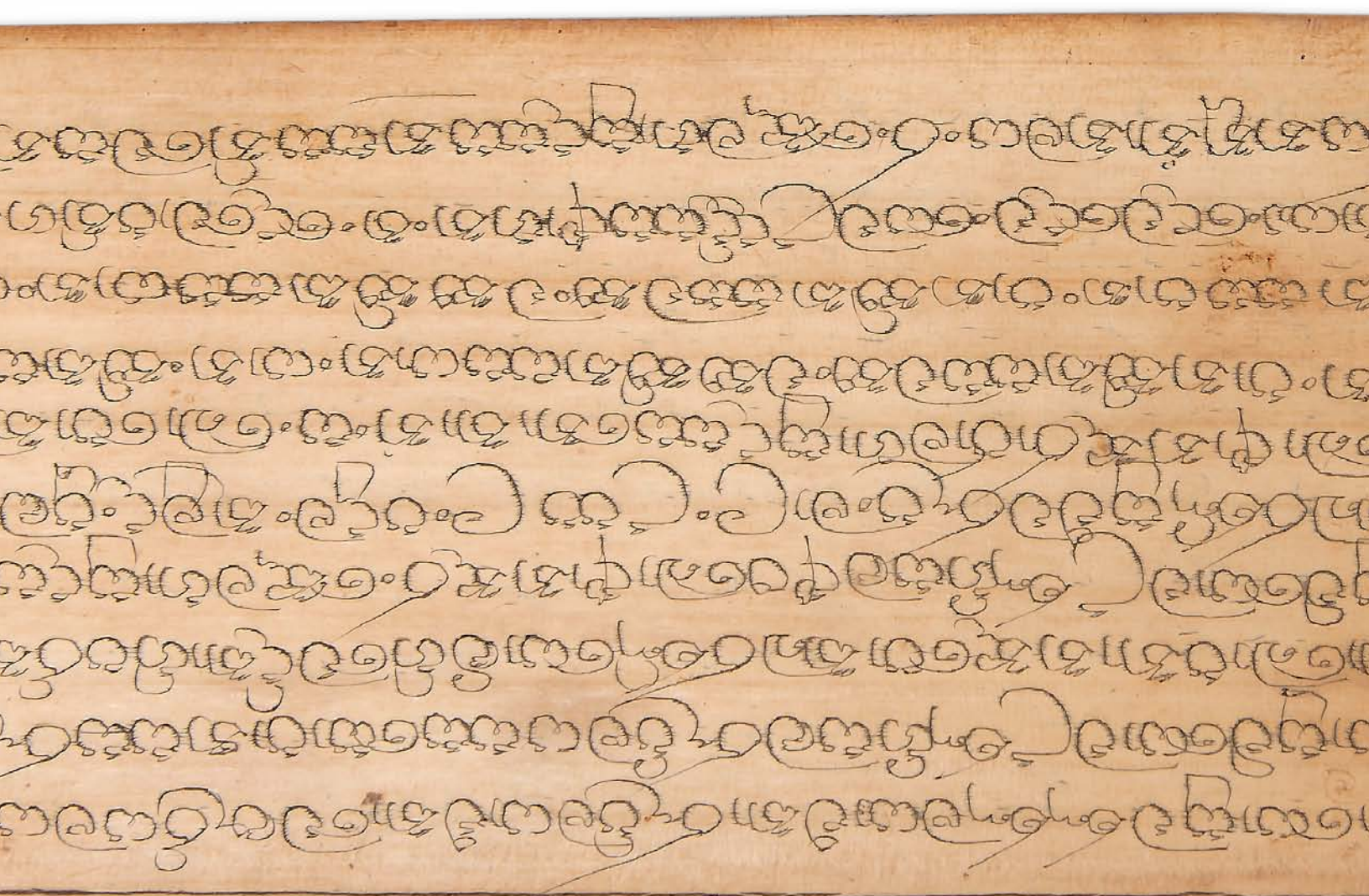
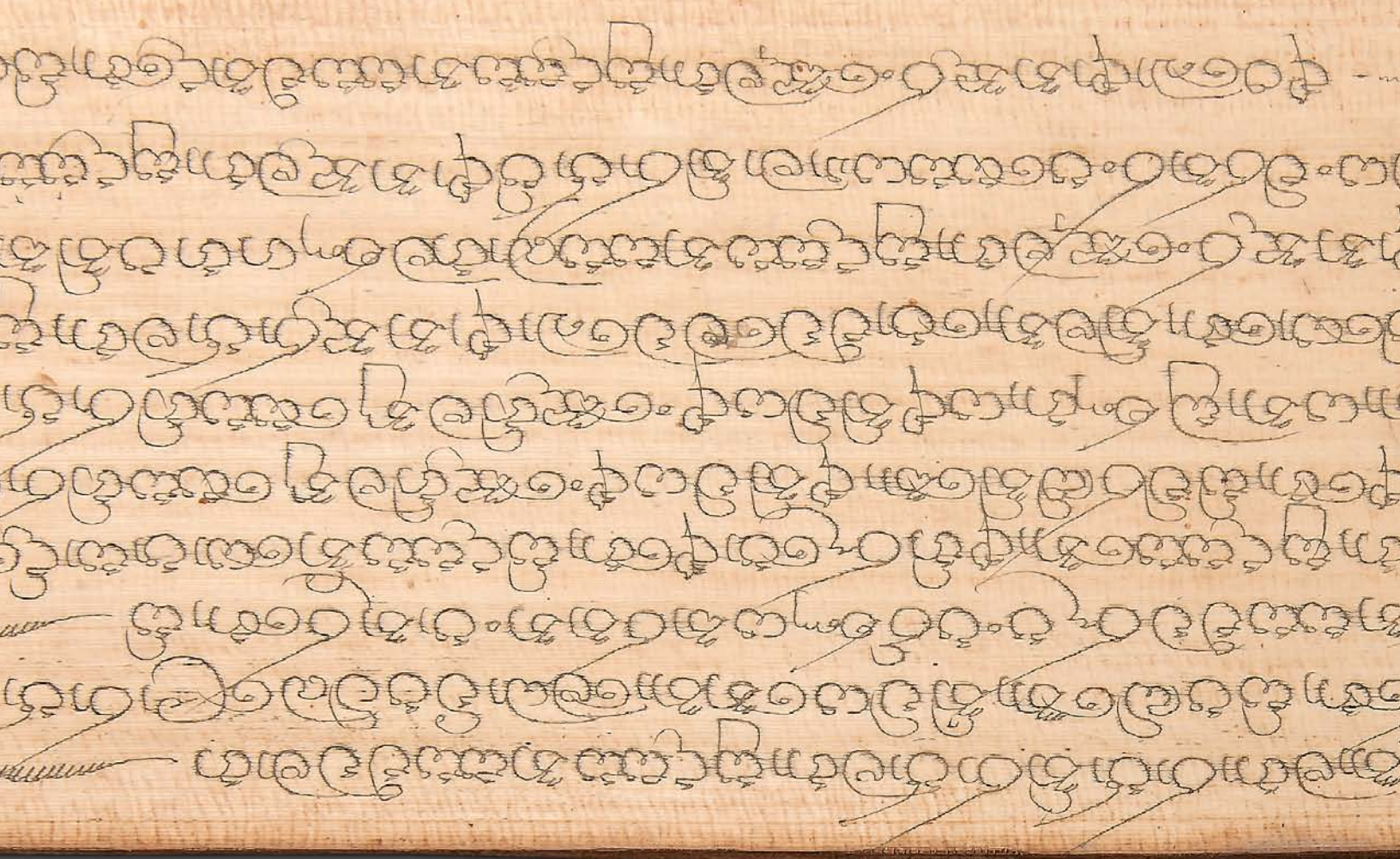


SACRED WORD



AND IMAGE:

Five World Religions



SACRED WORD AND IMAGE: Five World Religions

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Exhibition Dates:
January 4 – March 25, 2012

ISBN 978-0-98-44081-3-9

Presenting sponsorship of
this exhibition has been
provided by US Bancorp
Foundation and US Bank
Private Client Reserve.



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FOREWORD

SACRED WORD AND IMAGE: FIVE WORLD RELIGIONS IS A SPECIAL COLLECTION OF OBJECTS WHOSE ARTISTIC BEAUTY IS INTENDED TO INSPIRE AND CAPTIVATE.

Its richly illuminated texts and exquisite religious images represent five different traditions that celebrate the spiritual diversity of Arizona and bear significance far beyond their aesthetic appeal. The exhibition reminds us of the rich and sundry communities of faith that formed part of our past and continue to be vibrant features of our state today. We are the inheritors of these traditions and this exhibition is dedicated to the expansion of our knowledge and appreciation for the varied beliefs and rituals that contribute to our cultural fabric.

This exhibition is also a demonstration of the meaningful conjunction between education and the arts. Its accompanying electronic book includes not only lavish illustrations of the sacred texts and images, but essays on the meaning of these objects prepared by scholars from Arizona universities. The use of such a digital tool is a first for the Phoenix Art Museum and signifies an important technological transformation for informing and engaging with an expanding, modern audience. It will be of use to a broad spectrum of Arizona students, academics and people around the world, and the collaboration between Arizona State University and the Phoenix Art Museum from which it stems is an organic, ongoing and vital reflection of a broader, shared concern for the arts.

We also recognize with this exhibition the artistic maturity and distinction of local Arizona collectors whose sacred texts and images it displays. We give our sincere thanks to Peter and Pari Banko, Jacqueline Butler-Diaz and Lionel Diaz, Amy S. Clague, Drs. Barry and Colleene Fernando, and James and Ana Melikian.

It is a privilege to share this unique exhibition—at once beautiful, diverse, collaborative and technological—with the people of Arizona, and we invite you to enjoy its wonders for the mind and spirit.

James K. Ballinger
Director, Phoenix Art Museum

Michael M. Crow
President, Arizona State University



PREFACE

DRAWING FROM THE COLLECTION OF PHOENIX ART MUSEUM AND SEVERAL PROMINENT PRIVATE COLLECTIONS IN ARIZONA, SACRED WORD & IMAGE: FIVE WORLD RELIGIONS FEATURES EXAMPLES OF THE SACRED WRITTEN WORD AND PICTORIAL IMAGE AS EXPRESSED IN THE CULTURES OF HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM THROUGHOUT THE PAST 1500 YEARS.

Janet Baker, Ph.D.
Curator of Asian Art, Phoenix Art Museum

By comparing works from several faiths, the cross-cultural currents and historical continuity that affected all of these faiths can be traced across the Eurasian continent and beyond. The variety of materials used to document mankind's significant thoughts and beliefs during this long span of time is astonishing: paper, palm leaf, wood, lacquer, vellum, silk, metal and ivory. In some instances, complete illustrated manuscripts allow us to understand the original artistic and literary vision of the scribe and illustrator. Other examples preserve the decorative and symbolic images which tell a visual story linked to one of the major tenets of a religious faith. These sacred objects were created to be used as part of rituals, devotions and celebrations within their respective traditions. They embody in their sheer physical material nature the ephemeral experiences of faith, forgiveness, purification and sanctity. In an age when the printed word and image have been transformed into electronic form, it is revelatory to see how past civilizations used the means available to them at the time and in the place where they were created to become lasting documents of thoughts, visions, beliefs and hopes for a better world, both in the present and future realms.

Throughout human history, kingdoms and palaces, churches and monasteries, temples and mosques have been built to signify both sacred places and secular power. The works in this exhibition transcend time and place, as their small scale and portability have allowed them to pass through many hands of both believers and collectors alike. They allow us a better understanding of the interconnectedness of world cultural history and the timelessness and universality of the quest of the human heart and mind to seek answers to profound questions: Who are we? Why are we here? What lies beyond this life? How should we conduct our lives on this earth? Most important, for the 21st century, is the question of how we can live together as a global society. Our past is a key to our future.

This project brought together scholars from different disciplines and areas of world culture. Three catalogue essays were written by my fine colleagues Dr. Stephen Batalden, Director of the Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies at Arizona State University; Dr. Zsuzsanna Gulacsi, Professor of Asian Religious Art at Northern Arizona University and Dr.



Sherry Harlacher, Director of the Denison Museum in Ohio. It was a pleasure to work with each of them and I thank them for their unique and excellent contributions. The project also offered valuable experiences for students at Arizona State University who conducted research on objects and created an ongoing website under the supervision of my esteemed colleague and partner in this project, Dr. Claudia Brown, Professor of Art History at ASU. These students are: Shiloh Blair, Caitlin Deegan, Heather Findling, Ming Hua, Nicholas Kloforn, Matthew McLaughlin, Christina Park, Kinsey Redd, Candace Ring, Patrick Vincent, and Momoko Welch. Their diligence and involvement is laudatory.

Support for this project was provided by very dedicated members of Phoenix Art Museum: Drs. Barry and Colleene Fernando, Amy S. Clague, James and Ana Melikian and Dr. Dhira Mahoney. Their long-standing involvement in the collection and programs of the Museum are exemplary. Additionally, financial support has been provided by US Bancorp Foundation and US Bank Private Client Reserve. We are grateful to them for providing the means to make a concept and vision become a reality. A very special note of gratitude goes to Dr. Barry Fernando for his wonderful technical support and expertise in making the complete catalogue Phoenix Art Museum's first entirely electronic book. Dr. Fernando's knowledge of software design and visual aesthetics were key components in both conception and implementation, as well as in giving me the courage to use new technology. Finally, I wish to thank Jim Ballinger, The Sybil Harrington Director, for encouraging curators to envision ways to present objects and ideas that will evoke new modes of thinking about the history and culture of the world.

The people behind the scenes who help to make a project complete and as professional as possible are numerous. Momoko Welch, my assistant, has worked hard to verify measurements and details to create a detailed checklist of the objects. Lisa Meyerowitz gave everyone's contributions fine editing. P.S. Studios outdid themselves in creating a beautiful design for the book that will function well on a variety of electronic components. Kathryn Blake, Director of Education, fine-tuned the thematic concepts and label copy of the exhibition in the excellent manner we have come to always expect from her. David Restad, Exhibition Designer, and Gene Koeneman, Chief Preparator, worked together with preparators Bob Gates and Zach Glover to create a harmonious design and installation that complements a rich variety of objects. Keith Williams, Information Systems Manager; Arian Ploszaj, Marketing Production Coordinator and Lee Werhan, Retail Sales Director, have made this electronic book available to everyone everywhere. Mindy Riesenberg, Director of Marketing and Public Relations, facilitated interface with our audiences.

It is my sincere hope that each visitor to the *Sacred Word & Image: Five World Religions* exhibition and each reader of the catalogue will find their understanding and appreciation for the interconnectedness of human faith and ideals enhanced by the beauty and meaning of these artistic and literary works.

A SHORT ESSAY ON FIVE WORLD RELIGIONS

Janet Baker, Ph.D
Curator of Asian Art, Phoenix Art Museum

THE OBJECTS IN THIS EXHIBITION REPRESENT THE TRADITIONS OF FIVE MAJOR WORLD FAITHS. THE SYNOPSES BELOW SUMMARIZE THE BASIC TENETS OF EACH RELIGION. I HAVE EMPHASIZED THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THESE FAITHS IN ORDER TO REFLECT THE CONNECTIONS AND CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCES SHARED BY THE OBJECTS AND IMAGERY FEATURED IN THIS EXHIBITION. THESE SHORT SUMMARIES ARE NOT MEANT TO BE EXHAUSTIVE IN SCOPE BUT INSTEAD TO ELUCIDATE THE MAJOR BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AS RELEVANT TO THIS EXHIBITION.



BUDDHISM

BUDDHISM IS A RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY BASED ON THE TEACHINGS OF **SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA**, WHO LIVED IN THE NORTHEASTERN PART OF INDIA AROUND THE FIFTH CENTURY BC. Born as a Hindu prince, Siddhartha preached a path known as the Middle Way between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification that would help all sentient beings achieve Nirvana (enlightenment) and escape the cycle of suffering and rebirth. He became known as the *Buddha*, meaning “the awakened one.” The foundations of Buddhist tradition and practice are the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the *dharma* (teachings), and the *sangha* (community). The Noble Eightfold Path is the primary means to seeking enlightenment: correct views, resolve, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, awareness, and meditation. These eight principles are often manifest in Buddhist art and design in other aspects of eight, such as the Eight Auspicious Emblems and the eight-petal lotus flower.

As Buddhism spread across Asia and beyond, various schools of thought arose to resolve conflicts between Buddhist principles and other religions or philosophies, such as Confucianism in China and Shintoism in Japan. In India, aspects of Hinduism mingled with Buddhism, leading to various deities and practices known as Tantric Buddhism, practiced primarily in Himalayan regions. There are numerous Buddhist texts that discourage the practice of rituals, emphasizing instead the purity of word, thought, and action. The Buddha also repudiated the caste distinctions of Indian society, offering ordination into monastic life to all regardless of caste. Yet other practices, such as yoga and meditation, are practiced by both Hindus and Buddhists, with similarities and differences in the usage of terminology and techniques.



HINDUISM

HINDUISM IS THE PREDOMINANT AND INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS TRADITION OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT, AND IS FORMED OF DIVERSE TRADITIONS WITH NO SINGLE FOUNDER.

The earliest evidence for prehistoric religion in India dates back to the late Neolithic and early Harāppan period (3550–2600 BC). A large body of texts is classified as Hindu, the foremost and oldest being the Vedas, followed by the Upanishads and the Purānas, as well as the epics Mahrābhārata and Rāmāyana. Hinduism does not have a unified system of belief, but instead is a traditional way of life that tolerates differences of belief. There is a myriad of deities—both male and female—who, in turn, have numerous avatars or incarnations.

Prominent themes in Hinduism include *Dharma* (ethics/duties), *Samsrāra* (the cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth), *Karma* (actions and their effects on the person who does them), *Moksha* (liberation from *Samsrāra*), and the various *yogas* (paths or practices). Much of Hindu ritual is performed at home on a daily basis. Offerings, recitations, meditation, and purification through water rituals are typical religious activities. Merit can be gained through the performance of good works or charity, which will accumulate over time and reduce suffering in the next life. There are several Hindu holy cities and many temples to which pilgrimages may be made. Most notably, Hinduism spans monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, atheism, and agnosticism; but ultimately most Hindus share a belief that the spirit or soul of each person is eternal. The goal of life is to realize that one’s soul is identical to that of Brahman (the supreme soul). This realization of identity with *Brahman* allows the attainment of *Moksha*.



CHRISTIANITY

CHRISTIANITY IS A MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION THAT TEACHES THAT JESUS IS THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD AND SAVIOR OF HUMANITY. Believing that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in the Hebrew Bible, Christians began as a Jewish sect in the mid-first century AD in the Middle East under the leadership of the twelve Apostles of Christ. Christians believe that God has established a new covenant with people through Jesus, as recorded by the Gospels and other New Testament books of the Christian Bible. By the fourth century, Christianity had become the dominant religion of the Roman Empire.

The foundations of Christian belief as expressed in the Nicene Creed, which affirms the trinitarian belief in God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit. According to this creedal formulation, adopted at the first Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325 AD, Christ was born to the Virgin Mary, died by crucifixion, descended into hell, and arose from the dead before ascending into heaven. Christians believe that man’s sinfulness—the brokenness of the human condition—is overcome in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christian worship is centered in the Eucharist, or Lord’s Supper, which is the reenactment of the Last Supper that Christ shared with his Apostles prior to his crucifixion at the hands of Roman authorities. The cross or crucifix is the most widely recognized symbol of Christian faith; it adorns Christian houses of worship, appears in works of art, and is worn by believers.



JUDAISM

JUDAISM IS THE RELIGION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE GROUNDED IN THE HEBREW BIBLE, WHICH EXPRESSES THE COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP GOD DEVELOPED WITH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL. The most well-known example of this is the Ten Commandments, which God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. Judaism is one of the oldest monotheistic religions, spanning more than three thousand years, and is the oldest to survive to the present day. Judaism’s texts, traditions, and values strongly influenced later Abrahamic religions, including Christianity and Islam. Many aspects of Judaism have also influenced secular Western ethics and civil law. Jews are an ethno-religious group, whose varying approach to Jewish law and tradition reflects the diversity within modern Judaism. Authority on theological and legal matters is not vested in any one person or organization but in sacred texts and in the rabbis, scholars, and other believers who interpret them.

Unlike other ancient Near Eastern gods, the God of the Hebrew Bible is portrayed as unitary and solitary; thus, Judaism begins with the belief that God is one and is concerned with the actions of humankind. At its core, the Hebrew Bible is an account of the Israelites’ relationship with God from their earliest history until the building of the Second Temple (ca. 535 BC). Abraham is hailed as the father of the Jewish people. Later, Jacob and his children were enslaved in Egypt, and God commanded Moses to lead the exodus from Egypt. At Mount Sinai they received the Torah, which includes the five books of Moses. The Second Commandment, which prohibits the creation of any idol in the likeness of created things, is the primary reason that Jewish sacred objects and art do not bear representational images. Judaism shares this view with Islam, in which most sacred art is devoid of human representational figures. Both religions claim to arise from the patriarch Abraham, and both are monotheistic. Core Islamic values and practices are drawn from this common Abrahamic tradition.



ISLAM

ISLAM IS A MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION ARTICULATED BY THE QUR’AN, A TEXT CONSIDERED BY ITS ADHERENTS TO BE THE VERBATIM WORD OF GOD, AND BY THE TEACHINGS OF MUHAMMAD, HIS PROPHET. Muslims believe God to be one and incomparable, and that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that was revealed at many times and places before, including through the prophets Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Muslims repudiate the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus, however, claiming this doctrine to be at variance with traditional Abrahamic monotheism. They believe that parts of earlier scriptures, such as the Torah and the Gospels, have become distorted or corrupted over time, thus creating the need for the verses of the Qur’an, which they believe was revealed by God to Muhammad on numerous occasions between AD 610 and 632. The primary means of transmission was oral, though some of Muhammad’s companions wrote the verses down while he was alive. The Qur’an is seen as perfect only as revealed in the original Arabic; translations are regarded as “interpretations” of the sacred text.

Like Christians, Muslims believe in a bodily resurrection and a heaven of joy and bliss, with Qur’anic references describing its pleasures. The Last Judgment is based on how an individual has acted upon the criteria of the Five Pillars of Islam in their lifetime. These Five Pillars include: the creed, daily prayers, almsgiving, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and pilgrimage to Mecca. The city of Mecca is where Muhammad won a military coup in 629, dedicated to the abandonment of polytheism despite persecution from the authorities of Mecca. By the time of his death in 632, Muhammad had united the tribes of Arabia into a single religious polity.

I wish to thank Dr. Stephen Batalden and Dr. Anne Feldhaus for their review of this material.

SACRED WORD AND IMAGE IN BUDDHIST WORKS OF ART

Janet Baker, Ph.D
Curator of Asian Art, Phoenix Art Museum

IN 322 BC, FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT, THERE EMERGED A SOVEREIGN OVER AN EMPIRE ESTABLISHED IN INDIA KNOWN AS CHANDRAGUPTA MAURYA. IT WAS DURING THIS PERIOD OF GREAT CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT THAT CHANDRAGUPTA'S GRANDSON, ASHOKA (R. 272–232 BC), BECAME THE EARLIEST AND MOST RENOWNED IMPERIAL PATRON OF BUDDHISM.

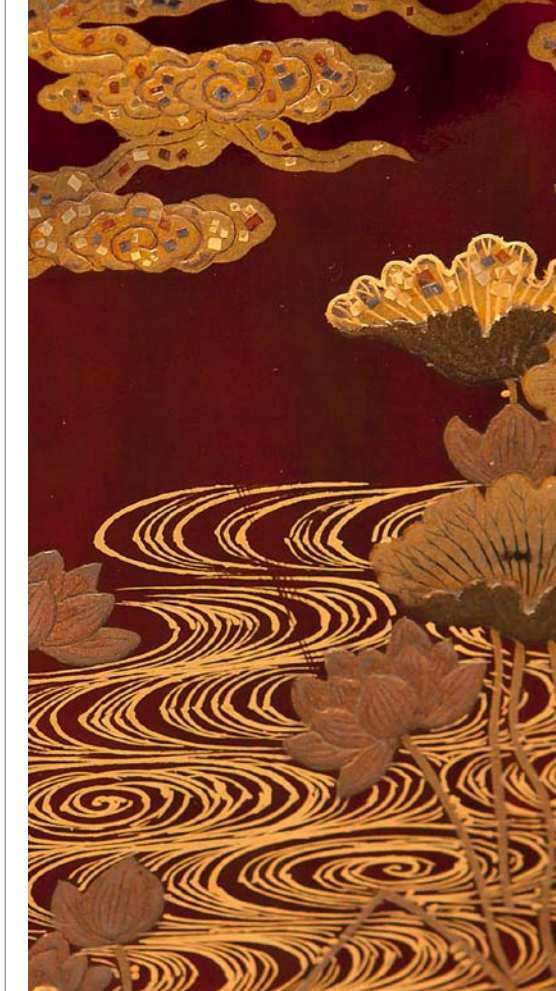


Following the horrors of the battlefield, he converted to the teaching of the Buddha, which led to a propagation of the law and peace of the Buddha across Asia through massive building projects and the dispatch of Buddhist envoys to the Hellenistic and the Singhalese worlds. His self-view as Chakravartin, or ruler of the celestial wheel of Buddhist Law set an example for later imperial leaders in Sri Lanka, China, Japan, and beyond.

Reliquaries, Shrines, and Texts

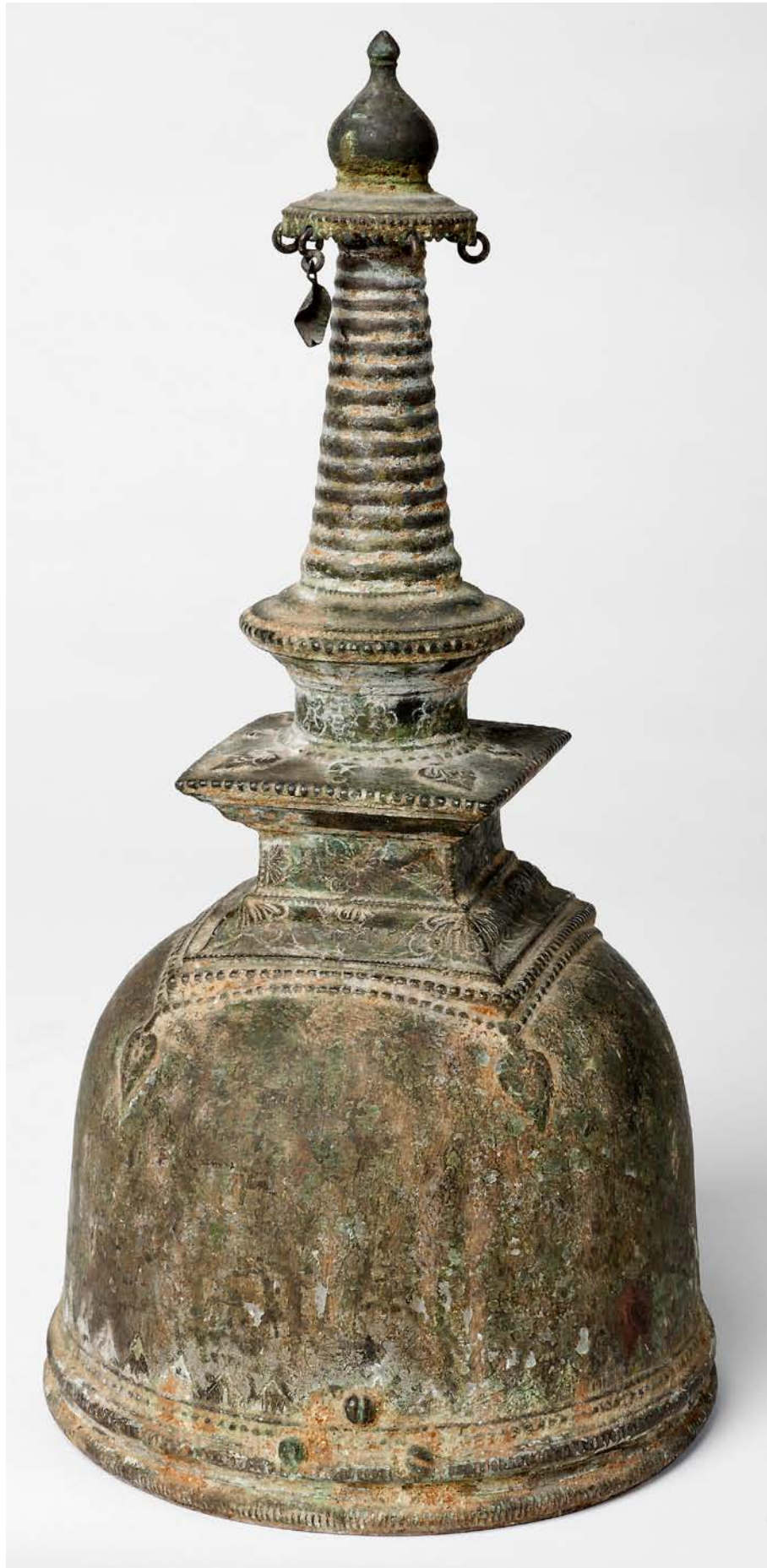
During the following Shunga period (185–72 BC), the concept of the *stupa* (relic mound) became manifest in India, with the great stupa at Sanchi being the finest example. When the Buddha died, his ashes—following a custom long reserved for nobles and holy men—were enshrined under artificial hills of brick or earth. Emperor Ashoka is said to have distributed the Buddha's bodily relics into stupas throughout the realm. This enabled worshippers to think of the Buddha as an imminent reality. The basic design of the stupa embodied precise orientation and proportions of the whole and its various parts, thus becoming an architectural diagram of the cosmos.¹

¹ Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1984), 59–79.



In Sri Lanka, an island off the eastern coast of India, the concepts of the Chakravartin and the stupa materialized in the first historical *dagaba* (stupa) built in Kandy in 250–210 BC by Devanampitissa; it houses the famous Tooth Relic of the Buddha. The form of Sri Lankan *dagabas* strongly echoes that of Indian prototypes—a hemispherical dome representing heaven, surmounted by a square mast symbolizing the world axis, which in turn supports a multitiered spire representing the supreme gods. This bronze reliquary (figs. 1a–b) from the twelfth century dates from the reign of King Parakramabahu I, and may have been made for the ashes of a respected monk. During the Polonnaruva period (993–1235), the shape of the half-dome became slightly attenuated.²

Fig. 1a–b
Bronze Reliquary
Sri Lanka, late Polonnaruva period or early Divided Kingdoms period, 12th–14th century



² John Listopad, "The Cult of Relics," in *Guardian of the Flame: Art of Sri Lanka* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 2003), 29–36.

Fig. 2a
Wooden Reliquary with Printed Sutra
Japan, Nara period, 764–70



Buddhism spread across the Asian continent via land routes that traversed the arduous deserts of central Asia and western China, then across China to Korea, and Japan. When Buddhism was introduced to Japan from China during the reign of Prince Shōtoku Taishi in the early seventh century, the new belief brought the written Chinese language to a previously illiterate Japan. The accompanying rituals, images, and architectural structures of Chinese Buddhism were soon copied in Japan under imperial sponsorship. By the Nara period, named for the city that was the capital from 710 to 784, a broad embrace of Chinese Tang dynasty culture had been achieved, within the goal of making Japan a “Buddha-land.” This small, wooden reliquary with printed sutra (figs. 2a–c) was one of a million examples made in the Nara period under the reign of Empress Shōtoku (r. 749–58 as Kōken and 765–69 as Shōtoku). The Empress promoted Buddhism in the Nara government to repent for the loss of life due to either to a smallpox epidemic in 735 or the suppression of the Emi-no-Oshikatsu Rebellion in 764. Her desire for penance led to the creation of these small reliquary shrines. According to the official histories, the Empress ordered one million of these pagodas to be made and distributed among the ten major temples in the Nara vicinity.³

The form of the wooden reliquary echoes early Buddhist architecture in China and Japan, in which the Indian prototype of the stupa was transformed into a multitiered structure known as a pagoda. The *sutra* (text) contained inside was probably a woodblock print and is one of the oldest surviving examples of printing known in the world today. Within each of the reliquaries was placed one of four different prayers drawn from the *Wugoujing Kuangjing*, a Chinese translation of a Sanskrit text (Japanese: *Mukujōkō-Daidarani-kyō*). Each of the four prayers begins with the same opening phrase or title, which translates roughly as “the purity of prayer,” reflecting the Empress’s desire for a spiritual cleansing following the catastrophes that occurred prior to or during her reign.⁴

³ Robert G. Sewell, “The First Printed Text in the World, Standing Tall and Isolated in Eighth-Century Japan: Hyakumant darani,” *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* 60 (2003): 123.
⁴ L. Carrington Goodrich, “The Development of Printing in China,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Hong Kong Branch) 3 (1963): 38.

Fig. 2b-c
Wooden Reliquary with Printed Sutra
Japan, Nara period, 764–70

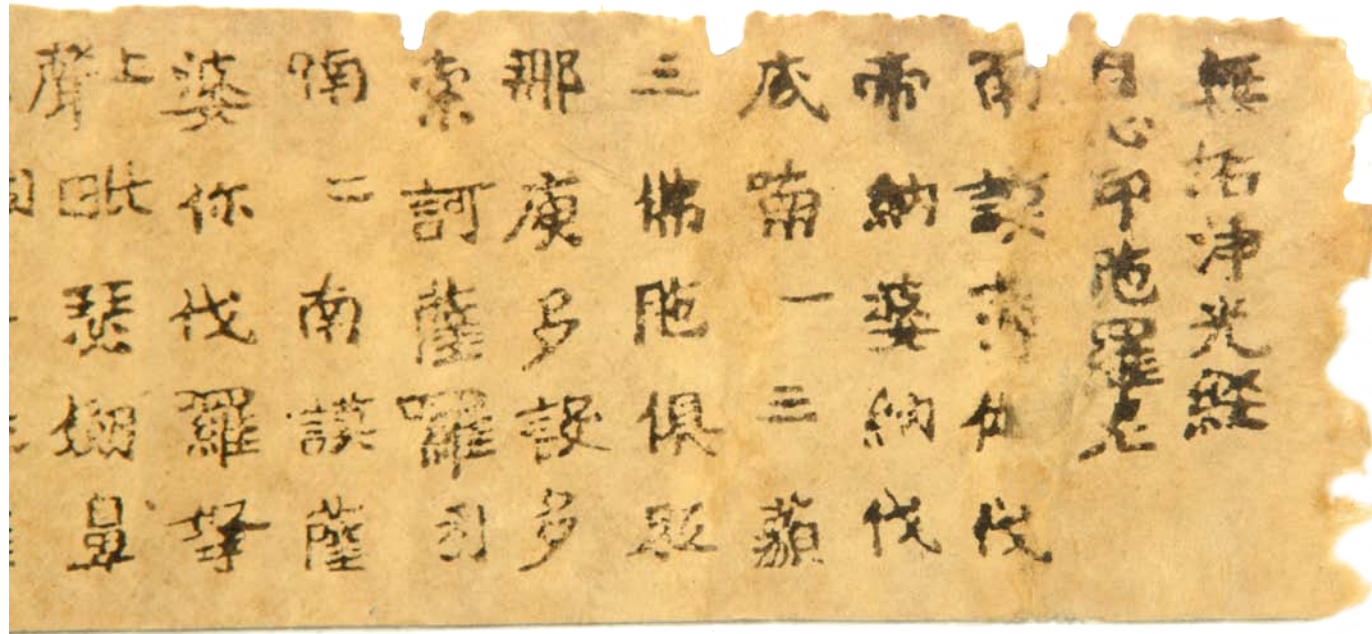
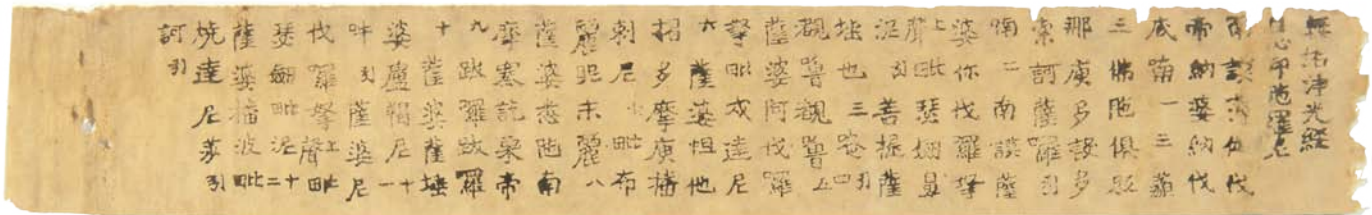




Fig. 3a-b
Bronze Sutra Container, dated 1280
Japan, Kamakura period (1185–1333)



Another vessel for sacred Buddhist scriptures in Japan is this rare bronze sutra container (figs. 3a–b). The container has a lotus finial on the lid and an inscription (now obscured), which reads: *Kōn kanoe-tatsu sannen nigatsu jōichinichi* (Second month, eleventh day of the third year of the Kōan era, 1280). An example of such a sutra container being used is recorded during the rule of Taira Kiyomori. Copies of the *Lotus Sutra*, chapter by chapter, were placed into ornamented bronze containers and presented to a Buddhist temple in 1164.⁵ The Lotus Sutra has twenty-eight main chapters, opening and closing chapters, a dedication, and other documents. It is one of the primary scriptures associated with the Tiantai (Japanese: *Tendai*) sect of Buddhism, founded in China in the sixth century. Regarded as the fullest and most perfect of the Buddha’s teachings, the Lotus Sutra affirms that the Buddha nature is inherent in all living beings and validates the use of all possible means to bring about salvation. Thus, earlier teachings came to be regarded by the Tendai sect as earlier stages of the Buddha’s transmission of doctrine.⁶

⁵ Julia Meech-Pekarik, “Taira Kiyomori and the Heike Nōgyō” (PhD Dissertation, Harvard, 1976).
⁶ Janet Baker, “The Relationship of Narrative Text and Pictorial Composition in Late Sixth-Century Paintings at Tun-huang,” in *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* (Kamakura, Japan), no. 3 (1993/94): 206.



Fig. 4a-b
Muryōgi-kyō (Sutra of Innumerable Meanings), dated 1720



An example of a Japanese sutra written on paper is this *Muryōgi-kyō* (figs. 4a–c), made from individual sheets of handmade paper about eighteen inches long that have been glued together horizontally, on which the text is written by multiple hands within silver ruled lines. The writing is read from top to bottom and from right to left. The *Muryōgi-kyō* is the introductory text of three canonical texts of Nichiren Buddhism: *The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings*, *The Lotus Sutra*, and *The Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva of Universal Worthiness*. This particular copy was created for Jyōju-in Temple in Kamakura, Japan, and was most likely used for ceremonial and decorative purposes as well as to disseminate knowledge. Members of the Japanese aristocracy commissioned scrolls such as these as a way to ensure their wishes were noted during temple rituals. Such commissions provided funding for the daily operations of the temple.⁷

⁷ John M. Rosenfield, “Enthroned Buddha Preaching” and “Illustrated Frontispiece to the Lotus Sutra,” in *Journey of the Three Jewels*, ed. John M. Rosenfield (New York: Tuttle, 1979), 61.

Fig. 4c (detail)
Muryōgi-kyō (Sutra of Innumerable Meanings), dated 1720,
Japanese, Edo period (1615-1868)

訶薩疾成阿耨多羅三藐三菩提佛告大
嚴言薩及八万言薩言善男子有一法門能
令言薩疾得成阿耨多羅三藐三菩提若有
言薩學是法門者則能得阿耨多羅三藐三
菩提世尊是法門者乎字何等其義云何言
薩云何修行佛言善男子是一法門名為無
量義言薩欲得修學無量義我者應當觀察
一切諸法自本來今性相空寂無大無小無生
無滅非住非動不進不退猶如虛空無有二
法而諸衆生虛妄橫計是此是彼是得是失
起不善念造衆惡業輪迴六趣受諸苦毒無
量億劫不能自出言薩摩訶薩如是諦觀生
憐愍心發大慈悲將欲救拔又復深入一切
諸法法相如是生如是法法相如是住如是
法法相如是異如是法法相如是滅如是法
法相如是能生惡法法相如是能生善法住
異滅者亦復如是言薩如是觀察四相始末
悉遍知已次復諦觀一切諸法念念不住新
新生滅復觀即時生住異滅如是觀已而入
衆生諸根性欲性欲無量故說法無量說法
無量故義亦無量無量義我者從一法生其一
法者即無相也如是無相無相不相不相無
相名為實相言薩摩訶薩安住如是真實相
已所發慈悲明諦不虛於衆生所真能拔苦
苦既拔已復為說法令諸衆生受於快樂善
男子言薩若能如是修一切法門無量義我者
必得疾成阿耨多羅三藐三菩提善男子如
是甚深無上大乘無量義我經文理真正尊無
過上三世諸佛所共守護無有衆魔群道得
入不為一切邪見生死之所壞敗是故善男

Fig. 5a-b
Portable Shrine, Japan, 19th century

Nichiren Buddhism was founded in Kamakura in Japan in the thirteenth century by the monk Nichiren, who believed in the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra's teachings. His opposition to other schools of Buddhism both attracted a large following and caused considerable political turmoil. A primary tenet of this sect is the belief that all people have an inherent Buddha nature and the capacity to achieve enlightenment in their present lifetime. Other schools of Buddhism do not offer such a degree of certainty. Following the death of its founder, the sect split into several schools, some of which are practiced around the globe today.⁸

A small, rectangular, portable shrine (figs. 5a–c) has rounded sides and hinged doors; it is ornamented on the exterior with lotus flowers in a pond, and clouds, sun, and moon above, and opens to reveal a delicately sculpted relief of Amida Raigō on the interior. The central panel shows a seated *Amida Buddha* (Buddha of Infinite Light) on a lotus throne under a jeweled canopy surrounded by cloud-like patterns. The two side panels show standing figures of Seishi on the right and Kannon on the left—two bodhisattvas who represent wisdom and compassion, respectively. They stand under jeweled trees in a posture of reverence turned toward the figure of Amida, their drapery showing an upturned edge to convey a sense of downward movement. Together, these three figures constitute a classic image of an Amida Raigō, which is a scene of these three figures descending to earth from the cloud-filled, Western paradise where they reside in order to save those who call upon Amida's name. In particular, they rescue the dying souls of those who utter the name of Amida in a meditation practice called *nembutsu* (the endless recitation of Amida Buddha's name as a form of mindfulness).

⁸ Stephen G. Covell, "Buddhism in Japan," *Buddhism in World Culture*, ed. Stephen C. Berkowitz (Santa Barbara: University of California Press, 2006), 219–43.



Fig. 5c
Portable Shrine, Japan, 19th century

These beliefs and practices were widely followed by Mahāyāna Buddhists across Asia belonging to the Pure Land sects, called Jōdo Shū and Jōdo Shinshū in Japan. In Pure Land traditions, it is believed that there is a place called *Sukhāvatī* (ultimate bliss), where respite from karmic transmigration can be found. Upon entrance to this blessed place, the practitioner is instructed by Amida Buddha and numerous bodhisattvas until full enlightenment is reached. These concepts are explained primarily in three texts: the shorter *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*, the longer *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*, and the *Amitūyurdhyāna Sūtra*. In addition, many other Mahāyāna texts mention Amida Buddha.⁹

⁹ Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, *Buddhism: The Light of Asia* (Princeton: Barrow, 1968), 69–71, 159–60, 180–82.

Fig. 6

Gilded Buddhist Shrine (Hpaya Khan), Burma, 19th century



The spread of Buddhism to various nations in Southeast Asia occurred through sea routes from India as well as by the land routes from the Himalayas and China. This *hpaya khan* (gilded shrine; fig. 6), is a miniature version of a sacred Buddhist building, and was likely produced in the Shan state in northeast Burma during middle to late nineteenth century as a devotional object that would have accrued merit for the donor. The shrine demonstrates several uses of lacquer: to gild wood; to provide a red pigment to contrast to the gold when charged with cinnabar; and as a cement to hold colored glass and mirrors.¹⁰ The intricate patterns of scrolls, flowers, lozenges, and beading are characteristic of the richly ornamental style of the period and contrast beautifully with the simple yet elegant, naturalistic modeling of the figures. Each of the disciples has two inscriptions on its base: one on the front indicating the disciple's name and one on the back indicating the directional orientation.

The shrine is elevated on legs with ball and claw feet to denote the transition from the earthly realm to that of the Buddha. At the top of the stairs, an intermediary transition is created by the terrace enclosed by a railing upon which are seated eight disciples, each positioned on an assigned directional point of the compass. Their gazes are focused on the Buddha, who sits above them with his hands in the *mudra* (gesture) of touching the earth, symbolizing his call to the earth to witness his enlightenment. Above the Buddha, a five-tiered roof represents the mythical Mount Meru, which exists at the center of the Buddha's cosmos and symbolizes spiritual ascent. The eaves are carved with various Buddhist symbols such as the peacock, which represents the Buddha's compassionate watchfulness. The five tiers are crowned with single-pointed finial pointing heavenward.

¹⁰ Ralph Isaacs and T. Richard Blurton, *Visions from the Golden Land* (London: British Museum, 2000), 126–28.

Fig. 7

Painting of Buddha with Attendants
Korea, Choson period, 18th–19th century



Paintings

Korea's proximity to China and Japan naturally affected its cultural history. By the fourth century AD, Buddhist influence had come from China and was acting as a political force within each of Korea's three kingdoms. In the seventh century, Korea was unified under the Silla Kingdom, during which time many Korean monks travelled to China and even India. Korea was also a potent transmitter of Buddhist culture to Japan. In the fifteenth century, however, the Confucian bureaucrats at the Korean court responded with hostile and repressive measures to the growing corruption and accumulation of wealth in the Buddhist monasteries. Nevertheless, Buddhism survived in a more limited form until the twentieth century.

During the Choson (Yi) dynasty (1392–1910), Korean culture was deeply influenced by Chinese Confucian culture and the literati arts of painting and calligraphy. The use of strong ink outlines and scrolling cloud motifs in *Buddha with Attendants* (fig. 7) clearly derive from Chinese painting. Sakyamuni Buddha sits at the center on a lotus throne surrounded by dual haloes. The entire composition is symmetrical, with attendant figures in pairs balanced on either side. A pair of bodhisattvas with haloes are flanked by the Ten Kings of Hell, dressed as magistrates prepared to judge the souls of those brought before them. This theme derives form a noncanonical but popular work, *The Sutra of the Ten Kings of Hell*, dating from the tenth century in

China. It was purported to be one of the final sermons preached by Sakyamuni Buddha, yet includes some personalities who never existed in India. Above, amid the clouds, sit the Kings' assistants holding documents; two representatives of the animal world—the horse and the ox—sit among them. Although this painting represents a scene of judgment, a tribunal sentencing of fallen souls, the Buddhist hell is not a place of eternal damnation. Rather, it is a temporary residence through which souls may pass before continuing on the journey through many incarnations toward spiritual enlightenment.¹¹

Examples of Buddhist painting throughout Asia includes murals in Buddhist caves, temple buildings, large banners used to adorn holy sites on special celebratory days, and devotional works on cotton or silk. Their survival into the twenty-first century depends on many factors, including the natural environment, regional political movements, and the level of care received over time. In Southeast Asia, the survival of paintings on wood or cloth is particularly rare due to the warm and moist climate.

¹¹ Marsha Weidner, *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850–1850*, (Lawrence, KS: Spencer Museum of Art, 1994), 13–14, 277–78.

Fig. 8a

Footprint of the Buddha (Buddhapada)
Sri Lanka, Kandyan period, 19th century

In fifth-century Sri Lanka, the chronicle *Mahavamsa* opens with an account of Sakyamuni Buddha's three miraculous visits to the island and a description of the origin of one of Sri Lanka's most revered relics, the footprint on Mount Sumanakuta (Adam's Peak). Forty-nine days after his enlightenment, the Buddha resolved to preach the dharma to all who would receive him. He saw Sri Lanka as a place where this doctrine would shine in glory and miraculously flew to the island. On his third and final visit, he ascended Mount Sumanakuta, where he left his footprint as a large depression in stone; it remains Sri Lanka's most visited site to this day.¹²

Other Asian countries have similar tales, as footprints emerged as a symbol of the Buddha's presence in India as early as the second century BC. Rarer than stone footprints are painted versions on cloth or on wooden manuscript covers. Long before the appearance of the Buddha figure, this aniconic symbol of his presence is recorded in histories of monastic pilgrimages. According to textual records, Buddha's footprints indicate his transcendent nature for he "hovers above the ground, his feet emit rays of light, and blossoming flowers spontaneously appear in his wake." His feet and hands are also covered with auspicious marks, such as the wheel representing the turning of *dharmachakra* (Buddhist law).¹³

A rare painting, *Footprint of the Buddha* (figs. 8a–c), shows the Buddha's footprint larger than life, with all five toes of even length and perfectly symmetrical shape. It is embellished with a variety of flowers—water lilies, lotus, and jasmine—in red, white, and yellow. The golden lotus in the center is surrounded by trefoil palmettes, with a spoked wheel at its center. Attendant figures flank a double-lotus throne. To the left is a figure of a monk, to the right is a figure of a god, possibly Indra. This painting was likely intended to be hung outdoors or in a temporary pavilion on special occasions.

¹² Sherry Montgomery (Harlacher), "The Buddha's Footprint," in *Guardian of the Flame: Art of Sri Lanka* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 2003), 169–76.

¹³ J. Auboyer, "A Note on the Feet and Their Symbolism," in *New Interpretation of Indian Art and Culture*, ed. M.S. Nagaraja Rao (Delhi: Agam, 1987), 125–27.



Fig. 8b–c (detail)

Footprint of the Buddha (Buddhapada)
Sri Lanka, Kandyan period, 19th century



Fig. 9
Painting of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara
in Cosmic Form, Tibet or Mongolia, 19th century



In Tibet, the cold and dry natural environment has been more favorable to the survival of works on paper, cotton, and silk. In addition to creating large banners, Tibetan Buddhist artists also painted smaller images, which were often mounted on silk and could be rolled up for portability and personal devotion. The central figure of this painting is the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (fig. 9), the enlightened being who represents the universal power of compassion and mercy for all sentient beings. In cosmic form, Avalokiteśvara has eleven heads, one thousand arms, and one thousand eyes. The multiple heads and eyes, which are depicted in the palms of the hands, symbolize his capacity to see and understand all human suffering through magnified power and energy. In each arm, Avalokiteśvara carries an attribute that symbolizes the ability to relieve different aspects of suffering. Attired as an Indian prince and standing on a lotus pedestal, which is a sign of purity, the figure is placed against a background of a paradisiacal landscape composed of clouds, waves, mountains, peonies, and the sun and moon.

The universal popularity of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Chinese: *Guanyin*; Japanese: *Kannon*) dates back to the eighth century in China and Tibet, at which time various sacred texts promoted

his myriad powers as a savior and rescuer of the distressed and suffering. His cult spread to Korea and Japan, with each country devising visual interpretations according to their spiritual needs and temperaments. Originally masculine, Avalokiteśvara is sometimes considered feminine in China and Japan. The reasons for this vary: often a feminine attribution is given to deities that embody virtues of gentleness or compassion, but in other cases feminine beings are given masculine status in order to ensure their access to a Buddhist paradise. From the viewpoint of Buddhist philosophy, however, the state of enlightenment transcends gender differentiation.¹⁴

¹⁴ Robert Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs* (Boston: Shambala, 1999), 3–58.

Fig. 10a-b
Horizontal Silk Panel with a Buddhist Mantra,
 China, Ming dynasty, mid-15th–early 17th century



Textiles

In later imperial China and in Tibet, Vajrayāna or Tantric Buddhism flourished and was supported by the rulers in both regions. The high level of textile techniques stems from the long development of the silk industry in China, and works from China were often gifted to Tibetan Buddhist lamas or high-ranking monks. This sumptuous horizontal silk panel (figs. 10a–b) features a Buddhist *mantra* (sacred prayer) in *lantsa*-script characters in a single row of seven characters. The characters represent the transliteration of a Sanskrit invocation or prayer. They are written in an Indic script used in Nepal and Tibet for Buddhist invocations or prayers—and also in China for Tibetan Tantric prayers. The first six syllables comprise a mantra that reads, from left to right: “*Om mani padme hum*,” which is generally translated as “O, the jewel in the lotus.” This widely repeated mantra refers to the sacred and secret

Vajrayāna teachings of Tibet, comparing them to the most precious and pure of all things. The seventh syllable, which reads “*hri*” is a “seed character,” or syllable that symbolizes bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Chinese: *Guanyin*), with whom this mantra is traditionally associated. To preserve their efficacy, all mantras and *dharanis* (invocations) are spoken or chanted using the original Sanskrit sounds, even when translated into Chinese or Tibetan, as the sounds themselves are believed to have mystical powers, even if their meaning is incomprehensible to those who hear them.¹⁵

¹⁵ Claudia Brown et al., *Weaving China's Past: The Amy S. Clague Collection of Chinese Textiles* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 2000), 37–39.



Fig. 9a-b
Square Panel with Crossed Vajras
and Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems
China, Ming to early Qing dynasty, 17th–18th century



Vajrayāna Buddhism developed in Tibet as a movement that integrated aspects of magic and metaphysics with earlier Indian teachings from the life of the Buddha. By the eighth century, these teachings had brought a diversified pantheon of deities and elaborate secret rituals to the Buddhist monasteries and political structures of Tibet, which survived until the mid-twentieth century. Although its shape and proportions suggest that this textile might have served as a cover for a Buddhist sutra or holy text, it was more likely originally part of a banner that hung in a Buddhist temple in Tibet or China.

The Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems were introduced to China from Tibetan Buddhism during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) and became a popular decorative motif during the subsequent six centuries. A square panel with crossed Vajras and Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems (figs. 11a–b) presents a richly and densely embellished surface in which the central motif is conceived as an eight-petaled lotus blossom. This flower represents Shambala, the mythical kingdom of Tibetan Buddhism. At its center are crossed vajras (thunderbolts). Emanating from the center are *bajixiang* (the Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems), each placed within a petal of the lotus. A second set of eight petals is shown as if partially visible behind the first. Arranged around the perimeter are stylized lotus blossoms with scrolling foliage. A square border of lotus scrolls encloses the composition, with a vase added at each of the four corners. The shape and radial symmetry of the textile suggest that it was intended for use as a suspended canopy, to be seen from below.¹⁶

The symbol of the *vajra* is emblematic of the power of knowledge over ignorance. This term is associated with the hardness of a diamond and thus the enduring and indestructible nature of Buddhist teachings and enlightenment. Vajrayāna Buddhist practices in Tibet draw upon the image of the thunderbolt in the very name of their sect. An alternative name for this sect is the Diamond Vehicle. The form of the *vajra* varies, but it is usually depicted as a hand-held symbolic weapon with three prongs at either end. The crossed vajras fuse the two shapes into a wheel-like motif with additional cosmic implications, suggesting both the power and the stability of the universe.¹⁷ The Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems are as follows:



UMBRELLA	symbolizing royal grace
DOUBLE FISH	symbolizing fertility, conjugal happiness, and protection from evil
VASE	symbolizing eternal harmony, abundant blessings, and ultimate triumph over birth and death
FLOWER	symbolizing truth, purity, and creative power
CONCH SHELL	symbolizing majesty and the voice of the Buddha
ENDLESS KNOT	symbolizing longevity, eternity, and receipt of the Buddha's assistance
CANOPY	symbolizing spiritual authority and reverence
WHEEL	symbolizing the Buddhist Wheel of Cosmic Law and thus the Buddha and his teachings.

¹⁶ Brown et al., *Chinese Textiles*, 53–55.

¹⁷ Beer, *Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 233–43.



Fig. 12a-b
Buddhist Ritual Diadem
China, Ming dynasty, 15th century

The interconnectedness of Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist art forms and designs prevailed throughout the Ming (1379–1644) and Qing dynasties (1644–1911) because of Chinese imperial patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. Works of art were created in Tibet as official gifts to the Chinese court and Tibetan Buddhist lamas reciprocated. An embroidered silk ritual diadem (figs. 12a–b) exemplifies work likely commissioned by a Chinese emperor as a gift for a high-ranking Tibetan monk. It is composed of five panels, each displaying an enthroned Buddha; these are usually referred

to as the Five Great Buddhas or Five *Jinas* (conquerors). Each presides over one of the five cosmic directions (center, north, south, east, and west), and is associated with an element of the cosmos such as space, water, fire, earth, and wind. In addition, each one is associated with a distinct yet abstract concept, such as teaching, humility, meditation, giving, and fearlessness. Buddhism has always developed systems for categorizing phenomena, qualities and attributes.¹⁸

¹⁸ Beer, *Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 90–93.

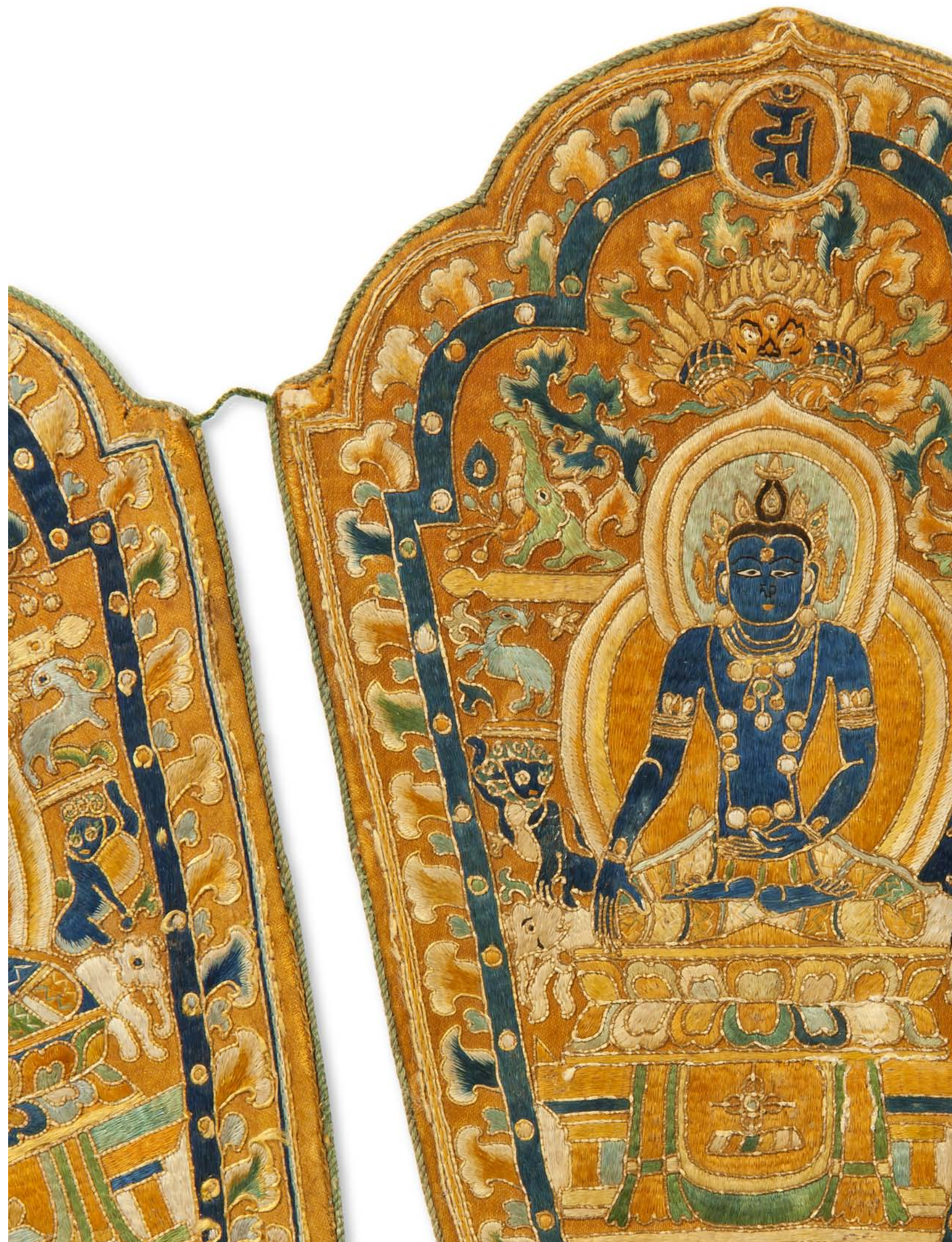


Fig. 13a-c
Buddhist Vestment (Kesa)
 Japan, late Edo period, 19th century



As early as the sixth century, Buddhist monks often wore a flat, rectangular garment known as a *kesa* (figs. 13a–c). A monk was given such a vestment upon ordination as a symbol of his knowledge of the Buddha’s teachings. It was traditionally made of pieced cloth to symbolize the renunciation of worldly possessions and worn draped over the shoulders.

During the Edo period in Japan, an effort was made to transcend the pictorial limitations imposed by the patchwork construction of the *kesa*. This vestment, for example, has actually been made out of a

single slit-tapestry-weave textile, to which a grid of green cording has been stitched to simulate patchwork seams; gold and silver threads add shimmering touches. In this type of textile, one set of warp ends is woven with discontinuous weft threads of different colors in a plain (tabby) weave. The technique originated in China, as did much of the imagery and many of the decorative motifs.

The pictorial theme of this vestment is the Buddhist paradise, in which devout believers hope to be reborn in their next life. At the bottom of the vestment are craggy rocks and

ocean waves, indicating the earthly realm. The heavenly realm is filled with a mythical scene of birds that are either auspicious—such as the peacock, emblem of beauty and dignity; and the crane, symbol of longevity—or mythological, such as the phoenix, symbol of peace and prosperity (one of the phoenixes is double-headed, an indication of a divine character). The most extraordinary creature in the picture is the flying *apsara* (heavenly angel), which is given the body of a phoenix. The surrounding space is occupied by scrolling clouds, and the entire composition is suffused with vivid colors and exquisite detail.

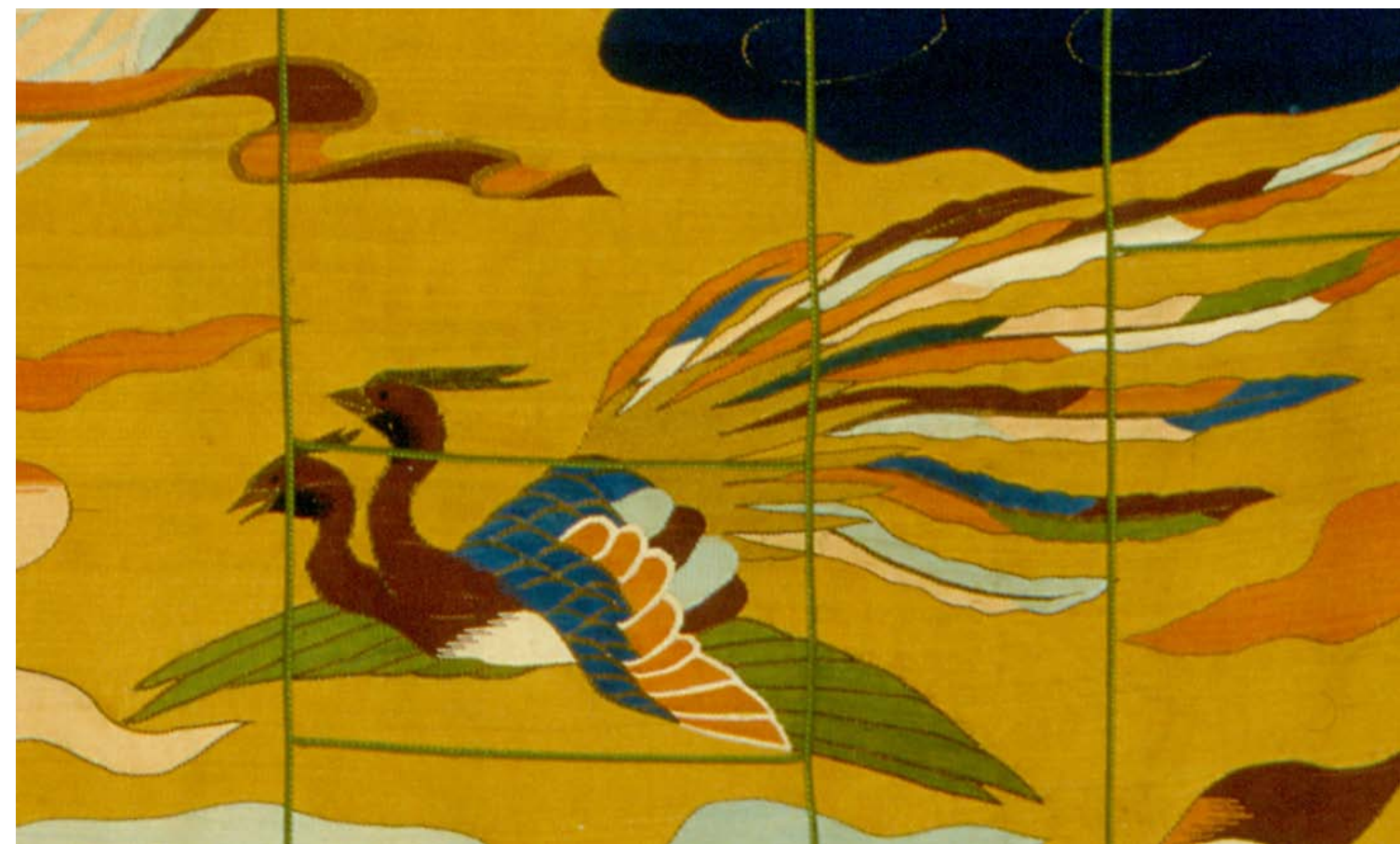




Fig. 14a-c
*Pair of Gilt Bronze Manuscript Covers
 with the Eight Auspicious Buddhist
 Emblems* Tibet, 18th century

Tibetan Manuscript Covers

Beautifully worked manuscript covers can be found in all of the Buddhist traditions and countries of Asia. While the earliest Buddhist practices were centered on memorization and recitation of the Buddha's teachings, the earliest evidence for written texts dates from around the first century BC. The creation of written texts involved many artisans and scribes in the process of creating the written pages and the covers. Decorated covers represent a small fraction of those manuscript covers produced—the majority were plain and simply served to hold the pages of the text together with a protective front and back panel. Because of the ephemeral nature of the materials used for the text pages—primarily paper or palm leaf—the covers more often survive intact because they are made of wood, ivory, or metal. Most covers were wrapped together with the pages with either a cloth or a lacing that ran through holes pierced in the text pages.

A pair of gilt bronze manuscript covers with the Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems (figs. 14a–e) combines those emblems with Garuda, the mythical lord of birds in both Hindu and Buddhist art, at the center. The other cover features eight images of heavenly musicians, with the Kalachakra Mantra at the center. This is a compilation of ten syllables of a sacred chant, which relates to aspects of the external world (cosmology, astronomy and astrology), the internal world (individual mind and body interrelationships), and the spirit world (the god Kalachakra and his retinue of 722 deities). Painted inside are three seated Buddhas surrounded by clouds and mountains.¹⁹

¹⁹Beer, *Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 123–27.





Fig. 14a-b
Pair of Gilt Bronze Manuscript Covers
with the Eight Auspicious Buddhist
Emblems Tibet, 18th century



A pair of gilt bronze manuscript covers embellished with turquoise and coral (figs. 15a–e) features a pair of dragons on one, while the other show the Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems. The painted interior shows beautifully detailed scenes with clouds, mountain peaks, and three seated figures Buddha (center), a Tantric deity (right), and a bodhisattva (left). The painting style and composition recall Tibetan *thangka* (scroll paintings), which often focus on an enthroned deity within a landscape setting.



Fig. 14c (detail)
Pair of Gilt Bronze Manuscript Covers
with the Eight Auspicious Buddhist
Emblems Tibet, 18th century



Fig. 16a-b
Manuscript Cover with the Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems
Tibet, 19th century

A large, single manuscript cover with the Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems (figs. 16a–b) shows deep relief carving and painting that sets the eight symbols within a circular vine pattern. At its center is a larger vase with a lotus bud blooming, a symbol of an emergent Buddha-to-be. Cloud motifs create a border pattern on all sides of the cover.

Fig. 17a-b
Pair of Lacquered Manuscript Covers
Tibet, 18th century



A pair of lacquered manuscript covers (figs. 17a–b) shows the strong influence of Chinese decorative art on that of Tibet. Gold phoenixes, dragons, and floral design relate to patterns seen in Chinese textiles and lacquerwares. Scrolling vine patterns ultimately derive from early Indian examples of Gandharan art (from present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan) and even Hellenistic art.

These works of art demonstrate the architectural, figurative, and symbolic aspects of Buddhist sacred imagery. Over time, Buddhism developed cosmological imagery that reflected the different cultures that adapted Buddhism to their existing religions and social backgrounds.

SACRED WORD AND IMAGE IN HINDU WORKS OF ART

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FROM ANCIENT TIMES IN INDIA, DANCE HAS CONSTITUTED NOT ONLY AN ART FORM BUT ALSO AN EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS. THE HARMONY OF MUSIC AND PHYSICAL MOVEMENT EVOKES HUMAN EMOTIONS, WHICH ARE IN TURN LINKED TO THE MORE ABSTRACT CONCEPTS OF LIFE, DEATH, AND REBIRTH IN HINDU PHILOSOPHY AND MYTHOLOGY.¹

Three of the primary deities of Hinduism are Brahma, god of creation; Vishnu, god of preservation; and Śiva, god of destruction. In an example of Śiva's incarnation as Śiva Natarāja, lord of the cosmic dance (fig. 18), the figure of Śiva possesses a particular tensile strength and vigorous movement. In the iconography of Natarāja, Śiva destroys and remakes the universe through his primal rhythmic energy. The circle of flames represents the world's destruction. Entwined in the deity's flowing, matted hair is a figure of the goddess Ganga, who created the life-giving Ganges River when she fell to earth, breaking her fall with Śiva's locks. Śiva holds a drum in one hand, signifying the pulse of time that marks our existence, and a flame in his other hand, marking the end of existence. Śiva's left foot is raised in a gesture that promises the release and salvation of the soul, and his right foot tramples a prone figure, symbolizing ignorance and evil. The figure of Śiva Natarāja thus embodies the movement of the never-ending energy of the cosmos, which was itself created by Śiva.

¹ R. Kanna, *Manual on the Bronzes in the Government Museum, Chennai (Chennai: Commission of Agriculture and Museums, 2003), 6–7.*

Fig. 18
Śiva Natarāja, Lord of the Cosmic Dance
India, 17th century

Fig. 19
Carved Hindu Manuscript Cover
Nepal, 17th–18th century



Painted or carved wooden manuscript covers depict Sīva with his family. Two single-manuscript covers feature the same deities (figs. 19a–b and 20a–b): the “holy family” of Sīva, the god of destruction; his consort Pārvatī (center); and their sons Kumāra (with four arms) and Ganésa (with an elephant head). All but Pārvatī are shown as multiarmed, indicating their superhuman powers. Sīva is a complex and ambivalent figure, often associated with polar opposites in the cosmos, such as asceticism and eroticism, male and female. He has numerous other names and iconic forms, but here we see Siva in a less awesome aspect, that of the family man. Pārvatī is shown smaller than the three male figures, and is seated gracefully, facing her husband. Her breasts are bare and she holds a lotus flower. She is known as the goddess of love and devotion, of female creative energy and fertility. Together with Siva, the couple symbolizes the blessings of marital fidelity as well as the power of renunciation and asceticism.

Both of their sons are said to have come into being through immaculate conception. The elder son Kumāra is regarded as intelligent and handsome. Ganésa, with his elephant head, is the god of auspicious beginnings, wisdom, and good fortune. He is one of Hinduism’s most popular deities. His axe removes obstacles to success. Ganésa acquired his elephant head when he disobeyed Pārvatī’s orders not to enter the house where Sīva was. Despite this order, he entered—and met with Sīva’s wrath, resulting in the severing of his head. When it could not be found, an elephant’s head was substituted, bringing him back to life. Pārvatī subsequently demanded that Ganésa be made the ruler of the celestial armies and worshipped by everyone before beginning any activity.²

² Andrew Topsfield et al., *In the Realm of the Gods: Arts of India* (London: Phillip Wilson, 2004), 90–99.

Fig. 20
Painted Hindu Manuscript Cover
Nepal, 18th century





Fig. 21
Pair of Painted Hindu Manuscript Covers
India, 18th century

The carved manuscript cover (figs. 19a–b) is rendered in deep relief and fine detail, with the vermillion powder clinging to the more deeply carved areas. Each of the three figures is shown seated on lotus thrones set within curved niches. Ganésa has only one elephant head, but wears a crown upon it. The painted manuscript cover (figs. 20a–b) is rendered in rich color and detail, with flamboyant gestures and numerous weapons that add drama and movement to the scene. Ganésa has multiple heads; some are of an elephant and some are not. Each personality is shown with a different color skin and skirt.

Another pair of painted manuscript covers (figs. 21a–c) shows four scenes on each cover, each separated from each other, which illustrate the famous legend of the Rāmāyana, India's most revered epic about ethical life and exemplary virtues. The major characters include the brave and benevolent Prince Rāmā, his devoted and dutiful wife Sīta, the demon-king Ravana, and Hanuman, the monkey-headed god of courage. Born the eldest son of a king, Rāmā is unjustly banished from the court through the intrigues of his stepmother, who wishes her own son to ascend the throne. Out of duty, he goes into exile in the

forest accompanied by Sīta and his brother. One day Sīta is abducted by the wicked Ravana. Rāmā resolves to battle the demon-king, aided by the monkey-god Hanuman and his armies. Finally, the liberated Sīta undergoes a fire ordeal to prove her chastity while in captivity. At last, they return to Adodhya, where Rāmā becomes king.³

The scenes are portrayed in a simple style with strong primary colors and minimal detail. On one cover, Ravana is depicted with his ten heads and twenty arms battling against monkey armies with bows and arrows. The scene on the far right shows Sīta and Rāmā reunited. On the second cover, scenes of the couple together and with other figures indicate ceremonial events connected with their return to the capital. Each year, devout pilgrims trace Rāmā's journey throughout India, visiting holy sites along the way. The Rāmāyana is held in such reverence that the mere reading or hearing of it is believed by Hindus to free them from sin and bring blessings.

³ Topsfield et al., *Arts of India*, 122–23

Fig. 21 (detail)
Pair of Painted Hindu Manuscript Covers
India, 18th century

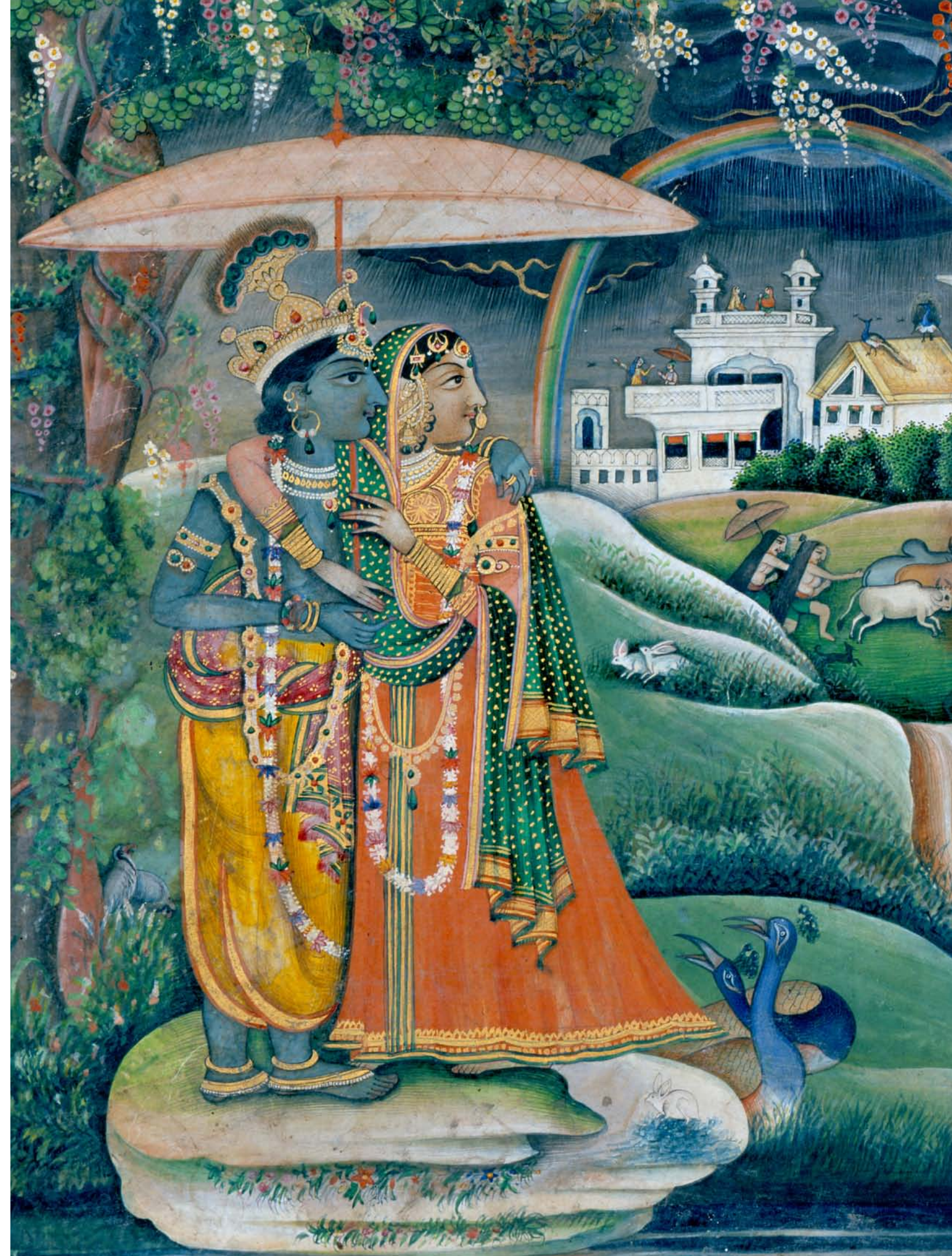


From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century in India, paintings constituted a major art form. Employed as illustrations in books, manuscripts, and albums, small-scale works depicted a variety of subjects, including portraits of historical personages, narrative scenes from Hindu epics and poetry, and illustrations of seasonal songs. Their delicate beauty was the result of the patronage of the royal court under the Islamic rule of the Mughals, who greatly admired the artistic traditions of Islamic Persia and India. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Kangra school of painting flourished in northern India and was particularly noted for illustrating a number of great Hindu devotional texts, among them the *Gita Govinda*, which celebrates the union of the individual with the divine through the symbolic figures of Krishna and Radha.⁴

Fig.22
Painting of Krishna and Radha under an Umbrella
India, 19th century

Krishna is the blue-skinned incarnation of Vishnu, though in some instances he is regarded as a god himself.⁵ His character first appears in the *Mahābhārata* epic (ca. 200 BC–AD 200). Though Krishna's primary mission was to destroy a tyrant uncle through his valor, he is most widely known as a passionate lover and a mischievous prankster. As he grew to manhood in rural exile from his uncle's power, all of the cow-maidens were charmed by Krishna and his flute music. His dalliance with them led to his great love for a favorite, Radha. The *Gita Govinda* describes their passion and its consummation in a forest in richly wrought imagery. In the painting of *Krishna and Radha under an Umbrella* (fig. 22), a lush landscape with an architectural backdrop is filled with blooming flowers, rabbits, birds, ducks and peacocks. The divine lovers are dressed in lavish jewels and flower garlands, with Krishna wearing a crown and carrying his flute. The umbrella creates a sense of intimacy between the divine lovers. Because of Radha's marriage to another, she and Krishna are often shown in clandestine trysts in the woods.

These works of art demonstrate the multiplicity of Hindu deities, the complexity of their narrative stories, and the inclusion of human-like qualities in the themes and events portrayed in Hindu sacred literature and images.



⁴ Janet Baker et al., *Phoenix Art Museum Collection Highlights* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 2002), 109.

⁵ Joan Cummins, *Vishnu: Hinduism's Blue-Skinned Savior* (Ahmedabad: Mapin, 2011), 178–79.

JEWELS OF THE DHAMMA:

The Art of the 'Most Revered Great Book of Protection'

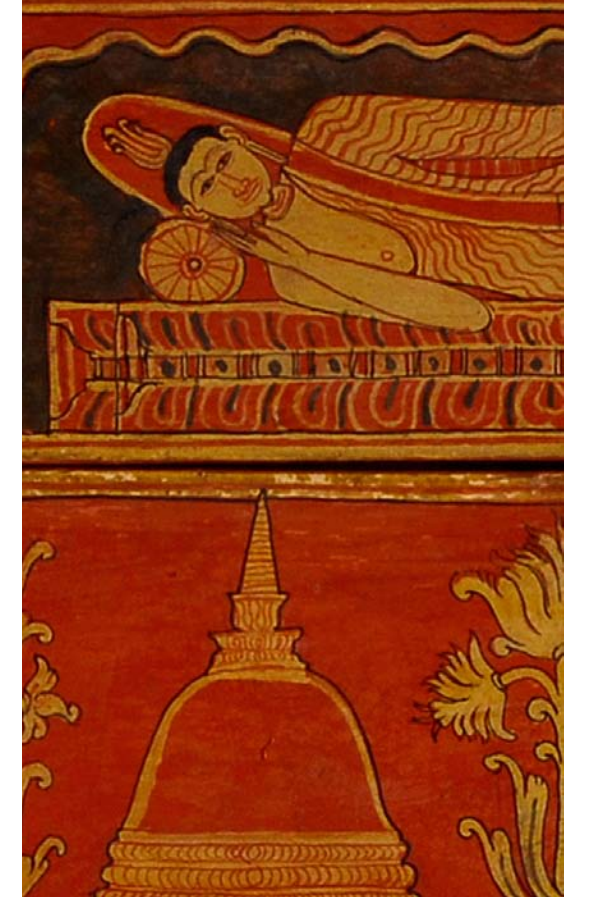
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BUDDHISM COMPRISES A FAMILY OF RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS THAT ARE LINKED TO THE LIFE AND DEEDS OF A NORTH INDIAN PRINCE WHO LIVED AND DIED NEARLY TWENTY-FIVE CENTURIES AGO. EVIDENCE OF WRITTEN BUDDHIST TEXTS, HOWEVER, DOES NOT EMERGE UNTIL APPROXIMATELY FOUR AND A HALF CENTURIES AFTER THE DEATH OF ITS FOUNDER.



Due to the fragile nature of most hand-produced books, historical and archaeological evidence for book art does not appear until much, much later, but attitudes towards the power of the Buddha's spoken words play a key role in determining which texts receive embellishments. The regular oral recitation of Buddhist scriptures persisted long after they were recorded in written documents. In Buddhist communities across Asia, to commit the scriptures to memory is a mark of scholarly distinction. This exercise is but a prelude, however, to their recitation---an act that transforms both the one who recites the scriptures and the disciples who hear and understand their true significance.

Local religious attitudes in India were founded upon the belief that sacred knowledge was best transmitted and preserved through oral means. In order to facilitate the memorization of large amounts of information, religious literature often took the form of poetic verses. Evidence in the literary tradition of Buddhist commentaries suggests the Buddha charged certain disciples to memorize his sermons so that he could call upon them at a moment's notice to deliver the sermons on the Buddha's behalf. After the Buddha's death, a division of labor emerged. Some disciples specialized in compiling, memorizing, and reciting the Buddha's sermons. Others, in an effort



to make the scriptures accessible to wider audiences, began to compose commentaries. These commentaries were also passed from teacher to student via oral transmission. Eventually, the decision to write down the Buddha’s teachings appeared in North India as well as in Sri Lanka sometime around the first century B.C. In Sri Lanka, the scriptures and their associated commentaries were preserved in a dialect called Pali whereas those compiled in North India were recorded either in Gandhari or Sanskrit.

The discourses or sermons of the Buddha, more so than any other kind of Buddhist literature, have played a fundamental role in the many diverse and rich traditions of Buddhist book art. All Buddhist traditions believe that the Master’s actual words are endowed with supernatural power. These words take the form of sermons, which in Pali are called *sutta* or “threads”. They are called “threads” because when they are collected together into the “Basket of Teachings” (*Sutta Pitika*), they provide a glimpse into the profound nature of reality. In many circles, hearing the recitation of the “Buddha Word” (*buddhavacana*) is an essential pre-requisite for enlightenment. The physical act of hearing helps disciples cultivate the states of mind that must be in place before insight and wisdom can arise. Once followers successfully grasp the truth of the Buddha’s message, they are filled with joy and are naturally eager to pay homage through acts devotion. Placing fragrant flowers, burning lamps, and dishes of food on an altar dedicated to Buddhist relics or images are traditional

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ways lay followers express gratitude. Commissioning a scribe to copy a Buddhist text is another. Creating a Buddhist manuscript is a costly and challenging task because it often requires the coordinated effort of several individuals. From the patron, to the scribe, to the artisans who prepared the palm leaves and crafted the binding boards, all collaborate in an activity that honors the Buddha in the present while simultaneously providing for the welfare of disciples who were yet to be born. It is a powerful act of piety, for benefits accrue to all participants in the form of spiritual merit, a reservoir of positive actions (karma) that contributes to their positive rebirth in the future.

The costly materials and fine craftsmanship of some Buddhist manuscripts signal the high regard local communities had for particular kinds of religious texts. Their splendid condition and elegant bindings suggest these particular manuscripts were regarded with the same kind of reverence as a Buddhist relic or image. In Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia in particular, manuscripts crafted with bindings made from precious materials or whose surfaces are completely covered with fine paintings comprise only a tiny percentage of the entire corpus of Buddhist literature once preserved in monastic libraries. The vast majority of surviving palm-leaf manuscripts is quite humble in appearance. They betray signs of repeated use suggesting they served as “working copies,” either for study or as ritual manuals. The more elaborate copies, however, are often in excellent condition. They were not intended for study, but rather served as precious offerings that paid homage to the precious legacy of the Buddha’s teachings.

According to the Buddhist commentaries, the Master once likened his teachings to a precious jewel in a sermon entitled the “Jewels Discourse” (*Ratana Sutta*). During one of the annual rains retreats, the Buddha took up temporary residence in a forest near the formerly vibrant and prosperous city of Vesali. That year Vesali was racked with famine and plague. The city’s remaining inhabitants were terrified that the mounting number of corpses would attract evil spirits. Taking pity on their plight, the Buddha summoned his disciple Ananda and proceeded to teach him a sermon specially prepared for the occasion. The verses of the “Jewels Discourse” identify three things as the most precious of treasures: the Buddha (literally “Enlightened One”), the doctrine, or teachings (Dhamma), and the community of his ordained disciples (Sangha). The Buddha affirmed that these “Jewels” supply both the means and the support to end the suffering of all beings-- both the residents of Vesali and the demons they held responsible for their torment. The commentaries explain that after Ananda finished memorizing the sermon, the Buddha sent him into the city. All through the night Ananda processed chanting the verses of the “Jewels Discourse” out loud. By dawn the following morning the city was miraculously delivered of its suffering and its residents tranquil; thus the skillful and pleasing recitation of sacred texts remains an integral part of the ritual life of many Buddhist communities throughout Asia, and many Buddhist rituals still begin with followers proclaiming that they “take refuge” in each of the Three Jewels.

A recent survey of Sri Lankan manuscripts in private as well

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as public collections concludes that binding boards made from precious materials such as ivory, ebony, and tortoiseshell are overwhelmingly reserved for copies of Pali Buddhist scriptures whereas Sinhala translations of *suttas* as well as classical works of devotional prose are more characteristically accompanied by painted binding boards.¹ This differential treatment suggests that audiences ranked these later vernacular texts below the early Pali originals. The most extravagant examples of binding boards were frequently reserved for a popular compilation of *suttas* popularly referred to as the *Maha Pirit Pota Vahanse* or *Most Revered Great Book of Protection*. The compilation includes the “Jewels Discourse” along with the “Discourse on Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Doctrine” (the Buddha’s first sermon)² and the beloved “Discourse on Practicing Loving-Kindness.”³ Sermons like these are still regarded as “protective.” Sponsoring a recitation of the book’s contents that lasts all night or that extends over several days is still considered a great act of beneficence and piety. *Great Books of Protection* with costly bindings are often stored in a monastery’s treasure room rather than in the library. In ritual contexts they are treated as votive objects and accorded the same respect as the Buddha’s corporeal relics. When a group of monks is invited into a private home to recite the protective verses, they may arrive carrying a *Great Book of Protection* manuscript wrapped in luxurious cloths. Before the monks enter the residence, the manuscript is placed on the head of a lay disciple who carries it to a place where it is installed with reverence (carrying it on the head is a sing of great respect). These recitation rituals accompany significant family occasions (such as the death anniversary of a parent or grandparent or prayers for the safe birthing of a child), as well as civic ceremonies such as the ones that marked the end of the island’s thirty-year

civil war. Perhaps their ritual significance also accounts for the critical role these texts played in the revival of Pali literacy in Sri Lanka in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Novice monks were expected not only to memorize the *suttas*, but to also study the associated translations in depth and inject their sermons with direct quotations from the Pali originals.

Great Book of Protection manuscripts are distinctive for several reasons. First, the bindings and palm leaf folios are noticeably longer than other kinds of manuscripts. This additional length allows them to accommodate an enlarged script that is arranged in widely spaced lines. Although the large script makes the contents easier to read in a small group setting or in the low light conditions that may have accompanied a recitation, the tradition may actually be an anachronism. The practice of copying with a large script persisted in all likelihood due to the conservative nature of Buddhist art. Just as in the Buddha’s day, memorizing and analyzing the protective *suttas* appears to have been an essential part of monastic education in Sri Lanka.⁴

Many of the decorative patterns that adorn Buddhist manuscripts have ancient Indian origins that were also popular among Hindu patrons and audiences. For example, leafy, flowering vine scrolls (Sinh: *liya-vela*) have a long association with sacred architecture in both religious traditions. Their appearance on binding boards is no coincidence for just as they serve to signal the threshold to sacred architectural space, their presence on binding boards indicates the auspicious nature of the literary contents of the book. Likewise, the lotus symbolizes purity and the attainment of spiritual perfection in both traditions. A row of lotus petals is a standard motif for the throne of seated Buddha images (Fig. 5c) and for the beveled edges of Buddhist manuscript binding boards. The truncated pyramid silhouettes of binding boards along with the subjects that decorate their surfaces also bring to mind altars festooned with flower garlands and strands of precious gems.⁵

¹ Sherry Harlacher, *Picturing the Dhamma: Text and Image in Late Colonial Sri Lanka* (Ph.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, 2010), 175.
² *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*
³ *Karaniya Metta Sutta*
⁴ Anne M. Blackburn. Magic in the Monastery: Textual Practice and Monastic Identity in Sri Lanka,” *History of Religions* 38, no. 4 (1999): 360–63.
⁵ B. D. Nandadeva. “Flowers for the Dhamma: Painted Buddhist Palm Leaf Manuscript Covers (*Kamba*) of Sri Lanka,” *Buddhist Manuscript Cultures: Knowledge, Ritual, and Art*, eds. Stephen C. Berkwitz, et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 159–71.

Fig. 23a-b
**Complete Manuscript with
Ivory and Metal repoussé Covers**
Sri Lanka, 19th century

A splendid example of a *Great Book of Protection* (Fig. 23a-b) features wooden boards enhanced by carved ivory borders and metal inlay. These may be the result of an artistic collaboration between an ivory carver and a metal worker or the handiwork of a single craftsman who specialized in both materials. The metal plaques occupy the flat, rectangular space at the center of the binding boards. Copper has been alloyed with gold and silver in an effort to imitate the appearance of the more costly metals. The plaques have been hammered into a delicate repoussé pattern featuring a pair of vines scrolls that terminate in large flowers. These stylized blossoms are popularly referred to as “scissors” flowers because of their crisscrossed petals. The petals surround fruits symbolize the rewards that accompany spiritual attainments.⁶ A pair of narrow metal strips hammered into a raised dot pattern reminiscent of a strand of pearls separates each plaque from

its neighbor while strips of ivory carved in low relief to look like a row of lotus petals enclose and frame the metal panels.

Four planks of ivory were used to create the binding boards for another copy of the *Great Book of Protection* (Fig. 24a-b). The elegant openwork design was made by affixing the carved board to a second ivory plank with a layer of red lacquer. The red lacquer is glimpsed through the openwork and highlights the precision of the symmetrical design. Attention is paid to various details including a chain of diamond shapes that separates a row of pineapple flowers from the scrolling vines at the center of the board. The scrolling vine pattern incorporates three varieties of flowers: the champa, the night-blooming cactus and the rose. The champa and the

⁶ Buddhists conceive of enlightenment as a series of four stages along a path. The realization that accompanies each stage is called a *phala* or “fruit.”



Fig. 24a
**Pair of Carved Ivory
Manuscript Covers (light)**
Sri Lanka, 18th century



legendary night-blooming cactus were prized in Sri Lanka for their fragrance, a characteristic that made them appropriate offerings to Buddhist relics and statues. The blossoms of the night-blooming cactus open during the height of the traditional pilgrimage season so they are associated with the holy footprint relic (Sri Pada) on Mount Sumanakuta. Buddhists spend all night climbing the sacred mountain in order to watch the sun rise from its summit and are treated to the lovely fragrance during the lengthy ascent. In this design, the champa blossom resembles a hibiscus flower with large creased petals whereas the cactus flower is distinctive for its triangular shape and the presence of a round fruit. The stylized appearance of both these native flowers is distinctive for

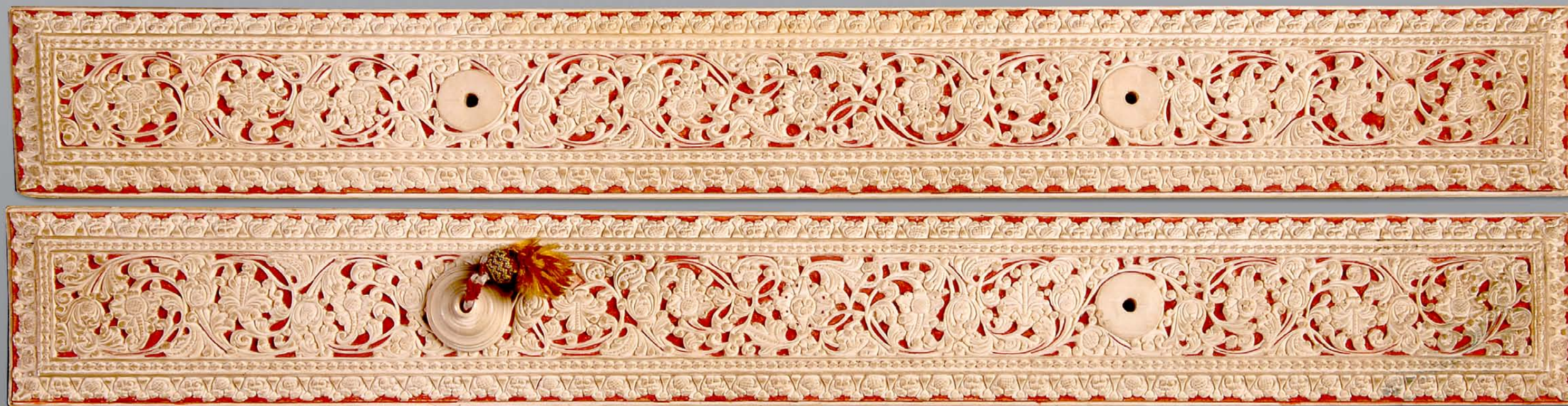
the large central stamens whose curves compliment the arc of the meandering vines. These flowers alternate with one another, one facing up and the other down, until they approach the center of the board. At the center of the pattern in the space traditionally reserved for a lotus a stylized rose appears. The round, compact bud comprised of spiraling petals is surrounded by flat, pointed leaves. Instead of being set off by a traditional border of lotus petals, the ivory carver has substituted a row of pineapple flowers whose cross-hatched fruit is clearly visible.

The combination of roses, pineapples and other more traditional flowers indicates an eighteenth century date for this pair of binding boards. Unlike

their counterparts who served at the pleasure of the last Sinhala kings, artists in the Southern and Western regions exercised a high degree of artistic freedom under European colonial rule. Because many Buddhist monks and their lay patrons residing in these contested areas had received some of their education in British administered schools, the incorporation of European motifs was tolerated, if not encouraged, so long as they served the higher purposes of the Buddhist religion.⁷ The seamless incorporation of a European flower motif into a pattern that conforms to longstanding Sinhala Buddhist visual tradition is a testament to the artist who crafted this specimen.

⁷ J. A. V. N. Jayatilake, *Western Elements in 'Low-Country' Buddhist Art and Architecture of Colonial Ceylon* (M.Phil. dissertation, University of Kelaniya, 2009), 123.

Fig. 24b
*Pair of Carved Ivory
Manuscript Covers (light)*
Sri Lanka, 18th century



Given what is known about Sri Lankan book art, it is tempting to speculate that two pairs of carved ivory binding boards without palm leaf folios may have been commissioned either for copies of Pali *suttas* or the collection of canonical birth stories known as the *Jataka Pota*. One deeply carved specimen (Fig. 25a-b) is completely coated with a layer of dark, red lacquer. It is unprecedented to cover the ivory completely with lacquer and there is no other documented example of carved ivory binding like this pair. Ivory is a precious material valued for its white color and natural gloss, so one possible explanation for this apparent

anomaly is that the lacquer once served as a substrate for an even more precious material—a thin layer of hammered gold. Based on stylistic comparisons with the compact, rounded designs that appear on a pair of painted binding boards preserved in the collection of the Sri Lankan National Museum, this pair of carved binding boards may date to the fourteenth or fifteenth century.⁸ Subtle variations in the carved motifs distinguish the two boards. For example, the pair of

⁸ See W. A. de Silva, *Memoirs of the Colombo Museum Catalogue of Palm Leaf Manuscripts* (Colombo: Ceylon Government Press, 1938), 381; and Sirancee Gunawardana, *Palm Leaf Manuscripts of Sri Lanka* (Ratmalana, Sri Lanka: Sarodaya Vishva Lekha, 1997), 41–43.



Fig. 25a-b
**Pair of Carved Ivory
Manuscript Covers (dark)**
Sri Lanka, 14th-15th century



cord holes on the upper board is surrounded by carved lotus roundels while those on the lower board feature a flower spray. Vine scrolls form lozenges on both boards but the lower board features dwarf figures in a variety of poses while the theme flower sprays with the addition of birds continues on the upper board. These subjects reflect Sri Lanka's cultural diversity during the medieval period when artisans labored for audiences comprised of local Buddhists as well as recent immigrants from South India. Dwarves and the sacred geese or swans known as *hamsa* are common motifs in Hindu as well as Sri

Lankan art. Dwarves are attendant figures often associated with Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of wealth and prosperity. In Sri Lanka, dwarves served as stalwart guardians and appear carved into the stone plinths that support ancient religious architecture. *Hamsa* are symbols of spiritual discernment because of their supernatural ability to drink only milk when served a mixture of milk and water. Geese also travel great distances in their seasonal migrations so they came to symbolize Buddhist monks who spread the Dhamma to distant lands.

Fig. 26a-b
Pair of Carved Ivory
Manuscript Covers (dark)
Sri Lanka, 19th century



A last example of a manuscript accompanied by ivory binding boards has more modest decoration. It contains the thirty-four sermons preserved in the *Collection of Long Discourses*⁹ excepted from the Sutta Pitika. (Fig 26a-c). The ivory planks have been planed, polished, and cut to size and their corners wrapped in cut and incised metal work. The key-shaped motif represents a sacred vessel (Sinh. *punkalasa*) or “pot of plenty”—another ancient Indian symbol of nature’s abundance and spiritual fulfillment. Beyond the costly ivory material and the metal work, the manuscript has no other ornament, not even a *sakiya*—a kind of knob or brad that has been knotted to the end of the cord. *Sakiya* are necessary for keeping the bundle of leaves and bindings together and preventing the cord from slipping

⁹ The *Collection of Long Discourses* or *Digha Nikaya* is one of the five sections of the *Sutta Pitika* (*Basket of Teachings*)—the collection of the Buddha’s sermons. The *Sutta Pitika* also preserves a small number of sermons delivered by prominent disciples as well as the collection of verses known as the *jataka* that recount the past incarnations of the Buddha. The other sections include the *Majjhima Nikaya*, the *Samyutta Nikaya*, the *Anguttara Nikaya* and the *Khuddaka Nikaya*.





Fig. 27a
Pair of Manuscript Covers with
Stupas and Reclining Buddha
Sri Lanka, 19th century

through the holes. Monks normally hold manuscripts in their laps and turn the pages. It is not difficult to appreciate the practical function of a cord stop and *sakiya* may be as simple as flat wooden disk or as elegant as a piece of ivory carved to resemble a Buddhist stupa. On particularly ostentatious manuscripts, however, the *sakiya* may be the work of a skilled jeweler. They may be made of hammered and incised metal and incorporate settings for polished cabochons. Sri Lanka is still famous for its wealth of semi-precious stones and a form of white quartz especially admired for its brilliance was popular during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Fig. 27a).¹⁰

Book art as highlighted in this exhibition serves as a window into the textual preferences of various religious communities. The specimens examined in this essay belong to the Theravada tradition of Buddhism. Theravada means “The Way of the Elders” and its followers are compelled by an earnest desire to return to what are believed to be the most ancient, and therefore “original,” teachings of the Buddha. At present the Theravada Buddhist scriptures are a vast collection of individual texts comprising thousands of printed pages. The associated body of Buddhist

commentaries that became an integral part of monastic education in Sri Lanka and elsewhere is equally as impressive. Due to the fragile nature of palm leaf and wood, few intact manuscripts earlier than the eighteenth century have survived. Hand-produced books that are accompanied by bindings made from costly materials or have elaborate paintings on both sides of the binding boards still remain quite rare in Sri Lanka. This preferential treatment suggests that despite the vast corpus of Buddhist literature available in Sri Lanka during the late colonial period, select literary genres were treasured above all others. Just as images and corporeal relics are ensconced in elaborate reliquaries designed to honor and protect them (Fig. 1a-b), elaborate book bindings alert audiences to the precious nature of the book’s literary contents. The material forms of these hand-produced books signal the presence of the Master in the legacy of his teachings. They serve as offerings to the Jewel of the Dhamma and affirm the power of the Buddha’s words to transform those who hear and understand their profound meaning.

Buddham saranam gacchami
(I go for refuge in the Buddha)

Dhammam saranam gacchami
(I go for refuge in the Dhamma)

Sangham saranam gacchami
(I go for refuge in the Sangha)¹¹

¹⁰ This variety of stone is called *palingu*.

¹¹ These Pali verses are known as the *Tissarana* or “Three Refuges” and are chanted out loud by lay as well as ordained disciples during Buddhist rituals.



Fig. 27b
Pair of Manuscript Covers with
Stupas and Reclining Buddha
Sri Lanka, 19th century

THE SACRED WORD IN ABRAHAMIC RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

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THE THREE MAJOR ABRAHAMIC RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS—JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM—ALL SHARE THE BELIEF THAT GOD, OR ALLAH, IS REVEALED TO HUMANITY IN THE INSPIRED WORD OF SACRED TEXT. FOR JUDAISM, THE SACRED WORD IS THAT OF THE HEBREW BIBLE, OR TANAKH. FOR CHRISTIANITY, IT IS THE SCRIPTURAL TEXTS OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS. FOR ISLAM, IT IS THE REVELATION GIVEN TO THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD AND PASSED DOWN IN ARABIC IN THE QUR'AN.



These Abrahamic traditions share much in common. Christians include the books of the Hebrew Bible in their Old Testament. Muslims respect the sacred texts of Judaism and Christianity—indeed, Muslims have traditionally viewed Jews and Christians as *dhimmis* (people of the book)—and they see the Qur'an as the completion of this divine revelation. All three of these great religious traditions recognize the God of Abraham as the one and only true God.

The Tanakh includes the Torah, or Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), the *Nevi'im*, or Prophets (Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezeckiel, and the twelve minor prophets), and the *Ketuvim*, or Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, I and II Chronicles). Named for the Hebrew first letters of Torah, *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim*, the Tanakh contains all the canonical books of the Jewish tradition. While the Torah readings and their interpretation have served as the traditional foundation for *halakah*, or way of life for Jews to follow, other parts of the Hebrew Bible, especially the Psalms, inform Jewish liturgy, prayer books, and public and private readings.



BECAUSE THE SACRED WORD IN EACH OF THESE ABRAHAMIC TRADITIONS FUNCTIONS AS A SOURCE OF DIVINE REVELATION, THE TEXTS ARE CENTRAL TO THE WORSHIP AND PRAYERS OF JEWS, CHRISTIANS, AND MUSLIMS. FOR THAT REASON, THE REPRODUCTION OF THESE SACRED TEXTS IN MANUSCRIPT AND PRINT FORM HAS BEEN THE FOCUS OF GREAT ATTENTION, BOTH AS OBJECTS OF SPIRITUAL DEVOTION AND AS PRODUCTS OF CREATIVE SCHOLARLY AND ARTISTIC ENDEAVOR.

The Christian Bible includes the books of the New Testament as well as the Old. Within the New Testament, the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—document the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, whom Christians believe to be the incarnate Son of God. The New Testament canon of twenty-seven books includes, in addition to the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, twenty-one Epistles (many of them written by the Apostle Paul), and the book of Revelation. The New Testament acquired its special status by the end of the second century AD, but was not formally confirmed until a convening of bishops from throughout the Christian world at the Council of Carthage in the late fourth century. Readings from the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Old Testament are traditionally included in Christian worship.

The *Qur'an* (literally meaning the “recitation”) is the sacred text of Muslims for whom it is the revelation of Allah to the Prophet Muhammad, communicated through the Angel Gabriel (Jibril) in the twenty-three years before the Prophet’s death in AD 632. The *Qur'anic* text is composed of one hundred fourteen *suras* (chapters), each with its own verses. Originally recited and written in Arabic by Muhammad’s companions, the verses were compiled into a single, written text shortly after Muhammad’s death, acquiring their present form, according to most scholars, by the middle of the seventh century. The *Qur'an* offers moral direction for believers, and is considered by Muslims to be a final testament of God’s revelation. In interpreting the *Qur'anic* text, Muslims are aided by the *Hadith*, which contains the reports passed down of statements or actions directly attributable to Muhammad. The Sacred Hadith (*Hadith Qudsi*) is the actual sayings of the Prophet that most Muslims consider the sacred word of God (Allah) as repeated by Muhammad.

Because the sacred word in each of these Abrahamic traditions functions as a source of divine revelation, the texts are central to the worship and prayers of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. For that reason, the reproduction of these sacred texts in manuscript and

print form has been the focus of great attention, both as objects of spiritual devotion and as products of creative scholarly and artistic endeavor. The biblical and *Qur'anic* texts brought together for the *Sacred Word and Image* exhibition reflect these elements of spirituality, scholarship, and artistry found within each of the three main Abrahamic religious traditions.

Transcribing and Translating Sacred Texts

Transcription and translation of sacred texts have been critical to all three Abrahamic religious traditions. The third-and second-century-BC Alexandrian translation of the Hebrew Bible into koinē Greek by the famous 72 Jewish scholars—thus, the Septuagint or LXX—made a variant of the Hebrew Bible accessible in the lingua franca of the eastern Mediterranean. Similarly, the development of the early New Testament canon in Greek tended to hide the multilingual character of the early Christian context in which elements of Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Aramaic or Old Syriac comingled. A similar challenge faced the early Muslim community as the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad sought to establish a single, standardized Arabic text of the *Qur'an* in the seventh century.

As Abrahamic religious traditions expanded beyond the Near East, the challenge of translation assumed greater importance. The commitment to “sacred languages”—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and in the case of Islam, Arabic—was maintained. For Jews, the Hebrew language remained the sacred language of scripture. Similarly, translations of the *Qur'an* into non-Arabic languages were typically referred to as “interpretations” so as to distinguish them from the sacred classical Arabic text. Nevertheless, the translation of these sacred texts became a central feature of each of the Abrahamic traditions, especially in the early modern and modern periods. Such translations, in turn, often drove the development and standardization of modern languages.

The *Sacred Word and Image* exhibition illustrates this important feature of the translation of sacred texts in both manuscript and print forms. It is perhaps

Fig. 40a-b (front and back cover)
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675

most clearly demonstrated in the case of the Armenian biblical texts. Armenian is among the earliest languages into which the Christian Bible was translated, with oral transmission of sacred texts almost surely functioning from the fourth-century conversion of Armenians to Christianity. Working from Greek and Old Syriac or Aramaic base texts, St. Mesrop (Mesrop Mashtots, ca. 361–439) and his collaborators, especially the Patriarch-Catholicos St. Sahak (Sahak Part'ev, ca. 350–439), launched the fifth-century translation of the Bible into Armenian, developing in the process the beautiful Armenian alphabet.

The standardization of the Armenian alphabet and the translation of the Bible yielded a “language of the book” (classical or Grabar Armenian) that has remained the traditional liturgical language of the Armenian church. The illustrated mid-seventeenth century Armenian Grabar text of the Gospels (figs. 40a–s) demonstrates how manuscript editions of the Armenian Bible continued to circulate alongside early Armenian printed editions of biblical texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As in other Eastern Christian communities, the development of the modern vernacular—in the case of Armenian the two variants, Eastern and Western Armenian—created the phenomenon of “diglossia” in which the traditional classical *Grabar* or sacred “language of the book” is distinct from the spoken idiom. Thus, from the nineteenth century, the classical Armenian text of the Bible has existed alongside vernacular Eastern and Western Armenian translations, even though the latter are not commonly used in Armenian liturgical worship.



Fig. 40c-d The Annunciation and The Last Supper
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
 Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675



Fig. 40e-f The Footwashing and the Arrest of Jesus
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
 Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675



Fig. 40g-h *Simon carrying Jesus' Cross and the Crucifixion*
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675



Fig. 40i-j *The Resurrection and the Ascension*
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675



Fig. 40k-l Mary with the Apostles and Christ as the King of Heaven
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675



Fig. 40m Canon Table
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675



Fig.40n-o Opening pages for the Gospel of Mark
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675



Fig.40p-q Opening pages for the Gospel of Luke
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675



Fig. 40r-s Opening pages for the Gospel of John
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospel,
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675



Fig. 47
First Tanakh Printed in Yiddish
The Netherlands, 1678

A parallel diglossia has functioned within Judaism. The two Jewish texts exhibited in *Sacred Word and Image* are rare first editions of vernacular translations of the complete Hebrew Bible into Yiddish and Ladino. Prior to these editions, biblical translation into the vernacular had been limited to the Pentateuch and other single books of the Bible. The Yiddish translation published in 1678 is the *editio princeps* of the complete Yiddish Bible (fig. 47). Its publication reflected the special circumstances of Jewish life in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, which had become the center of West European Judaism and the unrivaled center of Jewish publishing in the seventeenth century. Between 1626 and 1732, no fewer than 318 Jewish printers worked in Amsterdam, many of them seeking to provide publications for the Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities of Eastern Europe and the Balkans.¹

¹ On the Jewish press of Amsterdam and the first complete Yiddish Bible, see Jean Baumgarten, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature*, trans. and ed. Jerold C. Frakes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 121–27; and Marion Aptroot, “In Galkes They Do Not Say So, but the Taytsh Is as It Stands Here: Notes on the Amsterdam Yiddish Bible Translations by Blitz and Witzenhausen,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 27, nos. 1–2: 136–58.



One such Ashkenazic publisher, Uri Phoebus [Fayvesh] ben Aaron ha-Levi, commissioned Jekuthiel Blitz, a rabbi from the German town of Witmund, to prepare the Yiddish translation in 1670. The project was beset by problems—an effort to secure monopoly distribution rights in Poland from King John III Sobieski fell afoul of a local swindler; Phoebus’s business partner Borrit Smit (a Christian bookseller) went bankrupt, taking Phoebus down with him; and ultimately one of the other investors in the project, an Amsterdam Jewish printer by the name of Joseph Athias, sought to take over the venture, hiring a rival translator, Joseph Witzzenhausen. The end result was two rival

Yiddish translations in Hebrew script—the Blitz translation exhibited here, *Khamisho khumshey touro*, published in 1678 by Uri Phoebus; and the Witzzenhausen translation issued shortly thereafter in 1679 by Joseph Athias. Each was published in editions of 6,000 copies, neither of them commercially successful.

The importance of the Yiddish translations of the 1670s, however, lay not in their commercial success. Yiddish authority Jean Baumgarten claims that the Blitz and Witzzenhausen translations were “one of the pinnacles in the creativity and art of the book in Yiddish.” Such a claim rests in part on

their design, for these were “works of great accomplishment, even perfection, particularly with respect to the attention to page design and the beauty of the typography.”² But more importantly, the works reflected an entirely new approach to Hebrew biblical translation. As noted in the book’s preface, Jekuthiel Blitz rejected the pattern of previous free translation that had introduced Talmudic interpretation in such a way as to obscure the original text. Instead, he sought to maintain the purity and clarity of the original without exegetical interpretation. Such an approach not only reflected the influence of contemporary Dutch and German biblical translations, but also anticipated later vernacular translations of the Enlightenment and *Haskalah*.

Of comparable significance for the Sephardic world was the Judeo-Spanish, or Ladino, translation by Abraham Asa, whose *editio princeps* of the complete Ladino Bible was published in Constantinople in five volumes between 1739 and 1743. Volume 3 is the Ladino translation in Hebrew script of the Prophets, published in 1743 (figs. 48a–b).³

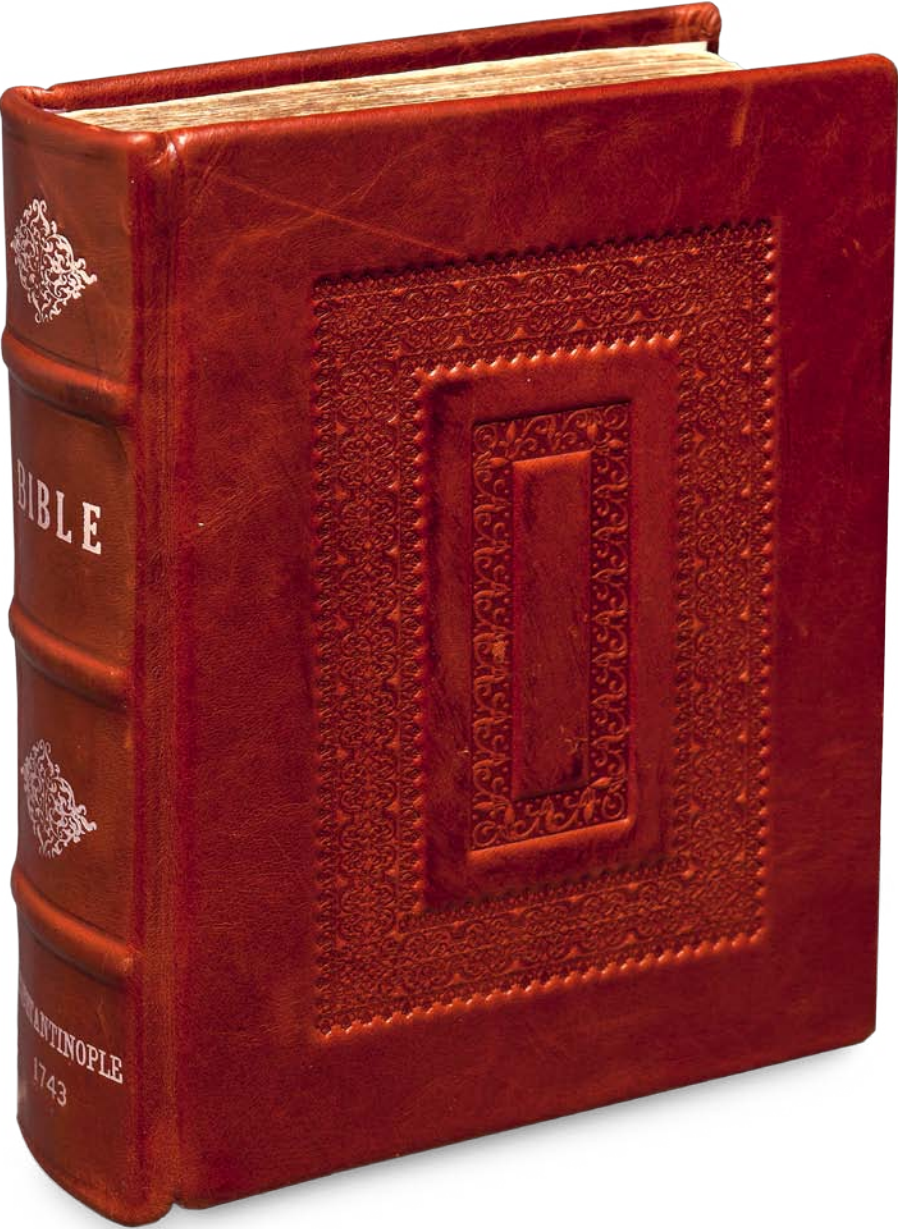
Until the eighteenth century, books in Judeo-Spanish were rarely printed in the Levant. As Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrique have noted, “Hebrew held pride of place, and any scholar worthy of the name had to demonstrate his virtuosity in the sacred language.”⁴

The popular Abraham Asa translation altered this pattern, and also liberated Judeo-Spanish from the archaic style of previous Ladino texts, providing a sacred text in an accessible language. As in most such vernacular translations of sacred text, the Abraham Asa translation was a response to the perceived need for renewal, reinvigorating the faith of the masses in the Ladino-speaking Ottoman Jewish Levant.

Fig. 48a-b
First Complete Tanakh Printed in Ladino, Volume III, Major and Minor Prophets
Constantinople (now Istanbul), 1743



Fig. 48a-b
First Complete Tanakh Printed in Ladino, Volume III, Major and Minor Prophets
Constantinople (now Istanbul), 1739–1745



² Baumgarten, *Old Yiddish Literature*, 122, 123.

³ The ordering of books in this Ladino translation varies slightly from the modern ordering. Volume 1 is the Pentateuch (1739); volume 2 the books of Joshua-II Kings (1743); volume 3, as seen here, contains the books of Isaiah-Malachi (1743); volume 4, the Psalter-II Chronicles (1743); and volume 5, the Megilloth (Ecclesiastes, Esther, Lamentations, Ruth, and Song of Songs [1743]). For a full citation, see entry no. 8662 in T. H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: BFBS, 1911), vol. 4, 1470.

⁴ Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrique, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th–20th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 61.

Fig. 46a
Chinese Qur'an
China, 18th century



Illuminating the Sacred Word in Abrahamic Traditions

The issue of accessibility relates to another common feature in Abrahamic traditions—namely, illumination of the sacred word. In the premodern era, before the dawn of mass literacy, the illustrated text and sacred image, including the icon, became powerful instruments for conveying the sacred word to a preliterate world. The icons and illuminated texts in the exhibition thus remind us of the educational, as well as the aesthetic, value of illustrations in Abrahamic traditions.

The vivid images in this exhibition, however, ought not to obscure the fact that in each of the Abrahamic traditions there have been serious questions raised about the appropriateness of sacred images. In

Jewish tradition, the biblical injunction in the Ten Commandments, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” has commonly been interpreted to mean that corporeal depiction of God is strictly forbidden and considered idolatrous. Thus, although traditional Jewish Bibles have been beautifully designed and have included decorative illustration, they do not depict human or other animal forms. In its broadest sense, this proscription reflects the concern that idolatry is a worship of transient values and objects, and therefore inconsistent with the sacred word.

Similarly, visual depictions of Allah and of the Prophet Muhammad are never found in the Qur’an and are more generally proscribed. Nevertheless, the elaborately illustrated 18th-century Chinese Qur’an (fig. 40a) demonstrates how illumination continued to

Fig. 31
Single-sided Triptych Icon
Ethiopia, early to mid-17th century



be prominent in Muslim sacred texts—in this case, note the richly colored borders decorated with intricate floral and geometric designs and with Arabic inscriptions.

There was a comparable ambivalence concerning sacred images in the early Christian church, reflected in Byzantine Emperor Leo III’s edict of 730 ordering the destruction of all holy icons. The iconoclast movement, which responded to appeals from bishops in Asia Minor, lasted until 787, when the seventh Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea effectively rejected the iconoclast position and restored the veneration of icons in Christian practice. Efforts to restore iconoclasm in the ninth century ultimately failed, with the result that sacred images have since been a central part of Christian iconography and sacred text illumination. Thus, illuminations such as the dramatic portrayal of the

resurrection of Christ (fig. 40i, p. 71) from the Armenian Gospels of the mid-seventeenth century, or the stunning seventeenth-century Ethiopian triptych icon (fig. 31) depicting the life of Christ, with the Madonna and child seated above the Apostles, could serve both an important instructive as well as devotional purpose.

Finally, what the *Sacred Word and Image* exhibition reconfirms is the importance of diaspora communities in fashioning and disseminating the sacred word in Abrahamic religious traditions. Thus, the exhibition features a Yiddish Bible from Amsterdam, Qur’ans from China and sub-Saharan Africa, Armenian texts from Constantinople, and a choral songbook from Bolivia. By the seventeenth century, the sacred word in Abrahamic religious traditions—its scholarly translations and creative illuminations—was reaching a global audience.

SACRED WORD AND IMAGE

*in Eastern Christian,
Islamic, and Jewish
Contexts*

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TWENTY-ONE WORKS OF ART EXHIBITED FROM THE COLLECTION OF JAMES AND ANA MELIKIAN CONSTITUTE A UNIQUE GROUP OF CHRISTIAN, ISLAMIC, AND JEWISH ARTISTIC TREASURES FROM ASIA, AFRICA, AND EUROPE. DATING FROM BETWEEN THE FIFTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES AND CONVEYED IN PRECIOUS METAL, WOOD, CLOTH, PAPER, PAINT, AND INK,



These objects allow us to contemplate iconography, aesthetics, and craftsmanship that service a variety of religious functions. At the same time, they reflect a superb collecting taste and a largely undocumented history of appreciation by generations of unnamed individuals who cherished these works of art and contributed to their preservation.

Ethiopian Christianity Conveyed in Wood and Paint

As the only country in Africa that escaped colonial occupation, Ethiopia is famed for its adherence to tradition, especially when it comes to Christian art. Accordingly, the five Ethiopian works of art exhibited here bring to mind some of the earliest ritual object known today to have been used by the followers of Jesus from the third and fourth centuries, despite the fact that they date from around the 17th century. The materials, techniques, subjects, and functions of these objects are not unlike those associated with the first Christian communities along the eastern Mediterranean and in Mesopotamia. With strong ties to the Coptic Church in Egypt,





Fig.28a
Red Wooden Hand Cross
Ethiopia, 17th–19th centuries

Ethiopia was among the first countries to embrace Christianity in the 340s, when the kingdom of Axum adopted it as the state religion. By that time, the cult of the cross and the cult of Mary had begun to be established. Their importance had been maintained throughout the history of Ethiopian Christianity, as signaled by these objects.

Ethiopian crosses display an exceptional visual creativity. Analogously to the earliest crosses known from Christian art, the arms of Ethiopian crosses are always of equal length. They are, however, unique for their endless variety of interlace and repeated rhythm of circles, squares, diamonds, dots, curls, wavy lines, and other shapes. Such cross designs may be tattooed on the foreheads and hands of the laity, or worn by them as leather or metal pendants hanging close to their necks. A variety of liturgical crosses that convey this uniquely Ethiopian design also are employed by the clergy. The largest ones are the processional crosses that consist of tall staffs culminating in intricate large metal crosses that are too sacred to be touched by members of the congregation, and thus, from the base of each, a long protective scarf is suspended. The hand crosses are most often made of wood. Smaller versions are the personal property of the priests, handed down in their families. Larger versions are used for blessings and offered for the community to touch or kiss.¹ Three wooden examples of the latter type include a red hand cross with heart-shaped filigree cuts (figs. 28a–c); a brown hand cross with an incised interlace on its front and a faint outline of a crucifix on its back (figs. 29a–d); and a black hand cross with lozenge head (figs. 30a–c). Their shapes follow a functional design since beneath the rhombus of the cross, the handle widens into a square that culminates in a pointed bottom. The square is adorned with a design complementing that of the cross but is always smaller than the overall shape of the cross. It plays a minor but important functional role by securing the object in the hand of the priest.

¹ Stanislaw Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Crosses: A Cultural History and Chronology* (Milan: Skira, 2006), 17–35.



Fig.28b-c (detail)
Red Wooden Hand Cross
Ethiopia, 17th–19th centuries

Fig.29a-d
Brown Wooden Hand Cross
Ethiopia, 17th–19th centuries



Fig.30a-c
Black Wooden Hand Cross
Ethiopia, 17th–19th centuries



Fig.31
Single-sided Triptych Icon
Ethiopia, early to mid-17th century

The Virgin Mary has had a prominent place in the teachings and liturgy of the Ethiopian church. Her figure with the baby Jesus is a frequent subject of Ethiopian panel painting, as attested by two Ethiopian triptych icons (figs. 31-32).² Both are painted in tempera on gesso-covered wood panels, hinged to one another simply with a cord. When closed, the side panels fully cover the central panel. When open, the side panels prop the paintings for display. The larger of the two is a single-sided triptych (fig. 31), featuring a popular combination of themes: the Virgin and the Child flanked by angels; scenes from the life of Christ; Saint George; as well as the three Ethiopian saints Honorius, Täklä Haymanor, and Ewostätewos. Dated to the early seventeenth century, a practically identical version of this triptych is found in the collection of the Walters Art Museum.³ The central panel is dominated by the large figure of Mary with the baby Jesus, both enclosed in her flaring blue robe, which is adorned with an even-armed

cross on its hood. This iconography derives from a Roman prototype in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore that was popularized by Jesuit missionaries, who were active in Ethiopia (as in India, China, and Japan) during the second half of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century.⁴ Beneath the main scene with Mary, are Jesus and the twelve apostles each holding small hand crosses and listening to John the Baptist. The left panel portrays Christ resurrecting Adam and Eve on top (Anastasis), and Saint George slaying the dragon on the bottom. The right panel portrays, on top, the crucified body of

² For an in-depth study on the subject, see Stanislaw Chojnacki, "The Imagery of the Virgin Mary," in *Major Themes in Ethiopian Painting: Indigenous Developments, the Influence of Foreign Models, and their Adaptation from the 13th to the 19th Century* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1983), 171–215.

³ Deborah E. Horowitz, et al., *Ethiopian Art: The Walters Art Museum*

⁴ The origin of this iconography, including an additional eleven versions, is discussed in Stanislaw Chojnacki, "The Virgin of S. Maria Maggiore," in *Major Themes*, 217–89. (Lingfield, Surrey: Third Millennium, 2001), 128–29, Cat. 23.

Fig.32a-b
Double-sided Triptych Icon
 Ethiopia, early to mid-17th century



Fig.32c (detail)
Double-sided Triptych Icon
 Ethiopia, early to mid-17th century



Christ flanked by Mary and the apostle John, collecting Christ's blood in chalices; and the three Ethiopian saints on the bottom. The main panel of the smaller double-sided triptych (figs. 32a–c) is devoted solely to the Santa Maria Maggiore Virgin and Child flanked by angels. The two scenes on the right panel depict the Crucifixion and Saint Mercurius. The three scenes of the left panel shows Daniel in the lions' den on top, possibly the holy patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the middle; and Saints Honorius, Täklä Haymanor, and Ewostatewos at the bottom.

On the reverse side, the main panel features the two most popular Ethiopian saints, Täklä Haymanor (the thirteenth-century founder of the monastery of Debre Libanos) and Ewostatewos (an important church leader from the fourteenth century), whose iconography here includes turbans and hand crosses. Beneath the two saints, on a smaller scale, is Jesus with the four evangelists. The right panel depicts additional Ethiopian saints. The left panel shows the Anastasis and St. George.

Fig.33a-b
Velvet and Silver Episcopal Crown
Armenia, mid-19th century



Armenian Liturgy Captured in Silver and Gold

Nestled south of the Caucasus Mountain Range in the northernmost regions of Mesopotamia, the kingdom of Armenia was the very first country to adopt Christianity as a state religion in 301 AD. According to tradition, the roots of the Armenian Church has apostolic ties and goes back to the first century, when the teachings of Jesus spread first toward the East from Judea along the local trade routes of western Asia. In this rocky region, the work of gold- and silversmiths is deeply rooted in a local tradition to create earthly treasures, which, in a Christian context, evokes status and reverence and at the same time alludes to heavenly, spiritual treasures. Many objects employed in the liturgy are rendered in precious metal, as seen in these seven works of art.

The Melikian Collection includes a characteristic group of silver and gold accessories from the attire of Armenian bishops (Gr. *Episkopos*): a crown, a staff, and a hand cross. The velvet and silver Episcopal crown (figs. 33a–c) is a regally shaped and elaborately decorated version of a clerical mitre, a comparable example of which is preserved in the collection of the Armenian St. James Cathedral in Jerusalem.⁵ Atop the crown, in the center of a horizontal circular ornament, stands a large double cross that features a second cross turned ninety degrees in relation to the first, and thus conveys the cross shape from four sides. The front of the headdress is distinguished with a scene of the crucifixion, while the rest of its surface is densely covered with floral and geometric motifs formed in silver repoussé appliqué to the red velvet. The collapsible, silver staff (figs. 34a–b) has a

⁵ Bezalel Narkiss, et al., *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem* (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas Bros., 1979), Cat. 186, pp. 143 and 158.



Fig.33c (detail)
Velvet and Silver Episcopal Crown
Armenia, mid-19th century



Fig. 34a-b
Collapsible Silver Clerical Staff
Armenia, dated 1821



fluted and gently twisted shaft, which concludes in a small even-armed gilded cross flanked by two dragons. The dragon heads were originally decorated with stone inlays. The motifs of such snake-like dragons, frequent on Armenian Episcopal staffs, may allude to Genesis 3: 1 (“The serpent was the most wise of all the wise beasts”),⁶ or to the brass serpent Moses raised on a pole to heal his people (Numbers 21:8-9), analogized to the crucifixion of Jesus (John 3:14-15). In this case, the bodies of the snakes are inscribed with a prayer on one side and a dedication on the other, which states: “Gifted to Saint Nishan Monastery in 1821.” The gilded filigree hand cross (figs. 35a–b) is composed of a delicate, lace-like mesh that frames a hollow body. This technique seems to indicate a connection to the Armenian community of Jerusalem, since it is identical to the metalwork seen on a silvered altar cross in the collection of the St. James Cathedral dated to 1747.⁷ In terms of its overall appearance, the design of the Melikian hand cross brings to mind the interlace routinely used to define the flaring shapes of crosses on Armenian memorial steles known as *khatchkars*. The *khatchkars* are uniquely Armenian votive stone relief carvings that can be either free standing or built into the walls of churches. The relatively small, brick-sized, inscribed example of a *khatchkar* in the Melikian Collection (fig. 36) shows a triple cross design set on top of a plant support, dated to 1646 by its dedicatory inscription.

⁶ Vrej Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2001), 128. For two additional Armenian dragon-headed Episcopal staffs, see the online catalogue of the Melikian Collection (<http://www.melikiancollection.com/>).

⁷ Narkiss et al., *Armenian Art Treasures*, Cat. 185, pp. 142 and 157.



Fig. 35a-b
Gilded Filigree Hand Cross
Armenia, mid-to late 18th century





Fig. 36
Khatchkar (Stone Cross),
Armenia, dated 1646

Fig. 37a
Gilded Silver Icon with the Virgin and Child
Armenia, dated 1696



Other examples of Armenian Christian silver work included here were designed as casements of various holy contents to be displayed during the liturgy. The gilded silver icon with the Virgin and Child (figs. 37a–d) belonged to the treasury of the Etchmiadzin Cathedral. A note pasted on the back of the icon records that it was painted in 1696 by the distinguished Armenian artist Naghash Hovnat'an (1661–1722), who painted the dome and the main altar at Etchmiadzin and also worked for the court of the Georgian King Vakhtang VI (1675–1737) in Tbilisi. In this icon, the figures of Mary and the young Jesus are delicately defined in tempera and gold paint on canvas adhered to a wooden support, and enclosed in a gilded silver repouseé background that also supplies their raised halos. Since the tradition of icon painting developed relatively late in Armenia under Russian and Greek influences, this icon is especially important for being one of the earliest Armenian icons known today. The rare example of a fine jeweled and enameled silver reliquary box (figs. 38a–d) captures the sight of Jerusalem on the front, two sides, and top, providing views of the walled old city with the Holy Sepulcher (Church of the Resurrection) at its center. The buildings are rendered in silver with the doors and windows in green or dark blue enamel. In each panel, the sky forms the background in solid light blue enamel. The lid features a large, pink sapphire stone in its center, around which the skyline of the city is shown from a centralized birds-eye-view. On the back panel of the box, enclosed in a floral setting, is a large roundel with a hexagram that brings to mind the Star of David. This Jewish symbol together with the Holy Sepulcher and the numerous mosques with their minarets and moon crescents (a symbol popular in Islam starting from Ottoman Turkish times) clearly allude to Jerusalem with its three Abrahamic religions. Silver repouseé with blue and green enamel is best known today through Armenian gospel covers produced in Anatolian workshops (such as in the city of Kayseri) during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, although the box may have been made for purchase by pilgrims visiting the holy city.⁸

⁸ For two examples of Armenian enameled silver gospel covers produced in Anatolia, see Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck, *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library; and Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), Cat. 1 and 68, pp. 145 and 196, color plates 47 and 46, respectively.

Fig. 37b-c (detail)
Gilded Silver Icon with the Virgin and Child
Armenia, dated 1696



Fig. 37d (detail)
Gilded Silver Icon with the Virgin and Child
Armenia, dated 1696

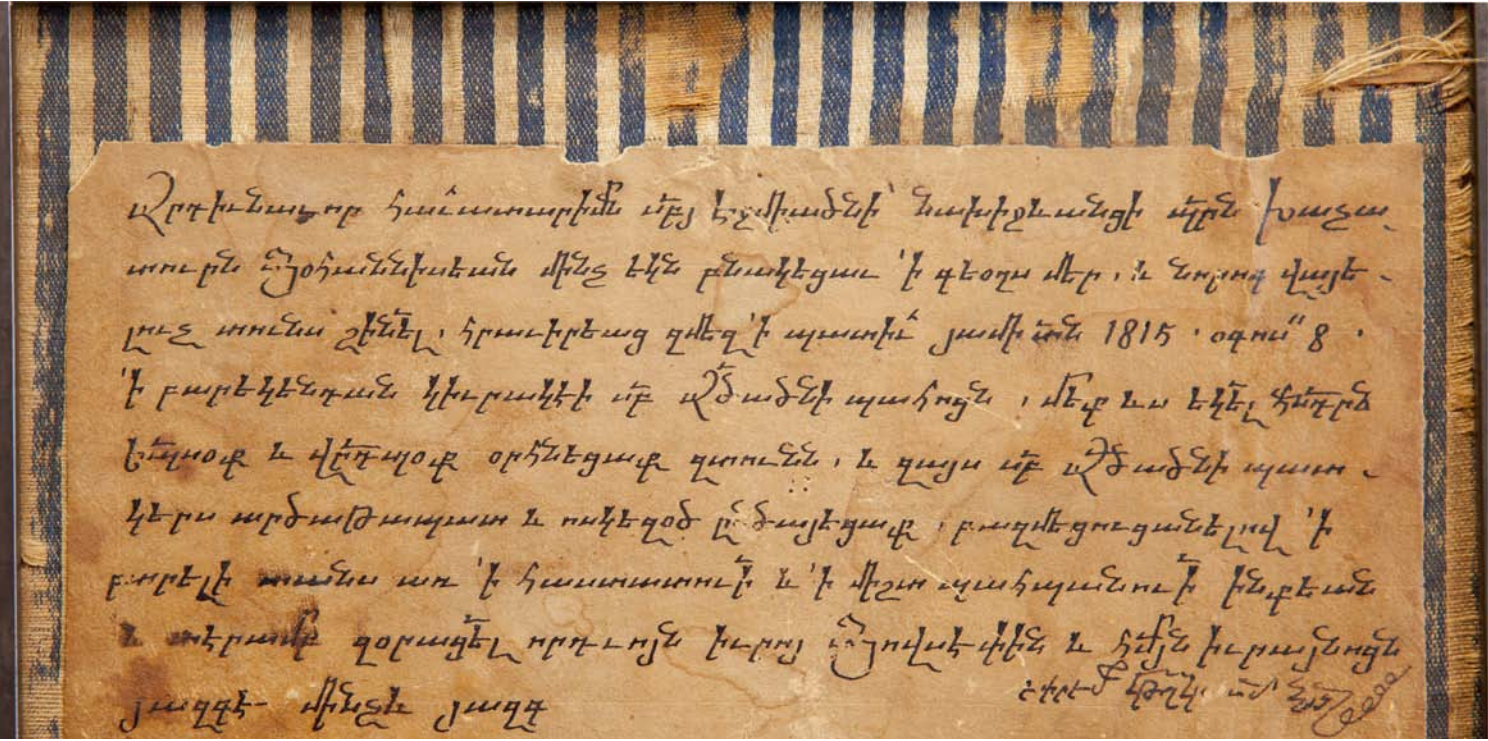


Fig. 38a-c
Jeweled and Enameled Silver Reliquary Box
 Armenia, 17th–18th century



Fig. 38d
Jeweled and Enameled Silver Reliquary Box
 Armenia, 17th–18th century



Fig. 39a-b
Silver-bound Liturgical Text
Armenia, 1653–1720



Encased in precious silver covers, sacred texts are important components of Armenian liturgy, during which they are carried in ceremonial manner, incensed, and displayed on the altar.⁹ This silver binding (figs. 39a–b) of a liturgical text is the work of the silversmiths of Caesarea and dates from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth century. The front cover portrays the much-favored scene of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. To the right of a central pedestal bearing a book is the high priest holding the young Jesus while Simeon blesses him. To the left is Mary with Joseph. The back of the cover shows the Ascension.¹⁰ Another superb example of a silver binding in the Melikian Collection (figs. 40a–b) was commissioned for a Gospel book to be used in the Church of the Holy Virgin in

the city of Konya. This exquisite cover was made by the Armenian silversmith Khachatourian Yakop in the north Anatolian province of Tokat in 1675. The front plate with the Resurrection and the back plate with the Crucifixion are attached to one another by a highest quality chainmail spine.¹¹

⁹ For a discussion of the Gospel book in Armenian worship, see an essay by Fr. Krikor H. Maksoudian in Mathews and Wieck, *Treasures in Heaven*, 34–37.
¹⁰ For an identical and a similar versions of the Presentation iconography on Armenian silver covers, see Mathews and Wieck, *Treasures in Heaven*, Cat. 11 and 1, pp. 120, 152 and 145, and color plate 47.
¹¹ For other examples of Armenian silver chainmail spines in lesser quality, see Mathews and Wieck, *Treasures in Heaven*, Cat. 60, 79, and 80, pp. 190–91 and 202–04, and color plate 48. For comparable quality, but solid gold chainmail spines used in Islamic book covers preserved in the Topkapi Palace Museum, see Suzanne Bauman, et al., *Süleyman the Magnificent* (New York: National Gallery of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000); and David J. Roxburgh, ed., *Turks: A Journey of a Thousand Years, 600–1600* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2005), Cat. 321, pp. 342–43 and 458.

Fig. 39c
Silver-bound Liturgical Text
Armenia, 1653–1720

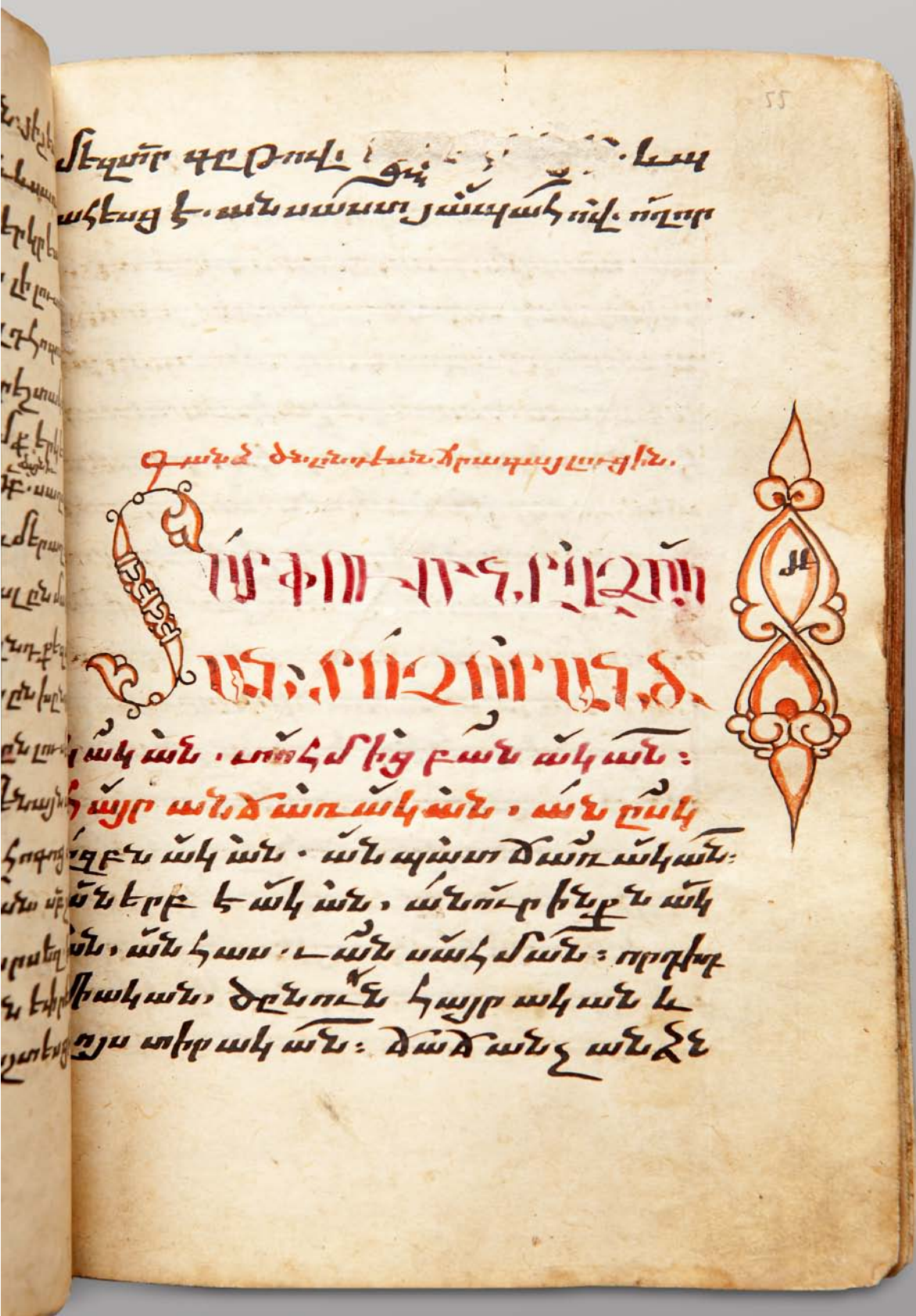


Fig. 40a-b
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675

The Highest Esteem in Armenian, Greek-Orthodox, and Arabic Christian Book Art

Arguably the most exquisite Christian works of art exhibited here are the illuminated manuscripts: the Armenian Four Gospels (figs. 40a-q) from 1675 bound in an expensive silver cover (already noted above); the two loose folia from a Greek Gospel Lectionary (figs. 41a-d), dating from the 17th century; and the Arabic Four Gospels (figs. 42a-e) from the early to mid- eighteenth century, bound in a finely tooled but less assuming leather cover. These manuscripts were made a generation or two apart within the territories of the Ottoman Turkish Empire. Their makers belonged to minority groups based on not only their religion (versions of Eastern Christianity), but also their ethnicity (Armenian, Greek, and Arab). Their distinct ethnocultural heritage is reflected through their different approaches to what constitutes the highest esteem in the religious book art of early modern West Asia.

The Armenian Four Gospels (figs 40a-q) has an archaic character for its time in the choice of its fine parchment folia and traditional pictorial program. The latter follows a pattern established already by the time of the earliest known illuminated gospels, the Syriac *Rabbula Gospels* (586 AD)¹² and the Armenian *Echmiadzin Gospels* (before 640 AD).¹³ It begins with ten full-page paintings, including: eight narrative scenes on the life of Christ (Annunciation, Last Supper, Foot Washing, Arrest of Jesus, Simon Carries Jesus’ Cross, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension; fig. 40c-j), and two iconic scenes devoted to Mary and Jesus (Mary with the apostles and King David, the author of the psalms prophesying the coming of Jesus; and Christ as the king of heaven, fig. 40k-l). The next ten pages feature arches and columns. They start with the two-page letter, explaining the canon tables written by Eusebius (early fourth-century Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine) to his correspondent Carpianos, with the images of both shown in roundels within the arches (fig. 40m), followed by eight pages of canon tables and other gilded notes on the canon, leading to the start of the Gospel texts (fig. 40o and q). Except for the first, each Gospel begins with a full-page image of a scribe, symbolizing the evangelist on the page facing the start his Gospel (fig. 40n and p). Within the text of the gospels, occasionally small figural scenes or floral decorations are painted along the margins. In the earliest known illuminated Gospel books, the body of the text was not supplemented with any figural decoration.¹⁴ The tendency to include miniatures on the pages of the gospels is a later development and, therefore, it is not surprising to find such marginal illuminations in a seventeenth-century Armenian Gospel book.

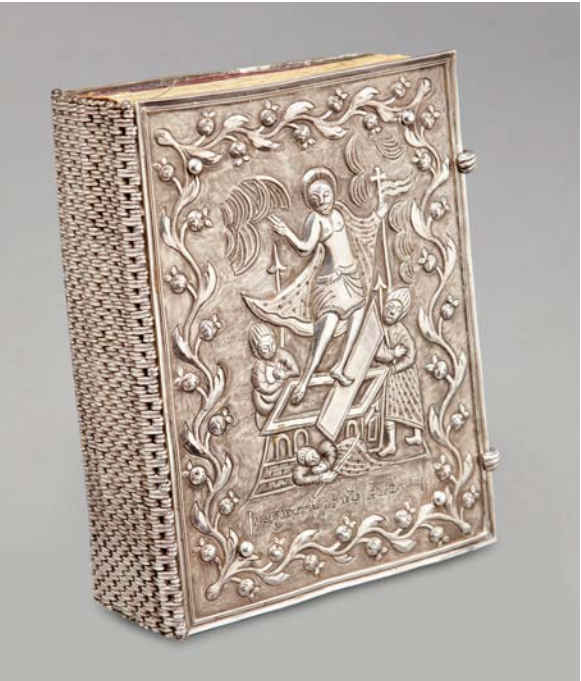


Fig. 40c-q
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675
For larger images and identification, please refer to pp. 66-74.



¹² Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark*, Cat. 108 and p. 180.
¹³ Dating from before 640, the earliest known Armenian Gospel illuminations are preserved in the jmiadsin Gospels (Matenadaran Ms. 2374, dated to 989), which contains a set of parchment folia with full-page scenes salvaged from a now-lost 7th-century Gospel book and sewn into the 10th-century codex; see Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark*, Cat. 80 and p. 157.
¹⁴ In the Rabbula Gospels, marginal scenes are used only along around the canon tables, see Carlo Cecchelli, *The Rabbula Gospels: Facsimile Edition of the Miniatures of the Syriac Manuscript Plut. 1, 56 in the Medicean-Laurentian Library* (Olten: Urs Graf-Verlag, 1959), folia 3b–12b.

Fig. 41a
Two Illuminated Pages from a Greek Orthodox
Gospel Lectionary, folio 1 recto(?)
Constantinople (now Istanbul), 17th century

The two pages of an illuminated Greek-Orthodox Gospel Lectionary (figs. 41a–d) demonstrate a pictorial program that employs miniatures incorporated within the columns. These pages once belonged to a so-called “lectionary,” which is a book of quotations from the scriptures arranged in a liturgical order appropriate for the days of the religious calendar. Each of the two visible pages constitutes one side of a double-sided codex folio (now framed for display) and together they preserve parts of three readings from the Gospel of Mark.¹⁵ Three large illuminated initials, stretching as tall as 7 lines along the left margins, mark the start of the readings. Atop each initial, red ink lines note the day when the passage should be read, followed by a gold ink line (red ink in case of the third reading) that introduces the phrase “at that time” before the actual Gospel quote begins. The first reading is from Mark 2:14-17 on Jesus and the tax collectors (fig. 41a). On the same page is the start of the second reading from Mark 8:34-36 that continues on another page (either on the back side of this folio not available for view, or on a facing page, now lost). This passage is on the cost of discipleship, where Jesus states that whoever wishes to follow him should take up their cross and do so. The miniature heading this section (fig. 41b) not only illustrates the essence of this message, but also visually divides this reading from the previous one. The third reading is from Mark 15:43-16:3 (also continues on another page) on Jesus’ burial and resurrection, discussing how Joseph of Arimathea asked Pontius Pilate for the body, how he buried Jesus into a tomb set aside for himself, and how the next day the three women going to anoint the body found the empty tomb (fig. 41c). In this case, too, the miniature is located above the start of the section, illustrating one element of the story discussed below by showing Christ’s body being placed in a tomb near Golgotha (fig. 41d).¹⁶

¹⁵ Since outer margins are wider than inner margins on pages of codex folia, the relative widths of the side margins suggest here that a recto page is visible on first folio and a verso page on the second.

¹⁶ I am most grateful for Prof. Jason D. BeDuhn (Northern Arizona University, Dept. of Comparative Cultural Studies) for translating and identifying the Greek text.



Fig. 41b
Two Illuminated Pages from a Greek Orthodox
Gospel Lectionary, folio 2 verso(?)
Constantinople (now Istanbul), 17th century



Fig. 42a
Arabic Four Gospels,
leather cover
Turkey, Ottoman empire, 18th century

The Arabic Four Gospels (figs. 42a–e) is a rare example of a Gospel-book in Arabic translation. Since this book does not have a colophon, the exact circumstances of its production are hard to determine. Based on its content, however, it is clear that it was made for an Arab Christian patron and/or community. The use of the Arabic language, both as the daily vernacular and the *lingua sacra*, distinguishes a relatively small group of Christians active in West Asia from approximately the 3rd-4th centuries until today.¹⁷ This Gospel-book contains only the texts of the four gospels in the order of Matthew (fig. 42a), Mark (fig. 42b), Luke (fig. 42c), and John (fig. 42d) with the exception of four brief invocations, each of which is written as the first black ink line of the text area directly beneath the wide gold strip and above the red ink passage that starts the gospel.¹⁸ The artistry of this luxurious illuminated manuscript also reflects an Arabic cultural context, since it manifests the finest characteristics of Arabic book art (best known for its Islamic output). Accordingly, this Gospel-book contains no figural scenes—although Arab Christians did illustrate their Gospels with images early on, as documented by the parchment folia surviving from the earliest known Arabic language Gospel-book dating from 859 in the collection of Saint Catherine’s Monastery at Mt. Sinai.¹⁹ Further features of Arabic/ Islamic book culture are seen in the superb quality materials (paper, ink, gold leaf, and paint) and the scribal techniques, including: the exquisite lettering in Nakshi calligraphy, the gilded double frames around the single column on each page, the four headpieces that extend across the upper margins to the edges of the paper, each with a row of delicate blue and red floral finials, as well as the layout of the final passages. Each gospel concludes in gradually narrowing, centered lines arranged in a wedge shape, the tip of which touches the bottom margin with the last word, as if the scribe was creating a calligram about the idea of ending (fig. 42e).²⁰



Fig. 42b
Arabic Four Gospels, Beginning of Gospel
of Matthew, folio 1 (verso) and folio 2 (recto)
Turkey, Ottoman empire, 18th century

¹⁷ Blackwell Dictionary of Eastern Christianity (Malden: 2001), 37–41
¹⁸ The four invocations read: “In the name of God (Ar. Allah), the One, the Living, the Everlasting, the Uncreated, the Eternal. It is Him [...] and on Him I count” (before Matthew); “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the One God” (before Mark) “In the name of the Father the Absolute, the Son the Intercessor, and the Holy Spirit the Paraclete” (before Luke), and finally “In the name of God the Creator, the Living, the Pronouncer. It is Him we [...] and ask for help” (before John). I am most grateful for Prof. Mohamed A. Mohamed (Northern Arizona University, Dept. of Comparative Cultural Studies) for translating these passages.
¹⁹ The Mt. Sinai manuscript is not only the earliest illuminated Arabic Gospel book, but also contains the earliest extant examples of Arabic painting, see Michelle Brown, ed., *In the Beginning: Bibles before the Year 1000* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2006), No. 35, 166–67, and 274–75.
²⁰ For Qur’ans with analogous layouts and illuminations produce Egypt, Turkey, and Iran between the 14th and 19th centuries, see Elaine J. Wright, in *Islam: Faith, Art, Culture: Manuscripts of the Chester Beatty Library* (London: Scala, 2009), 69–145.

Fig. 42c
Arabic Four Gospels,
Beginning of Gospel of Mark, folio 75 (verso)
and folio 76 (recto)
Turkey, Ottoman empire, 18th century



Fig. 42d
Arabic Four Gospels,
Beginning of Gospel of Luke, folio 117 (verso)
and folio 118 (recto)
Turkey, Ottoman empire, 18th century



Fig. 42e
Arabic Four Gospels,
Beginning of Gospel of John, folio 189 (verso)
and 190 (recto)
Turkey, Ottoman empire, 18th century

Fig. 42f
Arabic Four Gospels,
Conclusion of Gospel of Matthew, folio 73 (verso)
and folio 74 (recto)
Turkey, Ottoman empire, 18th century



Fig. 43a
Large Painted Tile with
the Bust of Christ
Isfahan, Iran. dated 1880



Christian and Islamic Images of Jesus and Mary

The large underglaze tile with a bust of Christ from the late 19th century (figs. 43a–c) is a rare ceramic icon that shows a monochrome image with the iconography of the Christ as *Pantocrator* (‘all-powerful’) familiar from early Eastern Christian art.²¹ Dressed in elegant Episcopal vestments, Jesus is looking intensely into the eyes of the beholder, while assuming a gesture of teaching with his right hand and holding the Bible in his left. Although attributed to Qajar Dynasty (1785–1925) Iran,²² this painted tile was used most certainly in Coptic Egypt, as indicated by the combination of its trilingual inscriptions that contain Greek, Coptic, and Arabic texts. First, two floating medallions above his shoulders identify him in Greek abbreviations as Jesus (*jēs*) on the left and Christ (*xrs*) on the right. Second, within his halo, there are three Greek letters (*ho,ō, and n*) highlighted against the white background of the silhouette of an even-armed cross that together read “The Being” and thus quote Exodus 3:14 from the Greek Old Testament (*Septuagint*), where God calls himself as such. Third, Jesus’s Bible opens onto the verse of John 8:12 given in Coptic on the left and in Arabic on the right page of the codex: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

²¹ A lesser-known, 6th-century example of the *Pantocrator* on a carved ivory panel is preserved in the collection of the Coptic Museum, Cairo, Egypt; see www.sacred-destinations.com/egypt/cairo-coptic-museum.

²² Pictorial tiles with Christian themes are best known today from Armenian context, but those are always colorful and made on a smaller scale, see Narkiss et al., *Armenian Art Treasures*, 129–33; and Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark*, 148–49. For the attribution of the tile to Qajar Isfahan, see Christie’s Sale 5830: Indian & Islamic Works of Art & Textiles, Lot 238 (April 3, 2009).

Fig. 43b (detail)
Large Painted Tile with the Bust of Christ
Isfahan, Iran. dated 1880



Fig. 43c (detail)
Large Painted Tile with the Bust of Christ
Isfahan, Iran. dated 1880



Fig. 44a
Islamic Cloth Painting with Maryam (Mary) and Isa (Jesus)
Turkey, Ottoman empire, c. 1600



In Islamic pictorial art, the mere existence of depictions of Qur’anic passages about Mary (Maryam) and the baby Jesus (Isa) is a phenomenon that contradicts a variety of false assumptions. While it is true that the Qur’an itself is never illustrated, various stories from the Qur’an are integrated into nonscriptural religious texts, such as the Tales of the Prophets (*Qisas al-anbiya*) and the Book of Divinations (*Falnama*), which frequently are illustrated in Iran and within the sphere of Iranian cultural influence—in the arts of Turkey, central Asia, and Islamic India. The Islamic cloth painting with Maryam (Mary) and Isa (Jesus), (figs. 44a–d) is one such example. In terms of its composition, this image is analogous to album paintings from Mughal India, Safavid Persia, as well as Ottoman Turkey. During its most likely time of production, ca. 1600, album paintings produced on sheets of paper in comparable sizes display a similar use of space by centering a group of figures in a landscape setting, framed by inscriptions written with Arabic script and in Persian or Turkish languages. The scale of this image is also comparable to contemporaneous album paintings, such as the Safavid images of “Maryam shakes the palm tree to provide food for the baby Isa” from the Tales of the Prophets in the collection of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.²³ The Melikian image was painted on cotton cloth with the medium of gouache, which is a less expensive alternative to paper and tempera. It portrays Mary with the young Jesus on her lap seated on a carpet within the walls of a garden. Mary is shown offering a piece of fruit to the boy, whose head is enclosed in the faint silhouette of a flaming halo. This scene derives from the Book of Divination, as confirmed by its Persian inscription with the characteristic wording of a divination text: “Jesus and Mary have been drawn as your lot, I speak the truth, not flattery: The door of conquest and fortune has been opened in front of your face.” The Melikian image closely resembles a cloth painting with Maryam and the baby Isa in the Museum of Ethnology, Rotterdam, that bears an identical inscription.²⁴

²³ Verses 19:22-26 of the Qur’an discusses the birth of Isa, noting how God provided a small stream to comfort Maryam and instructed her to shake a palm tree and eat its dates so to regain her strength. For depictions of this event and others related to the Prophets mentioned in the Quran, see an essay by Elaine J. Wright, in *Islam: Faith, Art, Culture: Manuscripts of the Chester Beatty Library* (London: Scala, 2009), 191-215 and Fig. 166.

²⁴ Once attributed to India (Museum voor Volkenkunde [Rotterdam, Netherlands] *Dreaming of Paradise: Islamic Art from the Collection of the Museum of Ethnology, Rotterdam* [Rotterdam: Martial & Snoeck, 1993], 105, Fig. 86), the Rotterdam painting might have originated in the eastern regions of the Ottoman Empire (http://www.melikiancollection.com/Selections/Islamic/6805700_tUthx).

Fig. 44b (detail)
Islamic Cloth Painting with Maryam (Mary) and Isa (Jesus)
Turkey, Ottoman empire, c. 1600



Fig. 44c-d (detail)
Islamic Cloth Painting with Maryam (Mary) and Isa (Jesus)
Turkey, Ottoman empire, c. 1600





Fig. 45a-b
Ethiopian Qur'an
Sudan, dated August 31, 1773

Qur'an Manuscripts from the Edges of the Islamic World

From Sub-Saharan Africa all the way to China, the Qur'an constitutes an essential component of Islamic religion and art. Its text is considered to contain the word of God transmitted through the archangel Gabriel to the prophet Muhammad (ca. 570–632), who taught the thus received divine revelations to his followers in the form of poetic recitations. By the mid-seventh century, already prior to the rule of the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750), these originally oral instructions were collected into a holy book with 114 *suras* (chapters). As one of the “Religions of the Book,” Islam maintains a high reverence for the production and use of religious texts, which culminates in Qur'anic manuscripts, characterized by leather-bound, vertical codex formats, and Arabic script and language.

Fig. 45c
Ethiopian Qur'an
Sudan, dated August 31, 1773

While the Arabic script is adopted to write a great variety of languages throughout the Islamic world, the original Arabic text of the Qur'an is never translated or transliterated for religious use. Analogous to the two eighteenth-century Qur'ans exhibited here, the earliest Qur'ans that survive from the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258) demonstrate the existence of both utilitarian and luxurious editions. Both examples are characterized by high-quality lettering and production values. The luxurious versions are handled as treasures and as such are subjected to less use. They may be written in gold ink and ornamented with geometrical or floral illuminations, but never illustrated with figural scenes.²⁵

A strong smoky scent signals that the Ethiopian Qur'an (fig. 45a-c) was used around the open fires of rural east Africa. This relatively early and rare manuscript from the Sub-Saharan region was produced in 1773 in the city of Harar, in the “horn of Africa.” Harar has been an important center of Islamic culture since the mid-sixteenth century, especially famous for its bookbinding. The original leather binding on this Qur'an follows a popular Islamic design of blind tooling and stamped motifs, featuring a large central medallion and corner pieces (fig. 45a). Testimony to the skill of the scribe and the devotion of the patron, each folio displays a bold, eastern Sudanese calligraphy in high quality black ink, occasionally accented with minimal scribal adornments and zigzagging marginal commentary in colored inks (fig. 45b).



²⁵ Examples of early Qur'ans are discussed in François Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition: Qur'ans of the 8th to the 10th Centuries AD* (London: Nour Foundation, in association with Azmimuth and Oxford University Press, 1992).

Fig. 46b
Chinese Qur'an
China, 18th century

In contrast, the Chinese Qur'an shows relatively few signs of use (figs. 46b–c). Luxuriously illuminated and gilded, it was produced in east Asia sometime during the middle of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912). As such, its exact provenance is hard to determine without a colophon. It is even unclear whether it was produced among the ethnically Chinese Muslim population, known as the Hui, or among one of the ethnically Turkic Muslim minorities of China, such as the Uygurs.²⁶ Unlike mosque architecture in China that is distinguished by either Chinese or central Asian building techniques and aesthetics, Qur'ans in China are never Sinicized but instead observe faithfully the traditional principles of medieval Arabic and Iranian book culture. This fidelity to the original Qur'an is unique in China, since all other foreign religions that successfully missionized there in premodern times (Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Eastern-Syriac ["Nestorian"] Christianity) gave up their traditional book culture and holy languages in favor of Chinese.²⁷ Islam is the only exception. Accordingly, this Chinese Qur'an is bound in codex format with a decorated leather cover. Produced on high-quality paper folia, the Arabic text is framed in elaborate gilded and painted borders at the beginning of the book (fig. 46b–c). Nevertheless, qualities exclusive to Chinese Qur'ans are found here as well. The *sini* calligraphy of this



Fig. 46c
Chinese Qur'an
China, 18th century

volume is a variation of *muhaggaq* script that developed specifically in Chinese Islam.²⁸ The cloud pattern, seen in the illumination on the frontispiece and the first two pages (figs. 46b–c), is a Chinese substitute for floral scrolls.²⁹ The flowers and flowering trees depicted in the manner of Chinese painting, framed at the four corners of the text blocks on these facing pages, may be unique to this very Qur'an. It is possible that these plants represent the four seasons: The upper four vignettes depict (from right to left) peonies for spring, pomegranate for summer, an unidentified tree for autumn, and plum blossoms for winter. The lower vignettes feature cymbidium with a *taihu* rock for spring, lotus flowers for summer, begonia for autumn, and narcissus with another *taihu* rock for winter. *Taihu* rocks (eroded limestone rocks from the Lake Tai) were cherished by Chinese intellectuals for their unusual shapes.³⁰

²⁶ See Dru C. Gladney, "Central Asia and China: Transnationalization, Islamization; and Ethnicization," in *Oxford History of Islam*, ed. by John L. Esposito (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 433–73.

²⁷ For the history of Manichaeism and its art in China, see Samuel Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, 2nd edition (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992); and Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, "A Manichaean Portrait of the Buddha Jesus: Identifying a Twelfth- or Thirteenth-century Chinese Painting from the Collection of Seun-ji Zen Temple," *Artibus Asiae* 69, no. 1 (2009), 91–145.

²⁸ Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), xxix.

²⁹ Lucien De Guise and Heba Nayel Barakat (eds.): *Al-Qur'an: The Sacred Art of Revelation, from the Collection of the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, 2006), 73.

³⁰ I wish to thank Momoko Welch, Phoenix Museum of Art, for her assistance in these identifications.

Fig. 47
First Tanakh Printed in Yiddish
The Netherlands, 1678

Printed Scriptures for Jewish Readers

Originating from between the late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries, the three rare and early printed books exhibited here were made for Jewish readers. They include two examples of the Jewish Bible (called *Tanakh* in Hebrew) and a Christian New Testament. These books document not only how the printing press took over the creation of sacred texts after the sixteenth century, but at the same time also show the intermingling of different languages and religions in the arts of the book that has continued from antiquity into the modern era.

The earliest of the three is a rare example of the first Tanakh printed in Yiddish (fig. 47). This vernacular edition of the Jewish scriptures was produced in Amsterdam between 1676–1678 in the workshop of Uri Feibush, whose printer sign (fish and ewer) appears on all the title pages. It was printed in Hebrew script and Yiddish, which is a language used by the Ashkenazi Jews of central and eastern Europe, based on dialects of German fused with Aramaic, Hebrew, and various Slavic languages. It is a complete and well-preserved, one-volume Tanakh, with its original vellum binding. Six thousand copies of this first edition were made specifically for use in Poland, as indicated by a page in Latin that promotes the publication to the King of Poland, and a Polish censors stamp at the bottom of one of the title pages.

Fig. 48b
First Complete Tanakh Printed in Ladino,
Volume III, Major and Minor Prophets
Constantinople (now Istanbul), 1745

The second example is one volume from the first complete Tanakh printed in Ladino, Volume III, Major and Minor Prophets (figs. 48b). Rebound in a modern binding, this is very rare book that originally belonged to a set of four volumes printed by Abraham ben Yitzhak Asa in Constantinople (Istanbul) in four parts between 1739 and 1745.³¹ Its language, Ladino (often called Judeo-Spanish), is a language in its own right spoken by Sephardic Jews, who were expelled from Spain in 1492 and settled mostly in Ottoman territories.

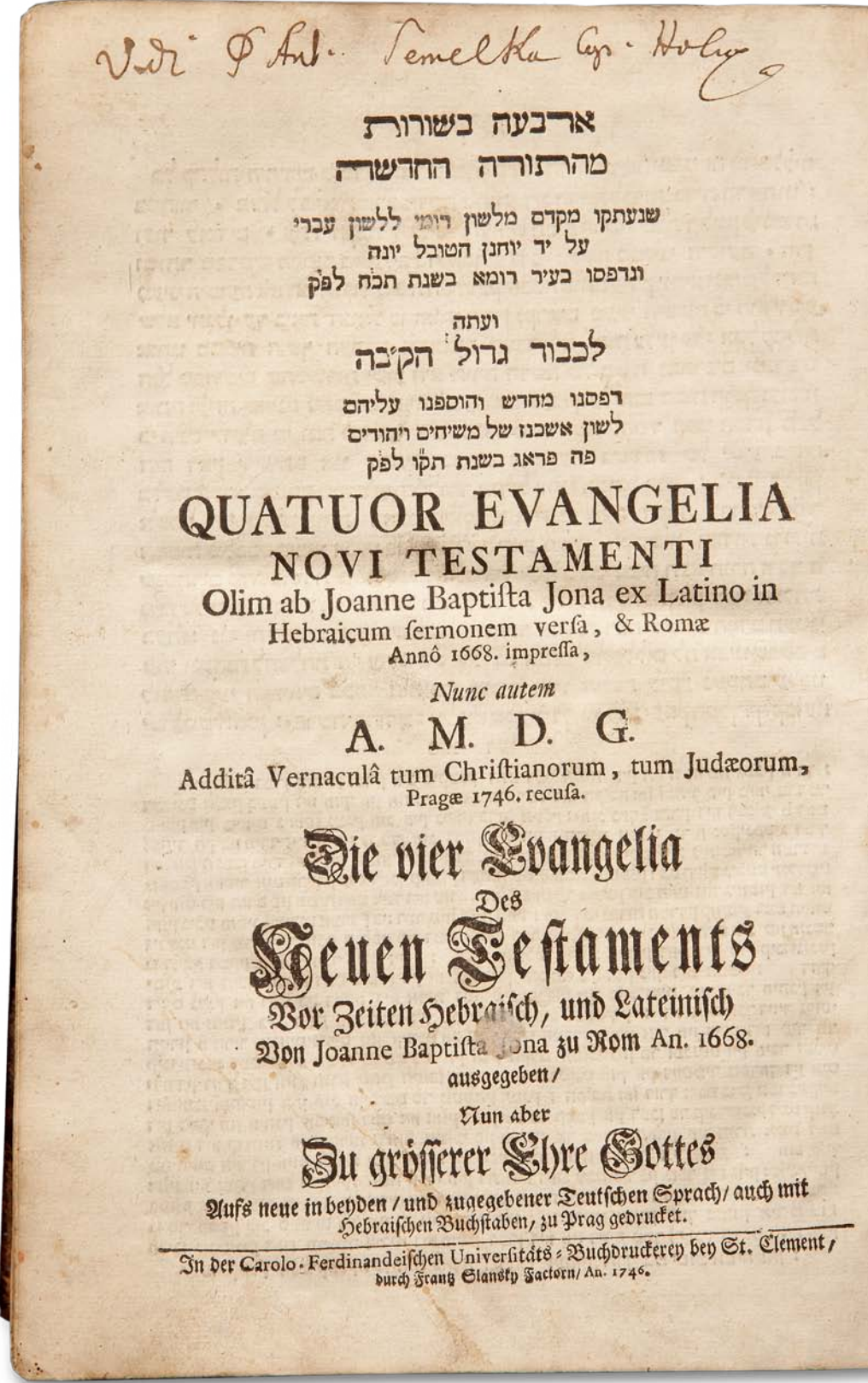


Fig. 49a
Polyglot New Testament printed in Four Languages (Latin, Hebrew, German, and Yiddish), Prague, 1746

They maintained their Judeo-Spanish lingo influenced by various Mediterranean languages. Initially, Ladino was printed using the Hebrew script as seen in this Bible that was made specifically for ethnic Jews living in Ottoman Turkey, with interest in reading the Jewish scriptures in their vernacular tongue instead of the traditional Hebrew. Confirming this is a note by the printer on the last page, lamenting the limited number of editions that resulted from subscribers not keeping their promises to fund the project, which was intended for the subscribers only.

The third example is a most unusual polyglot New Testament (figs. 49a–d) printed in four languages (Latin, Hebrew, German, and Yiddish) and in two stages, in Rome (1668) and in Prague (1746). An earlier edition with parallel New Testament texts in Latin and Hebrew was printed in Rome in 1668. The Melikian piece derives from an edition made 78 years later in Prague in 1746 that added the German and Yiddish translations of the Gospel tests. The binding of the book favors the Semitic right to left tradition seen only in connection with Jewish books in Europe at that time. This right to left arrangement of the pages abides the writing direction of Hebrew and Yiddish, thus implying that the book was made for Jews in central Europe with an interest in the Christian Gospels.

³¹ Abraham ben Yitzhak Asa was active in Constantinople during the mid-eighteenth century. Yaari lists seven major works written or translated by Asa, including his important translation of the Bible into Ladino. According to Yaari, Asa did more for Ladino literature than anyone else, both before him and after; see Abraham Yaari, *Hadevus Ha-ivri Be-aram-Tsovar* (Jerusalem: Kiryat sefer, 1933), 378.



2. EVANGELIUM SECUNDUM MATTH. CAP. I. & II.

autem genuit Azor.

14. Azor autem genuit Sadoc. Sadoc autem genuit Achim. Achim autem genuit Eliud.

15. Eliud autem genuit Eleazar. Eleazar autem genuit Mathan. Mathan autem genuit Jacob.

16. Jacob autem genuit Joseph virum
Mariæ, de qua natus est JESUS, qui voca-
tur Christus.

17. Omnes itaque generationes ab Abraham usque ad David, generationes quatuordecim: & à Davide usque ad transmigrationem Babylonis, generationes quatuordecim: & a transmigratione Babylonis usque ad Christum, generationes quatuordecim.

18 Christi autem generatio sic erat: Cum esset desponsata mater ejus Maria Joseph, antequam convenirent, inventa est in utero habens de Spiritu Sancto.

19. Joseph autem vir ejus, cum esset justus, & nollet eam traducere, voluit occultè dimittere eam.

20. Hæc autem eo cogitante, ecce Angelus Domini apparuit in somnis ei, dicens: Joseph fili David, noli timere accipere Mariam conjugem tuam: quod enim in eamatum est, de Spiritu Sancto est.

21. **Pariet autem filium : & vocabis nomen ejus JESUM :** ipse enim saluum faciet populum suum à peccatis eorum.

22. Hoc autem totum factum est, ut adimpleretur, quod dictum est à Domino per Prophetam dicentem :

23. Ecce u. virgo in utero habebit, & pariet filium: & vocabunt nomen ejus Emmanuel (quod est interpretatum) Nobiscum Deus.

24. Exurgens autem Joseph à somno, fecit sicut præcepit ei Angelus Domini, & accepit conjugem suam.

25. Et non cognoscebat eam, donec peperit filium suum primogenitum: & vocavit nomen eius JESUM.

u Isai. 7. 14.

CAPUT II.

1. **C**Um ergo natus esset JESUS in Bethlehem Juda in diebus Herodis regis, ecce Magi ab Oriente venerunt Jerusalem. 2. Dicentes: Ubi est, qui natus est, rex Judæorum? vidimus enim stellam ejus in Oriente, & venimus adorare eum.

3. Audiens autem Herodes rex, tur-
ba

kind aber zeugete Eliazim. Eliazim aber
 zeugete Azor. 14. Azoraber zeugete Sadoc.
 Sadoc aber zeugete Achim. Achim aber
 zeugete Eliud. 15. Eliud aber zeugete E-
 leazar. Eleazar aber zeugete Mathan.
 Mathan aber zeugete Jacob. 16. Jacob
 aber zeugete Joseph den Mann Maria; von
 welcher gebohren ist Jesus, der genann-
 t wird Christus. 17. Dennach seynd alle
 Glieder von Abraham bis auf David, vi-
 rgehen Glieder: und von David, bis zu der
 Babylonischen Gefängnuß, vierzehn Glie-
 der: und von der Babylonischen Gefängnuß
 bis auf Christum vierzehn Glieder. 18.
 Aber mit der Geburt Christi hatte es dieß
 Beschaffenheit: Nachdem seine Mutter
 Maria dem Joseph vermahlet war, besand
 sich, ehe dann sie zusammen kamen, daß
 sie schwanger war vom Heiligen Geist. 19.
 Aber Joseph ihr Mann, diuwei er gerath
 war, und sie nicht berichtigen wolte, gedach-
 te, sie heimlich von sich zu lassen. 20. Als
 er aber mit diesen Gedanken umging, siehe,
 da erschien ihm der Engel des HErrn im
 Schlaf, und sprach: Joseph, du Sohn Da-
 vids, fürchte dich nicht Mariam dem Ehe-
 Weib zu nehmen: Dann was in ihr gebohr-
 en ist, das ist vom Heiligen Geist. 21. Sie
 wird aber einen Sohn gebähren: und du
 sollst sein Namen Jesus nennen: Dann
 derjenige wird sein Volk selig machen von
 ihren Sünden. 22. Diß ist aber alles ge-
 schehen, auf daß erfüllt würde, was vom
 HErrn gesagt ist durch den Propheten, der
 da spricht: 23. Siehe, eine Jungfrau wird
 schwanger seyn, und wird einen Sohn ge-
 bähren: und sie werden seinen Namen Em-
 manuel nennen, das ist: wann mans verdol-
 merschet, GOT mit uns. 24. Als nun
 Joseph vom Schlaf aufstund, that er, wie
 ihm der Engel des HErrn befohlen hatte,
 und nahm sein Weib zu sich. 25. Und er
 erkannte sie nicht, bis sie ihren erstgebohr-
 nen Sohn gebährete; und er nennet sein Na-
 men Jesus.

Das II. Capitel.

1. Als nun JESE gebohren war zu Bethlehem Juda, in den Tagen des Königs Herodis, siehe, da kamen die Weisen vom Aufgang gen Jerusalem. 2. Und sprachen: Wo ist der König der Juden, der gebohren ist? Dann wir haben seinen Stern im Aufgang gesehen, und seynd kommen ihn anzubethen. 3. Da diß aber der König Ho-



בשורה הקדושה מישוע המשיח כפי מתי

דו הייליג קוואן געלויבט יעטו כריסטטי באך דעם אהיי

פרק א

א. ספר תולדות ישוע המשיח בן דוד בן
אברהם : ב. אברהם הוליד את יצחק
יצחק הוליד את יעקב ויעקב הוליד
את יהודה ואחיו : ג. יהודה הוליד
את פרץ וזרח מתמר ופרץ הוליד
את חצרון וחצרון הוליד את רבם :
ד. רבם הוליד את עמינדב ועמינדב
הוליד את נחשון ונחשון הוליד את
שלמון : ה. שלמון הוליד את בעז
מרחב ובעז הוליד את עובד מרות ועובד
הוליד את ישי וישי הוליד את דוד
המלך : ו. דוד המלך הוליד את
שלמה מאשת שהיתה מאוריה : ז. ושלמה
הוליד את רחבעם ורחבעם הוליד את
אביה ואביה הוליד את אסא : ח. ואסא
הוליד את יהושפט ויהושפט הוליד את
יהורם ויהורם הוליד את עזריהו :
ט. ועזריהו הוליד את יותם ויותם הוליד

• בראשית כ"א : • ברא
הכה : • ברא כ"ל : • ברא
ח כ"ט : • רות ד"ח : • במדבר
יב : • רות ד"כא : • רות ד' כ"ב :
שמואל ב' יב כ"ד : • מלכ' א' יא מג
מלכ' א' יד לא : • מלכ' א' טו
• דברי הימים ב' כ"ב : • דה ב'
ז"ט : • דה ב' כ"ז : • דה ב' לב
ג : • דה ב' לג : • דה ב' לפ
• דה ב' לו א' :

ועזור

ADDITIONAL WORKS



Fig. 50
Psalms and other Shi'a Texts
Syria, dated 1482

Janet Baker, Ph.D
Curator of Asian Art, Phoenix Art Museum

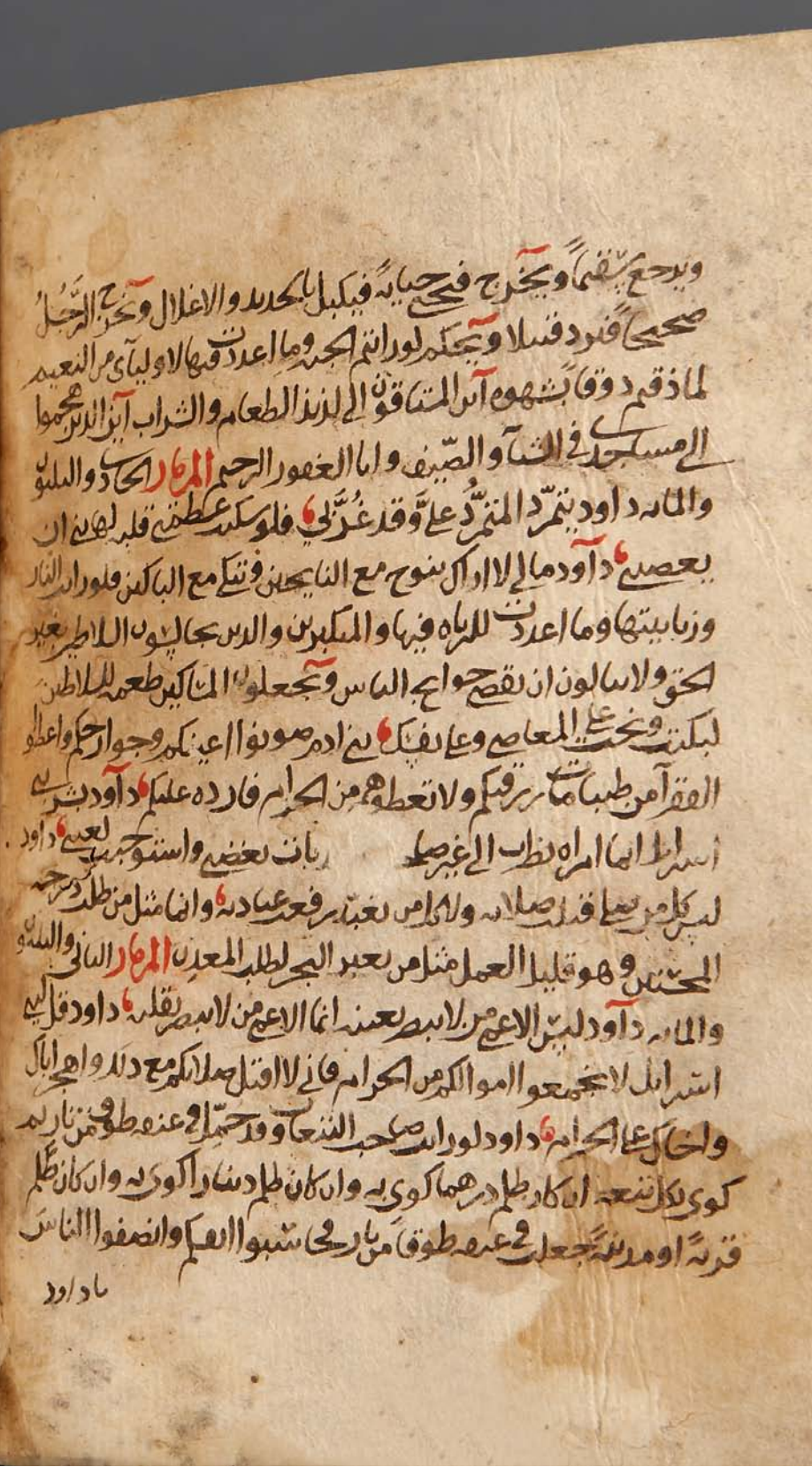
Fig. 50 (detail)
Psalms and other Shi'a Texts
Syria, dated 1482



Psalms and other Shi'a Texts

This unusual manuscript is composed of the one hundred and fifty Psalms of David, followed by extracts from the sayings of Moses and Abraham and a section of revelations to Jesus, purportedly from the Bible. Lastly comes works of an esoteric or mystical Shi'a nature. It was compiled by a Shi'a Muslim author, Muhammad B. Hasan Safir. In addition, the text includes other esoteric Shi'a works. The first is a "testament" in which the author states that he wrote this text as a means of "asking the forgiveness of his fellow brothers in God and lovers of God." This is followed by 24 precepts urging such things as modesty, prayer, companionship, intellectual endeavor, assisting the brothers, especially of the Fatimid Caliphate, which ruled over Tunisia, Egypt, and varying areas of the northern and southern Mediterranean from 909 to 1171.

The two main branches of Islam are Sunni, which constitute 80 to 90 percent of all Muslims, and Shi'a, which constitute 10 to 20 percent. The disputes over leadership that occurred following the death of Muhammad led to a schism, with Shi'a Muslims recognizing Ali ibn Abi Talib, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law as his rightful successor, appointed by divine will.¹ Though it is not apparent what purpose the manuscript would have served in Shia hands, certain exhortations refer to the pursuit of knowledge, which correlates with the intellectual orientation of Syrian Shi'ism. One part of this manuscript recounts the Prophet Muhammad's conversations with one of his companions and



earliest converts, Abu Dhar Ghifari, who was particularly revered among the Shi'a of Syria, where he is said to have spent his life teaching people the virtues of the Prophet's family. A colophon records the author's name and precise date of January 5, 1482 (15 Dhu'l-Qa'da, 886).

¹ Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 72-85.

Fig. 51
Retablo Painting
Portugal, c. 1825



Fig. 51 (detail)
Retablo Painting
Portugal, c. 1825

Retablo Painting

A *retablo* is a Christian devotional painting. In Spain and Portugal during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, *retablos* were much larger than this example and often placed behind the altar in a church. By the eighteenth century, the term came to refer to smaller personal devotional paintings. Not only were *retablos* purchased by those who wished to honor their patron saints, they were also given to express gratitude for the miraculous deed of a saint to whom the petitioner turned to in time of need.

This *retablo* depicts a scene in the town near Lisbon, Carnaxide, which dates as far back as the thirteenth century. It was the largest European parish for many years until it was later subdivided into several towns and villages. A shrine there is known as Our Lady of the Conception of the Rock.¹ Today, the location and its celebratory festival is a popular destination of worship.

According to local legend, a group of boys and a dog (figures at the lower part of the painting) were chasing a rabbit and a blackbird when they came across a grotto with human remains. Three days later, the image of Our Lady of Conception appeared at this location. In the rocky crag, the figure of the crowned Virgin Mary appears, flanked by two pairs of candlesticks. On the rocky crag, two legs and an arm appear, suspended from the rocks by red ribbons. These appendages express the specific physical needs of individuals beseeching the Virgin Mary for her holy grace.

¹ An inscription at the bottom of the painting reads: *Milagrosa Image de N. S. (Nossa Senhora) da Conceicao da Rocha*. Bonham's and Butterfields, *Fine European Furniture and Decorative Arts*, Los Angeles, Sept. 8, 2008, sale 16107, lot #403.

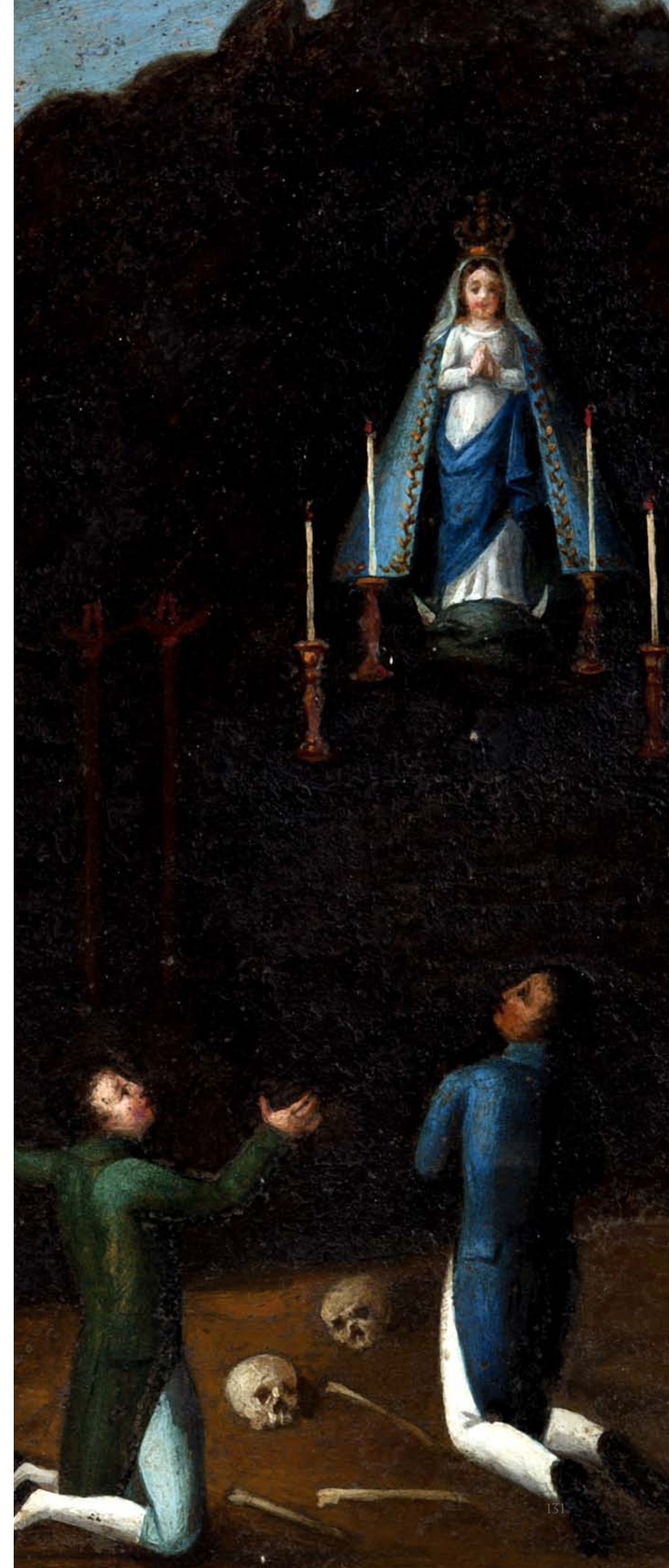


Fig. 52
Choir Book
Spain, 1774



Choir Book

The first page of this manuscript reveals several facts: it identifies the *presvit* or person in control, as Francisco De Ossorio; the *capellano chori* or choir chaplain as Ste. Metrop(ne); and dates the text to *Anno Diii M.DCC.LKKIV* (in the Year of our Lord 1774). The first page also identifies a geographical origin: *Hispalensi*, the Latin word for Seville.

The outside leather binding bears gilt decoration with flower and plant motifs. The text shows visible pencil markings for the ornamental borders and the lines of music. The hymns are arranged into four sections corresponding to the four evangelists in canonical order: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each section is demarcated by a large symbol and a notation of the evangelist's name in Latin. The music and text are in black ink with red staff lines. The musical notation is antiphonal—a system of singing with responses in which the notation does not indicate a specific note but rather a raising or lowering of pitch. Thus, no actual melody is indicated here. The text is from the Vulgate, a colloquial version of the Latin Bible that a greater number of readers could comprehend. The large size and clear print of this choir book is consistent with its intended use by several people, though it is also likely that the choir would have memorized the songs. The ultimate purpose of this devotional choir book was to facilitate communal worship and faith.

Fig. 53
Set of 8 Writing Implements
Sri Lanka, 19th century



Set of Eight Cutting and Writing Instruments

This group of implements were used for the cutting and finishing of palm leaves, for creating even lines of text and inscribing the text into the surface of the leaf, which was used for most Sri Lankan Buddhist texts.

Fig. 53 (detail)
Cutting and Writing Tools
Sri Lanka, 19th century



Fig. 53 (detail)
Cutting and Writing Tools
Sri Lanka, 19th century



Fig. 54, 55

Two Prayer Mats (*qalamkar*)
Iran, 19th century

Prayer Mats

Prayer mats and rugs are used throughout the Islamic world to provide the worshipper a clean and defined sacred space for the act of prayer five times a day wherever the person may be. They are reverentially handled and maintained. Prayer mats made of cotton are made in many villages with designs that reflect local traditions. The Persian word for these prayer mats is derived from two words: *qalam*, or pen; and *kari*, or work; thus, literally meaning to draw with a pen. The patterns are outlined by hand with a pen on cotton fabric, then a ball of fibers wrapped around a carved wooden block is soaked in liquid dye and pressed onto the woven cloth surface. It is an ancient practice which, based on archaeological evidence, likely originated in India around the fourth century BC. Production in Iran of such block-printed cotton reached a peak in the 19th century.

The design of the prayer mat is composed of a central field featuring a prayer niche (*mihrab*) design that symbolizes the alcove of the great Mosque in Mecca. When used for prayer, the niche design is oriented so that it points in the direction of Mecca. The worshipper kneels at the base of the mat, placing the hands at both sides of the prayer niche design at the top of the rug, and then touches the forehead on the niche design. The typical size of prayer rugs is based on this pose of prayer. At the top of the niche design on these two examples are calligraphic inscriptions in Arabic which offer praise to Allah. Other motifs that typically appear on prayer mats are the paisley design, based on the shape of a pear, signifying fulfillment and blessings. Other motifs seen in these two examples include hanging lamps signifying the importance of light as expressed in the Qur'an; trees, especially cypress, which symbolize the tree of life and immortality in the afterlife; and floral, architectural and geometric designs that often fill the borders around the central niche design.

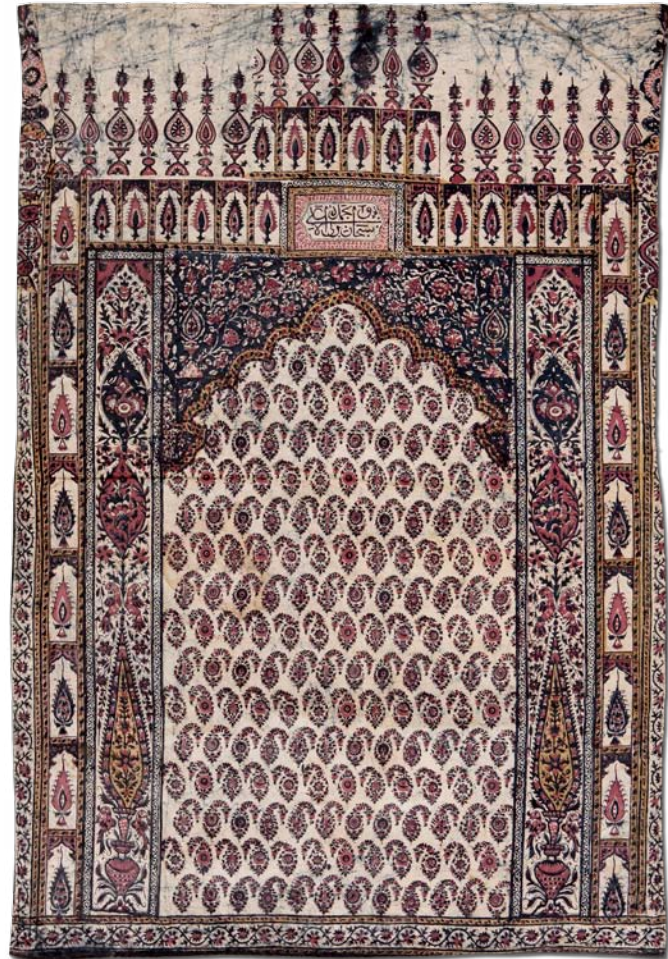


Fig. 54

Prayer Mat (*qalamkar*)
Iran, 19th century



Fig. 54 (detail)
Prayer Mat (qalamkar)
Iran, 19th century



Fig. 55
Prayer Mat (qalamkar)
Iran, 19th century



Fig.55 (detail)
Prayer Mat (qalamkar)
Iran, 19th century



Fig.55 (detail)
Prayer Mat (qalamkar)
Iran, 19th century



Fig. 56a-b
Turkoman Prayer Rug
Iran, 20th century

Prayer Rugs

The purpose of prayer rugs is the same as that of prayer mats; to provide the Islamic worshipper a defined and sacred space for the act of prayer five times a day. Prayer rugs are typically woven of wool by artisans whose designs are tied to local traditions that remain largely unchanged over a long period of time. The region or tribe names used to describe the different designs are often arbitrary, as the people of the Middle East and Central Asia are often nomadic. Motifs and designs were also copied and reproduced across the overall region.

In the first Turkoman example, the upper half of the field contains two images of mosques with tiled domes and minarets ornamented with flags and golden crescent filials. The lower half of the field is divided into three sections. The center section of a prayer niche or *mihrab*, composed of three archways each containing a mosque lamp. The prayer niche is flanked by two tall pillars and two smaller niches, each containing a mosque lamp. The lower field shows geometric birds flying around the summit of three small prayer niches. Each of the five spaces in the lower field shows human figures at prayer in approximate scale to the architectural imagery. A border design is comprised of images of birds and crabs.



Fig.57a-b
Turkoman Prayer Rug
Afghanistan, 20th century



In the second Turkoman example, the upper half of the field contains two distinct and identifiable architectural images. On the left is the sacred structure of Mecca, the Great Mosque, which contains at its center the Ka'ba, a cuboid-shaped building containing the "Black Stone" believed to have been sent to Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) from angels in paradise. The four corners of the Ka'ba point align closely to the four cardinal directions of the compass. It is to this physical point that all Muslims turn in prayer five times a day no matter where on the planet they may be. Mecca is the birthplace of Mohammed and is regarded as its holiest city. It was declared such by Mohammed in 630 when the city was conquered by him after a battle with the ruling Quraysh tribe. Pilgrimage to Mecca is a lifetime goal of Muslims and one of the Five Pillars of Islamic faith. On the right is the mosque at Medina, the second holiest site of Islam pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia. It is the city where Mohammed died and was buried. His tomb later became part of the Mosque of the Prophet, which is depicted on this prayer rug. Both Mecca and Medina are cities in which only Muslims are permitted to enter its holiest areas. In the lower field of this prayer rug is the niche or *mihrab*, beautifully ornamented with floral designs and a hanging mosque lamp.



Fig.57c (detail)
Turkoman Prayer Rug
 Afghanistan, 20th century

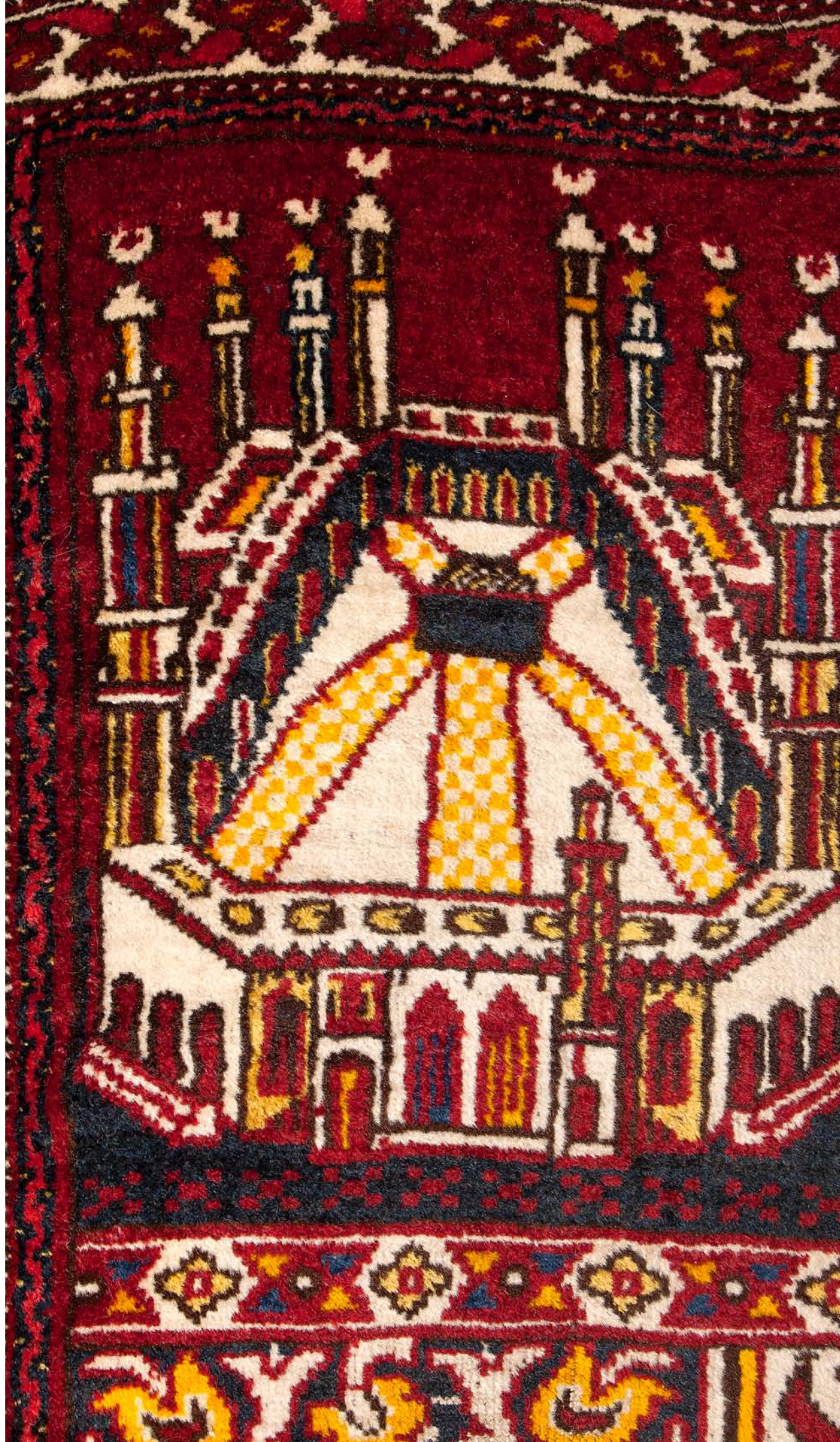


Fig.58a
Baluchi Prayer Rug
 Afghanistan, late 19th or early 20th century

In the Baluchi rug, the concept of the niche has been more abstracted, creating a geometric shape in the center of the rug which narrows at the upper end. The niche is filled with abstract and geometric patterns. In the Bergama carpet, abstracted designs of flowers and birds cover the main field, with a niche suggested by zigzag patterns. This example of a Bergama rug is unusual because of its use of curved lines. The Turkish style of knotting creates a checkerboard patterning in the weave that lends itself more to geometric or straight-edge patterns. In all of the prayer rugs, borders of floral and geometric designs create a finished effect of rich ornamentation.

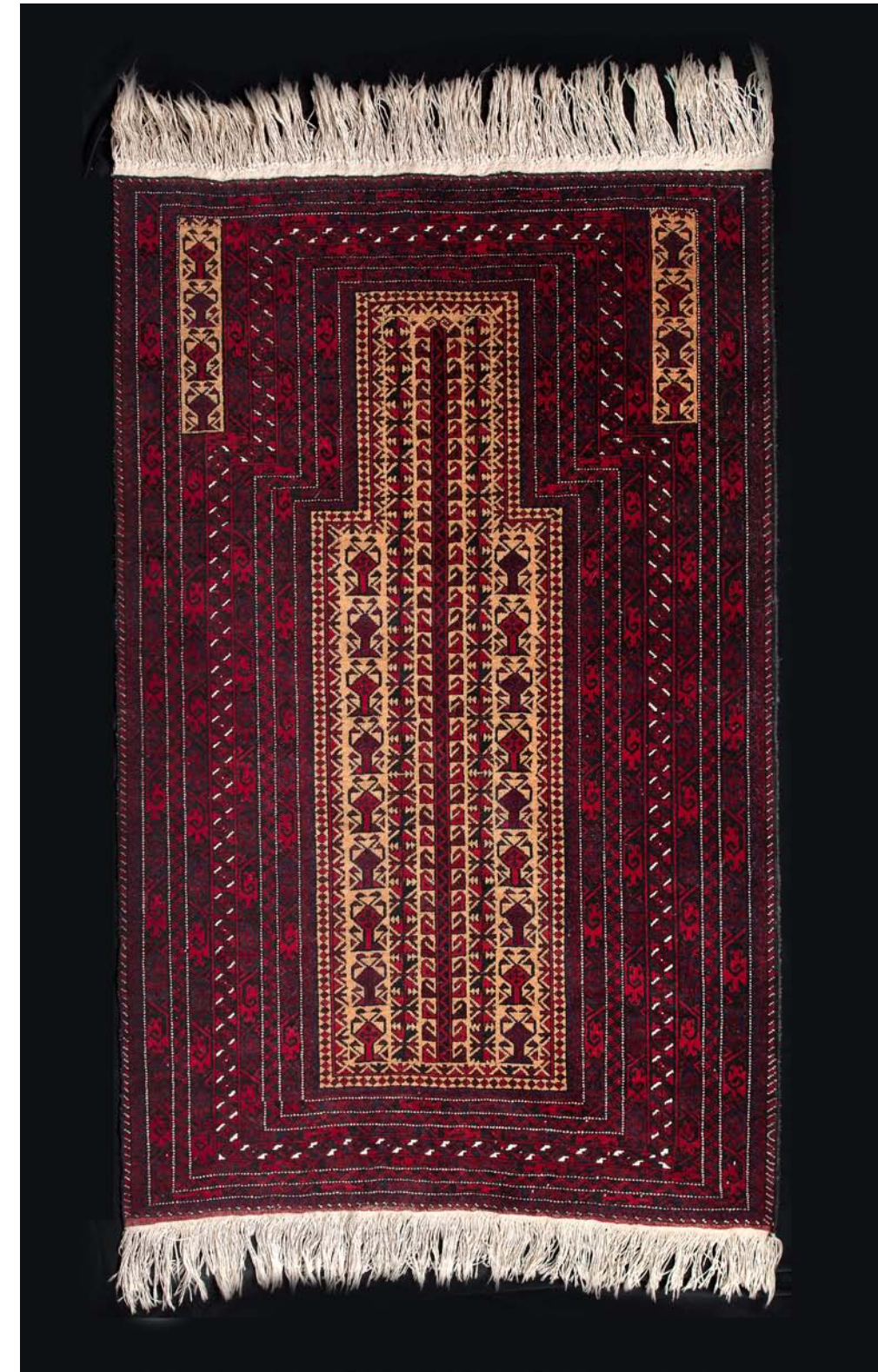


Fig.58b (detail)
Baluchi Prayer Rug
Afghanistan, late 19th or
early 20th century



Fig.59a-b
Bergama Prayer Rug
Turkey, Early 20th century





Fig. 60a
Offering Vessel (Hsun-ok)
Burma, 20th century

Offering Vessel

Offering vessels are used traditionally in Burma to carry food to a Buddhist monastery, which is an important ritual in daily life in Burma. It was either carried in the hands or on top of the head of the bearer, most often a woman. The shape of the vessels resemble that of a Buddhist pagoda in Burma, and is typically composed of tiered circular sections of increasing and decreasing diameter, with a flat tray inside the cavity to hold the food. Made from coiled strips of split bamboo with wood ornamentation, the vessel is given multiple layers of colored lacquer to create a smooth surface with a glossy finish. Over time, the red lacquer wears away, revealing traces of the undercoating of natural black lacquer in a pleasing visual effect. The resinous quality of lacquer makes it ideal for the creation of large yet lightweight containers that are heatproof and waterproof. Lacquerwork is time-consuming and labor-intensive, as the resin is obtained in randomly in natural forests rather than on plantations.

The primary school of Buddhism in Burma is Theravada, which emphasizes monasticism as a path to enlightenment. Monks live together in communities, often affiliated with a temple, and must rely upon the charity of the lay population for their daily sustenance. This system of giving is beneficial to both the giver and the recipient, for not only is the monk sustained by the gift but the donor gains merit towards enlightenment. Thus, the physical sustenance is imbued with the power of spiritual sustenance. The monks in turn serve the lay community by setting an example of a virtuous life, preaching the message of the Buddha, and teaching religious texts; thus raising not only the spiritual level but also the literacy level of the country's population.



Fig. 60b-c (detail)
Offering Vessel (Hsun-ok)
Burma, 20th century



Exhibition Checklist

SACRED WORD AND IMAGE IN BUDDHIST ART

Janet Baker

Reliquaries, Shrines, and Texts

Figure 1
Bronze Reliquary
Sri Lanka, Late Polonnaruva period or early Divided Kingdoms period, 12th–14th century

Bronze; 11 x 5 in. (28 x 12.7 cm); 13³/₈ x 9¹/₄ in. (34 x 23.5 cm) (with base)

Collection of Barry Fernando MD and Coleene Fernando MD

Figure 2
Wooden Reliquary with Printed Sutra
Japan, Nara period, 764–70

Cypress wood, gesso, and hemp paper; Reliquary: 8¹/₂ x 4 in. (21.2 x 10 cm); Sutra: 2¹/₂ x 14³/₄ in. (5.8 x 37.2 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederic P. Rich, 1984.428.A–B

Figure 3
Bronze Sutra Container, dated 1280
Japan, Kamakura period (1185–1333)

Bronze; 12 x 6¹/₈ in. (30.5 x 15.5 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Ms. Amy Clague, 2010.380.A–C

Figure 4
Muryōgi-kyō (Sutra of Innumerable Meanings), dated 1720
Japan, Edo period (1615–1868)

Metallic gold and silver inks on indigo-dyed paper; 12¹/₄ x approx. 422 in. (30.9 x approx. 1070 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 5
Portable Shrine
Japan, 19th century

Colored pigments and gold foil on lacquered cypress (*hinoki*) wood; 4 x 3 in. (10.2 x 7.5 cm) (closed); 4 x 5⁷/₈ in. (10.2 x 14.9 cm) (open)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Estate of Carolann Smurthwaite, 1984.3

Figure 6
Gilded Buddhist Shrine (Hpaya Khan) Burma, 19th century

Wood, lacquer, gold, mirror and colored glass; 27 x 32 in. (68.6 x 81.3 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, 2008.323

Paintings

Figure 7
Painting of Buddha with Attendants
Korea, Choson period, 18th–19th century

Ink, color, and gold on silk; 28⁷/₈ x 68 in. (73.3 x 172.7 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Anonymous gift, 1986.92

Figure 8
Footprint of the Buddha (Buddhapada)
Sri Lanka, Kandyan period, 19th century

Pigment on cloth; 81¹/₄ x 38¹/₂ in. (206.4 x 97.8 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Barry Fernando MD and Coleene Fernando MD in honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary, 2008.265

Figure 9
Painting of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara in Cosmic Form
Tibet or Mongolia, 19th century

Ink, color and gold on cotton; 13³/₄ x 10³/₈ in. (33.4 x 29.2 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of William Henry Storms, 1988.47

Textiles

Figure 10
Horizontal Silk Panel with a Buddhist Mantra
China, Ming dynasty, mid-15th–early 17th century

Silk brocade in tabby weave, interwoven with paper faced with gold leaf; 8¹/₂ x 26¹/₈ in. (21.5 x 66.5 cm)

Collection of Amy S. Clague

Figure 11
Square Panel with Crossed Vajras and Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems
China, Ming to early Qing dynasty, 17th–18th century

Silk *lampas* weave; 36¹/₄ x 36¹/₄ in. (92 x 92 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Amy S. Clague, 2005.152

Figure 12
Buddhist Ritual Diadem
China, Ming dynasty, 15th century

Silk of broken twill weave, embroidered with polychrome silk threads using laid and couched, split, satin, and outline stitches; 6¹/₂ x 5¹/₈ in. (16.5 x 13 cm); Band: 1¹/₈ x 18¹/₈ in. (3 x 46 cm); Leather tie: ⁵/₈ x 10⁵/₈ in. (1.5 x 27 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Amy S. Clague, 2005.151

Figure 13
Buddhist Vestment (Kesa)
Japan, late Edo period, 19th century

Silk tapestry with gold and silver thread; 45³/₄ x 80³/₈ in. (116.2 x 204.2 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Helen Wilson Sherman, 1991.123

Tibetan Manuscript Covers

Figure 14
Pair of Gilt Bronze Manuscript Covers with the Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems
Tibet, 18th century

Gilt bronze, wood, pigments; 4 x 11⁷/₈ in. (10 x 30.1 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Ms. Amy S. Clague in honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary, 2008.330.1–2

Figure 15
Pair of Gilt Bronze Manuscript Covers Embellished with Turquoise and Coral
Tibet, 18th century

Gilt bronze, wood, pigments, turquoise and coral; 4 x 16¹/₄ in. (10.2 x 41.2 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Amy S. Clague in honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary, 2008.334.1–2

Figure 16
Manuscript Cover with the Eight Auspicious Buddhist Emblems
Tibet, 19th century

Wood and pigments; 9¹/₄ x 28 in. (23.4 x 71 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Amy S. Clague in honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary, 2008.335

Figure 17
Pair of Lacquered Manuscript Covers
Tibet, 18th century

Wood and lacquer; 2³/₄ x 15³/₄ in. (7 x 40 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Amy S. Clague in honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary, 2008.333.1–2

SACRED WORD AND IMAGE IN HINDU ART

Janet Baker

Figure 18
Sīva Natarāja, Lord of the Cosmic Dance
India, 17th century

Bronze; 11³/₈ x 8³/₄ x 3¹/₂ in. (29 x 22 x 9 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of George P. Bickford, 1969.218

Figure 19
Carved Hindu Manuscript Cover
Nepal, 17th–18th century

Wood and vermilion powder; 5⁵/₈ x 13 in. (14.3 x 33 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Amy S. Clague in honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary, 2008.328

Figure 20
Painted Hindu Manuscript Cover
Nepal, 18th century

Wood and pigments; 3 x 7⁷/₈ in. (7.5 x 20 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Amy S. Clague in honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary, 2008.329

Figure 21
Pair of Painted Hindu Manuscript Covers
India, 18th century

Wood and pigments; each 1³/₈ x 13³/₈ in. (3.2 x 33.9 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Amy S. Clague in honor of the Museum's 50th Anniversary, 2008.332.1–2

Figure 22
Painting of Krishna and Radha under an Umbrella
India, 19th century

Ink and color on paper; 8³/₈ x 6³/₈ in. (20.8 x 16.1 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of George P. Bickford, 1970.112

JEWEL OF THE DHAMMA

Sherry Harlacher

Figure 23
Complete Manuscript with Ivory and Metal repoussé Covers
Sri Lanka, 19th century

Ivory and metal repoussé; 2¹/₄ x 20¹/₂ x 2³/₄ in. (5.5 x 52 x 7 cm)

Collection of Barry Fernando MD and Coleene Fernando MD

Figure 24
Pair of Carved Ivory Manuscript Covers (light)
Sri Lanka, 18th century

Ivory; each 2³/₈ x 18⁷/₈ in. (6 x 47.9 cm)

Collection of Barry Fernando MD and Coleene Fernando MD

Figure 25
Pair of Carved Ivory Manuscript Covers (dark)
Sri Lanka, 14th–15th century

Ivory; 1³/₄ x 18¹/₂ in. (4.4 x 47.2 cm); 1³/₄ x 18³/₈ in. (4.4 x 46.6 cm)

Collection of Barry Fernando MD and Coleene Fernando MD

Figure 26
Complete Manuscript, Ivory Covers with Gold Corner
Sri Lanka, 19th century

Ivory and gold; 2³/₈ x 25 x 3⁵/₈ in. (6.2 x 63.3 x 9.2 cm)

Collection of Barry Fernando MD and Coleene Fernando MD

Figure 27
Pair of Manuscript Covers with Stupas and Reclining Buddha
Sri Lanka, 19th century

Wood and pigments; 2⁵/₈ x 24 in. (6.5 x 61 cm)

Collection of Barry Fernando MD and Coleene Fernando MD

SACRED WORD AND IMAGE

in Eastern, Christian, Islamic, and Jewish Contexts

Zsuzsanna Gulacsi

Ethiopian Christianity Conveyed in Wood and Paint

Figure 28
Red Wooden Hand Cross
Ethiopia, 17th–19th centuries

Wood, pigments, or stains; 16 x 6³/₈ in. (40.5 x 16.2 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 29
Brown Wooden Hand Cross
Ethiopia, 17th–19th centuries

Wood, pigments, or stains; 20¹/₈ x 8³/₈ in. (51 x 21.2 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 30
Black Wooden Hand Cross
Ethiopia, 17th–19th centuries

Wood, pigments, or stains; 19 x 5 ¹/₄ in. (48.3 x 13.2 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 31
Single-sided Triptych Icon
Ethiopia, early to mid-17th century

Tempera on gesso-covered wood panels and string; 16¹/₈ x 11¹/₄ x 2 in. (41 x 28.7 x 5 cm) (closed)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 32
Double-sided Triptych Icon
Ethiopia, early to mid-17th century

Tempera on gesso-covered wood panels and string; 10 x 6⁷/₈ x 1¹/₂ in. (25.3 x 17.3 x 3.8 cm) (closed)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Armenian Liturgy Captured in Silver & Gold

Figure 33
Velvet and Silver Episcopal Crown
Armenia, mid-19th century

Silver, velvet, and cotton; 10⁵/₈ x 8¹/₈ in. (27 x 20.8 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

continued

Exhibition Checklist

continued

Figure 34
Collapsible Silver Clerical Staff, 1821
Armenia

Silver, gilt, and stones; 66⅜ x 6⅜ in.
(168.5 x 16.2 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 35
Gilded Filigree Hand Cross
Armenia, mid- to late 18th century

Silver and gilt; 11⅜ x 4⅜ in.
(28.8 x 11.2 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 36
Khatchkar (Stone Cross), dated 1646
Armenia

Ivory colored marble; 10¼ x 5½ x 2⅞ in.
(26.2 x 14 x 7.3 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 37
Gilded Silver Icon with the Virgin and Child, dated 1696
Armenia

Tempera on gesso-covered board, silver, and gold repoussé frame; 10¼ x 8¼ in. (26 x 21 cm) (silver frame); 10¼ x 8¼ in. (27.4 x 21 cm) (with backboard)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 38
Jeweled and Enameled Silver Reliquary Box
Armenia, 17th–18th century

Silver, enamel, and diamond; 4⅜ x 4⅜ x 2⅞ in. (11 x 11.2 x 7.2 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 39
Silver-bound Liturgical Text
Armenia, 1653–1720

Multicolored ink on vellum, leather binding, and silver cover; 7¼ x 5¼ in. (18.4 x 13.3 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 40
Silver-bound Armenian Four Gospels
Armenia, text written in 1651, bound in silver in 1675

Multicolored ink, color, and gilt on vellum, leather binding, silver cover; 6⅝ x 5 in. (16.8 x 12.6 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

The Highest Esteem in Armenian and Arabic Christian Book Art

Figure 41
Two Pages from a Illuminated Greek Gospel Book
Constantinople (now Istanbul), 17th century

Ink, color, and gilt on paper; 16½ x 10¼ in. (42.1 x 26 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 42
Arabic Four Gospels
Turkey, Ottoman empire, 18th century

Ink, color, gilt on paper, leather binding; 8 x 5⅝ in. (20.4 x 13.5 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Christian and Islamic Images of Jesus and Mary

Figure 43
Large Painted Tile with the Bust of Christ, dated 1880
Isfahan, Iran

Ceramic with underglaze black decoration; 18⅜ x 15⅜ in. (46.6 x 39 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 44
Islamic Cloth Painting with Maryam (Mary) and Isa (Jesus)
Turkey, Ottoman empire, c. 1600

Gouache on cloth; 14 x 9 in. (34.8 x 22.8 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Qur'an Manuscripts from the Edges of the Islamic World

Figure 45
Ethiopian Qur'an, dated August 31, 1773
Sudan

Multicolored ink on paper, leather binding; 12½ x 10 in. (32 x 25 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 46
Chinese Qur'an
China, 18th century

Ink, color, and gilt on paper, leather binding; 10¼ x 7½ in. (26 x 19 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Printed Scriptures for Jewish Readers

Figure 47
First Tanakh Printed in Yiddish, 1678
The Netherlands

Ink on paper, leather binding; 12¾ x 8⅝ in. (32.5 x 22 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 48
First Complete Tanakh Printed in Ladino, Volume III, Major and Minor Prophets

Constantinople (now Istanbul), 1745

Ink on paper, modern leather binding; 8¾ x 7⅞ in. (22.4 x 18 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 49
Polyglot New Testament printed in Four Languages (Latin, Hebrew, German, and Yiddish), 1746
Prague

Ink on paper, leather binding; 11¾ x 8 in. (29.7 x 20.3 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

ADDITIONAL WORKS

Janet Baker

Figure 50
Psalms and other Shi'a Texts, dated 1482
Syria

Multicolored ink on paper, leather binding; 7 x 5⅞ in. (17.8 x 15 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 51
Retablo Painting, c. 1825
Portugal

Zinc, oil paint, and gilt on wood; 21 x 16⅜ in. (53 x 41.5 cm) (framed)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 52
Choir Book, 1774
Spain

Ink on paper, leather binding; 14¾ x 10½ in. (37.5 x 26.7 cm)

Collection of James and Ana Melikian

Figure 53
Set of Eight Cutting and Writing Implements
Sri Lanka, 19th century

Metal; 15 in. (38 cm) (longest); 3⅝ in. (9 cm) (shortest)

Collection of Barry Fernando MD and Coleene Fernando MD

Figure 54
Prayer Mat (qalamkar)
Iran, 19th century

Block-printed cotton; 40 x 32 in. (101.5 x 81.3 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Peter Banko in honor of William F. Sage, 2011.61

Figure 55
Prayer Mat (qalamkar)
Iran, 19th century

Block-printed cotton; 40 x 32 in. (101.5 x 81.3 cm)

Collection of Phoenix Art Museum, Gift of Jacqueline Butler-Diaz in honor of collector William W. Sage, 2011.62

Figure 56
Turkoman Prayer Rug
Iran, 20th century

Wool; 46⅝ x 36⅜ in. (119 x 92.5 cm)

Collection of Pari and Peter Banko

Figure 57
Turkoman Prayer Rug
Afghanistan, 20th century

Wool; 49 x 33½ in. (124.5 x 85.3 cm)

Collection of Lionel Diaz and Jacqueline Butler- Diaz

Figure 58
Baluchi Prayer Rug
Afghanistan, late 19th or early 20th century

Wool; 60¼ x 38 in. (153 x 96.5 cm)

Collection of Lionel Diaz and Jacqueline Butler- Diaz

Figure 59
Bergama Prayer Rug
Turkey, Early 20th century

Wool; 69½ x 44¼ in. (176.6 x 112.5 cm)

Collection of Lionel Diaz and Jacqueline Butler-Diaz

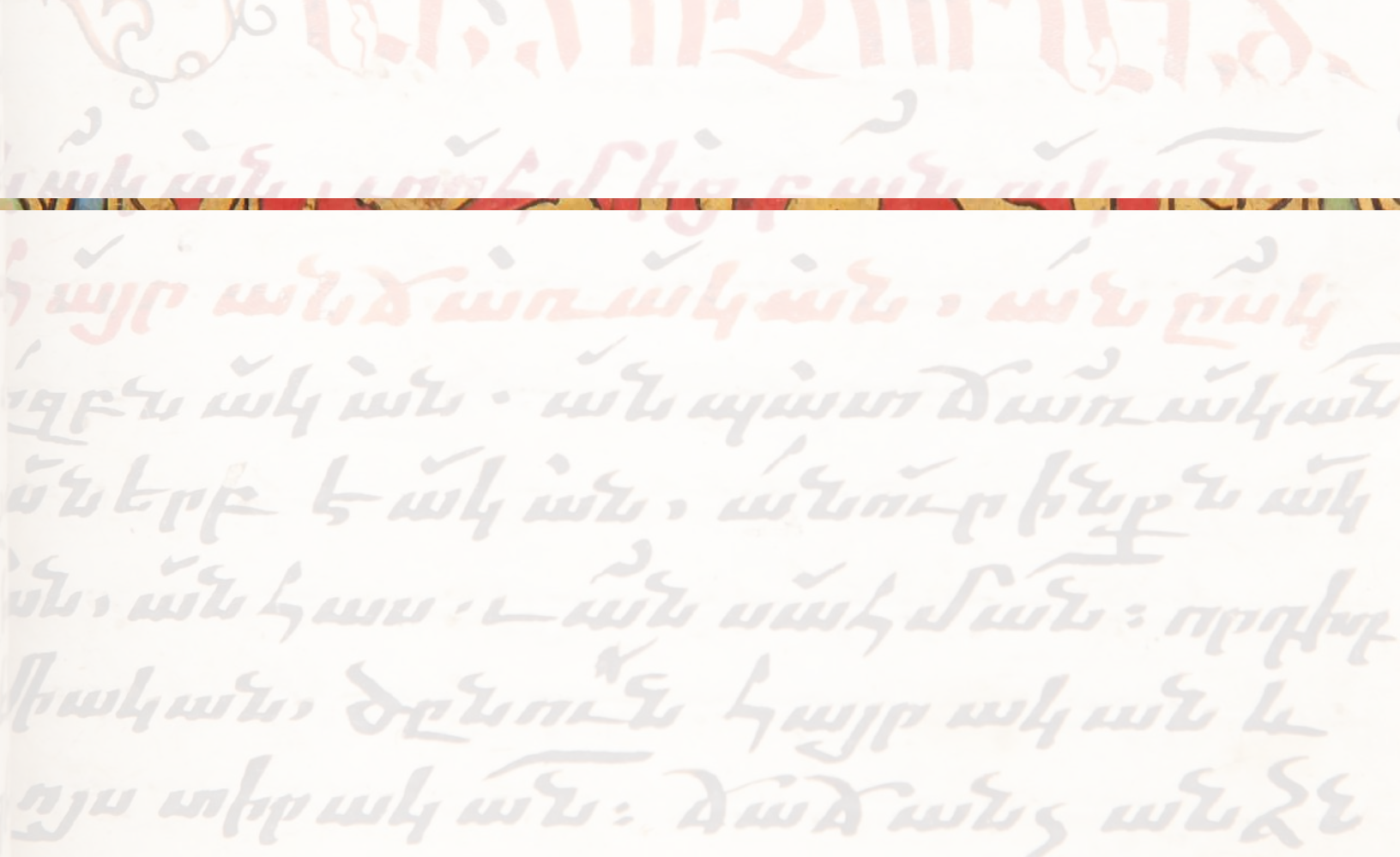
Figure 60
Offering Vessel (Hsun-ok)
Burma, 20th century

Lacquer on bamboo and wood; 32 x 13 in. (81 x 33 cm)

Collection of Pari and Peter Banko

All the reproductions of objects in the catalogue were made from digital photographs taken by Ken Howie Photography, Phoenix; except for the following:

Figs. 9, 13, 18, and 22 were made from color transparencies photographed by Craig Smith; Fig. 11 was made from color transparencies photographed by Marilyn Szabo; Figs. 23, 24b, 25, 27b, and 27c were made from digital photographs by John Hall.



Phoenix Art Museum

PhxArt.org