

Stylistic Changes

The systematic-typological analysis of Buddhist art offered in the previous chapters should be followed by a detailed treatment of its historical development in which the individual character of particular works, artists and periods and the full range of the surviving works is given due attention. Limitations of space rule this out, and such treatment would only make sense if the material, which is relatively little known in the West even among persons interested in art, could be accompanied by numerous illustrations. However, neither historical development nor changes in style should be ignored entirely. A few comments should, therefore, be made and pictorial material appended which attempts to offer visual impressions of a few typical examples.

Concepts of Time and History

Changes in style over time should be mentioned if for no other reason than that current opinion in the West is still characterized by the outdated view that East Asian cultures are essentially stationary, knew no historical development and exhausted themselves in steady, seldom altered repetitions of traditional patterns in thought, action, and the arts. How erroneous such opinions are can nowhere be demonstrated more clearly than in art, where works may be dated in most instances with the same accuracy as those of the West as belonging to certain centuries, half centuries or even decades, if only one is familiar with the language of their styles and if certain methodological principles are observed. The language of these styles, however, is more subtle and muted. Changes do not appear as dramatically as in the West. A number of reasons could be given to explain this fact which are just as valid for art as for other spheres of East Asian spiritual and social life, and may be traced to fundamental psychological peculiarities and philosophical convictions of those peoples.

In the East, the binding force of established patterns of order, thought, and form is very strong, and East Asians as a whole tend more toward the typical than the individual. In East Asia the human personality unfolds and completes itself primarily by representing a given type. Perfect embodiment of such a type is praised as high achievement. Individual patterns and original variations are not the primary goal but at best a welcome addendum.⁹⁵ To match the model of the ancestors is

sufficient to win fame. Originality is not recognized as a value in its own right but only as something which has gone beyond the model type and is measured in terms of it. This something extra is, however, welcomed as it contributes to a living tradition and is even necessary if only to avoid slavish imitation.

Every period may be said to have the same relationship to its predecessor. No period purposely attempts to achieve something basically new, to move away from established traditions or perhaps even to evince bitter hostility toward them. Rather, it regards itself as a wave in the flow of tradition. This flow continues and brings forth something new at every turn but normally in an uninterrupted linkage to its source. The past is never completely done with and superseded, but remains present, even if occasionally only rather latently. Anything new must relate to the past and continue to build on it. The past is, therefore, somehow always present, and the future is never an adventure into totally uncharted darkness. History means something different than it does to us, and the frequently raised question as to whether East Asians actually knew how to experience and think in historical dimensions can by no means be answered in the simple alternative of yes or no. A sense of time basically different from that of the West forms the background to East Asia's experience of history.

Time, particularly historical time, does not extend in linear fashion from a beginning to an end, from an origin to a goal. There is no chain of irretrievable and, therefore, uniquely precious moments. Rather, time is a cycle of changes in which everything returns and nothing is ever lost or forgotten. All changes of time are experienced against the metaphysical ground of Timelessness, of Nothingness, of Emptiness, and hence as temporary waves on the surface of the eternally unmovable depth of the ocean. In all time-specific historical phenomena the Time-Transcendent is felt just as strongly as the infinite "ground" which lies behind the world of unfolding space. Different modes of experience are therefore "synchronic" in character. Forms of thought, religious conviction, artistic styles (even in one and the same person and even more so in specific historical periods) run parallel and constitute an uninterrupted connection with the past, which enjoys the sacred status of an absolute model, and a continuous flow into a living tradition.

But to continue also means to create something new. It would be erroneous to conclude that the veneration of ancient models results in a mere backward orientation of the intellectual horizon or in epigonous decadence and stagnation. No doubt, something new is never something "entirely new" and unheard of. Usually it consists only of slight variations on or an enrichment of traditional elements. These partial innovations can still express, quite distinctly and unmistakably, the spirit of an age, the soul of a people, and the uniqueness of a creative personality. Though in East Asia the amplitude of historical changes is less drastic and the scope of individual development and expression more limited in several respects than it is in the West, innovations exist just as they do in any other living tradition. Art historians must become aware of the typical and abiding elements and of certain peculiar structural laws. Since the emphasis on such typicality of expression is so strong in East Asia, the art historian would be well advised to put together, first of all, a total view of the subject on the basis of its consistent representative characteristics, because only against the background

formed by these will individual and historical phenomena become visible and intelligible as variations of these general features.

Main Stylistic Phases

Our systematic-typological description of the basic features of Buddhist art is based on what we may call the mature or classic Buddhist art of China and Japan, from the Sui/T'ang to the Sung dynasties in China (ca. 580-1280), and from the Hakuho/Nara to the Kamakura periods in Japan (ca. 700-1330; cf. the chronological tables). The art of preceding periods, though highly significant and even fundamentally important, was still "archaic" in character. Its possibilities had not yet fully unfolded. On the other hand, the art following the classic periods is, despite several impressive achievements, epigonous and demonstrates that in both countries the intellectual vigor of Buddhism had already declined. (The art of Zen Buddhism, it is true, reached its apex during these later periods, but since it followed its own artistic paths it will be dealt with in a separate chapter at the end of this book.) We can distinguish, of course, between several stages of development during these six hundred years of the flourishing period of Buddhist art, even though certain common dominant basic features overlapped all these styles.

The mature Buddhist art of China is divided into an "early classical" (Sui and early T'ang periods), a "high-classic" period (middle and late T'ang) and a "late classic" phase (Sung period). Japanese Buddhist art follows this evolution only up to about the middle of the T'ang period (corresponding to the Nara period) and thereafter largely follows its own independent path leading up to the two classical ages of the Fujiwara and Kamakura periods, with the latter again inspired in part by the late classical Chinese art of the Sung period. In Korea a similar development took place between ca. 670 and 1400, i.e., during the unified Silla and Koryŏ periods. The entire development of Buddhist art, from its first flourishing to its waning periods, forms a consistent, historical process which not only may be, but rather must be, understood in its entirety by following its course step by step. We are not dealing here with expressions of a particular intellectual substance in ever new and different forms, but primarily with the evolution and gradual verification of a few given prototypes, i.e., the more or less constant types of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Devas, etc., as they had already been defined by "theology," sacred literature, and earlier artistic images.

Except for certain limited periods there is material in all spheres of Buddhist art which is dated with sufficient precision to write a well-documented history of stylistic changes. Even for the early centuries of the Six Dynasties Period in China (ca. 420-580) and the Asuka or Suiko period in Japan (ca. 550-645) we have a wealth of works dated either by inscriptions or other documents. But we should keep in mind that the real masterpieces of classical Chinese (but not Japanese) art--particularly the main cult images and paintings of the great sanctuaries in the cultural centers of the flourishing periods--have been lost, and that students of Buddhist art must rely in many instances on provincial and inferior works. Fortunately, many works of superior quality, directly inspired by Chinese models, have been preserved in Japan so that the Japanese material can and must make up for the losses suffered in China. The least unfavorable situation with respect to China exists in the field of small-sized metal sculptures and in some fields of stone

sculpture. The sequences of changes in style may, therefore, best be followed and documented through example from Chinese and Japanese sculptures which reveal an impressive consistency of stylistic evolution. In the following pages we will attempt to provide a picture of these stylistic changes, if only of their major phases.¹³⁹

What preceded this development and what indigenous artistic traditions confronted the initially foreign and imported Buddhist art in China and Japan? In China, the Han period had created a highly characteristic, highly stylized language of artistic forms tending towards an elegant but strict ornamentalization. Han had not, however, advanced beyond a comparatively modest level in the field of sculpture, the very field in which Buddhist art later excelled. Figure painting already possessed substantially richer formal means, and we have still to ascertain how far it may have influenced the evolving early forms of Buddhist art. But outside these art forms, Buddhist art found no indigenous traditional elements of comparable attainment to which it could have attached itself (important monumental animal sculptures of the Han period were unsuitable), and thus Buddhism had initially largely to depend on the foreign models from its areas of origin. Nevertheless it managed to produce even during its first centuries in China a basic style which was thoroughly and unmistakably Chinese.

In Japan, Buddhist art was adopted as part of the Chinese-Buddhist cultural heritage and encountered a virtual vacuum. During the centuries preceding this great transformation, there existed no works of art beyond some handicrafts and archaic, though charming and highly expressive, clay tomb figures in human and animals form (*haniwa*). There was no art of a more sophisticated kind which could have either served as foundation for a Japanese Buddhist art or as its rival. As late as in the middle of the sixth century, Japan was still at an essentially prehistoric level of development. It entered its historical era with fresh and unspent powers and was fortunate enough to do so under the guidance of China, a civilization rich in experiences and traditions, which could also point to significant though still archaic achievements of its own in the field of Buddhist art. Korea, a cultural extension of China, acted as intermediary or connecting link. This explains why the first Buddhist style, that of the Six Dynasties Period, quickly found a pure and fully resonant echo in the Japan of the Asuka/Suiko period which had just been awakened to a higher cultural consciousness.

The style of the Six Dynasties Period, particularly that of the Northern Wei (386-535), is of fundamental importance in art history because the oldest surviving Buddhist images in East Asia were created during this period. Except for rare pieces from the fourth century and the recently discovered isolated Buddha relief in a West Chinese tomb chamber from about the year 300,^{139a} these images are mainly from the first half of the fifth century. Older, large-sized works once existed but are now lost. Literary sources and historical considerations point to a beginning for the creation of Buddhist figures no later than the beginning of the third century. From the second half of the fifth century on, we possess a rich store of wall figures in temples and a wealth of individual stone or metal figures in both countries; in Japan even wood sculptures have survived.

At the beginning of this period, the influence of Central Asian models and of the Indian works with strong late classical (provincial Roman) features, which had inspired them, is still very noticeable. The Chinese bronze figures of this time (18) usually have rounded, smoothly modeled body forms, and nearly mathematical curves to indicate the folds of their garments, which cling tightly to the body. On the whole, they display a peculiar hybrid mixture of smooth elegance and rather dull schematic patterns at the expense of spiritual expression.

In contrast, the first truly Chinese style in Buddhist art, called simply Wei Style (the term covers somewhat imprecisely the time of the Northern, Western and Eastern Wei and some other dynasties), was probably already emerging. The Wei Style either abandoned the foreign elements or changed them into a new, very distinct style. This style retained certain archaic features (16, 17, 30, 34, 42-45): The bodies of the figures are rigid like columns, or flat like boards; they are sometimes overly slender, though occasionally quite plump; only their heads seem to have genuine volume, yet even these are given stereotyped spherical or oval shapes. Garment and body are not treated as independent entities, but the body either disappears behind the garment or its stereometric forms are merely accentuated by the tightly clinging garments. The garments are quite flat and their folds form thin layers. These folds appear "ironed" on. The contour and fold lines of the garments are solid and firm, but are cut with a strict elegance. Their nearly abstract ornamental patterns frequently form an integral part of the geometric overall outline of the figure and observe the laws of symmetry. Typical for the Wei/Sui style are the fin-like garment ends and seams which sometimes reach out like flickering flames or appear like windblown shapes frozen in their movement. All sculptures, including cast metal figures, appear as if carved out of a single block or engraved into a rigid surface, and not as if modelled from a plastic mass and conveying the impression of round forms emerging from the body. It is this "cut" quality which constitutes the peculiar charm of this style. The play of the lines of the garments is frequently rather lively, but its "graphic" dynamism is always restrained by the tight, even rigid quality of the lines, by the hieratic pose of the figure, and by their dominant spirit of ascetic remoteness. The figures' expressions, too, have an aura of loftiness permeated by quiet gentleness and compassion. This loftiness is only occasionally dissolved in a typical "archaic smile" which, in the best examples, radiates an entrancing aura of supra-mundane bliss without, however, exhibiting genuine "expressions" (47, 48). But many figures attain a certain precocious grace in spite of the strictness of their design. This shows that even this early stage is already far removed from the preceding primitive stage. All of the figure types display this sort of schematic formality and abstract beauty. Hierarchies of beings or levels of existence, as far as they appear in this art at all, are distinguished from one another more by iconographic signs than by formal design.

Following this early phase and beginning during the Northern Ch'i/Sui and the Hakuho periods, a more mature Buddhist art slowly developed. Initially, however, this new stage is still rather timidly expressed (20, 22, 40, 51 ff., 60). The figures gain in body volume. Their legs, hips and shoulders begin to bend and come alive. Their extremities are slightly parted from the trunk and the garments are given a softer flow, but still cling to the body, which is more roundly molded and only occasionally retains the former archaic flatness. The rigid schematicism begins

to melt. Straight, razor-sharp forms become curved and wavelike--without, however, as yet attaining an organic and realistic corporeality. Folds of garments, for example, still appear to have been applied as linear curves onto the rounded parts of the body, and even often appear incised into it. They still closely follow the smoothly modeled, tight surfaces and thus generate the impression of an inseparable unity between body and garment. While their beauty is no longer geometrically abstract, it still has a predominantly ornamental, albeit flexible linear rhythm. The contours of the figures are integrated into large soft rounded curves. The expression of the faces is softened, the rigid smile begins to blossom into a more *genuine feeling* but often has a slightly "arrogant" air.

This art conveys the impression of a budding flower which has not yet opened. The figures combine shy grace with cool beauty. Many anticipate the majesty and monumentality of the following period. Now that the artistic means are handled more freely, clearer distinctions than before are made between different figure types. Bodhisattvas are now unmistakably distinguished from Buddhas by being given more physical detail and livelier movements, as, for example, the S-curved line of the tribhanga pose which is only seemingly a contraposto. A Bodhisattva may also display a more graceful play of lines, wear richer jewelry and have a less remote expression.

This "budding" art unfolds during the great high classical T'ang art (which is echoed in Japan by Nara art) with full vigor and monumentality (23-26, 55, 57, 58, 70, 72, 73, 86, 87, 155). The bodies gain more natural proportions than before and frequently display the massive volume which should be understood as symbolizing dignity and majesty. This new urge for organic modeling, though entirely different from that of Greek art (which was based on the study of nature), nevertheless displays a complete and free mastery of the use of the human body as an instrument of artistic design which does, however, aspire to supra-natural forms. The extremities move freely and frequently reach out into space in dancing or belligerent poses, whereas before they had remained more or less confined inside an imaginary circle. The garments now cover or enclose the realistically shaped body in natural fashion. They drape it as gravity might determine, but without hiding it or following its contours slavishly. The garment has now become an independent partner of the body. An inner unity between the organic and the aesthetic form of body and garment has been achieved which permeates both. The strict, cool melody of the earlier garment lines and body contours now achieves a noble fullness and natural power and follows a relaxed and loosely flowing rhythm which remains, however, still subject to higher laws of harmony. The garments retain their ornamental charm despite the heightened functional, as opposed to the earlier schematic, treatment.

All the forms of this phase, from monumental sculptures to the smallest ornaments, give the impression of following innate formative laws. Their shapes extend into space or unfold in flat surfaces but always in a uniformly vigorous flow from a living center of energy. All these forms, from the largest parts of the body down to the smallest garment fold, have a soft yet never effeminate plasticity. At the same time, they succeed in indicating, to a certain degree, the material substances of which they are made. This new proximity to nature should not, however, be called naturalistic but rather "idealistic," even though this term in the strictest sense is not quite suitable to Asian phenomena. The figures--as Buddhist

figures--radiate their numinous powers into the world while resting profoundly and firmly within themselves, with the exception of figures like world-guardians serving active functions.

The expressions of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas may appear duller or less spiritual in comparison with those of the earlier styles, but these must be understood as expressions of self-contained majesty and of the fullness of absolute wisdom, essence and compassion. Correctly understood, Rilke's words "deep and slow like an animal" (in *'Buddha': New Poems*) may be applied to them. For the first time Deva and other types display dynamic and demonic expressions. For the first time human figures come to display earthly personalities depicted as discrete individuals, but permeated and formed by a pervading religious spirit.

At this point, there arose in Buddhist art the distinction between beings at different levels of existence, because only now had all the means of corporeal, "realistic" or "idealistic" depiction and of calmly detached or vigorously active expression become available. Without these the earlier, more or less strictly uniform stylistic patterns could not dissolve into the rich variety of forms corresponding to the religious hierarchy of figure types. It was only now possible for several "styles of types" to coexist. But all these were based on and sustained by the common style of the period. What had developed by this time was the first universal basic style to reach full maturity and to become capable of realizing its varied potentials. The entire further development of Buddhist art in China and Japan took this style as its point of departure and binding standard.

If, ignoring the intermediary phases, we now proceed to trace further developments in China, we encounter the Sung style (66-68, 91 ff.) as the next clearly distinguished stage. Compared to the flat and linear Wei style and to the plastic T'ang style, this style may be labeled "painterly." The massive bodies with their tight, firm, and smoothly modeled surfaces, on which folds of the garments, jewelry, etc., appear like surface waves, are now more differentiated, more loosely defined, even hollowed out (e.g., garment folds). The still rather restrained poses of the T'ang figures are less rigid and artificial, and by now have become more easy, natural and even playful. The result of all this is a lively surge and retreat of plastic surfaces and abrupt changes from light to dark; a play of forms which lures the eye from form to form without, however, allowing it to be captured by any particular form. This quality may be considered typically "painterly."

All these contrasts blend into a dynamic unity which is in sharp contrast to the earlier thrust for a quiet orderliness of alternating flat and plastic forms. This is joined by a heightened realism, particularly in the priest and Arhat figures. The Bodhisattva figures appear somewhat weak, almost feminine, and occasionally possess a rococo-like delicacy.¹⁴⁰ The Buddhas, on the other hand, are only slightly touched by these changes which, limited by the law of stylistic types, left their full impact on figures at the Bodhisattva or lower levels. The new style became fully effective only where the figure type permitted or demanded it.

This phase is occasionally overshadowed by the onset of decadence. In North China, since the early 10th century under the rule of the Liao and then Chin dynasties, there appeared an archaizing style which apparently looked back to the patterns of the T'ang and even pre-T'ang periods. This was followed by a final decline into epigonic work and mere imitation which ultimately lapsed into

uninspired mass production. This began to happen during the Yüan and Ming dynasties. However, particularly during the early years, quite a number of remarkable works were still created. But if the majority of figures are compared to works of classic or late classic art, it becomes evident how schematically body and garments had come to be treated and how faces had turned into stereotyped masks. Only among images of Arhats, which permitted an occasionally grotesque realism, could original works still be found (93). Unfortunately, almost the only surviving figures in Chinese temples are from this period of decadence, because older pieces have for the most part been lost or have not yet been discovered.

From the 6th century on the Buddhist sculpture of Korea at first followed rather faithfully the stylistic phases of China's Six Dynasties period, particularly the so-called Wei style and the styles of the Northern Ch'i and the Sui Dynasties which followed the former in close succession. The early phase is primarily represented by numerous small-sized bronze statues, but also by some larger works as, for example, the two outstanding figures of the sitting Bodhisattva Maitreya (Korean *Mirok*) in the Seoul National Museum which are among the most beautiful works of East Asian art. Parallel to this metal sculpture, there developed a stone sculpture which for the most part used granite as its material and over the centuries developed an often somewhat plump yet monumental form which became characteristic of Korea.

The Chinese T'ang style became the guiding model after 668 once the Silla Dynasty (668-935) had established the first unified Korean state. Silla had its political and cultural center in the South, in the capital of Kyōngju and its surrounding area. The grotto sculptures of Sōkkul-am or the few surviving large bronze Buddhas of this period (e.g., in the Pulguk-sa), together with miniature sculptures, provide impressive evidence that the Korean variant of this style was distinguished by a certain austerity, solemn weightiness and quiet restraint. As long as Buddhism remained a living cultural force in Korea, i.e., until the end of the Koryo Dynasty (935-1392), this style continued in its canonical forms, but without perceptible development of styles resembling those of contemporary China or showing an independent evolution of its own.

Until the end of the Nara period (ca. 800), the development of style in Japan faithfully followed the Korean and later the Chinese developments, without, however, creating mere imitations. Thereafter, Japan went its own way. This was mainly the result of the interruption of regular official contacts with China. A stronger degree of Japanese cultural independence manifested itself thereafter in many other facets of life, but predominantly in poetry and fiction, as the country began to build its own classic medieval culture, a process which began around 900 and intensified from 1000 on until into the 13th century. First came the Fujiwara period with its center at the imperial court. It was succeeded by the Kamakura period which was dominated by two centers--the court and the eastern capital of the warrior nobility. After the end of the Nara style, a peculiar transitional style, the so-called Jōgan style (named after a reign period), emerged. It is characterized by a preference for plump and massive figures; individual forms are rigid, harsh and show pronounced ornamental traits. This may be regarded as a kind of hardened version of the T'ang style, but its best works display a remarkable vigor combined with austerity and solemnity which is clearly distinct from the lavishness of the T'ang style (27, 61 f.).

The T'ang/Nara style, which favored bronze, clay, and lacquer as materials for its sculptures, had remained an essentially plastic style which continued to shape its figures as if modeling them from clay, even where they were chiseled from stone or carved from wood. By comparison, this new Japanese Jôgan style displays characteristics of a genuinely sculpting style, and its evolution coincides with a growing preference for wood as the material from which its sculptures were fashioned.

The Fujiwara style is entirely different (28, 74). Though also inspired by the art of wood-carving, it approaches this material with more tender hands and with a delicate sense for smoothly modulated surfaces. It gently restrains three-dimensional tendencies without, however, returning to an entirely two-dimensional approach (something that would be quite unthinkable in the wake of the T'ang/Nara style). The forms no longer seem to be surging vigorously from a core, but are made to blend smoothly into each other in soft, tender transitions. Though the ornamental play of body and garment lines is far more linear than in the T'ang/Nara style, there is no turn to the strongly decorative, non-natural character of "archaic" art. A nobly restrained simplicity and delicacy and a tender beauty of elegant coolness is typical of this style, which does, however, easily succumb to formal schematicism or epigonal emptiness.

To overcome this danger, the Kamakura style--arising from a more vital, warlike age--turned vigorously to nature's reality, and was inspired in this thrust by the Nara style which had also been vital, monumental and relatively close to nature. A kind of renaissance took place which reached back to classical models across the immediately preceding style phase which, in turn, had itself been a variation of the same classical model, but one which had evolved in an "idealistic" direction toward a predominantly smooth surface-modulating approach to forms. Now a higher degree of "realism" and of plastic energy came into vogue.

All this was stimulated by the Sung style, since cultural relations with China had been revived. This revival had also led to the spread of Zen Buddhism, which was to play such an important role in Japanese culture and art. But the Sung style was never accepted as completely as the T'ang style had been during the Nara period because Japan had by now become much too sure of its own artistic identity for something like this to happen again.

The Kamakura style (29, 65, 78, 80, 88-90) testifies to an intensive observation of living forms which were vigorously grasped in accordance with their natural characteristics. This is particularly evident in the natural, irregular fall and three-dimensional corporeality of the garment folds, which bestowed on all figures an unmistakably distinct, vigorous and yet spiritualized expression. This is particularly true for their bodies, postures and movements, faces and hands, but also for every last fold of their garments. All those features are permeated by a common rhythm which is no longer predominantly abstract, decorative or symbolic, but is rather an emanation of physical and spiritual vitality.

It goes without saying that this style is far removed both from the literal naturalism of the West and from the idealism derived from that naturalism. We have already discussed the intellectual foundation of an art which occupies the middle ground between realism and non-realism, and which does not bestow physical form on the divine, but rather spiritualizes the earthly and corporeal. The

farther removed from the illusory *samsāra* reality a figure is, the less validity the features of the Kamakura style can have. A Buddha (29) still displays traditional schematic forms to a higher degree. But even here a closer look reveals a stronger "realism" and liveliness, particularly in individual facial features and garment folds. The entire figure radiates that intensity, inner vitality, power and majesty so characteristic of the Kamakura style. Naturally, this style found its major field of application in depicting figures from the human sphere--Arhats, priests, pious laymen--who were also congenial to the Sung style. It goes without saying that this period brought portraiture to a culmination. At the same time it intensified its depiction of demons even beyond the levels reached by the T'ang/Nara style to create figures of unsurpassed expressiveness.

The last important stylistic phase of Buddhist sculpture in Japan is that of the Muromachi or Ashikaga period (ca. 1330-1580). However, the sculpture of this period, just as in China, came to be dominated by increasingly rigid, imitative and empty epigonic works. Still, a number of very important and distinctive works were created during this period, primarily in portrait sculpture. There was no further elaboration of realism in the treatment of details, but rather an almost stereotyped schematizing, which integrated all detailed forms into larger patterns without relying on traditional formulas and also shunned all archaizing tendencies (96). But these works remained isolated individual achievements, as did a few good images of the Tokugawa period (69, 94). A style as a truly valid expression of the age could no longer emerge from the Buddhist artistic tradition. It arose, almost in opposition to this tradition, in the sphere of Zen Buddhism, beginning with the Kamakura period, but especially during the Muromachi period (and in China since the Sung period) as Zen came more and more to permeate all artistic creativity. But Zen's major influence was on painting rather than sculpture.

It would be desirable, or even necessary, to show the development of style in painting as well as in architecture or cult utensils and ornamental art, but this development cannot as easily be demonstrated in these areas as in sculpture. This could only be done by relying on numerous illustrations offering minute details. Furthermore, questions about the significance of individual styles as expressions of the prevailing spirit of the period could be raised. But such questions could only be answered in a detailed history of Buddhist art which would include all formative forces of the different periods and their relationship to and influence on the Buddhist world of ideas. Such details cannot be provided here. But we should caution against all hasty attempts to view the particular style of the T'ang or of the Fujiwara and the Kamakura periods as specific expressions of distinct religious beliefs and metaphysical ideas, such as the relationship between the Absolute and the empirical-phenomenal world, or of varying perceptions of the nature of the Buddha and other sacred figures. In the absence of preliminary, very thorough and critical studies of these matters, we do not dare to answer such questions and have, therefore, confined our comments to the presentation of the general intellectual foundations on which all styles of Buddhist art are based. But a few basic comments should be made on the historical development of Buddhist art and the problems art historians face in studying its changes in style.

Some Methodological Questions

Anyone attempting to write a comprehensive history of Buddhist art in East Asia and to integrate it into the larger historical context would have to explore its roots beyond the East Asian limits of time and geography to its country of origin, India. The origin of the image of the Buddha and of that of other types should be explored. The migration of the Indian models to East Asia and the intermediary stops, of which those in present-day Afghanistan and in Central Asia (Bāmiyān, Khotan, Kucha, Turfan, Tun-huang, etc.) are of crucial importance, should be examined. We cannot delve into the origin of images of the Buddha or of the Bodhisattva or any of the other types or into the detailed iconographical questions relevant to these issues.^{140a} All this is properly part of the history of Indian religion and art, and those attempting to describe the basic features of the Buddhist art of East Asia may take the existence and the iconographically fixed appearance of the different figure types for granted, except for those which evolved in East Asia.

Somewhat different is the question of the formal modifications of these Indian elements as they entered East Asian art. They continued to display substantial remnants of their original styles and thus remained for a time part of the emerging East Asian canon of forms though they gradually began to disappear as they became ever more fully amalgamated into the form language of East Asian Buddhist art. It would also have to be shown in detail what these foreign style elements looked like, where and when they appeared, to where they spread, and how long they survived. These questions cannot be discussed within the framework of this study, if only because this complicated process would require extensive illustrations. A close scrutiny of the historical development which led to the evolution of the truly East Asian (and this means initially Chinese) style, following its own original bent despite numerous foreign influences, would also have to critically assess the balance between foreign and indigenous elements.

It is undisputed that Chinese Buddhist art received numerous stimuli from abroad. This is part of its history, particularly during its fertile and fundamental periods of development during the Six Dynasties and the T'ang periods. Chinese Buddhist art was part of a network of almost universal cultural relations with the non-Chinese World, extending particularly to India and beyond India and Central Asia, as far as the Middle East. We could, for example, without difficulty trace the path of certain Indian Buddhist figure types and style forms within the Northwest Indian-Afghanistan Gandhāra culture, where they received late Hellenistic and some Iranian influences over a great number of intermediary stages as they came to be incorporated into the Chinese art of the Six Dynasties and the T'ang periods. We might confidently claim that many of the lavish forms and classic elements in the figures of T'ang sculpture originated in the Gupta art of India (ca. 320-600). But even this would touch only individual phenomena within the vast complex of East Asia's Buddhist art and would by no means "explain" these phenomena. "Influences" rarely explain the course of a historical evolution of such breadth, duration and importance. Each individual influence requires the readiness of a recipient, who will only adopt what he needs and is able to use for the unfolding of his own self with its own historical roots. Such a recipient will adopt and usually also transform foreign elements by his own initiative and powers.

This is precisely what happened in China. Hardly any works of China's Buddhist art, with a very few clearly limited exceptions, should be called pure copies of Indian works. Specifically Chinese elements which are the results of indigenous creative powers of tremendous breadth and depth are evident everywhere. But even in those exceptional cases where Indian-Central Asian models were copied, the degree of influence exercised by these models is limited for another reason. Most such models were world famous monuments of particular numinous importance from areas where Buddhism originated. They were copied more or less faithfully because the act of copying them was recognized as beneficial. The efficacy of the copy required that the iconographical features be carefully maintained, because their numinous powers mainly rested in these features. The artistic form, the "style" of these images, was of far less interest and entered China almost surreptitiously.¹⁴¹

We should, therefore, caution against one prevailing opinion that, in the final analysis, it was Hellenistic and, therefore, Western art which truly awakened and fertilized the religious art of India and, through it, also that of East Asia, so that in every T'ang Buddha we could still sense the Greek style of rendering garments. It is true that faint echoes or reminiscences of Hellenism do exist--though by no means everywhere--but they are embedded in a total structure which is profoundly different in artistic design and spiritual attitude. Mahâyâna art and religion may even be called the very opposite of all Hellenistic and, in several respects, even all Indian notions. Along the route from their point of origin in the West to their final destination in the East, even those relatively few Hellenistic and Late Antique elements which exercised any influence at all were reshaped to the same degree and in the same direction (i.e., toward desensualization and transcendence) as they were in Christian art. They were made to serve an entirely different spiritual content and even turned into their very opposites. We may note parenthetically that more recent studies have shown that those late Hellenistic style forms which influenced the Northwest Indian Gandhâra art and especially that of Bâmiyân (Afghanistan), which was so crucially important for their transmission to Central and East Asia, were far more frequently provincial Roman works, particularly from Syria (Palmyra, etc.) than Hellenistic ones, with Bactria furnishing supplementary elements.

Another question arises in connection with this analysis of style changes: Do typological similarities exist between the course of the East Asian and Western evolutions of style? It may have been noticed and perhaps resented that we used terms like archaic, early, high, and late classic. Is it permissible to apply such categories which have evolved in connection with Western phenomena to non-Western historical materials? Does their application imply claims of a parallel evolution or even possibly a general immanent law inherent in all such historical processes? Certainly not, at least not with such crude directness.

Nevertheless the Wei/Suiko style, for instance, displays a number of features which are typical of any archaic style and one which we also encounter in the Greek art of the sixth century B.C. or in Romanesque art. The changes in style from T'ang to Sung share certain features with those occurring in the art of early classic Greek to Hellenistic times. Moreover, changes from the Japanese Fujiwara to the Kamakura style may be compared to those from high Gothic to late Gothic art, or possibly to those from the early Renaissance to the Baroque, depending on which

aspects one examines. But none of this involves genuine and essential similarities between the two civilizations. The spiritual foundations of the two and the nature of their creativity, as, for example, the way in which they deal with the reality of nature, are too different. Above all, none of these European total processes truly parallels the total process of the changes which took place in East Asia.

The grand evolution from "archaic" to "classic" and "late classic" styles was nevertheless just as irreversible in East Asia as it was in Europe. In view of its historical role and the general character, no one will doubt that T'ang art, like T'ang culture in general, had truly classic qualities. It was classic in the double (historical and normative) sense that it had a certain style which may, on the one hand, be characterized as the apex of a long evolutionary process, while at the same time it established ideals of perfection and models of essence and norm. By contrast, the Sung style reveals obvious characteristics of a late phase including historicizing and archaizing tendencies. This cannot, however, be asserted with equal validity for the Kamakura style in Japan, even though it chronologically parallels the Sung style.

The equation nowhere fits, therefore, quite properly, and we have to be satisfied by saying that certain sequences of styles are similar in nature and direction to certain sequences of European changes in style, and that in both areas the direction is generally the same and the changes irreversible. Given the entirely different preconditions, there existed a remarkable basic similarity of forms and similarity of sequence between the two civilizations. That this was the case should not be ignored. It may have been the result of factors shared by all mankind and a consequently similar relationship between typical mental attitudes and creative potential. But we must also keep in mind the differences of spiritual content and its formal expressions, and must pay attention to the unique structure of the total East Asian development. For these reasons an uncritical application of European categories to East Asian art should be avoided.

The phenomenon of "levels of style," already touched upon several times, should also caution us against a too direct application of Western notions about the uniform, quasi-linear, nature of the logic of evolution. That is to say, the style of a Buddhist work of art depends largely on the particular level of existence to which that figure-type belongs, while type styles are primarily statements of iconographical relevance (cf. p. 118).¹⁴² The linear sequence of style phases is, therefore, interrupted or at least modified by style-determining factors which cut across sequences in time. True judgments can only be obtained by observing the interaction of type-styles and period-styles.

Both factors might almost be graphically represented within a system of coordinates. A third component may be the fairly distinct national styles of China and Japan, whose different essential features have still not been ascertained so clearly and methodically as to allow us to formulate them precisely. A fourth component involves the "layers of traditions," i.e., the fact that in one and the same work, such as a Japanese Buddha or Bodhisattva sculpture of the Kamakura period, a basically Indian iconographic-symbolic foundation has superimposed on it a Chinese design of the figure type, the garments etc. and that finally this Chinese type is modified by the specific Japanese sensitivity to forms as revealed in the treatment of all particular features of this sculpture.

The basic types of sacred beings remain relatively consistent despite their modification by period styles. Historical changes in style involved only more or less peripheral alterations. In East Asia the definition of a period style has far less validity as a guarantor of uniformity over an entire epoch than is frequently the case in Europe. Several styles may coexist during approximately the same period (22-26, 49, 55-58, 60, 70-73, 84, 87) and frequently even within the same group of figures or in the same painting. We are prone to transpose these from ontological into historical categories, and hence misunderstand them as period styles. This may result in errors of dating particular works or, in case of works which have been accurately dated, in puzzled statements among specialists about the "prematurely realistic" or "belated archaic" features of these works.

Realism in Buddhist art first and foremost symbolizes the ontological character of a sacred being. The higher the degree of a figure's metaphysical reality, the less realistic or naturalistic its image, because the formal features of the image make an ontological statement about the figure they depict. If a period tends generally to a more realistic treatment of forms, as was, for example, the case during the Kamakura period (29, 65, 78, 80, 88-90), it will also tend to allow the types of beings at the lower levels to play an avant-garde role for those at the higher levels. The reverse is true in case of a phase favoring an idealizing style. In these cases type-style may be superseded by period-style.

The picture presented by particular style phases is made even more complicated by the fact that in East Asia, as everywhere else, a leading art which evolved in one of the great centers may be found side by side with a provincial, "outmoded" art. In these situations, the spatial-geographic components of art interact with its temporal-historical dimensions, because provincial art usually follows older models. This is even more the case in the vast expanse of the Chinese empire than in the limited space of the Japanese archipelago, whose early and vigorously centralized political-social structure not only made the formation of a unified style possible, but favored it. In Japan all important stylistic phases, in a continuous tradition, have been shaped in the Yamato core region in and around Nara and Kyôto, and have radiated from there into the more distant centers. But in China, a number of local style traditions can be found coexisting from the very beginning, so that certainty about the place of origin of a particular work of art is just as significant for evaluating its place in art history as is its date. The one may often make it possible to determine the other, render its determination more reliable or force certain modifications in dating.

The inter-penetration of type style and period style occurred in East Asian art in realms far beyond the sphere of Buddhist art. For example, in both painting and calligraphy, a number of technically as well as artistically different styles have been cultivated side by side during the last 1500 years. These have included "linear" and "painterly" styles--both "static" and "dynamic". Both have frequently been used by the same artist, depending not only on the content, purpose, formal and functional context of individual works, but also on the artist's mood and the usage dictated by tradition.¹⁴³ It remained possible to select different styles, though never as arbitrarily as, for example, in the fashion of the historicism of our 19th century artists. This is because in East Asia all these styles have remained living elements of the tradition.

Such freedom of choice, such a polyphony of potential styles--which all remained available at the same time--offered a wealth of nuances between two opposite poles, especially in the more recent centuries. The result was a web of styles, frequently rather complicated, and thoroughly confusing to Western students, who are used to linear concepts of time and to mutually exclusive modes of thought. In the West, we at best barely recognize local variants of style, different historical lines of development, or the co-existence of the styles of several generations living at the same time (Pinder's "non-contemporaneity of contemporary phenomena").¹⁴⁴

Buddhist art, however, does not have such wide choices of style as does the secular art of East Asia. In Buddhist art, the type of figure largely determines the style, and all these type styles can only vary within the framework of a set of well-defined possibilities and without substantial mutual overlapping. However, such "subterranean" changes of period style do occur. They permit these images to retain the qualities of a living tradition while at the same time retaining the spiritual message regardless of the time or frequencies of such changes. All figure types focus on the sacred symbol of the Buddha. The Buddha symbol, in spite of certain concessions to contemporary tastes, is neither "archaic" nor "modern," but remains, according to Mahâyâna doctrine, "uncreated" and remote from all changes in form. All forms bear the mark of the period of their genesis, but these are canceled in the ontological vision of the timeless ground of all change symbolized by the Buddha in and of himself.