

Chinese South Asian Buddhist Hindu and Japanese Art Questions

Posted on September 25, 2019

Chapter 2: Topics In Chinese Art

Chinese art is a collection of architecture, painting, pottery, jade carving, sculpture, bronzes, and calligraphy. These and other forms of decorative art have been produced centuries ago. From medieval times, the country has been known for its dominance in the referential culture in the East Asia regions. Archaeological evidence indicates China has had a considerable influence on the world of culture through blades and worked stones. The Chinese enhanced cultural interaction among the East Asian cultures in the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods. Chinese art has outstanding characteristics as it forms a reflection of the past class structure over different times in the history of China. Initially, the arts were solely reserved for the feudal courts as well as the royal class. The sector was also regulated exclusively by the court patrons in the Zhou and Shang periods.

Calligraphy has been perceived as supreme among the Chinese visual arts. It requires subtle judgment and immense skill from the writer and uniquely reveals the writer's character and his breadth of cultivation. Besides, writing as fine art is linked with spiritual communication and is viewed from the artist's spiritual attunement. Calligraphy needs lofty personal characteristics as well as an unusual aesthetic sensitivity.

In Chinese art, the artist uses specific materials such as ink, brush, paper or silk. The various themes and symbols have unique characteristics and meanings. Chinese art in the early times involved sacrifices and rituals as a means to submit to and respect the will of heaven. Specifically, the archaic bronze vessels were meant for heaven and spiritual sacrifices. The spirits of the ancestors were believed to influence the life of the living positively, and rituals were performed to the satisfaction of the ancestors.

The Chinese society has always been attached to the world of nature. Nature manifests a generative interaction between various generations. Art in Chinese culture has shifted from sacrifice and propitiation to the focus of human understanding through various forms such as bamboo, flowers, birds, and landscape paintings. During the early times, art had both moral and social functions. Wall paintings depicted benevolent emperors, loyal generals, virtuous ministers, sages, and the evil opposites. The portrait paintings served a significant moral function by portraying the person's role in society and their character. Some paintings also served as memorable and auspicious events. Hence, they addressed the Confucian and ethical functions (Sullivan and Silbergeld np.). Chinese art, thus, was an avenue to which people could relate, and therefore, they fostered human relationships. Most Chinese art forms have survived for generations and help modern generations connect to their rich

history. The art culture provides a wealthy reserve of precious artifice that demonstrates the diligence and artistic talent of the people. Most people all over the world have been fascinated by the different forms of art due to their uniqueness and exceptional nature and are willing to travel far and wide to see them (Independenceday.com). The elegant taste of the art appeals to most people since most of the artistic work is full of charm and beauty. China is thus a leading tourist destination in the world due to its vast wealth of art, history, and traditional culture.

Chapter 3: South Asia: The Indus Valley Civilization

The Indus Valley Civilization occurred around the period of 3300–1300 BCE. The civilization took place along the Indus Valley River, where more than five million people took part in developing new techniques for improving their welfare. The civilization indicated some form of modernization and accurate planning. In the major artefacts excavated from this region, it is evident that the civilization in the area comprised many things aimed at improving the welfare of people. People expressed themselves through the art of figurativeness to show their culture and document things that were important to them. Human figurativeness is the art associated with this civilization that was used to celebrate the union of marriage that brought forth children. The art was mainly made during ceremonies, and the reason why it was not widely found is that it was issued to children as toys.

Since the Indus Valley Civilization art was mainly made of human figurativeness, children's figurativeness is adored primarily. The reason why the majority of the art comprised of children was that they were products of recreation. Most of the art portrayed the nursing abilities of mothers, though the majority of the art was male-dominated, something that promoted gender bias. The art expressed the use of ornaments to express beauty, and the turban is still worn to this day in India. This civilization primarily focused on children, toys, and objects used by children widely expressed. The games played by children showed that society valued children, which is the reason why childbirth was widely celebrated. It can be argued that the reason why present countries occupy this region with a large population is because of their high regard for children.

Indus Valley Civilization valued women more than men, which is the reason why women's figurativeness is found in plenty. Female art can be easily distinguished based on the choice of figurativeness and ornamentation used in sculptures. Women's figurativeness was curved with protruding breasts and a pear-shaped body. The reason why women were adored is their beauty and the sexual nature associated with females. The art was also used to cherish women because of their gentle nature and their ability to give birth to children. Art associated with men is limited because most of them were nude and were mostly used to express virility and strength. Ornaments were not used, or in cases where they were put into use, it was limited. The focus of female figurativeness in this culture shows the value directed towards procreation and the essence of a family.

Just like other cultures during this period, the Indus Valley Civilization commonly used human figurines to express things that were so dear to the society. Procreation and childbirth have widely

been celebrated, an issue that saw most of the figurines on issues of fertility. The current society does not celebrate the issue of fertility and virility, but this was much adored during the civilization since childbirth helped to sustain the culture and the continuity of the family unit. The figurine art additionally expresses the culture of clothing, the various hairstyles, preferred jewellery, and toys used by children. These issues were integral in the culture of the inhabitants, which helped them to improve their welfare and enhance the survival of children born. The Indus Valley Civilization artwork lies on the family unit and the ability to keep the family happy through appreciation.

Chapter 4: Buddhist Art In India And China

Buddhism originated in India and spread to most parts of Asia, including China and Japan. The religion is based on the teachings of Buddha, who is believed to have lived in the region between 563 and 483 BCE. Buddhist art first flourished in India since this was the origin of the religion. Pre-iconic and Iconic phases represent the period in which Buddhist art was expressed. As religion expanded to other countries, it interacted with different cultures, which brought a change in the expression of art. In China, art existed before the entry of the Buddhist religion. Daoism dominated China, but the entry of Buddhism, together with its ideals of Buddha, transformed the art in China. India had a great influence on Chinese art as it allowed the representation of deities through sculptures.

Art began with architecture, which was used to build temples used to worship Buddha. Over time, artists became reluctant to depict Buddha and used symbols such as footprints in sculptures. Buddhist art is widely expressed through sculptures, which spread all over Asia. The representation of Buddha in human form advanced the growth of Buddhist art as sculptures were used to represent Buddha. Amid the growth of Islam, which led to the destruction of Buddhist monasteries, Indian Buddhist art started to disappear. In China, Buddhist art was inspired by India, which had already established sculptures of Buddha. The art in China followed a different route, which focused on footprints, empty seats, and architecture. As the religion expanded and received followership, the art evolved through the sculptures and architecture in the temples that were later built. The Buddhist art in both countries relied on the early artwork in India, which was advanced in China in accordance with Daoism. The culture was based on sculptures, which could be used to represent the various teachings of Buddha.

The influence of Buddhist Indian art on Chinese art is varied and comprehensive. Understanding the influence requires a background understanding of art history and literary sources in both contexts. Few kinds of literature additionally exist on the influence of Western culture on both Chinese and Indian Buddhist art. It is evident that Indian culture came into contact with Chinese culture during the introduction of Buddhism in China. The Han period was the moment when Buddhist ideas found their way into China. The different doctrines of the religion popularized the religion, which positively affected the growth of Buddhist art. Gradually, the art was enhanced and widely represented since Buddhism in India was slowly disintegrating.

Buddhism had a large impact on Chinese culture and ways of doing things. The religious beliefs and the works of art were transformed through the entry of Buddhism. In China, Daoism was a dominant tradition before the entry of Buddhism, which lacked the expression of the work of art. Buddhism had monumental sculptures that were made of either wood or stone primarily designed for worship. These images represented the Buddhist teachings, which found their way to Daoism. The carvings in Buddhist temples inspired Chinese art, which grew as the religion gained more followers. The architecture and the sculptures allowed Chinese artists to display their talent and develop new ideas to represent the changing Buddhist religion in China. The existing Chinese art provides the platform to assess the influence of Indian art through the spread of Buddhism.

Chapter 6: Buddhist And Hindu Developments In East Asia

Buddhism and Hinduism are two religions that share a common ancestry and are similar in a way. Buddhism originated in India and spread to East Asia. In China, Buddhism was not easily accepted as it received opposition from strong traditions of Daoism and Confucianism. The new religion came with new changes, which were not readily accepted by the native Chinese. Eventually, the religion was accepted due to the works of Chinese scholars who identified similarities between the two religions. Buddhism in Korea was introduced by Chinese Monk who taught the Buddhist ideas, even though the religion faced opposition, it was easily accepted into Korea since it had already been declared the state religion.

Hinduism is a religion that is associated with India, and it originated in India. The religion is dominant in India due to its many followers. Unlike Buddhism, Hinduism managed to stay in the hearts of the people and was practised countrywide. Hinduism is a religion with strict beliefs that are followed right from birth. Hinduism believes in a caste system in which an individual is born in a certain social class where they cannot change or marry one another. Hinduism was able to spread to Indonesia and Malaysia, where it was adopted but eventually faded off because of Buddhist and Islam pressure. The religion was spread by Indian traders who travelled to most regions of East Asia, engaging in trade and spreading their religious beliefs. In present-day Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, Hinduism was able to spread even though it lacked a larger following. Wars and the collapse of trade eventually led to the collapse of Hinduism in East Asia as people shifted to other religions that were growing.

Hinduism and Buddhism coexist together since they share common similarities. Hinduism borrowed much from Buddhism, particularly the practices and architecture of its temples. In East Asia, Hinduism eventually declined due to the pressure of Buddhism and the encroachment of Islam. Countries such as Indonesia, Korea, Vietnam, and Cambodia saw the growth of Buddhism, which stopped the growth of Hinduism. The fact that the two religions shared things gave room for the expansion of Buddhism, which replaced Hinduism. Most scholars were forced to travel to India to study the two religions and get back to their countries with a new influence, which saw the religion advancing more in the East.

Several reasons led to the collapse of Hinduism in the East, but the conflicting ideas of Buddhism are the reason why Buddhism was eventually accepted more in the East.

The ideas of Hinduism are to blame for its failure to dominate most countries of East Asia. East Asia was faced with a period of religious pressure where religious ideas played a key role. Hinduism promoted the ideas of the caste system, which promoted inequality in the society. Such ideas were countered by Buddhism, which encouraged equality and had a unique explanation of the understanding of religion and how society was expected to act to promote equity. As Islam found its way into present-day Indonesia, most people left Hinduism, which made the religion unpopular. As the number of followers decreased, its popularity declined, forcing the remaining followers to opt for either Islam or Buddhism. In East Asia, Buddhism dominates because of the large population of Chinese and Koreans, while small groups of people still practice Hinduism.

Chapter 9: Japanese Woodblock Prints

Japan is known for woodblock printing. Art is created using a piece of wood, and an artist can create multiple versions of a given image. Printing can be done through different methods. Japan has a rich history of beautiful woodblock printing. In this unique printing method, one carves an image into a sizeable piece of wood. Areas that are not printed are cut away using gouges (sharp blades); thus, the design is left in reverse on the block. Then, the block is inked depending on the user's colour preferences and pressed on the surface. The surface may be paper or fabric, and an impression of the block's image is left on the paper.

During the early times, most of the wood prints were done in black and white, but eventually, the Japanese mastered coloured prints. Coloured woodblock prints were very complicated and consumed a lot of time. Every colour that was to be added to the printing required a new block. Woodblock printing originated in China and was introduced to Japan in the 8th century. At first, it was not used for religious texts but was later used as a primary method for printing books in the 1500s. By the 1700s, at a time of prosperity, the wealthy upper classes introduced a style called Ukiyo-e ('floating world'), which included exclusive prints and paintings. Besides, the prints had different colours and were of high decorative quality. They manifested various forms of nature, sensual pleasures, evolving fashion, and beautiful courtesans. With time, the style was popularized among all the society's strata, and other people were able to own such prints. By the end of the 16th century, innovativeness enhanced the development and production of coloured woodblocks, where about twenty different colours were used.

Initially, the woodblock prints served as a sign of social class, whereas the affluent owned specific prints as a sign of power. The ruling class was the trendsetter in society and influenced artists in a big way. However, with time, art became a common identification and a source of communication both at the local and religious levels. The woodblock prints were also a means of publishing books, and people could have access to information and identify themselves with a particular class. Woodblock prints

were also a means towards sustaining a stable social order since they established a structured social hierarchy among the people.

Due to commercial prosperity and financial success, there was the development of a new urban culture. There was popular culture, *ukiyo* meaning a “fleeting or floating world.” It was solely for the *chonin* or ‘townspeople’. By ‘floating world,’ people specifically meant being affluent, modern, fashionable and stylish (Pang np). Further, woodblock prints were a foundation for an evolving culture among the Japanese. They elicited innovativeness and people’s way of life, especially through the commercialization of the different items and paintings. The customers were usually rich townspeople, and they helped improve the living standards of the people. The entrepreneurial publishers helped the printers and carvers to sell various designs to the public.

The traditional art was imbued with spirituality and inspired by nature. The people were thus intertwined or connected through the various forms of art. It is, therefore, a means through which people share a common belonging through similar beliefs, values, and culture (Pang np).

Works Cited

Pang, Mae. “Japanese Woodblock Prints: A Mass Medium.” *Ngv.Vic.Gov.Au*, 2016, <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/japanese-woodblock-prints-a-mass-medium/> Accessed 13 Apr 2018.

Sullivan, Michael, and Jerome Silbergeld. “Chinese Art.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/art/Chinese-art>. Accessed 13 Apr 2018.