

**THE UNIVERSITY
MUSEUM: SECTION
OF ORIENTAL ART**

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The University Museum: Section of Oriental Art by John Gets

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JOHN GETS

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Pennsylvania University

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ORIENTAL
ART

PHILADELPHIA
1917

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PREFACE

That the culture of the Far East is linked with our own by ties of the most vital importance is becoming increasingly apparent from year to year. Especially true is it that the various national schools of art of the Orient can no longer be regarded as isolated phenomena, interesting only in a retrospective sense. On the contrary they are still active processes, destined to exert a steadily growing influence upon the esthetic ideals of Occidental lands. It is for this eminently practical reason, as well as for its own intrinsic interest, that the field of Oriental art is so important to us.

For various reasons, the attention of the University Museum in this connection has been confined largely to China. Of the earlier phases of the art of that country practically nothing has survived save certain sacrificial vessels of bronze, of massive construction and displaying a sort of barbaric strength and dignity not found in later bronze vessels. As a rule their decoration is highly symbolic and consists principally of conventionalized patterns. Frequently they are covered with a very rich and beautiful patina in tones of green, blue, and brown, varying with the chemical constitution of the soil in which they have lain or of the atmospheric conditions to which they have been exposed.

Somewhat later it was that there arose in China that art of sculpture the excellence of which has attracted such favorable notice of recent years. The development of this art was a consequence of the introduction of the Buddhist faith from India in the early centuries of our era, and the earliest examples of Chinese statuary which have come down to us date from the Tartar dynasty known as the northern Wei (A. D. 386-535). Conse-

quently statues from this epoch are spoken of as belonging to the Wei period, in spite of the fact that that dynasty ruled only over a portion of northern China and is not recognized by the Chinese as a legitimate one. It was a little later than this, during the T'ang dynasty (A. D. 618-907), that sculpture in China attained its highest development. That era has left us statues both in stone and in pottery which rank among the greatest that have ever been produced anywhere. The University Museum is especially fortunate in possessing specimens of this great art such as are unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

Although painting has existed in China for not less than two thousand years, scarcely a picture exists today which we can assign with assurance to any period earlier than the T'ang dynasty (A. D. 618-907). Under the rulers of that house and of the Sung dynasty (A. D. 960-1280) painting attained a pitch of excellence never reached before. Surviving examples compel the highest admiration. Particularly do they display in an eminent degree that complete mastery of brushwork for which Oriental painting has ever been noted. In determining the date or authorship of any given work in the absence of independent historical evidence, there is still great difficulty. The painter's seal and signature are not always trustworthy, and while internal indications may tell us much, and sometimes even be decisive, it is still true that where documentary evidence is wanting, determinations are matters of individual opinion rather than of knowledge.

The use of pottery has been known among the Chinese from prehistoric times, but at first the development of the art was exceedingly slow. Glazes appear to have been almost if not entirely unknown until the Han dynasty (B. C. 206-A. D. 221), when they begin to appear, possibly as a result of the contact which arose at that time with western Asia, where glazes had been known for many centuries. Before the end of the T'ang dynasty, however,

both earthenware and stoneware were made in a variety of shapes and ornamented with numerous colored glazes. At about this time, too, the celadons, forerunners of the true porcelains, began to make their appearance, and soon attained an enormous vogue, being carried, particularly by Arab traders, to Malaysia, India, East Africa, and even to the Mediterranean.

Porcelain in its restricted sense is a development of the last two dynasties, the Ming (1368-1644) and the Manchu, or Ch'ing (1644-1912). It has been variously defined, but essentially it is composed of a special sort of white non-fusible earth known as kaolin, fluxed with petuntse, a powdered quartz. The Chinese seem at first to have valued porcelain less for its own beauty than for the facility with which it lent itself to imitations of various precious materials. For example, green jade was imitated in the celadon wares with their deep pellucid sea green glazes, while ivory found a substitute in the ware known as *blanc de Chine*. Soon, however, porcelain began to be prized for its own excellent qualities, and under the Ming emperors was brought to a high state of development, which continued unchecked well on into the Manchu dynasty. It was under the emperor K'ang Hsi (1662-1722) that the art reached its climax. Under the two succeeding emperors, Yung Ch'eng (1723-1735) and Ch'ien Lung (1736-1795), porcelain continued to be beautifully and carefully made; but it does not quite equal the greatness and vigor of the best K'ang Hsi specimens. The great days of Chinese porcelain may be said to have ended with the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Other countries represented at present in the Oriental Section are Persia and Tibet. In the case of the latter country particular attention is called to the intermediate position of its art. Lying between China and India, Tibet received its culture partly from the one land and partly from the other. Its main impress, however, is Indian,

inasmuch as the art of Tibet is almost wholly religious, and connected with Buddhism, which originated in India.

The art of Persia has so far received less attention than it deserves. Fundamentally it is the old indigenous art of the Iranian plateau, deeply modified by Babylonian influence, later and less deeply by Greek ideas after Alexander. Adopted almost in its entirety by the Arabs after their conquest of Persia in the first half of the seventh century A. D., it has been carried far and wide by them in the course of their conquests and trading ventures. In this way Persian art has come to exert a most potent influence over a great part of the world, from China to Spain and equatorial Africa, and deserves more intensive study in the land of its origin.

C. W. B.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF CHINESE DYNASTIES

(The earlier or mythical periods are omitted)

The earlier dates given in the following table have been calculated backward by later historians from the lengths of the reigns and other data recorded in the current annals, and must consequently be taken as only approximate. It is not till the accession of Hsüan Wang (B. C. 822) that there is a general agreement in the native sources. From this time downward the official Chinese dates are accepted by sinologues and Chinese scholars generally. Not in every case did the dynasties named below rule over the whole of China; those named are the ones regarded by the Chinese themselves as legitimate.

THE THREE EARLY DYNASTIES (FEUDAL PERIOD)

(Known to the Chinese as San Tai)

<i>Name of Dynasty</i>	<i>Number of Rulers</i>	<i>Duration of Dynasty</i>
Hsia.....	Eighteen.....	B. C. 2205-1766
Shang.....	Twenty-eight.....	" 1766-1122
Chou.....	Thirty-five.....	" 1122-255

<i>Name of Dynasty</i>	<i>Number of Rulers</i>	<i>Duration of Dynasty</i>
Ch'in.....	Five.....	B. C. 255-206
Western Han.....	Fifteen.....	" 206-25 A. D.
Eastern Han.....	Twelve.....	A. D. 25-221

PERIOD OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

Minor Han.....	Two.....	A. D. 221-285
Western Chin.....	Four.....	" 265-317
Eastern Chin.....	Eleven.....	" 317-420

EPOCH OF DIVISION BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH

Sung (Liu House).....	Eight.....	A. D. 420-479
Ch'i.....	Seven.....	" 479-502
Liang.....	Six.....	" 502-557
Ch'en.....	Five.....	" 557-589

While the four above named dynasties were ruling over southern China, the northern half of the country was under the domination of the Northern, Western, and Eastern Wei Dynasties (Tartar House of Toba), as well as of the Northern Ch'i and Northern Chou.

Sui.....	Four.....	A. D. 589-618
T'ang.....	Twenty-two.....	" 618-907

WU TAI ("FIVE DYNASTIES")

Posterior Liang.....	Two.....	A. D. 907-923
" T'ang.....	Four.....	" 923-936
" Chin.....	Two.....	" 936-947
" Han.....	Two.....	" 947-951
" Chou.....	Three.....	" 951-960
Northern Sung.....	Nine.....	" 960-1127
Southern Sung.....	Nine.....	" 1127-1280

Between the overthrow of the T'ang Dynasty, at the commencement of the tenth century, and the rise of the Mongol power, early in the thirteenth, great portions of northern China were ruled over by the following Tartar dynasties: Liao (Khitan Tartars), 907-1125; Western Liao, 1125-1168; Kin (Nuchen Tartars), 1115-1234.