

China, Korea, & Japan:
300 BCE - 1980 CE

China and Korea

- **Time period**
 - From prehistoric times to the present

- **Enduring Understanding:** South, East, and Southeast Asia have ancient artistic traditions
 - Ancient ceramics survive from China and India
 - Religious beliefs developed locally, but spread throughout Asia
 - Rich artistic traditions were exchanged throughout the great civilizations of Asia

- **Enduring Understanding:** Great religions were established in Asia
 - Ancient belief systems, called Indic, spread throughout the region, eventually developing into religions like Hinduism and Buddhism
 - Buddhism spread through East Asia. Chinese religions were influenced by Buddhism and stressed living in harmony with nature and one another. Daoism and Confucianism emphasized living ethically within society's boundaries
 - Buddhism is a visual art form, noted for its religious images and narratives
 - Islam, Christianity, and ancient European cultures play a role in Asian art
 - Architecture is best expressed by religious temples, shrines, and rock-cut caves

- **Enduring Understanding:** Asian art is a reflection of Asian aesthetics
 - Chinese art is characterized by paintings on scrolls with limited color
 - There is a wide range of materials used in this region
 - Uniquely Asian art forms include Buddhist images and buildings
 - Calligraphy is a central art form in Chinese art
- **Enduring Understanding:** Asian art spreads throughout the world through trade
 - The Silk Road was key to the spread of artistic styles
 - Asian art shows evidence of the interconnectivity of regional schools with the wider world
 - Asian art heavily influenced the art of Europe

Patronage and Artistic Life

- Calligraphy is central artistic expression in traditional China, standing as it does as a midpoint between poetry and painting
- Artists worked under the patronage of religion or the state, although, a counterculture was developed by a group called the literati who painted for themselves, forgoing public commissions and personal fames – these artists produced paintings of a highly individualized nature
- At first the Korean language was written with adapted Chinese characters called hanja
- A native alphabet was created in 1444

Chinese Philosophies

- Daoism was begun by Laozi, a philosopher who believed in escaping society's pressures, achieving serenity, and working toward a oneness with nature
- Confucianism was begun by Confucius, who wrote about behavior, relationships, and duty – built upon a system of mutual respect, the Confucian model presents an ideal man whose attributes include loyalty, morality, generosity, and humanity, along with the important idea of respect for the traditional values

Metaphysical, Daoist Aspect

- Nature was perceived as the visible manifestation of God's creativity, using the interaction of the yin (female) and yang (male) life forces.
- The main aim of Chinese art - initially centered on propitiation and sacrifice - soon turned to the expression of human understanding of these life forces, in a variety of artforms, including painting (notably that of landscapes, bamboo, birds, and flowers), pottery, relief sculpture and the like.
- The Chinese also believed that the energy and rhythm generated by an artist resonated closely with the ultimate source of that energy.
- They thought that art - especially calligraphy and painting - had the capacity to refresh the artist or to retard him spiritually, according to the harmony of his practice and the character of the individual himself.

Moral, Confucian Aspect

- Chinese art also had social and moralistic functions.
- The earliest mural paintings, for instance, portrayed benevolent emperors, wise ministers, loyal generals, as well as their evil opposites, as an example and a warning to observers.
- Portrait art had a similar moral function, which aimed to highlight not the facial or figurative features of the subject so much as his or her character and status in society.

Inspirational But Not Essentially Religious

- Court painters were frequently commissioned to depict auspicious and memorable events, but high religious painting is unknown in Chinese art.
- Even Buddhism, which stimulated the production of numerous masterpieces, was actually a foreign import.
- The main thing is that themes used in traditional Chinese art were almost always noble, or inspirational.
- Thus overly realistic subjects such as war, death, violence, martyrdom or even the nude, were avoided.
- Furthermore, Chinese artistic tradition does not separate form from content: it is not enough, for instance, for the form to be exquisite if the subject is unedifying.

Inner Essence Not Outer Appearance

- Unlike Western artists, Chinese painters were not interested in replicating nature, or creating a true-life depiction of (say) a landscape.
- Instead they focused on expressing the inner essence of the subject.
- Remember, rocks and streams were seen as "live" things, visible manifestations of the invisible forces of the cosmos.
- Therefore, it was the role of the artist to capture the spiritual rather than the material characteristics of the object concerned.

Symbolism in Chinese Visual Art

- Chinese art is full of symbolism, in that artists typically seek to depict some aspect of a totality of which they are intuitively aware.
- In addition, Chinese art is packed with specific symbols: bamboo represents a spirit which can be bent by circumstance but not broken; jade represents purity; a dragon often symbolizes the emperor; the crane, long life; a pair of ducks, fidelity in marriage.
- Plant symbols include: the orchid, another symbol of purity and loyalty; and the pine tree, which symbolizes endurance.
- Some art critics, however, prefer to describe Chinese art as essentially expressionist, rather than symbolic.

Chinese Architecture

- The design of the stupa, a Buddhist building, moved along the Silk Roads, transforming itself into the pagoda when it reached China
- Built for a sacred purpose, the pagoda characteristically has one design that is repeated vertically on each level, each smaller than the design below it
- Exterior outside walls of a courtyard style residence kept the outside world outside
- The Chinese used wood for their principal building material

- Tiled roofs seem to float over structures with eaves that hang away from the wall space and curve up to allow light and keep rain out
- Walls protect the interior from the weather, but do not support the building; instead, support comes from an interior fabric of wooden columns that are grooved together rather than nailed
- Corbeled brackets are used to transition the tops of the columns to the swinging eaves.
- Wooden architecture is painted both to preserve the wood and enhance artistic effect



#206

Forbidden City

Beijing, China

Ming Dynasty

15th century CE and later

Stone masonry, marble, brick, wood, and ceramic tile

Forbidden City, fifteenth century, Ming Dynasty

- Largest and most complete Chinese architectural ensemble in existence
- 9,000 rooms
- Walls 30 feet high to keep people out and those inside in
- Forbidden City so named because only those of the royal court could enter
- Each corner of the rectangular plan has a tower representing the four corners of the world

- Focus is the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the throne room and seat of power; wood structure made with elaborately painted beams; meant for grand ceremonies
- Yellow tile roofs and red painted wooden beams placed on marble foundations unify the structures in the Forbidden City into an artistic whole
- Hall of Supreme Harmony ceremonies: new year, the winter solstice, emperor's birthday
- Surrounding wall of the Forbidden City characteristic of a Chinese city: privacy within provides protection; containment of Chinese culture



#206

Forbidden City

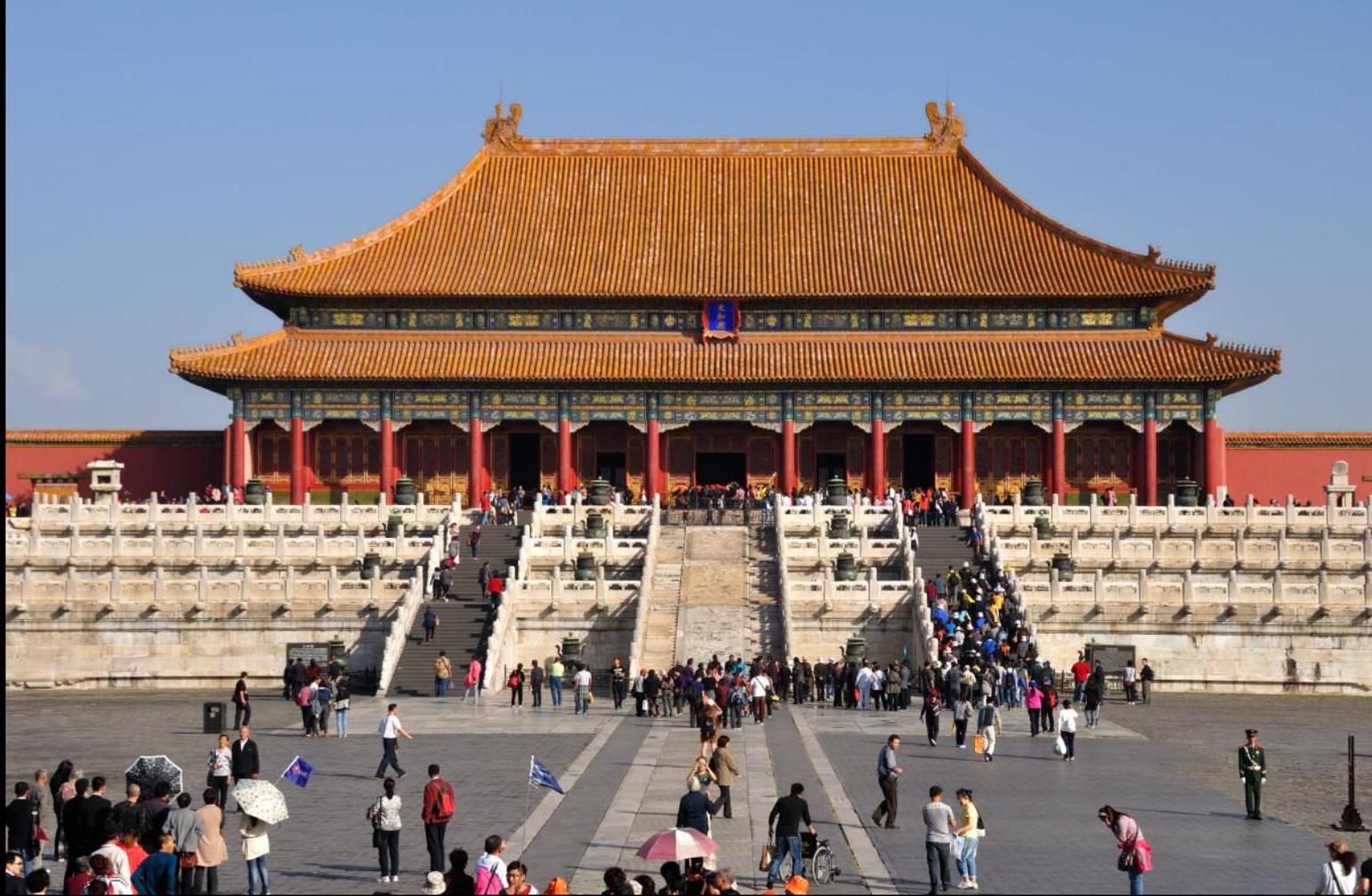
Front Gate

Beijing, China

Ming Dynasty

15th century CE and later

Stone masonry, marble, brick, wood, and
ceramic tile



#206

**Forbidden City
Hall of Supreme Harmony**

Beijing, China

Ming Dynasty

15th century CE and later

Stone masonry, marble, brick, wood, and
ceramic tile





#206

Forbidden City

The Palace of Tranquility and Longevity

Beijing, China

Ming Dynasty

15th century CE and later

Stone masonry, marble, brick, wood, and
ceramic tile

#206

Forbidden City

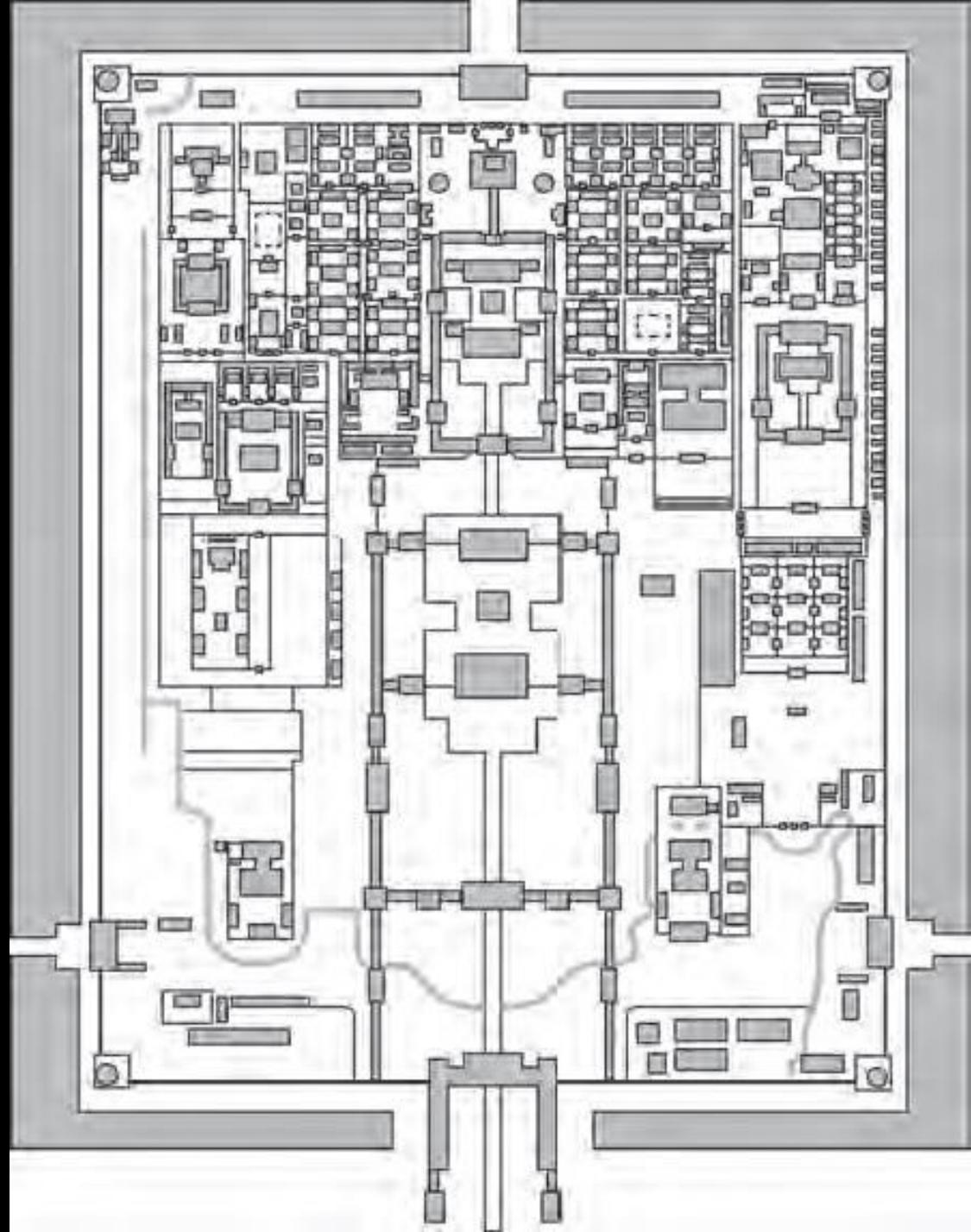
Forbidden City Plan

Beijing, China

Ming Dynasty

15th century CE and later

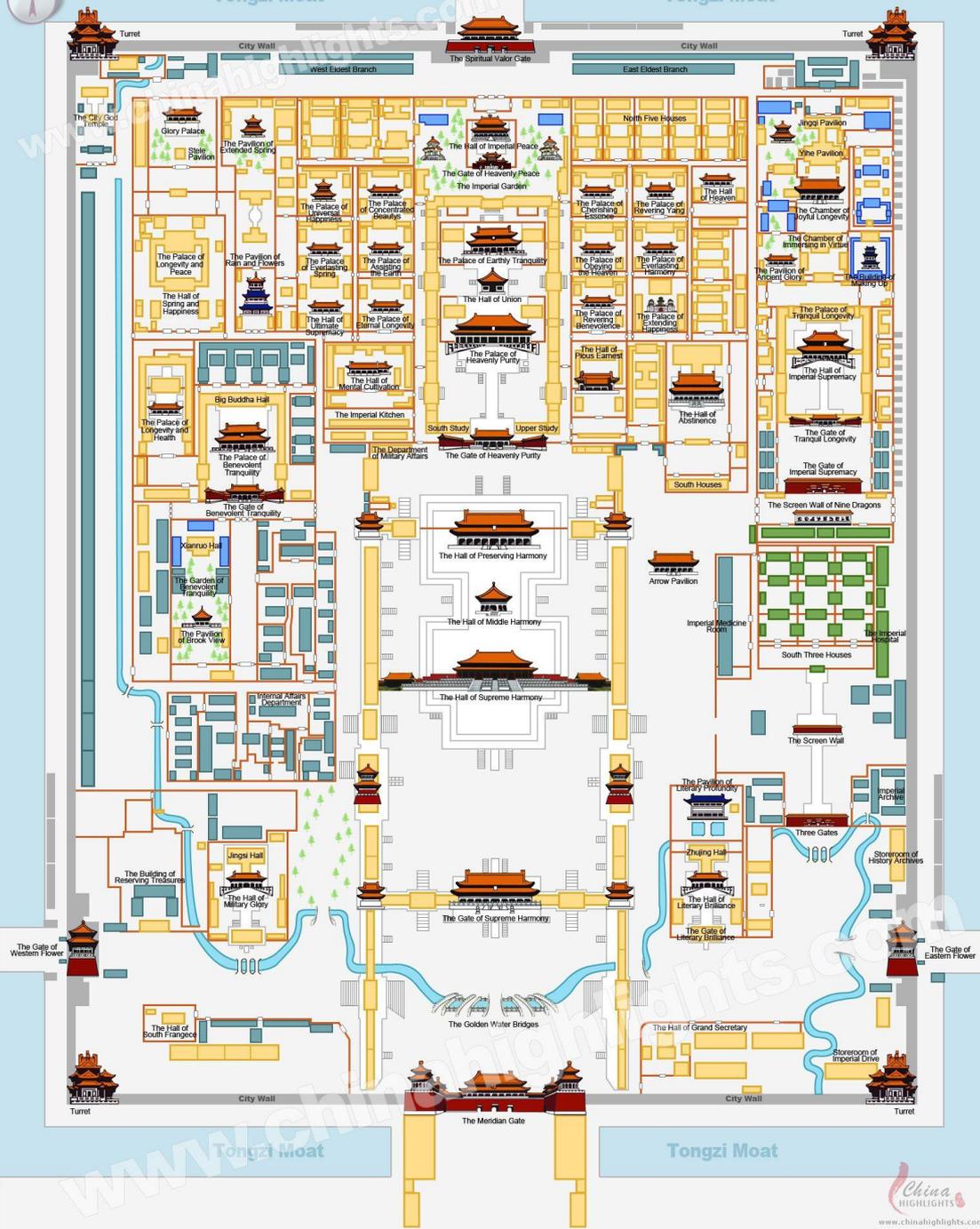
Stone masonry, marble, brick, wood,
and ceramic tile





Tongzi Moat

Tongzi Moat



Tongzi Moat

Tongzi Moat

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Centers of Power



Barry and Pugin,
Houses of Parliament

Nan
Madol

Versailles



Chinese and Korean Painting

- East Asian painting appears in many formats, including album leaves, fans, murals, and scrolls.
- Scrolls come in two formats:
 - The handscroll, which is horizontal and can be read on a desk or a table
 - The hanging scroll, which is supported by a pole or hung for a time on a wall and unraveled vertically – no scrolls were shown permanently; they were something to be admired, studied, and analyzed, not hung for decoration

- Landscape paintings are highly prized in Chinese art
 - They do not seek to represent a particular forest or mountain, but reflect an artistic construct yielding a philosophical idea
 - Typically, some parts are barren and empty, suggesting openness and space; others are crowded
 - The intertwining of crowded and empty spaces reflect the Daoist principles of yin and yang

- Porcelain is another specialty – subtle and refined vase shapes are combined with imaginative designs to create works of art that appear to be utilitarian, but are actually objects that stand alone
- To achieve maximum gloss and finish, sophisticated glazing techniques are applied to the surface

#194

Funeral banner of Lady Dai (Xin Zhui)

Han Dynasty China

c. 180 BCE

Painted silk



- Three elite tombs, discovered in 1972, at Mawangdui, Hunan Province (eastern China) rank amongst the greatest archeological discoveries in China during the 20th century. They are the tombs of a high-ranking Han official civil servant, the Marquis of Dai, Lady Dai (his wife), and their son. The Marquis died in 186 B.C.E., and his wife and son both died by 163 B.C.E. The Marquis' tomb was not in good condition when it was discovered. However, the objects in the son's and wife's tombs were of extraordinary quality and very well preserved. From these objects, we can see that Lady Dai and her son were to spend the afterlife in sumptuous comfort.

- These banners may be “name banners” used to identify the dead during the mourning ceremonies, or they may have been burial shrouds intended to aid the soul in its passage to the afterlife. Lady Dai’s banner is important for two primary reasons. It is an early example of pictorial (representing naturalistic scenes not just abstract shapes) art in China. Secondly, the banner features the earliest known portrait in Chinese painting.



registers

heavenly realm

Lady Dai and
her attendants

body of Lady Dai
with mourners

underworld

- Lady Dai died 168 bce in Hunan province,; Han Dynasty
- Tomb found with over 100 objects in 1972
- T-shaped silk banner covering the inner coffin of the intact body
- Probably carried in a procession to the tomb then placed over the body to speed its journey to the afterlife
- Yin symbols at left; yang symbols at right; the center mixes the two philosophies
- Painted in three distinct regions



- Top: Heaven with crescent moon at left, and the legend of the ten suns at the right; in the center two seated officers guard the entrance to the heavenly world



- Middle: earth with Lady Dai in center on white platform about to make her journey to heaven with a walking stick that was found in her tomb; mourners and assistants appear by her side; dragons' bodies are symbolically circled through a bi (a round ceremonial disk found in ancient Chinese tombs; characterized by having a circular hole in the center, which may have symbolized heaven) in a yin and yang exchange



- Bottom: underworld; symbolic low creatures frame the underworld scene; fish, turtles, dragon tails; tomb guardians protect the body



The afterlife in Han dynasty China

- Lady Dai's banner gives us some insight into cosmological beliefs and funeral practices of Han dynasty China. Above and below the scenes of Lady Dai and the mourning hall, we see images of heaven and the underworld. Toward the top, near the cross of the "T," two men face each other and guard the gate to the heavenly realm. Directly above the two men, at the very top of the banner, we see a deity with a human head and a dragon body.

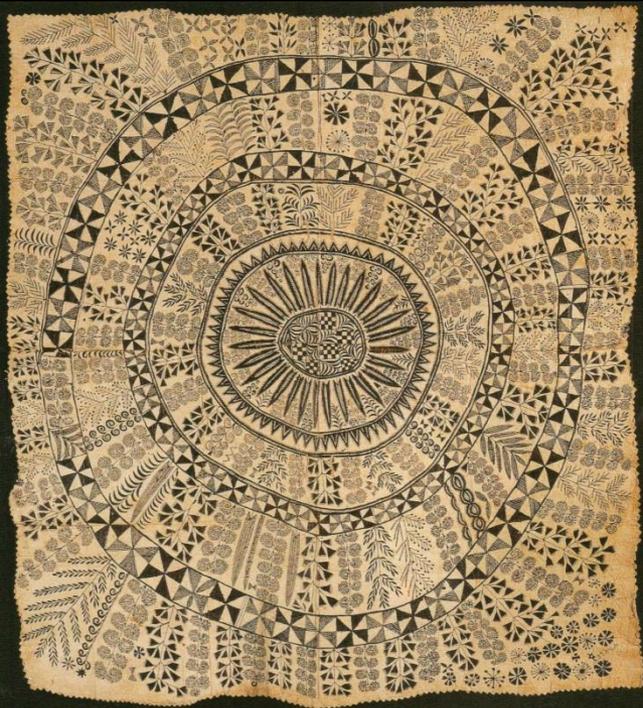


On the left, a toad standing on a crescent moon flanks the dragon/human deity. On the right, we see what may be a three-legged crow within a pink sun. The moon and the sun are emblematic of a supernatural realm above the human world. Dragons and other immortal beings populate the sky. In the lower register, beneath the mourning hall, we see the underworld populated by two giant black fish, a red snake, a pair of blue goats, and an unidentified earthly deity. The deity appears to hold up the floor of the mourning hall, while the two fish cross to form a circle beneath him. The beings in the underworld symbolize water and earth, and they indicate an underground domain below the human world.



Four compartments surrounded Lady Dai's central tomb, and they offer some sense of the life she was expected to lead in the afterlife. The top compartment represented a room where Lady Dai was supposed to sit while having her meal. In this compartment, researchers found cushions, an armrest and her walking stick. The compartment also contained a meal laid out for her to eat in the afterlife. Lady Dai was 50 years old when she died, but her lavish tomb—marked by her funeral banner—ensured that she would enjoy the comforts of her earthly life for eternity.

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Fabric Art



Hiapo



All-T'oqapu Tunic



Ringgold, *Dancing at the Louvre*

Neo-Confucianism

- The development of Monumental landscape painting coincided with that of Neo-Confucianism—a reinterpretation of Chinese moral philosophy.
- It was Buddhism that first introduced, from India, a system of metaphysics and a coherent worldview more advanced than anything known in China.
- With Buddhist thought, scholars in the 5th and 6th centuries engaged in philosophical discussions of truth and reality, being and non-being, substantiality and nonsubstantiality.
- Beginning in the late Tang and early Northern Song (960-1127), Neo-Confucian thinkers rebuilt Confucian ethics using Buddhist and Daoist metaphysics.

- Chinese philosophers found it useful to think in terms of complimentary opposites, interacting polarities— inner and outer, substance and function, knowledge and action.
- In their metaphysics they naturally employed the ancient yin and yang (Yin: feminine, dark, receptive, yielding, negative, and weak. Yang: masculine, bright, assertive, creative, positive, and strong.)
- The interaction of these complementary poles was viewed as integral to the processes that generate natural order.

- Central to understanding Neo-Confucian thought is the conceptual pair of li and qi.
- Li is usually translated as principles.
- It can be understood as principles that underlie all phenomena.
- Li constitutes the underlying pattern of reality.
- Nothing can exist if there is no li for it.
- This applies to human conduct and to the physical world.
- Qi can be characterized as the vital force and substance of which man and the universe are made.
- Qi can also be conceived of as energy, but energy which occupies space.
- In its most refined form it occurs as mysterious ether, but condensed it becomes solid metal or rock.

Fan Kuan

- Daoist mountain man, hermit, rustic, wine-lover – Fan Kuan has the reputation of having been truly unconventional.
- He explored and perfected naturalistic painting through his recordings of light, , shade, distance, and texture.
- We know very little about this great artist, yet he painted the most majestic landscape painting of the early Song period.
- Everything about *Travelers by Streams and Mountains*, which is possibly the only surviving work by Fan Kuan, is an orderly statement reflecting the artist's worldview.

Landscape as a subject

- Fan Kuan's masterpiece is an outstanding example of Chinese landscape painting.
- Long before Western artists considered landscape anything more than a setting for figures, Chinese painters had elevated landscape as a subject in its own right.
- Bounded by mountain ranges and bisected by two great rivers – the Yellow and the Yangzi – China's natural landscape has played an important role in the shaping of the Chinese mind and character.
- From very early times, the Chinese viewed mountains as sacred and imagined them as the abode of immortals.
- The term for landscape painting (*shanshui hua*) in Chinese is translated as “mountain water painting.”

After a period of upheaval

- During the tumultuous Five Dynasties period in the early 10th century (an era of political upheaval from 907–960 C.E., between the fall of the Tang Dynasty and the founding of the Song Dynasty, when five dynasties quickly succeeded one another in the north, and more than twelve independent states were established, mainly in the south), recluse scholars who fled to the mountains saw the tall pine tree as representative of the virtuous man.

[Google Art Image](#)

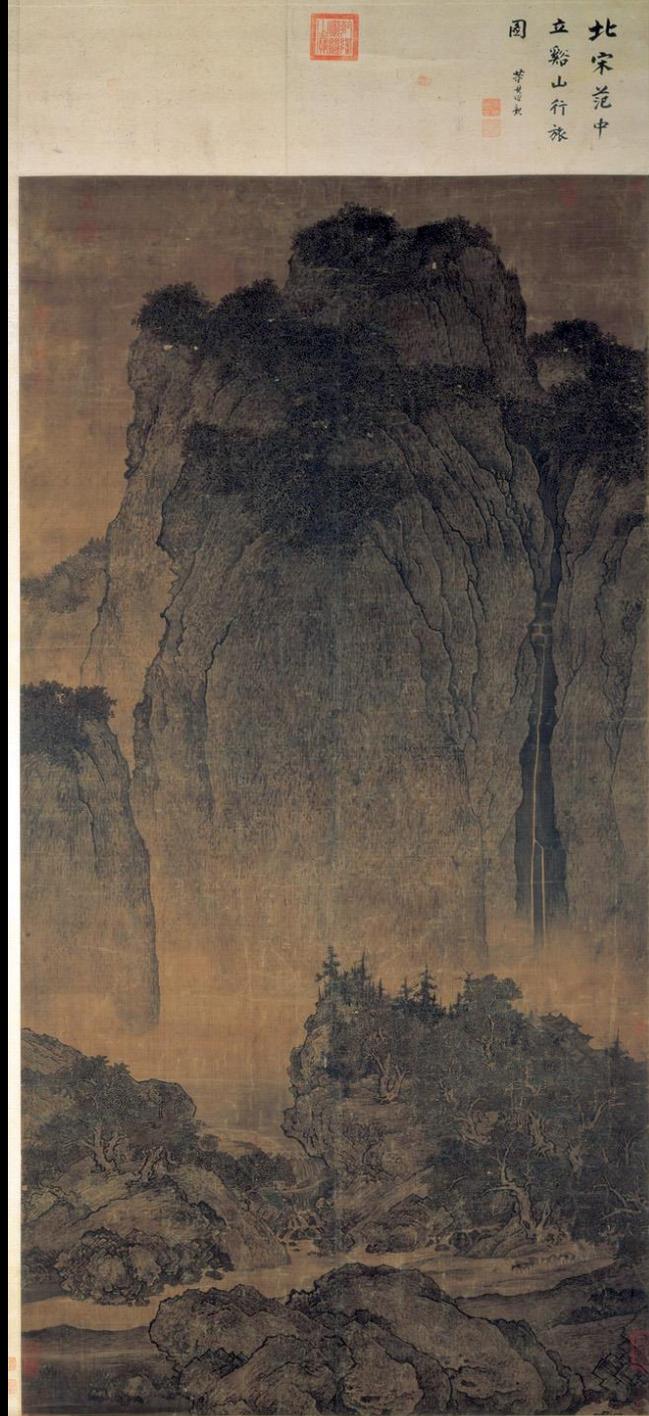
#201
Travelers among Mountains and Streams
Fan Kuan
c. 1000 CE
Ink on silk



- Artist isolated himself away from civilization to be with nature and study it, for his landscapes; Daoist philosophy
- Produced very complex landscapes
- Different brushstrokes describe different kinds of trees: coniferous, deciduous, etc
- Long waterfall on right balanced by mountain on left; waterfall accents the height of the mountain



- Not a pure landscape: donkeys laden with firewood are driven by two men; a small temple appears in the forest; man seen as small and insignificant in a vast natural world
- Mists created by ink washes; silhouettes the roofs of the temple
- Might be his only surviving work; signature hidden in the bushes on the lower right
- Hanging scroll





In the early Northern Song dynasty that followed, from the mid-10th to the mid-11th century, gnarled pine trees and other symbolic elements were transformed into a grand and imposing landscape style.

- Through his painting *Travelers by Streams and Mountains*, Fan Kuan expressed a cosmic vision of man's harmonious existence in a vast but orderly universe.
- The Neo-Confucian search for absolute truth in nature as well as self-cultivation reached its climax in the 11th century and is demonstrated in this work. Fan Kuan's landscape epitomizes the early Northern Song monumental style of landscape painting.
- Nearly seven feet in height, the hanging scroll composition presents universal creation in its totality, and does so with the most economic of means.

- Immense boulders occupy the foreground and are presented to the viewer at eye level.
- Just beyond them one sees crisp, detailed brushwork describing rocky outcroppings, covered with trees.
- Looking closely, one sees two men driving a group of donkeys loaded with firewood and a temple partially hidden in the forest.
- In the background a central peak rises from a mist-filled chasm and is flanked by two smaller peaks.
- This solid screen of gritty rock takes up nearly two-thirds of the picture.
- The sheer height of the central peak is accentuated by a waterfall plummeting from a crevice near the summit and disappearing into the narrow valley.



To model the mountains, Fan Kuan used incisive thickening-and-thinning contour strokes, texture dots and ink wash.

Strong, sharp brushstrokes depict the knotted trunks of the large trees.

Notice the detailed brushwork that delineates the foliage and the fir trees silhouetted along the upper edge of the ledge in the middle distance.



To convey the sheer size of the landscape depicted in *Travelers by Streams and Mountains*, Fan Kuan relied on suggestion rather than description.

The gaps between the three distances act as breaks between changing views.

Note the boulders in the foreground, the tree-covered rock outcropping in the middle, and the soaring peaks in the background.

The additive images do not physically connect; they are comprehended separately.

The viewer is invited to imagine himself roaming freely, yet one must mentally jump from one distance to the next.



The unsurpassed grandeur and monumentality of Fan Kuan's composition is expressed through the skillful use of scale.

Fan Kuan's landscape shows how the use of scale can dramatically heighten the sense of vastness and space.

Diminutive figures are made visually even smaller in comparison to the enormous trees and soaring peaks.

They are overwhelmed by their surroundings.

Fan Kuan's signature is hidden among the leaves of one of the trees in the lower right corner.

Not as the human eye sees

- The Neo-Confucian theory of observing things in the light of their own principles (li) clearly resonates in the immense splendor of Fan Kuan's masterpiece.
- Northern Song landscape painters did not paint as the human eye sees.
- By seeing things not through the human eye, but in the light of their own principles (li), Fan Kuan was able to organize and present different aspects of a landscape within a single composition—he does this with a constantly shifting viewpoint.
- In his masterful balance of li and qi, Fan Kuan created a microcosmic image of a moral and orderly universe.

- Fan Kuan looked to nature and carefully studied the world around him.
- He expressed his own response to nature.
- As Fan Kuan sought to describe the external truth of the universe visually, he discovered at the same time an internal psychological truth.
- The bold directness of Fan's painting style was thought to be a reflection of his open character and generous disposition.
- His grand image of the beauty and majesty of nature reflects Fan Kuan's humble awe and pride.









Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Figures Set in Landscape



Cole, *The Oxbow*



Breughel, *Hunters in the Snow*



Circle of the Gonzales Family,
Screen with Hunting Scenes



#205

Portrait of Sin Sukju (1417-1475)

Imperial Bureau of Painting

c. 15th century CE

Hanging scroll (ink and color on silk)

- Korean prime minister (1461-1464 and from 1471-1475) and soldier
- Portrait made when he was a second grade civil officer; insignia designed with clouds and a wild goose
- Korean portraits emphasize how the subject made a great contribution to the country and how the spirit of loyalty to king and country was valued by Confucian philosophy
- Repainted over the years, especially after 1475, when he died
- Great scholar
- Hanging scroll



- This painting shows Sin Sukju dressed in his official robes with a black silk hat on his head.
- In accordance with Korean portraiture conventions, court artists pictured subjects like Sin Sukju seated in a full-length view, often with their heads turned slightly and only one ear showing.
- Crisp, angular lines and subtle gradations of color characterize the folds of his gown.
- Here, the subject is seated in a folding chair with cabriole-style arms, where the upper part is convex and the bottom part is concave.
- Leather shoes adorn his feet, which rest on an intricately carved wooden footstool.
- In proper decorum, his hands are folded neatly and concealed within his sleeves.
- He wears a rank badge on his chest.

- Rank badges are insignia typically made of embroidered silk.
- They indicate the status of the official, which could be anyone from the emperor down to a local official.
- As in Ming-dynasty China (1368–1644), images of birds on rank badges precisely identified the rank of the wearer.
- Here, Sin Sukju's rank badge shows a pair of peacocks amongst flowering plants and clouds.
- It is an auspicious scene suiting a civic official, and especially luminous with the use of gold embroidery.
- Crafted in sets, rank badges were worn on both the front and back of the official overcoat.

His solemn visage exudes wisdom and dignity

Crows feet
around the eyes



Mouth
surrounded by
lines where it
meets his
mustache

Eyes are bright
and clear

Although portraiture conventions, such as the attire and posture of the sitter, were quite formulaic, the facial features were painted with the goal of transmitting a sense of unique, physical likeness.

This careful attention to the sitter's face, such as wrinkles and bone structure, served the Korean belief that the face could reveal important clues about the subject.



The meticulous brushwork on Sin Sukju's face is even more striking in comparison with the solid, undulating lines and bold blocks of color that define his attire.

Highly skilled artists at the court may have collaborated on portraits, such that one artist may have painted the robes according to the prescribed rank or title, while another may have painted the face in great detail.

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Painting Technique

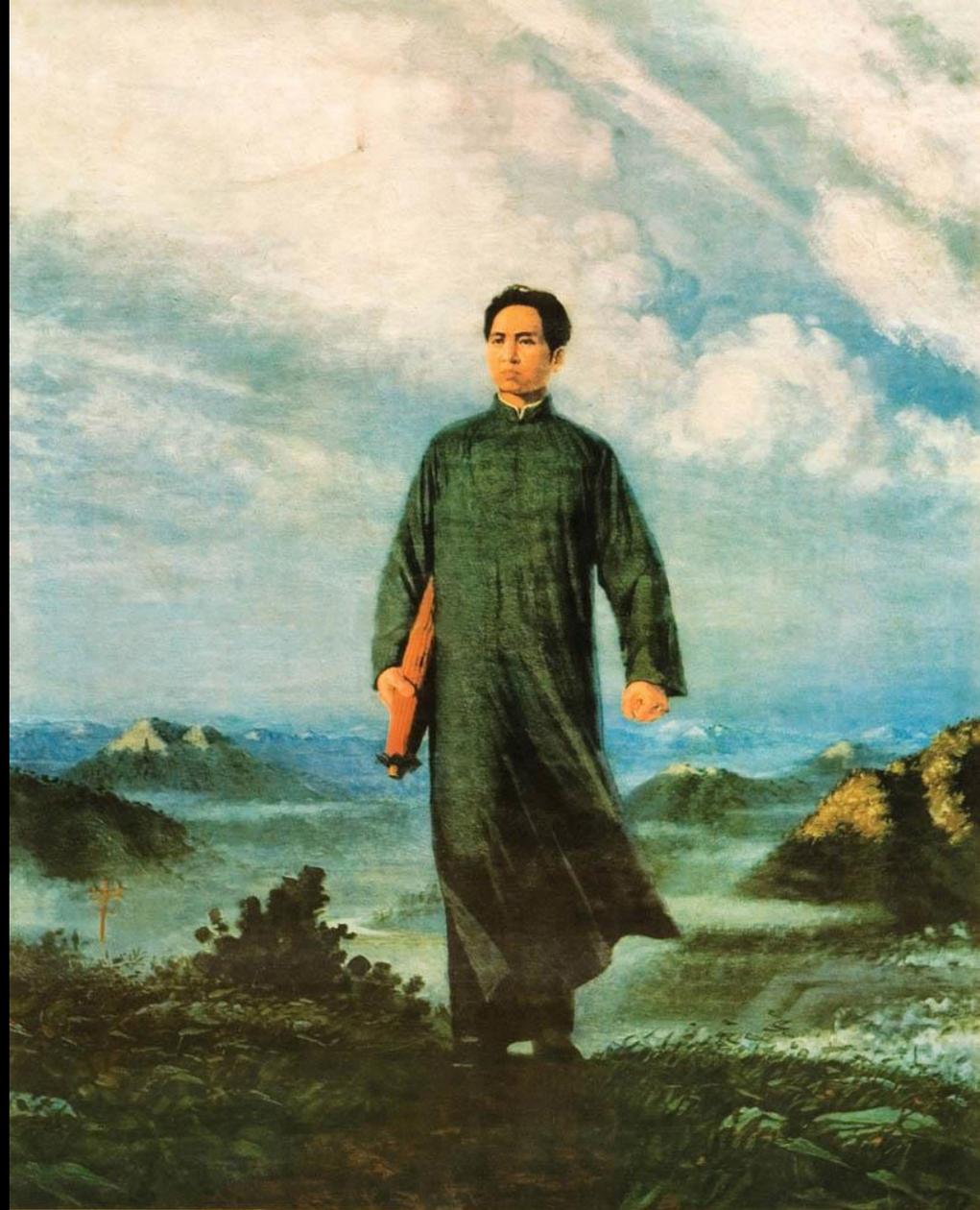
Oil: Campin, *Annunciation Triptych*



Ink and pencil: Smith, *Lying with the Wolf*



Fresco: Rivera, *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda Park*



毛主席去安源

一九二一年秋，毛泽东同志到安源，领导了安源的革命斗争。

#212

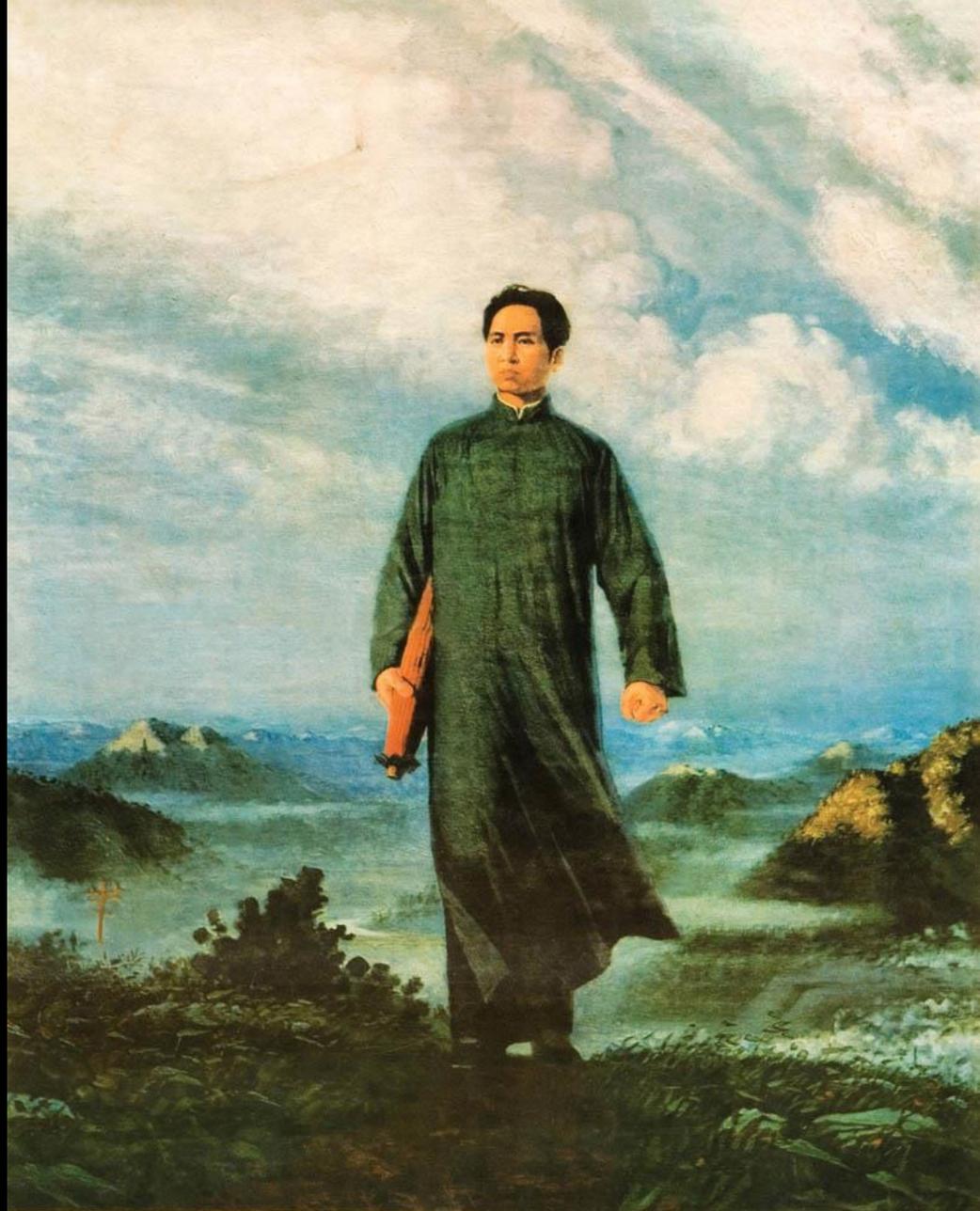
Chairman Mao en Route to Anyuan

Artist unknown; based on an oil painting by
Liu Chunhua

c. 1969 CE

Color lithograph

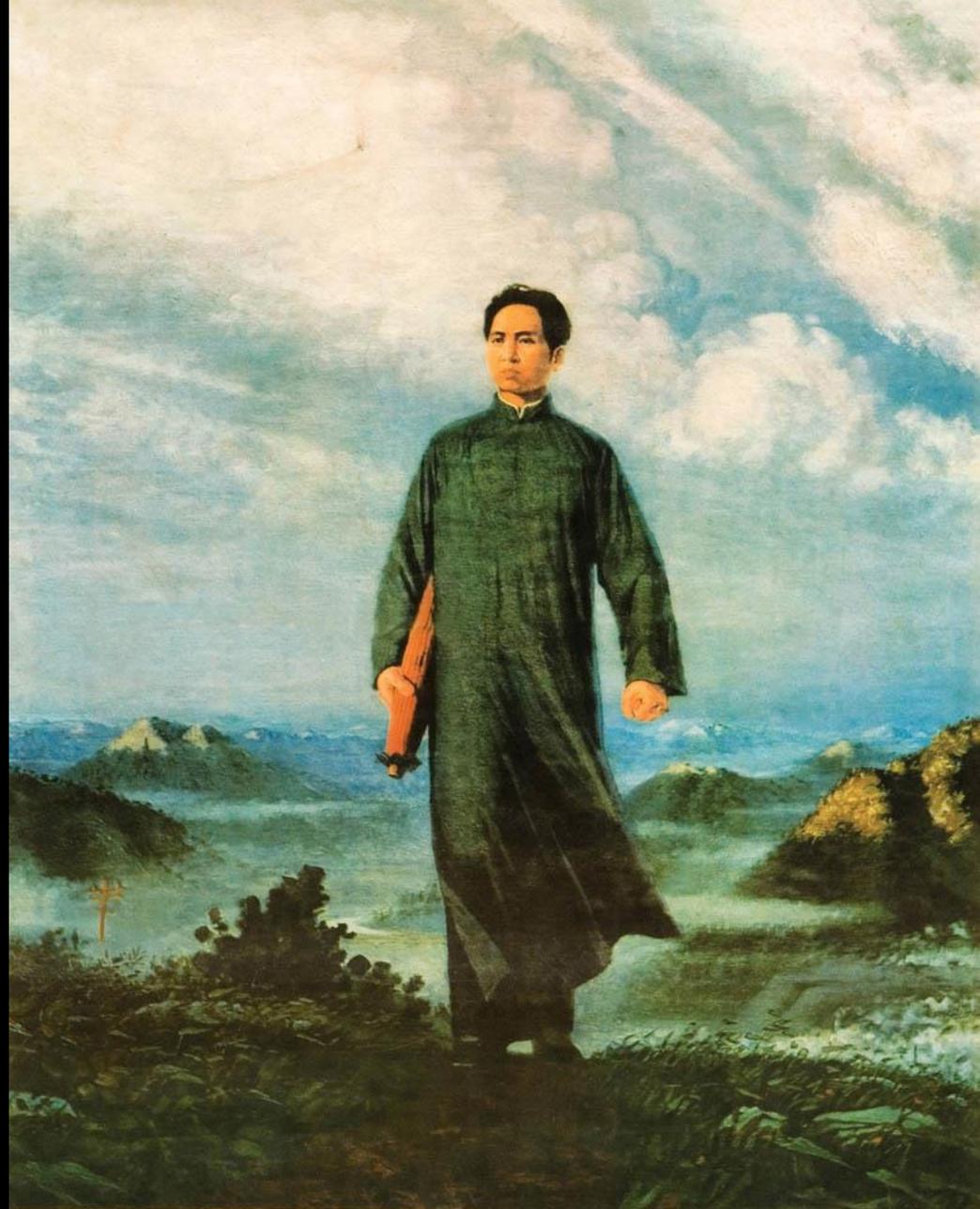
- Painted during the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76; high art was dismissed as feudal or bourgeois
- Poster-like; vivid colors, dramatic and obvious political message
- Dominated by pictorial representation
- Art was done anonymously; individual artistic fame seen as counter-cultural in a collectivist society
- A moment in the 1920s; Mao on his way to Anyuan to lead a miner's strike



毛主席去安源

一九二一年秋，毛泽东同志到安源，领导了安源路矿工人运动。

- Mao worked for reform for miners; supported a local strike for better wages, working conditions, and education
- For many people this action formed a permanent bond with the Communist party
- Iconic representation of the Great Leader's career
- May be the most reproduced image ever made: 900,000,000 copies were generated



毛主席去安源

一九二一年秋，毛泽东到安源组织工人运动，领导了安源路矿工人运动。

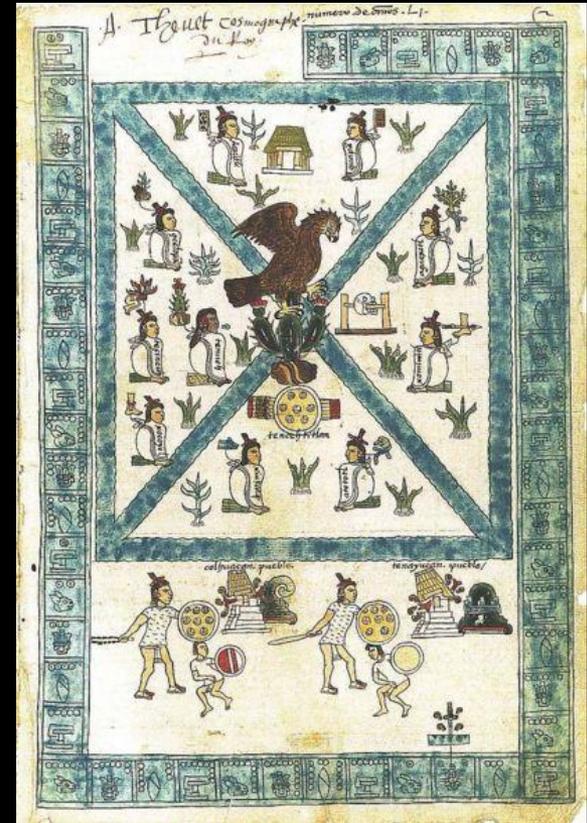
Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Non-Western Works Using Western Ideas



Bandolier Bag



Lindauer, *Tamati Waka Nene*



Frontispiece from the
Codex Mendoza

Chinese Sculpture

- Enormous scale, without sacrificing artistic integrity
- The Chinese created a dazzling number of sculptures cut from the rock in situ, a technique probably imported from India



#193

Terra cotta warriors from mausoleum of the first Qin emperor of China

Qin Dynasty

c. 221-209 BCE

Painted terra cotta



- About 8,000 terra-cotta warriors, 100 wooden chariots, 2 bronze chariots, 30,000 weapons buried as part of the tomb of Emperor Shi Huangdi
- Soldiers are six-feet tall, some fierce, some proud, some confident; taller than the average person of the time
- A representation of a Chinese army marching into the next world
- Daoism seen in the individualization of each soldier despite their number
- Originally colorfully painted
- Discovered in 1974



#193

Terra cotta warriors from mausoleum of the first Qin emperor of China

Detail

Qin Dynasty

c. 221-209 BCE

Painted terra cotta

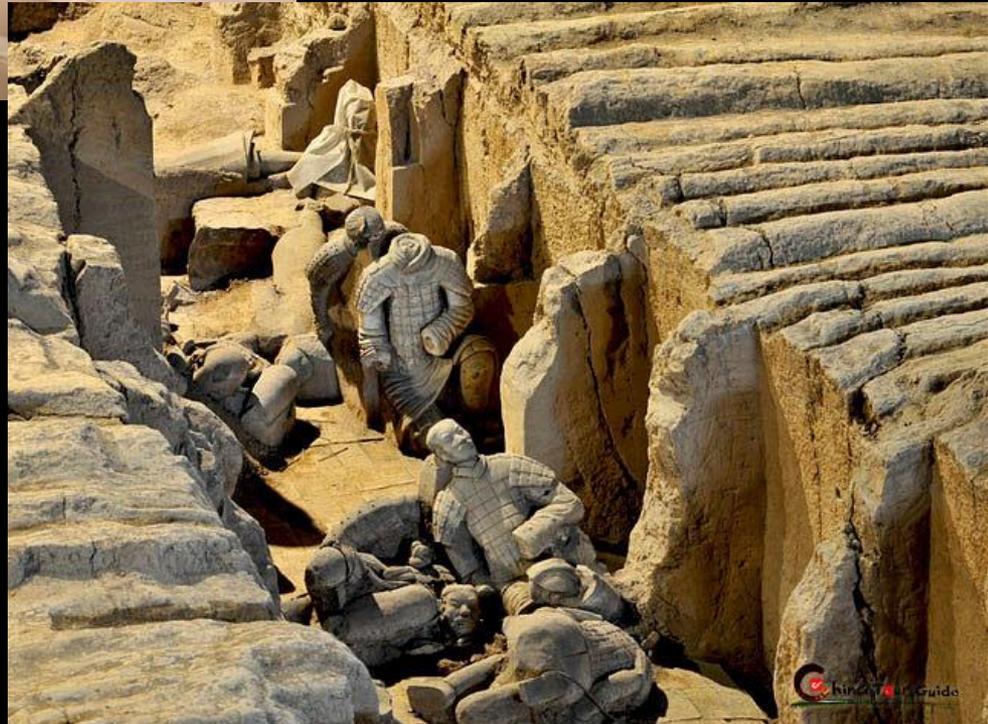
Terra-cotta Soldiers

- [National Geographic Video 1](#)
- [National Geographic Video 2](#)
- [Engineering an Empire](#)





© Dan Bereski



Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Buried Works

Tomb of Tutankhamun



Tomb of the Triclinium



Catacomb of Priscilla

[Video](#)



#195

Longman caves

Louyang, China

Tang Dynasty

493-1127 CE

Limestone

[Khan Academy Video](#)



#195

**Longman caves
Detail**

Louyang, China

Tang Dynasty

493-1127 CE

Limestone

Quick Facts

- Caves along the banks of the Yi River
- Sculptures and reliefs carved from the existing rock; some colossal, some small
- Documents attest that 800,000 people worked on the site; 110,000 Buddhist stone statues, more than 60 stupas, and 2,800 inscription steles
- Buddha arranged as if on an altar of a temple, deeply set into the rock face
- Inscription states Empress Wu Zetian was the principle patroness of the site, and she used her private funds to finance the project
- Vairocana Buddha having monk attendants, bodhisattvas, and guardians flanking
- Elongated legs and exaggerated poses

Imperial Patronage

- Worship and power struggles, enlightenment and suicide—the 2300 caves and niches filled with Buddhist art at Longmen in China has witnessed it all.
- The steep limestone cliffs extend for almost a mile and contain approximately 110,000 Buddhist stone statues, 60 stupas (hemispherical structures containing Buddhist relics) and 2,800 inscriptions carved on steles (vertical stone markers).

Most of the carvings at the Longmen site date between the end of the 5th century and the middle of the 8th century—the periods of the Northern Wei (486–534 C.E.) through early Tang dynasties (618–907 C.E.).



The Northern Wei was the most enduring and powerful of the northern Chinese dynasties that ruled before the reunification of China under the Sui and Tang dynasties.

Central Binyang Cave

- The Central Binyang Cave was one of three caves started in 508 C.E. It was commissioned by Emperor Xuan Wu in memory of his father.
- The other two caves, known as Northern and Southern Binyang, were never completed.

carvings
painted in
brilliant
blue, red,
ochre and
gold



He is
assisted by
two
bodhisattv
as and two
disciples

Shakyamuni (the historical Buddha) or
Maitreya (the Buddha of the future)

Across from the entry is the most significant
devotional grouping—a pentad (five figures)



The Buddha's monastic robe is rendered to appear as though tucked under him (image above).

Ripples of folds cascade over the front of his throne.

These linear and abstract motifs are typical of the mature Northern Wei style



The flattened, elongated bodies of the Longmen bodhisattvas (image left) are hidden under elaborately pleated and flaring skirts.

The bodhisattvas wear draping scarves, jewelry and crowns with floral designs.

Their gentle, smiling faces are rectangular and elongated.



The style of the reliefs may be inspired by secular painting, since the figures all appear very gracious and solemn.

They are clad in Chinese court robes and look genuinely Chinese.



Fengxian Temple



- This imposing group of nine monumental images carved into the hard, gray limestone of Fengxian Temple at Longmen is a spectacular display of innovative style and iconography.
- Sponsored by the Emperor Gaozong and his wife, the future Empress Wu, the high relief sculptures are widely spaced in a semi-circle.

The central Vairocana Buddha (more than 55 feet high including its pedestal) is flanked on either side by a bodhisattva, a heavenly king, and a thunderbolt holder (vajrapani).

Vairocana represents the primordial Buddha who generates and presides over all the Buddhas of the infinite universes that form Buddhist cosmology.

This idea—of the power of one supreme deity over all the others—resonated in the vast Tang Empire which was dominated by the Emperor at its summit and supported by his subordinate officials.

These monumental sculptures intentionally mirrored the political situation.

The dignity and imposing presence of Buddha and the sumptuous appearance of his attendant bodhisattvas is significant in this context.





#195

Longman caves

Detail

Louyang, China

Tang Dynasty

493-1127 CE

Limestone

In contrast, the heavenly guardians and the vajrapani are more engaging and animated. Notice the realistic musculature of the heavenly guardians and the forceful poses of the vajrapani.



#195

**Longman caves
Detail**

Louyang, China

Tang Dynasty

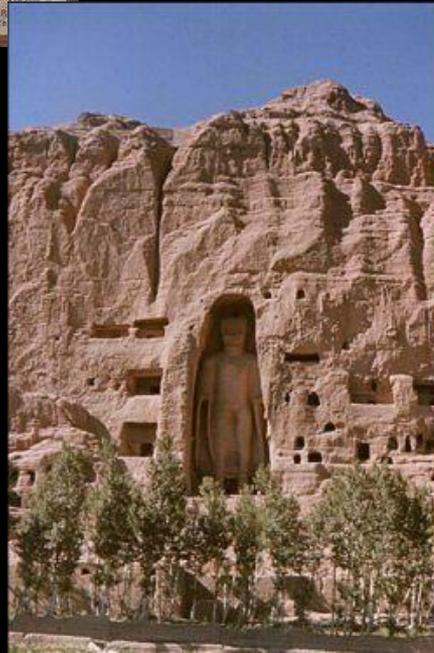
493-1127 CE

Limestone

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Grand Outdoor Settings



Great Altar of Zeus and Athena



Bamiyan Buddha



#196

Gold and jade crown

Three Kingdoms Period, Silla Kingdom, Korea

5th to 6th century CE

Metalwork



Goguryeo

Silla

Gyeongju

Baekje

Tamna

Japan

Quick Facts

- Uncovered in Gyeongju, Korea from a royal tomb
- Symbolizes geometric trees
- Antler forms influenced by shamanistic practices in Siberia
- Very light weight; had limited use; maybe for ceremonial occasions, perhaps only for burial



Korea

- In the fifth and sixth centuries, the Korean peninsula was divided between three rivaling kingdoms.
- The most powerful of these was the Silla kingdom in the southeast of the peninsula.
- Chinese emissaries described the kingdom as a country of gold, and perhaps they had seen its crowns adorned with shimmering gold and jade.

- Although their fragile gold construction initially led some to believe that these crowns were made specifically for burial, recent research has revealed that they were also used in ceremonial rites of the Silla royalty during the Three Kingdoms Period (57 B.C.E. - 676 C.E.).
- Prior to the adoption of Buddhism, Koreans practiced shamanism, which is a kind of nature worship that requires the expertise of a priest-like figure, or shaman, who intercedes to alleviate problems facing the community.
- Silla royalty upheld shamanistic practices in ceremonial rites such as coronations and memorial services.
- In these sacred rituals, the gold crowns emphasized the power of the wearer through their precious materials and natural imagery.



Worn around the forehead, this tree-shaped crown (daegwan) is the headband type found in the south in royal tombs at the Silla capital, Gyeongju.

Between the fifth and sixth centuries, Silla crowns became increasingly lavish with more ornamentation and additional, increasingly elongated branch-like protrusions.

In this crown, three tree-shaped vertical elements evoke the sacred tree that once stood in the ritual precinct of Gyeongju.

This sacred tree was conceived of as a “world tree,” or an axis mundi that connected heaven and earth.



Two additional antler-shaped protrusions may refer to the reindeer that were native to the Eurasian steppe that lies to the north of the peninsula.

Attached to the branch-like features of the crown are tiny gold discs and jade ornaments called *gogok*.

These jade ornaments symbolize ripe fruits hanging from tree branches, representing fertility and abundance.

With sunlight falling on its golden discs, the crown must have been a luminous sight indeed.

Eurasian connections

- The Silla crown demonstrates cultural interactions between the Korean peninsula and the Eurasian steppe (thousands of miles of grassland that stretches from central Europe through Asia).
- Scytho-Siberian peoples of the Eurasian steppe created golden diadems similar to the Silla crown, such as a crown from Tillya Tepe (an archaeological site of six nomad graves that contained objects known as the “Bactrian Hoard”) in modern-day Afghanistan.
- With five tree-shaped projections, flower ornaments and reflective discs, the Tillya Tepe crown can be compared with the natural imagery and radiant gold of the Silla crown.
- Though separated by many miles and by centuries, both crowns attest to shamanic beliefs prevalent among the nomadic cultures of the Eurasian steppe.



Ancient
Near East



Rome

Metalworking techniques, such as granulation (a technique whereby a surface is covered in spherules or granules of precious metal) and filigree – seen in the Mediterranean – appear to have traveled along the Silk Road.

Burial customs in the Three Kingdoms Period

- Though their use of gold and practice of shamanism related to the northern steppe cultures, the Silla royalty adopted the burial customs of the Chinese by burying their elite in mounded tombs.
- In Chinese burials, objects that were important in life were often taken to the grave.
- Similarly, power objects like the Silla gold crowns were used both above ground and below, and their luxurious materials conveyed the social status of the tomb occupant in the afterlife.

- In addition to crowns, belts, earrings, other jewelry were placed in Korean tombs during the Three Kingdoms era to represent the rank and identity of the wearer.
- This gold belt, for instance, was made for the burial of a Silla king.
- It was like a tool belt or charm bracelet, with pendants that dangled from its band of interlinked square plates and entwining dragon openwork.
- Some objects were practical, such as knife sheaths and needle boxes, which evoked nomadic life on the Eurasian steppe.
- Others were symbolic, such as the comma-shaped ornaments seen on the Silla crown or miniature fish, which may have been charms to avert evil.
- The materials of the belt also corresponded to social status; for example, tombs of the Silla royalty had gold belts, while the nobility in other regions of the peninsula had silver or gilt-bronze belts.

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Metalwork



Merovingian Looped Fibula



El Anatsui, *Old Man's Cloth*



Golden Stool

Porcelain

- Originally, most ceramics were made by the coiling method, in which clay was rolled into a long, flat surface so that it resembled a long cord
- The cords were wrapped around themselves creating a sculpture
- To remove the appearance of coils, the edges were often smoothed out the artist's hand or an instrument
- Later the clay was placed on a round tray and made to revolve using a pedal; this began the invention of the potter's wheel
- The process of making pottery on a wheel is called throwing

[Video 1](#)

[Khan Academy Video](#)



#204

The David Vases

Yuan Dynasty, China

1351 CE

White porcelain with cobalt-blue underglaze

- One of the most important examples of blue and white porcelain in existence
- Made for the altar of a Daoist temple, along with an incense burner which has not been found; a typical altar set
- Dedication on the side of the neck of the vessels; believed to be earliest known blue and white porcelain dedication



- Inscription on one of the vases:
“Zhang Wenjin, from Jingtang community, Dejiao village, Shuncheng township, Yushan county, Xinzhou circuit, a disciple of the Holy Gods, is pleased to offer a set comprising one incense burner and a pair of flower vases to General Hu Jingyi at the Original Palace in Xongyuan, as a prayer for the protection and blessing of the whole family and for the peace of his sons and daughters. Carefully offered on an auspicious day in the Fourth Month, Eleventh year of the Zhizheng reign.”



- Blue color imported from Iran; Chinese expansion into western Asia makes the cobalt blue available
- Vases modeled after bronzes
- Elephant-head-shaped handles
- Neck and foot of vases: leaves and flowers
- Central section: Chinese dragons with traditional long bodies and beards; dragons have scales and claws and are set in a sea of clouds
- Named after Sir Percival David, a collector of Chinese art

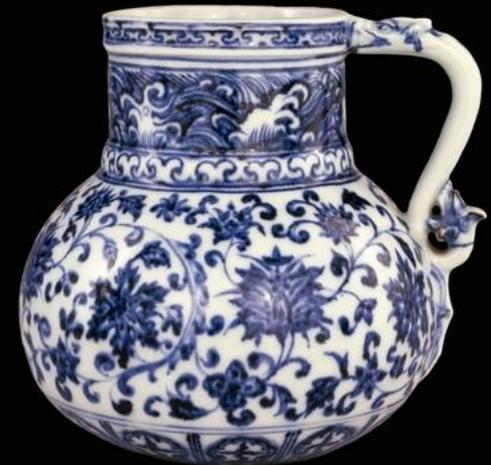


Blue-and-white porcelain

- The earliest blue-and-white ware found to date are temple vases inscribed 1351.
- These display a competence which indicate that the underglaze-painting technique was well-established by that time, probably originating in the second quarter of the fourteenth century.
- Cobalt blue was imported from Iran, probably in cake form.
- It was ground into a pigment, which was painted directly onto the leather-hard porcelain body.
- The piece was then glazed and fired.
- "Blue-and-white" porcelain was used in temples and occasionally in burials within China, but most of the products of the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) appear to have been exported.

- Trade remained an essential part of blue-and-white porcelain production in the Ming and Qing dynasties (1644-1911).
- Europe, Japan and South-east Asia were important export markets.
- Vessels, with numerous bands of decoration, were painted with Chinese motifs, such as dragons, waves and floral scrolls.
- The potters of Jingdezhen also produced wares to satisfy the demands of the Middle Eastern market.
- Large dishes were densely decorated with geometric patterns inspired by Islamic metalwork or architectural decoration.

- Blue-and-white porcelain was particularly admired by the Imperial court, and it is interesting to trace the shapes and motifs preferred by different emperors, many of whom ordered huge quantities of porcelain from the imperial kilns at Jingdezhen.

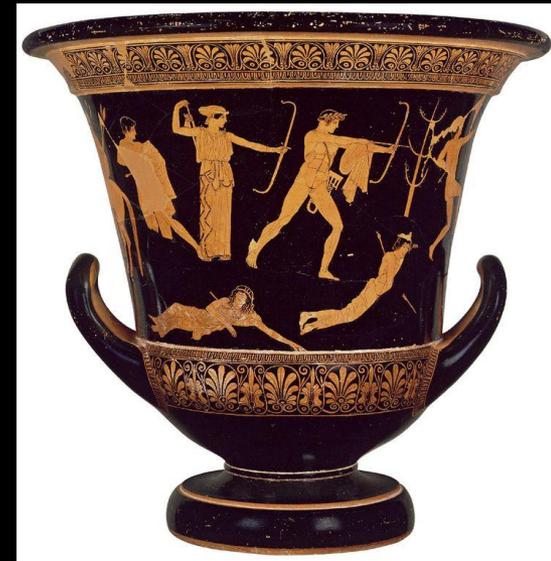


- The blue-and-white wares of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries often took their shapes from Islamic metalwork.
- The globular body, tall cylindrical neck and dragon handle of this jug all imitate contemporary metalwork of Timurid Persia.
- The crowded decoration of this jug is a feature of early blue-and-white porcelain that continued into the early part of the Ming dynasty.
- It is very different to the generally more subtle character of Chinese ornament.
- The motifs used in decorating the jug, however, are still distinctly Chinese, notably the breaking waves on the neck and floral scroll on the body.

Cross-Cultural Connections: Porcelain and Ceramic



Martínez, Black-on-black ceramic vessel



Niobid Krater



Terra-Cotta Warriors

Japan

- **Time period**
 - 1250-1848

- **Enduring Understanding:** Asian art is a reflection of Asian aesthetics
 - Japanese art is characterized by its influence from Shintoism and Zen philosophy
 - Calligraphy is a central art form in Japanese art
- **Enduring Understanding:** Asian art spreads throughout the world through trade
 - Asian art shows evidence of the interconnectivity of regional schools with the wider world
 - Asian art, particularly Japanese prints, heavily influenced the art of Europe

Patronage and Artistic Life

- Japanese artists worked on commission, some for the royal court, others in the service for religion
- Masters ran workshops with a range of assistants
- The master created the composition by brushing in key outlines and his assistants worked on the colors and details

Zen Buddhism

- Zen Buddhism was imported from China in the 12th century
- Zen adherents reject worldliness, the collection of goods for the own sake, and physical adornment – instead, the Zen world is centered on austerity, self-control, courage, and loyalty

Japanese Architecture and Sculpture

- The austerity of Zen philosophy can be seen in the simplicity of architectural design that dominates Japanese buildings
- A traditional structure is usually a single story, made of wood, and meant to harmonize with its natural environment
- The wood is typically undressed – the fine grains appreciated by the Japanese
- Because the wood is relatively light, the pillars could be placed at wide intervals to support the roof, opening the interior most dramatically to the outdoors
- Floors are raised above the ground to reduce humidity by allowing the air to circulate under the building

- Eaves are long to generate shady interiors in the summer, and steeply pitched to allow the quick runoff of rain and snow
- Interiors have mobile spaces created by sliding screens, which act as room dividers, by changing its dimensions – particularly lavish homes may have gilded screens

Zen Gardens

- A principal innovation in Japanese design is the Zen garden, which features meticulous arrangements of raked sand circling around prominently placed stones and plants
- Each garden suggests wider vistas and elaborate landscapes
- Zen gardens contain no water, but the careful placement of rocks often suggests a cascade or a rushing stream
- These gardens serve for spiritual refreshment, a place of contemplation and rejuvenation
- There is a deep respect for the natural world in Japanese thought
- Shintoism believes in the sacredness of spirits inherent in nature
- In a heavily forested and rocky terrained country like Japan, wood becomes the natural choice for building, and stone for Zen gardens



#197

Todai-ji

Nara, Japan

Various artists, including sculptors Unkei and Keikei, as well as the Kei School

743 CE; rebuilt c. 1700

Bronze and wood (sculpture); wood with ceramic tile roofing (architecture)



- Great Eastern Temple, refers to its location on the eastern edge of the city of Nara, Japan
- Noted for its colossal sculpture of seated image of the Vairocana Buddha
- Temple and Buddha have been razed several times during military unrest
- Seven external bays on façade
- Influenced by monumental Chinese sculptures
- Largest wooden building in the world



#197

**Todai-ji
Great Buddha**

Nara, Japan

Various artists, including sculptors Unkei and Keikei, as well as the Kei School

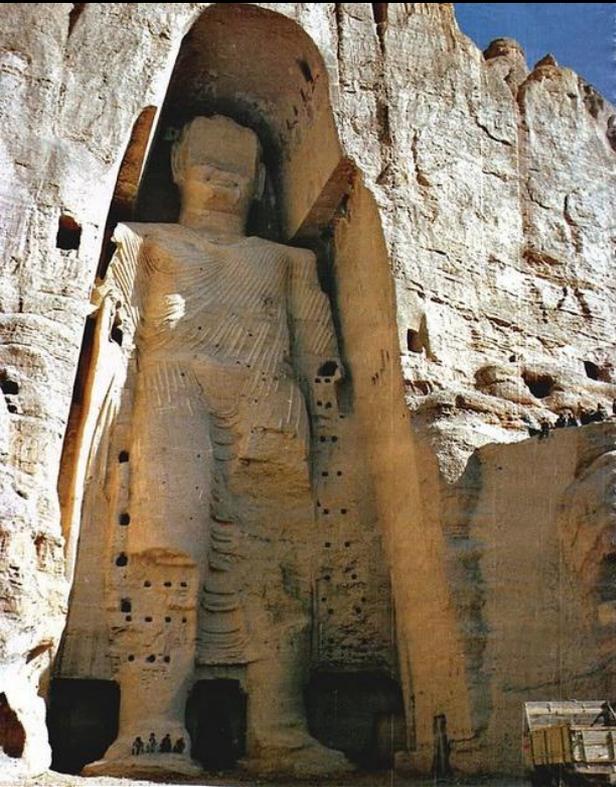
743 CE; rebuilt c. 1700

Bronze and wood (sculpture); wood with ceramic tile roofing (architecture)

- Monumental feat of casting
- Emperor Shōmu embraced Buddhism and erected sculpture as a way of stabilizing Japanese population during a time of economic crisis
- Largest metal statue of Buddha in the world
- Mudra: right hand means “do not fear”; left hand means “welcome”



Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Images of Buddha Across Asia



Bamiyan Buddha



Jowo Rinpoche



Longmen Caves



#197

Todai-ji

Nio guardian statue

Nara, Japan

Various artists, including sculptors Unkei and Keikei, as well as the Kei School
743 CE; rebuilt c. 1700

Bronze and wood (sculpture); wood with
ceramic tile roofing (architecture)



#197

Todai-ji

Nio guardian statue

Nara, Japan

Various artists, including sculptors Unkei and Keikei, as well as the Kei School
743 CE; rebuilt c. 1700

Bronze and wood (sculpture); wood with ceramic tile roofing (architecture)

Kei School of Sculpture

- The large scale rebuilding after the Genpei Civil War created a multitude of commissions for builders, carpenters and sculptors.
- This concentration of talent led to the emergence of the Kei School of sculpture—considered by many to be the peak of Japanese sculpture.
- Noted for its austere realism and the dynamic, muscularity of its figures, the Kei School reflects the Buddhism and warrior-centered culture of the Kamakura era (1185–1333).

- Unkei is considered the leading figure of the Kei school, with a career spanning over 30 years.
- His distinctive style emerged in his work on the refurbishment of the many Nara temples/shrines, most particularly Todai-ji. Unkei's fierce guardian figure Ungyō in the Nandaimon is typical of Unkei's powerful, dynamic bodies.
- It stands in dramatic contrapposto opposite the other muscular Guardian King, Agyō, created with Kaikei and other Kei sculptors.

- Both figures are fashioned of cypress wood and stand over eight meters tall.
- They were made using the joint block technique (*yosegi zukuri*), that used eight or nine large wood blocks over which another layer of wooden planks were attached.
- The outer wood was then carved and painted. Only a few traces of color remain.



- One on either side of the gate
- Complex joined woodblock construction
- Intricate swirling drapery
- Fierce forbidding looks and gestures
- Masculine, frightening figures that protect the Buddha



#197

Todai-ji Gate

Nara, Japan

Various artists, including sculptors Unkei and Keikei, as well as the Kei School

743 CE; rebuilt c. 1700

Bronze and wood (sculpture); wood with ceramic tile roofing (architecture)



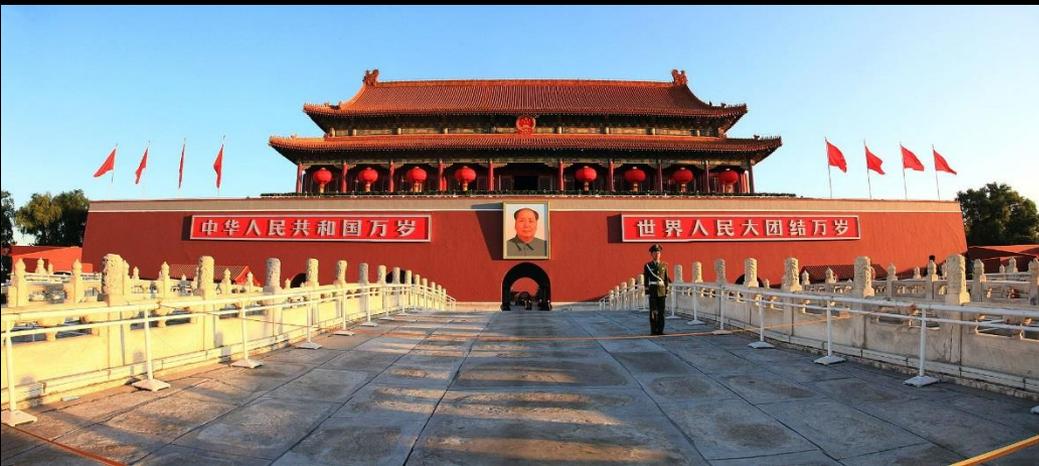
- Nandaimon: great south gate, with five bays, three central bays for passing, and two outer that are closed
- Two stories are same size; unusual in Japanese architecture (usually upper story is smaller)
- Deep eaves supported by the six-stepped bracket complex, which, rise in tiers with no bracketed arms
- Roof supported by huge pillars
- Unusual in that it has no ceiling; roof is exposed from below
- Overall effect is of proportion and stateliness

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Entrances

Great Portal, Chartres



North Gate of the Great Stupa



Front Gate of the Forbidden City

Zen Buddhism

- [Khan Academy Video](#)
- [Khan Academy Shinto Video](#)

Ryonji Garden

- [UNESCO Video](#)
- [Japanquest Video](#)



#207

Ryoan-ji, dry garden

Kyoto, Japan

Muromachi Period

c. 1480 CE; current design most likely dates to the 18th century

Rock garden

Zen dry garden:

- Gravel acts as water; gravel raked in wavy patterns
- Rocks are mountain ranges
- Meant to be viewed from a veranda in a nearby building
- Fifteen rocks arranged in three groups
- Interpreted as islands in a floating sea; mountain peaks above clouds; constellations in the sky
- From no viewpoint is the entire garden viewable at once
- Served as a focus for meditation
- Asymmetrical arrangement
- Bounded on two sides by a low, yellow wall



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#207

Ryoan-ji, wet garden

Kyoto, Japan

Muromachi Period

c. 1480 CE; current design most likely dates to the 18th century

Rock garden

Wet Garden:

- Contains a tea house
- Seemingly arbitrary in placement, the plants are actually placed in a highly organized and structured environment symbolizing the natural world
- Water symbolizes purification; used in rituals

The Facts

- The garden is not ascribed to one designer, although common belief is that Soami (1480?-1525), a leading monochrome artist of the age also associated with Daisen-in, made the garden.
- Contradictory temple records indicate other makers, while the back of one stone is inscribed with the names of Kotaro and Hikojiro, who were probably workers that did the actual construction and perhaps even helped in designing it.

- The records contain more information about the temple buildings.
- The main building was burned in 1789 and a substantially larger structure was moved here from another site.
- It seems that the east side of the garden had to be shortened to make room for a new gate that was added at the same time.
- In 1977-1978, both the roof of this replaced building and the garden wall were repaired.
- The clay-tiled roof of the wall was replaced with one of cedar shingles, and the texture of the wall was substantially changed.

- The garden consists of a flat, rectangular surface of raked white sand with fifteen rocks scattered about singly and in clusters.
- It seems to represent the ocean with islands protruding above its surface.
- The garden's elimination of trees and plants and its overall simplicity is reminiscent of abstract art.
- It may well be compared to a scroll of calligraphy or to a painting in the splashed-ink style of *sumi-e* (Black Ink Painting).

The Context

- Japanese aristocrats from at least mid-eighth century customarily had gardens near their homes.
- During the Heian period (794-1185) a somewhat standard type of garden matured in concert with the shinden type of courtier mansion.
- Later in the Heian period, with the increased popularity of Pure Land Buddhism, the shinden style of architecture and garden was suited to the construction of temples that were created to be representations on earth of Amida's paradise in the western realm of the universe.

- During the medieval age, the Japanese began experimenting in unique and abstract ways with the use of rocks, although still maintaining such features of their traditional garden as the pond, stream, and artificial island.
- From then on, rocks of varying shapes and textures were increasingly used to represent both natural formations and man-made structures, such as mountains, cliffs, waterfalls, and bridges.
- In addition, sand and white pebbles were employed as "water" and therefore, in some works, the pond was eliminated, which for many centuries had been the central highlight of the Japanese garden.

- It was during and after the Higashiyama epoch (second half of the fifteenth century) that the greatest of the medieval dry rock gardens, known as kare-sansui or "withered landscapes," were built on the grounds of Zen temples.
- Possibly, the most famous Japanese rock garden is that at Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto.
- The earliest temple recorded on this site dates from 983. It was destroyed during the Onin Wars (1467-77).
- The garden may have been laid out during the rebuilding of 1488.

- Its derivation most probably comes from a mixture of sources-the small tray gardens of China and Japan, the pure pebble ground coverings of sanctified Shinto precincts, and the style of landscape paintings favored by the Zen monks.
- Its original layout and intention are still contestable, with some experts alleging that it once contained trees and plants and has recently been reduced.

Artistic Context

- Ryoanji features a dry garden (karesansui), which is principally composed of just sand and stone.
- While there are many similar examples, Ryoanji is stemmed as the original.
- Unlike other landscape gardens, Ryoanji does not feature stones of special sizes and shapes, but relies on its intricate composition to create a subtle and harmonic garden.
- Its brilliance lies on its subtlety and transcendental sensitivities.
- The development of dry garden is influenced by a number of different sources: the dominant Zen philosophy, the small tray gardens of Japan and China and the imported Chinese Confucian thinking.

Zen Philosophy

- Instead of using landscape as patterns, elements are used to express feelings and thinking.
- Its austerity and simplicity reflect the preferences of Zen philosophy.
- The serenity of the composition provides space for the communication and the contemplation of Zen teaching.
- Zen teaching is never expressed through elaborate words, but through quiet parables.

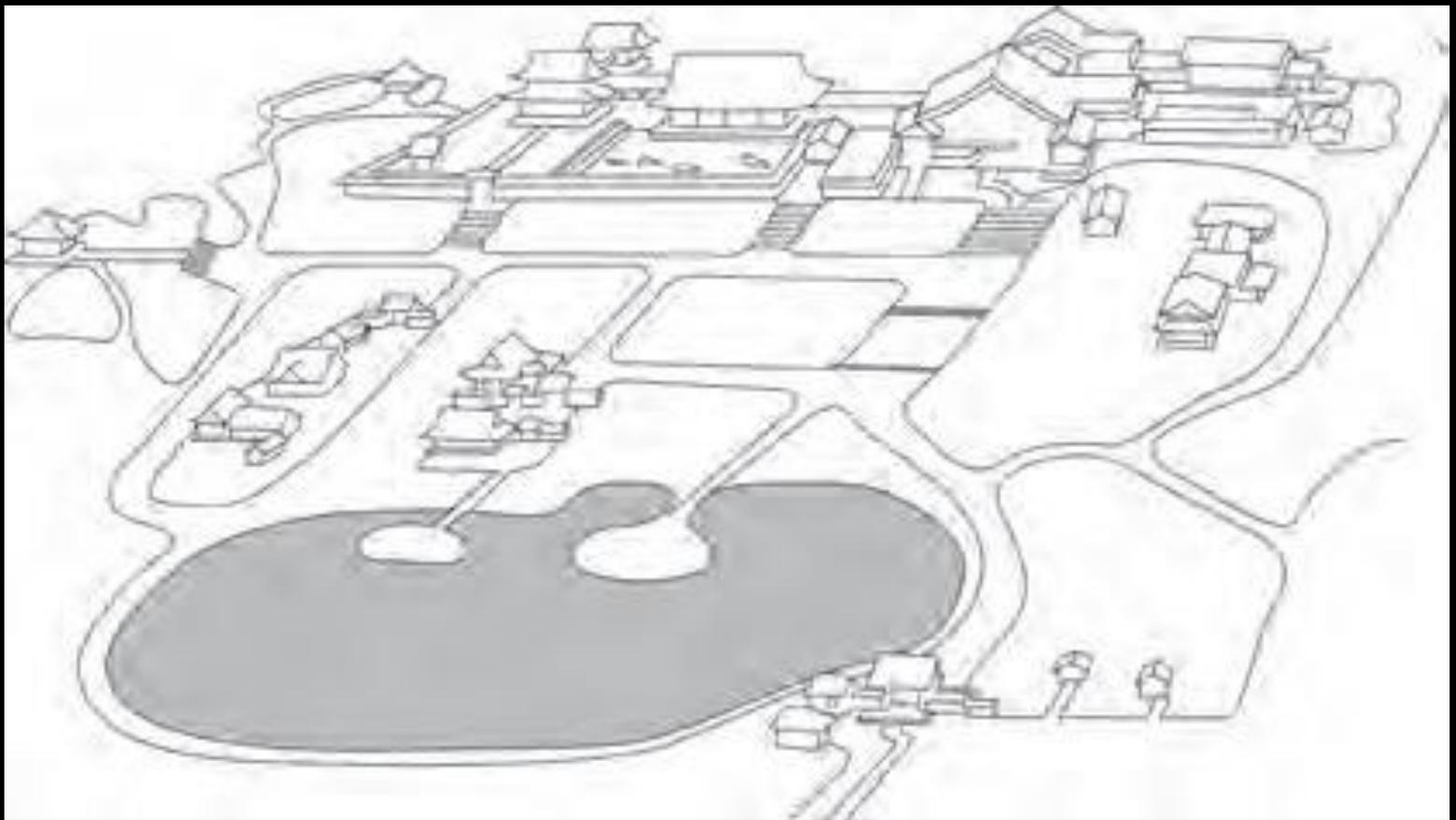
- The garden of Ryoanji, with its limited but carefully selected stones, embodies the teaching of Zen philosophy.
- It is also a perfect setting for contemplation.
- The physically bare garden allows viewers to reflect towards oneself.
- The beauty of the garden lies peacefully inside the enlightenment of the viewer, and not in the materialistic exterior.
- Zen is the art of the void, and is well-illustrated in the garden of Ryoanji.

Design – The Garden

- The garden is measured at thirty by seventy-eight feet.
- It is located on the south side of the temple.
- On its north side (the right of side the picture above) locates the long veranda where the visitors appreciate the garden.
- To its east (the bottom end of the picture), the garden is bounded by a thin low wall.
- On the southern and western side, a low wall with thatched roof tile surrounds the rock garden.
- The wall, originally white in color has turned into a rusty earthy color, blending it well with the garden.
- The garden itself is composed of fifteen stones in five groups, lying on an area of raked sand.

Design – The Temple

- The *hojo* is the monk's quarters.
- The records contain more information about the temple buildings.
- The main building was burned in 1789 and a substantially larger structure was moved here from another site.
- It seems that the east side of the garden had to be shortened to make room for a new gate that was added at the same time.
- The veranda is also believed to be shortened, limiting the panoramic view. In 1977-1978, both the roof of this replaced building and the garden wall were repaired.
- The clay-tiled roof of the wall was replaced with one of cedar shingles, and the texture of the wall was substantially changed.



#207

Ryoan-ji

Plan

Kyoto, Japan

Muromachi Period

c. 1480 CE; current design most likely dates to the 18th century

Rock garden



Cross-Cultural Comparisons: People and Nature

Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds*



Turner, *The Slave Ship*



Velasco, *Valley of Mexico*

Japanese Painting and Printmaking

- Characteristics that the Japanese added to Chinese printing techniques and formats include elevated viewpoints, diagonal lines, and depersonalized faces
- A Japanese specialty is **haboku** or ink-splashed painting that involved applying in a free and open style that gives the illusion of being splashed on the surface
- Yamato-e, developed in the 12th century, features tales from Japanese history and literature depicted usually in long narrative scrolls
 - There is a depersonalization of figures in yamato-e works, often with just a line to indicate eyes and mouth, and many times the nose is missing or just suggested
 - Strong diagonals dominate compositions that feature buildings with their roofs missing so we can see inside
 - Clouds are used to divide compositions into sections so they become more manageable to the viewer

- Ukiyo-e, a term that means “pictures of the floating world”
 - the “floating” is meant in the Buddhist sense of the passing or transient nature of life – depict scenes of everyday life or pleasure: festivals, theatre, domestic life, geishas, brothels, etc
 - It is most famously represented in woodblock prints, although it can also be found on scrolls and paintings
 - Prints made it possible to mass-produce between 1658-1858
 - Printmaking was a collaborative process between the artist and the publisher – the publisher determined the market, dictated the subject matter and style, and employed the woodblock carvers and printer
 - At first, all prints were in black and white
 - By 1765, a polychrome print was created
 - Colors are subtle and delicate, and separated by black lines
 - Each color was added one at a time
 - Western artists were taken with ukiyo-e prints – especially the flat areas of color, the largely unmodulated tones, the lack of shadows, and the odd compositional angles, with figures occasionally seen from behind – forms are often unexpectedly cut off and cropped by the frame of the work



[Interactive Scroll](#)

[Khan Academy Video](#)

[Night Attack Vimeo Video](#)

#203

Night Attack on the Sanjo Palace

Kamakura Period, Japan

c. 1250-1300 CE

Handscroll (ink and color on paper)

- Painted 100 years after the civil war (the Genpei War, 1180-1185) depicted in the scene
- Elevated viewpoint
- Strong diagonals emphasizing movement and action
- Swift active brushstrokes
- Narratives read from right to left as the scroll is unrolled
- Depersonalized figures, many with only one stroke for the eyes, ears, mouth
- Tangled mass of forms accentuated by Japanese armor
- Lone archer leads the escape from the burning palace with equestrian Japanese commander behind him

- Military rule in Japan from 1185 on had an interest in the code of the warrior (Bushido); reflected in the large quantity of war-related literature and paintings
- Unrolls like a film sequence; as on unrolls, time advances
- Burning of the imperial palace at Sanjô in Kyoto as rebel forces try to seize power by capturing the emperor
- Coup staged in 1159 as Emperor Go-Shirakawa is taken prisoner
- Imperial palace in flames; rebels force the emperor to board a cart waiting to take him into captivity
- Rebels kill those opposed and place their heads on sticks and parade them as trophies



#203

**Night Attack on the Sanjo Palace
Detail**

Kamakura Period, Japan

c. 1250-1300 CE

Handscroll (ink and color on paper)

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Historical Events



Bayeux Tapestry



Column of Trajan



#210

White and Red Plum Blossoms

Ogata Korin

c. 1710-1716 CE

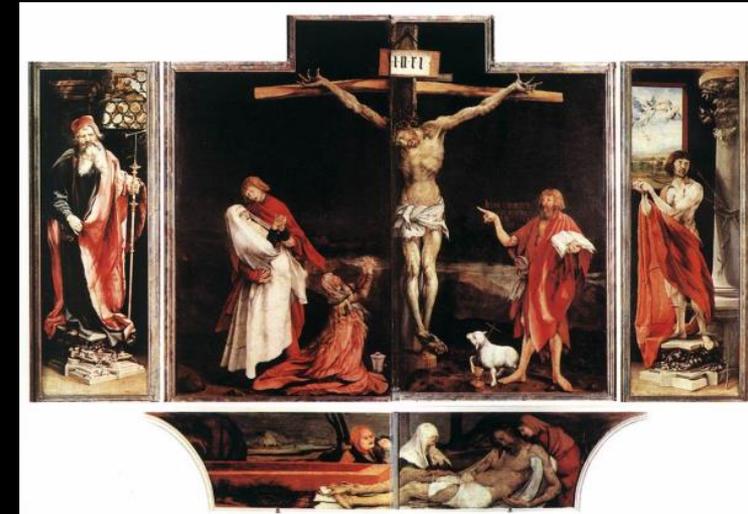
Ink, watercolor, and gold leaf on paper



- Japanese rinpa style named for Ogata (*Rin* for “Ko-rin” and *pa* meaning “school”)
- Influenced by the yamato-e style of painting
- Stream cuts rhythmically through the scene; swirls in paint and surface indicate water currents
- White plum blossoms on left; red on right
- Tarashikomi technique in which paint is applied to surface that has not already dried from a previous application; creates a dripping effect useful in depicting streams or flowers

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Multi-Panel Paintings

Campin, *Annunciation Triptych*



Grünwald, *Isenheim Altarpiece*



Circle of Gonzales Family, *Screen with the Siege of Belgrade and Hunting Scene*



#211

**Under the Wave off Kanagawa (Kanagawa
oki nami ura), also known as the Great
Wave, from the series Thirty-six Views of
Mount Fuji**

Katsushika Hokusai

1830-1833 CE

Polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on
paper

- First time landscape is a major theme in Japanese prints
- Last of a series of prints called Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji
- Personification of nature, it seems intent on drowning the figures in the boats
- Mount Fuji, sacred mountain to the Japanese, seems to be one of the waves
- Striking design contrasts water and sky with large areas of negative space



Katsushika Hokusai?

- Hokusai was born in 1760 in Edo (now Tokyo), Japan.
- During the artists' lifetime he went by many different names; he began calling himself Hokusai in 1797.
- Hokusai discovered Western prints that came to Japan by way of Dutch trade.
- From the Dutch artwork Hokusai became interested in linear perspective.
- Subsequently, Hokusai created a Japanese variant of linear perspective.
- The influence of Dutch art can also be seen in the use of a low horizon line and the distinctive European color, Prussian blue.

- Hokusai was interested in oblique angles, contrasts of near and far, and contrasts of manmade and the natural.
- These can be seen in *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* through the juxtaposition of the large wave in the foreground which dwarfs the small mountain in the distance, as well as the inclusion of the men and boats amidst the powerful waves.

Under the Wave off Kanagawa

- Katsushika Hokusai's *Under the Wave off Kanagawa*, also called *The Great Wave* has become one of the most famous works of art in the world—and debatably the most iconic work of Japanese art.
- Initially, thousands of copies of this print were quickly produced and sold cheaply.
- Despite the fact that it was created at a time when Japanese trade was heavily restricted, Hokusai's print displays the influence of Dutch art, and proved to be inspirational for many artists working in Europe later in the nineteenth century.

Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji

- *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* is part of a series of prints titled *Thirty-six views of Mount Fuji*, which Hokusai made between 1830 and 1833.
- It is a polychrome (multi-colored) woodblock print, made of ink and color on paper that is approximately 10 x 14 inches.
- All of the images in the series feature a glimpse of the mountain, but as you can see from this example, Mount Fuji does not always dominate the frame.
- Instead, here, the foreground is filled with a massive cresting wave.

- The threatening wave is pictured just moments before crashing down on to three fishing boats below.
- Under the Wave off Kanagawa is full of visual play.
- The mountain, made tiny by the use of perspective, appears as if it too will be swallowed up by the wave.
- Hokusai's optical play can also be lighthearted, and the spray from top of the crashing wave looks like snow falling on the mountain.

- Hokusai has arranged the composition to frame Mount Fuji.
- The curves of the wave and hull of one boat dip down just low enough to allow the base of Mount Fuji to be visible, and the white top of the great wave creates a diagonal line that leads the viewers eye directly to the peak of the mountain top.
- Across the thirty-six prints that constitute this series, Hokusai varies his representation of the mountain.
- In other prints the mountain fills the composition, or is reduced to a small detail in the background of bustling city life.

The making of Ukiyo-e Prints

- Ukiyo-e is the name for Japanese woodblock prints made during the Edo Period.
- Ukiyo-e, which originated as a Buddhist term, means "floating world" and refers to the impermanence of the world.
- The earliest prints were made in only black and white, but later, as is evident from Hokusai's work, additional colors were added.
- A separate block of wood was used for each color.
- Each print is made with a final overlay of black line, which helps to break up the flat colors.
- Ukiyo-e prints are recognizable for their emphasis on line and pure, bright color, as well as their ability to distill form down to the minimum

- Hokusai moved away from the tradition of making images of courtesans and actors, which was the customary subject of ukiyo-e prints.
- Instead, his work focused on the daily life of Japanese people from a variety of social levels.
- Such as the quotidian scene of fishermen battling the sea off the coast of Mount Fuji that we see in *The Great Wave*.
- This change of subject matter was a breakthrough in both ukiyo-e prints and in Hokusai's career.

Popularity of Ukiyo-e prints in Europe

- Beginning in 1640, Japan was largely closed off to the world and only limited interaction with China and Holland was allowed.
- This changed in the 1850s, when trade was forced open by American naval commodore, Matthew C. Perry.
- After this, there was a flood of Japanese visual culture into the West.
- At the 1867 International Exposition in Paris, Hokusai's work was on view at the Japanese pavilion.
- This was the first introduction of Japanese culture to mass audiences in the West, and a craze for collecting art called *Japonisme* ensued.
- Additionally, Impressionist artists in Paris, such as Claude Monet, were great fans of Japanese prints.
- The flattening of space, an interest in atmospheric conditions, and the impermanence of modern city life—all visible in Hokusai's prints—both reaffirmed their own artistic interests and inspired many future works of art.

Video

Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Images of the Sea and Water

Michelangelo, *The Flood*



Turner, *The Slave Ship*



Kusama, *Narcissus Garden*