesso with scenes from the life of the Buddha. A specialty of Burmese metalsmiths are repoussé



Figure 70 *Painted Terracotta Plaque. Ananda.* By Permission of the Huntington Archives, Ohio State University.

gold objects richly decorated with filigree work and inlaid with precious stones and glass. A 19th century vessel shaped into the form of a sacred goose is a fine example of the decorative tradition (**Figure 71**).

Thailand

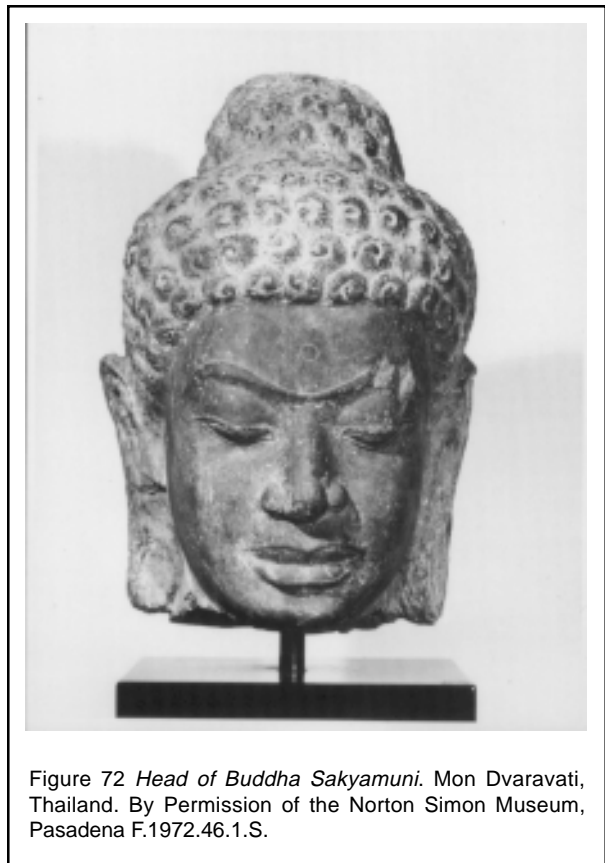
Thailand's most distinctive contribution to the arts of Southeast Asian cultures is its unique sculptural style. This sculptural tradition began around the 6th century, about the time that the Mon people from lower Myanmar invaded



Figure 71 *Sacred Goose Vessel.*
By Permission of the V&A Picture Library, London.

Thailand and brought Theravada Buddhism with them. Cultural ties were also effected with Sri Lanka and India bringing Hinduism into Thailand.

The art of this period followed Indian Gupta traditions. However, local characteristics were evident, particularly in the facial features which are distinctly non-Indian. The broad nose, full lips and the curved eyes with pronounced double outlines suggest models of Mon ethnic types. The brows and snail-shell hair are developed as patterns. Many of these figures were given a smile, which would continue into later Thai sculpture and would become prominent in Cambodian sculpture as well (**Figure 72**).



In an exceptional bronze figure of a Bodhisattva, of the 8th or 9th century, we see a tendency toward an expressive rather than decorative image in sculpture. The Bodhisattva is from Jaiya on the Malay Peninsula. The Jaiya Bodhisattva torso gently sways to one side in the traditional three-bend (tribhanga) pose of a dancer. Despite the precise rendering of the ornaments and jewelry, the artist captured the softness of the nose and full lips. The half-closed eyes and parted lips convey an expression of ecstatic spirituality, less familiar than the traditional expression of benign tranquillity of Buddhist art.

Khmer rule over Thailand, beginning at Lopburi in the 10th century, initiated a sculptural style that was provincial to Cambodian style of the Angkor Period, 10th to 13th centuries. Characteristic of Lopburi sculpture are such features as snail-shell curls turned into

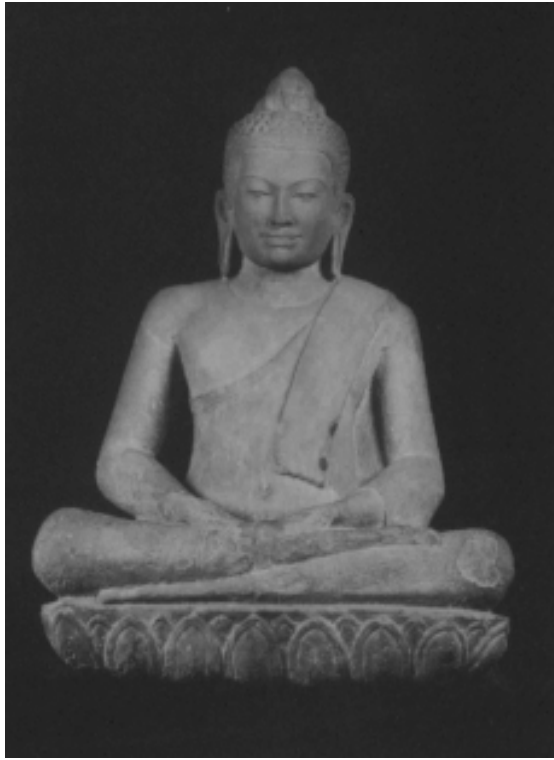


Figure 73 *Seated Buddha*. Wat Mahadhatu, Lopburi.
By Permission of the National Museum of Thailand.

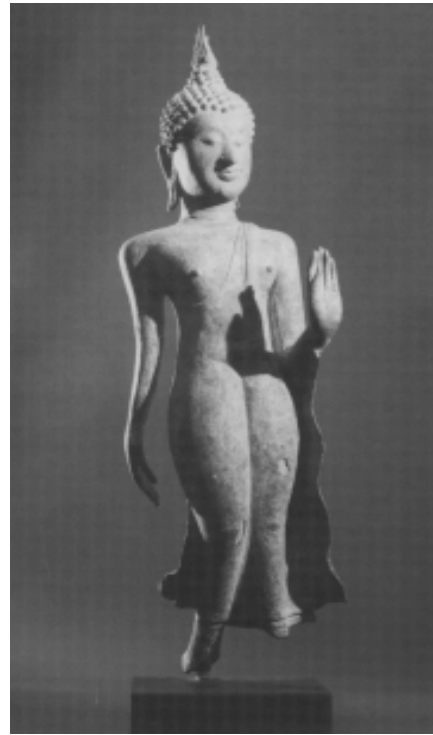


Figure 74 *Buddha Sakyamuni*. Sukothai, Thailand. .18.S. By Permission of the Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena. F.1975.17

patterns of small knobs, prominent overhanging foreheads, pointed noses, cone-shaped ushnishas on the crown of the head and large chins. These features also came to be the emblems of Thai style and would continue into the future (**Figure 73**).

Thai people from southwestern China began moving into the northern territories of Thailand in the 9th century. They overturned Khmer dominance and established the first instance of ethnic Thai power in the 13th century. Chiangmai, in the northwest, is recognized as an important site of Thai sculptural style. The typical Chiangmai Buddha image displays arched eyebrows, curved almond eyes, a long sharp nose, faint smile and flame-like protuberance from the skull. These characteristics of Chiangmai and Sukhodya Buddha heads continue into the 20th century.

The Sukhodya style of the 14th century brought the Thai Buddha image to a height of elegance. Figures of the seated Buddha, touching the ground, the most popular image, were designed with a simplicity most appropriate to Theravatism. A new image, "The Walking Buddha," conceived of Sakyamuni as a missionary. Here again, the flowing curves of the Buddha in motion are echoed in the curves of his fingers and the undulating ripple of his garment (**Figure 74**).

The evolution of Thailand's sculptural style into smooth, taut and highly stylized forms with sharp features continued into the period of Ayudhya (14th to mid-18th centuries). These images are instantly recognizable as original Thai creations after centuries of interaction with its neighboring cultures.

Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

The area now comprising Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam was variously affected by intrusions from the north and the west through the first four centuries of our era. From south China came invaders who entered forcibly and imposed Chinese settlement and rule. From the west came traders seeking commerce and profits but not conquest. The ports of Fu-nan in southern Cambodia were at first convenient stop-overs for Indian vessels bound for China and Indonesia. Ultimately, the Indian merchants established their native culture on the Indo-Chinese peninsula.

Hinduism and Buddhism were brought to Cambodia around the mid-3rd century CE. Not only did the two faiths co-exist peacefully, but a fusion of the two developed into the cult of the god-king Devaraja. As Cambodian monarchs at Fu-nan were also venerated as incarnations of a god such as Shiva or Vishnu, they exercised rule over the spiritual as well as the secular lives of their subjects.

Early, or Pre-Angkor, Cambodian sculpture and architecture of the 5th through the 8th centuries show close relationships with Gupta and Pallava artistic traditions of India. However, in the art of the Angkor Period, which began in the 9th century, distinctly indigenous characteristics asserted themselves over the imported styles. Stone sculptures, frequently representations of Vishnu and Harihara (a deity who combined Vishnu and Shiva) (**Figure 75**), confront the worshipper with strength and power.

Related to this is the cosmological concept of the temple as the vital center of the “World Mountain,” while the mountain itself represented the axis of the universe. This concept began as an arrangement of five, small, one-cell shrines on a platform, the roof of each shrine rising in stages into a tall pyramidal form. At Ta Keo (c. 1000 CE), five shrines were built on a high-stepped pyramidal platform, a tall central tower over the sanctuary and four smaller shrines at each corner.

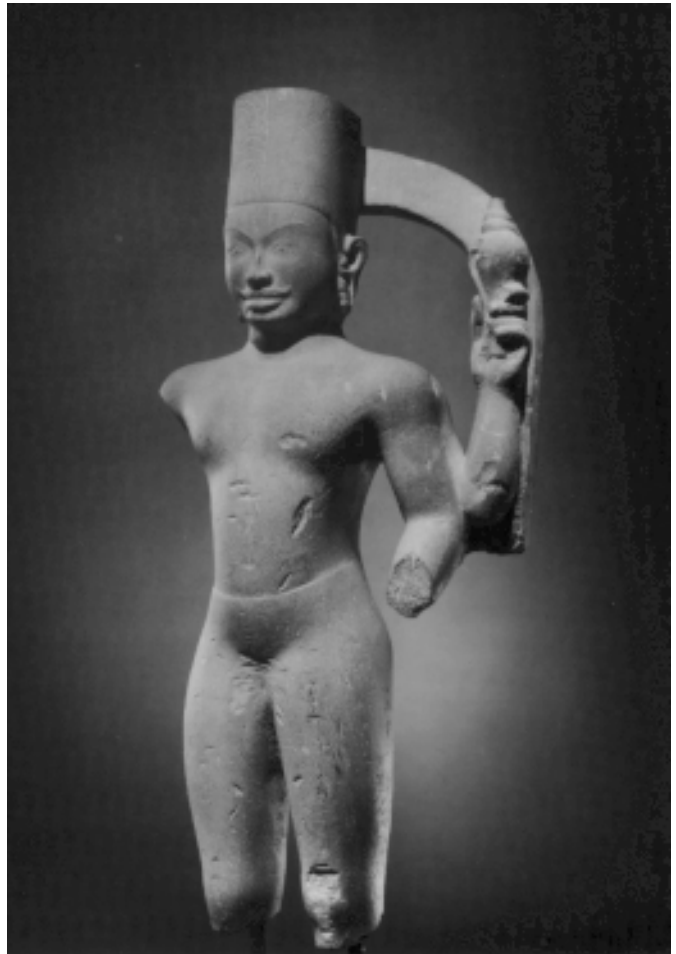


Figure 75 *Harihara*. Photo by Lee Boltin
By Permission of the Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena.

Full culmination of the constructed “World Mountain” was achieved at Angkor Wat. The temple complex was created as a monument to the Devaraja cult and as a royal mausoleum. The plan was the same as that of Ta Keo, but on a much more majestic scale.



Figure 76 *Angkor Wat, distant view*. By Permission of The Fine Arts Library, Harvard College Library.

The temple ensemble of five shrines and connecting structures is mounted on a vast high terrace, the greater length of which is 3,000 feet. The mass of the temple ascends some 200 feet in height from the ground to the central shrine which houses the sanctuary of the Devaraja and represents the axial center of the world. Unlike the traditional pyramidal shape of Indian temple architecture, these towers are configured more like pine cones (**Figure 76**).

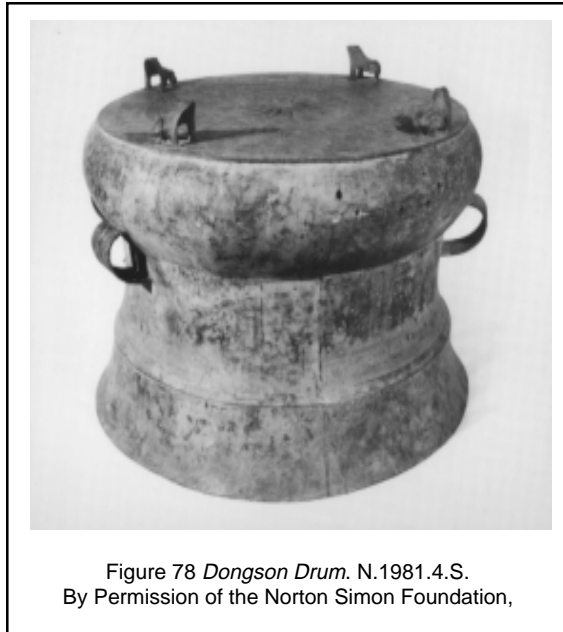
As Angkor Wat is the realm of Vishnu, the sculptural program for the temple exterior features scenes depicting various incarnations and exploits of this popular Hindu deity. Carved reliefs of scenes from the *Ramayana*, and other subjects, are spread along the stone walls of the lower levels of the temple, and galleries display an inexhaustible number of narrative scenes accompanied by files of celestial maidens who assume poses of dancers with elegance and grace, totally avoiding the frank sensuality of their Indian counterparts (**Figure 77**).



Figure 77 *Angkor Wat, Apsaras*. By Permission of The Fine Arts Library, Harvard College Library.

The final phase of the Angkor Period architecture is represented by the Bayon at Angkor Thom. Built in the early 13th century, it began as a Buddhist monument by Jayavarman VII. It is the last great architectural accomplishment before the fall of the Khmer empire.

As with Angkor Wat, the Bayon is a temple-mountain. The temple towers are conspicuous for their enormous images of the Bodhisattva Lokeshvara carved in deep relief on all four sides. They may even be the face of the king, who retained his status as the Devaraja, even though he was a Buddhist. These staring visages represent the all-seeing power of the deity, or the god-king. They are icons realized in the most flamboyant Khmer style. The squarish faces have broad, flat noses, open eyes and wide full-lipped mouths spread into their enigmatic smiles. This last feature was universally applied to Khmer figurative sculpture regardless of context, thus adding to their expression an edge of mystery, for which Cambodian art is justly famous.



The arts of Vietnam and Laos are closely related to those of their neighboring cultures, particularly Cambodia and Thailand. As with all other Southeast Asian nations, the arts and religions of India (Buddhism and Hinduism) were influential in the artistic development of Vietnam and Laos. The people of Dong-Son, a site on the coast of Tonkin, Northern Vietnam, produced objects of bronze from the 6th to the 2nd centuries BCE. As this and many other coastal settlements to the South within the Dong-Son culture were dominated by China, the finds are assumed to be provincial Chinese works of distinctive Vietnamese style.

The Dong-son culture produced magnificent bronzes. A bronze lamp in the form of a kneeling man holds a bowl before him. Three additional bowls on his body branch out, two in the form of birds, and minute human figures appear on the branches and at his knees. The most important Dong-son bronze are large bronze drums decorated with highly stylized relief designs. Representations of the radiating sun, frogs, dancers, boats carrying figures wearing feathered headdresses and the thunderous sound of the drum connect these vessels to weather and the inducement of rain (**Figure 78**).

The Kingdom of Chen La was also important to the development of Indianized art in this region beginning around the 6th century. Chen La people were Mon-Khmers who lived in modern Laos. Figure sculpture of this period from various sites shows adaptations of Indian forms and proportions by Indo-Chinese artists; however, the dynamic of pose, body fullness and rendering of features are Vietnamese rather than Indian.

Indonesia

The early cultures of Indonesia largely originated by the migration of populations from Yunnan, southern China, through Southeast Asia during Neolithic times. This entire region, which constitutes the southeastern mainland and island nations of Asia, represents a population of untold ethnic and linguistic diversity. During the Neolithic period, the settlers of Sumatra and other locales were building with, and carving significant megalithic stone objects of great size. This tradition continued into the modern period in southern Sumatra, for example, where the Nias people used immense stone slabs as foundations for the wood houses of chieftains. Art of the Dong-son culture, developed in Chinese-dominated Vietnam about the 5th century BCE, also appeared in Sumatra and other Indonesian sites.



Figure 79 *Ancestor Figure*. Nias, Sumatra. By Permission of Naprajzi Museum, Museum of Ethnography, Budapest.

Traditional arts of Indonesia reflect metaphysical concerns which govern one's reverence for deities, spirits and the deceased, for the protection of tribe and culture, one's attainment to power and the after-life. In the Nias culture, the ancestor figure, the most revered of human images, must always be kept on a wood plate representing a crocodile, tortoise, or stag and hung on the main beam of the house. Nias ancestor figures are carved of wood in crouching position with forearms held forward, hands clasped or holding a betel mortar or pestle. Their faces are angular and dominated by a long sharp nose and brow. They wear a high pointed crown, and their gender is clearly indicated. These figures (Adu Zatuas) were created to pay homage to the spirit of the deceased which is believed to exercise control over the living and protect them from disease, war and disaster (**Figure 79**).



Figure 80 *Container for Magical Substances*. Toba Tobak, Sumatra.
By Permission of the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden. No. 125/I.

The Bataks of the interior of northern Sumatra excelled in domestic architecture and in wood carving. Their exterior house carvings display imaginative renderings of plant, animal and humanoid beings who serve as protective and fertility spirits. Of particular interest among the Batak's carved puppets, magic wands and masks are containers for magical plant extracts carved out of buffalo (and mountain goat) horn with stoppers of carved wood (**Figure 80**).

Kalimantan, formerly Borneo, occupies the major portion of the island it shares with Sarawak and Brunei. Early contact with China during the Zhou period (c. 4th-3rd centuries BCE) is suggested by a wood sculpture of a crowned hornbill perched on a flowered standard that was traditional decoration during head-hunting festivals. Spirit masks, made by the wearers for funerary rituals, dramatize the skeletal face with strong brushwork and projecting animal tusks. Special shields for ritual dance were decorated with mask motifs and full figures of benevolent spirits.

Woven fabric is a particularly honored art form among all Indonesian cultures. Traditionally, men prepared the dyes from recipes which they guard in the strictest secrecy. Women were the weavers whose tasks frequently required high degrees of technical mastery. Apart from their meaning and beauty, textiles had particular significance for Indonesians as symbols of metaphysical union, male to female and thread to thread.

Certain fabrics, because of their particular material, weave, texture, pattern and color are intimately associated with significant ceremonies such as birth and death rites, important lifetime events such as filing of teeth or planting rice. Hence, textile traditions remain steadfast for centuries. Weavers of Borneo and Sumatra excelled in weaving fabrics using the ikat technique—that is, weaving with threads that have been selectively dyed. Sometimes the ikat woven design is enhanced with embroidery. Ikat woven cloth executed by the Sumatra people of the Lesser Sunda Islands shows frequent use of tree of life and skull tree motifs, the latter adapted from the village tree which displayed the skulls of vanquished enemies.

Indonesia experienced several major cultural transitions, beginning in the early 8th century. Indian Hinduism and Buddhism penetrated its religious life and its art, and some of the great monuments in central Java were inspired by these two religions.

The great stupa of Borobudur in central Java is universally recognized as one of the world's supreme religious monuments. Structurally, Borobudur is a vast rectangular pyramid of stone that rises from below ground in a series of terraces diminishing in size as they attain their summit. Its architectural plan and its extensive sculptural program are governed by the complex theological and iconographic ideas of Mahayana Buddhism.

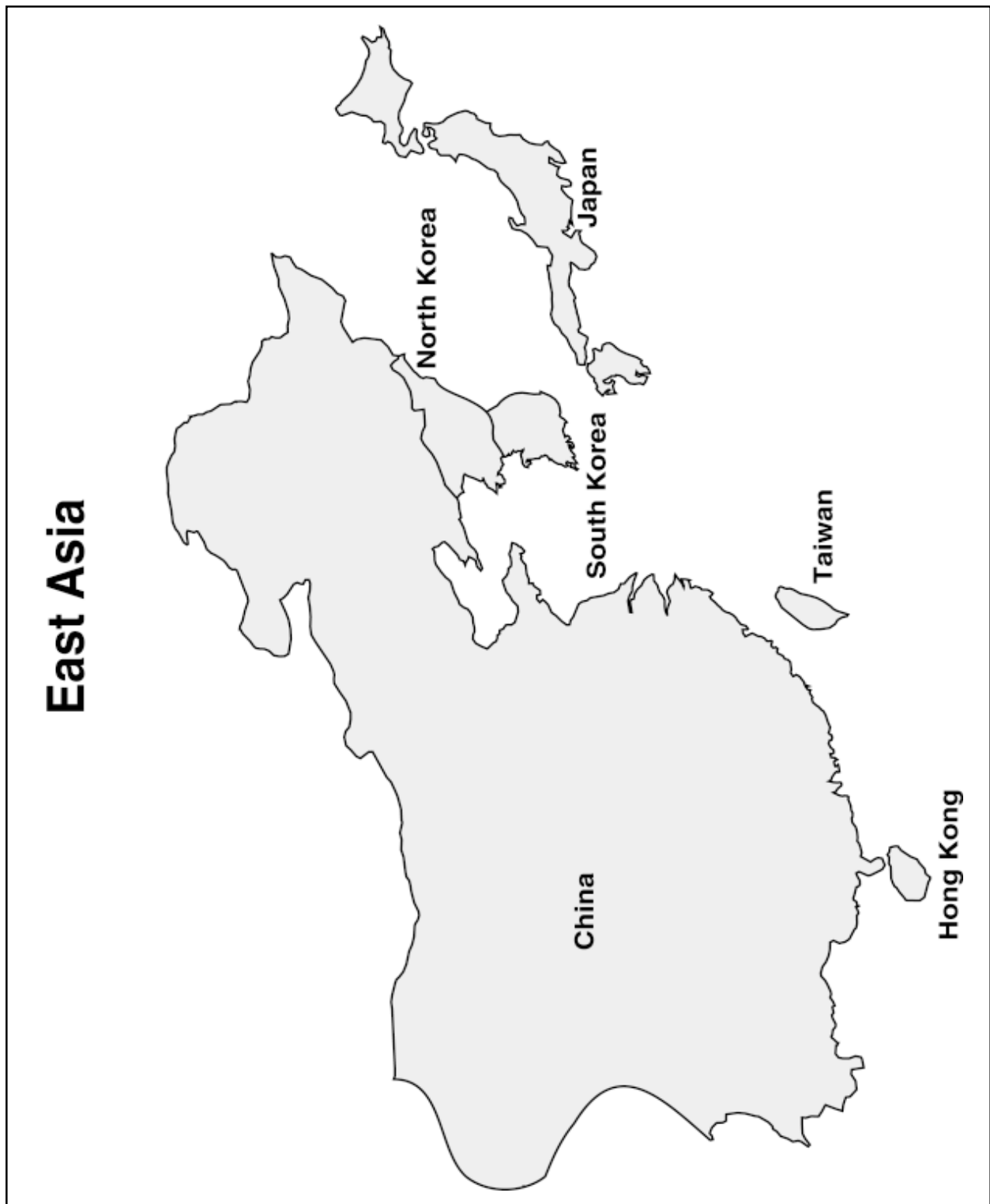
At ground level, wall sculptures represent the torments of earthly desire and constant rebirth. The first four terrace levels are devoted to the various past lives of the Buddha, his final incarnation on earth as the Buddha Sakyamuni, and the story of Sudhana, a seeker after the truth.

As worshippers followed the Master's footsteps to higher and higher levels of spiritual ascent, wall reliefs gradually change from naturalistic to increasingly formal representations. The fifth level is barren of narrative reliefs; however, sculptures of the teaching Buddha are seen on all four sides of the terrace. The final ascent is up three concentric circular platforms which hold 72 smaller stupas with pierced domes. Each of these houses an image of the Buddha.

Centered on this three-stepped platform is the crowning pinnacle, a large bell-shaped stupa which terminates up high with a parasol finial. This is the sanctuary which holds the most sacred image of the Buddha. The 9 stories, including the basement, correspond to the 9 levels of Meru, the "World Mountain."

In the 15th century Islam came to Indonesia via Arab traders. The mosques built differed from Indian temples only in the absence of figurative decoration. In fact, nowhere else in the world has Arabic style submerged so completely into local forms.

As we moved from South Asia across Southeast Asia, we witnessed the enduring viability of Indian culture as it made its way to Indonesia. The vehicles of this passage were trade and religion, and their outcome was a fusion of culture and art. Buddhism, in particular, demonstrated an affinity for adaptation. Transmutation occurred as it encountered each new culture along its path. Its fundamental ideas endured, but its visual and plastic characteristics were transformed as they encountered local popular culture and style.



EAST ASIA

Introduction

The East Asian region consists of China, Korea and Japan. Like the arts of South-east Asia these areas have been heavily influenced by the religious traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism from India. A fusion of native traditions with these influences have developed traditions of East Asian art which are particularly notable for the attention to nature, contemplation and harmony. While Korea and Japan have completely indigenous traditions of their own, they have been deeply influenced by the schools and traditions from China.

China

China holds one-quarter of the human race. Although there are many regional variations, Chinese ethnic groups are closely related to each other. The Chinese possess artistic traditions of sculpture and painting which are notable for their poetic and spiritual depth. The Chinese have always sought spiritual perfection from their art which has focused on qualities of serenity, balance and placement avoiding representations of confusion, conflict and violence. Chinese art represents a Chinese “way of being” and is attuned to Chinese philosophy, religion and etiquette.

China’s prehistory is known through excavated sites of the middle and late Neolithic period (5th to the 2nd millennium BCE). The most characteristic finds are pottery that falls into three types: a gray ware whose surface was textured by cord markings, a hand coiled “Painted Pottery” decorated with colored slips (**Figure 81**) and a fine “Black Pottery” made by potters of the Longshan culture. Some Chinese Neolithic cultures had distinct lapidary traditions. Jade was the most precious of all stones to the Chinese because of its translucency, texture and range of subtle colors. It can be penetrated only by abrasion with a drill and an abrasive substance such as sand.



Figure 81 *Burial Urn*. China. Neolithic Period, c. 2200 BCE.
By Permission of The Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection. #51.194.

The development of a metallurgical industry/technology that would serve artistic and ritualistic needs became a characteristic of Shang culture. Royal tombs at the late Shang city Anyang reveal the prevalence of sacrificial interments of humans and animals along with the finest of the worldly goods possessed by the deceased.

The most significant artistic legacy of Shang culture was bronze vessels which were used in rituals by the living and served as omens of good fortune in the tombs for the deceased. Ritual bronze vessels were accessible only to the king and the nobility; some are cast with ideographic inscriptions which identify the owner's clan or family. Over 30 types of vessels are known, representing a variety of sizes, shapes and functions. The largest are bowls and covered tureens for food, while others are pouring and drinking vessels for wine. There was a basic repertory of decorative motifs, mostly animal designs, which artisans applied to the vessel walls, corner flanges, legs, handles and lids. The monster mask, taotie (a mythic animal character), appears on virtually all vessels, sometimes prominently but often obscured within the overall design revealing itself as a myste-

rious, even menacing, image (**Figure 82**). Bronze bells or musical instruments were made in sets of different sizes or pitches. These were suspended on specially-made frames and played as modern bells or by percussionists.

Shang dynasty artisans set very high standards of ceramic design and manufacture. Pottery decorated with stamped and carved geometric designs carried over from Neolithic sites and continued into the Han dynasty (202 BCE-CE 220). However, high-fired stoneware was unique to the Shang productions of Anyang. Of particular interest is a type of white ceramic ware made of almost pure kaolin of such refinement that it appears to be pure porcelain. Contemporary glazed buff stoneware, impressed with overall rope or basket-weave textures, initiated a tradition that would develop into the Yue wares of the Song period (CE 960-1279).



Figure 82 *Fang Ding*. Ritual Vessel. Chinese. Shang Dynasty, 11th century. By Permission of The Seattle Art Museum, Margaret E. Fuller Purchase Fund #54.1777.

The Zhou dynasty (1045-256 BCE) gained control of the kingdom as Shang power began to decline. Early Zhou ritual vessels continued the forms and style of Shang but added lengthy inscriptions recording the acts and pronouncements of the king and nobility. As a result the bronzes became secularized. Gradually wine containers and pouring vessels disappeared and the old shapes of others were changed. Bronze vessels lost their earlier refinements and were collected principally for their historical value. The animal motifs of dragons, serpents and taotie masks were no longer used, and were replaced by decorative patterns. The very beasts which had spiritual value for the Shang were seen as menacing creatures by the Zhou.

The final period of the Zhou dynasty, known as the Warring States period (403-221 BCE), saw social and economic reform and artistic progress developing along with political chaos. Bronze vessels were shorn of their wild projections and rough surface. Decora-



Figure 83 *Ting, decor in silver inlay*. Jin Cun. Henan, China. Late Zhou Period. By Permission of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Pillsbury Collection.

tive motifs were reduced to elegant surface patterns. Some bronze vessels were decorated with scenes of combat and the hunt, as well as abstract scroll designs executed in silver inlay technique (**Figure 83**). Representations of wild beasts in fierce encounters were derived from nomadic tribal life on the northern steppes. During the declining years of the Zhou dynasty, the arts flourished in the State of Chu in Central China. Chu artists were painting on silk fabric, carving fine ornaments of jade and producing objects of lacquer.

The tenure of the Qin dynasty (221-207 BCE), though very brief, gave momentous drive to the evolution of China as a nation. The people of China had developed an extraordinary artistic legacy of more than 1300 years when they were pulled together as a nation in 221 BCE. The union was forcibly consummated by the king of the Qin state, a man of great intelligence and ruthless determination who proclaimed himself Qin Shihuangdi, the first emperor of all China. One of the emperor's major achievements is the integration of a series of old protective walls into the Great Wall, a barrier 1,400 miles in length. New harsh regulations were enforced. Modes of behavior, legal codes and procedures were standardized and strictly regulated by a network of imperial censors.



Figure 84 *Tomb Pit with Part of Earthware Burial Army of First Emperor of Qin. Pit 1, Shaanxi, China.*
By Permission of China Pictorial Publications, Beijing.

Upon his death in 210 BCE the emperor was buried under a mound of enormous proportions. Excavations at sites close to the emperor's burial mound unearthed astonishing underground installations of military garrisons revealing monumental sculpture of an unexpected naturalistic style. The largest of the three pits housed a vast subterranean underground shed populated by over 6,000 life-size clay figures of military officials, soldiers armed with bronze swords and horses, all dispersed in military formations as though ready for action (**Figure 84**).

The warrior figures are clay sculptures assembled in sections. Body parts were cast in molds and facial features were sculpted by hand; hence each figure possessed a distinctive expression and personality.



Figure 85 Group Shot: *Tales from History and Legends*. Late 1st c. BCE. China; Western Han Dynasty.
By Permission of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Denman and Waldo Ross Collection, Gift of C.T. Loo (25.190, 25.10-13).

The Han dynasty (202 BCE-CE 220) restored China's intellectual and artistic life and relaxed the autocratic controls that had been imposed upon the nation by the Qin regime. Chang'an, centrally located on the Wei River, became its capital. Western Han emperors (202 BCE-CE 9) drew upon the common aims of the Chinese people to reinvigorate the culture. China dominated the two highways—the Great Silk Roads—which crossed Central Asia and met at its westernmost outpost, Dunhuang. The Han court established trade with India and the West by sea routes across the Indian ocean, and east to Korea where Chinese settlements were established in Lelang (Pyongyang). Land routes from Yunnan, the southwestern province of China, stimulated migrations to and from Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Burma (Myanmar).

Confucian and Taoist philosophies evolving from the 5th century BCE into new religious and ethical creeds were gaining acceptance over popular ritualistic forms of ancestor worship. The arts were also developing from the forms and styles that were generated during the late Zhou period. Contemporary observers reported that the Han emperors and nobility had the walls of their ancestral temples and palaces painted with fanciful views of

heavenly realms, divinities and the likenesses of prominent persons of the time. Paintings on silk were also acquired for royal collections. Examples of Han painting have survived on lacquerware, tomb wall paintings and painted pottery tiles.

The high quality of the Han painter's brushwork is observed in a tile painting of the late Han period (CE 25-220). In addition to his fine brushwork, this painter also captured the character, expression and gesture of each figure and the interaction of the men who are engrossed in conversation (**Figure 85**).

During the late Zhou and the Han dynasties, lacquer-painted wood bowls and other domestic containers were imaginatively decorated with vigorous patterns of figures, animals and fantastic beasts. These were executed in bright colors over black ground. Typical of Western Han lacquer painting style is the energetic interaction of scrolls and streaking forms which are contained within the design space.

Human figures are frequently depicted in highly energetic poses and gestures on engraved stone walls of funerary offering chapels. The figures, animals, trees and architectural patterns of these wall reliefs are flat silhouettes whose features are engraved with few details into the stone.

Artists and artisans of the Han period demonstrate a rare ability to draw from traditions that go back to Neolithic times. They also create new forms and develop new materials and techniques with amazing versatility. The backs of bronze mirrors were given vigorous patterns of abstract shapes and elegantly curved creatures in flight. Incense burners of cast bronze and inlay of gold, silver and precious stones were shaped into fairy-tale mountain peaks often populated with minuscule hunters, animals and trees. Smoke issuing from the burning incense must have conjured the transmission of energy by the powers of nature through the mountain.

Many objects of Han manufacture were made to be placed in tombs with the deceased. These included weapons and implements of inlaid bronze, pottery figurines, architectural models and banners. Sculpture and jewelry of carved jade and sumptuous silk

textiles of various weaves are among the items that were traded and ultimately found in the burial mounds of Siberia, West Asia, Egypt and Europe. By the end of the Han period, Chinese artists had produced a legacy of art that was exercising influence over other Asian cultures and also dazzling the Roman world.

The collapse of the Han Dynasty in CE 220 left a perilous gap at the heart of Chinese society. The central governing circle was in such disarray and so steeped in Confucian conservatism it was unable to adjust to change until the Tang dynasty took the throne and reunited China in CE 618. Although it was an era of chaos and strife among a number of contending forces, the arts developed and flourished along with the spread of new ideas, new dispersals of religions and the interaction of cultures across Asia.



Figure 86 *Sakyamuni Buddha*, China. Zhao Dynasty. By Permission of The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection (B60 B1034).

During this period, known as the Six Dynasties, indigenous ethnic Chinese culture survived in southern territories, midway between the Wei and the Yangzi rivers, and Turko-Mongol kingdoms in regions to the north of this line. In CE 439 northern China was occupied by a people of Turkic origin as a result of which large populations of Chinese, including intellectuals and artists, fled to the South, many settling in Nanjing.

In these times of turmoil and stress, Chinese intellectuals rejected the Confucianist belief that the purpose of art was to teach and maintain the moral fiber of society. They embraced the expression of human feeling, spirituality and creative imagination. Hence many turned to Taoism, an indigenous Chinese faith that had incorporated elements of



Figure 87 *Nymph of the Luo River*. Late Tang or early Song copy after Gu Kaizhi (c. 344-406 CE). Section of the handscroll; ink and slight color on silk. By Permission of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC (14.53).

folklore, nature worship and metaphysics into its doctrine. Another option was Buddhism, a new religion from India that had been filtering into China across the Great Silk Road through Central Asia and Southeast Asia (**Figure 86**). Many artists who once agreed on the importance of moral values in art now contended that the arts should be valued only for their aesthetic merits. From this was formulated the essential qualities for the arts of painting and calligraphy. These principles covered matters related to expression, brushwork, draftsmanship, color, composition and preservation of ancient models. Calligraphy developed as the preeminent art form separate from painting, and the calligrapher was encouraged to create his own personal style of brushwork. As broad or as delicate as a brush stroke might be, it had to have an inner strength, energy and grace.

Master painter Gu Kaizhi (c. 344-406), renowned for his portraits and landscapes, was praised by Chinese critics for having imbued his work with Taoist spirituality. Very few of the paintings attributed to Gu Kaizhi are now considered to be authentic. Among those accepted as examples of the master's style, a scroll painting, *The Nymph of the Luo River*, is a copy by an unknown painter of the mid-15th century. In China, the practice of copying a painting of an admired artist, especially that of an ancient master, was regarded as an

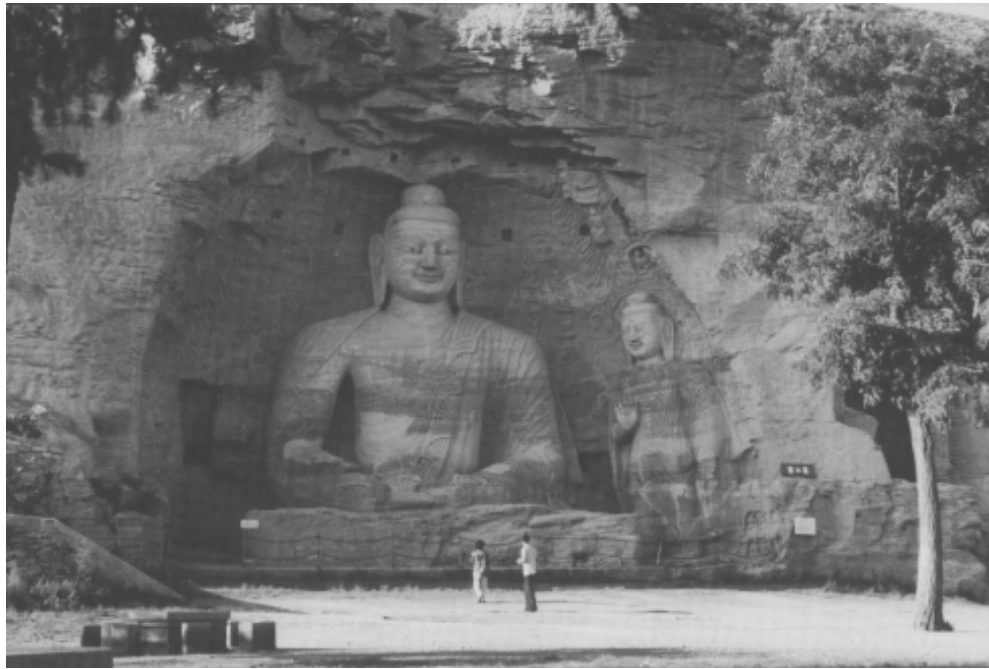


Figure 88 *Colossal Buddha*. Stone 45'. Cave 20, Yungang Shanxi, China. Six Dynasties Period. 2nd half of 5th century. By Permission of China Pictorial Publications, Beijing.

act of profound respect. The black ink drawing is done with a strong but fine brush line of consistent thickness. Figures have elegance of movement and a weightlessness enhanced by the flow and fluttering of their garments (**Figure 87**).

Landscape painting endowed with Taoist spirituality is not merely a representation of a particular place at a particular time but an expression of truth beyond time and place. The artists who aspired to more profound levels of expression also found more appropriate answers to their quest in Buddhism, which had begun to spread from Kushan-dominated India into China during the Han dynasty.

Buddhism gained substantial support among intellectuals and upper levels of Chinese society during the Northern Wei dynasty (CE 386-535) as pilgrims and monks, Indian as well as Chinese, introduced reformed doctrines of Buddhist worship and images of Buddhist divinities into East Asian culture.



Figure 89 *Shakyamuni and Prabhutaratna*. China.
By Permission of Musee de Arts Asiatiques-
Guimet, Paris. © PHOTO R.M.N.

Zeal for Buddhist doctrine and for the worship of its images spread across Central Asia from India to China. Shrines were established in trade centers and affluent cosmopolitan oasis cities along the Silk Road based on such Indian prototypes as Ajanta and Ellora in the Deccan Plateau of south India and at Bamiyan in north-central Afghanistan. These shrines and monasteries served as models for comparable Buddhist sanctuaries in China.

Around CE 460 the Wei rulers commissioned a rock-cut complex of Buddhist shrines and colossal sculptures at Yungang in Shanxi, north China. The now famous figure of a seated Buddha in contemplation betrays the sculptural legacy of India in the massive volumes of head and body, the garment which clings tightly to the body and falls in linear folds, the overlapping position of the legs and

the hands clasped on the lap. Facial features, the smiling lips and oversized abstracted ears, are minimally Chinese in character; clearly the sculptors were guided by drawings or portable sculptures of Indo-Roman style from Gandhara (**Figure 88**). Relief sculptures on the interior stone walls and ceilings also followed northern Indian tradition.

Toward the end of the 5th century, Chinese style was fully visible in the later sculptures of the Yungang caves and in the Buddhist caves of Longmen at Henan. By the first half of the 6th century, Chinese taste transformed the bulky forms of the earlier cave sculptures into slender elongated figures, often configured in long curvilinear poses. The linear qualities of these late Wei-style figures was given emphasis by the decorative treatment of the multiple flowing folds of garments, flying scarves and the elaborately developed halos (**Figure 89**). Altar pieces of gilt bronze were fashioned in this style making maximal use of rhythmically flowing garments and flying celestial beings.

The great complex of Buddhist shrines at Dunhuang, the eastern terminus of the Great Silk Road and the gateway into China proper, is virtually an archive of early Chinese Buddhist painting. Due to the absence of suitable rock for carving, artists fashioned sculptures of stucco in naturalistic style and painted them. Walls and ceilings of the rock-cut shrines were smoothed and covered with paintings mostly representing scenes from the previous lives of the Buddha. Many of these scenes were composed within landscape settings, thus providing examples of landscape from as early as the 4th to the 6th centuries.

Four hundred years of political and ethnic fragmentation came to an end when the Sui dynasty (CE 581-618) united China and secured its borders with strong military forces. The dynasty collapsed after a mere 37 years of rule and was followed by the Tang dynasty (CE 618-906). In CE 626, the second Tang emperor Li Shimin, who ruled under the name Taizong, inaugurated a century of peace and prosperity. Upon his death in CE 649, China had extended its power into Central Asia and Tibet. The conquest of Korea had begun, and good relations were initiated with Japan and Southeast Asia.

The Tang capital, Chang'an rapidly developed into a cosmopolitan metropolis of over a million inhabitants. Its streets teemed with Asians of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Buddhism was no longer the only foreign religion in China, as Nestorian Christians, Zoroastrians, Manicheans and Muslims converged upon the Tang capital. Korea had long been the bridge by which Chinese culture was received in Japan. Now the latter established its own mission in Chang'an, imported Tang art to its shores and replicated Tang sculpture and architecture.

While Buddhist sculpture of the Tang period virtually disappeared in its homeland, the copies made from the originals still exist in Japan. Since Buddhism was regarded by many Chinese as an intrusive foreign religion, its followers occasionally suffered persecution and restriction. Bronze sculptures were either destroyed or melted down for the metal. Nevertheless, examples of Tang dynasty wall painting, scroll painting, stone and clay sculpture have survived in Buddhist cave sanctuaries. Stone and clay sculpture show a return to plasticity of form from the slender curvilinear figures of the late Northern Wei dynasty.



Figure 90 *The Thirteen Emperors*. By Permission of The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Denman Waldo Ross Collection. 31.643.

The full bodies of Buddhist images are revealed under the lengths of draping fabric which fall from the shoulders and sweep around the chest and hips in long and elegant curves. Fine examples of Buddhist painting and painted sculpture of the Tang period are found at Dunhuang and in the Kondo of the Horyuji at Nara, Japan.

An important example of naturalism in Tang sculpture is found in the tomb of Emperor Taizong. Life-size representations of the emperor's six favorite horses attended by their grooms are carved in high relief into a series of limestone panels. The grooms are executed with life-like naturalism down to anatomical details. Legend has it that the celebrated painter

Yan Liben provided the drawings for these reliefs. Also attributed to this master is a hand scroll painting, *The Thirteen Emperors*. Represented in this painting on silk are full-figure portraits of emperors from the Han to Sui dynasties, each with their attendants. The artist's fame as a master portrait painter is well realized in this scroll; each emperor is portrayed with individual features which describe distinct personalities, rendered with fullness of form, sensitive modeling of faces and fluent brush line of technical brilliance (**Figure 90**).

The poet, musician and painter Wang Wei (CE 699-759) is given credit for the creation of the first painting devoted entirely to the beauty and mysticism of wild uncultivated nature in which exotic rock formations, twisted trees and mountains enveloped in mist are the principal focus of the painting. Human figures or habitations if included in the picture are minuscule in scale against the overwhelming dimensions of the setting. In their utter isolation, away from the cares of urban life, these ascetic figures ponder the mysteries of nature and the boundlessness of the universe (**Figure 91**). The quality of the artist's

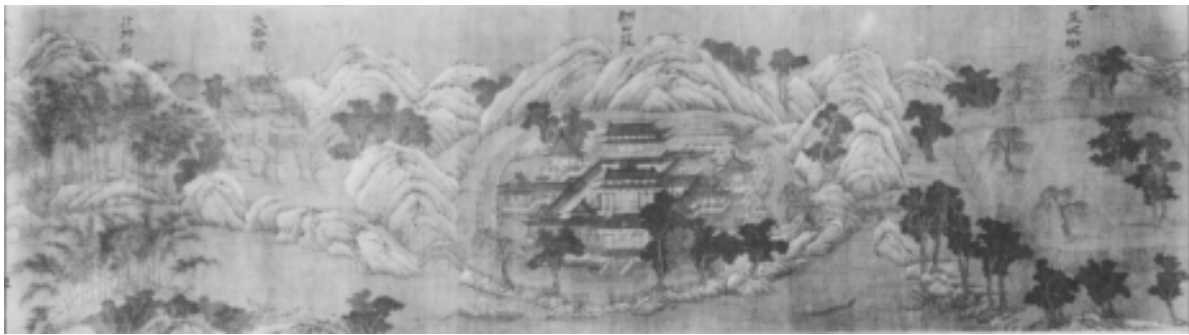


Figure 91 *Wangchuan Villa*. 15th or 16th century copy after Wang Wei (699-759 CE) section of handscroll. China, Ming dynasty. By Permission of the Seattle Art Museum, Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection #47.142.

brushwork determined its significance as a work of art. The line or the blob of black ink which delineates the trunk or leaf of a tree must have the flow, vitality and spontaneity that captures the essence of the image. These criteria, particularly as they apply to landscape painting, became the subject of vigorous debate among Chinese artists, critics, intellectuals and amateurs from the Tang period to the current century.

Ceramics of the Tang period achieved a high level of technical and artistic brilliance. The pottery tomb figurines produced by Tang artisans demonstrate a mastery of the medium as sculpture. These figurines were produced in great numbers to serve as tomb accessories. They represented persons of all stations in life, camels, horses, attendants, dancers, musicians, tradesmen and many others. Facial features and costumes of foreigners were recorded with fidelity. Gestures, poses and movements, especially of animals, were also true to life (**Figure 92**). Pottery plates, bowls and other household wares were superbly shaped and crafted. Most were painted



Figure 92 *Tomb Figurine: Camel Bearing Troupe of Central Asian Musicians*. Xi'an, China. Tang dynasty. By Permission of The Museum of Chinese History, Beijing.

or splashed with cream, green and orange-brown glazes. The viscous glazes were frequently allowed to dry in thick drips before they reached the bottom of the vessel.

The Tang dynasty fell in CE 907. After a period of political unrest referred to as the Five Dynasties, China was reunited under the Song dynasty (CE 960-1227) which ruled from Kaifeng.

Arts of the Northern Song dynasty evolved in a climate of cultural reaffirmation and self-examination. The pursuit of knowledge focused toward understanding the physical, moral and spiritual natures of the visible world. With improved printing technology it was possible to disseminate encyclopedic works which advanced the intellectual level of Song culture.

Theories on painting abounded during the Northern Song (CE 960-1126) and Southern Song (CE 1127-1279) periods. During the earlier period, much of the critical comments were focused on landscape painting. Jing Hao, (active around CE 900 to 960), addressed the issue of difference between “resemblance” or the representation of visible form, and “truth,” the manifestation of the inner essence of form. The artist, he believed, must achieve a synthesis of the two in order to integrate the form and content of his picture.

The 11th-century master painter Guo Xi advised artists to study nature intently, observing seasonal changes and the effect of light upon the landscape as the day progresses. He also urged artists to give movement to water and clouds, and impart life to mountains. Guo Xi was famous for his towering jagged mountains and for his ability to enliven rock formations and trees with forceful draftsmanship (**Figure 93**). Critic Shen Gua commented that landscape must be seen from “the angle of totality,” that is, from a bird’s-eye view, to see detail within its entire setting. A picture, he observed, is a fragment of eternity, not one experience but an accumulation of experiences. For the Chinese painter, one-point perspective in the Western sense would have been limiting, whereas the space created by the Chinese painter encompasses many points of view. Thus, the ideal landscape painted



Figure 93 *Mountain Scenery*. By Guo Xi (c. 1020-1090 CE) All Right Reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

on a long hand scroll is experienced in time and space as the viewer unrolls the paper, from right to left, engaged in motion along with the movement which the artist consigned to the image.

The Northern Song period also saw the development of two approaches to painting that were totally opposed in concept and technique. The “Literati” painters were a small circle of intellectuals, poets and scholars, all Neo-Confucianists, who declared that the purpose of painting was expression and not representation. Since the quality of the brushwork in a painting revealed the character of the painter, their primary concern upon viewing a picture was not its aesthetic qualities but the character of the artist. The Literati considered themselves gentlemen first and painters second; and since they wished not to be mistaken for “professional” painters, whom they abhorred, they avoided sleek technique, which they characterized as “merely skillful,” preferring a certain primitive awkwardness in their brushwork and the exclusive use of black ink on paper. As the Literati painted only for their own circle of friends they avoided all technical effects that would call attention to their works as “art objects.” Their sincere intent to express the unique personality of the individual artist resulted in the most original painting of this period.

The last Northern Song emperor, Huizong (CE 1082-1125)—himself a painter of distinction—established the official court painting style. Under his patronage, court painters competed with one another to please his taste in portraiture, figure, landscape, bird



Figure 94 Detail: *Court Ladies Preparing Newly Woven Silk*.
By Permission of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Special Chinese and Japanese Fund. 12.886.

and flower painting and in copies of classic works admired by the emperor. Whenever the emperor produced a fine painting himself, his artists hastened to make copies. *The Five Color Parakeet* signed by Huizong, is a fine example of Northern Song court style painting. *Court Ladies Preparing Silk* is a supremely well-rendered copy of a Tang dynasty work. The brilliant characterization of these women of rank absorbed in their task of pounding the silk and drawing the thread conveys a warmth of feeling and a dignity that brings this scene to life (**Figure 94**).

When the Jurchen Tartar took Northern China and sacked Kaifeng in CE 1125, the emperor's palace and historic collection of thousands of paintings were totally destroyed. The entire court, with a few exceptions, were taken captive and Huizong died in exile.

Once the border between the Southern Song and the newly formed Jin Tartar Kingdom was settled and the Song court established at Hangzhou in CE 1227, the arts resumed with new vigor. The painting of the new, much-diminished Kingdom of China reflected the psychological changes that pervaded the nation. The lofty, dramatic mountains, deep valleys, the thorny trees and exotic rock of Northern Song painting yielded to softer landscape and benign climate as a more emotional, imaginative and poetic vision came to the fore.

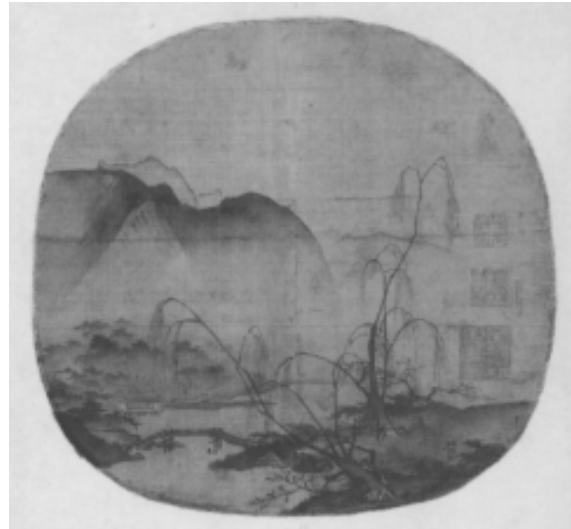


Figure 95 *Bare Willows and Distant Mountains*. Southern Song Dynasty, end of 12th century. By Permission of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Special Chinese and Japanese Fund. 14.61.

Among the painters of the next generation are Ma Yuan and Xia Gui (active between CE 1190 and 1230). The paintings of these and other artists of their generation brought the subject much closer to the viewer and allowed open spaces for atmospheric effects. Moreover, they employed contrasting tones of light and dark to intensify emotion. Ma Yuan tended to place a group of trees or perhaps a single figure over to one side of the picture, leaving space on the opposite side to render mist-enshrouded mountains far in the distance. His paintings often convey a feeling of poetic melancholy (**Figure 95**). Xia Gui also composed his landscapes as open spaces with rocks, trees and other elements close to the viewer and distant mountains only partially visible. However, his brushwork was far more robust than that of his colleague and, in fact, possesses a dynamism and spontaneity observed in Chan Buddhist painting.

Chan artists placed great emphasis upon deep contemplation and emptying the mind of all thought to make room for sudden revelations of truth. They were noted for their eccentric behavior, wild imaginations, irrational imagery and explosive brushwork. Needless to say, academicians and Literati considered Chan painting insignificant.

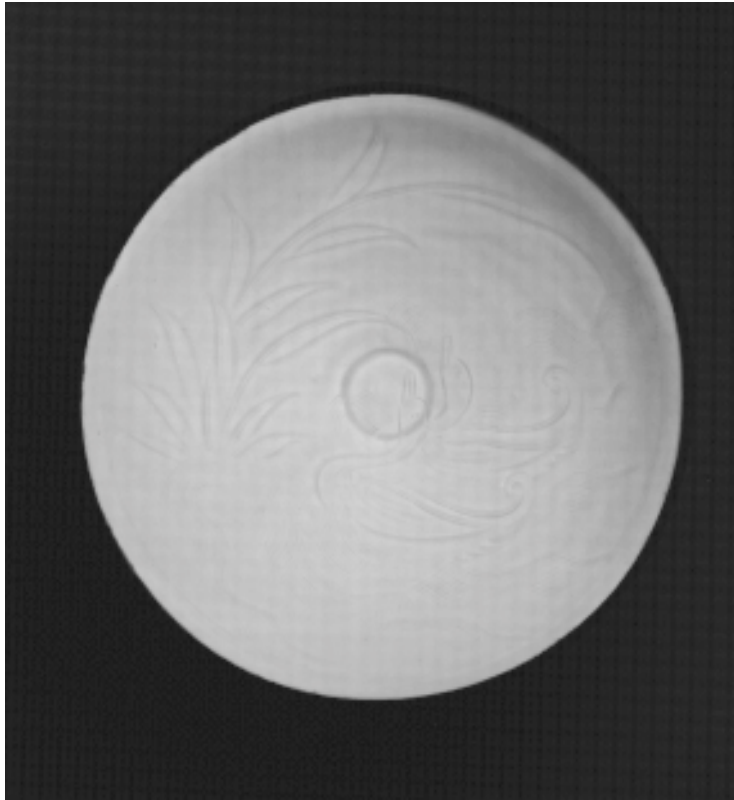


Figure 96 *Bowl*. China, Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127 CE. Ding ware. By Permission of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Helen and Alice Colburn Fund. 28.359.

The ceramics of the Tang and Song periods constitute a major component of the artistic legacy of China. Apart from the variety and superb quality of their forms and glazes, Tang dynasty potters also developed pure porcelain around the year 900, about 700 years before it was produced in the west. Both the white porcelains and the fine Yue ware which developed into Song dynasty celadons were exported through Asia and beyond.

From the white porcelains of the Tang period, the Song potters created Ding wares in thin translucent walls and glazed a creamy white color. The particular distinction of

these wares was the supreme purity of their shapes. Ewers, bowls, vases and pouring vessels could be perfectly smooth or decorated with flower and leaf designs, engraved by hand, or pressed into the clay with molds (**Figure 96**).

Among the porcelaneous stoneware of the Song dynasty the celadons, which were glazed in various tones of green, were the most highly prized. Some were given glazes meant to develop fine crackles. Jun wares are distinctive for their light blue glaze splashed with soft tones of reddish violet. Cizhou wares were made for utilitarian purposes—everything from pillows to wine pots and vases (**Figure 97**). The material was stoneware covered with a creamy white slip. Decoration was either painted on the surface in dark brown-to-black slip, or carved in sgraffito and covered with transparent glaze.

Exported Song ceramics reached as far to the west as Arabia and Egypt, and east to Japan, the Philippines and Indonesia. These and later Chinese ceramics would, in time, have a profound influence on the arts of Persia, Anatolia and western Europe.

Mongol conquest of Song China in CE 1279 by Qubilai Khan resulted in the Yuan dynasty which lasted a mere 74 years after the death of the great Khan. The Hanlin Academy established during the Southern Song period continued to function as a center for academic painting. The court also called upon the services of professional painters, potters and other artisans. However, the oppressive and corrupt administrations of Qubilai's successors drove intellectuals, poets and Literati artists away from court circles and into environments where they hoped to restore some semblance of traditional Chinese culture and art. Some of the painters found solace not in the Southern Song tradition but in the legacy of Tang painting which they regarded as the ultimate in native Chinese culture. As the Mongol rulers were followers of Lamaist Buddhism of Tibetan origin, sculpture and paintings of the numerous deities and sacred leaders of the faith were made for the court, the temples and monasteries of Beijing.

The calligraphers and painters of the period were mostly associated with the Literati movement. Zhao Mengfu (CE 1254-1322), a descendant of the first Song emperor, was one of the very few Chinese scholars to serve the Yuan court. In so doing he became a vital civilizing force within Mongol society. An artist of great versatility and impeccable integrity, he was renowned as a painter of horses and most particularly as a landscape painter and calligrapher (**Figure 98**). Zhao was of pivotal importance in the development of Chinese landscape painting from the Yuan dynasty forward with his seemingly simplis-



FIGURE 97 *EWER: CIZHOU WARE. DENG FENG TYPE. CHINA, 10TH-11TH CENTURY. NORTHERN SONG DYNASTY. GLAZED STONEWARE WITH SLIP, H. 17.5 CM. BY PERMISSION OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART, 1998, PURCHASE FROM THE J.H. WADE FUND 1948.219.*



tic approach. His masterful use of clear and uncluttered pictorial space, his delineation of trees, mountains and other elements with assured and highly personal brush strokes led to the highest artistic achievements of the Yuan period.

Yuan Literati inscribed their own poetry on their works and also welcomed friends to inscribe their comments about the painting. Four scholars of the Yuan period developed their own distinctive styles which in turn served as models for painters of the Ming, Qing and modern periods. One of the most frequently imitated and influential of these four masters, Ni Zan (CE 1301-1374), was the quintessence of the gentleman-scholar who turned away from the pressures of urban living. He worked on paper with monochrome ink, which he used most sparingly to create a deceptively simplistic view of nature whose only reference to humanity is an empty hut or pavilion. Shrubs, trees, rocks, water and perhaps distant hills, are delicately adjusted to open, blank space. Just as one can see emptiness in these scenes, one can also sense their silence.

Bamboo painting presented technical and interpretive challenges that few artists could successfully meet. The artist had to first understand bamboo structure and the way it behaves and then possess the ability to express its strength, resiliency and movement with precise strokes of the brush. During the Yuan dynasty, bamboo painting was of particular interest to many Chinese artists, and especially those who saw bamboo as the symbol of the true gentleman resisting Mongol repression. Both Ni Zan and Zhao Mengfu were highly regarded as great calligraphers and bamboo painters. So was Guan Daosheng, who was married to Zhao Mengfu.

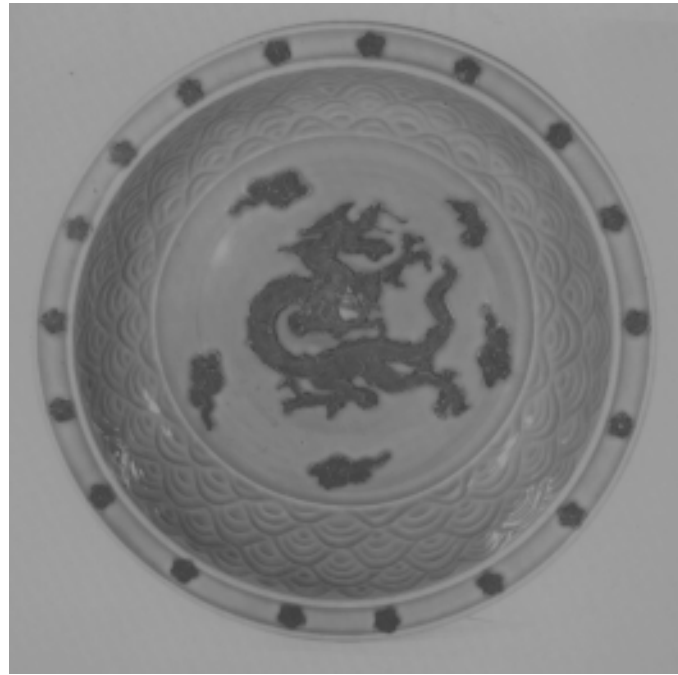


Figure 99 *Dish with Dragon and Clouds*. China, Zhejiang Province. Yuan dynasty, 14th century. Porcelain. Diam. 43.2 cm. By Permission of the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1998, John L. Severance Fund, 1961.92.

Yuan dynasty ceramics were produced principally at kiln sites in central and south China. Celadon production at Longquan and Lishui in Zhejiang increased to satisfy West Asian demands. Some new designs and techniques were introduced at this time: Qingbai ware, a slightly blue-tinted type of porcelain, was now decorated with strings of tiny pearls or beads arranged in leaf and scroll patterns. Celadon glazed dishes were given raised decorations, left unglazed in the bisque, with a central dragon surrounded by cloud bands and a ring of flower petals on the rim (**Figure 99**). Such highly energetic dragons, clouds, leaves and flowers were also painted in white porcelain vessels of various kinds in copper red and cobalt blue. At first, attempts were made to combine red and blue underglaze painting, and even add beadwork and open-work panels on one vase. However, cobalt



Figure 100 *The Hermit Xu You Resting by a Stream*. By Dai Jin, Chinese, 1338-1462, Ming dynasty. Hanging Scroll, ink and slight color on silk, 138 x 75.5 cm. By Permission of the Cleveland Museum of Art. 1998, John L. Severance Fund, 1974.45

blue underglaze decoration gained immediate acceptance by the Persians (who were also under Mongol rule until CE 1335), and was eventually admired and collected the world over and imitated for centuries by Japanese, Dutch and other craftsmen.

The Ming dynasty (CE 1368-1644) reverted to the well-organized Confucian bureaucracy. However, at the Ming court, the arts deteriorated into vacuous academism. The capital was moved from Nanjing back to Beijing by the third emperor, Yongle (CE 1403-1424). The art world, however, was some 600 miles south in the prosperous and beautiful districts around Suzhou where the collectors, scholars and painters spent much time at leisure surrounded by idyllic landscape and lovely gardens. These self-exiled aesthetes continued the traditional practice of their Yuan predecessors in avoiding any form of contact with officialdom. Scholar painters and thinkers of the Ming period were concerned with the intuitive perception of natural forms as vehicles for artistic expression, whereas their counterparts of the Song period believed that the observation and study of nature were essential preparations for the creative process.

The Ming painters also placed great emphasis on the study of ancient masters and copying their works. In the 17th century, color printing also became a practical reality, helping with the production of art manuals and handbooks and for reproductions of ink and watercolor paintings. In Japan, this technology led to the development of wood-block prints as an art form of major consequence.



Figure 101 *Fish and Rocks*. By Zhu Da, Chinese, 1624-1705, Qing dynasty. Handscroll, ink on paper, 29.2 x 157.5 cm.
By Permission of the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1998, John L. Severance Fund, 1953.247.

Professional painters who were centered at Hangzhou were referred to as the Zhe School. This informal group was led by the landscape painter Dai Jin (CE 1388-1452) who was dismissed from the court academy for misusing the color red (**Figure 100**). He returned to his native city, Hangzhou, and had great success as an independent professional painter. The basic style of the Zhe School was derived from the Southern Song painters Ma Yuan and Xia Gui. The counter group to the Zhe School was the Wu School of Literati painting at Suzhou. Its founder Shen Zhou (CE 1427-1509) mastered the styles of the Yuan dynasty recluse painters and particularly admired the work of Ni Zan and Huang Gongwang. He created landscapes based on their styles; however, his own personal style always prevailed.

In CE 1644, while the Chinese military were otherwise occupied, the Manchus, a people of Mongol origin installed the Qing dynasty. Eager to steep themselves in Chinese culture, which they had long admired, the Manchu aligned themselves with the most conservative positions of Confucianist thought and practice. They honored China's past by collecting Chinese antiquities, books, manuscripts and advancing scholarship. The imperial art collection of Chinese painting assembled under the Qianglong emperor (CE 1786-1796) surpassed all efforts to preserve China's great legacy.

The professional painters rediscovered the grand landscape paintings of Guo Xi and other early (Northern) Song period painters. The Literati followed in the traditions of their predecessors and withdrew in isolation. A number of painters possessed of their own personal vision came to the fore even though their individual styles were derived from earlier masters. One of these artists stands out from the rest as a true individualist. Zhu

Da, or Bada Sharen (CE 1622-c.1705), conceded to no convention either in art or in life (**Figure 101**). A descendent of Ming royalty, he withdrew to the life of a monk. His brush work was extremely free but absolutely assured and defied convention. His landscapes of contorted rocks and trees had richness of tone and a perceptible vibrancy. His people, birds and animals were swiftly executed in lines and blobs of ink which capture their expression and character.

The presence of Western powers began with Portuguese trading missions at Canton in CE 1514 and at Macao later in the century, where they not only established a trade concession but also installed a production facility. China was viewed with great awe in the Western world and its art was avidly collected by Europeans during the Qing period. However, in China, knowledge of European culture was restricted to a few within the emperor's court. Even though Giuseppe Castiglione and other European Jesuits worked along with Chinese artists in the imperial workshop, Western techniques had limited appeal for the painters of the Qing court, and were ignored by Chinese artists in general.

Ceramics and other decorative and functional arts rank high among the artistic achievements of Ming and Qing dynasty artisans from 1368 to 1912. Ming blue and white porcelains attained an excellence of form and decoration. Delicate sprays of peonies and other flower and leaf scrolls were painted with "Mohammedan Blue" underglaze. During the 16th century, "Mohammedan wares" boxes, and other articles for the writing table with Persian and Arabic inscriptions, were produced for Western markets. Vessels of the 16th and 17th centuries featured naturalistic scenes incorporating pine trees, deer, cranes and Taoist immortals. Also during this period, a so-called "Kraak" porcelain, decorated with highly stylized landscapes and flowers, found its way to Holland where it was imitated for Delft and Lowestoft wares.

During the early Qing dynasty, the blue and whites were mass produced with precise uniformity but painted with a cobalt blue of particular beauty. Also, a soft paste porcelain was developed and painted in blue underglaze with dragons and cloud forms. Monochromes attained a classic perfection. These thin-bodied porcelains were glazed with a variety of subtle colors, the most outstanding of which was a deep red dubbed by Euro-

pean connoisseurs sang de boeuf or oxblood. They surpassed the Ming white eggshell porcelains in attaining the classic beauty of Song dynasty Ding ware. Enameled wares enjoyed great popularity, especially among foreign collectors. European collectors gave these wares names which were based on the dominant color; i.e. famille vert, famille rose, etc.

Many critics believe that Chinese arts of the 19th century entered a period of stagnation. The imperial academies and workshops did decline with little supervision and patronage from the Qing court. There was a tendency for artists to replicate past styles and works. However, excellent art works were being produced on local and folk levels. Late 19th century artists like Qi Baishi, Wu Changshuo and Huang Binhong drew inspiration from both new and old sources. Qi Baishi derived his unique style from woodcuts and folkarts. He often chose common objects from everyday life as his subjects. Wu Changshuo delved into China's ancient past and developed a bold calligraphic style based on archaic scripts found on oracles and bronzes of the Shang dynasty. He imparted new vigor and dynamism to the ancient script form. Huang Binhong upheld the traditional ideal of the Literati artists. His landscape paintings are imbued with Literati content yet executed with a new vibrancy and energy in his brushwork.

Some Chinese intellectuals discouraged by the weakened and decadent Qing state turned to the West to infuse new life into traditional Chinese art and culture. Although many initially rejected the Chinese styles in favor of Western techniques and concepts, they eventually reconciled their differences in a synthesis of Chinese- and Western-styles.

Twentieth century Chinese arts are grouped into two periods: pre-1949 and post-1949. The pre-1949 arts continued the 19th century synthesis between Chinese- and Western-style works, with many artists studying abroad. After 1949, the arts were controlled by the communist state and subjugated to political needs and influences. Soviet-style socialist realism exerted a strong influence and works were geared towards glorifying the working-class and vilifying the traditional aristocracy. After the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), as China began to trade and communicate with the wider world an interest in decorative arts were revived. Today, contemporary Chinese artists are trying to integrate the infusion

of western influences while still maintaining the essential Chinese traditions intact. And as the 20th century comes to an end, a new generation of Chinese artists working in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and abroad are finding a voice in the global art scene.

The art of China is extraordinary not only for its aesthetic qualities, but for its historical unity. Despite foreign conquests, internal struggles and the loss of the entire pre-Song heritage of paintings all the basic elements that define Chinese art are present from nearly the beginning of Chinese artistic traditions. Chinese artistic tradition is most notable for paying such close attention to nature and the deep harmony in its contemplation.

Korea

The arts and culture of the Korean peninsula were vitally affected by neighboring cultures throughout its history. The first Korean state, Choson, was formed in northwest Korea during the 3rd century BCE. Choson was invaded and colonized by Han dynasty forces from China in 108 BCE. One of these colonies, Lelang, became an important trade center for the diffusion of Chinese goods and culture in the peninsula. The tombs of Lelang yielded fine works in Chinese style. In *The Tomb of the Painted Basket*, in South Pyongyang province, a lacquered basket decorated with painted friezes depicting Confucian gentlemen in animated conversation with vigorous designs of scroll clouds, dragons and lozenge motifs of the Han period was discovered. By CE 313, Lelang was surrounded by three Korean kingdoms, Koguryo, Paekche and Silla, which were independent and prosperous. In CE 668, Silla conquered the other two kingdoms and ruled the entire Korean peninsula until CE 935.

The Three Kingdoms (57 BCE-CE 668) and the United Silla (CE 668-935) periods represent high achievement in Korean architecture, sculpture, painting and decorative arts. Koguryo tombs, for example, were built of precisely-cut stone blocks. Interior walls, ceilings and domes were embellished with colorful paintings representing animated hu-

man figures, animals, dragons, flowering plants and heavenly beings. Characteristic examples may be seen in the Shinba-ri Tomb near Pyongyang (5th-7th century) and the *Tomb of the Dancers* in Tonggou, Manchuria (4th-6th century) (**Figure 102**).

Korea accepted Buddhism in the late 4th century and sent emissaries to Japan, followed by teams of architects and artists to build the original Horyuji Temple at Nara in CE 607 creating some of the finest Buddhist sculptures and paintings of that era.

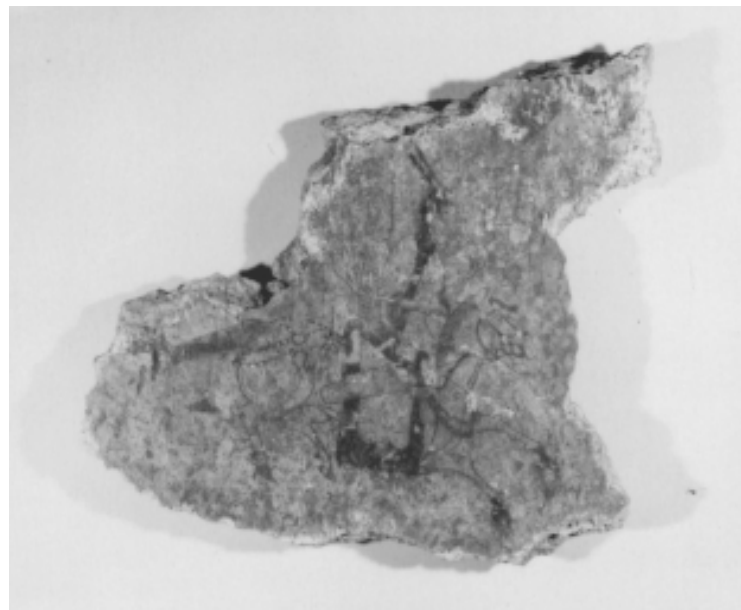


Figure 102 Mural: *Great Tomb, Horse with Rider Shooting Arrows*. Kaguryo.
By Permission of the National Museum of Korea.

The tombs of Paekche were built of stone, brick and clay tiles. Pagodas were constructed of wood and later of stone. Of the few pagodas that survive from the 6th to 7th centuries, the Chongnim at Puyo is a classic example of the five-tier pagoda. A series of clay tiles of the 7th century from a temple at Puyo show unusual traditional motifs in deep relief cast from molds. These depict landscapes, representing trees in a mountainous setting and featuring a sky filled with scroll clouds (**Figure 103**).

The most prosperous of the Three Kingdoms was Silla. Royal burial mounds in the attractive valley near its capital, Kyungju, contained quantities of gold jewelry and other objects. The most important of these relics are gold crowns of gold (5th-6th century) ornamented with antler-like projections hung with gold spangles, jade crescents and long pendants. Among the pottery remains of one tomb were unusual stoneware ceremonial ves-



Figure 103 *Tile Relief with Landscape Relief*. By Permission of the National Museum of Korea.

sels fashioned into mounted warriors, animals and fanciful creatures. A gilt bronze figure of the popular Bodhisattva Maitreya, seated in a pensive mood, shows influence of Chinese sculpture of the late Northern Wei dynasty (early 6th century) and the high quality of bronze casting by the artisans of Silla (**Figure 104**).

In the mid-8th century two shrines dedicated to Vairocana, the Universal Buddha, were built in north Kyongsang province. Of particular interest in the Pulguk-sa temple are two pagodas, symbols of the Buddha. The smaller of the two, *The Pagoda that Casts No Shadow*, is a stone structure of five stories representing the Korean pagoda in its simple form. The other is built of five stories, each of different size and shape, crowned by a tall finial.

The Sokkuram Shrine is a circular vaulted chapel partly hewn out of the live rock and completed with blocks of granite. From its location at the summit of Toham-sa the chapel has a monumental sculpture of the Buddha positioned to overlook the land toward the eastern sea so as to deter foreign invasion. The formal pose, the understated carving, the expression and faint smile reinforce his profound meditative state. Surrounding the tranquil Buddha are granite wall panels of Vedic deities, Bodhisattvas, and disciples vividly realized in larger-than-life relief carvings. The energy of these sacred beings provides a significant contrast to the serenity of the Buddha.

The Silla court was removed by a revolt within the kingdom in CE 918, and succeeded by the Koryo dynasty

(CE 918-1391). The capital was relocated to Songdo (modern Kaeson). Among the arts of the Koryo period of particular interest are the development of pagodas, objects of bronze and celadon porcelains. Bronze technology reached Korea from China through Manchuria possibly as early as the 8th or 10th century BCE. The practice of decorating metal vessels and containers with inlaid silver wire enjoyed a long tradition in Korea. During the Koryo period, bottles and vases simulating fine long-necked porcelain wares were cast of bronze and embellished with delicate linear designs of inlaid silver wire (**Figure 105**). Well into the late 19th century, containers of cast iron were decorated with intricate geometric and animal patterns of silver inlay.



Figure 104 *Maitreya*. Gilt Bronze. Old Silla, 7th century.
By Permission of the National Museum of Korea.



Figure 105 *Bronze Bottle*. By Permission of The V&A Picture Library.

Koryo bronze mirrors varied greatly in design. Their disc-like shape, sometimes scalloped on the edge, had one face polished and designs on the reverse side cast in relief, either in circular patterns or as pictorial representations. Circular designs may represent a variety of animals and inscriptions, as well as abstract and floral patterns. Pictorial designs frequently represent mythological subjects (**Figure 106**). Mirrors were deposited in tombs to serve the deceased in his or her after-life. The polished side served toiletry purposes but also provided an eternal light which magically illuminated the tomb interior.

Koryo celadons developed from Chinese wares of the Song dynasty (CE 960-1279). Celadon is made of a fine porcelaneous clay which is high-fired to an extremely durable light-gray body,

covered with a translucent green glaze. Frequently, flower and leaf designs are engraved, carved or stamped into the body. Sometimes designs such as clouds or flowers are painted before the green glaze is applied. Korean potters also apply what is called slip-inlaid decoration. This process involves laying white and/or black slip on the body, scraping away the design areas, then filling in the recesses with slip of another color. Celadon glazes vary from an olive to a turquoise. The latter is known as “kingfisher blue.” Korean celadons are appreciated and sought by collectors because of their fine proportions, shapes, decorations and subtle glazes.



Figure 106 *Bronze Mirror*. Koryo dynasty.
By Permission of the Brooklyn Museum of Art,75.65.2.



Figure 107 *Samantabhadra Riding on an Elephant*. By Permission of the V&A Picture Library.

As Buddhism had developed a very broad following and strong patronage during this period, much support was given to the construction of temples and monasteries and the creation of Buddhist sculpture and painting.

The invasion of Korea by the Mongols in CE 1231 halted much art production. Even so, Tibetan Lamaism prevailed throughout the eastern Mongol empire and Buddhist art gained imperial patronage. A Korean or possibly Chinese painting of this period representing the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra seated on a six-tusked elephant is an elegant example of mystical Buddhist images that would have been created in either country during the Mongol period (**Figure 107**).



Figure 108 *Sage in Meditation*. By Kang Hui An.
By Permission of the National Museum of Korea.

As happened in China when the Ming dynasty overthrew the Mongol (Yuan) rulers, Buddhism began losing its influence and Confucianism was made the official religion of the Yi dynasty (CE 1392-1910). At the new capital, Seoul, construction of lavish palaces was in full force and the visual arts found new strength in painting, ceramics and decorative arts. Under the patronage of the pro-Chinese Yi rulers, Korean artists adopted the painting styles and concepts favored by the Ming dynasty. Korean aristocrats and intellectuals, self-styled Gentlemen Painters, decried the professional and academic artists, insisting, as had the Literati of China before them, that art must express the inner meaning of nature, not its external form. Moreover, black ink brushed on plain silk or paper was the acceptable medium of the elite Literati painters. Although Korean painters drew inspiration from Chinese masters of landscape

painting, they also experimented with unorthodox subjects, expressions and techniques practiced by Son (Chinese: Chan/Japanese: Zen) Buddhist masters. Among prominent Yi-period painters of the Southern School, Chong Son (Kyonjae) (CE 1676-1759), studied Song and Yuan landscape painting. His quiet view of Ingok Valley where a scholar is absorbed in his reading exemplifies Southern School style. In his painting *Sage in Meditation*, Kang Hui-an (CE 1419-65) applied Son Buddhist eccentric brushwork to a scene depicting a sage seated on a great boulder which appears to be floating in mist (**Figure 108**). In the final years of the Yi dynasty, An Chung-sik (CE 1886-1914) retained the atmosphere and mood of traditional Korean ink painting in *Mountain Retreat*, though he executed it in Western style and technique.

During the 20th century, Korean art has met with strong influences from abroad. While under the rule of Japan (CE 1910-1945), Koreans absorbed the concepts, styles and techniques of modern Japanese art which were being taught in their schools and

academies. From the 1950s forward many Korean artists returned to traditional Korean themes such as landscapes and genre scenes while others turned to movements such as abstract expressionism and minimalism that were evolving in Europe and the United States.

Japan

Japanese history is distinct from that of China and Korea due to its geographic position. The islands of Japan were never governed by invaders. The divisions of territory within Japan by mountains and water made a centralized government nearly impossible for much of its history. Civil war has been common throughout Japanese history but despite its militaristic emphasis Japanese culture has also admired poetic and artistic refinement represented by apparently simple yet elaborately complex rituals. Japanese artistic sensibilities are governed by simplicity with a reverence for the inner quality of the object. For Japanese art every object deserves close and careful prolonged contemplation. From contemplation comes the inner qualities of Japanese art.

The Japanese are descended from a union of Jomon and Yayoi cultures, becoming a well consolidated population with advanced agricultural skills and a knowledge of bronze casting by the 2nd century CE. Their indigenous religion, Shinto “The Way of the Gods,” is based on an extremely complex mythology, and touches on every aspect of life.

The Jomon culture (ca. 10,500-300 BCE) is named after a type of earthenware pottery, made of unwashed clay which still retained pebbles, pieces of shell and other impurities. Heavy storage pots made of coils of clay were decorated primarily with impressions of rope. Later (ca. 7500-1500 BCE) this material was shaped into fanciful vessels and imaginative figurines.

The Yayoi (300 BCE-CE 300) culture brought agriculture and metal technology into Japan when it replaced Jomon culture. Later in this culture, known as the “old tomb period,” potters used a finer red clay; to make a unique type of sculpted image called Haniwa



Figure 109 *Standing Warrior*. Japan.
Courtesy of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage

(**Figure 109**). These figures were three dimensional representations of human and animal spirits mounted over cylinders which were pressed into the ground around tombs. Modeled with striking simplicity, these figures had a compelling presence and expression.

During the Asuka or Suiko period (CE 552-646), the Japanese accepted Buddhism and Chinese culture quickly and with great enthusiasm. Prince Shotoku Taishi (CE 572- 622) helped to establish the new imported faith as the state religion above the protests of the traditional Shinto establishment. As much as the indigenous religion, Shinto enriched daily life with popular folklore and nature spir-

its, Buddhism introduced another level of thinking about the relationship of human existence and the universal essence.

Once accepted by the Japanese ruling class, Buddhist temples and monasteries were constructed without delay and sculpture was produced in quantity at first based on Korean models and later directly from Chinese originals. One of three great architectural monuments of Japan, (**Figure 110**) the Horyu-ji Temple was built in the 7th century in authentic Chinese style. The Kondo (Golden Hall) is not only a superb example of Tang dynasty building, it also houses rare works of early Korean, Japanese and Chinese art. A



Figure 110 *Horyu-ji Temple*. Nara Prefecture, Japan. Asuka Period, 7th century CE.
By Permission of Horyu-ji Temple, Japan. Photo by Askaen Co., Ltd.

masterwork of the Horyu-ji is the Tamamushi Shrine, a pagoda-like structure on a pedestal which holds lacquer paintings depicting scenes of the incarnations of the Buddha on its four sides.

The Horyu-ji also houses one of the earliest of Japanese Buddhist sculptures. This bronze representation of the *Shaka Triad*, the Buddha with two attendants, made by the Korean-Chinese sculptor Tori is in the Northern Wei style (**Figure 111**) of the Chinese Buddhist caves at Yungang and Longmen. It set the stage for the development of native Japanese sculptural style. A later work, the *Kudara Kannon*, carved of camphor wood, still reflects Wei style but rendered with greater plasticity and warmth of expression. Either made by a Korean artist in Japan or sent to Japan from Korea, this work is strongly three dimensional, elegantly slender and contemplative in expression, closer than the Tori sculptures to Japanese artistic qualities.



Figure 111 *Shaka Triad*. By Tori Bishi. CE 623. By Permission of Horyu-ji Temple, Japan. Photo by Askaen Co., Ltd.

The Nara period (CE 646-794) is named after the newly created capital at Nara, modeled after the Tang capital in China. At this time Japan no longer depended on Korea to mediate cultural interaction with China, but received Chinese art, religion, philosophy and a model for bureaucratic organization directly from the sources. Buddhism was adopted enthusiastically by all levels of Japanese society; the sober ethical and moralistic tenets of Confucianism had little appeal for the Japanese, hence, gained little ground in Japan. The art of the late Nara period began to show some measure of Japanese character. These qualities emerged in matters of surface and texture. Line and decoration were maintained in proper balance, solidity and fullness which enhanced the power and presence of the image. Moreover, facial features are rendered as individualistic portraits. This is particularly noted

in clay sculptures which offer the artists opportunities to model the shape and mood of the character. The Bonten Bodhisattva in Nara is an example of a clay sculpture that shows attention to the clearly executed smoothness of face and hands and the varied textures of the hair and the garment.

Nara paintings drew from Tang works that were imported from China. It is sometimes difficult to tell them apart. The Horyu-ji Kondo wall paintings, in particular the famous *Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara*, shows a Tang figure painting style at its very finest.

New sects of Buddhism were introduced into Japan during the Early Heian period (CE 794-897), a time when the imperial court moved from Nara to Kyoto. The temples for these esoteric Buddhist sects were consecrated at Mt. Koya in a beautiful district of pine forests south of Kyoto. The art that developed from this new religious establishment was focused on immersing the worshiper with exaltation. Sculptures of Buddhist and Shinto

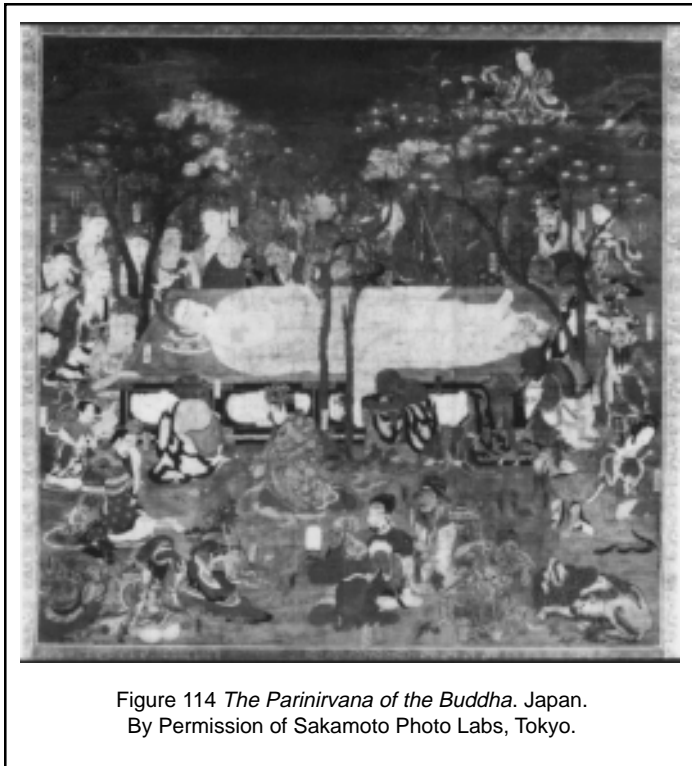


Figure 112 *Female Shinto Image*. Heian Period. By Permission of Koryo-ji Temple. Photo by Benri-do Co., Inc.



Figure 113 *Nyoirin Kannon*. Japan. By Permission of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, The Avery Brundage Collection B71 S3

deities (**Figure 112**) were carved out of single blocks of wood. (On the whole they tended to be corpulent, their rounded faces and thick necks showing a double-chin of the sort that were common in Central Asian painting). Facial features and expressions of Buddhist figures are austere rather than compassionate. The cosmic and transcendental nature, and the powers of the deities were visualized in the form of esoteric symbols. The 9th century sculpture of the Nyoirin Kannon holds a gem, a wheel, a lotus (**Figure 113**) and a rosary in four of his six hands. Paintings of two types, mandalas and Fudo pictures, served the needs of worshipers. Mandalas are images which are realized within geometric diagrams based on a circle at its center, the circle representing the universe. Fudos are guardians of the faith in their most terrifying aspects who frighten evil doers away. During the late Heian period (CE 897-1185), the emperor's power was usurped by a powerful clan of aristocrats, the Fujiwara. From that time to the 20th century, the nation was governed by the strongest of these noble, later warrior, clans while the emperor functioned as a figure-head. The Heian court attended to the culture of its society and the florescence of the arts. Traditional Heian sculpture, painting and icons of the esoteric continued; however, the



pictorial and sculptural styles of the late Heian/Fujiwara era drew from the elegant decorative developments of Tang Chinese art, free of esoteric Buddhist mysticism. The renowned painting *The Parinirvana of the Buddha* dated 1086, visualizes the physical demise of the Buddha in an open setting in an arbor of flowering trees where mourners are gathered around the bier (**Figure 114**). The meaning of this event is revealed openly rather than by means of obscure mystical symbolism.

As with the painting, sculpture of the Fujiwara period is severe in demeanor and decorative in its forms and color.

Secular art for the households of the nobility include superbly crafted furnishings of lacquered wood, screens with landscape paintings on silk, illustrated religious manuscripts and illustrated narrative handscrolls. Narrative handscrolls are lengthy sequences of pictures and calligraphy which tell a story. The viewer unrolls the scroll, right to left, to follow the progress of the story. Handscrolls were introduced from China; however, in Japan they take on a distinctly Japanese character in the way they are organized, and by the style in which the figures are drawn which vary from courtly elegance to robust realism. As these works spring from Japanese sources and not from Chinese inspiration, they are given the name Yamato-e, which mean specifically “Japanese painting.”

A particular genre of narrative scroll known as Monogatari-e (illustrated stories) which were usually written by women, interior scenes were composed in a very inventive way. The reader/viewer looks down into the interiors of the rooms where the action is

occurring as if the roof and ceiling have been removed. The wall screens which separate the rooms are drawn at angles of 30 degrees to 45 degrees, thus giving ample space for the action of the characters in the story and also providing a dynamic method of keeping the flow of action from one sequence to the next. Many of the Kamakura era (CE 1185-1333) handscrolls show examples of the Japanese gift for satire, excitement and high drama.

In subsequent periods, Japanese artists adopted monochrome ink landscape painting to their own vision and styles in hanging scroll paintings and multi-panelled screens. Supreme decorative screens of vivid colors on gold or silver paper represent another tradition of Japanese painting. Distinctly Japanese decorative arts also include exquisite lacquered objects, unique pottery shapes and glazes, distinctive domestic architecture, garden and landscape design and kosodas and other superbly decorated garments. The art of Japanese woodblock print making (**Figure 115**), strongly influenced European and American painting/graphics during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Japanese art, which drew on Chinese and Korean models, maintained and developed a distinct viewpoint of its own. It varied Chinese traditions and represented a more vigorous art of the people. With an orientation based in a profound and ultimately brilliant embodiment of pure design.

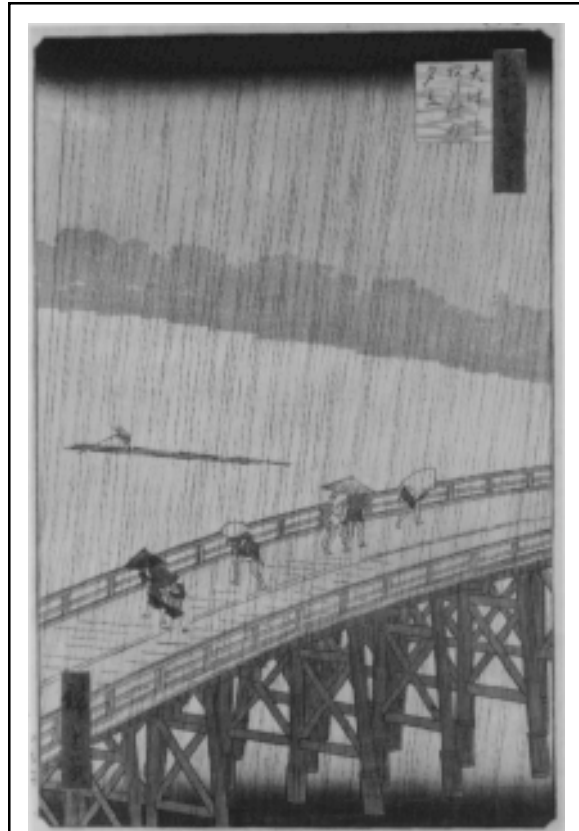


Figure 115 *Rain Shower at Ohashi Bridge*. By Ando Hiroshige. Japanese. 1797-1858. Color woodblock print. 35.2 x 23.2 cm. By Permission of the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1998, Gift of J.H. Wade 1921.318.

EPILOGUE

Contributions of Asian Art and Asian-American Artists to the Culture of the United States

**By
Pratapaditya Pal**

Mecca and mogul, guru and karate, judo and yoga, tao and taichi are familiar and even common place expressions in the American lexicon today. All are loan words from Asia and in general their adoption indicates the genuine interest of America today in Asian culture and ideas.

The first Americans to come under the influence of Asian thought and philosophical ideas were the Transcendentalists. Founded by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1852) and espoused also by Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), Transcendentalism believed in the interconnectedness of all life and in the existence of a higher reality beyond experience and reason. Both were familiar with Indian philosophical ideas, as embodied in such sacred Hindu texts as the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavadgita*. In turn, Thoreau was a source of inspiration for the Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi and America's Martin Luther King, Jr.

Among Emerson's admirers was a young poet called Walt Whitman (1819-1892) who also came under the influence of India and wrote a remarkable poem in 1868 called "Passage to India" (which was borrowed in this century by the British novelist Forster for his own well-known novel *A Passage to India*). In a highly romantic and wistful passage, Whitman wrote:

Passage O Soul to India!
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.

Not you alone proud truth of the world,
Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,
But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,
The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,
The deep diving bibles and legends,
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions,
O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over the rising sun!

A little over a century after Whitman's death as we approach the end of the millennium, one does not have to sit and dream of the temples and towers and pagodas of Asia that excited the American poet's imagination. Most Americans have a temple, mosque, or a Japanese garden and tea house within their reach in almost every region of the United States if not in every state. And Americans can walk into museums in most major cities, and even many minor ones, to become acquainted with art from most Asian civilizations and cultures.

Today the influence of Asian culture including art and architecture is so pervasive in America that it is difficult to imagine that in 1868 when Walt Whitman was creating his own imaginary passage to India he was probably familiar with the temples and towers of Asia only through illustrations. Most dramatic has been the impact of Asian cuisine, but in other areas too, notably in architecture, creative literature, visual and the performing arts, the contributions of Asian-Americans have been an enriching experience for all Americans.

Art & Architecture

While in the nineteenth century, American architects mostly flirted with Asian architectural forms to create romantic buildings that looked like the Taj Mahal or a Japanese inn, New York architects like Lockwood de Forest (1850-1932) traveled to Asia and were profoundly impressed by Asian architectural forms and designs. By the turn of the 20th century a new form of domestic architecture known as the bungalow (derived from the houses designed in Bengal in India for British colonials) became for a while the rage,

especially in California. Also, early in the century Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), one of the most innovative and influential among modern architects, came under the spell of Japanese aesthetics.

Indeed, Wright was a collector of Japanese prints as well and a purchasing agent for several other collectors. The history of collecting art and artifacts from Asia (other than the purchase of China for use at tables) began mostly with the merchants who sailed in the eighteenth century from harbors on the east coast to trade with Asia. One of the oldest museums to house objects brought back by sea faring merchants is the Peabody museum in Salem (Massachusetts) of “witch burning” fame. By the early 20th century, however, most major museums on the east coast, especially in Boston and New York, had begun avidly collecting Asian art. The seriousness of the Boston museum’s commitment is evident in the appointment of Okakura Kakuzo (1862-1913) and Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) as curators. It is not surprising that by World War I the major collectors of Asian art lived in and around Boston.

If World War I made the average Americans better acquainted with their European heritage, it was World War II that familiarized them with Asian cultures. Ironically, involvement with two more wars—the Korean and Vietnam in the second half of this century—also expanded that awareness. This is when the American culinary habit was changed dramatically with the introduction and popularization of several regional Asian cuisines other than Chinese. It is also the period when interest in the arts of all Asian cultures expanded enormously so that there is hardly a major city in this country without a sizable and varied collection of Asian arts. The influx of new Asian populations in the wake of American involvement in two Asian wars and a more liberal immigration policy have also resulted in the establishment of large and diverse communities of Asian-Americans who have begun to contribute significantly to the cultural mosaic of the United States.

While Asian visual arts, now easily accessible in American museums, have inspired many well-known American artists during the last half a century, one of the most respected names in the American art world is that of an Asian-American. Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), born in Los Angeles of a Japanese father and an American mother, is a perfect

example of the synthesis between east and west. A master of biomorphic forms, Noguchi modified natural stone and also carved stone, wood and other materials into curving forms which suggest living organisms. These were assembled into sculpture and furniture. His fascination with stone evolved from his work with Japanese gardens. Noguchi's achievement was realized by his intuitive absorption of Japanese traditional theory which he combined with Japanese apprehension of basic materials, and reinvented into authentic 20th century works of art.

One of the foremost architects in the world today is Ieoh Ming Pei (b. 1917 —), a naturalized Asian-American. Pei left Canton, China in 1935 to study architectural engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The outbreak of World War II prevented his return to China upon graduation in 1939. He worked with the National Defense Research Institute and on a number of projects until he joined the faculty of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University in 1945. From 1948 until 1955 Pei directed the architectural division of Webb and Knapp in New York. One of his major urban projects of that period was the Mile-High Center in Denver. He formed I.M. Pei and Associates (later I.M. Pei and Partners) in 1955 and produced, among many other buildings, the Luce Memorial Chapel in Taiwan and the Everson Museum in Syracuse, New York. He also designed a model pentagonal airport tower for the Federal Aviation Agency that was built in many airports around the country.

Other major complexes include the Christian Science Church Center and the Hancock Tower (1973), the latter an elegant mirrored-glass structure in Boston. The east building of the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. and the John F. Kennedy Library complex in Boston, followed in 1977 and 1978 respectively. Pei's design for the Louvre Museum's new public entry, which featured a glass pyramid, is his most controversial building project.

A younger Asian-American architect who has recently distinguished herself is Maya Ying Lin (b. 19-). Born in Athens, Ohio, Maya Lin was a student of architecture in her senior year at Yale when she submitted her proposal, one of 1,420 entries, to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Funds for the design of a monument honoring veterans of the war in

Washington D.C. On May 8, 1981, Lin's design was unanimously selected by an eight-person jury comprising architects, landscape architect, sculptors, and the editor of Landscape Architecture. Protests voiced by various groups argued that the all-too-modernists design and the black color of the stone express inappropriate ideologies and sentiments. Despite these objections, Maya Lin's design was completed in 1982. It has come to be widely acknowledged for its beauty and is one of the most visited sites in the capital. Lin's subsequent projects include the Civil Rights memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, and the interior design of the Museum of African Art in the Soho district of New York, both of which have won accolades.

Music

Perhaps nowhere else do names of Asian-Americans loom so large as in the world of music. One could probably write an entire monograph on the subject, so rich and diverse is the contribution of Asian-Americans to American music. Anyone who patronizes a symphony orchestra today must be well used to seeing at least a half dozen Asian faces in the orchestra. Individual artists such as Yo Yo Ma the cellist and Midori the violinist perform before sell out audiences. And, of course, if one counts Israel as part of Asia—as indeed it is—then one would have to say that the world of classical western music is dominated entirely by Americans of Asian origins.

Among conductors of symphony orchestras two of the most well known are Zubin Mehta of India and Seiji Ozawa of Japan. Born in Mumbai (Bombay) in 1936, Mehta came to North America in 1961 as the music director of the Montreal Symphony. In 1967 he moved to Los Angeles and was responsible for putting the L.A. Philharmonic on the musical map. In 1978 he left to be the music director of the New York Philharmonic. He also has a lifetime appointment as the music director of the Israel Philharmonic.

Less flamboyant than Mehta, Seiji Ozawa (1935-) has been the music director of the celebrated Boston Symphony Orchestra since 1973. He was born in China the year Pei left for the United States. He had his training at the Toho School of Music in Tokyo and with such masters as Hideo Saito, Herbert von Karajan and Leonard Bernstein. Apart from

being the distinguished music director of the prestigious Boston Symphony for almost a quarter century, he is also closely associated with Tanglewood Festival where a hall has been named after him.

Two other facts about music concern technique rather than performance. It is now well-known that a popular mode of teaching the piano today is that known as Yamaha, a Japanese invention. However, while the Yamaha piano and the teaching method are both imports from Japan, the credit for transmitting the sound with greater fidelity through highly sensitive speakers belongs to another Asian-American. The much admired Bose sound systems today are the result of theoretical inventions in acoustics, non-linear systems and communications by Amar Gopal Bose of MIT, Cambridge. He was born in Philadelphia in 1929 of an Indian father and an American mother. Apart from inventing the scientific process that has so enriched our experience of music, he is also a successful businessman.

Among many other Asian-Americans of Indian origins who have enthralled audiences and contributed directly to the American music scene, mention should be made of the sitar maestro Ravi Shankar (b. 1917-). Perhaps no other Asian-American musician has had so profound an influence on both classical and pop-music as has this illustrious Indian musician who has had a long association with America and now lives in Southern California. However, like Noguchi and Pei, Shankar is an international figure and is not constrained by narrow national boundaries. His numerous admirers in the Western musical world include the classical violin maestro Yehudi Menuhin and the popular Beatle George Harrison, who for a time was Shankar's student. Indeed, Shankar is one of the few musicians who has had an impact on all four quarters of the western musical world: pop, folk, jazz, and classical.

Another Asian-American musician who has had a significant impact on the American musical world is Nam-June Paik (19-). Korean-born, performance and video artist Paik started his studies in Western musicology in Tokyo, musical composition, theory and history at Freiburg and Munich, and electronic music at Cologne. While in Germany, he

befriended the American avant-garde composer John Cage who encouraged him to pursue performance. Paik's experiments with music and multiple television sets led him to explore the technology of television and methods of distorting images with sound.

As he explored video technology, he expanded the esthetic and expressive possibilities that could be achieved by his new medium. While his outrageous programs targeted commercial television and super-serious elite culture with unrestrained sarcasm, Paik's artistry gained recognition and support from foundations and public television. In collaboration with the Japanese engineer, Shuya Abe in 1970, Paik brought forth a video synthesizer which enabled him to mix, colorize, polarize and otherwise manipulate video images with brilliant and often startling effects. Ironically, Paik's invention, immediately picked up by mainstream commercial producers, is commonplace on network and cable television today. However, Paik's inventive dynamism enabled him to develop sculptural configurations and vast walls of video monitors which move images of color in an infinite number of patterns and structures. He thus has inspired a new generation of artists in the field of computer-generated imaging. His multi-media art forms can be found in major museums in the U.S.

Considering that the earliest Asian immigrants came to America roughly a century and a half ago, mostly as laborers, it is remarkable how significant a role their descendants and newcomers play in American cultural and intellectual life at the threshold of a new millennium. Indeed, the Asian-American experience and contribution to the mainstream of 20th century American art and culture belies Rudyard Kipling's famous line, "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." They have met on the American soil and have flourished and will continue to do so in the future.

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