

Editors' Introduction

Religion and the Arts of Global Asia

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The essays published in this special issue of *Religion and the Arts* grew out of a particularly stimulating workshop entitled *Spiritual and Artistic Interactions: Religion and the Arts of Global Asia*, held at Fudan University in Shanghai in June 2014. Sponsored by the University's International Center for Studies of Chinese Civilization, it was organized by Rui Oliveira Lopes, visiting fellow, and Shaoxin Dong, professor at the National Institute for Advance Humanistic Studies there. During the three-day workshop, a dozen scholars presented papers on a range of topics dealing with the religious and artistic traditions across Asia. Unfortunately, it was possible to publish only eight of the papers here, but the keen discussions during and after the sessions reflect the lively interaction between participants such that the presence of all attendees is reflected in this selection.

Befitting its broad title, the workshop drew upon the expertise of scholars ranging from historians of art and architecture to linguists, textual historians, and others. Participants came from a wide geographical area, drawn from academic centers in Asia, Europe, and North America. The essays likewise touch on a variety of religions including not the only the major traditions of (in alphabetical order) Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, and Jainism but also many variants and subspecialties thereof, such as Catholicism and the Jesuit tradition of Christianity (discussed in different contexts by both Dong and Naoko Frances Hioki) or Sunni and Shi'i Islam (discussed by Sheila Blair).

The essays published here include works of art produced across Asia, from its western littoral on the Mediterranean to its eastern shores in Korea and Japan, and from China and Central Asia south through the Indian subcontinent. But the range extends even further, as some the pieces of art discussed have been dispersed around the world. Dong, for example, discusses the Dong

Qichang album that the anthropologist Berthold Laufer discovered in the early 1900s in Xi'an and acquired for the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Rostislav Berezkin focuses on an illustrated manuscript of *Baojuan Rescuing His Mother*, once in the collection of the Russian Orientalist Vladimir A. Desnitskiy (1878–1958) but recently acquired by the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.

The range of time and media is equally broad. Most essays deal with arts created during the last two millennia, but some refer to earlier traditions. Adam Hardy, for example, relates the design of temples in north and south India to the Vedas and the Upanishads dating from the seventh century BCE. The tradition of shadow puppets may go back just as far, although, as Oliveira Lopes shows, extant examples are much more recent. Fei Deng investigates the iconography of the half-open door, a well-studied pictorial scene that frequently adorns stone sarcophagi and tomb walls in northern China from the late eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, but also discusses prototypes in Roman and Han funerary contexts. Some authors concentrate on architecture, whether the temples of South India or the pilgrimage shrine at Mashhad in eastern Iran. Others discuss architectural decoration, including murals in Dunhuang and northern China and scenes on temples in southern India. Portable objects range from Japanese folding screens to shadow puppets, and multiple authors discuss books of all sorts, from manuscripts to woodblock-printed books in different formats including the scroll, the accordion, and the codex. Maggie Wan concentrates on just one part of a book: the illustrated frontispiece.

Despite this diversity of people and topics, several themes run throughout the essays presented here. One is the need to look at various media to understand the iconography used in any particular medium. For example, murals and reliefs in caves and temples can help to explain narratives in paintings and frontispieces or the imagery of shadow puppets. A second theme revolves around the intersection of foreign traditions with local ones, as with the reception of European engravings in China and Japan. The images may have carried one set of meanings in their original environment but quite different ones in their new homes, and those might be further adapted with copies of originals that were used as the basis for further copies. It is thus important to consider not only the creator and the original object but also the audience and its new meanings, as well as to emphasize movement, permutation, and emergence. In addition, the reception of these objects was not only visual but also oral and physical. Books, for example, were made not simply to be read silently, but also to be recited, sung, or performed. Screens were not necessarily viewed flat, as they are displayed in museums today, but often seen folded. These objects, then, can testify to popular practice, and they are important evidence for audiences