

TITLE: Jowo Rinpoche **LOCATION:** Lhasa, Tibet **DATE:** Believed to have been brought to Tibet in 641 C.E.

ARTIST: Yarlung Dynasty (legendarily by Vishvaharma) **PERIOD/STYLE:** South and Southeast Asian Art **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Gilt metals with semiprecious stones, pearls, and paint; various offerings

FORM:

The sculpture portrays Buddha seated under the Bodhi tree at the moment just before the historical Buddha Shakyamuni achieved enlightenment. Buddha's legs are crossed in the lotus position, or padmasana. The sculpture uses Mudras, or symbolic hand gestures, to convey the dramatic moment. Buddha sits in a gesture of meditation with his left hand, palm upright, in his lap. At the same time, his right hand touches the ground in a gesture calling the earth to witness his spiritual authority. The earth then roared, "I bear you witness!"

FUNCTION:

Created to act as the Buddha's proxy following his Parinirvana, or departure from the world. The statue resides at the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa and is considered to be the most sacred Buddhist objects in all of Tibet. Like those of many Buddhist sculptures, the face of Jowo Rinpoche is extremely serene. In fact, Jowo Rinpoche is such a powerful emanation of Buddhist compassion that all a person has to do is look at the sculpture, so believers say, and his or her life will start improving right away. This is called "Liberation Through Seeing." The idea is that one only needs to look upon this venerated icon and positive energy will begin to flow. There's no need for special ritual, meditation, or mantras. A person need only be present.

CONTENT:

It is a depiction of the Buddha Shakyamuni as a young man, around the age of 12. Jowo Shakyamuni is seated with his legs in the lotus position or padmasana. His left hand is in the mudra (hand gesture) of meditation (dhyana mudra) and his right hand is in the gesture of "calling the earth to witness" (bhūmisparśha mudra). Together, these postures signify the moment of the Buddha's enlightenment. He is shown wearing a thin monk's robe, which drapes over his body and covers his left shoulder. When dressed, Jowo Shakyamuni is presented with a magnificent jeweled crown and robes.

CONTEXT:

In 537 BC, Siddhartha began to meditate under a sacred Bodhi tree. After 49 days he finally attained enlightenment. Siddhartha now understood that suffering is caused by desire and that the way to end pain is to end all desires. The historic Buddha Shakyamuni devoted the next 40 years to teaching the truths he discovered. According to ancient accounts, the Indian king Dharmapala gave the Jowo Rinpoche to the Emperor of China. In 641 the Chinese princess Wencheng, the daughter of the Tang Emperor Taizong, included the sacred image in her dowry. She then brought the Jowo Rinpoche to the Tibetan King Songsten Gampo when she became his second wife. The Jowo Rinpoche's arrival marks the beginning of the foundation of Buddhism in Tibet. As Tibet is currently a part of China and the Dalai Lama is living in exile, this important location and the leader of the religion have been kept apart for many years. The temple and the surrounding area are a hot tourist attraction, and while the Chinese government has designs to modernize the area to make it more accessible, the Tibetan people and supporters around the world are doing everything they can to keep the Old Town area of Lhasa exactly that, old.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Metal was used to make many useful things, including commemorative plaques, vessels, armor, sculpture, and decorative objects of all kinds. The use of a precious metal like gold adds a high level of opulence to an object like this one, while reinforcing the sculpture's significance within the Buddhist tradition. Both Islamic and Buddhist artists worked with metals to make some incredible stuff. The Jowo Rinpoche is certainly a stunning example of the use of gilt metal in a sculptural form. So what makes one image of the Buddha Shakyamuni more sacred than another? In examining the Jowo Shakyamuni, it is the sculpture's purported direct lineage to the Buddha, as well as the belief that it is the most accurate portrait of the Buddha Shakyamuni.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Songsten Gampo constructed the Jokhang Temple to house the Jowo Rinpoche. Although regularly expanded over the centuries, the temple's original core remains largely intact. The Jokhang Temple is now the spiritual heart of Tibet. Buddhist pilgrims who pray before the richly gilded and jeweled statue believe that viewing the image will facilitate their path to enlightenment. The continued restoration and veneration of the Jowo Shakyamuni over the course of its 1300 year history is a testament to its religious and cultural importance in Tibet.

INTERPRETATION:

Legend has it that Vishvaharma, the celestial king of craftsmen, created the larger than life size image of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni housed in the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa. Unable to confirm this legendary account, modern scholars now believe that the Jowo Rinpoche "Precious One", was probably made in India sometime during the early 7th century. While texts regarding the sculpture's origins and history would like us to believe that the Jowo Shakyamuni is the most accurate and thereby the earliest portrait of the Buddha. The invention of the Buddha image in anthropomorphic (human) form dates to after the turn of the first century C.E. (circa early second century), with the advent of Mahayana Buddhism during the Kushan Dynasty. The purported date of the Jowo Shakyamuni to the time of the Buddha from the 6th-5th centuries B.C.E. is not consistent with the development of Buddha imagery in the history of Buddhist art, nor does the actual sculpture conform to stylistic conventions of early Buddha images.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Jowo means "lord" Khang means house/ The Jowo Rinpoche disappeared for awhile during the Chinese "Cultural Revolution". In 1983 the lower part of the figure was discovered in a rubbish heap, and the upper part was in Beijing. It was restored in 2003.

TITLE: The Great Stupa at Sanchi **LOCATION:** Madhya Pradesh, India **DATE:** 300 BCE-100 BCE

ARTIST: Maurya and late Sunga Dynasty **PERIOD/STYLE:** Buddhist Architecture **PATRON:** Ashoka
(local guild of ivory carvers)

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Stone masonry, sandstone on dome

FORM:

The Great Buddhist Monastery at Sanchi consists of many buildings constructed over the centuries including large stupas, viharas (celled structures where monks live), chaitya halls (halls with rounded or apsidal ends for housing smaller stupas and temples for sheltering images). This stupa crowns a hilltop in Northern India. The solid earth and rubble dome stands 50 feet high. Carved into different parts of the Great Stupa are more than 600 brief inscriptions of donors to the project. Stupas come in many sizes, from tiny hand held objects to huge structures such as the Great Stupa.

FUNCTION:

Stupas are large hemispherical domes that originally functioned as monuments containing the relics of kings or heroes. It is generally considered to be a sepulchral monument—a place of burial or a receptacle for religious objects. They later became associated with the sacred relics of the Buddha. It later functioned as a major pilgrimage site and also served as an integral part of a thriving Buddhist community. Pilgrims cannot enter the Great Stupa since it is a solid structure. Instead, worshipers meditate and chant as they follow a path allowing them to circumambulate, or walk around, the stupa. Their circular journey brings them into close proximity with the sacred relics buried inside. The ritual also brings the devout into harmony with the journey of the earth as it rotates around the sun. The Stupa at Sanchi, which is located 46 kilometers northeast of Bhopal, is the oldest and most important of all the stupas in India. It's thought to hold the relics, or the remains, of the Buddha himself, Buddha Shakyamuni.

CONTENT:

Toranas are 35 foot gateways that punctuate the railing at each of the four cardinal points. Each torana consists of two square pillars supporting three horizontal crossbars (architraves). They probably reflect the form of earlier Indian wood gates. Deeply carved relief sculptures cover the entire surface of each torana. The carvings depict pivotal events from Buddha's life such as his birth, enlightenment, and famous First Sermon. However, the sculptors did not depict Buddha's actual image. Instead they substituted symbols such as parasols, and empty throne, a pair of footsteps, or a riderless horse. The sculptors adorned the East Gate with the figure of a sensuous female fertility figure called a *Yakshi*. The yakshi demonstrates her power as a source of life by touching a nearby mango tree, thus causing it to burst into bloom. She personifies fertility and vegetation and were long established statuary typed in the repertoire of South Asian sculptors.

CONTEXT:

The Mauryan emperor Ashoka the Great ruled almost the entire India subcontinent from 272-231 BC. He converted to Buddhism after he heard the anguished cries of the defeated army that he just conquered. For both the history of art and the history of religion, by far the most important development in South Asia under the Maurya Dynasty was King Ashoka's conversion to Buddhism. He acted on his new faith by distributing Buddha's ashes to stupas he erected across India. The stupa suffered damage during the breakup of the Mauryan Dynasty, but was restored and doubled in size sometime around 75-50 BC. Again the Stupa was forgotten as Buddhism declined in India in favor of Hinduism. In 1818 a British officer found the site in ruins and soon it was plundered by treasure hunters. In the 20th century it has become a centerpiece of a restored complex containing priceless religious monuments.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Among the most important Buddhist sanctuaries founded during Ashoka's reign was the monastery at Sanchi in Central India. The site, which remained in use for more than a thousand years boasts many structures, but the most impressive is the Great Stupa. The yakshi and other elaborate torana carvings are among the finest works of Buddhist art in India. Taken together they help visiting pilgrims to understand Buddha's life and teachings. Before Buddhism, great teachers were buried in mounds. Some were cremated, but sometimes they were buried in a seated, meditative position. The mound of earth covered them up. Thus, the domed shape of the stupa came to represent a person seated in meditation much as the Buddha was when he achieved Enlightenment and knowledge of the Four Noble Truths. The base of the stupa represents his crossed legs as he sat in a meditative pose (called padmasana or the lotus position). The middle portion is the Buddha's body and the top of the mound, where a pole rises from the apex surrounded by a small fence, represents his head.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Ashoka was responsible for building many stupas all over northern India and the other territories under the Mauryan Dynasty in areas now known as Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. Ashoka chose the location because it offered a secluded site for meditation and proximity to a prosperous town nearby. Not because it had any special meaning connected with the life of Buddha. Ashoka and his successors built the Great Stupa to support their faith and to obtain spiritual benefits or Karma. Buddhists believe that making a contribution to a stupa will enable the devout to escape poverty in their next lives and also avoid being reborn in an undesirable location. The Great Stupa at Sanchi contains inscriptions by over 600 monks and laypersons who contributed to the monument in hope of receiving these rewards. In Buddhism, the earliest stupas contained portions of the Buddha's ashes, and as a result, the stupa began to be associated with the body of the Buddha. Adding the Buddha's ashes to the mound of dirt activated it with the energy of the Buddha himself.

INTERPRETATION:

As pilgrims pass under a torana, they leave the secular world and enter a sacred space protecting Buddha's relics. With a height of 54 feet and a diameter of 120 feet, the Great Stupa presents an imposing form. The stupa is crowned by a large dome that symbolizes the sky. The dome (which symbolizes the dome of heaven) is visually separated from the base of the structure by a stone railing or fence--known as the Harmika (vedika)--echoing the separation of the heavenly and earthly spheres. An axial pole known as a yasti occupies a sacred location at the center of the harmika (fenced rooftop landing which symbolizes a sacred tree). It represents the Axis Mundi, or pivot of the universe. The yasti bears three umbrella shaped discs representing the three jewels of Buddhism; the Buddha, the Law, and the monastic gathering of monks.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The eight-fold path that is represented in the structure of the stupa itself: "Right faith, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness, and right meditation." "Stupa" is Sanskrit for heap

TITLE: Borobudur Temple **LOCATION:** Central Java, Indonesia **DATE:** 750-842 C.E

ARTIST: Gunadharma **PERIOD/STYLE:** Buddhist Architecture **PATRON:** Sailendra Dynasty

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Volcanic-stone masonry

FORM:

The monument, the largest Buddhist temple in the world, is comprised of nine platforms, six that are square and three that are circular. Borobudur is a Buddhist monument that measures about 400 feet on each side of its base and rises about 98 feet to the sky. It begins with a series of six concentric terraces that rise like steps to a giant central Stupa. Built without mortar, the monument does not include a roof, vault, or central sanctuary. Nonetheless, Borobudur does contain 1460 relief panels, 1500 stupas of various sizes, 504 life-size statues of the Buddha and is made from literally millions of blocks of volcanic stone. The temple has been described in a number of ways. Its basic structure resembles that of a pyramid, yet it has been also referred to as a caitya (shrine), a stupa (reliquary), and a sacred mountain.

FUNCTION:

The monument serves two purposes. It is a shrine built to honor the Buddha, and it is also a place for Buddhist pilgrimage. Pilgrims must walk about 3 miles to view all of the relief panels. They then emerge from the confines of narrow corridors to enter three open circular terraces. Each terrace offers a view of the surrounding countryside. These panoramic vistas offer a liberating feeling of spaciousness. The circular terraces contain 72 bell-shaped stone stupas. Each 12 foot tall stupa holds a sculpted figure of a Buddha. These statues promote a sense of spiritual calmness that encourages meditation. The celestial Buddha prepares pilgrims for the climax of their spiritual journey, a single empty stupa. The stupas' emptiness represents perfection. Having climbed the holy man-made mountain, pilgrims have attained enlightenment and can return to their homes.

CONTENT:

Viewers begin their spiritual journey at Borobudur by viewing a series of 720 panels illustrating Jataka or "Birth Stories" that recount acts of self-sacrifice by Buddha in his earlier incarnations. They will see the effects of different kinds of human behavior, then reliefs depicting jatakas of the Buddha's earlier lives, and farther up, events from the life of Shakyamuni. For example, in one well-known story the Buddha was reborn as a woodpecker. One day he chanced upon a lion who suffered excruciating pain from a bone caught in his throat. The woodpecker opened the lion's mouth with a bit of wood and then walked in to remove the bone. Although the woodpecker was very hungry, the lion refused to share his meal. This taught the woodpecker an important lesson; the reward for a good deed is the pleasure of helping someone who may not reciprocate. The 500 Jataka stories helped Buddha accumulate the wisdom he would need for his final earthly existence as Prince Siddhartha Gautama.

CONTEXT:

Historians now recognize that Java contributed rice and hardwood to an extensive trading network connecting ports in Malaysia, China, and India. This exchange brought Java both wealth and Buddhist ideas. The influx of Buddhist scholars and pilgrims contributed to a period of intellectual activity. A family known as the Sailendras, or "Lords of the Mountains", embraced Buddhism and sponsored the construction of Borobudur. Scholars do not know why the Sailendras chose to build Borobudur. But they do know that the architects designed the largest and most unique Buddhist monument in the world. Java's brief era of monumental construction began in 750 BE and abruptly ended in 930 CE. Scholars do not know why the Sailendra's support came to a sudden and complete end. Over time, Borobudur's original meaning ceased to be relevant, and the monument slipped into obscurity.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The Borobudur is dependent on Indian Art, literature, and religion. Nothing like it actually exists in India itself. Borobudur's sophistication, complexity, and originality underline how completely Javanese and Southeast Asia in general, had absorbed, rethought, and reformulated Indian religion and art by 800. The brilliance of the site can be found in how the Borobudur mandala blends the metaphysical and physical, the symbolic and the material, the cosmological and the earthly within the structure of its physical setting and the framework of spiritual paradox.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Borobudur, was built as a free-standing monument from volcanic stone.

INTERPRETATION:

Scholars believe that it is a constructed cosmic mountain, a 3D mandala where worshipers pass through various realms on their way to ultimate enlightenment. The lower stories represent the world of desire and negative impulses; middle areas represent the world of forms, people have to control these negative impulses; the top story is the world of formulas, where the physical world and worldly desire are expunged. The temple's pathway takes one from the earthly realm of desire (kamadhatu), represented and documented on the hidden narratives of the structure's earthbound base, through the world of forms (rupadhatu) as expounded on the narratives carved along the four galleries set at right angles, until one finally emerges into the realm of formlessness (arupadhatu) as symbolized and manifested in the open circular terraces crowned with 72 stupas.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Rediscovering Borobudur in 1814, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles started a long period of decline for the temple which allowed for looting, souvenir hunting and even the building of a colonial style teahouse on top of one of the stupas. Between 1974 and 1983, the temple went through a state-sponsored restoration that has allowed the monument to reopen as a supreme architectural and cultural achievement.

TITLE: Lakshmana Temple **LOCATION:** Khajuraho, India **DATE:** 930-950 C.E.

ARTIST: Chandella Dynasty **PERIOD/STYLE:** Hindu Architecture **PATRON:** King Yashovarman and his son Dhanga

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: sand stone

FORM:

The Lakshmana temple is constructed out of sandstone blocks. It is one of 20 similar temples at the Khajuraho site. It sits on a raised platform accessed by stairs, separating the outside secular world from the spiritual world inside. The shrine measures 85 feet in both height and length. Located at the corner of the temple platform, four free-standing subsidiary shrines flank the main shrine. A tower known as a shikhara (roof), or “mountain peak” forms the Lakshmana Temple’s most prominent visible feature. The main shikhara and the four subsidiary shrines evoke images of Mt. Meru, the five-peaked mythical mountain home of the Hindu gods. The Lakshmana Temple is an excellent example of Nagara style Hindu temple architecture.

FUNCTION:

The temple was built in the tenth century A.D. and houses a sacred image of Vishnu that was brought from Tibet. The Lakshmana temple is a home for Vishnu, a central Hindu deity who is revered as the preserver of the universe and the restorer of moral order. The temple is thus a sacred space where devotees can approach the divine. Its design encourages reflection and the attainment of the essential spiritual knowledge that all life is connected. It is not hall for congregational worship, but instead it is the residence of a god.

CONTENT:

As they begin their clockwise circumambulation, worshipers first encounter a statue of the elephant headed Ganesha. The beloved son of Shiva and Parvati, Ganesha is the Lord of Beginnings who removes obstacles to success and prosperity. Paying respect to Ganesha prepares worshipers for their spiritual journey ahead. The temple’s exterior walls contain three horizontal registers displaying over 600 carved figures. These elaborate decorations begin with a row of majestic elephants, symbolizing the mighty Chandella Kings. They are followed by seemingly endless processions of marching soldiers, mounted hunters, and lively musicians. There are no free-standing sculptures. Architecture and sculpture are integrated, thus demonstrating the essential Hindu truth that many become one. The central deity at the Lakshmana temple is an image of Vishnu in his three-headed form known as Vaikuntha who sits inside the temple’s inner womb chamber also known as garba griha—The womb chamber is the symbolic and physical core of the temple’s shrine. It is dark, windowless, and designed for intimate, individualized worship of the divine—quite different from large congregational worshipping spaces that characterize many Christian churches and Muslim mosques.

CONTEXT:

The Chandella kings ruled northern and central India from the 9th to the 12th centuries. During this time they commissioned over 80 structures for their capital city at Khajuraho. The Lakshmana Temple is one of 24 surviving structures (including Vishvanatha temple). Begun by King Yashovarman and consecrated by his son in 954, the Lakshmana temple embodies the central characteristics of Hindu temple architecture. Its placement on an east-west axis allows it to receive direct rays from the rising sun.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

After circumambulating the Lakshmana temple, worshipers continue their search for spiritual knowledge by entering the temple. They walk through a series of richly decorated halls before approaching the garbha griha. The inner sanctum, or “womb chamber” is the temple’s symbolic and physical core. Unlike the large congregational spaces in Christian cathedrals and Islamic mosques, the square, windowless garbha griha is designed for the intimate worship of a divine icon.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Although they knew how to build arches, they preferred corbelled-vaulting techniques to create a cave-like look on the inside. Thick walls protect the deity from outside forces. An antechamber, where ceremonies are prepared, precedes the cella, and a hypostyle hall is visible from the outside where congregants can participate. Hindu temples are constructed amid a temple complex that includes subsidiary buildings. The temples at Khajuraho, including the Lakshmana temple, have become famous for these amorous images—some of which graphically depict figures engaged in sexual intercourse. These erotic images were not intended to be titillating or provocative, but instead served ritual and symbolic function significant to the builders, patrons, and devotees of these captivating structures.

INTERPRETATION:

As devotees circumambulate the temple, they encounter exquisite portraits of graceful nymphs. These sensuous figures dance, play musical instruments, and engage in sexual acts. Scholars have proposed different theories to explain the erotic images. One argument holds that sensuality is a fundamental human experience that brings joy and creates life. Other arguments contend that the erotic images are best understood as visual reminders of the Hindu belief that the universe is driven by the union of male and female forces. The profusion of sculptures depicting mortals as well as gods especially pairs of men and women (mithunas) embracing or engaged in sexual intercourse in an extraordinary range of positions is typical of all of the Khajuraho temples. They suggest fertility and the propagation of life and serve as auspicious protectors of the sacred precinct.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

One reason for the popularity of Hinduism in the 7th century could be its frank appreciation for eroticism. Western religions impose a distinction between the body or flesh, on the one hand, and the soul or mind, on the other. As a consequence, sex is often seen as being at odds with religious purity. Hinduism considers sexual expression to be one legitimate path to virtue. They also do not have the Adam and Eve origin story with the narrative of original sin being caused by a woman.

TITLE: Angkor, the temple of Angkor **LOCATION:** Angkor Thom, Cambodia **DATE:** 800-1400 C.E.
Wat

ARTIST: Angkor Dynasty **PERIOD/STYLE:** Hindu and Buddhist Architecture **PATRON:** Indravarman, Jayavarman II, Suryavarman II and Jayavarman VII

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: stone masonry, Sandstone

FORM:

Angkor Wat (Wat=Monastery) is the largest of many Khmer temple complexes. It rises from a huge rectangle of land delineated by a moat measuring about 5000 by 4000 feet. It required 5 to 10 million sandstone blocks, cut from a quarry about 20 miles from the building site. An extensive system of canals enabled elephants and water buffaloes to tow about 300 to 400 stone blocks a day. Workers used these stones to build a series of towers and rectangular galleries. In addition, they surrounded the temple's three mile perimeter with a deep moat. The complex at Angkor Thom's Bayon temple included towers displaying gigantic stone faces, benignly gazing toward each cardinal point. The faces may represent all-seeing and all-knowing images of Buddha or perhaps Jayavarman VII himself.

FUNCTION:

Hindu temples are considered to be the dwelling places of the gods, not houses of worship. Angkor Wat's purpose was to associate the king with his personal god, in this case, Vishnu. Unlike previous Khmer temples, Angkor Wat faces west, the traditional direction of death. Many scholars believe that Suryavarman II may have built Angkor Wat as a mausoleum. Like Shih Huangdi's burial city and Hatshepsut's mortuary temple, Angkor Wat may have served as a gateway to the afterlife. Angkor Thom and the state Buddhist temple of Bayon were built later, by Jayavarman VII as a political and religious capitol of medieval Cambodia. The building of temples by Khmer kings was a means of legitimizing their claim to political office and also to lay claim to the protection and powers of the gods.

CONTENT:

Teams of highly skilled Khmer sculptors decorated the temple walls with an extensive collection of bas-relief friezes. The 220 foot long friezes illustrate legendary Hindu epics and battles featuring Suryavarman II's victorious armies. Like the Palette of King Narmer and the Benin Wall plaques, Khmer bas-reliefs use hierarchical scale to indicate a figure's importance. Angkor Wat's most renowned frieze illustrates a great Hindu epic story known as Churning of the Ocean of Milk. In this story, gods and demons vie for immortality. Vishnu saves the universe from catastrophe by cleverly encouraging the rivals to work together. A spectacular bas-relief depicts 92 demons and 88 gods pulling on a serpent wrapped around Mount Mandara. Their back and forth action rotates the mountain, thus churning the surrounding ocean. After furiously pulling for 1000 years, their churning action finally produces the elixir of immortality. Aided by Vishnu, the gods defeat the demons and restore the balance of good and evil.

CONTEXT:

Jayavarman II founded the Khmer Empire in 802. He promptly proclaimed himself a devaraja or "god-king". Jayavarman II and his successors concentrated their building activity at Angkor. Each ruler constructed a temple designed to exhibit his political power and religious authority. In 1113, a ruthless young prince named Suryavarman II shattered the empire's peaceful succession of rulers when he ambushed and killed the reigning king. After taking power, Suryavarman II turned to architecture and art to demonstrate his legitimacy as a ruler who enjoyed divine approval. Previous Khmer kings dedicated their temples to the Hindu god Shiva. In contrast, Suryavarman II deliberately selected Vishnu as his divine protector. A new temple dedicated to Vishnu would function as a sacred place where the god and Suryavarman II would exercise undisputed power. This temple is known as Angkor Wat. 30 years after Suryavarman's death, Jayavarman VII ascended to the throne and built the Bayon temple and developed Angkor Thom as a city surrounding it. In 1431, Thai armies attacked and defeated the last of the Khmer kings, and Angkor was forgotten to fall into ruins in the jungle.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Angkor Wat's priest architects designed a mandala or earthly model of the cosmic world. The 5 soaring towers represent the peaks of Mt. Meru, the mythical home of Vishnu and other Hindu gods. The temple's outer walls correspond to the mountains at the edge of the world, while the surrounding moat symbolizes the great oceans beyond. Angkor Wat and Lakshmana Temple share a common symbolic form. Both temples are Mandalas, or architectural representations of the Hindu cosmos. Five towers representing the peaks of Mount Meru crown each temple. The main tower in both temples is an axis mundi, symbolically connecting the earth with the heavens. Angkor is notable because it demonstrates the peaceful merging of two different religions. When it was founded, Angkor was guided by Hindu traditions, but over the course of its history the people gradually transitioned to Buddhism influences.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Angkor Wat is designed in the form of a mountain, Mount Meru, which is the home of the devas in Hindu mythology. Devas are benevolent supernatural beings akin to angels in Christianity. There are three rectangular levels to the temple, each one on top of another, and at the center is a grouping of five towers arranged in a quincunx. This is a super fancy way to say that there is one tower in the middle with four other towers around it. The artist uses horror vacui in the sculptural reliefs. In addition to envisioning Angkor Wat as Mt. Meru on earth, the temple's architects, of whom we know nothing, also ingeniously designed the temple so that embedded in the temple's construction is a map of the cosmos (mandala) as well as a historical record of the temple's patron.

INTERPRETATION:

The Bayon temple at Angkor Thom was a reflection of Jayavarman's conversion to Buddhism. He adapted the bodhisattva Lokeshvara (Lord of the World) into divine prototypes of the king himself. This temple has a mixed Hindu-Buddhist character. The faces on the Bayon towers perhaps portray Lokeshvara, intended to indicate the watchful compassion emanating in all directions from the capitol. The Khmer civilization of Cambodia represents a rich religious and artistic tradition that was able to adapt itself over time to incorporate both Hindu and Buddhist ideas and forms into its art and architecture.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Angkor Wat, which has become a national symbol of Cambodia and is a prime example of the classical style of Khmer architecture. The major patron of Angkor Wat was King Suryavarman II, whose name translates as the "protector of the sun."

TITLE: Shiva as Lord of Dance (Nataraja). **LOCATION:** Hindu; India **DATE:** 11th Century

ARTIST: **PERIOD/STYLE:** Chola Dynasty **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: 11th century C.E Cast bronze

FORM:

Flying locks of hair terminate in rearing cobra heads. One hand sounds the drum that he dances to, another has a flame. Shiva is depicted with 4 hands.

FUNCTION:

This image is a sacred object made for a temple, where devout Hindu worshipers could have contact with their god. The experience of encountering this sculpture was not limited to revering it in a temple. Processional parades organized by priests provided an opportunity for Hindu devotees to view Shiva Nataraja and receive blessing from their religious leaders. On these festive occasions, the statue of Shiva Nataraja would be adorned with gold jewelry, flowers, and red and green clothes. Images placed in the “womb” of the temple are idols in that they are invoked with the essence of divinity that the figure represents. To touch the image is to touch the god himself or herself. Few can do this. Instead the image is treated with the utmost respect and deference.

CONTENT:

The statue portrays Shiva performing the Tandava, a dance believed to be the source of the cycles of creation, preservation, and destruction. The statue provides an extraordinary iconographic representation of many central tenets of the Hindu faith. Shiva’s four arms allow the god to fully display his awesome powers. His upraised left hand holds a five pointed divine flame that will destroy the universe. But Shiva’s powers are not just destructive. His upraised right hand holds a drum, providing rhythm to the god’s dance and also marking the beat of life and thus the first stage of creation. Destruction and creation are balanced against each other, and both are governed by Shiva. Shiva’s second right hand employs mudra, or hand gesture, intended to speak directly to the god’s frightened followers. The “fear not” mudra bestows peace and protection by signaling to his devotees, “Be not afraid, for those who follow the path of righteousness will have my blessing.” Shiva’s second left hand extends toward the god’s left foot, beneath which worshipers may take refuge from the visible world.

CONTEXT:

Considered the embodiment of the deity, the image is not a symbol of the god but the god itself. All must treat the image as a living being. Worship of the deity involves caring for him as if he were an honored person. Bathed, clothes, given foods to eat and taken for outings, the image also receives gifts--songs, lights (lit oil lamps), good smells (incense), and flowers, things the god can enjoy through the senses. The food given to the god is particularly important because he eats the essence, leaving the remainder for the worshiper. The food is then prasada (grace), sacred because it came in contact with the divine. Worshipers experience the divine through actively seeing the invoked image, an experience known as *Darshan* and performing *puja*, a ritual offering to the deity, which is mediated by temple priests.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The Chola Dynasty was one of the longest and most prosperous dynasties of south India. The empire spread all the way to Sri Lanka, where there were vast amounts of copper available. When combined with tin and various other metals, copper turns into bronze, a much harder metal. Artists of the Chola period are known for making great innovations in the field of metalwork, particularly anything to do with bronze.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The Greek, Roman and Chola sculptors all used the Lost Wax method to cast their bronze statues. However, even classical masterpieces such as the Doryphoros were hollow. In contrast, the bronze statues of Shiva are solid. The feat required great precision to prevent bubbles and cracks. No other group of sculptors replicated this feat until the modern age. This image of Shiva is taken from the ancient Indian manual of visual depiction, the Shilpa Shastras (The Science or Rules of Sculpture), which contained a precise set of measurements and shapes for the limbs and proportions of the divine figure. Arms were to be long like stalks of bamboo, faces round like the moon, and eyes shaped like almonds or the leaves of a lotus. The Shastras were a primer on the ideals of beauty and physical perfection within ancient Hindu ideology.

INTERPRETATION:

Shiva’s dance occurs in the center of a cosmic ring of fire. The ring is a perfect circle, symbolizing the Hindu belief that time is an endless cycle with no beginning, no middle, and no end. “Shiva’s dance is a continual dance of creation and destruction involving the whole cosmos; the basis of all existence and of all natural phenomena.” -Fritzo Capra (physicist) Shiva also has a third eye. He once burned the god Kama with this eye.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Shiva’s right foot is shown crushing Apasmara, a dwarf demon who personifies illusion and ignorance. Blinded by illusions, humans fail to see divine truth; all living things are part of the interconnected rhythm of Shiva’s dance. Shiva’s triumph over the dwarf of human ignorance inspired Hindu holy men, who hailed Shiva by chanting, “We behold you dancing, source of the world...We take refuge in you! we adore you...who dance the divine dance. His name Nataraja is made up of two Hindu words: nata, meaning “dance,” and raja, meaning “lord.”

TITLE: Jahangir Preferring a Sufi Shaikh to Kings **LOCATION:** India **DATE:** 1620 C.E.

ARTIST: Bichitr **PERIOD/STYLE:** Mughal Dynasty **PATRON:** Emperor Jahangir

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: watercolor, gold, and ink on paper

FORM:

Although the work is just 18 inches by 13 inches, it includes a complex blend of Mughal, Persian, and European styles. Compositions tend to be both crowded and colorful. Perspective is tilted upward so that surfaces of objects, like tables or rugs, can be seen in their entirety. Floral patterns contribute to the richness of expression. Figures are painted with great delicacy and generally seem small compared to the landscape around them. They have a doll-like character that adds to the fairy tale like nature of the stories being illustrated. There is a heightened use of color, with black outlines. Humans have a wide range of emotion, figures often gesticulate wildly. Nature is seen as friendly and restorative.

FUNCTION:

This is an allegorical painting portraying the emperor in both words and pictured as favoring spiritual over worldly power. To flatter their Emperor, Jahangir's artists portrayed him in imagined victories over rivals and enemies or painted events reflecting imperial desire. Regardless of whether Jahangir actually met the Shaikh or was visited by a real Ottoman Sultan (King James I certainly did not visit the Mughal court), Bichitr has dutifully indulged his patron's desire to be seen as powerful ruler (in a position of superiority to other kings), but with a spiritual bent. While doing so, the artist has also cleverly taken the opportunity to immortalize himself. Jahangir often had several artists following him around wherever he went. He liked to have everything recorded.

CONTENT:

Bichitr's carefully drawn portrait of Jahangir dominates the composition. The seated emperor is much larger than the other figures. A halo comprised of a golden sun and silver moon surrounds Jahangir, demonstrating that he is the source of all light. In the upper right corner a Renaissance style cupid covers his eyes to protect them from the halo's blinding radiance. Jahangir sits on a jeweled circular throne resting above a European hourglass. Two clothed cupids hold the emperor and inscribe an inscription wishing that he emperor would live for a thousand years. But the sands of time are inexorably running out. Bichitr's carefully designed allegorical image conveys a spiritual message that Jahangir must turn his attention from this world to the next. One of the inscriptions in the upper and lower borders gives the emperor's title as "Light of the Faith".

CONTEXT:

An Islamic dynasty known as the Mughals ruled most of India from 1526 to 1857. Under Akbar the Great, the Mughal court became a vibrant artistic center. Akbar contributed to this cultural renaissance by adopting a tolerant attitude toward India's diverse religious groups. Although blessed with great success, Akbar experienced increasing anxiety over his lack of a male heir. The deeply troubled emperor turned or help to a revered Islamic mystic named Shaik Salim Chisti. The Sufi holy man blesses Akbar and confidently foretold the imminent birth of a son. Shortly thereafter, Akbar's wife gave birth to a young prince. The grateful royal couple named their son Salim to honor the Sufi sage. Salim ascended the Mughal throne in 1605. He inherited a vast empire that reportedly took caravans two years to cross. Determined to take advantage of his seemingly limitless opportunities, Salim chose the name Jahangir, meaning "World-seizer", as the "title which best suited my character." Jahangir failed to live up to his title. He soon became a vain and fickle ruler who alienated his supporters and tortured his opponents. His frightened courtiers burst into applause when Jahangir issued trivial orders or recited uninspired verses of poetry. Although he was a disappointing ruler, he was a great patron of the arts. He enthusiastically widened trade with Europe which created an influx of European works that inspired his court artists like Bichitr.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The influence of Indian, European and Persian styles on Mughal painting is evident in this piece. Bichitr's combination of realistic portraits and allegorical symbols provides a window into a unique period of Indian history. This piece has a great deal in common with "The Court of the Gayumars". Both Bichitr and Sultan Muhammad packed meticulously drawn details into small pictorial spaces. For example, the two works include intricate floral designs skillfully painted with jewel-like colors. Although Bichitr's composition owes much to Persian aesthetics, his contact with European paintings prompted him to include features such as cupids and an allegorical hourglass. The portrait of King James I was copied from a painting by John de Critz that had been gifted to Jahangir by the English King. By 1620, the world had broken wide open, and trade was connecting people from all around the globe. By including so many different people from so many unique cultures in this image, Jahangir represented himself as man who was interested in connecting cultures and expanding his world view. He was forward-thinking, not rooted to the past.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Jahangir did not commission works of art for public display, he bound miniatures such as this into a muraqqa, or album, for private viewing. Sometime around 1620, Bichitr received a royal directive to create a miniature featuring a flattering allegorical portrait of Jahangir and a subordinate group of spiritual and royal figures. Jahangir extended Bichitr the rare honor of including his self portrait in the painting. Bichitr recognized the privilege but also understood his own humble status. Although his portrait in the lower left corner is closest to the viewer, he ignored the rules of perspective and modestly drew himself as the smallest figure in the work. A close inspection reveals that Bichitr is holding a small painting within a painting that includes a self portrait of Bichitr deeply bowing as a sign of his gratitude for these costly imperial gifts. Bichitr also includes his own name on the footstool that Jahangir would step on, as a sign of respect and humility.

INTERPRETATION:

Jahangir understand the inevitable passage of time. He ignores an unidentified Ottoman sultan and the English King James I. Instead, Jahangir presents the sage a sumptuous leather-bound book held together by gold clamps. The gift recognizes the important role Husain's predecessor played in correctly predicting Jahangir's birth. The image also underscores Jahangir's commitment to spiritual wisdom over worldly power. An inscription explains that "although to all appearances kings stand before him, Jahangir looks inwardly toward the Dervishes (Islamic ascetic holy men)" for guidance.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Jahangir's son is Shah Jahan the patron of the Taj Mahal. His father was Akbar, the first leader of the Mughal Dynasty.