



# Defining Yongle

Imperial Art in Early Fifteenth-Century China

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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Imperial Art in Early Fifteenth-Century China

*James C.Y. Watt and Denise Patry Leidy*

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James C.Y. Watt  
Denise Patry Leidy

## *Director's Foreword*

This exhibition, devoted to the arts produced during the reign of Yongle (1403–24), third emperor of the Ming dynasty in China, is one of the small exhibitions, staged from time to time at the Metropolitan Museum, that focus on individual topics. The arts of the Yongle reign deserve special attention because of their extraordinarily high quality and their influence on the subsequent development of Chinese art up to the end of the eighteenth century. Despite its small scale, the exhibition offers a comprehensive view of this important period in Chinese art by including every major category of art objects produced in the Yongle reign. In this publication, produced to accompany the exhibition, the curators present an account of the art styles and techniques that had their roots in the cosmopolitan culture of the previous Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), when the Mongol rulers of China brought to Dadu (Beijing) the finest craftsmen from every corner of the vast Mongol empire. In particular, two aspects of the arts of Yongle are stressed. The first is the impact of Tibetan Buddhism on the imperial arts of China as a result of the Yongle emperor's strong attachment to Buddhism. The second is the artistic exchange between China and the Islamic lands in Central Asia and the Middle East as a result of diplomatic and trade activities. On the Chinese side, this exchange is evident in the shapes of Yongle porcelain for export and domestic use, which in some cases are derived from Islamic glass and metalwork.

The core group of exhibits consists of objects in various media collected over the past fifteen years by curators of the Department of Asian Art with the support of patrons of the Department, particularly Florence and Herbert Irving and Sir Joseph Hotung. The display has been augmented by loans from other institutions and collectors, and our grateful thanks are due to Robert Rosenkranz, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Asia Society and Museum, the Rubin Museum of Art, and the Peabody Essex Museum. The Metropolitan Museum is deeply indebted to The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Foundation for its generous support of the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue. Indeed, we remain ever grateful for the Wallach Foundation's steadfast contributions toward the activities of the Department of Asian Art.

Philippe de Montebello  
Director





Portrait of the Yongle Emperor.  
15th century. Hanging scroll;  
ink and color on silk.  $86\frac{3}{8} \times$   
59 in. (220 × 150 cm). National  
Palace Museum, Taipei

## *Yongle and the Arts of China*

Zhu Di, third emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), is one of the most written about personalities in Chinese history. Though the various arts produced during his reign (1402–24) have individually received considerable attention, particularly in the areas of porcelain, lacquer, and gilt bronze Buddhist images, the present exhibition brings together every known type of decorative and Buddhist art produced in his reign. Most of the objects can to some degree be associated with imperial patronage, especially those for religious use.

The reign of Zhu Di was known as “Yongle” (perpetual happiness), and he is generally referred to as the Yongle emperor, or simply as Yongle. Orthodox historians use his posthumous honorific title of Chengzu. He is a favorite subject of historians and folklorists alike, as there is much to tell, and wonder about, in his life and deeds. He may have been one of the last rulers whose private wishes determined the course of his country’s history. His life can be regarded as a grand drama, centered on his person and played upon the vast stage of the early Ming empire. Historical writing on Yongle can be compared to literary criticism—which is to say that his actions, and the motives behind them, are open to as many different interpretations as there are commentators. The epic maritime expeditions that he instigated, led by the able officer Zheng He, have generated many legends and historical studies. Irrespective of the consequences of the expeditions, they have occasioned either high praise as a spectacular

Figure 1  
After Xie Huan (ca. 1370–ca. 1450). *Elegant Gathering in the Apricot Garden*. Ming dynasty, ca. 1437. Detail. Handscroll; ink and color on silk. 14¾ × 94¾ in. (37.5 × 240.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1989 (1989.141.3)

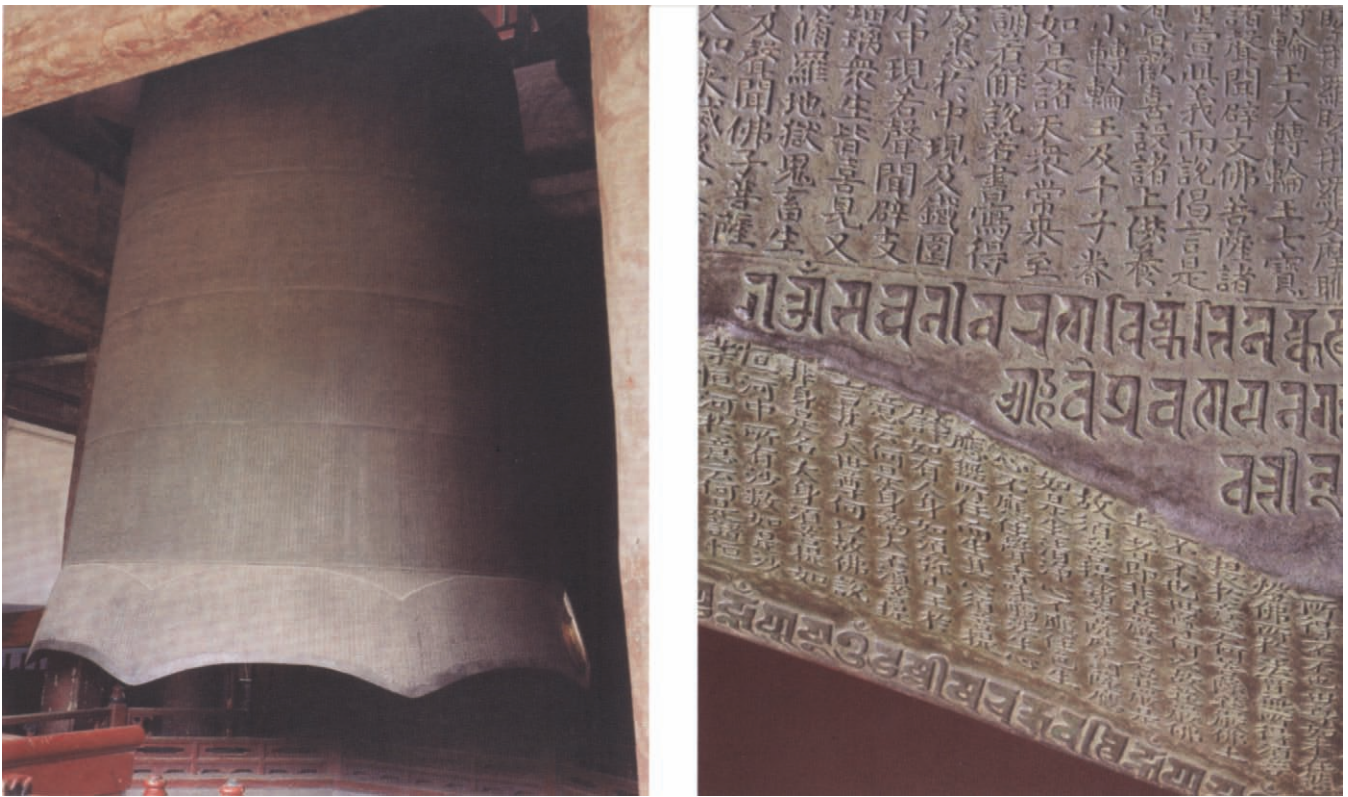
achievement or blame as an extremely expensive exercise serving no particular purpose. Historical models, those of Alexander, Emperor Taizong of the Tang, or Chinggis Khan, are inapplicable, as territorial gain was not the intention or the result of these naval expeditions. Historians will no doubt be occupied for some time debating why the emperor personally led repeated military incursions into Mongolia, even when the Mongols posed no immediate threats, even into old age and while in poor health, dying on his last campaign in 1424. On one subject, however, his religious belief, there has been general agreement until relatively recently. His lavish gifts to Tibetan monks and monasteries and his generous hospitality to lamas from Tibet have always been portrayed not as the acts of a devout believer, but as part of an astute political strategy to appease Tibetans and prevent them from allying themselves with the Mongols—who, after the expulsion of the ruling house of Kubilai from China, still entertained the intention of a return to power. This explanation, based on the accounts in official Chinese histories, seems to make good sense, but some historians in the last century have raised doubts about these accounts,<sup>1</sup> and the art historian must side with them. After all, the Chinese court throughout history used massive gifts to pacify neighbors and minority populations who posed threats, but no Chinese emperor, let alone one who was as powerful and strong willed as Yongle, treated any Buddhist eminences with the same degree of deference, amounting to



object adulation. What is more, judging by the objects that have survived from the Yongle era, the great majority of those produced in the imperial workshops served a religious function or, at a minimum, were decorated with (Tibetan) Buddhist symbols. Who but the emperor himself had ordered them?

#### *The Early Life of Zhu Di*

A brief sketch of Zhu Di's early life may throw light on these speculations. The future emperor was born in 1360, the fourth of twenty-nine sons (not ranking the eighteen daughters) of Zhu Yuanzhang (1328–1398), who founded the Ming dynasty eight years later. In 1370, Zhu Di was granted the title Prince of Yan, a fief comprising Beijing and surrounding areas, indicating early recognition of the boy's exceptional abilities. He was given strict instruction in the Chinese classics and, in 1376, was sent to live in Fengyang, in Anhui Province, the family's home town. Fengyang remained, at the beginning of the Ming dynasty, the desperately poor place in which Zhu Yuanzhang had grown up, despite having been proclaimed the Middle Capital of the empire, despite major construction work on a palace complex that had been underway for six years (1370–76). In 1380, by now aged twenty, Zhu Di took up residence in his fief. In 1382, the empress died and Zhu Yuanzhang's four eldest sons returned to the capital, Nanjing, for the funeral. On his return to Beijing, Zhu Di was accompanied by



the Buddhist monk Daoyuan, better known by his secular name Yao Guangxiao. He remained for the rest of his life the Yongle emperor's closest advisor.

The first emperor of Ming died in 1398 and, his eldest son having died earlier, was succeeded by his eldest grandson, Yunwen, in accordance with the principle of primogeniture. Almost immediately, Zhu Di, abetted by Yao Guangxiao, marched on the capital. After three years of intense civil war, he entered Nanjing and declared himself emperor, and in 1403 the reign name was changed from Jianwen to Yongle. There was one problem. The Jianwen emperor, Yunwen, was never captured. A charred body found in a burned-down palace building could have been that of Yunwen, but no one was sure. This uncertainty would cast a pall over the entire Yongle reign, as the nephew might appear at any time and seek to reclaim his throne. There was another minor inconvenience. Yongle, unlike his elder brothers, was not the son of the empress, but the offspring of one of the minor wives of Zhu Yuanzhang, know as the consort Gong, perhaps a Korean. (A mischievous rumor had it that she was a Mongol.) These two factors—his fear of the return of his nephew, and his need to justify his actions and legitimize his reign—may have motivated much of Yongle's conduct as emperor. The long-distance maritime expeditions can be interpreted as both a search for Jianwen and a way of proclaiming to the world that he, Yongle, was the reigning emperor of China. His father, after all, had sent envoys to various countries to announce that he was the emperor of a new dynasty.

Figure 2  
Temple Bell. Ming dynasty,  
Yongle period (1403–24).  
Bronze. Height 220½ in.  
(560 cm). Big Bell Temple  
(*Dazhong si*), Beijing

Detail of fig. 2

### *Yongle and Buddhism*

Yongle's attachment to Buddhism is easier to fathom. His father was not averse to the religion, having been himself a novice monk in his youth, and it was his idea to send a monk to accompany each son back to his fief after the empress's funeral. Yongle's conversion to Tibetan Buddhism, however, could already have occurred upon his first arrival in Beijing. This was the former Great Capital, Dadu, of the Yuan, which was renamed Beiping upon the change of dynasty. When the prince took up residence in the former palace of the Mongol Khans, the senior lamas of the Mongol court had fled the city, before it fell to the Ming army,<sup>2</sup> but many temples in Beijing were still operated by Tibetan monks. Yongle's conversion can be inferred from one of his orders during the civil war. After a fierce battle at the Baigou River, southwest of Beijing, at which heavy casualties were sustained on both sides, Yongle ordered that the skulls of the fallen soldiers be gathered and made into rosary beads for palace officials (who would say prayers to promote their reincarnation), while the larger skulls were to be made into cups for offering pure water on the Buddhist altar.<sup>3</sup>

One of Yongle's first acts upon seizing the throne was to send for the Tibetan lama Deshin Shegpa, known in China as Halima (Helima), who arrived in Nanjing three years later, in 1406, and was received with great ceremonial pomp. Halima performed requiem rituals for Yongle's father and his official mother, and was showered with



Figure 3  
Pagoda of Bao'an Temple. From  
a 17th-century Dutch engraving

every kind of precious gift.<sup>4</sup> *Mingshi* (The History of the Ming) records objections by senior officials to the emperor's lavish gifts and the excessive deference paid to the lama, but it rationalizes the emperor's actions by ascribing them to the policy of appeasing the Tibetans.<sup>5</sup> When Halima returned to Tibet, he was sent off with a retinue that was half that of the emperor. Other lamas began to arrive in Nanjing, and all were treated generously.<sup>6</sup> The only Tibetan hierarch who refused to attend the emperor was Tsongkhapa, who instead sent his disciple Sakya Yeshey.<sup>7</sup> For this slight, Tsongkhapa's name was not mentioned in the *Mingshi*. The practice of entertaining and rewarding Tibetan lamas, some of whom came in large delegations, continued through the reign of Zhengde (1506–21), but later emperors did not command the same resources as Yongle, and surviving quantities of imperial gifts from later reigns are comparatively fewer.

For art historians, the evidence for Yongle's fanatical attachment to Tibetan Buddhism is overwhelming. Buddhist images and ritual objects in all media were produced in great quantities in imperial workshops. A large number of these are still preserved in Tibetan monasteries, although some have found their way into Western collections in the last century. Many pieces carry the inscription "*da Ming Yongle nian shi*" (bestowed in the Yongle era of the great Ming), implying imperial patronage (see pls. 24–26). So few of the products of the Yongle workshops are free of Buddhist

symbolism that it almost seems that the workshops existed to produce articles for Tibetan Buddhist rituals. This was particularly the case with metalwork, examples of which are on view in this exhibition.

That the Yongle emperor could command the resources for large-scale production of religious objects is not surprising. The young Prince of Yan must have inherited the skilled craftsmen from the Mongol workshops when he arrived in Beijing twelve years after the fall of the Yuan dynasty. The Yuan empire in its heyday (late thirteenth to early fourteenth century) had assembled the finest craftsmen from all over its vast realm, and these craftsmen, together with their Chinese counterparts, established workshops of the highest standard, particularly in metalwork and textiles—the two materials most coveted by the Mongol rulers. Gold and silver objects were made for daily utensils, bronze and iron with elaborate gold and silver damascening for arms and armor, and gilt bronze for religious images. Luxury silk textiles were used for formal wear and palace furnishings, imperial portraits and Buddhist images, mandalas, and temple hangings. The continuation of the splendid Yuan artistic tradition is evident in a number of objects in this exhibition. Cloisonné was also introduced to China during the Mongol period,<sup>8</sup> although the earliest known example of cloisonné can only be dated to the early fifteenth century, such as the dish with scalloped rim (pl. 8).



### *Porcelains and Islamic Influence*

Porcelain, basically a utilitarian ware, is also a sculptural medium. Buddhist images in porcelain, with a pale bluish green glaze, were produced in the Yuan dynasty, but this production seems to have tapered off in the fifteenth century. On the other hand, a number of porcelain vessels were made in the Yongle period for ritual offerings, often with Tibetan Buddhist inscriptions in cobalt blue written under the glaze and also incised on the clay body. An example is the Xuande stem cup (pl. 6). It may be mentioned here that the Xuande emperor (r. 1426–35) was a true heir to his grandfather. Like Yongle, he treated Tibetan high lamas with deference, and all the types of Buddhist paraphernalia initiated under Yongle continued to be produced with little change in style and quality, if in reduced quantities. Xuande also inherited a group of senior advisors—academicians who had formed Yongle’s *neige* (privy council), the best known among them being the three Yangs, who are represented in a painting from about 1437 that is now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 1).<sup>9</sup> During the Xuande reign, Zheng He made his seventh and final long-distance voyage, to the Indian Ocean.

The more interesting aspect of Yongle production is the Islamic influence on Chinese porcelain forms (if one may use “Islamic” as an art historical term of

convenience, as is the general practice among art historians.) The blue-and-white basin (pl. 2) is a prime example of the transfer of shapes of metal and glass vessels from contemporary Islamic lands in the Middle East and Central Asia to Chinese porcelain. This influence may be partly attributed to increased communications with Islamic lands as a result of Zheng He's voyages, which followed all the maritime trade routes. The fashion for Islamic shapes was more likely a consequence of diplomatic activities between China and the Timurid empire. Fu An, an emissary sent by the first Ming emperor to Timur in 1395, returned to China in 1407 (after a lengthy detention). He traveled extensively in the Timurid domain, visiting Samarkand, the capital, Tabriz, Isphahan, Shiraz, Herat, and other cities. Quite a few exchanges of embassies between the Chinese court and the Timurid rulers took place during the reign of Yongle. These were led by able officials, often accompanied by palace eunuchs who were Muslims.<sup>10</sup> They must have brought back to China articles from their travels that provided prototypes for Chinese potters. This conjecture is supported by the concurrent diminishing of diplomatic exchanges between China and Central Asia and the disappearance of Islamic shapes in Chinese porcelain after the Yongle reign. The active cultural exchange between early Ming China and the Timurid empire is also evident in the influence of Chinese art on that of the Timurids.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 4  
Partial reconstruction of door  
frame of pagoda of Bao'an  
Temple. Ming dynasty, early  
15th century. Glazed  
earthenware. Nanjing Museum

Figure 5  
Detail of portal at Juyongguan

### *Beijing and Other Large Works of Art*

It would seem that Yongle always wanted to make Beijing his capital. When his wife died in 1407, he ordered the construction of a mausoleum, the Changling, in an area outside of Beijing, where all subsequent emperors would be buried. When the tomb complex was finished nine years later, the empress was finally interred—to be followed later by Yongle. In 1417, after years of planning, the construction of the new palace was begun in earnest, and the move to Beijing took place in late 1420. Among Yongle's large projects was a bronze temple bell. This bell, weighing 46,000 kilograms, is 5.6 meters high and 3.3 meters wide at the mouth. It still exists, but is now housed in the Big Bell Temple in the western suburbs of Beijing (fig. 2). The surface of the bell is completely covered with Buddhist sutras and mantras in Chinese and Tibetan, numbering over 230,000 characters (see detail, p. 12). It was said that the bell was cast as an act of contrition for the cruel treatment Yongle meted out to those who opposed his usurpation of the throne, putting to death all the relatives and friends of some of the accused. The tolling of the bell was supposed to quicken the deliverance of the souls of his victims.<sup>12</sup>

One of Yongle's major projects was only completed after his death. This was the Bao'an Temple in Nanjing built in commemoration of his parents—the image of the mother in the inner sanctum, not open to the public, was that of his real mother, not

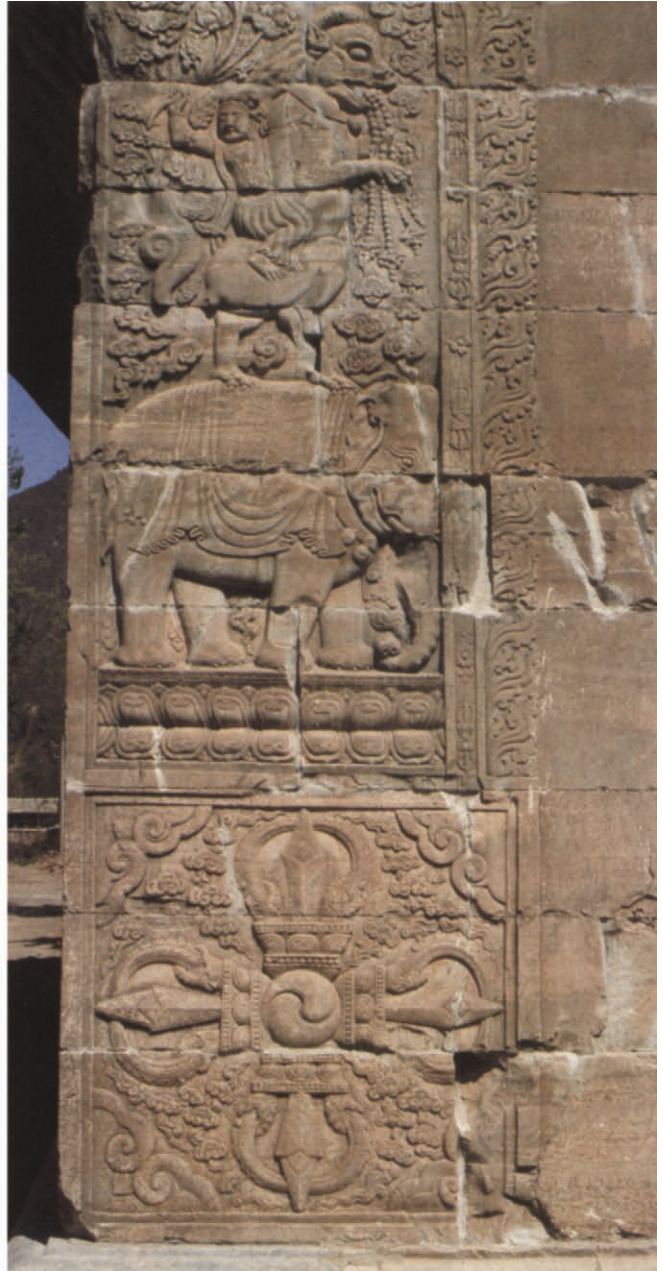
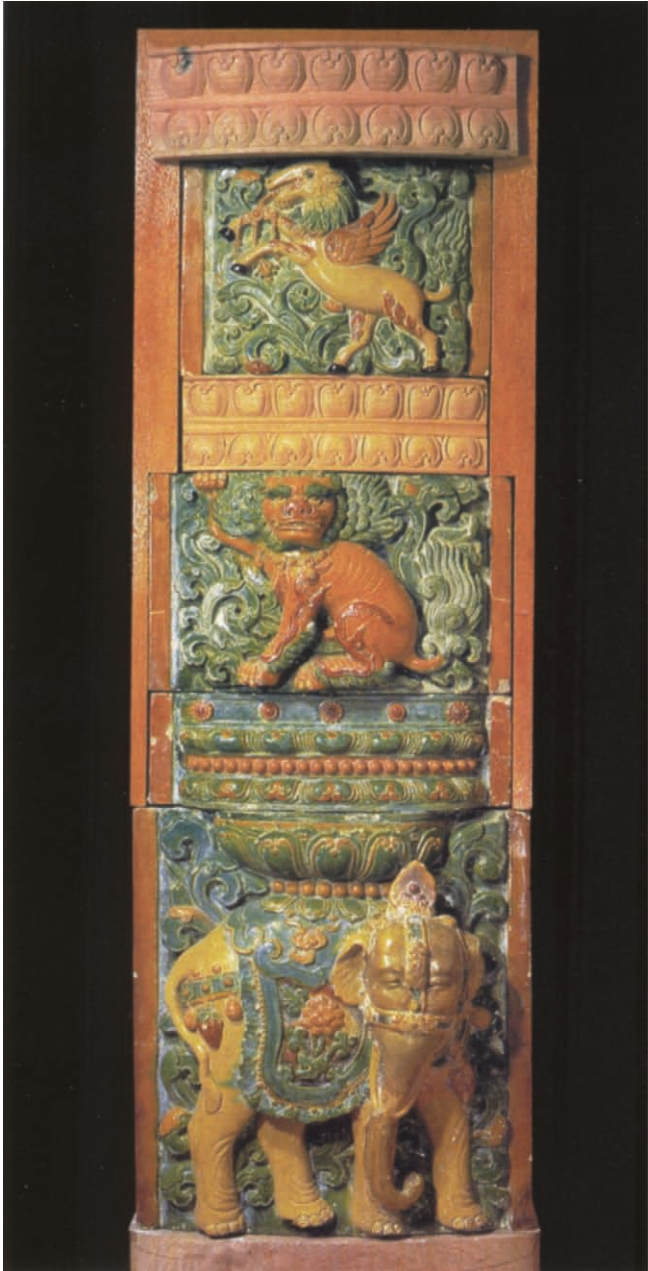




Figure 6  
Platter. Yuan dynasty, 14th  
century. Carved red lacquer.  
Diameter 21 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (55.6 cm). The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
Promised Gift of Florence and  
Herbert Irving (L.1996.47.14)

his official one. The temple was particularly renowned for its nine-story pagoda, rising to some 260 feet, surfaced with colorful glazed ceramic tiles. Known to early European visitors as one of the wonders of the world (fig. 3), it unfortunately was destroyed in 1856 during the Taiping Rebellion. Tiles recovered from the kilns that produced the ceramic building materials have enabled archaeologists working in Nanjing to reconstruct part of a door frame (fig. 4), the iconography of which replicates that of the great ceremonial gate, the Juyongguan, outside Beijing, built about 1343 by the last Mongol emperor of China (fig. 5; see also figs. 12, 13). The tiles from the pagoda and the gilt bronze Buddha in this exhibition (pl. 24) are evidence of the continuation of Yuan Buddhist practices and art into the Yongle reign.

One reason for the tardy completion of Bao'en Temple may have been that many of the workmen at the imperial kilns in Nanjing were taken to Beijing to produce ceramic building materials for the new palaces and ceremonial altars. Nevertheless, the Nanjing kilns continued production for the duration of the Ming dynasty, partly to produce spare parts for the Bao'en Temple and other buildings of the former imperial palace.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Yongle Style*

While Tibetan Buddhist images and symbols pervade the imperial arts of Yongle, and industrial arts outside the court show Islamic influence, other aspects of the arts of

Figure 7  
Platter. Yuan dynasty, ca. mid-  
14th century. Porcelain painted  
in underglaze cobalt blue.  
Diameter 15¾ in. (40 cm). The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
Gift of Stanley Herzman, in  
memory of Adele Herzman,  
1991 (1991.253.35)



Yongle represent a return to what may be called the native tradition. An example is carved lacquer. The major development in the art of carved lacquer in the fourteenth century, before Yongle, was the three-dimensional quality of the relief decoration, most noticeable in the treatment of garden rocks and floral elements (fig. 6). As demonstrated by objects in this exhibition and discussed in Denise Leidy's essay, there was a gradual return during the early fifteenth century to the previous convention, characteristic of late Song and early Yuan carved lacquers, namely, a flat surface on the relief. A similar development took place in the surface decoration of ceramics. The high relief of Yuan porcelain, sometimes suggesting openwork, has all but disappeared in the Yongle reign and been replaced by finely incised lines on the clay body under the glaze, known as *anhua* decoration (pls. 4–6).

Another change that occurred in the early fifteenth century was in the composition of pictorial decoration on porcelain, especially on large surfaces. The jumbled assemblage of disparate elements seen on some large blue-and-white dishes of the fourteenth century (fig. 7) is reduced to an orderly pattern composed of a single motif—for example a single type of flower as seen in the center of the large platter (pl. 1).

Thus, along with the many external influences on the religious and decorative arts of China during the Yongle reign, there was an inexorable movement back to the

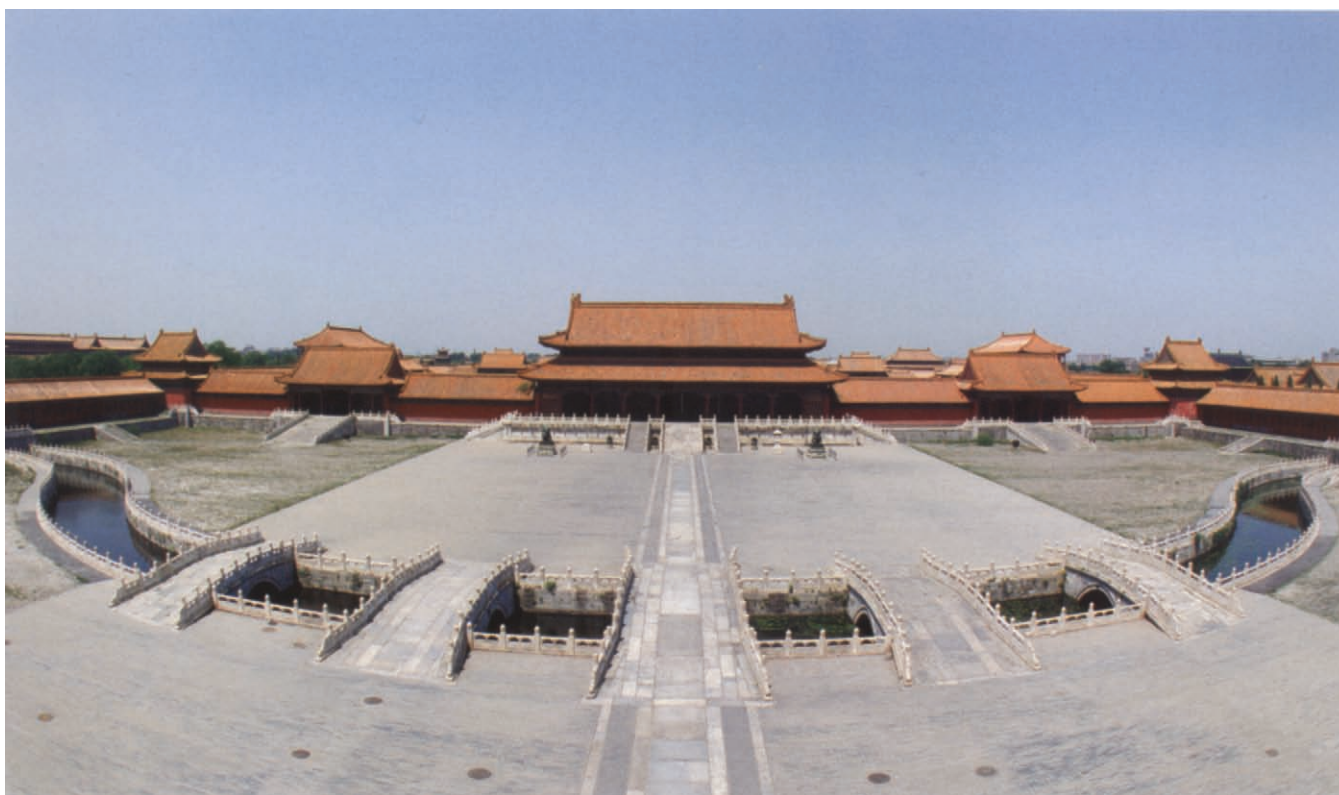


Figure 8  
Courtyard of *Taihe dian*.  
Forbidden City, Beijing

ancient tradition of two-dimensional representation and single-subject decoration, a process that was completed in the reign of Xuande. Maritime trade continued for the rest of the Ming dynasty, and other shapes and motifs would make their appearance in the decorative arts, particularly in trade goods, but there would be no radical change in artistic style, as had happened at the beginning of the fourteenth century under Mongol sovereignty and during the early fifteenth century after the restoration of Chinese rule.

In any consideration of Yongle style, the matter of scale must be taken into account. Every project that the emperor instigated—whether a building, a bell, a naval fleet, the compilation of an encyclopedia—was on a scale larger than anything undertaken for centuries after him and, indeed, rarely seen in all of Chinese history. He commanded one of the most artistically accomplished work forces in Chinese history, and the buildings erected for him were not only on a large scale, but were also perfectly scaled. One has only to stand in the first courtyard of the Forbidden City to sense this (fig. 8). The works of art in this exhibition, all of high artistic worth, represent the legacy on a smaller scale of the extraordinary reign of one of the most powerful and complex personalities history has ever known.

## Notes

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12. Quan Jinyun, "A Study into the Cause of the Making of the Yongle Bell—A Buddhist Bell Cast for Confession" (in Chinese), in *Ancient Bells* (Gem of Beijing Cultural Relics Series) (Beijing: Beijing Publishing House, 1999).
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## *Decorative Arts*

China's multifaceted ties with other cultures, which are often reflected in the decorative arts, intensified at the beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), in the early fifteenth century. Porcelains and other luxuries produced during the reign of the Yongle emperor (r. 1403–24) continued the synthesis of regional Chinese traditions begun under the Mongol Yuan dynasty, which had unified China for the first time since the mid-tenth century.<sup>1</sup> Khubilai Khan (1215–1294) and his kin ruled over an enormous empire encompassing Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Tibet, and China. This vast realm was ruled from the capital at Dadu, which was established in 1272, before the conquest of the Southern Song and the unification of China. The arts flourished under the “pax mongolica,” and craftsmen from throughout the realm, brought to the imperial workshops in Dadu, introduced new techniques, shapes, and themes. The extensive trade of the Yuan period, which was briefly interrupted by the native rebellions that led to the formation of the Ming dynasty, resumed during the reign of the Yongle emperor, who maintained extensive diplomatic and economic contacts with other major powers: for instance, the Mamluks (1250–1517), based in Egypt and Syria, the Timurids (1389–1501) in Afghanistan and Iran, and the Ashikaga shogunate in Japan (1392–1573).

Figure 9  
Procession through the desert.  
Samarkand or Tabriz, late 14th–  
15th century. Pigment on paper,  
mounted in an album.  $9\frac{7}{8} \times$   
 $18\frac{7}{8}$  in. (25 × 48 cm). Topkapi  
Saray H.1253, fol. 130r

### *Ceramics*

Due in part to their durability, Chinese porcelains are found in substantial numbers throughout the world, attesting to their longstanding importance as trade goods. Evidence for trade is found as early as the ninth century, and, by the twelfth century, ceramics were actively exported to Southeast Asia, Korea and Japan, and Egypt and other centers in the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> Trade in luxury goods was an important aspect of the seven extraordinary maritime voyages undertaken by Zheng He (1371–1435), six of which were sponsored by the Yongle emperor. For example, a fleet of 317 ships with 27,870 men traveled to Java, Ceylon, and the western part of India between 1405 and 1407, while another, voyaging between 1417 and 1419, reached East Africa. These voyages brought porcelains, silks, and other goods to exchange for spices and such rare items as ivory, rhinoceros horn, and tortoiseshell. In addition, overland trade, which included Chinese porcelain (fig. 9)<sup>3</sup> and Islamic metalwork, along with commodities like tea and horses, continued between China and polities in Central Asia, especially the Timurids. As a result of this maritime and overland trade, numerous porcelains dating from the second half of the fourteenth century and the first decades of the fifteenth are preserved in the collection of the Ardebil Shrine in Iran, which was assembled in 1611, and that of the Topkapi Saray Museum in Turkey.<sup>4</sup> Chinese porcelains were also collected in India.<sup>5</sup>



The complex of kilns in the city of Jingdezhen in Jiangxi Province, long noted for the production of various types of ceramics, supplied a substantial percentage of trade ceramics in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century. Jingdezhen also played a seminal role in the creation of porcelains painted with cobalt blue under the glaze, which developed around 1325 and soon became the most treasured wares in world history.<sup>6</sup> Although cobalt blue was known earlier, its extensive use in the mid-fourteenth century in China is generally attributed to its importation from Iran, where it was often used to color glazes. It is thought that merchants brought the cobalt to China in order to requisition wares made to the taste of Middle Eastern customers, and that the large scale of the earliest examples of porcelain painted with cobalt reflects their intended destinations. Recent archaeological discoveries, however, have yielded blue-and-white wares from the Yuan capital at Dadu, as well as from centers to the north, such as Kharakhoto.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, studies in the culinary habits of the Mongols show that cuisine changed as their empire expanded to include Central Asia and Iran. Like their counterparts in the Middle East, the Mongols probably also used large platters and other communal vessels while dining. It seems likely, therefore, that the first blue-and-white wares were produced for domestic use as well as for export.<sup>8</sup>

Extensive production of imperial wares at Jingdezhen can be traced to 1278 when the Fouliang Porcelain Bureau was established to produce wares for the court. The



Plate 1

Platter. China, Ming dynasty, early 15th century. Porcelain painted in underglaze cobalt blue. Diameter  $16\frac{7}{8}$  in. (42.9 cm). Peabody Essex Museum. Gift of the Estate of Janet P. Elliot (E74098)

Plate 2

Basin. China, Ming dynasty, probably Yongle period (1403–24). Porcelain painted in underglaze cobalt blue. Diameter  $13\frac{3}{4}$  in. (34.9 cm). Anonymous Loan



Figure 10

Basin. Egypt, Mamluk dynasty, late 13th–early 14th century. Brass engraved and inlaid with silver and bitumen. Diameter  $18\frac{1}{2}$  in. (46.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bequest of Edward C. Moore, 1891 (91.1.589)





bureau was expanded in 1295 and again in 1324, when administration of Jingdezhen was placed under the control of the governor of the province. Jingdezhen fell under rebel control in 1325, prior to the establishment of the Ming dynasty, and was once again placed under the supervision of the court in 1369 during the reign of the emperor Hóngwu (1368–98). Jingdezhen’s position as the supplier of imperial ceramics continued, with minor interruptions, from the early fifteenth century into the early twentieth.

Such features as the slight dimpling in the glaze, known as “orange peel,” and the splotching of the cobalt blue, which is often called “the heap and piled” effect, characterize porcelain in the early fifteenth century, such as a platter with a scalloped rim (pl. 1). The elegance of the brushwork depicting the tree peonies in the center and the clarity of the composition are also typical and help to differentiate the platter from those made in the mid- to late fourteenth century. Two large peony blossoms and smaller buds flow from a single stem that begins at the lower edge of the interior. Sprays of different types of flowers decorate the ribbed cavetto, while a botanical scroll fills the rim.

Similar blossoms fill the exterior of a basin (pl. 2) that derives its shape from the art of the Mamluk period, when magnificent examples were produced in both metal (fig. 10) and glass.<sup>9</sup> Rolling waves interspersed with whirlpools decorate the upper rim

Plate 3  
Flask. China, Ming dynasty,  
Yongle period (1403–24).  
Porcelain painted in underglaze  
cobalt blue. Height 12¼ in.  
(31.1 cm). The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art. Gift of  
Stanley Herzman, in memory  
of Adele Herzman, 1991  
(1991.253.37)



of the basin, and a floral scroll fills the interior sides (for a view of rim and interior, see p. 30).<sup>10</sup> The waves and whirlpools are a standard motif in the decoration of blue-and-white wares. A six-pointed design, possibly a star, which fills the interior base, reflects the widespread use of such motifs throughout the Middle East.<sup>11</sup> The Mamluk basins were used for ablutions that were part of religious and courtly ceremonies. It is not clear why porcelain examples were produced in China in the early fifteenth century. They may have been made as gifts or trade items or for use by Muslims, such as Zheng He, who worked at the court or in various capacities throughout China. Such basins may also have been intended to illustrate the cosmopolitan taste of the court and its contacts with, and understanding of, other parts of the world.

An eight-pointed motif, articulated with palmettes, fills the front and back of a flask (pl. 3) that also derives its shape from works produced during the Mamluk period.<sup>12</sup> Flasks of this shape have a long history in the Middle East. Produced in some numbers in Syria, they were used both as pilgrims' flasks and as canteens for the military.<sup>13</sup> As with the basins, they most likely served a variety of functions in China. Precise dating of porcelains produced in the early fifteenth century is challenging since these wares rarely have the reign marks that became common by mid-century. Excavations from different strata at Jingdezhen, however, have provided information that is helpful in distinguishing some types of pieces produced during



Plate 4  
Flask. China, Ming dynasty,  
Yongle period (1403–24).  
Porcelain with incised design  
(*anhua*) under the glaze.  
Height 12½ in. (31.8 cm).  
Asia Society, New York. Mr.  
and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller  
3rd Collection (1979.156)

Yongle's reign from those made slightly later. For instance, evidence for dating this flask to the Yongle period is provided by another flask, from the Yongle stratum, that also exhibits a small foot ring and the same amount of white space encircling the primary motif. In contrast, a Xuande-period example, also found at Jingdezhen, has less open space, larger decoration, and a more pronounced foot ring.<sup>14</sup>

A flask of the same shape (pl. 4) with comparable decoration and a small foot ring can also be dated to the Yongle period, but its body is covered with a thin white glaze, a popular ceramic style at the time. The incised decoration, which is barely visible, shows another eight-pointed design, interspersed with palmettes, on the body of the flask. Such decoration is known as *anhua*, or hidden decoration. Designs made in this fashion were reserved for pieces used by the emperor or at the court, and are often found in ceramics made during the rule of Yongle. White wares represent an advance in porcelain technology, with their sugary, slightly matte appearance resulting from the use of clay with a high aluminum content, a low lime content in the glaze, and a high firing temperature. Examples dating to the early fifteenth century are often known as "sweet white wares," or *tianbai*.

White wares were also produced in China in the late fourteenth century and used in some number at the Korean court in the mid-fifteenth century. The prominence of such wares in Korea is generally thought to reflect the Confucian—and therefore





Plate 5

Ewer in the shape of a monk's cap. China, Ming dynasty, probably Yongle period (1403–24). Porcelain with incised decoration (*anhua*) under the glaze. Height 7¾ in. (19.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Stanley Herzman, in memory of Adele Herzman, 1991 (1991.253.36)

Plate 6

Stem cup. China, Ming dynasty, Xuande period (1426–35). Incised *Xuande nian zhi* (made in the Xuande era). Porcelain with underglaze cobalt blue and incised decoration (*anhua*). Diameter 6⅞ in. (16.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Mrs. Stanley Herzman, 1984 (1984.483.1)



properly subdued—taste of the court there. Questions remain, however, regarding Yongle's preference for white wares.<sup>15</sup> White is the color of mourning and filial piety in China, and it has been suggested that Yongle's choice of white was politically motivated. The emperor's public mourning of his parents was intended in part to mitigate negative reactions to his usurpation of his nephew's throne. In addition, in Buddhist circles white is a symbol of purity associated with the transcendent Buddhas Vairochana and Akshobhya, and the prominence of white ware may be another example of the Buddhist overtones often found in the art of the Yongle period.

Nearly fifty-five examples of the distinctive monk's cap ewer (pl. 5) were unearthed in the Yongle strata at Jingdezhen.<sup>16</sup> As the name suggests, the vessels, most likely used for pouring ablutions of some sort, were based on the headgear worn by Buddhist monks in Tibet. Hidden decoration of a scrolling lotus is barely visible on the top part of the vessel, while a sacred invocation to the protective goddess Mahashri decorates the body. The same invocation is written in cobalt blue on the exterior of a large stem cup (pl. 6)<sup>17</sup> and incised using the *anhua* technique in the interior just below the rim. A four-character mark, written in an archaic script and reading *Xuande nian zhi* (made in the Xuande era), is incised in the bottom of the cup.<sup>18</sup> Such marks in the archaic script also appear on cups of the same shape dating to the Yongle period, suggesting that the cups were particularly treasured in the early

Plate 7  
Traveling box. China, Ming  
dynasty, early 15th century.  
Leather, wood, iron, gold and  
pigments. Height 21 in. (53.3  
cm). The Metropolitan Museum  
of Art. Purchase. Rogers and  
Fletcher Funds, and Henry G.  
Keasby Bequest, 1999 (1999.61)

fifteenth century. Cups in this shape were first produced during the Yuan dynasty, and made in porcelain and jade in the early Ming. A number of examples are preserved in Tibet, where they were sent as gifts. At least one has an elaborate stand made of gilded silver.<sup>19</sup> In both China and Tibet, the stem cups may have been placed on altars to hold an offering such as water, butter, or flowers.

#### *Leather, Cloisonné, and Ivory*

Imagery used in or alluding to Tibetan practices is found in many different types of objects produced at the court during the Yongle period and reflects the emperor's personal interest in and practice of this tradition of Buddhism. A striking wood and leather carrying case (pl. 7), painted with pigments, is decorated with scrolls of lotuses with spiky blossoms, a motif that can be traced back to the Yuan period and ultimately to Nepal.<sup>20</sup> The scroll rises from a vase decorated with a tied scarf (see detail, p. 24), an auspicious Indian motif symbolic of the desire for plenty. Small lotuses are tooled onto the clasps on the sides and tops of the case. It may have been made as a gift for one of the many Tibetan dignitaries who visited the court and inevitably returned home with presents that included ceramics, paintings, and textiles.<sup>21</sup> Lotuses with spiky blossoms also decorate the lock on the case. The flowers





Plate 8  
Dish. China, Ming dynasty,  
early 15th century. Cloisonné.  
Diameter 6 in. (15.2 cm). The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
Purchase, Florence and Herbert  
Irving Gift, 1993 (1993.338)

Plate 9  
Base for a mandala. China,  
Ming dynasty, early 15th  
century. Cloisonné. Diameter  
13½ in. (34.3 cm). The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
Purchase, Florence and Herbert  
Irving Gift, 1992 (1992.331)

were created by inlaying small wires of gold and silver into an iron base, a technique known as damascening, which reached China, probably from the Middle East, during the Yuan dynasty.

Although no examples in this technique are preserved from the fourteenth century, cloisonné was also imported to China during the Yuan dynasty, probably via the southwestern province of Yunnan, which, under the control of a Muslim governor, received an influx of people from Central Asia. Cloisonné is the technique of creating designs on metal vessels with colored-glass paste placed within an enclosure of copper or bronze wires that have been bent into the desired pattern. Known as *cloissons* (French for “partitions”), the enclosures are generally either soldered or pasted onto the metal body. The glass paste, or enamel, is colored with metallic oxide and painted into the contained areas of the design. The decoration of spiky, scrolling lotus blossoms on a small dish (pl. 8) is typical of the early fifteenth century. The same motif is found on a large base for a mandala (pl. 9) decorated with auspicious emblems, many Buddhist, on the sides. Mandalas are cosmic diagrams in which a Buddhist deity functions as the center of a self-created universe. The base was a support for a three-dimensional mandala that was formed by placing grains in concentrically smaller rings on the surface.







Plate 10  
Seal with mantra in Vartu script. China, Ming dynasty, probably Yongle period (1403–24). Ivory and iron inlaid with gold. Height 2 in. (5.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Florence and Herbert Irving Gift, 1993 (1993.457)

Plate 11  
Square seal with knob in the shape of a wheel. China, Ming dynasty, Yongle period, dated 1424. Ivory. Height 2¾ in. (6.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Harrison Cady Bequest, by exchange, and Erich O. Grunebaum Bequest, 1994 (1994.56)

Two rare ivory seals further illustrate the strong Buddhist interests of the court. Usually made of stone, seals played a critical role in Chinese culture. They were used both to legitimize imperial and court documents and to mark authorship, ownership, and appreciation on paintings and other works of art. Seals were often awarded to visiting dignitaries in recognition of their official ties to China and as an act of respect. Seals with Buddhist content, made of rare and imported materials, such as ivory, reflect the importance of the practice of the religion during the reign of the Yongle emperor. An undated example (pl. 10) is capped with a flaming pearl, one of the eight auspicious emblems of Buddhism. The base is decorated with a delicate botanical scroll inlaid in gold on iron. A small turquoise bead inlaid on one side helps orient the mantra “*a-ra-pa-ca-na*,” which is found on the seal. Written in the Vartu script, which was adapted for cursive Sanskrit by Tibetan monks, the mantra is dedicated to Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, who played an important role in devotion at the court. A Chinese-language inscription on the top of the second seal (pl. 11), capped with a Buddhist wheel, dates it to 1424 and identifies it as a gift made for a Tibetan lama named Yashizangbu, presumably the Chinese transliteration of a Tibetan name, suggesting that this piece was made as a gift for a visiting monk. The Chinese characters on the base read *jing xie jie lu*, or study the law (in this case, the dharma or Buddhism) with forbearance.



Plate 12  
Flywhisk. China, Ming dynasty,  
15th century. Ivory with tin  
beads and palm leaf fibers.  
Length 35 in. (88.9 cm). The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
Purchase, The Vincent Astor  
Foundation Gift, 2004 (2004.5)

Detail of pl. 12





Plate 13  
Section of a clapper. China,  
Ming dynasty, early 15th  
century. Ivory. Length  $7\frac{3}{8}$  in.  
(18.7 cm). The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art. Purchase,  
Friends of Asian Art Gifts,  
2003 (2003.166)

Luxury goods for use in elite circles were also made in ivory, often imported from South Asia and Africa, in the early fifteenth century. Although flywhisks are often depicted in paintings and the decorative arts, few examples of the object are extant. An unusual piece (pl. 12) has a hexagonal ivory handle decorated with two rows of lotus petals that are divided by pearl borders. A sinuous dragon chasing a pearl made of tin decorates the macramé ferrule. The trefoil pattern found on the handle of the flywhisk also fills the bottom of one side of a clapper (pl. 13), while the spiky lotus scrolls that are ubiquitous in the early fifteenth century decorate the body of the musical instrument. Both the handle of the flywhisk and the section of the clapper appear to have been tinted red. The mention of red ivory clappers in the sixteenth-century novel *Jin ping mei* suggests that the coloring of ivory objects may have been prevalent in the early Ming.

### *Lacquer*

Lacquer is the resin of the lac tree, and objects made using this material generally have a substructure of wood or some other material, coated with multiple layers that have been colored, usually red or black. Examples produced in the early part of the fifteenth century continue the refinement of shapes and motifs of the Southern



Song (1127–1279), which were also popular during the Yuan. Unlike ceramics, metalwork, or ivory, however, lacquer shows no influence from other cultures.<sup>22</sup> It is unclear why this medium does not share the interest in foreign shapes and themes found in other media in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century. It may be worth noting that lacquer is distinctively East Asian, unlike metalworking or textiles, which were known by both native and foreign artists working at the court. Presumably no foreign-trained artists worked in the medium, thereby limiting the introduction of new shapes and themes into this artistic tradition.

Although lacquer goods also played a role in the international trade of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, no examples are preserved in the Middle East, suggesting that this material, unlike porcelain, was not as treasured there. Japan, on the other hand, plays as important a role in the study of Chinese lacquer as do the collections preserved in Iran and Turkey for the study of porcelains. Examples of all of the major types of lacquers produced in China from the thirteenth to the early fifteenth century, one of the great periods in the history of the material, are preserved in Japan. These include pieces inlaid with mother-of-pearl, with carved decoration, or inlaid with powdered gold or gold foil. Buddhist monks of both nationalities, who often traveled between the two countries, were largely responsible for bringing Chinese lacquers to Japan in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, despite the

Plate 14  
Tray. China, Ming dynasty, early  
15th century. Black lacquer  
inlaid with mother-of-pearl.  
24<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (61.9 × 29.8 cm).  
The Metropolitan Museum  
of Art. Lent by Florence and  
Herbert Irving (L.1996.47.39)

Detail of pl. 14



lack of official ties in that period. Many important examples are preserved in temple collections; some were used in the Japanese tea ceremony.<sup>23</sup> One of the most useful documents for the study of lacquerware is a list, with dimensions and descriptions of decorations, of fifty-eight items that were gifts from the Chinese court to the Japanese shogunate late in 1403, the first year of the reign of Yongle.<sup>24</sup> Additional gifts are recorded in 1406 and in 1407, when the emperor rewarded the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1368–1408) for his help in containing the pirates that plagued exchanges between China and Japan.

Mother-of-pearl as inlay on a lacquer base dates to the Tang dynasty (618–907), but its use did not become common until the twelfth century, when a highly refined technique was developed in the Hangzhou region in the south, long noted for the production of this material. Shades of green and red in the depiction of the flowering plum tree, which fills a rectangular tray (pl. 14), indicate that the inlay was of *haliotis* shell, first used in the twelfth century. The skillful placement of small pieces of shell to provide different effects is evident in the distinction between the gnarly trunk of the tree and the flat surface of the rocks (see detail, above). The delicate diaper pattern along the rim and the evenly spaced chrysanthemum blossoms on the border are standard in the art of the late fourteenth century. The dramatic sweep of the trunk of the flowering plum, however, suggests a date in the early fifteenth century. The plum,

Plate 15  
Dish. China, Ming dynasty,  
early 15th century. Inscribed  
*da Ming Yongle nian zhi*  
(made in the Yongle era of  
the great Ming). Carved red  
lacquer. Diameter 12¾ in.  
(32.4 cm). The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art. Promised Gift  
of Florence and Herbert Irving  
(L.1996.47.12)



Figure 11  
 Dish, China, Yuan to early  
 Ming period, mid- to late 14th  
 century. Carved red lacquer.  
 Diameter 12¾ in. (32.4 cm). The  
 Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
 Promised Gift of Florence and  
 Herbert Irving (L.1992.62.12)



Inscription on base of dish,  
 pl. 15

the two sparrows nestled in its branches, and the delicate bamboo growing at the foot are symbolic of the end of winter and the arrival of spring. Some of the details in the treatment of the blossoms can be traced to the *Meihua xishen pu* (Manual of Plum Blossom Likeness), a mid-thirteenth-century book of woodblock prints that had a profound impact on the decorative arts of the fourteenth and early fifteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

The Japanese documents mentioned earlier indicate that carved red lacquer was favored at the Chinese court in the early fifteenth century. The theme of two birds against a background of flowers was popular from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, and at least twenty examples are known.<sup>26</sup> A peacock and a peahen fly amidst lush tree peonies on a densely carved dish (pl. 15), while the extravagant tail of the male bird is skillfully carved to fit into the round shape. A floral scroll fills the dish's outer edges, and a six-character mark, *da Ming Yongle nian zhi* (made in the Yongle era of the great Ming), is incised in the *kaishu*, or clerical, script on the base (see detail at left). Such marks are known on several early-fifteenth-century carved lacquers, and dispute continues regarding their authenticity. The sketchiness of the incised marks, particularly when compared to the carved marks found later, raises questions, as does their existence on the lacquer objects sent to Japan in 1403. It is often suggested that, because the production of lacquerware is time-consuming, the marks were hastily added to pieces that had been made prior to the Yongle period





Plate 16  
Covered box. China, Ming dynasty, Yongle period (1403–24). Inscribed *da Ming Yongle nian zhi* (made in the Yongle era of the great Ming). Carved red lacquer. Diameter 6¼ in. (15.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Arthur M. Sackler Gift, 1974 (1974.269a,b)

Top view of box, pl. 16

in order to send gifts quickly to Japan. The addition of Xuande-period marks over some of those incised with the Yongle name further complicates the issue.<sup>27</sup>

A comparison with a magnificent dish from the mid- to late fourteenth century (fig. 11) showing two birds set against a background of hollyhocks supports the early-fifteenth-century date for the dish with the peacocks and tree peonies. The fourteenth-century piece exhibits more space in the background and a greater sense of depth in the treatment of the leaves, which often overlap one another. Variations in the positions of the wings of the birds give a sense of movement to the earlier piece that is not found in the later example. A parallel treatment of the tree peonies on the cover of a small box (see top view at right) indicates a date in the early years of the fifteenth century. Here, too, the lush blossoms are placed frontally, with a slight curling of selected petals to suggest depth, but no real overlapping of shapes. The same treatment of flowers and leaves is found on the sides of the box (see pl. 16, above), which are carved with a scroll containing four blossoms. Each flower is associated with a season: tree peonies symbolize spring, pomegranates evoke summer, chrysanthemums represent autumn, and camellias signify winter.

The sides of another box are decorated with the same flowers. On the cover (pl. 17) is a landscape featuring two men on a balcony, seated on stools to either side of an incense burner. One man is playing the zither, while the other listens, and three





Plate 17  
Circular box (top view). China,  
Ming dynasty, Yongle period  
(1403–24). Inscribed *da Ming  
Yongle nian zhi* (made in the  
Yongle era of the great Ming).  
Carved red lacquer. Diameter  
8¾ in. (22.1 cm). The Metro-  
politan Museum of Art. Lent  
by Florence and Herbert Irving  
(L.1992.62.13)

Detail of pl. 17



attendants, two on the balcony, one inside a pavilion, stand ready to assist them. The rocks twisting to either side of the scene suggest a remote location, thus linking the scene to those of the eremitic scholars often found in monochromatic landscape paintings. The use of varying geometric patterns to represent the balcony floor, water, and sky (see detail, above) first appeared in the late fourteenth century and continued in the early fifteenth.

Similar scenes of isolated environments with rocks and trees are also depicted on a large lobed platter (pl. 18) and a smaller lozenge-shaped dish (pl. 19). Once again, the primary figures occupy the balconies of pavilions, and different geometric patterns are used to distinguish the floor of the balcony, the water, and the sky in the background. Pictured sitting on mats in the center of the large plate are two gentlemen, one holding a staff and the other with his hands hidden in a gesture of respect. They are accompanied by three attendants and a crane, while another crane flies overhead. Both the cranes and the pine tree in the background are symbols of longevity, and the scene has Daoist overtones of a teacher instructing a student in practices that lead to a state of transcendence or to a more mundane goal such as immortality. In the center of the smaller dish is a scholar with a staff who walks with a young attendant carrying a zither. The diaper pattern on the rim of the smaller piece and the overlapping of pictorial elements on both lacquers to create an illusion of



Plate 18

Platter. China, Ming dynasty, early 15th century. Inscribed *da Ming Yongle nian zhi* (made in the Yongle era of the great Ming). Carved lacquer. Diameter 13 $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (34.6 cm). Asia Society, New York. Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection (1979.122)

Plate 19

Dish. China, Ming dynasty, early 15th century. Carved red lacquer. Length 7 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (20.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Lent by Florence and Herbert Irving (L.1996.47.15)





Plate 20  
Stand for a cup. China, Ming dynasty, Yongle period (1403–24). Inscribed *da Ming Yongle nian zhi* (made in the Yongle era of the great Ming). Carved red lacquer. Diameter 8¾ in. (22.1 cm). Promised Gift of Florence and Herbert Irving (L.1996.47.18)

Plate 21  
Sutra box. China, Ming dynasty, Yongle period (1403–24). Red lacquer with engraved gold decoration. Length 16 in. (40.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Sir Joseph Hotung and The Vincent Astor Foundation Gifts, 2001 (2001.584a–c)

recession—seen for example, in the treatment of the buildings and their interiors—is also typical of the early fifteenth century. The lack of depth in these scenes parallels the frontal treatment of blossoms on the works discussed above, which have floral motifs, or flowers and birds, as the primary decoration.

The phoenixes and spiky lotuses decorating a stand for a cup (pl. 20) help place it within a group of magnificent pieces produced at the court during the last years of the Yongle period and the early part of Xuande’s reign. This group, which is characterized by the use of the phoenix and the dragon as imperial motifs, dense floral backgrounds, and precisely rendered details, includes several such stands as well as pieces of furniture.<sup>28</sup> The phoenixes belong to two different species. The one with the fanned-out plummage is of the male *luan* type, while the bird with the foliated tail is the female *fenghuang*.

Five-clawed dragons, which became a symbol of imperial power during the Ming, stride among clouds on the top and sides of a box that once held a Buddhist sutra (pl. 21). The sutra would have been written on a Chinese-style handscroll that was rolled up and stored in the box. The box retains the original metal fittings, which include an elegant lock that is inlaid with flowers (similar to those shown on the lock for the traveling box discussed above, pl. 7) and with a minuscule five-clawed dragon. The flowing mane and beard, the tufts of hair at the joints, the unevenly placed eyes, the prominent snout, and the long whiskers of the dragon have parallels on works in



porcelain and other material, helping to date the box to the early fifteenth century. The articulation of different parts of the box, seen, for example, in the double lines used to define the edges of the sides and cover, is also typical of the period, as is the careful placement of the scrolling clouds and leaves.

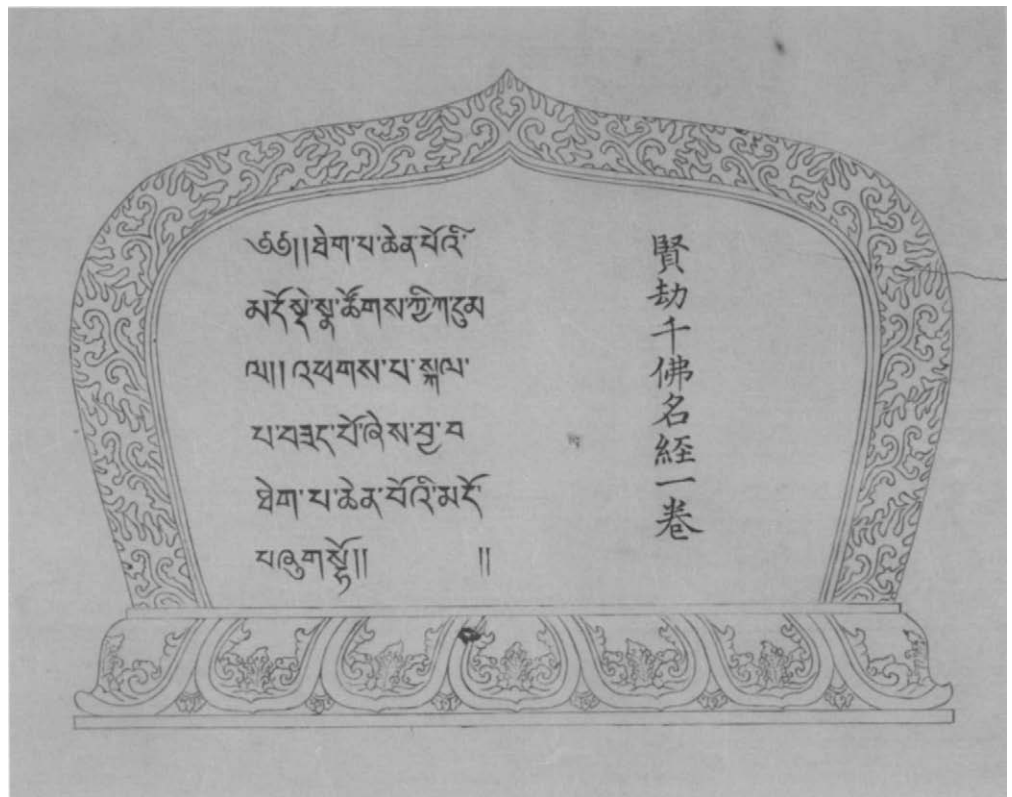
The box is decorated using the *qiangjin* technique, which was first developed in the Song period. In this technique, fine lines are incised into a surface, and gold foil or powdered gold is pressed into the grooves. Examples using this technique are preserved in Japan, but, until the discovery of a series of manuscript covers in Tibet, only a few others were known from the early fifteenth century. These covers were made for the edition of the Tibetan canon, or Kanjur, that was produced in Beijing on the order of the Yongle emperor in 1410.<sup>29</sup> There are 108 volumes in the compilation, and the names of the texts are inscribed in both Chinese and Tibetan (for an example, see p. 57) on the back of the manuscript covers. The set of covers made for the Sutra of the Good Aeon (*Bhadrakalpika Sutra*), a long text that lists the thousand Buddhas of the current world era, has decoration that is identical to that of the other volumes. The central motif on both the top and bottom cover of this set (pl. 22) is the triple flaming jewel, or *triratna*, symbolic of the treasures of Buddhism: the Buddha, his teachings, and the monastic community. Each jewel is flanked by four of the Eight Treasures. Those on the top board are the wheel, the Buddhist banner, the double





Plate 22  
 Manuscript covers. China,  
 Yongle period, ca. 1410. Red  
 lacquer with engraved gold  
 decoration. 28½ × 10½ in.  
 (72.4 × 26.7 cm). The Metro-  
 politan Museum of Art. Lent  
 by Florence and Herbert Irving  
 (L.1996.47.35a,b)

Inscription on back of one of  
 the manuscript covers, pl. 22



fish, and the precious vase. The parasol, the conch, the lotus flower, and the endless knot decorate the bottom board. An interlaced floral scroll frames the jewels and the treasures, while lotus petals enhanced with a trefoil design decorate the edges of the covers.

As discussed in the following essay, articulated lotus petals and lotuses with spiky blossoms are also found in Buddhist sculptures produced in the early fifteenth century. During the Yongle period, decorated petals, a motif deriving from Nepali traditions, are blended with longstanding Chinese themes, as well as with Middle Eastern designs and shapes, to create a vibrant synthesis, in which a Nepali theme can decorate an indigenous form or a Chinese motif be found on a Middle Eastern shape. This masterful blending of foreign elements and Chinese taste remains a hallmark of ceramics, metalwork, and textiles, particularly those created for imperial use, from the fifteenth until the late eighteenth century.

## Notes

1. For an overview of ceramics and other decorative arts during the Ming, see James C.Y. Watt, "Official and Commercial Art," in Wen C. Fong and James C.Y. Watt, *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996), pp. 427–70.
2. As is discussed below, the shapes of metalwork and ceramics produced under the Mamluks had a profound impact on early-fifteenth-century Chinese ceramics. Unfortunately, since few Chinese pieces are preserved intact in Egypt, the importance of this part of the world in the study of Chinese porcelain is not well known. For an overview of excavations in Egypt, see Tsugio Mikami, "China and Egypt: Fustat," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 45 (1980–81): 67–89.
3. The album of paintings in which this illustration appears, made most likely in either Samarkand or Tabriz, is the subject of much scholarly debate. See Ernst J. Grube and Eleanor Sims, eds., *Between China and Iran: Paintings from Four Istanbul Albums* (London: Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1985).
4. John A. Pope, *Chinese Porcelains from the Ardebil Shrine* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 1956); Regina Krahl, with Nurdan Erbahar and John Ayers, *Chinese Ceramics in the Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul: A Complete Catalogue* (London: Sotheby's, 1986).
5. Ellen Smart, "Fourteenth Century Chinese Porcelains from a Tughlaq Palace in Delhi," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 41 (1975–77): 199–230.
6. For a recent overview, see John Carswell, *Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain around the World* (London: British Museum Press, 2000).
7. For pieces found in the north, see Adam T. Kessler, *Empires Beyond the Great Wall: The Heritage of Ghenghis Khan* (Los Angeles: Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 1993), figs. 89–93. For Dadu, see Li Zhiyan and Cheng Wen, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1989), p. 69.
8. Paul D. Buell, "Mongol Empire and Turkicization: The Evidence of Foodways," in *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy*, edited by Reuven Amitai-Press and David Morgan (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), pp. 220–23.
9. An early example of this type of basin, probably made in Iran or Afghanistan, was excavated from the eleventh-century tomb of the Chenguo princess of the Liao dynasty (907–1125) in northeast China. The tomb also contained several pieces of glass from the eastern reaches of the Islamic world, providing evidence of ties between China and the Middle East prior to their intensification in the fourteenth and early fifteenth century. See Neimenggu Zhizhiqu Wenwu Kaogusuo, ed., *Liao Chenguo Gongzhu mu* (The Liao dynasty tomb of the Chenguo princess) (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1993), p. 48, ill. 28 and pl. 111.
10. Regina Krahl, "Unequal Twins: A Yongle Blue and White Basin and Its Qianlong Counterpart," *Arts of Asia* 27 (Nov.–Dec. 1991): 125–26.
11. Ma Wenkuan, "Ming dai ciqu zhong isilan yinsu de gaocha" (A study of Islamic elements in Ming porcelain), *Kaogu Xuebao* 4 (1999): 437–58. An English translation of this article is available in *Chinese Archaeology and Art Digest* 3, no. 4 (2000): 7–38.
12. Esin Atil, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), p. 190, fig. 96.
13. At least one example is known from Afghanistan or Central Asia. See Johannes Kalter and Margareta Pavaloi, eds., *Uzbekistan: Heirs to the Silk Road* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), fig. 260.

14. Liu Xinyuan, "Imperial Export Porcelain from Late Yuan to Early Ming," *Oriental Art* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 48–54.
15. Sir John Addis, "Hung Wu and Yung Lo White," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 41 (1975–77): 35–58.
16. He Jinguan and Situ Yuanjie, *Jingdezhen Zhushan chutu Yongle Xuande guan yao ciqi zhan lan* (Imperial porcelain of the Yongle and Xuande periods excavated from the site of the Ming imperial factory at Jingdezhen) (Hong Kong: Urban Council, Hong Kong, and Jingdezhen Museum of Ceramic History, 1989), p. 21 (English translation, p. 62).
17. Concerning the invocation, see the discussion of pl. 33 in the "Textiles" section in the essay on Buddhist art.
18. I thank Ellen Howe of the Museum's Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation for her help in deciphering this mark, which is almost invisible.
19. *Xue yu cang zhen: Xizang wenwu jinghua* (Treasures from snow mountain: gems of Tibetan cultural relics) (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2001), fig. 97. For vessels in the same shape, see figs. 93, 96, and 98–100.
20. The Buddhist essay in this volume includes a discussion of Nepali influence.
21. See the Buddhist essay for a discussion of such gifts.
22. For the following discussion of lacquers, I am indebted to James C.Y. Watt, "Lacquer in China," in James C.Y. Watt and Barbara Brennan Ford, *East Asian Lacquer: The Florence and Herbert Irving Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991), pp. 15–39.
23. John Figgess, "Ming and Pre-Ming Lacquer in the Japanese Tea Ceremony," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 37 (1967–69): 37–51, with illustrations.
24. A good overview of the Japanese documentation is provided in Harry M. Garner, "The Export of Chinese Lacquer to Japan in the Yuan and Early Ming Dynasties," *Archives of Asian Art* 25 (1971–72): 7–28. See also *Chōshitsu-urushi no rerifu* (Carved lacquer) (Nagoya: Tokugawa Art Museum, and Tokyo: Nezu Institute of Fine Arts, 1984).
25. For an overview of the development of this theme, see Maggie Bickford, *Ink Plum: The Making of a Chinese Scholar-Painting Genre* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
26. Nishida Hiroko, "Choshikki no kachō monyō," in *Chōshitsu-urushi no rerifu*, pp. 214–20 (see n. 24 above).
27. Though Xuande-period marks over those incised with the Yongle name provide evidence for the use of earlier pieces during Xuande's reign, the stylistic similarities found in pieces with Yongle inscriptions suggest that they were made at the same time. Since it is unlikely that Yongle would use older examples of lacquer when recently made pieces were available, it seems reasonable to assume that lacquers inscribed with the name Yongle were produced in the first years of the fifteenth century and that they may represent works which were begun before he usurped the throne but were finished soon thereafter. For a recent discussion, see Lee King-tse and Hu Shih-chang, "Carved Lacquer of the Hongwu period," *Oriental Art* 47, no. 1 (2001): 10–20.
28. Fritz Low-Beer, "Chinese Lacquer of the Early 15th Century," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 20 (1950): 145–67.
29. Jiacao et al., "Lasa Xianzang de liangbu Yongle 'Ganzhuer'" (The two Yongle versions of the Kanjur extant in Lhasa), *Wenwu* 9 (1985): 85–88.



## *Buddhist Art*

Extraordinary sculptures and textiles representing Tibetan Buddhist divinities were produced in significant numbers during the Yongle period, as were the implements used in religious rituals. It seems likely that Zhu Di (1360–1424), who ruled as Chengzu, the Yongle emperor, was introduced to Tibetan Buddhism and initiated into its practices around 1380, when he was enfeoffed in Beijing, and that he continued his adherence during his lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Zhu Di's strong ties to the Mongol military elite who also practiced this type of Buddhism, as well as renewed contacts with religious and secular leaders in Tibet, further spurred the demand for works depicting Tibetan Buddhist religious imagery at the beginning of the fifteenth century. With the exception of the material produced during the reign of the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95), more representations of divinities associated with Tibetan practices are preserved from the reign of the Yongle emperor than from any other period in Chinese history.

Buddhist art produced during this reign illustrates a refinement and sinicization of a style of Buddhist imagery that had long and complicated roots. Both the style and imagery are preserved in paintings found at Dunhuang that date as early as the ninth century<sup>2</sup> as well as at sites associated with the Xixia kingdom (982–1227) in northwest China<sup>3</sup> and the Dali kingdom in the southwest (937–1252).<sup>4</sup> It was the Mongol conquest of China, however, in the thirteenth century, that spurred widespread acceptance of Tibetan thought and imagery.

Plate 23  
Mandala of Yamantaka–  
Vajrabhairava with imperial  
portraits. China, Yuan dynasty,  
ca. 1330–32. Silk tapestry (*kesi*).  
Warp 96<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (245.5 cm),  
weft 82<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (209 cm). The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
Lila Acheson Wallace Gift,  
1992 (1992.54)

The Mongols had long and complicated ties to both the Tangut rulers of the Xixia kingdom, which they conquered in 1227, and the Tibetans. In the early thirteenth century, Tibet was fragmented into various principalities, some under the control of powerful monasteries, some ruled by important families. Mongol control of Tibet began around 1240 when Koden, a grandson of Chinggis Khan (ca. 1162–1227), led a small force into the central regions, gaining control of the area and setting the stage for Mongol dominion in 1268.<sup>5</sup> Koden also persuaded (or coerced) the renowned Buddhist master Sakya Pandita (1182–1251) to come to his capital at Liangzhou in Gansu Province, presumably to help deepen his understanding of Buddhism, which would be adopted as the state religion by Khubilai Khan in 1268.

Two nephews, Phakpa (1235–1280) and his younger brother, accompanied Sakya Pandita to China. The former, who created a script for the Mongol language based on the Tibetan one, would become the State Preceptor (*Guoshi*) in 1260 when Khubilai Khan (1215–1294) was named the khan, or ruler, of the expanding Mongol empire, and Phakpa his principal link to Tibet. Although the relationship between Phakpa and Khubilai is often described as that between a monk and his patron, suggesting a teacher-student dynamic, it is unclear whether Phakpa had any strong influence at the court beyond his role as a teacher of religious practices.<sup>6</sup>





It was Phakpa, however, who was responsible for bringing the young Nepali artist Anige (1244–1306) to the court at Beijing in 1262. Anige, according to Chinese sources, was the leader of a group of artists brought to central Tibet, the stronghold of the Sakya sect, in 1261 to construct a “golden pagoda.”<sup>7</sup> Artists from the Katmandu Valley in Nepal had a long tradition of metalworking and painting, and their role in the development of Tibetan art is well recorded.<sup>8</sup> Although he was only seventeen at the time, Anige was already an accomplished artist, noted for his casting of metal sculptures, and trained in painting and weaving.

After the construction of the monument, Phakpa accepted the young artist as a religious disciple and brought him to Beijing, where he quickly rose to prominence, becoming the director of all artisan classes (*Zhuse renjiang zongjuan*) in 1273. He was named controller of the Imperial Manufactories Commission (*Jiang zuo yuan*) in 1278, during a period of expansion in which seventeen new workshops were added at the court. Chinese records indicate that Anige was involved in both large and small projects, including the production of 191 sculptures and 64 painted panels for the Sangqing Temple on Mount Longhu as well as portraits of Khubilai Khan and his consort Chabi. Anige continued to work for the Yuan court, making Confucian and Daoist images as well as Buddhist icons until the death of Khubilai Khan in 1294, if not later. Acenge, one of his sons, and the Chinese artist Li Yuan are recorded as



working in his style, and it seems likely that other artists of diverse backgrounds were familiar with Anige's tradition as well.

Extensive blending of artistic traditions and religious images characterizes the art of the fourteenth century in China and Tibet. Chinese-style paintings are found in Tibet in the fourteenth century,<sup>9</sup> as is Tibetan imagery at the Yuan court. A magnificent silk tapestry (*kesi*) in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (pl. 23) displays the traditional palace-architecture mandala most often found in Tibetan art. Probably produced in either Beijing or Hangzhou, both centers with a strong Tibetan presence, the tapestry belongs to a class of textiles known in Tibetan as *gosko* that, though often used in the same way as religious paintings, were considered more precious. The primary deity, in this case Yamantaka-Vajrabhairava (see detail, above), stands in a circle in the center of a multileveled square palace with elaborate gateways at the four cardinal directions. Yamantaka conquers Yama, the lord of death, and by extension transcends death as well. In some manifestations, he also embodies the powers of Vajrabhairava, who has the ability to spur destruction and, thereby, renewal.

A larger circle encircles the palace compound, while many additional figures, including manifestations of the principal deity, monks and others representing a lineage of practice, and donors, are shown at the top and bottom of the tapestry. The donors at the lower left and right corners are identified by Tibetan inscriptions as

Tugh Temur (great-grandson of Khubilai Khan), who reigned from 1328 to 1332, his elder brother Khoshila, who was briefly emperor in 1329, and their respective spouses, Budashri and Bubashu.<sup>10</sup> The combination of portraits of all four helps date the tapestry to the period between 1330 and 1332.

The dense composition of botanical scrolls, which fills the background of the mandala, characterizes paintings from central Tibet dating to the first half of the fifteenth century, particularly those produced by, or under the supervision of, Nepali artists. Comparable scrolls, often featuring lotus flowers with spiky blossoms, are often found on the covers of Nepali manuscripts dating to the thirteenth century, and the use of such motifs in both China in the fourteenth century and Tibet in the fifteenth provides an intriguing paradigm for the widespread sharing of styles and themes during the period.

Such scrolls also decorate the balcony and railings of the so-called Cloud Platform at the Juyongguan (fig. 12), to the northwest of Beijing, one of the three major passes to the Great Wall.<sup>11</sup> This extraordinary platform, which once supported a group of Tibetan-style chortens,<sup>12</sup> was constructed between 1343 and 1345 at the order of the emperor in order to bring happiness to those who traveled beneath the pass. Kunga gyaltzen palzangpo (1310–1358), the Tibetan monk who served as the last State Preceptor to the Yuan court, planned the monument and supervised its construction.

Figure 12  
View of Juyongguan

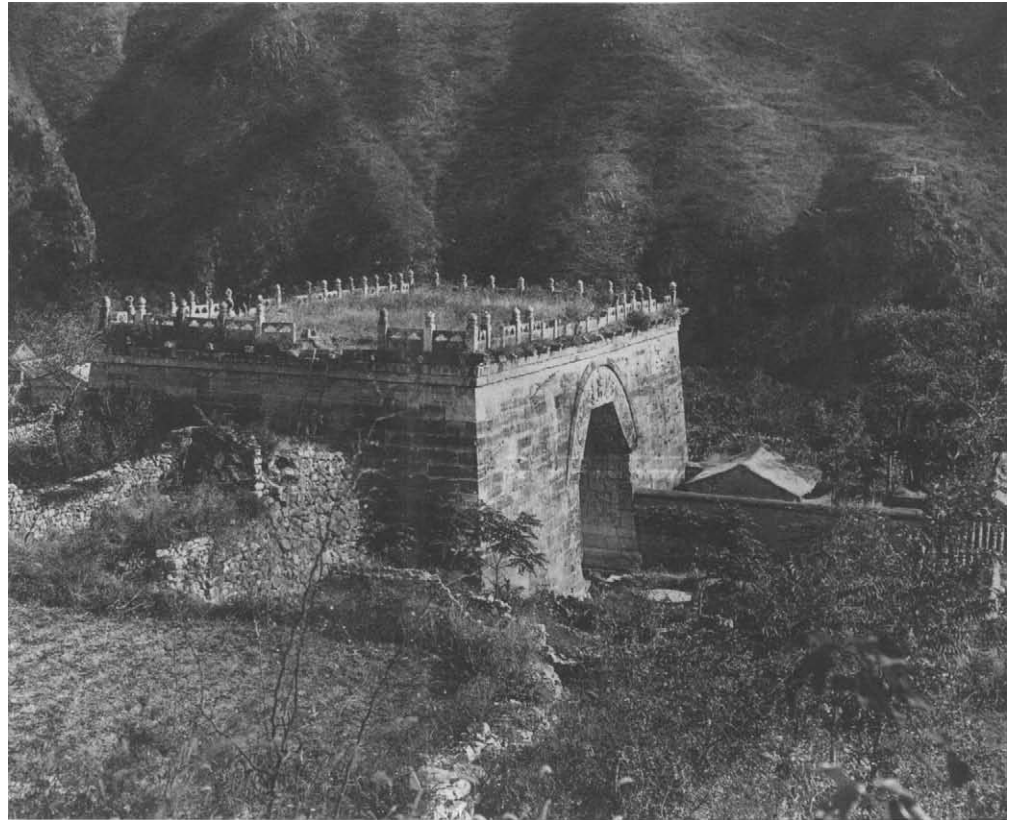
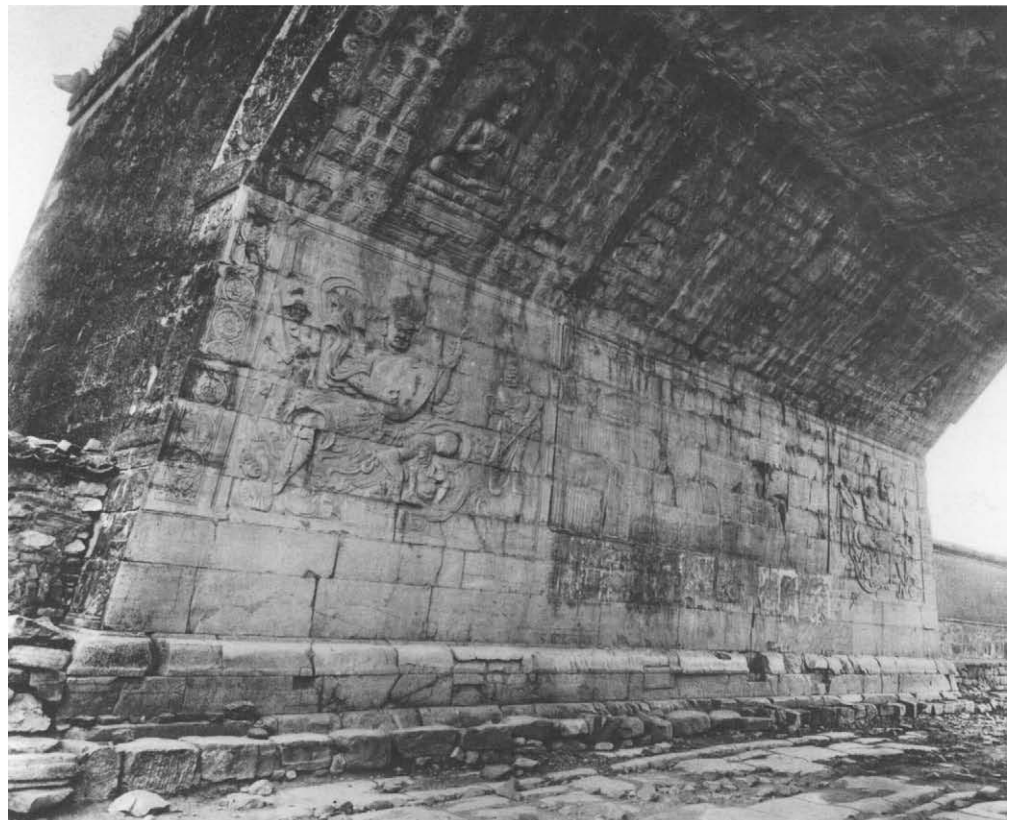


Figure 13  
Interior of the arch at Juyong-  
guan showing guardian figures



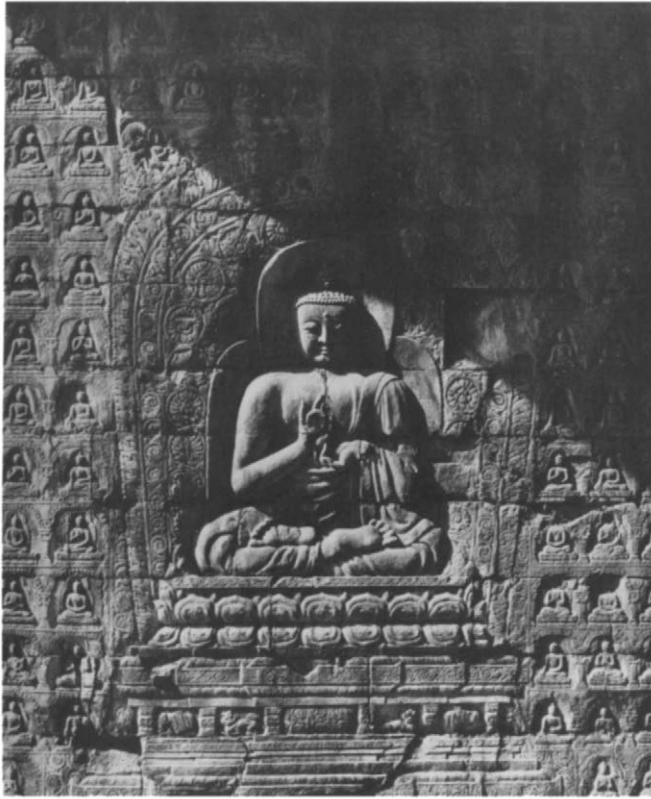


Figure 14  
Buddha from the interior of  
the arch at Juyongguan

Plate 24  
Buddha. China, Ming dynasty,  
Yongle period (1403–24).  
Inscribed *da Ming Yongle nian  
shi* (bestowed in the Yongle era  
of the great Ming). Gilt bronze.  
Height 28½ in. (72.5 cm).  
Speelman collection, London

The guardians of the four cardinal directions stand two to either side, in the interior of the arch (fig. 13), which is filled with ritual invocations, or *dharanis*, in six scripts: Lantsa, Tibetan, Chinese, Phakpa, Uighur, and Xixia. Ten large Buddhas, five to either side, are seated in the intermediary zones, and five mandalas in palace architecture style are carved on the ceiling.

### *Sculpture*

A Buddha from the interior of the arch (fig. 14) provides a prototype for the style of Buddhist imagery seen in a magnificent gilt bronze piece that is dated by inscription to the Yongle period (pl. 24). Both the bronze Buddha and the example from the Juyongguan sit on lotus pedestals set on elaborate square thrones. Both are backed by flame-shaped mandorlas filled with dense scrolls, some of which contain large, spiky lotus blossoms. The Buddhas share broad shoulders, powerful torsos, and long legs. The curly hair is gathered into a slightly pointed topknot. The sense of ease in the Buddha's posture, the soft contours of the body, and the naturalistic drape of the cloth, however, differentiate the Yongle sculpture from the earlier example.

Such elegant casting, found also in a small image of the bodhisattva Manjushri (pl. 25), the personification of spiritual wisdom, is characteristic of bronze sculptures





Plate 25  
Bodhisattva of Wisdom  
(Tikshna–Manjushri). China,  
Ming dynasty, Yongle period  
(1403–24). Inscribed *da Ming*  
*Yongle nian shi* (bestowed in the  
Yongle era of the great Ming).  
Gilt bronze. Height 7½ in.  
(19.1 cm). The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art. Rogers Fund,  
2001 (2001.59)

Back view, pl. 25



produced during the reign of Yongle, which are noted for a delicacy of detail and the rich color of the mercury gilding. The soft folds of the clothing seen in the drape of the scarf over the bodhisattvas's shoulders and front arms and the loose pleats of the lower garment are also typical of the style of sculptures produced in the early fifteenth century, as is the careful casting of the back (see above). The four-armed form of Manjushri, often called Tikshna–Manjushri, was prevalent in China particularly during the early Ming, but is not found in the *Garland of Sadhanas* (*Sadhanamala*) or other traditional sources for later Indo-Tibetan iconography.<sup>13</sup> In this form, Manjushri holds a bow and an arrow as well as his standard sword and book. The first two implements illustrate his capacity to defeat egotism, the second his ability to confound ignorance.

Implements are also held in the thirty-two arms of a powerful sculpture of Yamantaka–Vajrabhairava (pl. 26). Yamantaka is one of the more powerful emanations of the bodhisattva Manjushri, and the visual evidence suggests that worship of both forms was important at the court of Yongle. It seems likely that Yongle, as did several previous rulers, promoted the understanding that he was an earthly manifestation of the bodhisattva Manjushri. The casting of Yamantaka's nine faces, including the primary buffalo head, and the small representation of the visage of Manjushri at the top illustrate the mastery that is typical of sculptures produced at the court of





Plate 26  
Yamantaka–Vajrabhairava.  
China, Ming dynasty, Yongle  
period (1403–24). Inscribed *da*  
*Ming Yongle nian shi* (bestowed  
in the Yongle era of the great  
Ming). Gilt bronze. Height  $7\frac{3}{4}$   
in. (20 cm). Speelman collection,  
London

Yongle. The combination of precision and elegance that defines the Buddhist sculpture of this era is also evident in the detailing of the jewelry worn by the deity, as well as in the rendering of the numerous figures—human and animal to the right, avian to the left—that are placed beneath his eight legs. These, and the various implements in the hands, symbolize the obstacles that must be overcome in the quest for enlightenment. For example, the flaying knife in the central right hand illustrates the need to sever oneself from delusions, while the skull cup in the central left symbolizes compassion and the cultivation of bliss.

#### *Ritual Implements*

Implements such as those held by Yamantaka–Vajrabhairava, many bearing Yongle reign marks, share the high quality of workmanship that defines the art of the period. The implements are made of iron that is inlaid with geometric and figural designs in gold and silver, a technique known as damascening, which was introduced from the Middle East to China, and possibly Tibet, under Mongol rule. Linear scrolls decorate the handle of a *khatvanga*, or ritual staff (pl. 27), which is similar to the miniature version held in the right hand of the sculpture of Yamantaka–Vajrabhairava. Such staffs are thought to quell demons and, by extension, various obstacles. Both



Plate 27  
Ritual staff (*khatvanga*). China, Ming dynasty, Yongle period (1403–24). Iron with gold and silver inlay. Inscribed *Yongle nian zhi* (made in the Yongle era). Length 11 1/8 in. (28 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Promised Gift of Florence and Herbert Irving (L.1993.69.5)



Inscription on staff, pl. 27

Plate 28  
Finial for a ritual staff. China,  
Ming dynasty, early 15th  
century. Ivory. Height 3½ in.  
(8.9 cm). The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art. Lent by  
Florence and Herbert Irving  
(L.1997.23.50)



the finial of the iron *khatvanga* and that of a rare ivory example (pl. 28) consist of an overflowing vase, a longstanding Indic symbol of abundance, set beneath three heads, one human, one decaying, and one skeletal, which symbolize the inevitability of change and death. An inscription (see detail at left) reading *Yongle nian zhi* (made in the Yongle era) is found on the upper part of the handle of the iron ritual staff. The use of this inscription exemplifies the questions often raised about the place of manufacture of the *khatvanga* and other ritual implements. Because such implements are known primarily from Tibetan practices, it is sometimes thought that they were made in Tibetan centers, such as Derge (now in Sichuan Province in southwest China), and sent to the Chinese court. On the other hand, the use of reign marks usually indicates imperially sponsored Chinese manufacture, in the case of ritual implements presumably at a workshop in Beijing with a tradition of working in foreign techniques and shapes.

An uncommon pair of ritual spoons (pl. 29), one square, one round, is also dated by inscription to the Yongle period. The phrase *da Ming Yongle nian shi* (bestowed during the Yongle era of the great Ming), which is often found on Buddhist sculptures, is incised into the square spoon. Such spoons were used in rituals for pouring offerings, presumably into a sacred flame. The square spoon is fairly deep and is decorated on the rim with small vajras, or thunderbolts, inlaid in gold. A vajra in gold also fills the



Plate 29

Pair of ritual fire spoons. China, Ming dynasty, Yongle period (1403–24). Square spoon inscribed *da Ming Yongle nian shi* (bestowed in the Yongle era of the great Ming). Iron with gold and silver inlay. Square spoon, length 3 1/4 in. (79.4 cm); round spoon, length 2 1/2 in. (69.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Florence and Herbert Irving, 1993 (1993.477.1.1a,b,.2)

Inscription on axe, pl. 30



interior of the smaller, round spoon. Both are covered, front and back, with inlaid linear scrolls. The raised snakes encircling the handles are also commonly found on fifteenth-century ritual implements.

An inscription (see detail, above) on the handle of an axe, on the other hand, suggests that similar implements were also manufactured in Tibet. With the exception of the two characters *da Ming* (great Ming) at the beginning, the inscription is illegible, and the casting of the Chinese characters lacks the definition of that on the *khatvanga* discussed earlier (see pl. 27, detail). The linear scrolls on the handle of the axe are also less precise than those decorating the handle of the *khatvanga*. It seems likely, therefore, that the axe, which is thought to be part of a set that includes a mace and a flaying knife (pl. 30), was made in Tibet in the mid- to late fifteenth century, a period noted for Chinese influence in the visual arts. Raised snakes encircle the handle of the axe, and the head of a *makara*, a crocodile-like creature from India with protective functions, joins the blade to the handle. A similar head is found on the flaying knife. Both have upturned snouts, long whiskers, curling manes, protruding teeth, and speckled skin; both show the influence of the long snouts found on early-fifteenth-century Chinese dragons, such as that inlaid into the handle of the mace.

The upturned snouts and the speckling of the skin of the dragon-like *makara* heads in the center of a ritual dagger (pl. 31) also suggest a date in the fifteenth century. Known



Plate 30

Axe, mace, and flaying knife.  
Tibet–China, possibly Derge,  
15th century. Axe inscribed  
*da Ming* [...] (great Ming [...]).  
Iron with gold and silver inlay.  
Axe, length 15 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (40.4 cm).  
Mace, length 15 $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (38.5 cm).  
Flaying knife, width 6 $\frac{7}{8}$  in.  
(17.4 cm). © The Cleveland  
Museum of Art. John L.  
Severance Fund (1978.1–3)







Plate 31  
Ritual dagger (*kila*). Tibet–  
China, possibly Derge, 15th  
century. Metal with gilt bronze  
decoration. Height 6 $\frac{7}{8}$  in.  
(17.4 cm). © The Cleveland  
Museum of Art. Bequest of  
Mrs. Severance A. Millikin  
(1989.362)

as *kila* in Sanskrit, and more widely by the Tibetan word *phurbu*, the ritual dagger is a powerful protective implement that is particularly associated with doorways, thresholds, and other boundaries, both physical and spiritual. The head topping the dagger is that of Vajrakila, the three-faced personification of such daggers. Dramatic eyebrows cap his glaring eyes and fanged mouth. Each of the three faces bears a crown decorated with small images of seated Buddhas set above skulls. The haphazard placement of the small Buddhas may also point to Tibetan manufacture, as do the parallels between the auspicious knots decorating the center of the dagger and those on the handle of the axe discussed above. Both sets of knots are depicted in a two-color basket-weave pattern. The small creatures that form the handles of an unusual incense burner (pl. 32), which could have been made in either China or Tibet, have snouts similar to those found on the ritual dagger and the axe. The sides of the incense burner are decorated with scrolls filled with spiky lotus blossoms, a decorative motif common in China in the early fifteenth century and found in Tibet in the second half of the century.

Sculptures and ritual implements played an important role in the exchanges between various Tibetan centers and the Chinese court that marked the first half of the fifteenth century. Tibet had overthrown Mongol control around 1358, when members of the Phagmotruba clan revolted against the faltering Yuan dynasty. From that point

Plate 32

Incense burner. China or Tibet, 15th century. Iron with gold and silver inlay. Height 6½ in. (16.5 cm). © The Cleveland Museum of Art. The Severance and Greta Millikin Purchase Fund (1983.154)



on Tibet was divided into several sections, with the Phagmotruba ruling in the central regions. Relations between China and Tibet, which had weakened in the second half of the fourteenth century, due in part to the turmoil in both realms, were reinstated during the reign of Yongle and his successors. At least thirteen official delegations between China and Tibet are recorded during the reign of Yongle, including substantive visits by three of the more important clerics of the time: Deshin Shekpa (1385–1415) of the Karma sect, who is more commonly known by the Chinese name Halima (or Helima), Kunga tashi gyalsten (1349–1425) of the Sakya, and Sakya Yeshey (1352–1435), who served as a representative of the famed Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), the founder of the Geluk branch.<sup>14</sup>

The activity surrounding Halima's visit to the Yongle court is typical of the fanfare that accompanied these delegations. He arrived in the capital at Nanjing by boat and was greeted by a thousand monks and thirty adorned elephants. The emperor, his guards in gold armor, and other similarly arrayed officials welcomed the monk to the palace. During the time he spent in China, Halima performed funerary rites for the emperor's parents and supervised the creation of mandalas initiating the emperor (and others) into their practices. It is likely that many of the sculptures and implements preserved today were made either for use in such functions, as gifts for visiting clerics, or both.

Plate 33  
Avalokiteshvara as Shadakshari  
Lokeshvara. China, Ming  
dynasty, early 15th century.  
Silk damask. 101 × 51½ in.  
(256.5 × 130.8 cm). The  
Metropolitan Museum of Art.  
Purchase, Sir Joseph Hotung  
Gift, 2002 (2002.271)

### *Textiles*

Sculptures and other religious goods, as well as luxuries such as tea, paper, ceramics, and silk, were part of the formal exchanges between the court and clerics and other Tibetan visitors. Large numbers of Chinese ceramics and textiles, not all of which had a religious function, are preserved in Tibet. Moreover, silk, woven in various techniques, played an important role in the religious culture of the time. A rare damask weave panel (pl. 33), which shows the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in his manifestation as Shadakshari Lokeshvara, once served as a temple hanging. The bodhisattva is seated on a throne set on a pedestal that rests on a large lotus flower. The background of small, scattered flowers reflects the continuation of Nepali traditions introduced in the late thirteenth and the fourteenth century. The tiered throne and the elaborate mandorla (see detail, p. 84), on the other hand, parallel those of the early-fifteenth-century gilt bronze image discussed above (pl. 24), as does the sensuous treatment of the bodhisattva's form, clothing, and jewelry.

Shadakshari Lokeshvara has one face and four arms. The palms of the two center hands are joined in front of the heart, while the outer hands hold a rosary and a lotus, traditional attributes of the bodhisattva of compassion in many of his manifestations. Shadakshari Lokeshvara represents the bodhisattva as the lord of the traditional six realms of existence (hell-beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans,





Detail of pl. 33

Plate 34  
Decorative pendant. China,  
Ming dynasty, early 15th  
century. Embroidered satin.  
25½ × 12 in. (64.7 × 30.4 cm).  
The Metropolitan Museum  
of Art. Purchase, Joseph E.  
Hotung Gift, 1989 (1989.4)

demi-gods, and gods). He is the personification of the well-known six-syllable Sanskrit invocation “*Om mani padme hum*” (“hail to the jewel in the lotus”) that is found at the top of the hanging beneath the seed syllable *hrih*, thought to contain the essence of the bodhisattva. The Tibetan inscription at the bottom, on the other hand, was often cited in the art of the Yongle period (see pls. 5 and 6). It can be translated:

Daytime is auspicious, and nighttime is auspicious,  
Noon is auspicious and  
Auspicious are day and night;  
May there be auspiciousness due to the Three Jewels.<sup>15</sup>

An embroidered pendant (pl. 34) may once have hung from the crown of a large sculpture of a Buddha. The large floral scrolls often found in the art of the early fifteenth century fill the surface of the pendant, while a conch shell and other auspicious images are placed on lotus pedestals in the center. An inscription, written in an elegant hand on the back, indicates that the silk was given by the master/abbot of a (as yet unidentified) place named Kungalegpa for the purpose of bringing knowledge and good fortune to the mothers of sentient beings.<sup>16</sup>

An embroidery depicting Yamantaka–Vajrabhairava (pl. 35) served as a devotional image and is mounted in a manner comparable to that of a Tibetan *tangka*,





Plate 35  
Yamantaka-Vajrabhairava.  
China, Ming dynasty, early 15th  
century. Silk embroidery with  
metallic thread and horsehair.  
57½ × 30 in. (146.1 × 72.6 cm).  
The Metropolitan Museum of  
Art. Purchase, Lila Acheson  
Wallace Gift, 1993 (1993.15)

Detail of pl. 35



or painting. The work is unsurpassed in the fineness of the silk floss, the density of the stitches, and the ingenious use of a variety of embroidery techniques to achieve chiaroscuro and textural effects. The delicacy of the jewelry, particularly the bracelets worn on the thirty-two arms (see detail, above), is impressive. At the top left is an image of Manjushri, identified by the sword and book that the bodhisattva holds. The monk to the right, wearing a five-leaf black crown, can be identified as Sakya Yeshey by comparison with a *kesi* portrait preserved in the Sera Monastery in Lhasa. The robe worn in both portraits is most likely that conferred by the Yongle emperor when Shakya Yeshey returned to Tibet in 1416.<sup>17</sup>

The powerful, multi-limbed and many-faced deity stands on a double lotus base placed on an elaborate pedestal. Additional protectors stand before the pedestal. An astonishing “gate of light” (*prabha torana*) encircles Yamantaka–Vajrabhairava. The motif, which is found in Nepal in the thirteenth century and in China and Tibet in the fourteenth, has become amazingly baroque and alive in the early fifteenth. It consists of two columns capped with *makara* heads from which spring botanical scrolls that support an image of a *garuda*, a mythical Indian bird. Additional scrolls, also filled with an abundance of leaves, twine around the columns.





Figure 15  
Avalokiteshvara as Lokeshvara.  
Tibet, Gyantse, Great Stupa,  
Temple S3, mid-15th century

Plate 36  
Avalokiteshvara as Shadakshari  
Lokeshvara with deities and  
monks. Tibet, late 15th century.  
Ink, pigment, and gold on cloth.  
40<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 31<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (102.5 × 79.4 cm).  
The Metropolitan Museum of  
Art. Gift of Margery and Harry  
Kahn, 1985 (1985.390.3)

#### *Chinese Influence in Fifteenth-Century Tibetan Art*

The interchanges between China and Tibet in the fifteenth century contributed to the flourishing of a new artistic style in Tibet in the second half of the century.<sup>18</sup> For example, many of the paintings found in the great stupa at Gyantse, built between 1427 and 1440, show an awareness of Chinese aesthetics.<sup>19</sup> The stupa has eight stories divided into seventy-five chapels that are filled with paintings and sculptures. A painting of Avalokiteshvara as Lokeshvara or Lord of the World, found in Temple S3 (fig. 15), illustrates the impact of Chinese art at Gyantse, which also shows the hands of contemporary Nepali artists. The two-armed bodhisattva sits with a slight sway on a large lotus pedestal, the articulated petals of which are similar to those found on bronze sculptures produced during the Yongle period.

The bodhisattva occupies a space that has a sense of depth that is not common in Tibetan art but is derived from Chinese traditions. The careful knotting of the bodhisattva's sash and the naturalistic folds of the scarf and lower garment reflect the Chinese treatment of clothing common in sculptures produced during the Yongle era, such as the sculpture of Manjushri (pl. 25) discussed earlier; and it seems likely that the patterning of the clothing reflects the influence of Chinese textiles. Finally the botanical scrolls and individual blossoms that surround the seated bodhisattva





parallel the exuberance often found in such motifs in Chinese textiles and decorative arts of the early fifteenth century.

Chinese influence is also seen in an unusual painting featuring Avalokiteshvara as Shadakshari Lokeshvara (pl. 36) encircled by a retinue of deities and monks. The painting, rendered with black ink and touches of gold and pigment, lacks the colorfulness that is typical of most Tibetan works, suggesting that it was inspired to some degree by ink painting. The clothing worn by the primary bodhisattva is treated in the naturalistic manner derived from Chinese traditions, while the tight garments with stripes worn by several of the smaller attendants typify the Indo-Nepali treatment of clothing. In addition, the ceramics at the bottom of the painting (see detail, above) are Chinese objects, presumably based on examples that had been brought to Tibet as gifts or as trade items. The piece at the left is a ewer in the shape of a monk's cap (for a comparison, see pl. 5) that developed in China in response to Tibetan tradition; the three tall bottles with small lids belong to a type called *yuhuchun*, noted for the elegance of their full bodies and long necks. The lack of color suggests that all four vessels are made of the white glazed porcelain that played an important role in ceramics produced during the reign of Yongle (see pl. 4).

### *Arhats in China and Tibet*

Three extraordinary paintings of arhats, from a set of nine, provide further insights into the blending of the artistic traditions of China and Tibet in the fifteenth century. The words *da Ming Yongle nian shi* (bestowed in the Yongle era of the great Ming) are inscribed in gold at the right side of one of the paintings (pl. 37), indicating that the works were painted at the court. Unlike much of the religious material preserved from the Yongle period, the paintings illustrate a longstanding Chinese theme rather than Tibetan imagery. Devotion to the arhats is based on a text entitled *A Record of the Abiding of the Dharma Spoken by the Great Arhat Nandimitra*, which was translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by the monk pilgrim Xuanzang (596–664). A translation of the *Lotus Sutra* by the famed Indian monk Kumarajiva (344–413) in the early fifth century had earlier helped to nourish the belief that arhats, like bodhisattvas, remain in the phenomenal world to help guide mortals in their spiritual quest.<sup>20</sup>

Renderings of the arhats, sometimes featuring their ungainly (foreign) features and exotic habitats, are found in China as early as the ninth century, and, by the twelfth, they had become one of the principal images in Chinese Buddhist traditions. Since arhats are shown as groups of sixteen, eighteen, and one hundred, the original



Plate 37  
Arhat, possibly Vanavasa.  
China, Ming dynasty, Yongle  
period (1403–24). Inscribed  
*da Ming Yongle nian shi*  
(bestowed in the Yongle era  
of the great Ming). Hanging  
scroll mounted as framed  
panel; ink, pigments, and gold  
on silk.  $31\frac{1}{8} \times 22\frac{1}{4}$  in. ( $79.2 \times$   
 $56.5$  cm). Robert Rosenkranz  
Collection

Plate 38  
Arhat, possibly Chudapanthaka.  
China, Ming dynasty, Yongle  
period (1403–24). Hanging scroll  
mounted as framed panel; ink,  
pigments and gold on silk.  
30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 19<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (77 × 50 cm).  
Robert Rosenkranz Collection



number of paintings in the set under discussion is unknown. The nine paintings feature gentlemen-monks in elegant robes seated in paradisiacal mountain settings and accompanied by exotic attendants and mystical animals. The features and faces of the arhats are individualized to suggest age and ethnicity. The textile patterns used in their clerical robes, in the garments worn by their attendants, and in such accoutrements as the cushions upon which they sit and the shoes that are placed beneath them are carefully delineated. The sarong-like garment of the attendant with peacock feathers and the coral he holds (pl. 37) suggest a home in Southeast Asia, while the style of clothing, beard, and earrings of an attendant in another painting (pl. 38) allude to Central Asia. A phoenix strolls at the foot of the arhat in the first painting, while the Central Asian attendant in the second holds a lion cub. An older lion saunters in the foreground of a third painting in which a Chinese attendant brings a cup to the meditating arhat (pl. 39).

Each figure inhabits an isolated realm defined by mountains in the background and trees placed to the side. The details—flowing waterfalls and elegant flowers—add to the beauty of their realms and reiterate the otherworldly nature of these sanctuaries. The towering mountains in the background are painted in shades of blue and green with touches of gold and follow the tradition of blue and green landscape that developed in China in the late seventh and eighth century.

The cult of arhats was introduced from China to Tibet at least as early as the fourteenth century, and Tibetan paintings of these figures usually follow Chinese models.<sup>21</sup> A fifteenth-century Tibetan painting (pl. 40) follows closely the composition of the Chinese painting reproduced in plate 39.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the lacquer stands and jade (or celadon) bowls held by the young attendants are identical in both works, as are the entwined trees to the left and the staircases to the right. The seated figure of a meditating Buddha, probably Amitayus, in the upper right corner of the Tibetan work is the only iconographic variant in the two paintings. The Tibetan painting, however, lacks the subtle spatial depth found in the Chinese piece. In addition, the greater detailing seen in the bark of the trees and the sides of the mountains further distinguishes the Tibetan painting from its Chinese prototype, as does the flatter and more schematic rendering of the leaves of the trees. The leaves in the Tibetan painting are shown as undifferentiated clumps, while the Chinese examples are carefully distinguished from one another.

A comparable rendering of the leaves of a tree and a similar lack of spatial depth suggest a Tibetan provenance for a painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, which is identified by a Tibetan inscription on the back as an image of the arhat Vajriputra (pl. 41). The use of sized pigments, rather than watercolor, and a cloth, as opposed to silk, support also indicate Tibetan workmanship. Moreover, a Chinese





Plate 39  
Arhat, possibly Ajita. China,  
Ming dynasty, Yongle period  
(1403–24). Hanging scroll  
mounted as framed panel; ink,  
pigments, and gold on silk.  
30<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> × 19<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (77 × 50 cm).  
Robert Rosenkranz Collection

Plate 40  
Arhat, possibly Chudapanthaka.  
Tibet, mid- to late 15th century.  
Pigments and gold on cloth.  
39 × 22<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (99 × 57.2 cm).  
Rubin Museum of Art  
(C2003.50.3)





Plate 41

Arhat Vajriputra. Tibet, mid- to late 15th century. Pigments on cloth. 32 × 20 in. (81.3 × 50.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Purchase, Friends of Asian Art Gift, 1992 (1992.198)

prototype is found among the series of nine arhat paintings mentioned above.<sup>23</sup> The painting in the Metropolitan Museum has been catalogued as both Chinese and Tibetan, and the difficulty in precisely placing it illustrates the assured melding of Chinese, Tibetan, and, to some extent, Nepali traditions found in the vibrant religious art of the fifteenth century.<sup>24</sup> This melding in turn reflects the cosmopolitan use of sources and styles that characterizes the art that was produced at the court during the reign of the expansionist emperor Yongle and that, in the first half of the fifteenth century, spread from China to Tibet and contributed to the “renaissance” that marks Tibetan art at that time.

## Notes

1. An overview of the importance of Tibetan Buddhism during the Ming dynasty is found in Nan Bingwen, *Fojiao zongjia yu Mingdai shehui* (Buddhism and esoteric Buddhism in Ming society) (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2002).
2. See, for example, *Sérinde, terre de Bouddha: Dix siècles d'art sur la Route de la Soie* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1995), pls. 280–284.
3. Mikhail Piotrovsky, ed., *Lost Empire of the Silk Road: Buddhist Art from Khara Khoto (X–XIIIth century)* (Lugano: Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation, 1993). It should be noted that current research in early Tibetan painting suggests that at least some of the pieces found at Karakhoto may postdate the fall of the Xixia in 1227.
4. Like that of Karakhoto, the religious imagery of the Dali kingdom combined Chinese and Tibetan forms. For an overview, see Liu Changjiu, *Nanzhao he Dali guo zong jiao yi shu* (The religious art in Nanzhao and the Dali kingdom) (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 2001).
5. A good overview is provided in Luciano Petech, “Tibetan Relations with Sung China and with the Mongols,” in *China Among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors 10th–14th Centuries*, edited by Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 173–203.
6. Luciano Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols: The Yuan Sa-skya Period of Tibetan History* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990).
7. Anning Jing provides translations of most of the pertinent Chinese sources pertaining to Anige in “The Portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245–1306),” *Artibus Asiae* 54, no. 102 (1994): 40–86.
8. Luciano Petech, “The Newar Artists of the Nepal Valley: An Historical Account of Their Activities in Neighbouring Areas with Particular Reference to Tibet,” *Oriental Art* (Autumn 1985): 262–77; and “The Artists of the Nepal Valley—II,” *Oriental Art* (Winter 1985/1986): 409–20.
9. For a discussion of Chinese influence at Shalu, see Roberto Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (London: Serindia Publications, 1990), pp. 89–122. For a discussion of three Tibetan paintings with Chinese themes and styles, see Stephen Little, “The Arhats in China and Tibet,” *Artibus Asiae* 52, nos. 3–4 (1992): 255–81.
10. For the dating, see James C.Y. Watt and Anne E. Wardwell, *When Silk was Gold* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), pp. 95–99. For the sake of simplicity, the Mongol names of the emperors of the Yuan dynasty are used herein. Sanskrit is used for the names of Buddhist deities shared by China and Tibet, and a pronunciation-based romanization is used for Tibetan names. Thanks are due to Donald La Rocca for help with the Tibetan language.
11. Murata Jirō and Akira Fujieda, *Kōyokan*, 2 vols. (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Kōgabuku, 1955–57).
12. Murata and Fujieda (n. 11) and others suggest three chortens, but, given the importance of the five Buddha families in Tibet, five are equally likely and more in keeping with the imagery on the monument.
13. This identification is based on a later Chinese source. More recently, Sheila Bliss has suggested that sculptures with this iconography represent Vajrananga–Manjoghosa, but gives no reason for her identification. See Sheila Bliss, “Sino-Tibetan Sculpture: The Tibetan Legacy,” in *On the Path to Void: Buddhist Art of the Tibetan Realm*, edited by Pratapaditya Pal (Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1996), pp. 142–61, fig. 5.

14. The most thorough discussion of the Chinese sources is found in Elliot Harris Sperling, "Early Ming Policy Toward Tibet: An Examination of the Proposition that Early Ming Emperors Adopted a 'Divide and Rule' Policy toward Tibet," Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1983. See also Patricia Berger, "Miracles in Nanjing: An Imperial Record of the Fifth Karmapa's Visit to the Chinese Capital," in *Cultural Intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism*, edited by Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), pp. 145–69.
15. Thanks are due to Christian Luczanits for this translation.
16. Christian Luczanits has translated the inscriptions as follows: "At the time when the Summer service to the sublime assembly and the collected Buddhist teaching; of the water female snake year called . . . has been well accomplished; this noble silk for the three supports headed by the wish-fulfilling image of the lord of the teaching Shakyashri: is given [by] the master/abbot of the place named Kungalegpa; with the noble/highest intention . . . , may the beings who have been mothers quickly attain knowledge increasing good fortune." I am also grateful to Dr. Luczanits for pointing out that the textile decorated a crown, not a drum, as had previously been thought.
17. Watt and Wardwell, *When Silk Was Gold*, pp. 202–7.
18. Erberto Lo Bue, "Chinese Artistic Influence in Tibet from the 11th to the 15th century," in *Facets of Tibetan Religious Traditions and Contacts with Neighbouring Cultural Areas*, edited by Alfredo Cadonna and Ester Bianchi (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1999), pp. 179–202; Valrae Reynolds, "The Tibetan Renaissance of the Fifteenth Century," *Oriental Art* 45 (Autumn 1999): 23–33.
19. Franco Ricca and Erberto Lo Bue, *The Great Stupa of Gyantse: A Complete Tibetan Pantheon of the Fifteenth Century* (London: Serindia Publications, 1993).
20. Xuanzang's translation is preserved in the Chinese canon under the title *Da aluohan Nandimiduulo suo Shou Fazhuji*. See also Robert F. Rhodes, "Kumarajiva's Interpretation of the Lotus Sutra on the Attainment of Buddhahood by Arhats," *The Ōtani Gakuhō* 64, no. 4 (1986): 79–96.
21. Pratapaditya Pal, "The Arhats and Mahasiddhas in Himalayan Art," *Arts of Asia* 20, no. 1 (1990): 66–78.
22. The identification of the arhats in the two paintings illustrates the inherent problems in the study of this material. The Chinese painting (pl. 39) has been identified, using a later Chinese source, as the arhat Ajita, while the arhat in the Tibetan piece (pl. 40) is called Chudapanthaka. For further discussion, see Rob Linrothe, *Paradise and Plumage: Chinese Connections in Tibetan Arhat Painting* (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2004).
23. Jean-Marie Simonet, *Splendor of Yongle Painting: Portraits of Nine Luohan* (sale catalogue) (Brussels: Gisele Croes, 2002), p. 18, fig. 2.
24. Strong Chinese influence is also found in a sketchbook attributed to an anonymous Nepali master. See John Lowry, "A Fifteenth Century Sketchbook (Preliminary Study)," in *Essais sur l'Art du Tibet*, edited by Ariane Macdonald and Yoshiro Imaeda (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient 1977), pp. 83–102.

## *Selected Reading*

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- Fong, Wen C., and James C.Y. Watt, *Possessing the Past: Treasures from the National Palace Museum Taipei* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996).
- He Jinqian and Situ Yuanjie, *Jingdezhen Zhushan chutu Yongle Xuande guan yao ciqi zhan lan* (Imperial porcelain of the Yongle and Xuande periods excavated from the site of the Ming imperial factory at Jingdezhen) (Hong Kong: Urban Council, Hong Kong, and Jingdezhen Museum of Ceramic History, 1989).
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- Watt, James C.Y., and Barbara Brennan Ford, *East Asian Lacquer: The Florence and Herbert Irving Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1991).
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- Xiong Wenbin, *Yuan dai Zang Han yishu jiaoliu* (Artistic interchange between China and Tibet in the Yuan dynasty) (Hebei: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2003).

## *Photograph Credits*

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Figure 2: *Ancient Bells* (Gem of Beijing Cultural Relics Series) (Beijing: Beijing Publishing House, 1999), nos. 8, 12

Figure 3: Johannes Nieuhof, *Legatio batavica ad magnum Tartariae chamum Sungteium, modernum Sinae imperatorem: historiarum narratione, quae legatis in provinciis Quantung, Kiangsi, Nanking, Xantung, Peking, & aula imperatoria ab anno 1665 ad annum 1657...* (Amsterdam: Jacob Meursius, 1668), between pp. 96 and 97

Figure 4: *Art Treasures from the Nanjing Museum Collection* (Nagoya: Nagoya [Japan] Art Museum: 1981), no. 112

Figure 5: Photograph by James C.Y. Watt

Figure 7: Photograph by Sheldan Comfert Collins

Figure 8: Photograph by Hu Chui, Chief Photographer, The Palace Museum, Beijing

Figure 9: John Carswell, *Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain around the World* (London: British Museum Press, 2000), fig. 71

Figures 12, 13, and 14: Murata Jirō and Akira Fujieda, *Kōyokan* (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Kōgabuku, 1955–57), pls. 2, 17, and 69

Figure 15: Franco Ricca and Erberto Lo Bue, *The Great Stupa of Gyantse: A Complete Tibetan Pantheon of the Fifteenth Century* (London: Serindia Publications, 1993), pl. 11



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