

A Decade of Collecting, 1984–1993

FRIENDS OF ASIAN ART GIFTS



THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

A Decade of Collecting, 1984–1993

F R I E N D S O F A S I A N A R T G I F T S

T H E M E T R O P O L I T A N M U S E U M O F A R T

N E W Y O R K

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壬戌秋

洪俊



Preface

The purposes of the Friends of Asian Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art are to bring together an international group with serious interests in Asian art, to encourage individual contact with the Museum's Department of Asian Art, and to foster wider appreciation and understanding of Asian art and culture.

Since its establishment in 1984–85, the Friends of Asian Art has become a vital part of the Museum's increasingly prominent Asian art program. The group participates in a variety of special programs, including seminars and lectures, organized by the Department of Asian Art. Among the most valued privileges enjoyed by the Friends are the curatorial gallery talks prior to the opening of the Museum's Asian art exhibitions. Membership funds contributed by the Friends enable the department to widen the scope of its acquisitions. At the Friends' annual meeting each spring, the curators recommend important works of art for purchase.

The present publication, which accompanies a special exhibition of more than fifty objects and paintings originating in China, Korea, Japan, and South and South-east Asia, celebrates the acquisitions made by the Museum with funds contributed by the Friends of Asian Art. Although the Museum's curators have attempted each year to present a balanced selection of objects from the different fields represented in the department, the results inevitably reflect the availability of objects and market conditions. On rare occasions, the curators and Friends have also sought to focus on special opportunities. It is most gratifying that, because of the great enthusiasm generated by the group, individual members of the Friends have not only voted to acquire objects outside their immediate area of interest, but they have also on occasion volunteered additional funds to make special acquisitions possible. Indeed, a number of Friends' acquisitions published here rank as exceptional examples in their fields.

It has been a great personal joy for Suzzie and me to take part in, and for me to serve as chairman of, the Friends of Asian Art at the Metropolitan. As we celebrate these gifts to the Museum during the past nine years, which testify to the important role the group has played in the development of the Metropolitan's collections, we look forward to the Friends' continued success in the years to come. We thank the curators of the Department of Asian Art and Wen Fong, Consultative Chairman, for organizing and presenting a stimulating program each year. Special thanks are due the following individuals for their extraordinary gifts: Mrs. Vincent Astor, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Bruckmann, Mr. and Mrs. C. Y. Chen, Jeanine Coyne, Richard and Peggy Danziger, Robert Hatfield Ellsworth, Olivia Cox-Fill, Mrs. Lita Annenberg Hazen, Joseph E. Hotung, Mr. and Mrs. Shau-Wai Lam, Mr. and Mrs. Perry J. Lewis, Randall D. and Barbara Smith, Mr. Oscar Tang and the late Frances Young Tang, and Dr. and Mrs. John C. Weber. We also wish to thank Judith Smith and Joyce Sitzer for administering the Friends program, and Judith Smith for editing and coordinating the production of this publication.

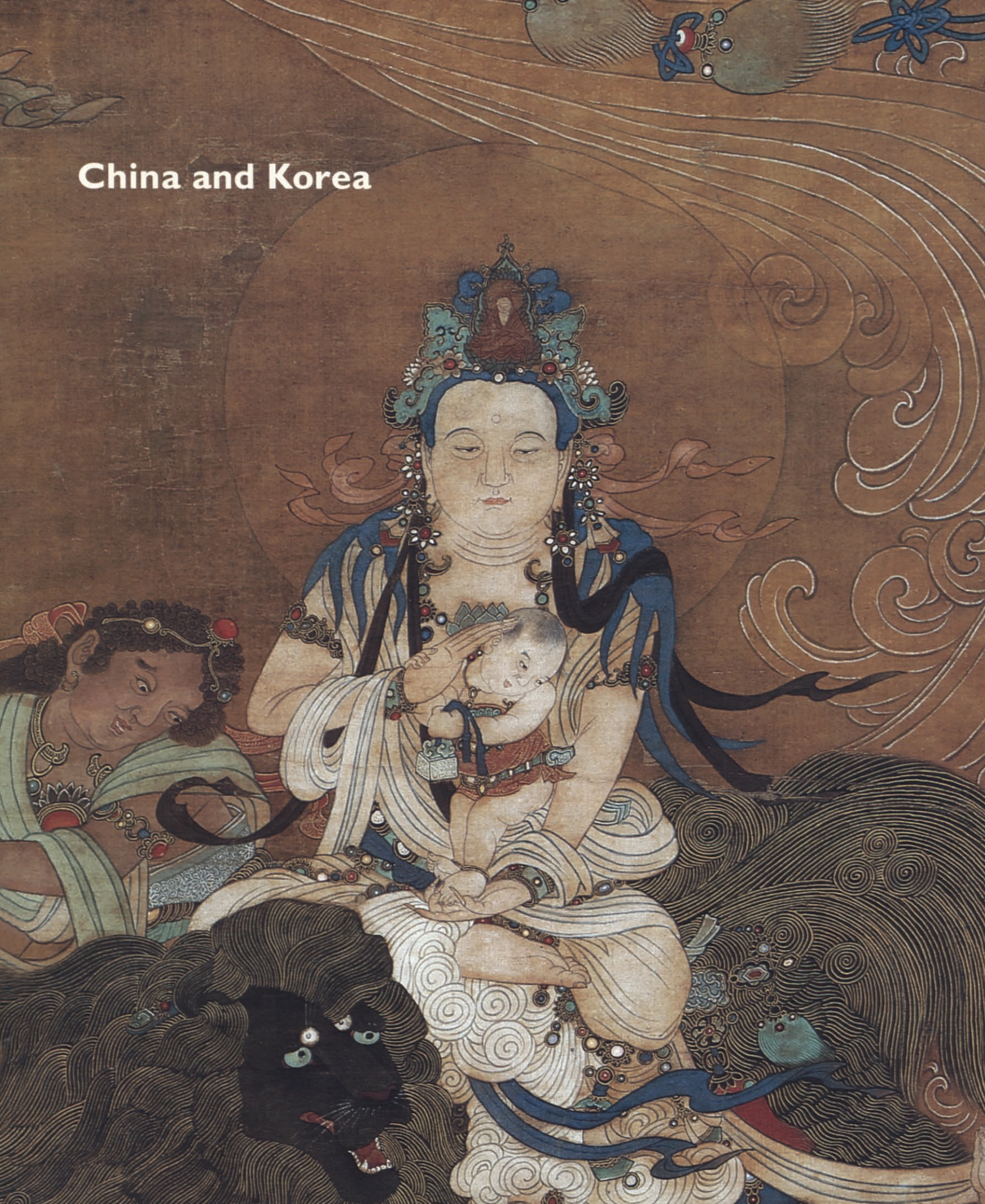
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China and Korea





Ritual Object (Pi)

Chinese, Neolithic period (Liang-chu culture), ca. 2400 B.C.
Jade (actinolite), Diam. $8\frac{3}{8}$ in. (21.3 cm), D. $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (1.6 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1986 (1986.112)

The austere shape, imposing mass, and monumental proportions identify this perforated disk as an important ceremonial object of China's Neolithic culture. Worked from a mottled green stone identified as actinolite (a form of jade), it bears traces of saw and drill marks on its otherwise smooth surfaces that provide a textbook study of early Chinese lapidary techniques. The disk belongs to the late Neolithic Liang-chu culture of Kiangsu and Chekiang provinces. In 1982, twenty-five such disks, ranging in size from five to ten inches in diameter, were excavated from a Liang-chu tomb near Ch'ang-chou, Kiangsu. Carbon 14 datings for the tomb place it between 2700 and 2200 B.C. (*K'ao-ku*, 1984, no. 2, pp. 109–29).

The function and meaning of these disks are unknown. As late as the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), jade disks performed a ritual function in aristocratic burials, where they were placed above the head, below the feet, and on the chest of the deceased. They were also depicted on painted burial shrouds of the second century B.C. In these paintings, two dragons are shown threading their way through a jade disk on their way from the nether world to the celestial realm. This suggests that jade disks may have been intended to help the deceased's soul in its journey to heaven. Although it is not certain that they functioned in this way in Neolithic times, the enormous labor involved in perfecting the abstract shape and the lustrous finish of these disks is striking testimony to the reverence accorded them.

M K H

Animal Finial

Chinese, Eastern Chou dynasty, 6th–5th century B.C.

Bronze, H. 3⁵/₈ in. (9.2 cm)

Purchase, The B. Y. Lam Foundation Gift, 1993 (1993.177)

This hollow-cast bronze animal finial is stylistically close to animal figures that serve as handles and other attachments on bronzes of the Chin state, especially the type associated with the site of Li-yü, Hun-yüan County, Shansi Province, where they are mostly found. Li-yü bronzes are known for their fine casting and their intricate decoration, which exhibits influences of the art of nomadic peoples in the north.

The animal, with a protruding tongue and curled tail, is portrayed in a crouching position. The body is covered by fine stippling and by intaglio panels in the shape of hysteresis curves filled with furry striations. The claws of the animal clutch the ears of animal masks that decorate both sides of the socket. The iconography of the animal is comparable to that of a pair of animal handles on the Chao Meng *chieh hu* in the British Museum, dated 482 B.C. and regarded as a standard Li-yü bronze (Jessica Rawson, *Chinese Bronzes—Art and Ritual*, British Museum, 1987, p. 89, no. 34). On most Li-yü-style bronzes, the crouching animal appears together with a mask similar to those on the socket of this finial.

Animals on Li-yü-style bronzes, such as this finial, occupy an intermediate stage between the archaic treatment of animal forms in the early phase of the Chinese Bronze Age and the naturalistic representation that came two centuries after the date of this finial, as exemplified by the Erickson “tiger” in the Museum’s collection (Maxwell K. Hearn, *Ancient Chinese Art—the Ernest Erickson Collection*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1987, p. 35, no. 13).

JCYW





Mirror

Chinese, T'ang dynasty (618–906), 9th century

Bronze, Diam. 6³/₄ in. (17.2 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1988 (1988.149)

This mirror is decorated on the back with a coiled dragon cast in high relief. The open mouth of the dragon is positioned to catch the hemispherical knob of the mirror as the “pearl.”

The dragon, as the “magic serpent” (*ling shê*), has been associated with the pearl in Chinese literature since the Han period (206 B.C.–A.D. 220). The dragon-and-pearl motif in the plastic arts began to appear a few centuries later. One of the earliest known examples of dragon-and-pearl decoration is seen on the ring-pommel of an early-seventh-century Chinese sword in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (Steven V. Grancsay, “Two Chinese Swords Dating About A.D. 600,” *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art* 25, no. 7 [July 1930], pp. 194–96; Helmut Nickel, “The Dragon and the Pearl,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 26 [1991], pp. 139–46). However, it was not until the late T'ang period that the pearl became invariably associated with the dragon in

graphic depictions. The decoration on the back of this mirror is one of the earliest examples of the conventionalized dragon-and-pearl motif that persisted for more than a thousand years.

An interesting observation can be made by comparing the decoration on this mirror with certain designs found on circular shields of the Late Roman army in the first half of the fifth century. The *Notitia dignitatum*, a muster roll of Late Roman military and civilian authorities, preserves illustrations of shield designs, some of which can be interpreted as a dragon chasing a “pearl.” In a few examples the dragons are “arranged around the shield boss in a way that suggests the boss itself takes the place of the ‘pearl.’” (Helmut Nickel, “The Dragon and the Pearl,” p. 139).

In the early medieval period, a number of artistic motifs evolved in Central Asia as hybrid growths from ideas and images originating in areas connected to the Silk Road, including China, India, and the Late Roman world. The dragon image in T'ang China, as seen in this mirror, is itself a hybrid of the early Chinese dragon and the Indian makara. The dragon-and-pearl motif is yet another such creation, except that it became naturalized in Chinese art through persistent use over a long period of time.

JCYW

Comb-top

Chinese, T'ang dynasty (618–906), 8th–9th century

Mother-of-pearl, L. 4 in. (10.2 cm)

Purchase, Jennifer Fill and Christina Weber Gifts, 1990 (1990.128)

Combs with tops of such precious materials as gold, jade, ivory, and mother-of-pearl were worn as hair ornaments by court ladies of the High and Late T'ang periods (8th–9th century). These comb-tops were decorated with carvings of birds and flowers and sometimes with Buddhist motifs. Of the various materials used in this type of comb-top, the rarest extant is mother-of-pearl, as it is the most fragile.

This piece is carved in high relief on one side with two birds in circular flight, each with a parrot beak and a long, forked tail, surrounded by raised floral scrolls. On the reverse is a single large foliate motif of overlapping petals radiating from the base. It is likely that it was once gilded, as were some ivory examples.

JCYW





Wine Cup Decorated with a Pair of Ducks

Chinese, T'ang dynasty (618–906), 9th century
Silver with parcel gilding, L. 5⁵/₈ in. (14.3 cm)
Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1991 (1991.159)

This elegant cup represents a transitional phase in the development of a new aesthetic of subdued understatement and naturalistic imagery. In contrast to the ornate workmanship and flamboyant shapes of High T'ang (8th century) silver, this cup possesses an inviting intimacy of shape that is matched by the harmonious simplicity of its decor. The cup is an elongated oval bowl with gently upswept lobed sides. The bottom of the interior features a pair of ducks, one with its head raised, the other with its head down, and both with their wings elevated as if uncertain of the security of the lotus leaf upon which they have alighted. The radiating veins of the lotus leaf form an abstract halo around the birds, while the leaf's gilded upturned edges beautifully echo the lobed rim of the vessel, which is also gilded and embellished with a design of demi-florettes on a ring-mat ground. The exterior of the vessel is plain except for a single character, the surname Chang, neatly inscribed on the bottom.

The piece may be compared to eighth-century footed cups excavated from the site of the T'ang dynasty capital of Ch'ang-an (Lu Chin-kao, *Gold and Silver of the T'ang Dynasty* [T'ang tai chin yin ch'i], Peking, 1985, fig. 155), but the absence of a foot ring—which gives the vessel a simpler, more intimate shape—and the naturalistic visualization of the ducks all suggest a late T'ang date for this piece.

MKH

Ewer

Chinese, T'ang dynasty (618–906), ca. 9th century
Stoneware with applied medallions under brown-splashed, greenish buff glaze, H. 6 in. (15.2 cm)
Ch'ang-sha ware
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1986 (1986.113)

This well-potted ewer has a globular body, a short neck with flared mouth, an arched triple-strand handle set opposite a very short, faceted spout, and two triple-strand loops at the shoulder. It rests on a broad, flat base with bevelled edge. There are three applied medallions on the body: a pair of birds in a dense spray of leaves and curly tendrils is under one loop; a seated lion on a fringed mat is under the spout; and a figure of a musician holding a stringed instrument is under the other loop. The entire vessel is covered with white slip, over which is a finely crazed pale greenish buff glaze; the appliqué are splashed dark olive-brown. The slip and glaze both end short of the bottom, revealing the fine pale buff stoneware body.

Ceramics produced in the vicinity of Ch'ang-sha, in Hunan Province, during the T'ang dynasty are set slightly apart from the other wares of the period. Perhaps to compensate for a lack of technological expertise in their pottery—as compared with the other, more sophisticated T'ang ceramics—the Ch'ang-sha potters were extraordinarily inventive in their ceramic decoration. One particularly distinctive group of ninth-century Ch'ang-sha stoneware ewers is ornamented with applied, low-relief medallions that are splashed with patches of dark brown glaze. A number of these ewers have been excavated at the T'ung-kuan kilns at Ch'ang-sha; these kilns have been attributed to the T'ang dynasty (*K'ao-ku hsüeh-pao*, 1980, no. 1, pp. 67–96, pl. 1:7). The medallions on ewers of this type either have identical motifs or occasionally feature two different motifs. Our ewer is rather unusual in that the designs of all three plaques are different. The medallion depicting the figure of a musician holding a stringed instrument is particularly interesting: he is a foreigner, probably from a Central Asian country. The potters made a special effort to see that his identity should be noticed, taking particular care to define the round eyes, the broad nose, the thick lips, and his most outstanding feature, the long, curly hair.

SGV

Bibliography: Suzanne G. Valenstein, *A Handbook of Chinese Ceramics*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989, p. 75, color pl. 10.



***Mei-p'ing* (Plum Vase)**

Chinese, Late Northern–Southern Sung dynasty, 12th–13th century
Stoneware with reserved, carved, and painted decoration against a
brownish black glaze, H. 8 in. (20.3 cm)

Chi Chou ware

Purchase, Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, in honor of
Cynthia and Leon Polsky, 1985 (1985.87)



This strongly potted *mei-p'ing*-shaped vase has high shoulders that taper to a waisted neck with lipped rim. On either side of the vessel a sprig of flowering plum (*prunus*) in buff-colored biscuit is set off by the contrasting brownish black glaze. The decoration was produced by reserving the design on the unbaked body, probably by using paper-cuts as resists, and by applying the thick glaze to the rest of the vase. The paper was removed, revealing the fine buff-colored body it had protected during glazing. Twigs were deeply carved through the glaze down to the body, details of the flowers were painted in the reserved areas, and the piece was fired.

The flowering plum has traditionally been a popular decorative motif in Chinese art. Because this tree blossoms very early in the year, even before it sprouts leaves, it has come to symbolize the approaching end of winter and the imminent arrival of spring.

The attribution of this vase can be verified by recent archaeological discoveries. In 1970 a tomb was excavated at Nan-ch'ang Hsien, in Kiangsi Province; it can be dated by its tomb epitaph in accordance with the year 1209. Along with some other ceramics, the tomb contained a Chi Chou vase that is very similar to the present one (*Wen-wu k'ao-ku kung-tso san-shih nien*, Peking, 1979, p. 247, pl. 21:3). Another similar vase has been found at the Chi Chou kiln site, at Yung-ho Chen, near the city of Chi-an, Kiangsi (*Wen-wu*, 1975, no. 3, p. 50, pl. 4:4).

SGV

Bibliography: Suzanne G. Valenstein, *A Handbook of Chinese Ceramics*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989, pp. 116–17, pl. 115.

Figure of a Monk

Chinese, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), 14th–15th century
Wood with traces of gesso, polychrome, and gilt, H. 19 1/8 in. (48.6 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1990 (1990.113)

This rare image of a Buddhist monk epitomizes the merging of religious and secular imagery in later Chinese Buddhist sculpture. With his shaven head and elongated earlobes, the figure resembles a *lohan* (Sanskrit: *arhat*, one of the disciples of the Buddha), but his refined facial features, dignified posture, long-sleeved robe, and pointed shoes—attributes associated with Confucian scholar-officials—identify him unmistakably as a Chinese Buddhist monk. Given the figure's diminutive scale and reverential pose, the piece must have functioned as a subsidiary attendant or devotee standing to one side of an assemblage of more important Buddhist deities.

The sculpture is carved from a single block of wood, and its boldly defined draperies, subtly curved silhouette, and elegant, elongated head recall Southern Sung dynasty (1127–1279) prototypes. Carbon 14 dating of a sample from the piece, however, indicates a date between 1324 and 1614. Within this time frame, the most likely period for the sculpture to have been made is the early Ming dynasty when there was a revival of Sung artistic styles. As with many works of that period, it balances an assured awareness of anatomical structure with a new fascination with the geometry of natural forms.

A dynamic tension is created throughout the monk's body between naturalism and abstraction: the graceful forward tilt of the head is counterbalanced by the abstract silhouette of the head's profile; the well-observed upward pull of the sleeves is offset by the geometric curve of the hemline. The subtle asymmetry of the figure's stance conveys both movement and reverential attentiveness but is simply constructed out of abstract, curving forms. This fusion of naturalistic detail with bold abstraction is most effective in evoking the serene spirituality of this youthful devotee.

M K H





Medallion

Chinese, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), late 16th–early 17th century
Ivory (morse), Diam. 3³/₈ in. (8.6 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1993 (1993.176)

This ivory medallion, of unknown function, is carved on one side in high relief with a scene of the return by moonlight of a party from a “spring outing.” Every detail of the scene corresponds to its standard treatment in genre paintings of the Ming period, such as those by Tai Chin (1388–1462) and Ch’iu Ying (1495–1552) in the National Palace Museum, Taipei. On the reverse is a low-relief pattern composed around the character *wan* surrounded by four cloud collars and further surrounded by four “secularized” emblems of Buddhist and Taoist origin. Interspersed with the emblems are lotus, peony, aster, and hibiscus blossoms. There are traces of gilding on a red lacquer base. The center of the back is penetrated by an iron pin that has been cut to be level with the surface of the ivory. There is a drilled hole on the edge, which is carved with a diaper pattern.

Relatively few ivory carvings can be dated with any certainty to the Ming period. The landscape scene on this piece, which is a standard subject in professional paintings of the Ming period, provides an excellent clue as to the period of the carving. The generalized emblems are also indicative of a late Ming date.

JCYW

Imperial Walking Stick

Chinese, Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1911), late 18th century
Lacquered wood with steel and gilt-iron fittings, L. 44³/₄ in. (113.7 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1986 (1986.148)

The rich lacquer surface and the gilt fittings embellished with dragons immediately identify this ceremonial staff as belonging to the imperial regalia of the Ch'ing court. But the concealed function of this walking stick is striking evidence of the first Manchu emperors' uncertainty about their subjects' loyalty.

The massive lacquered-wood shaft of the walking stick reveals its age through the pattern of hairline cracks running around its circumference. The iron handle and foot are decorated with designs of heavy gold foil: flowering lotus and mountains encircled by waves and clouds and a coiled dragon pursuing a flaming pearl. With a single half-turn of the shaft, the cylindrical foot may be removed, revealing a ten-inch steel spearhead with wavy tempering patterns along both cutting edges. The foot is secured over the spearhead by means of a continuous winding screw thread.

Several pieces of evidence corroborate the eighteenth-century date of this walking stick. An engraved illustration of the Shun-chih emperor (r. 1644–61) survives in which he is depicted holding a virtually identical staff. The style of the gold-inlay decoration compares closely with the decoration on a set of K'ang-hsi period (1662–1722) jade chimes in the Museum's collection (03.15.1) as well as with that of the black lacquer scroll boxes housing the *K'ang-hsi Southern Inspection Tour* scrolls of about 1695 (1979.5). Finally, although the continuous winding screw thread was known to Chinese engineers as early as 1609, the diameter of the male screw here measures exactly one English inch. This suggests that it was produced by an English die, which only became common as an export item in the late eighteenth century.

M K H





Rank Badge

Chinese, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), early 15th century
 Embroidery: colored silk floss, wrapped gold thread, and flat gold on silk gauze, 14½ × 14¼ in. (36.8 × 36.2 cm)
 Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, in honor of Myron S. Falk, Jr., 1988 (1988.154.1)

The use of square badges, sewn on the front and back of ceremonial robes of civil and military officers, was instituted by imperial decree in 1391 during the reign of the first emperor of the Ming dynasty. The badges were designed to indicate the ranks of the officials, with different species of birds corresponding to the nine civil ranks and animals denoting the military ranks. The woven or embroidered badges were usually of the finest workmanship, and metal (gold and silver) threads were often used. This pair of badges are of similar design and represent respectively the highest quality of weaving and embroidery work. The image of the lion signifies the highest rank in the military.

The use of square patches on ceremonial robes for officials originated in the preceding Yüan (Mongol) dynasty (1260–1368) or the earlier Liao and Chin dynasties, but it is likely that the designs on the patches were appropriate to the occasion of the ceremony rather than to the rank of the wearer. In the Ming dynasty, the regulations governing the use of rank badges were



Rank Badge

Chinese, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), early 15th century
 Silk tapestry (*k'o-ssu*), 14¾ × 15 in. (37.5 × 38.1 cm)
 Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. C. Y. Chen and Anonymous Gifts, 1988 (1988.154.2)

not strictly enforced, and many officials began to sport badges above their given ranks soon after the use of such badges was instituted. This was especially the case with military officers outside court circles. Thus more badges of higher ranks have survived than those of lower orders. These badges are rare not because they are appropriate for the highest rank but because very few badges of the early Ming period, especially those in such good condition, are extant.

The dating of these badges can be inferred from their technical characteristics, their relatively large size, and their design. The composition, with the lion occupying a major part of the pictorial space, and the detailed treatment of the lion's large head are stylistically typical of the early part of the Ming period. In later versions of this motif, the lions are smaller in relation to the square. The square itself is also smaller.

One of the badges (1988.154.2) is in a tapestry weave. Silk tapestry (*k'o-ssu*), which is said to have been introduced into China in the early Sung dynasty (late 10th–11th century), was

the most highly valued type of textile in China—partly because of the painterly effects that could be achieved with the tapestry weave. In the case of this rank badge, ingenious use has been made of the slits as a means of indicating outlines and details. The other badge (1988.154.1) is embroidered in counted stitch on silk gauze, over strips of gold on paper in some areas, spaced to show the gold. The body of the lion is worked in couched gold-wrapped silk. This embroidery provides an interesting counterpart to the technique of *or nué* developed in European embroideries of the Renaissance.

JCYW/JM

Back and Sleeve of a Dragon Robe

Chinese, Ming dynasty, Wan-li period (1572–1620)
Satin damask embroidered with silks, gold-wrapped silk,
85 × 42 in. (215.9 × 106.7 cm); border, 4 in. (10.2 cm)
Purchase, Mrs. Vincent Astor, Jeanine Coyne, Robert Hatfield
Ellsworth, Joseph E. Hotung, Dr. and Mrs. John C. Weber, and
Anonymous Gifts, 1986 (1986.143)

This large panel was assembled from parts of a dragon robe that was originally made for the Lantern Festival. The robe is of cinabar satin damask with a ground pattern of auspicious ornaments, couched with gold-wrapped silk and embroidered with brilliant silk floss in white and shades of red, yellow, green, and blue, and with some laid-work detail. The lower half is made up of the back of the robe flanked by two triangular fragments. The pattern on the back of the robe is dominated by a large frontal dragon with five-clawed feet raised on either side to support a cloud band holding a large lantern with the longevity character above the dragon's head. Smaller dragons descend below him on either side of a triple-shaft mountain centered in a wave border forming the lower edge of the original robe (and now of the panel). The top half of the panel is formed by an opened full sleeve with a rampant dragon over a triple lantern in the center and a running dragon on either side, each holding a lantern. Cloud bands and sprays of pine, plum and bamboo, and fungus are spaced over the ground. A border of silk lampas has a geometric floral diaper in pastel and dark blue.

This panel was probably used as a canopy for a shrine in a Tibetan Buddhist temple. It was not unusual for Tibetan monks to convert dragon robes and other textile objects given by the Chinese imperial court to religious and other practical uses. The reformatting of the late Ming robe into this flat panel was probably done in the Ch'ing period (18th–19th century).

JCYW/JM





Chuba

Sino-Tibetan, 17th century

Cut velvet with pattern wefts of multicolored silks and gold-wrapped silk, peacock feather filament-wrapped silk,

W. 55 in. (139.7 cm), overall L. 102 in. (259.1 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1987 (1987.147)

This *chuba* (lay aristocrat's robe) was converted from a Chinese velvet dragon robe of the early seventeenth century—a common practice in Tibet. It is not possible in most cases to estimate the approximate date of the making of the *chuba*, as the Chinese robes might have been in a Tibetan collection for a long period before they were retailored into a Tibetan garment.

The cut velvet is of a dark blue color with pattern wefts of red, orange, green, blue (two shades), yellow, and white silks, and with paired metal-wrapped silk yarns and silks wrapped with peacock (or Siamese fighting cock) filaments tied on the surface. It is something of a *tour de force* in weaving.

On one side of the robe is a single dragon holding a pearl in its claws, and on the other side a pair of confronting dragons with a flaming pearl between their open mouths. The dragons are set against a background of “five-color auspicious clouds” above rocky mountains arising out of the sea where various Buddhist symbols are found among the waves.

JCYW/JM

Unidentified artist

Lohan Vajriputa

Chinese, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), 15th century

Ink and color on cloth, 32 × 20 in. (81.3 × 50.8 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1992 (1992.198)

Tibetan Lamaism, imported into China by Mongol rulers in the thirteenth century, enjoyed continued imperial patronage by fifteenth-century Ming emperors. At the same time, the Ming court's revival of the richly descriptive painting manner of the Sung dynasty (960–1279) imperial academy led to the creation of a new hybrid style of Lamaist painting. This image, a rare fifteenth-century fusion of Chinese and Tibetan styles, vividly demonstrates how Chinese artists transformed hieratic Tibetan imagery into a more familiar, naturalistic manner.

The painting depicts a lohan (Sanskrit: *arhat*), one of the disciples of the Buddha who remained in the world to guard the Buddhist law until the coming of the messianic Buddha Maitreya. Originally part of a set depicting the Sixteen Lohans, this image probably portrays Vajriputa, who raises his right hand in the gesture of teaching (*vitarka mudra*) and holds a fly whisk in his left hand. As the principal focus of worship, the lohan is much larger in scale than the devotee who venerates him. The lohan is shown seated cross-legged in a landscape setting that combines dramatic overhanging cliffs with such elegant garden elements as flowering peonies and a pair of peacocks. A nearby pedestal holds an incense burner, a bundle of sutra scrolls, and a bowl of flowers.

Identifiable as a Tibetan-style *thangka* by its coarse cloth ground and densely applied mineral colors, the painting is otherwise entirely Chinese in its content and manner of execution, notably the lohan's sensitively described features and robes, the "blue and green" palette of the landscape, and the pine, bamboo, and flowering plum, the "three friends of wintry weather," which symbolize endurance and renewal. A short inscription in Tibetan has been added along the lower left margin of the *thangka* beyond the painted surface; the same inscription also appears twice on the back of the *thangka* near the top edge.

M K H

Bibliography: Pratapaditya Pal, *Tibetan Paintings*, Basel, 1984, pl. 59; Jay A. Levenson, ed., *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration* (exh. cat.), Washington, National Gallery of Art, 1991, pp. 457–58, no. 308.



Unidentified artist

The Child-Bestowing Kuan-yin

Chinese, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), late 16th–early 17th century

Hanging scroll, ink, color, and gold on silk,

47³/₈ × 23⁵/₈ in. (120.3 × 60 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1989 (1989.152)



This image of the “Child-Bestowing” (*Sung-tzu*) Kuan-yin is a rare example of ecclesiastical painting from the end of the Ming period. As an icon, the painting is both remarkable in its ornate use of line and rich colors and amusing in its content. It presents Kuan-yin (Sanskrit: Avalokiteshvara), the Bodhisattva of Compassion, in a peculiarly Chinese manifestation as the provider of male offspring.

Kuan-yin is depicted seated on a lion (a symbol of royalty in India), descending toward the worshiper on a plume of clouds while holding a baby in his arms. The child is shown girded by a jewel-encrusted belt and holding an imposing seal, emblems of high official rank. Below him is the adoring figure of Sudhana, the young boy whose auspicious birth enabled him immediately to set forth on a quest for spiritual enlightenment. On Kuan-yin’s other side is a servant with non-Chinese features who holds aloft a ceremonial parasol, a further sign of the divinity’s regal stature, while keeping a watchful eye on his master’s lion.

The painting is a study in contrasts between movement and stillness. Kuan-yin’s central placement and frontal pose emphasize his hieratic authority and transform him into an island of calm surrounded by the animated poses of his mount and attendants. The costumes and the style of drawing reinforce this contrast. Kuan-yin’s placid face is perfectly static in its symmetry, but linear energies accelerate as one’s gaze moves out from the face. The radiating arabesques of the deity’s crown point toward the waving pennant and the scrolling clouds while the sinuous tresses of Kuan-yin’s blue hair draw the eye downward to the curving scarves and energized drapery folds of the figure’s white skirt and the abstract curls of the lion’s mane.

This image exemplifies what must have been a widespread style of ecclesiastical images found in temples during the late Ming and early Ch’ing (1644–1911) periods. The broad shape and evenly spaced features of Kuan-yin’s face are typical of late Ming sculpted portrayals of the deity. The patternized treatment of form is even more characteristic of the period. Drapery lines, the coat of the lion, and the clouds are all drawn in the same manner so that the layers of cloth, fur, and mist are transformed into flat, abstract spirals.

M K H

Ch'en Hung-shou
Chinese, 1598–1652

Bodhisattva Kuan-yin in the Form of the Buddha Mother

Ming dynasty (1368–1644), dated 1620
Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 53¹/₈ × 19¹/₈ in. (134.9 × 48.6 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1992 (1992.197)



This hanging scroll, dated 1620, is a rare large-scale example of Ch'en Hung-shou's early figure style and a perfect complement to the small-scale figures contained in his early album of 1618–22 described below (1985.121).

In Esoteric Buddhism, the Buddha was understood as having been born of the Law, which was regarded, therefore, as the Buddha Mother. This image depicts the Esoteric manifestation of Kuan-yin (Sanskrit: Avalokiteshvara) as the Buddha Mother, a deity with multiple arms and a third “all-seeing” eye. In Ch'en Hung-shou's interpretation, however, the Buddha Mother does not appear as a formidable incarnation of scripture, but as a winsome young woman. The figure's divinity is conveyed through the cape, apron, and jewels of her costume, the staff with pendant bell and shield attached to her back, the palm-leaf sutra embellished with a Sanskrit character in her hands, as well as her nose ring, third eye, and the subtle suggestion of other arms behind the pair holding the sutra. Her unruly hairdo and the unconventional gesture of clutching strands of hair in her mouth may be derived not from Buddhist iconography but from heroines of contemporary popular theater.

Ch'en's inscription explains how the commission to create this religious image came about:

In the forty-eighth year of the Wan-li reign era of the Great Ming dynasty, on the twenty-ninth day of the first month [March 4, 1620], Mr. Ch'en Chih-mu of Shan-yin remarked: “I have wished for [an icon] to venerate for many years, but have never obtained an image to reverence. Why don't you respectfully paint a precious likeness for me?” Written by Ch'en Hung-shou after purifying himself.

An unidentified contemporary of Ch'en's has added a title at the upper right corner of the painting: “Bodhisattva Kuan-yin in the form of the Buddha Mother” (*Chün-t'i Fo mu fa-hsiang*).

At this enlarged scale, Ch'en Hung-shou's technique and idiosyncratic stylistic sources become readily apparent. His relaxed and fluid drapery lines do not follow the disciplined brush mannerisms of literati models, but instead are derived from popular paintings and woodblock prints. Yet his drawing is not casual or spontaneous. The general form of the figure was first sketched in charcoal or light ink. Next, the main outlines were drawn in pale tones with key contours reinforced in dark ink. Finally, Ch'en added the intricate fabric patterns and jewelry details that reflect the same love of meticulous drawing found in the album of 1618–22. Ch'en's archaic regular-script writing style is also consistent with his inscriptions on the album.

MKH

予得承

佛威力此量此也貞者信之好者信其欲

表心

佛氣以報之可

佛豈之報也

傳下替信授



Ch'en Hung-shou
Chinese, 1598–1652

Landscapes, Figures, and Flowers

Ming dynasty (1368–1644), dated 1618–22

Album of 12 paintings with 6 facing pages inscribed by Ch'en Hung-shou and 6 pages by Ch'en Chi-ju (1558–1639), ink and color on paper, each leaf, 8³/₄ × 3⁵/₈ in. (22.2 × 9.2 cm)

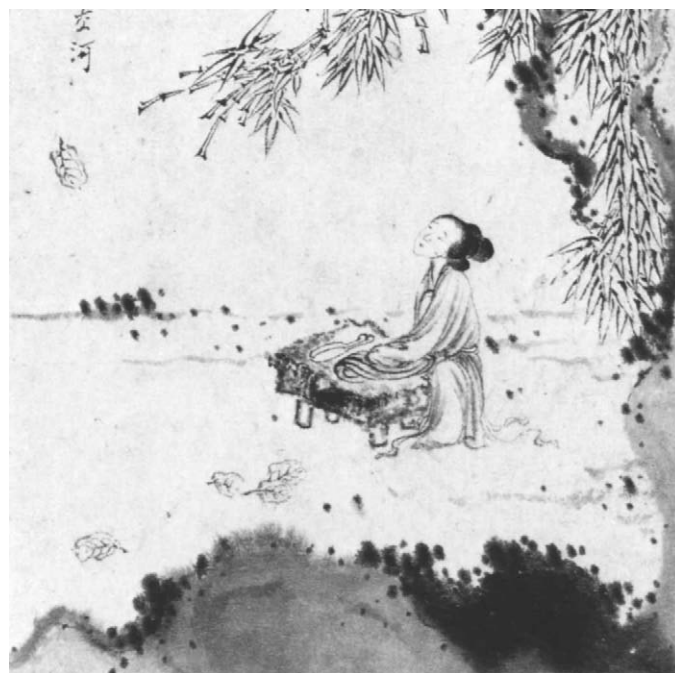
Purchase, Friends of Far Eastern Art Gifts, in honor of Alfreda Murck, 1985 (1985.121)

This exquisite album, done when Ch'en Hung-shou was between twenty and twenty-four years of age, exhibits a broad range of subject matter and an extraordinarily fastidious brush style that confirm Ch'en's reputation as a youthful prodigy. This reputation is further attested by the presence of six laudatory colophons added to the album by Ch'en Chi-ju, a noted writer, publisher, and artist who, along with his friend Tung Ch'i-ch'ang (1555–1636), was one of the foremost critics of the day.

Beginning at the age of ten and continuing into his early twenties, Ch'en Hung-shou studied with the Hangchow landscape painter Lan Ying (1585–1664). In this album, however, Ch'en's range of subject matter and refined brushwork are quite distinct from Lan Ying's productions. Two extremely fine figure studies, done in the *pai-miao* (plain drawing) tradition of Li Kung-lin (1049–1106), recall Ch'en's woodblock illustrations to the *Nine Songs*, dated 1616. Two flower paintings, one in monochrome and one in brilliant color, demonstrate Ch'en's familiarity with both the scholar-amateur and the decorative traditions of this genre. But it is the eight landscapes that provide the most surprising insights into the young artist's models and state of mind. Far from practicing a single, homogeneous style based on the work of his mentor, Ch'en paints old trees and bamboo in this album in the spare, understated manner of the Yüan dynasty (1279–1368) painter Ni Tsan (1301–1374); there is also an archaic "blue and green" landscape after Ch'ien Hsüan (ca. 1235–after 1301), a powerful mountainscape in the energized brush idiom of Wang Meng (1308–1385), and a depiction of the Solitary Elegant Peak in Kuei-lin that recalls the fantastic landscapes of Wu Pin (ca. 1583–1626). Ch'en's early interest in the styles of Yüan hermit-painters and the eccentric professional artist Wu Pin indicates a strikingly independent and reclusive temperament that manifests itself prominently in his later works.

M K H

Bibliography: Alice R. M. Hyland, *Deities, Emperors, Ladies and Literati* (exh. cat.), Birmingham Museum of Art, 1987, cat. no. 24, pp. 51–52 (leaves b, c).



Detail

Chang Feng
Chinese, active ca. 1636–62

The Stone Bridge

Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1911), dated 1661
Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 60 × 18 1/4 in. (152.4 × 46.4 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, The Dillon Fund Gift, and
Anonymous Gift, 1993 (1993.202)



Chang Feng was a significant artistic figure in seventeenth-century Nanking, but paintings by him are extremely rare. The Metropolitan owns the earliest major example of his oeuvre, an album of intricately rendered landscapes dated 1644 (1987.408.2); this hanging scroll, one of Chang's last dated works, epitomizes the bold, free brush manner of his maturity.

The painting depicts a lone scholar in a wintry landscape of bare rocks and leafless trees. Clutching a staff with hands drawn into his robe to protect them from the cold, the figure stands erect and motionless on one side of a stone bridge that spans a mountain torrent. The far side of the bridge ends abruptly in a tall cliff. Several scraggly trees growing horizontally from the rock face reinforce the sense of the scholar's own precarious position. Unlike conventional images of scholars in a landscape, Chang's figure does not pause to admire the scenery; instead, he appears to confront his environment, unable either to move forward or to turn back.

The disjunction between figure and landscape is heightened by the disparity in the brushwork used to describe the two. The scholar is carefully drawn in intricate, brittle lines that appear almost carved; the landscape, in contrast, is boldly brushed in broad, wet strokes filled with wild, almost uncontrolled energy. Recalling the spontaneous brushwork of some Ch'an (Zen, in Japanese) Buddhist paintings or the works of earlier Nanking professional artists, the kinetically charged rocks swirl about the static figure, adding to the sense of his isolation and indecision.

Chang's inscription reinforces the tension between the figure and his world:

Who is it gripping an iron staff in the jade spray;
The torrent's waters ringing beneath the stone bridge?
Snow, like flowers' souls, flies about without pause;
The spring wind still awaits the mountain man's summons.

From the poem it becomes clear that spring's renewal is not forthcoming—the scholar-recluse in the painting is no more able to summon the spring wind than Chang Feng is capable of bringing about a restoration of the fallen Ming dynasty (1368–1644).

Chang's father was a military governor who died in 1631 while resisting the rebel forces of the Manchu ally K'ung Yu-te (d. 1652). Though Chang remained loyal to the Ming after the fall of the dynasty in 1644, he did not give up his life in its defense. Instead, he withdrew from society and associated himself with the Buddhist church, residing for a time at the Bao-en Temple in Nanking, a center of Ming loyalist resistance.

The imagery of *The Stone Bridge* pointedly recalls a specific site, the famous waterfall and natural stone bridge at Mount T'ien-t'ai, a site sacred to both Buddhists and Taoists. Legend has it that anyone who succeeds in crossing the slippery stone arch will enter paradise and become immortal. Chang's autobiographical figure can neither attain paradise nor return from whence he came; he is riveted to the harsh reality of the present in which he must face both his limitations and mortality.

MKH



Yeh Hsin
Chinese, active ca. 1650–70

Landscapes

Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1911)
Four album leaves, ink and color on silk, each leaf,
4⁵/₈ × 5¹/₂ in. (11.8 × 14 cm)
Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. C. Y. Chen Gift, 1987 (1987.223)

In these four gemlike album leaves, Yeh Hsin, one of the Eight Masters of Nanking, lovingly depicts the rural scenery around his native city. Broad panoramas show a river valley with a temple and with ox carts traveling through wintry mountains, and intimate views depict rustic retirement and the farmyard. A sensitive and lyrical recorder of the familiar, Yeh was also an innovative experimenter with light, atmosphere, and color whose art reflects a creative response to Western influences introduced to China by Jesuits in the late sixteenth century.

Works by Yeh Hsin are extremely rare; the Metropolitan has a single leaf by him done as part of a collective album for the preeminent Nanking collector Chou Liang-kung (1612–1672). Painted about 1654, it is Yeh's earliest extant datable work (64.268.2). These four leaves dating from Yeh's mature period add significantly to our representation of this important artist and complement the Museum's concentration of works by two of the foremost Nanking masters, Kung Hsien (1619–1689) and Fan Ch'i (1616–after 1694). In contrast to the intensely self-expressive works of Kung Hsien and the sometimes overly pretty and finicky descriptive detail of Fan Ch'i, Yeh Hsin emerges in these leaves as an artist with a serene, introspective manner; subtle in his use of colors and playful in his manipulation of subject matter and pictorial conventions, he distanced himself from the turmoil of dynastic change through idyllic images of rural life suffused with moisture and light.

MKH



Detail



Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shih-ning)
Italian, 1688–1766; lived in China 1716–66

One Hundred Horses

Ch'ing dynasty (1644–1911), ca. 1728
Handscroll, ink on paper, 37 × 310³/₄ in. (94 × 789.3 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, in honor of Douglas Dillon,
1991 (1991.134)

During the eighteenth century, the Manchu Ch'ing dynasty sponsored a major revival of courtly arts, which attained a new monumental scale, technical finish, and descriptive intricacy. A key figure in establishing this new court aesthetic was the Italian Jesuit Giuseppe Castiglione. A master of vividly naturalistic draftsmanship and large-scale compositions—in Europe he worked as a muralist—Castiglione helped to create a new, hybrid style that combined Western realism with traditional Chinese conventions of composition and brushwork.

This monumental scroll, a unique example of a Castiglione preparatory drawing, promises to be a key monument in understanding how European art influenced the course of Chinese painting. The model for one of Castiglione's most famous compositions, the *One Hundred Horses* scroll preserved in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (see detail illustrated above), the drawing is executed almost exclusively in the European manner, with a quill pen rather than a brush; it is, therefore, unquestionably from Castiglione's own hand.

As the final draft from which the finished version on silk would have been traced, the scenery is precisely rendered in bold ink lines. Castiglione first sketched the horses in charcoal and then employed a fine-tipped pen to complete them. He used a coarser pen to draw the trees, mountains, and foliage. In only a few instances—notably the broad leaves of the reeds at the end of the scroll—did he choose to use a brush. Landscape is represented using Western-style perspective, figures are often shown in dramatically foreshortened views, and vegetation is depicted with spontaneous arabesques and cross-hatching. The large scale of the painting also suggests a European influence—as if Castiglione took a typical Western canvas and extended its length to make an architectural frieze.

MKH



Unidentified artist

Birds and Flowers

Korean, 19th century

Ten-fold screen, ink and color on paper, each panel,
54³/₈ × 10³/₈ in. (138.1 × 26.4 cm)

Purchase, The Vincent Astor Foundation Gift and John M. Crawford, Jr.
Bequest, 1993 (1993.255)

This delicately painted and richly colored series of bird and flower paintings on a ten-panel screen is a type traditionally made for the bridal chamber. Such screens were typically used in the private sections of the home; Confucian themes or literati subjects, including bamboo and orchids painted in ink, were considered more appropriate for reception rooms or the scholar's study. The near-encyclopedic array of motifs in this screen includes common sparrows and chickens, exotic parrots and birds of paradise, insects and fish—all of which are presented in harmonious combinations that symbolize domestic peace and happiness. Not only were screens of this type auspicious decoration for the bridal chamber, but they must also have provided welcome privacy to a newly wed couple whose family members customarily performed the playful task of keeping evil influences away from the marriage bed by the observance of “first-night peeping.”

The realistic rendering of the motifs reflects both a thorough assimilation of the concept of “form-likeness” idealized in Chinese bird and flower painting since the Sung dynasty (960–1279) and a response to the scientific observation in European painting, which was introduced to China in the sixteenth century. A distinct variant of the primary decorative genre in East Asian painting, this screen makes it possible to elucidate the Korean response to the revival of realism in bird and flower painting in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

B B F

Detail

Japan



牛闘士

闘牛

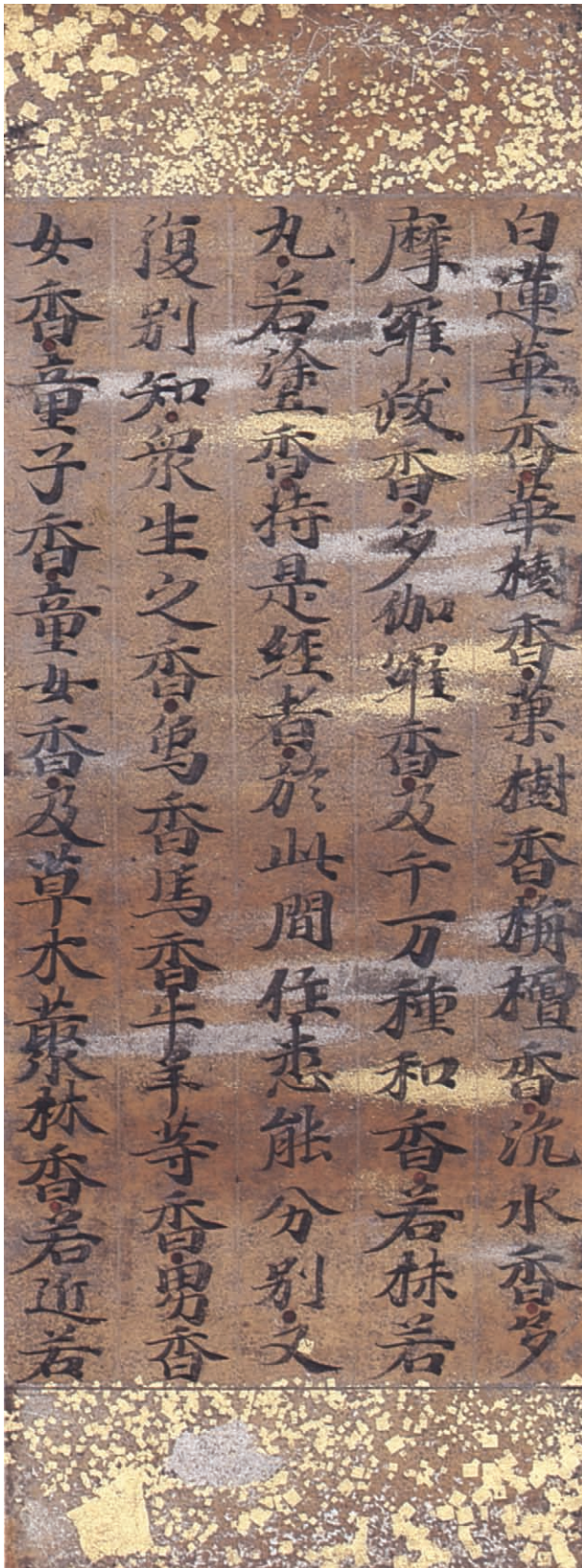
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Attributed to Kujō Kanezane
Japanese, 1149–1207

Five Lines from the Lotus Sutra

Heian period (794–1185), last quarter of the 12th century
Section of a handscroll remounted as a hanging scroll, ink on colored
paper decorated with sprinkled and cut gold and silver, scroll,
55½ × 13 in. (141 × 33 cm); image, 10 × 3⅝ in. (25.4 × 9.2 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1990 (1990.116)

This five-line segment of one of the most sumptuously decorated scrolls of the Lotus Sutra perfectly embodies both the aesthetics and the religious practice of the late Heian period, which is aptly termed “Japan’s Golden Age.” One of the major themes of the Lotus Sutra is the myriad benefits bestowed on those who venerate this text by copying it. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, this notion inspired personal or commissioned copies of vast number and opulence, usually written in gold on dyed paper of a deep blue or purple. The present example, executed in an elegant, personal script on paper decorated in silver and gold cloud patterns within a border of richly sprinkled cut gold and silver leaf, surpasses these in conception and reflects the taste of the court, which valued beautiful handwriting on carefully chosen paper above all other accomplishments. It calls to mind Sei Shōnagon’s singling out of the Lotus Sutra as a “charming thing” in her *Pillow Book*, an evocative compendium of the delightful and dismal aspects of life in the Fujiwara court. The reputed calligrapher Kujō Kanezane was one of the most illustrious statesmen and poets of his day who, toward the end of his life, became an ardent patron of Pure Land Buddhism.

B B F



Portable Shrine with Image of Bato Kannon

Japanese, Edo period (1615–1867), ca. 1620

Fruitwood image in lacquered case with gold-sprinkled designs,
H. 7³/₄ in. (19.7 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Far Eastern Art Gifts, 1985 (1985.96)



An exquisite reflection of the florescence of traditional crafts in the early years of Tokugawa rule, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, this lacquer shrine encases a meticulously carved image of Bato Kannon, the horse-headed Avalokiteshvara. The shrine and its icon reveal a high level of craftsmanship in the sensitively modeled figure and the refined ornamentation of the lacquer case, which is decorated in lotus designs in a style reminiscent of lacquer of the Heian period (794–1185). Elaborate gilt-bronze fittings incorporate the Tokugawa hollyhock crest and accentuate the simple elegance of the naturalistic sprinkled-gold lotus motif on the smooth black lacquer, now mellowed to a rich deep brown. The interior of the shrine is completely covered with a traditional geometric floral pattern associated with healthy childbearing, over which richly colored pink and white lotuses are painted in heavy mineral pigments. Bato Kannon, one of the six manifestations of Kannon according to Tantric thought, was prominent in Esoteric Buddhism in the Heian period and became popular as the patron of travelers in the Edo period. The deity combines the ferociously protective aspects of the Hindu deities assimilated into Buddhism with the omnipotent compassion of the Bodhisattva Kannon.

B B F

Related reference: *East Asian Lacquer in the Florence and Herbert Irving Collection* (exh. cat.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991.

Vajra

Japanese, Heian period (794–1185), 12th century

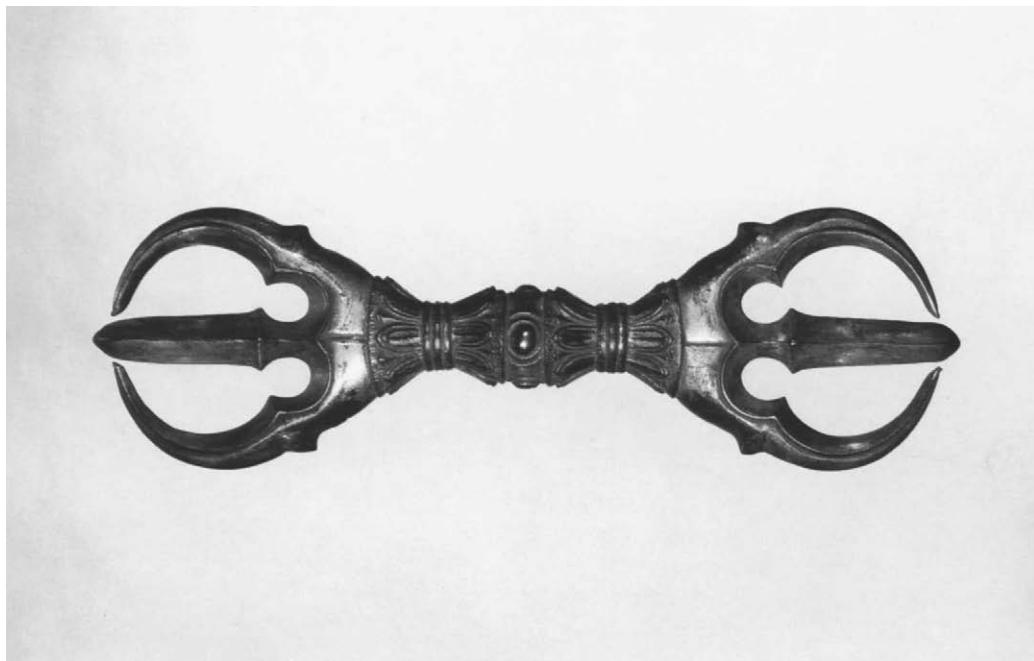
Gilt bronze, H. 6⁷/₈ in. (17.5 cm)

Purchase, Richard and Peggy Danziger Gift, 1987 (1987.151)

The vajra, or ritual thunderbolt, is a religious implement of Hindu origin and the single most significant spiritual symbol in Esoteric Buddhism. Emblematic of the human spirit that is identical with Buddhahood, it is essential to the performance of the central rite of the mandala. Its potent function is to enable the devotee to experience Buddhahood in the rite of actualizing the spiritual cosmos through the creation of a mandala. This gilt bronze vajra is one of a very few examples from the Heian period, during which Tantric rites were introduced to Japan as the final, most perfect form of Buddhist worship, capable of near-magical power in the perfection of human life and the protection of the realm.

The superbly cast form has a finely chased decoration of stylized petals and jewels. The elegantly tapered prongs are well modeled and set away from the central, diamond-shaped bolt, achieving both a severity of form appropriate to the vajra's function and the exquisite grace of Heian aesthetic expression.

B B F





Stoneware Ewer

Japanese, Momoyama period (1568–1615), 17th century
Shino-Oribe ware, H. 7³/₄ in. (19.7 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1988 (1988.156a,b)

This beautiful ewer was made as a wine or soup server for the *kaiseki* meal that precedes the formal tea ceremony. With its bold contour and charmingly painted decoration of floral and textile patterns, it is one of the most attractive and rare examples of a type of ware known as Shino-Oribe. The body of refined white clay is covered with a white feldspathic glaze that fired a purplish pink where it pooled and interacted with the iron.

Shino ware, the first decorated white ware in Japan, was developed in the sixteenth century in Mino, Gifu Prefecture. This piece is a fascinating example of the transformation of Mino ceramics according to the taste of the tea master Furuta Oribe (1544–1615) and the technical changes that occurred as a result of the introduction, in the early seventeenth century, of a more advanced kiln type, the chambered climbing kiln modeled on those built by Korean craftsmen at Karatsu in Kyushu. The earliest and most important of the new kilns was the one at Motoyashiki, in Mino, where utensils for use by the tea masters of Kyoto were produced to order. At Motoyashiki the green-glazed decorated wares known as Oribe ware were produced, but excavations reveal that Shino wares continued to be made there in the early period. Inevitably the prevailing taste and the new technology brought about the changes in Shino ware that are reflected in the more refined form and inventive decoration of this vessel.

B B F



Detail

Karasumaru Mitsuhiro
Japanese, 1579–1638

Ten Oxherding Pictures

Edo period (1615–1867), ca. 1634
Handscroll, ink on dyed paper decorated with gold and silver designs,
11³/₄ × 107 in. (29.9 × 271.8 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1986 (1986.142)

Nowhere is the synthesis of diverse traditions in the early Edo renaissance more originally expressed than in this unusual scroll, *Ten Oxherding Pictures*, by Karasumaru Mitsuhiro, a major figure in the circle of the politically enfeebled but artistically influential Emperor Go-Mizunō-ō (1596–1680). In drawings and poems unified by his fluid brushwork, Mitsuhiro rendered the classic Zen parable that likens the deepening stages of spiritual enlightenment through meditation to the vicissitudes of a herdboy pursuing an elusive ox. Here, the confrontation of the wary ox and the tentative oxherd depicts the early stage of the spiritual quest when, after blind searching, the goal is perceived. The next stage, rendered as a tense struggle to control the ox, symbolizes the unruly passions to be overcome during the quest.

Common in Zen teaching, which previously had been embraced mainly by the military, this theme as treated by Mitsuhiro reflects the syncretic influence of the tea ceremony, which flourished in the newly established peace of the early seventeenth century. The practice of *chanoyu* (tea ceremony) created an open social context in which Zen ideas were transmitted and adapted by cultivated townsmen such as Kōetsu (1558–1637) and the artist Sōtatsu (d. ca. 1643) as well as courtiers such as Mitsuhiro. Mitsuhiro's personal vision of the Zen theme is rendered on sumptuous paper decorated with gold and silver clouds and stenciled chrysanthemum and paulownia patterns. Casting a Zen subject in this courtly mode is characteristic of Mitsuhiro's taste, which fostered the revival of ancient court aesthetics and was shared by Kōetsu and Sōtatsu. Although the oxherding theme was extremely important in Japanese Zen, illustrated versions are rare. Mitsuhiro based his poems upon those composed in the fifteenth century by the Tōfukiji monk Shōtetsu (1381–1459), but his succinct and witty drawings reflect his own highly idiosyncratic interpretation of the theme.

B B F

Related reference: Paul Varley and Isao Kumakura, eds., *Tea in Japan: Essays on the History of Chanoyu*, Honolulu, 1989.

Itō Jakuchū
Japanese, 1716–1800

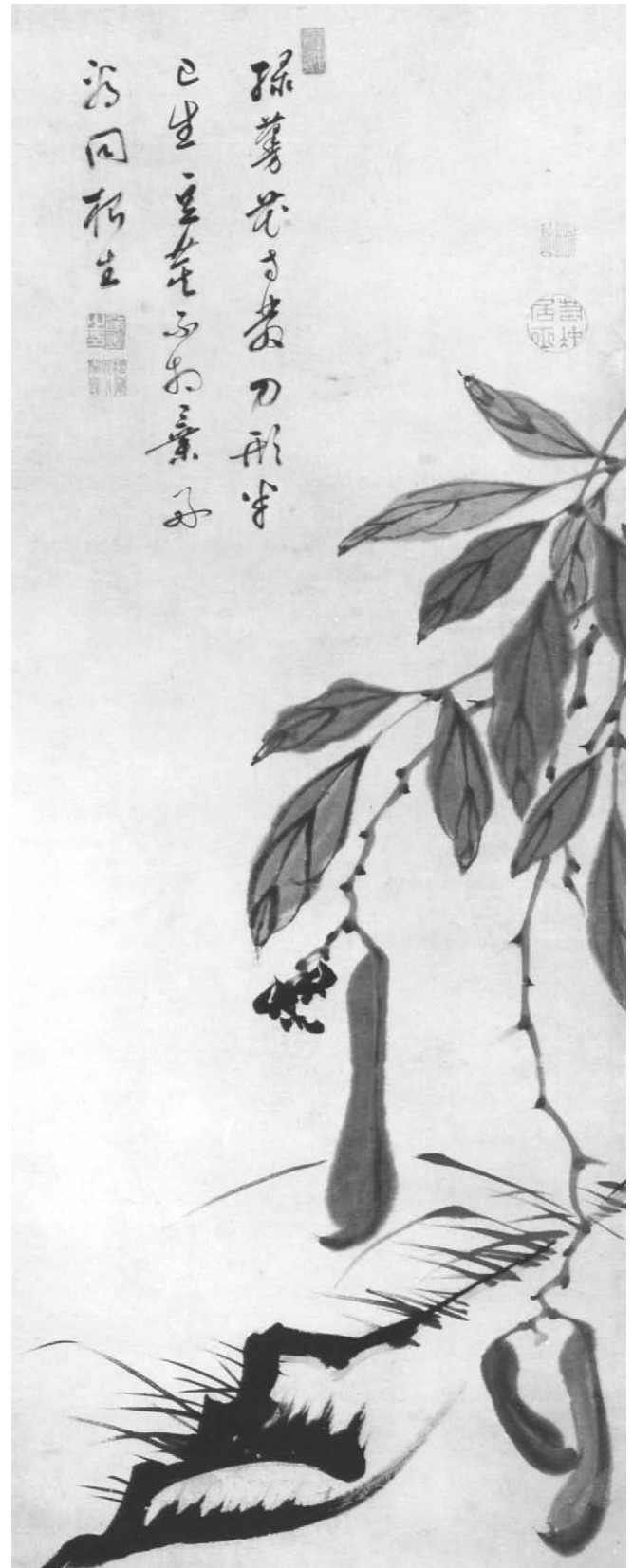
Bean Vine

Edo period (1615–1867), ca. 1763
Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 48³/₄ × 19 in. (123.8 × 48.3 cm)
Purchase, Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, 1985 (1985.97)

This immediately expressive rendering of a bean vine, inscribed by Tangai (1693–1763), the eighth abbot of the Obaku Zen sect, is one of the earliest ink paintings by Itō Jakuchū, a prolific and idiosyncratic painter. One of a set of six vegetable subjects, it may originally have been pasted on a folding screen. Tangai's poem alludes to a poem by Ts'ao Chih (192–232), brother of the first emperor of the Chinese Wei dynasty. Ts'ao's poetic protest against his mistreatment by his brother was couched in the image of a bean painfully burned by a fire made of pods from the same vine. Tangai's phrase "Two of the same root" alludes to this story, not only giving a literary dimension to the painting but also expressing the notion prevalent in Zen of the underlying unity of all living things. *Bean Vine* was painted about 1763, while Jakuchū was completing his masterwork, a set of twenty-four paintings of plant and animal subjects in rich color and teeming detail. The latter formed a set with a triptych depicting the Buddhist deities Shaka, Monju, and Fugen, which he donated to the Zen temple Shōkokuji, in Kyoto, and which is now in the Imperial Household collection. Here, in the more direct medium of ink, Jakuchū achieves a compelling vision of the natural world with the same sure grasp of descriptive form evident in his colored paintings. It foreshadows his many works in the spontaneous ink mode done in his late years.

B B F

Related reference: Money L. Hickman and Satō Yasuhiro, *The Paintings of Itō Jakuchū* (exh. cat), New York, The Asia Society, 1989.



Meisō

Japanese, early 18th century

Tiger

Hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper,
30⁵/₈ × 13³/₈ in. (77.8 × 34 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1986 (1986.171)



The tiger, long venerated in Asia as a mythological guardian animal, occupied an important place not only in popular culture but also in the elite society of both Japan and Korea in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A common symbol of auspicious powers in folk mythology, the tiger also proved a source of inspiration for monks and intellectuals. The poem inscribed on this painting presents a Zen interpretation of the tiger as a symbol of one who ventures to embark on the true path to enlightenment:

The recluse in a mountain cottage
And the fabled puma in the Southern Mountain
Indulge themselves in hiding from the world.
The tiger does not lose his way here.
Suddenly, at the painter's hands,
He attains complete existence.

This painting posed an intriguing question as to its origin. It had initially been considered Korean despite its provenance in a Japanese collection. The whimsical treatment of this dignified and terrifyingly powerful animal exhibits Korean sensibilities. However, in the depiction of the fur and in the simple treatment of the paws, the painting displays the loose, freely executed brushwork characteristic of Japanese renditions of this subject since the early sixteenth century rather than the meticulous brushwork of Korean monochrome ink examples. The posture of the animal is also more typical of Japanese tiger paintings. The poem inscribed on the painting is traceable to an obscure monk named Shitaku Junka who lived at the famous Edo temple of Tōkaiji in the early eighteenth century. The artist, Meisō, whose name appears in the seal at the lower left corner, was almost certainly a Japanese monk-painter.

HO

Incense Burner

Japanese, Edo period (1615–1867), 18th century
Copper alloy, with enamels, gilding, and silvering, H. 8³/₈ in. (21.3 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1993 (1993.193)

This incense burner in the shape of a rooster represents a highpoint of Edo enameled metalwork. The feathers of the bird are rendered in a rainbow of subtle blue, green, and yellow enamels set off by a few feathers that are embellished by intricate chasing on gilded and silvered copper. Except for the head and feet, the rooster's form was not molded but hammered from a sheet of metal, in this case, a copper alloy. Exquisitely detailed chasing defines the textures of the rooster's comb, feet, and those feathers that are not enameled. The enameling is in the *champlevé* technique, in which silica paste colored by various metallic oxides is set in grooves that are hammered or chiseled out of the metal base, rather than being held by wire soldered onto the base as in *cloisonné*. Enameling in premodern Japan was mainly used on small objects such as sword fittings, nail covers, and door pulls; it rarely occurs on objects in the round such as this example.

Proto-enamels, in which glass was fused to metal, existed in Japan as early as the eighth century. In the second half of the fifteenth century, Chinese enameled objects were treasured by the Ashikaga shoguns. However, it was not until the end of the sixteenth century that the enamel craft developed, probably in response to influences from China and Europe that fed the taste for gorgeous decoration in the Momoyama period (1568–1615).

The Museum is notably weak in its collection of Japanese enamel work, with only a few examples of Meiji-period *cloisonné*. This magnificent bird, emblematic of peaceful domesticity, of dawn, and, by extension, of regeneration, is an auspicious first step in developing a representative collection of Japanese enamelware, aptly termed *shippō*, "Seven Jewels."

B B F





Katsushika Hokusai
Japanese, 1760–1849

Drunken Asaina

Edo period (1615–1867), ca. 1800–10
Fan mounted as hanging scroll, ink and color on paper,
17¼ × 23 in. (43.8 × 58.4 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1991 (1991.151)

Hokusai's extraordinary achievement in print art, exemplified by the well-known series *Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji*, has overshadowed his great talent in painting. In fact, most of Hokusai's paintings were simply forgotten or lost until recent scholarship drew attention to his painted works. Scholars are now eagerly searching for and trying to rescue Hokusai's lost paintings, but the number of extant authentic works is not large. Many works, which are most likely those of Hokusai's disciples, have been misattributed to Hokusai.

In this painting, Hokusai exploits the artistic possibilities of the fan format to give a new interpretation to his subject, Asaina Saburo, the legendary hero of Herculean strength. Begin-

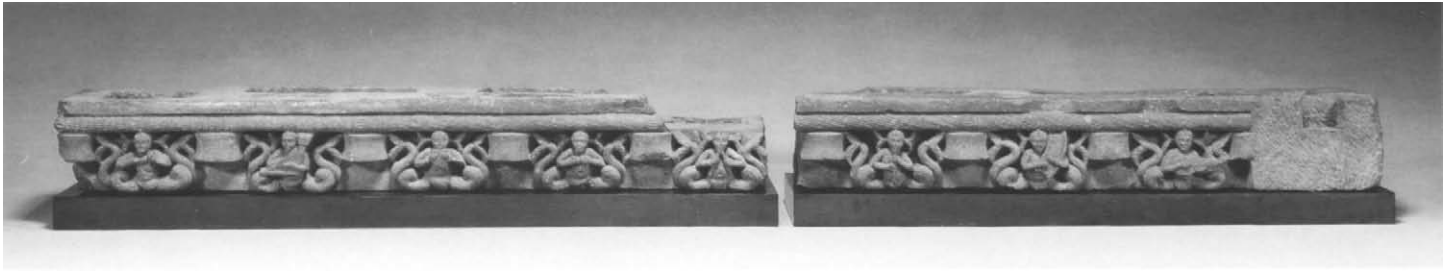
ning in the Kamakura period, in the late thirteenth century, and continuing into modern times, the character of Asaina has captured the popular imagination of the Japanese; he has appeared and reappeared over hundreds of years in classical samurai sagas, popular legends, noh and kabuki dramas, and in Edo novellas and ukiyo-e. In Edo culture two aspects of the Asaina legend—his contests of strength and his journey to an island of dwarfs—were so much a part of popular imagery that a variety of new interpretations, often humorous or even ironical, proliferated. According to one such Edo parody, Asaina stopped at a sake shop, became intoxicated, and dreamed a dream in which he acquitted himself bravely when surrounded by dwarf demons. Here, Hokusai has eliminated the motif of demons and enshrined the image of Asaina in the small domain of the fan to give it a more iconic quality.

This fan, which was actually used, might have been a New Year's gift from a sake shop. The characters "Tsuruya," which appear on the box on which the drunken Asaina reclines, most likely represent the name of the sake shop. If this is the case, Hokusai created a witty, auspicious image for the shop. The figure, well defined with broad, sharply inflected brushwork in a subtle palette of light blue and red wash, and the Hokusai signature followed by the seal "Kimo Dasoku" suggest that this fan painting is a work of the artist's early career.

HO

**South
and
Southeast Asia**





Architectural Frieze with Musical Mermen

Indian (Mathura), Kushan period, 2nd–3rd century
 Red-mottled sandstone, (a) L. 39 in. (99.1 cm); (b) L. 33 in. (83.8 cm)
 Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1993 (1993.192a,b)

The nine mermen in these two sections of an architectural frieze are composite creatures of a sort that were widely portrayed throughout the ancient world. In the classical world, these creatures were attendant divinities associated with the sea. The Kushan empire was a large trading partner of the Roman empire, and elements from Mediterranean styles are often found in Kushan art of the ancient Gandhara region and less frequently in the art of Kushan India. It is unusual to find mermen, as here, playing musical instruments. They are depicted in human form from the waist up, except for their elephantlike ears. Below the waist, their legs have been metamorphosed into two fish tails with bifurcated ends.

In the art of Kushan Gandhara, celestial musicians were frequently shown serenading at important events, most often the birth of the Buddha. The specific setting and symbolic function of these aquatic musicians are not known. Most probably they served a similar purpose, adding a chorus of joyous music for the deity whose shrine they decorated.

SMK



Seated Warrior with Bow

Pakistan or Afghanistan (Ancient Gandhara area), ca. 4th century
Stucco, H. 18 in. (45.7 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1991 (1991.132)

Buddhist stucco sculpture dating from about the third to the fifth century from the area of ancient Gandhara, in what is today the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan and parts of eastern Afghanistan, is not at all uncommon. Most of this usually fragmentary material has been recovered from the remains of various collapsed Buddhist monuments. To judge from the vast amount that has survived, the prosperous Buddhist communities employed a sizable work force of artists. Much of this material is of straightforward, fine quality, somewhat uninspired, and of standardized, repetitious iconography. On occasion, by virtue of particularly fine modeling and unusual subject matter, one encounters an outstanding example.

The sculpture at hand must be attributed to an artist whose refined aesthetic vision was matched by his technical proficiency, one who with considerable skill has modeled the volumes of the figure and manipulated the forms into a visually convincing naturalistic posture with subtle twists of the body. He provides his warrior with an animated expression and describes his costume with great clarity. All these set the sculpture apart from the mass of more iconic, predictable representations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

A seated male figure, not easily identified, is depicted wearing scale armor and high boots, with a bow across his chest. He might represent an anonymous warrior, but it is tempting to elevate him from the ranks to a more important position. Perhaps our figure is an unorthodox representation of Panchika, the semidivine warlord of the *yakshas* who personifies the power to ensure wealth and appears in Gandharan art with some regularity seated and holding a weapon. As with most Gandharan sculpture, this image clearly reveals its allegiance to the stylistic idioms of the classical world.

ML



Standing Tara

Indian, Gupta period, ca. second half of the 6th century
Bronze, H. 12 in. (30.5 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1987 (1987.218.4)
Samuel Eilenberg Collection
Ex. coll. Columbia University

Tara is the Buddhist deity who serves as the feminine counterpart of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. She is identifiable by the blue lotus (*utpala*) held in her left hand and the citron (or pomegranate) in her right.

Occupying a pivotal position in the transition from Gupta to Pala styles, this remarkable sculpture has prompted speculation as to both its date and its place of origin. It has previously been assigned a seventh-century date and has been published as Nepalese as well as Indian.

The sculpture seems to derive, stylistically and iconographically, from late-fifth-century Sarnath-school images such as the two stone standing Taras in the Sarnath Museum and the Indian Museum, Calcutta (Pramod Chandra, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C.—1300 A.D.*, exh. cat., Washington, D. C., National Gallery of Art, 1985, pp. 88–89; Joanna Williams, *The Art of Gupta India: Empire and Province*, Princeton, 1982, pl. 98). It is clear, however, that this bronze goddess stands at some chronological remove from these Sarnath images. The full, round face, swelling hips, and organic modeling seem closer to the aesthetic spirit of the Gupta-period idiom than to that of the Pala period and, along with the details of jewelry, garments, and hairstyle, suggest a date not later than the second half of the sixth century.

ML

Bibliography: Martin Lerner and Steven Kossak, *The Lotus Transcendent—Indian and Southeast Asian Art from the Samuel Eilenberg Collection* (exh. cat.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991, pp. 97–98, no. 66.

Standing Buddha

Indian (Bihar), Pala period, second half of the 8th century

Stone, H. 51 1/2 in. (130.8 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1990 (1990.115)

One of the richest and most fascinating chapters in the long history of Indian art concerns the Pala dynasty of eastern India. From the eighth through the twelfth century, the Palas controlled the area of the present-day states of Bihar and West Bengal and the nation of Bangladesh. The Palas were the last great royal patrons of Buddhism on Indian soil and, in fact, occupied the region where, in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, spent most of his life. Among the many enlightened accomplishments of the Pala rulers were their endowment and support of great Buddhist monastic universities. These institutions attracted students from all parts of the Asian world, exerting a profound intellectual and spiritual influence upon the rest of Asia.

The flowering of artistic activity under Pala rule is critical to the development of Indian art, but it is also notable for the great influence it had on other regions. Radiating from eastern India, Pala styles and iconography were transmitted across the Bay of Bengal to Burma, Indonesia, and the rest of Southeast Asia and to the Far East, as well as north overland to Tibet and Nepal.

This standing Buddha is early in the sequence of Pala styles—dating to the second half of the eighth century or possibly the beginning of the ninth century. It already reflects the fully developed Pala idiom, with only traces of earlier Gupta influences. The Buddha is quite large, stands in a frontal posture, and displays a strong hieratic solemnity of expression not found in earlier sculptures. Here, the sensuous elegance of Gupta art has been replaced by a powerful figure of considerable dignity. The proportions of the body and the shape of the face are pure Pala in conception, as is the treatment of the garments. The imaginative and sensitive handling of minor drapery motifs forms a striking contrast to the subdued strength of the body with its great masses of smooth surface.

ML





Linga with One Face (*Ekamukhalinga*)

Indian (Kashmir), ca. late 7th century

Stone, H. 14 in. (35.6 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1989 (1989.150)

In India and other countries where Hinduism is practiced, veneration of the linga (phallic emblem of Shiva) is understood to be worship of the generative principle of the universe, the source of universal energy conceptualized as one great aspect of Lord Shiva. The linga is the most sacred object of a Shaivite temple and is housed in the innermost sanctum.

The phallic emblem can be plain or carved with one to four faces; when there are four faces, the presence of an invisible fifth, facing upward, is often assumed. The linga illustrated here has a single face of Shiva. The erect phallus, with the glans clearly delineated, is set on a large tiered pedestal theoretically corresponding to the complementary female principle operative in the universe. In orthodox fashion, Shiva wears the crescent moon on the right side of his doublebun hairdo, which is arranged in wavy locks parted in the center and flowing toward the back of his head. He wears large circular earplugs and a torque with two stylized animal heads, reminiscent of classical and Near Eastern prototypes. Three auspicious beauty folds (*trivali*) appear on his neck, and the tops of his ears are pointed, animal-like, as a reminder of the more ferocious facets of Shiva's complex personality. The vertical third eye, which seems to burst from his forehead, recalls for the faithful that episode when the world was plunged into darkness because Parvati, Shiva's consort, playfully covered his eyes. Shiva restored the luminous brilliance through the creation of a third eye.

The appealing expression on the full, rounded face with smiling lips and eyes opened wide beneath high arching brows, coupled with the skillful modeling and precision of detailing, sets this linga apart from most other examples from Kashmir. Kashmiri lingas are rare, and very few examples of this size and quality have survived.

ML



Panel from a Portable Shrine

Indian (Kashmir), 8th century
Ivory with traces of polychrome, $1\frac{3}{8} \times 1\frac{3}{4}$ in. (3.5 × 4.5 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1988 (1988.148.1)

As a group, carved ivories from Kashmir dating from the eighth and ninth centuries rival in beauty and relative importance those of the great early schools of ivory carving in Europe, such as the Carolingian and Ottonian, but are even rarer. Fewer than thirty Kashmiri carved ivories of this period, including such fragments as the one illustrated here, are extant. These refined carvings attest the skill and sophistication of the Kashmiri ivory workshops, the products of which were one of the minor glories of eighth-century northern Indian art.

This small panel depicts a spirited female dancer between two male musicians. The dancer's voluptuous body is frozen in a contorted pose—her head thrown back and her mouth open,

responsive to the ecstatic moment. Flanking her are a bearded musician who beats time on what appears to be the remains of a tambourine and a youthful musician who energetically strikes a drum suspended from his shoulders. The traces of pigment are a reminder that all the Kashmiri ivories were originally stained and colored.

The subject is possibly one of the three daughters of Mara, the personification of evil, attempting unsuccessfully to seduce Siddhartha and to dissuade him from becoming the Buddha. The event takes place at Bodhgaya where Siddhartha, seated under the bodhi tree, has commenced the meditations that will culminate in his enlightenment and Buddhahood.

To judge from the bottom of this delightful miniature and the horizontal support behind the figures' heads, the panel must originally have been part of the lower frieze of a more elaborate ensemble of ivory carvings. Most probably it and one or two panels of similar or narrower width were set into the lower part of an intricately carved wooden frame of a portable shrine. The larger main ivory image might have been a Buddha being attacked by Mara's evil hosts, such as in the example in The Cleveland Museum of Art (71.18).

ML



Bust of Kamadeva, the God of Love

Indian (Kashmir), second half of the 8th century

Stone, H. 14⁵/₈ in. (37.2 cm)

Purchase, Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, 1993 (1993.175)

Kamadeva, the god of love, youth, and desire, is identifiable here by his special emblem at his left shoulder, the *makara*, the mythological composite creature believed to be, among other things, a symbol of sensual powers. A bow and arrow, as well as paired birds, can also serve as emblems for Kamadeva. In the Museum's sculpture, the mouth of the *makara* is filled with arrows, an unusual iconographic motif. Kamadeva is an important but infrequently represented deity in Indian sculpture; this is only the third example from Kashmir known to me.

The sculptural qualities of this figure, which survives only as a bust, endow it with remarkable visual impact. The sculpture is beautifully modeled, and the elaborate crown, necklace, and armbands are carved with great precision. The stone is a choice Kashmiri green stone rather than the more common dark gray. Its unusual iconography and superior quality make this hitherto unknown sculpture a significant addition to the corpus of Kashmiri art.

ML

The Brahmanical Triad: Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu

Indian (Kashmir), 8th–9th century

Stone, H. 5¾ in. (14.6 cm)

Purchase, Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, in honor of
Cynthia and Leon Polsky, 1985 (1985.85)

Emerging slightly unfocused out of the erosion caused by ritual rubbing during worship, this very fine Brahmanical triad is still representative of the height of Kashmiri stone carving. Revealing the confident hand of a master sculptor, the deities stand in easy, graceful, hipshot postures, their small well-modeled bodies exuding inner power. The carefully controlled manipulation of the larger volumes is skillfully coupled with the refined precision of detailing, making this a small gem of classical Kashmiri art.

Sharing the same indented pedestal and forming a visual unit, none of the gods display the slightest psychological concession to the presence of the others, even though they physically touch. Instead, they individually engage the attention of the worshiper as three distinct icons.

This triad depicts Shiva and Vishnu in their complex, multi-headed forms—iconographic variants particularly popular in Kashmir during the eighth and ninth centuries. Following orthodox precedents, Shiva, the destroyer, stands in the center, his vehicle the bull Nandin to his right. Vishnu, the sustainer, stands to the left of Shiva; his two subsidiary heads, those of a lion and a boar, identify his *vaikuntha chaturmurti* form. The personifications of Vishnu's weapons, the mace and the war discus, flank his legs. This figure is about one-tenth the size of an iconographically identical Kashmiri Vishnu recently added to the Museum's collection (1991.301). Brahma, the creator, who is always depicted as multiheaded, completes the triad. The geese at his feet are his vehicle.

M L





Seated Transcendental Buddha Akshobhya

Pakistan (Northwest Frontier Province, Swat Valley), 9th century
Bronze with silver and copper overlay, H. 9 1/2 in. (24.1 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Far Eastern Art Gifts, 1985 (1985.77)

This well-known sculpture of Akshobhya, identifiable by his traditional vehicle, the elephants, and his distinctive hand gestures, is one of the Five Transcendental or Cosmic Buddhas (*Tathagatas* or *Jinas*). The concept of this quintet occurred late in the development of Buddhist theology and is based on the acceptance of a plurality of Buddhas who rule over the cosmic totality of time and space. Each of the five Buddhas was associated with a specific direction of the universe—Akshobhya being the Buddha of the East—and each had his own separate sphere of responsibility. Eventually each acquired his own distinctive family of deities. The Five Transcendental Buddhas are at the heart of Esoteric Vajrayana Buddhism and are often depicted in the form of a mandala with Vairochana, the Supreme Buddha, in the center.

Here, Akshobhya sits in the cross-legged yogic, diamond or adamantine, posture of *vajraparyankasana*, the right leg over the left with the soles of both feet facing upward. His lowered right hand makes the earth-touching gesture, the *mudra* of calling the Earth Goddess to testify to his right to Buddhahood; his raised left hand holds a flap from his robe and perhaps a small object.

Bronze sculptures of the Swat Valley are part of the rich tradition of post-Gupta metalworking centers in the north, which includes Kashmir and parts of Himachal Pradesh. The styles of the Swat Valley and Kashmir are closely related, and it is sometimes difficult to tell them apart. In this example, the color of the metal, the oblong shape of the head, the austere expression, and the corners of the cloth throne-covering drawn down through a jeweled ring are stylistic elements associated with the Swat sculptural repertory. As is common with metal sculptures from both Kashmir and Swat, the eyes of the Buddha have silver overlay, and the lips an overlay of copper.

ML

Bibliography: Douglas Barrett, "Bronzes from Northwest India and Western Pakistan," *Lalit Kala* 11 (April 1962), fig. 13; Ulrich von Schroeder, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, Hong Kong, 1981, p. 94, pl. 11C.

Seated Jain Tirthankara

Indian (Gujarat), Solanki period, second half of the 11th century
Brass inlaid with silver and copper, H. 11 1/2 in. (29.2 cm)

Parikara (back plate)

Indian (Gujarat), dated 1449

Brass inlaid with silver and copper, H. 13 in. (33 cm)

Purchase, Anonymous Gift, 1992 (1992.124.1,2)

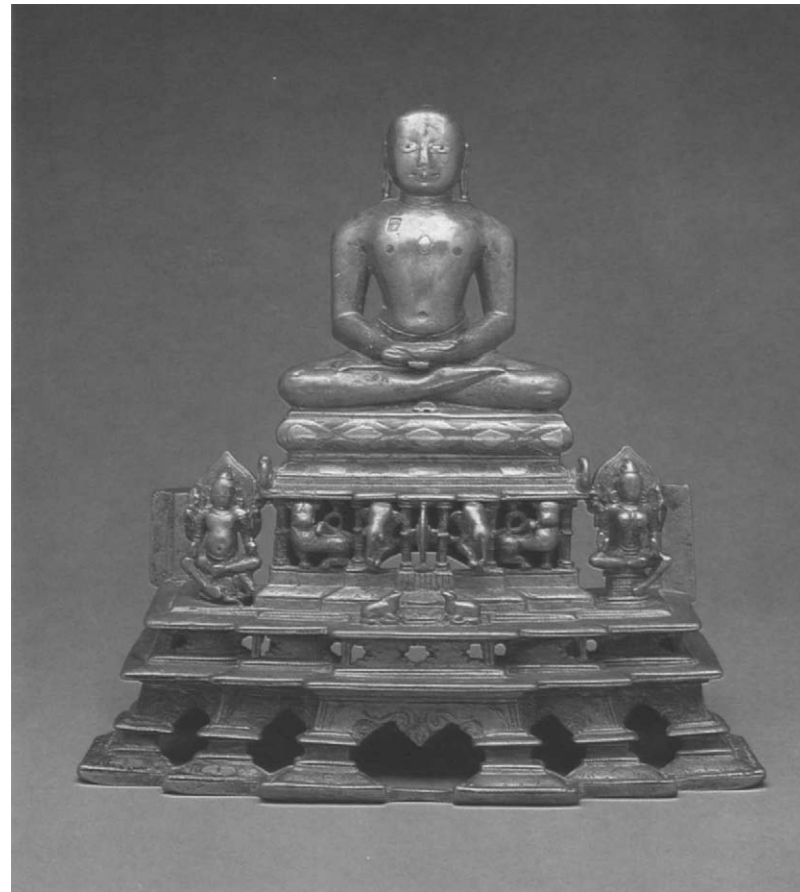
The sculptural traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism are well represented in the Museum's Indian collections, but those of the third great early religion, Jainism, are not. The Jain sculpture illustrated here is the first one in metal to enter the collection.

This figure, seated in a cross-legged yogic posture with his hands set in front of him in the gesture of meditation, is one of the twenty-four Tirthankaras ("Finders of the Ford") or Jinas ("Victorious Ones") of the Jain religion. There is very little physical difference between representations of seated Buddhas and Tirthankaras in Indian art; both are considered enlightened beings and display the appropriate physical signs. This Tirthankara has no accompanying attributes by which he can be identified.

The Tirthankara is seated on a decorated cushion set on an elaborate throne. At the base of the throne are two lions, each placed between columns; between them a pair of elephants flank a wheel displayed in profile. On top of the stepped *pitha* (pedestal), in the center beneath the wheel, is a pair of deer. To the Tirthankara's right, on the pedestal, a four-armed male tutelary deity, a *yaksha*, is seated on a recumbent elephant; to his left, a four-armed female tutelary deity, a *yakshi*, sits on a decorated stool. The lavish use of inlays of silver and copper to enrich the surface is commonly found on western Indian metal sculptures from Gujarat and Rajasthan. Here, the centuries of ritual rubbing during worship have erased the incised decorations on the cushion and throne inlays and worn down the sculpture's surface.

The elaborate inscribed *parikara*, dated 1449, was attached to this Tirthankara, causing it to be incorrectly considered a fifteenth-century sculpture. But it is clear that the figural style of the sculpture and that of the *parikara*, though fitting together very well, are not contemporaneous. Perhaps the *parikara* was made as a replacement for the lost original.

M L





Standing Buddha Flanked by Monks

Burmese, Pagan style, ca. first half of the 13th century
Wood with lacquer, H. 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (108 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1987 (1987.199)

The great Burmese temple city of Pagan, along the eastern side of the Irrawaddy River, measures more than thirty square miles and preserves the remains of more than two thousand monasteries and pagodas. How many buildings actually existed at the site from the beginning of the Pagan period in 1057 until the fall of the ancient capital in 1287 to Kublai Khan's invading Mongols will never be known. Under the aegis of Theravada Buddhism and the royal court, hundreds of thousands of images of the Buddha in all media were created for Pagan. Of this enormous corpus of Buddhist art, many stone sculptures remain in situ. Bronze and even perishable wood sculptures of the period have survived, but, of the latter, only a relatively small number have come down to us.

Among the rarest of the wood sculptures are the triads depicting a standing Buddha flanked by his two chief disciples, Sariputra and Maudgalyayana. Aside from the one illustrated here, I know of only two other examples. Shakyamuni stands on a double-lotus pedestal, and his disciples stand on long-stalked lotuses, which—had the lower section of the sculpture survived—might have emanated from the mouth of a *kala* monster as they do on the other two extant triads. The Buddha's lowered right hand makes the charitable boon-bestowing gesture, and, in his raised left hand placed against his chest, he holds a portion of his monastic robe. The triad stands in front of an unusually shaped background combining architectural and floral elements. Originally, this background may have been painted; now only traces of red lacquer survive. The surprisingly high halo must certainly have been painted, perhaps with decorative floral or stylized flame motifs. Flying celestials and other demi-gods may have been integrated into the halo's painted decor.

The proportions of the Buddha's body, the shape of the head, and the physiognomy are similar to those of some Pagan stone Buddhas of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

M L

Standing Crowned and Jeweled Buddha

Burmese, Pagan style, ca. 13th–early 14th century
Wood with lacquer and gilding, H. 67³/₄ in. (172.1 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1986 (1986.207)

With few exceptions, standing wood images of this specific late Pagan type all have the same compositional and iconographic features. Some variation exists in the quality of carving and in the proportions, and some of the faces are closer to Pagan stone Buddhas of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than others. Whether these wooden sculptures are all of approximately the same date or span an appreciable period of time—some perhaps being post-Pagan—is not clear.

Carved from a single tree trunk, the figure of Buddha stands on a double-lotus pedestal. He assumes the same stance as the standing Buddha illustrated above (1987.199), and his hands are also arranged in the same positions. The symmetrically disposed robe, covering both shoulders and falling to above the ankles, is a thin garment adhering tightly to the body and having no drapery folds. The figure wears a broad flame-edged torque, ear pendants, and an elaborate high-pointed leaf-and-bud crown. His hair is arranged in ascending coils terminating in a lotus bud. Two pairs of ribbons project from behind the Buddha's head: the lower pair fall to the shoulders, the upper pair ascend above the head. An openwork foliate design, common to all of these large Pagan wooden sculptures, extends beyond the ribbons to provide a curious decorative surround for the head. These images may originally have been set against walls or in niches that provided the missing halos. As with all sculptures of this type, the Buddha was originally lacquered and gilded.

The doyen of Burmese studies, G. H. Luce, was unsure of the identity of these large images: “. . . are these wooden statues ordinary Bodhisattvas, or crowned Mahāyānist Buddhas? Or are they portrait-statues of dead Pagan royalty, idealized as Bodhisattva-kings . . . ?” (*Old Burma—Early Pagan*, New York, 1970, vol. 2, p. 187.) The questions remain unanswered.

ML





Seated Vairochana, the Supreme Transcendental Buddha of the Center

Nepalese, Thakuri dynasty, 10th century
Copper with gilding and Tibetan cold-gold and blue pigment,
H. 7½ in. (19.1 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1991 (1991.133)

Vairochana is the presiding Buddha within the group of the Five Transcendental or Cosmic Buddhas (see the entry on Seated Transcendental Buddha Akshobhya, 1985.77). He is always at the center of the group. Here he sits in a cross-legged yogic position on a double-lotus pedestal. The pedestal's expansive lower tier of lotus petals emphasizes the sculpture's triangular composition. Vairochana wears a tiara and elaborate jewelries and is dressed as a bodhisattva rather than as a Buddha, a common iconographic variant for representing Transcendental Buddhas. In somewhat unusual fashion, one long section of the sash worn diagonally across his chest falls behind his left shoulder to the top of the lotus pedestal and then over it. The Buddha's hands make the appropriate wisdom-fist *mudra* (*bodhyagrimudra*), the right hand clenching the extended forefinger of the left. The blue pigment and cold-gold applied to the surface indicate that this sculpture was once worshiped in Tibet, as were many Nepalese and north Indian sculptures. Tenth-century representations of Vairochana in Nepalese art are rare.

M L

Devata on a Hermit-Sage

Nepalese, 13th century

Wood, H. 39 in. (99.1 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1988 (1988.148.2)

South Asian temples were often conceived as the cosmic mountain abode of a god, and their exteriors frequently inhabited by a profusion of auxiliary deities, including nature spirits. The lofty, multitiered wooden temples of the Katmandu Valley are of this type. They are supported by cantilevered roof struts, which are typically carved with figures of beautiful celestial maidens standing on the backs of male dwarf figures. These figure types hark back to *yakshis* and *yakshas*, ancient Indian incarnations of abundance. The female figures (*yakshis*) were often associated with trees, and their touch was believed to bring the trees into flower.

This temple strut is carved with a *devata* (goddess) standing on the arm of a hermit-sage. The hermit-sage is sitting on a stylized rock from which grows a flowering tree. The *devata* stands in an unusual pose, with her left foot held at mid-hip level with the aid of a strap held by her right hand. The use of a strap seems to indicate that she is practicing a yogic posture.

This is a particularly fine example of early Nepalese wood carving. The volumes and poses of the figures are beautifully realized and the surface decorations skillfully rendered. The artist's juxtaposition of the angular forms of the lower third of the sculpture with the more curvilinear and sensuous forms of the upper parts of the sculpture is particularly pleasing and inventive. The Museum has a superb collection of early gilt-copper Nepalese deities. This wood carving, with its anecdotal scene set within an abbreviated landscape, illustrates another important aspect of the Nepalese tradition.

S M K





Portrait of a Lama

Tibetan, ca. 1100

Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on cloth,
18¹/₈ × 14¹/₈ in. (46 × 35.9 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1991 (1991.152)

This portrait of a lama is one of the earliest Tibetan *thankas* (paintings on cloth) known. It must have been painted before 1103, as it is inscribed on the reverse side with a consecration by Tshul Trimbar (1038–1103). In his inscription, Tshul Trimbar states that the painting hung on the east wall of his room. The *thanka* depicts a single monk seated in a cross-legged yogic posture, his head turned to the right, and holding a rosary in his upraised hands. The monk portrayed is possibly Dromton (1004–1064), the teacher of Tshul Trimbar and one of the seminal figures in the early history of Tibetan Buddhism. Seated on an elaborate Pala-style throne, he wears a gold brocaded, saffron-colored outer robe and vest and a red patchwork inner

robe. His skin is rendered in gold, further signifying his exalted status. The upper corners of the painting are each filled by a red aureole containing a seated bodhisattva, with hands raised before his chest.

The style of the painting, notably the “ironwire” line used to delineate the forms (most visible in the main figure) and the use of large planes of unmodulated color, derives from that of the Palas of northeast India. This painting provides important art-historical evidence that by 1100 a purely Tibetan version of the Pala style had coalesced. Its features included the two-tiered throneback, the lotus-petal design around the outer edge of the painting, the foliate scrolling over the nimbus and throne, the configuration of the guardian animals beneath the throne, the brocaded robe of the main figure, as well as the very idea of portraiture. All of these elements became stock features of Tibetan paintings of eminent monks and continued for some two hundred years largely unchanged.

SMK

Related reference: Steven Miles Kossak, “Lineage Painting and Nascent Monasticism in Medieval Tibet,” *Archives of Asian Art* 1003 (1990), pp. 49–57.

**Portrait of a Great Teacher Surrounded by Lamas and
Mahasiddhas**

Tibetan, ca. 1300

Opaque watercolor and gold on cloth, 27 × 21 1/2 in. (68.6 × 54.6 cm)
Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1987 (1987.144)

The identity of the central figure of this *thangka* is problematic. An embroidered cloth, once attached to the painting and now missing, bore the Sanskrit inscription *jnana tapa* (“heat of knowledge”). Although epithets were often given to eminent Tibetans, no such name is known from the detailed early historical record.

The figure is portrayed as an adept of Tantric (Esoteric) Buddhism. This is indicated by the magic horn that rests on the fingertips of his raised right hand and the object (perhaps a casket) surmounted by a sculpture of a snow lion that he holds in his left palm and by his dress, a loincloth and elaborate bone jewelry. These attributes are not those associated with any of the eighty-four *mahasiddhas* (great Tantric teachers). A more likely identification is Atisha, the Indian monk who initiated the great reformation of Tibetan Buddhism in the eleventh century, who is shown in another early portrait wearing a similar Indian-style helmet. Most of the other personages depicted in the *thangka* may be identified by the Tibetan inscriptions beneath them. The majority of the lamas on the upper portion of the border are abbots of the Taglung Monastery of the Kagyupa sect. The figures on the lower part of the border are eight of the eighty-four *mahasiddhas*. At the top center of the painting presides a buddha with his consort. The whole ensemble probably illustrates the transmission of a particular Tantric doctrine or group of doctrines from their source, a buddha, through the *mahasiddhas* to the central figure and thus to this branch of the Kagyupa order.

On the basis of the inscriptions and its style, this painting is datable to about 1300. Individual elements such as the frame of mountains, the pattern of the border, the throne style, and the pillow type are late manifestations of the Tibetan adaptation of the late Pala style of northeast India (11th–12th century). The more florid ornamentation and the anecdotal pictorialism show signs of Nepalese influence. The beauty and iconography make this painting unique and an important addition to the small corpus of extant early Tibetan *thankas*.

SMK

Bibliography: Steven Miles Kossak, “Lineage Painting and Nascent Monasticism in Medieval Tibet,” *Archives of Asian Art* 1003 (1990), pp. 49–57; fig. 2.



Detail

Seated Buddha

Sri Lankan, Anuradhapura period, ca. 9th century

Bronze, H. 4 1/4 in. (10.8 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts and Lita Annenberg Hazen Charitable Trust Gift, 1986 (1986.149)



The conservative nature of the Buddhist art of the island-nation of Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) is reflected in the slow and gradual change in style from one century to the next, which often makes it difficult to date a small isolated Buddha image with great confidence. Nevertheless, this bronze seated Buddha, purported to have been found in the area of Medirigiriya near Polonnaruwa, seems to belong to the late Anuradhapura period, and it probably should be assigned a ninth-century date.

The Buddha sits in the half-lotus posture, his right leg over his left. His hands are positioned in his lap in the attitude of meditation. The monastic robe, the drapery folds of which are indicated by precise parallel ridges, is arranged so as to leave the right shoulder bare. The robe is pulled to the left shoulder, falling over and behind the Buddha so that the vertical hem descends down the middle of the back to the bottom of the figure. This method of rendering the garment, originally introduced through south Indian images of the Amaravati school in Andhra Pradesh, is standard for Sri Lankan Buddhas. The Buddha's hair is arranged in tight, small curls topped by a low, flame-shaped finial. The *trivali* (three auspicious rings) appear on his neck, and auspicious markings are on his exposed palm and sole.

Sinhalese sculpture outside Sri Lanka is quite rare. The West lacks great collections equivalent to those the French formed of Cambodian art, the Dutch of Indonesian art, and the British of Indian art.

M L

Head of a Male Deity

Thai (Phetchabun Province, Si Thep), 7th century

Stone, H. 8⁷/₈ in. (22.5 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1993 (1993.201)

To judge from the unusually fine sculptures recovered from the site and some historically significant Sanskrit inscriptions found there, the ancient city of Si Thep in central Thailand must have been a center of considerable importance. This city was situated along active trade routes and, despite clear evidence of a distinct and fully developed local style, from the fifth through the eighth century was responsive to various stylistic impulses from different parts of India, including northern India under the Guptas and southeast India under the Pallavas. During this same period, the kingdom of Funan and later that of Chenla, in what is today Cambodia and Vietnam, also seem to have participated in the formulation of elements of Si Thep style, though in these cases there appear to have been reciprocal stylistic exchanges with Si Thep. Since the contemporaneous pre-Angkorian styles of Cambodia and Vietnam are so much better known, this head from Thailand, with its distinct physiognomy, has until now been mistakenly included in the corpus of early Cambodian sculpture.

This compelling head of a male deity, carved in the round, wears an octagonal miter, which provides an upward visual thrust to the long face. The very refined carving of the face with its sensitive features, delicate nostrils, full sensual lips, high arching brows, and downcast eyes contributes to the deity's pensive and somewhat poignant expression. It is a face radiating dignity and restrained power. Images from Si Thep of both Surya, the sun god, and Vishnu (and perhaps others) wear octagonal miters, so it is not possible to identify with confidence the deity depicted here.

M L



Standing Bodhisattva

Thai, late 7th–early 8th century

Bronze with high tin content, H. 9 1/4 in. (23.5 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1989 (1989.151)



The seventh and eighth centuries in Southeast Asia were a time of extraordinary artistic creativity. While still indebted to earlier Indian influences, both Thailand and Cambodia were establishing local artistic expressions, the shared stylistic elements of which sometimes make it difficult to identify provenance. This fine sculpture, while displaying certain generic features of the Cambodian pre-Angkorian style of Prasat Andet, such as the manner of arranging the *sampot* and the modeling and proportions of the body, is most closely related to some sculptures found in southern and eastern Thailand. It is purported to have been found in Surin Province in eastern Thailand just north of Cambodia.

This slim and elegant male deity stands in a subtle hipshot pose with the weight of the body resting on the rigid left leg and the right leg slightly bent. His *sampot* is wrapped around his hips, and a braided belt with a large ornamental clasp in the center helps to secure the garment. The unusual conical cap decorated with round bosses appears on a few other sculptures from Thailand and Indonesia approximately contemporaneous with this sculpture and may ultimately be traceable to a foreign prototype of royal headgear such as that worn by the Kushanas.

Although neither the position of the hands nor the costume helps to identify the deity, he is most likely a bodhisattva, perhaps from a triad that would have included a central Buddha.

ML

Durga Victorious over the Demon Buffalo (*Durga Mahishasuramardini*)

Indonesian (Java), Central Javanese period, 9th century

Andesite, H. 60 in. (152.4 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Bruckmann, Mr. and Mrs. Perry J. Lewis, and Anonymous Gifts, 1988 (1988.160)

Representations of the triumph of good over evil are not uncommon in Hindu art, and one of the most persistent and popular is the great goddess Durga killing the Lord of the Demons who had taken the form of a buffalo (Mahishasura). This mythological event is celebrated in Indian art throughout the subcontinent, and the theme was transmitted to Southeast Asia where it also attained importance in Indonesian art and in the early sculpture of Thailand and Cambodia.

After the gods were defeated by the Lord of the Demons, Durga was created out of the gods' collective energies in order to defend the universe. Having been given the weapons of each of the gods and possessing all their accumulated powers, she first defeated the demon's armies and then Mahishasura himself. The elaborate story recounting these events is primarily preserved in the Indian text *Markandeya Purana*.

Based on the number of extant sculptures of Durga from Java, cults devoted to the goddess seem to have been popular there from about the eighth through the fourteenth century. In Indian art Durga is shown fighting the Buffalo Demon. Javanese sculptures usually depict the multiarmed Durga, as here, standing victorious on the back of the recumbent demon and lifting his tail. A war discus (*chakra*) projects from the buffalo's severed neck; emerging from the fatal wound, the contrite demon—now in anthropomorphic form—clasps his hands together in adoration of Durga.

This unusually large sculpture, even with the loss of the heads of Durga and the demon and the partial restoration of the goddess's breasts, is one of the most imposing examples known. The goddess's ample and powerful body is well modeled, and the drapery folds, jewelries, and sashes are carved with meticulous precision.

ML





Lintel and Antefix

Indonesian (Java), Central Javanese period, 9th century

Volcanic stone, lintel, 12 x 27 in. (30.5 x 68.6 cm);

antefix, 10¹/₄ x 19³/₄ in. (26 x 50.2 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1990 (1990.122.1,2)

These two temple blocks are purported to be from the same monument. They may have been part of an overwindow, with one or more courses of stonework, now missing, separating them. The antefix is in the form of a *kala* head, a fantastic leonine head possessing only an upper jaw. It is typically shown, as here, spewing forth vegetation. *Kala* heads are usually placed directly over either doors or windows in temples, where they function as protective deities guarding access. For the devotee, who must pass beneath them to enter a sanctuary, *kala* heads also constitute the threshold between profane and sacred space, death and spiritual rebirth.

The lintel is unusual because it has at its center the head of a bodhisattva (a deity who has renounced nirvana in order to save mankind). His two raised hands clutch curling vines. Because of its relatively short length, it is likely that the lintel spanned a window rather than a door of a Buddhist temple. The triangular-shaped top of the Museum's antefix suggests that it was the crowning element of an overwindow. It is possible that the vegetation being grasped by the upraised hands of the bodhisattva in the lintel is the continuation of that emerging from the *kala* head above.

SMK

Bangle with a Male Head

Indonesian (Java), Central Javanese period, first quarter of the 10th century

Gold, H. 2 1/8 in. (5.4 cm)

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1992 (1992.199)

This exquisite armband with a male head is a superb example of the great tradition of Javanese goldwork, the delicacy and chiseled clarity of which can be closely compared to the contemporaneous tradition of small-bronze casting. It fills an important gap in the Museum's collection of Javanese art, which, due in large part to the 1987 gift of Indonesian bronzes from Samuel Eilenberg, ranks as the finest outside Indonesia.

The central face of the armband is set against two vertically oriented bracts of abstracted foliation. The bracelet is formed of a row of overlapping lotus petals, which splay out into fantastic leaf forms on either side of the large ears. The armband was cast, and then, as is typical of Javanese gold of the early period, its surface was transformed by engraving, chasing, and carving. The finely wrought appearance of the final product is due to this finishing work, which has been executed with remarkable freedom. The details of the face—the arching eyebrows, the alert eyes, and the full lips—and the vegetation have all been beautifully articulated using a chisel and carving tools. Although the dating of early Javanese gold is speculative, many elements of this piece appear to be closely related to Central Javanese sculptures of the eighth through the early tenth century, and a late date within that sequence seems plausible.

SMK





Dish

Vietnamese, 15th century

Porcelain, underglaze blue decoration of peonies,

Diam. 17½ in. (44.5 cm)

Signed: Nột

Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gifts, 1989 (1989.157)

The use of cobalt blue for underglaze decoration on porcelain began in Vietnam during the fourteenth century, about the same time as its beginnings in China. Blue-and-white porcelain, whether Chinese or Vietnamese, probably originated as trading commodities, intended for the overseas market in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The forms and decoration of early Vietnamese blue-and-white closely followed contemporary Chinese models, from which evolved an international style in trade ceramics. However, there were distinctive traits in the decoration of Vietnamese ceramics. During the fifteenth century

one of the distinguishing characteristics of Vietnamese blue-and-white was the use of pencil lines that served both as shading and as a means of depicting the leaf veins and petals of plant motifs. This technique is well demonstrated in this dish. Vietnamese porcelain of this period can also be identified by the finely levigated clay and the slightly uneven flow of the warm white glaze.

Given that most blue-and-white porcelain was exported, it is not surprising that some of the best surviving Vietnamese pieces are found outside the country. One of the finest and best-known examples is in the Topkapi Sarayi Museum, Istanbul: it is a vase decorated with peony scrolls and is dated by the underglaze blue inscription to 1450, the eighth year of Ta Ho (Roxanna Brown, *The Ceramics of Southeast Asia, their Dating and Identification* [2nd ed.], Singapore, 1988, p. 26, color pl. X). The vase also bears the name of the artist who painted it. The Museum's dish is decorated in the same style with identical peony flowers and scrolls, and it also bears the name of the artist, Nột, but not a date. It is likely that the Metropolitan's dish is contemporary with, or slightly later than, the Istanbul vase.

JCYW

