In this issue, we are publishing the papers presented at TAASA’s full day Inner Asia symposium held on 7 September at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. The symposium drew together a number of experts who explored aspects of the rich cultures of the region stretching from the Korean peninsula to West Asia - and in particular the interaction of ideas and material culture within this region and between this region and the great powers at the periphery, especially the Chinese and Persian worlds.

We were honoured to welcome our keynote speaker, Professor Zhang Jianlin, Deputy Director of the Shaanxi Provincial Archaeology Research Institute, China, who presented his recent work in Tibet at sites relating to the Tubo kingdom from the 7th to early 9th centuries. Images found at these sites demonstrate the frequent cultural exchanges between the Tubo, the Tang empire and Central Asia in this period. In particular, his observations of the costumes depicted on these images show how the people of Tubo integrated Buddhism with the customs of their traditional worship.

Dr Angelo Andrea di Castro continued the theme of cultural interaction in his presentation of artistic and architectural features of the Kashgar area, based on recent work undertaken through the Monash Kashgar Project. His article illustrates how cultural exchanges and inter-ethnic relations have been shaping the social environment of the Kashgar oasis uninterrupted since the early Iron Age.

Lyndon Arden-Wong focuses specifically on the Türk (552-742) and Uighur (744-840) periods in the central-eastern Eurasian steppes, exploring the cultural differences between these two societies through their use of tangle - which can variously mean a brand (for livestock), seal of author, mark of ownership or a political symbol. His close analysis of the changing use of tangle signs demonstrates the shift in ritual practice over this period.

The potential for influences to reach right across the Inner Asia region is suggested by Dr Qinghua Guo’s article on the architectural remains of the Bohai capital, Shangjing in present Northeastern China dating from the 7th to 9th century. She focuses on the extant roofing tiles found at Shangjing, observing that, while these tiles follow the general range of types familiar in Tang dynasty China (618 – 907), the type of eaves-cover tiles used here is distinctive and uncommon in the Tang.

Instead, Dr Guo points out the similarity between these arched eaves cover roof tiles and earlier roof tiles found at Gordium, the capital of the Phrygian kingdom (8th century BCE), suggesting contact over widely separated geographic regions and time span.

The presence of Christian communities throughout the Inner Asia region is also a testament to the way in which international trade along the ‘Silk Road’ facilitated the movement of ideas and peoples across this region. The final paper at the symposium presented by Dr Ken Parry discussed how eastern rite Christian communities, initially founded in Persia from at least the 3rd century CE, established themselves in the oasis towns of Inner Asia. Dr Parry shared his own recent archaeological work at Quanzhou in South China, where there are archaeological remains from Christian as well as Hindu, Manichaean and Muslim communities dating from the Yuan dynasty (1279 -1368).

This issue is not confined to the Inner Asia symposium. Christopher Haskett presents an 18th century thangka or large Tibetan scroll painting held by the NGA, Canberra, which has only recently been identified as an important portrait of the fifth Tai Situpa, a high lama of the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Russell Kelty describes a fascinating display - Stairway To Heaven - currently at the Art Gallery of South Australia, with over 40 works created primarily in the Himalayan region, or inspired by its sacred traditions.

Another major exhibition which TAASA members can currently enjoy is at the NGV, Melbourne. Dr Mae Anna Pang has curated Three Perfections: Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting in Chinese Art which showcases paintings and calligraphy dating from the 14th century to the present from the NGV’s Asian collection.

Rounding out our offering in this issue is Christina Sumner’s detailed description of a Khotan rug in the collection of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. And for those who want to extend their knowledge of the Inner Asia region, we present Professor Jeffrey Riegel’s informative assessment of a recent publication by Valerie Hansen, namely The Silk Road: A New History, plus Sandra Forbes’ tantalising introduction to The Museum of Samarkand.

In this last TAASA Review for 2013, we would like to wish TAASA members all the very best for the festive season. We look forward to sharing a full program of activities in 2014.
In the early 7th century, in the central regions of the Tibet Plateau, the Sing-po-rje tribe expanded from its territory in the Yarlung river valley, conquered other tribes in central and south Tibet, and established a centralised monarchy known as Tubo or Tufan. Over the next two centuries, the Tubo conquered the Zhangzhung, Supi and Tuhuyun, in the north and the west, gradually occupying a large area of Central Asia right up to the borders of the Tang Empire.

Simultaneously, there were frequent cultural exchanges between the Tubo, the Tang empire and Central Asia. Since the 1980s, in the Qinghai-Tibet plateau, many rock carvings, murals, and painted coffin panels have been discovered including a considerable number of Buddhist statues. New discoveries over the past few years have provided important material on Buddhist art in the Tubo period and information on the mutual cultural influence between the Tubo, the Tang Empire and Central Asia. Some of these will be outlined below.

Tubo period Buddhist statues are mainly concentrated in three provinces: Mangkang (Mangkam), Chaya and Jiangda in Eastern Tibet, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai and Shiqu county in Sichuan.

In Chaya county (Eastern Tibet), there is a Buddha Hall built on the side of Danmazha cliff. The cliff face is the back wall of the Buddha Hall. Inside, there are statues of Vairocana (the great radiant one’), with eight bodhisattvas, two flying apsaras and one nagaraja (Snake or Dragon King). There are also Tibetan and Chinese inscriptions.

The statues are arranged symmetrically around a central axis. There is a rectangular border around the statues, decorated on both sides with lotus patterns. The major statue in the middle in high relief is that of Vairocana, with a roof-like canopy over his head. On the top left is an engraving of the moon, on the top right one of the sun. On each side of Vairocana are carvings in bas relief of a flying apsara and four bodhisattvas.

Vairocana and the bodhisattvas all wear a three petal crown. Only one bodhisattva has a five petal crown. On some of the statues, at the back of the crowns, we can see their hair, gathered up in a top-knot. Hair ornamentation is mainly in the shape of a ring or multi-layered braided cords. Hand-bangles and arm-bracelets are of simple shape and design. A silk sash is draped diagonally from their upper left shoulders. They wear long trousers, with a belt around the waist. The feet are bare. Vairocana is sitting cross-legged in the full lotus position, on a lotus throne flanked by Sumeru lions.

The eight bodhisattvas have playful poses, sitting on flat lotus thrones. They can be identified as Sarvanivarana vishkambhin, Samantabhadra, Ksitigarbha, Manjusri, Maitreya, Vajrapani, Avalokiteshvara and Akasagarbha.

The inscriptions in intaglio at the bottom of the statues in Old Tibetan have been well preserved. They affirm the bases of the Buddhist faith: performing acts of goodness, escape from birth, old age, sickness and death and the achievement of eternal bliss. The inscription goes on to give the date: ‘Summer of the Year of the Monkey, in the time of Tri Desongtsen, state officials were ordered to enter into an alliance with the Tang.’ It wishes Tri Desongtsen longevity and good fortune to
all sentient beings, and also gives some details of the Tibetan and Chinese monks involved in the making of the sculptures.

This particular archeological survey paid special attention to the Chinese language inscriptions. Here, the characters ‘Emperor of the Great Fan State’ can be made out (fan = foreign, meaning the Tubo state) and at the end, the year jia-shen, which exactly corresponds to the year of the monkey in the reign of Chi de-song-zan (Tri Desongtsen). This shows that the inscription is dated to the year 804 of the Western calendar, or the 21st year of the Zhenyuan reign period of the emperor Dezong of the Tang dynasty.

The Tibetan and Chinese inscriptions not only give the date of the carving of the statues. They also show the important historical significance of the peaceful alliance (biéntng) between China and Tibet at that time.

In 2009, the Randui mani stone inscriptions were discovered at Jinshan river bank and Qiamalong creek to the north west of Randui village, in Mangkam county, Tibet. Nineteen were scattered along the river bank, partially or completely buried in the ground. Mani stones are stone plates, rocks and/or pebbles, inscribed with the six-syllabled mantra of Avalokiteshvara (om mani padme hum) as a form of prayer in Tibetan Buddhism.

Langbalangzeng lakang is the Tibetan word for the Vairocana Hall, situated in the village of Randui. Well preserved statues in their original position are located inside: Vairocana in the centre towards the back, two bodhisattvas to his left and two on his right. At the back of the Hall is a pile of broken stones, including various parts of the body (13 pieces), fragments of Sumeru lions (3 pieces) and remnants of a lotus throne and building columns with bas relief sculptures on them.

Vairocana is wearing a conical turban, outside it is the three petal crown. He has earrings and pendants and is wearing a simple belted robe with the triangular lapel. He is wearing boots, and is sitting in full lotus meditation position on a Sumeru lion throne. The four bodhisattvas also wear a conical turban, covered by a foreign style cap. Outside this is the three petal crown, accompanied by earrings and pendants. They are wearing loose robes, with three lapels and a belt, and boots. The costumes of Vairocana and the bodhisattvas are typical of the clothes of the Tubo aristocracy.

The Zhaguoxi creek cliff face sculptures are situated in Mangkang county, in Naxi county, Naxi village. In the 1980s, the cultural relics survey discovered something very interesting about the statues which had formerly been regarded as being those of Srong-tsan-gam-po and Princess Wencheng, Brikuhi Devi, his Nepalese wife: that they are, in fact, of Vairocana and two standing bodhisattvas. The images are chiselled on stone inside the Zhaguoxi Lakang (Buddhist Hall). Both Vairocana and bodhisattvas have halos emanating from their heads and bodies and wear similar crowns and clothing to the previous finds.

Tubu Buddhist images are mainly concentrated in the south of the Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai. The Leba creek images are located in three places between Jiegu Township and the Tianhe river, at the entrance and inside of the creek. At the entrance of the creek there are two engravings: one titled Worshipping the Buddha and the other Preaching the Dharma.

Images at Beina creek are located 20 kilometres from Jiegu Town. There are nine altogether in high relief. The temple which exists there now is called the Vairocana Hall, with Vairocana as the central image and the eight bodhisattvas standing around him. Their costumes and ornamentation are identical. They are wearing a cylindrical hat, a decorative three petal crown, a single lapel robe.

In front of the image there is a Tibetan inscription, which records that these statues were made during the reign of the Tubo emperor Tri Desongzan (798-815). Nearby, on the cliff wall, there is a Chinese inscription of the text of the Heart Sutra.

The statues of the two bodhisattvas are slender and erect. They show a relatively strong Nepalese style. Underneath is a Tibetan inscription which says: ‘when the bodhisattva nobleman Tri Songdezan was on this earth, he accumulated great virtue. He propagated the Dharma, he converted to Great Vehicle (Mahayana) Buddhism, he enjoyed longevity on this earth, and now lives eternally.’ There is also a Chinese inscription with much the same content.

There are indications that Chinese carvers participated in the making of these Buddhist
images, probably during the lifetime of Tri Songdezan (755-795) or a little later. Since 2010, there have been continuous discoveries in Baima and Xuba spirit mountains near the village of Yanjiao village in Shiqu country. Of these, the greatest concentration is in the latter. The images found in Beina creek in Yushu, Qinghai, in Zhao-Alam in Shiqu in Sichuan, and on the cliff face in Chaya Danmazha were all accompanied by inscriptions in Chinese. These indubitably indicate the participation of Chinese artisans or monks in the carving process.

The Tibetan literary classics The Sages at the Wedding Banquet and The Reigns of the Tibetan Kings tell us about the Tang imperial princess Wencheng, on her way to Tibet. They refer to a stone statue carved at Danma Cliff: ‘The princess and all the Tubo envoys reached the Danma Cliff, on the cliff there was carved an image of Maitreya bodhisattva, it was seven cubits high’. In these records, in addition to the Buddhist statues, there is also mention of inscriptions of Buddhist sutras.

The images we have found in the eastern part of the Qinghai-Tibet plateau date from the end of the 8th century to the early 9th century, long after the time of Princess Wencheng’s voyage to Tibet. But these literary works do provide evidence that the Tang empire and the Tubo had considerable interchange in the field of Buddhist culture.

More importantly, these statues have a type of clothing which is different from those we are used to seeing in Buddhist statues, which I call ‘Buddhist images in the Tubo style’.

The head ornaments include conical turban bound around the head, a tubular high crown and a tubular top-knot. In front or at the side there is a three petalled crown. The conical shaped turban was the most commonly used aristocratic head ornament in the time of the Tubo, commonly seen in the Dunhuang murals and in the paintings on coffins in Qinghai Tibetan tombs.

There are robes with single, double and even triple lapels. On all of them the right lapel presses down on the left. The sleeves are extremely long, they droop downwards and can even reach the heel. The mouth of the sleeves is quite wide, and the edge of the sleeve is always embroidered. The front of the garment on both sides is quite high.

The triangle-shaped turn-down collar robe is the clothing of the royal family and the aristocratic classes of Persia and Central Asia. In the Northern and Southern dynasties period (between the Han and the Tang) this style entered China, and was very popular during the Sui and the Tang dynasties. It was one type of costume worn by non-Chinese of the time. There is no shortage of examples in Tang murals, and Tang porcelain statuettes found in tombs. The belt around the waist was probably made of leather. It had buckles, button holes, and weights hanging from the internal side of the belt. The boots were generally pointed or rounded.

As far as the clothing of the Tubo aristocracy was concerned, most scholars think that this sort of upper class Tubo clothing came from Central Asia and Persia, as seen in murals and other images from Sogdiana. This fully reflects the great contributions made by the Tubo, situated between the Tang Empire and Central Asia, in absorbing and integrating eastern and western culture.

The question of when the costumes of the Tubo aristocracy began to be used in Buddhist statues can now be determined from recent finds as being from the last years of the 8th century to the first years of the 9th century. This legacy persisted as late as the 11th and 12th centuries, as can be seen in the murals in the Zhatang temple of Zhanang county, and those in the Xialu temple in Xigatze. The people of Tubo integrated Buddhism with the customs of their traditional worship. Buddha was regarded as an emperor, and so they adopted the costumes of the highest ranks of their society as appropriate for the founder of Buddhism.

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In recent years the Monash Kashgar Project has been engaging with local authorities in studying cultural heritage management, development and historical heritage sites. In this article I will present an overview of some artistic and architectural features of the Kashgar area. My focus is on the cultural development of the Kashgar oasis from the viewpoint of population movements and stylistic trends.

The oasis of Kashgar is located in a strategic position at the junction of the Tian Shan and Pamir Mountains where the northern and southern branches of the Silk Road reunite after forking at the Jade Gate in the Dunhuang oasis. From Kashgar the roads forked again into various directions across the mountain passes towards Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and via Tashkurgan towards Tajikistan, Gilgit, Swat and the Kashmir Valleys. Communications occurred not only along the east-west trajectories, but also along the north-south paths. Controlling this section of the Silk Road also meant control of the hub of this network which connected different peoples, city-states, ancient kingdoms and empires between East and West.

Since the early Iron Age this part of the Silk Road was occupied by a mixture of populations: semi-nomadic pastoral Indo-Europeans and proto-Hunnic groups who intermingled with other local groups.

The Kashgar region, consisting of lowland oases, river valleys and the surrounding mountains, is rich with heritage sites ranging from the Palaeolithic to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) periods. According to recent research conducted by Chinese and Australian scientists, people living near Upal at the foot of the Pamirs, in the liminal part of the oasis, were already dedicated to agricultural activities, cultivating wheat, around the later phase of the Bronze Age c. 1500 -800 BCE (Zhao et al. 2012). From this same area two important bronze cauldrons were discovered; one of these has knobbed ‘mushroom-like’ handles dated to the mid Iron Age (7th-5th century BCE). Similar cauldrons have been found from the Black Sea to the Southern Mongolian plateau over a broad chronological span.

‘Mushroom-handled’ cauldrons – quite popular in the Altai regions – have been generally related to the Hunnic (Xiongnu) groups (Davis-Kimball 1998). Nevertheless the possibility that these cauldrons from Upal County were from non-Hunnic tribes should not be ruled out. Regardless of their origins, the important point here is that pastoral nomadic populations sharing similar material culture with peoples of the Kazakhstan steppe and of the Altai Mountains were also present in the Pamirs around the middle of the first millennium BCE and that most likely they interacted with the local agriculturists by exchanging their produces and artefacts.

From the Iron Age (c. 9th-5th century BCE) down to around the 7th century CE we find evidence of different cultural interactions.
For instance, the tombs of the Pamir site at Xianbaobao (or Xiabandi, in the area of Tashkurgan) indicate the presence of nomadic Saka/Scythians around the 3rd century BCE. Anthropological analysis of the skulls demonstrates that the people buried in these tombs (either small tumuli and stone-circles, or simple pits) were a mixture of Caucasoid and Mongoloid types respectively related to Saka horsemen and Qiang proto-Tibetan tribes. From the 8th to 4th centuries BCE Iranian Saka groups were interacting in the Pamir regions with other local populations: most likely the occupation of the lowland of the Kashgar oasis started around this period.

It is not clear though whether their settling in the Pamirs’ valleys was due to a general migratory movement responding to climatic changes or whether they were regularly shifting their territories on a cyclical-seasonal basis in order to change pastures until they found a ‘suitable’ environment with no competing groups for the basic subsistence. In regards to the artefacts collected from the tombs at Xianbaobao, Mallory and Mair (2000: 163) talk of a ‘continuum of steppe cultures that stretched from Herodotus’ Scythians on the black Sea coast into the northern and western margins of the Tarim Basin.’ The bronze buckle and horse trapping ornaments from the Pamirs show a clear animal-style of the steppe with stylisation of horned animals, the ubiquitous Central Asian mountain goat motif.

There was clearly a dynamic relation between nomadic/semi-nomadic and sedentary cultures, such as for instance, when the Yuezhi migrations and the Wusun dislocation altered the Inner Asian political balance (2nd century BCE). Despite the initial traumatic impact and the relative collapse of various kingdoms, these ‘barbaric nomads’ were adapting themselves to Greco-Bactrian and Iranian lifestyles, embracing elements of sedentary life. Aspects of this are reflected in many artistic expressions such as the precious artefacts from Tillya Tepe in Bactria, where elements of Saka and Iranian cultures are mixed with Scythian and Bactrian with incorporated Hellenistic figurative idioms.

This eclectic environment of Central Asian cultures and peoples also moulded the Kushan world.

Chinese sources of the later Han period (25-220 CE) talk of Kushan interference in the political affairs of Kashgar (the ancient Shule, as the Chinese called it). An Guo, the king of Kashgar, sent his maternal uncle Chenpan as a hostage to the Yuezhi (the Kushan court). After a period spent in a Buddhist monastery in Kapisha (possibly at Shotorak) Chenpan eventually became the new king of Kashgar. His contacts with Kushan elites and Buddhist preceptors might have enabled a swift diffusion of Buddhism in the Kashgar oasis. Furthermore the economic surplus generated by the commerce of the caravan traders along the Silk Road might have helped the development of Buddhist monastic institutions in this strategic oasis.

One of the most famous Buddhist teachers who translated many sutras from Sanskrit into Chinese was Kumarajiva. Born in the mid-4th century CE from a princess of Kucha and an Indian Brahmin, he converted from Hinayana to Mahayana during his time in Kashgar. A couple of centuries later Xuanzang described the monasteries of Kashgar as bustling with thousands of monks. The archaeological evidence however is not particularly strong, compared to other sites of the Tarim Basin. Only a few Buddhist monuments of those investigated by early 20th century’s explorers (Stein, Pelliot, etc) are still partly visible thanks to the tyranny of time, natural erosion and modern development. Kashgar’s most famous and best preserved Buddhist structure is the Mori Tim stupa (temple) complex, some...
20 km NE of modern Kashi: it is protected by a wire fence on its borders but threatened by earth works not far away.

This sacred area comprises two main structures, namely Stupa A and Stupa B, and other minor ruined structures. On the southern sector of the sacred area, the Mori Tim Stupa A is a mud brick structure about 12m tall raised on a three-stepped squared plinth with sides about 13m long. The plinth is surmounted by a receding cylindrical section, with a diameter of about 7.30m, which supports the 'dome' (anda) and its base (drum), with a diameter of about 5.2m. The stupa pinnacle is damaged and the harmika (a small railing at the top of the stupa) and the chattras (umbrellas), which were supposed to be there, are now missing. The section underneath the anda was adorned with plaster decorations still visible at the time of Aurel Stein (Di Castro 2008).

Stupa B is a large three-stepped structure c. 26m wide at the base and about 10m tall. Originally it had niches which were likely decorated with stucco images of Buddhas and/or Bodhisattvas, a conclusion based on a number of fragments recovered on the site. It is possible to relate this imposing structure with the type defined by Franz (1980, 1984) as a ‘stupa-temple’ or ‘tower-shaped stupa’. A noteworthy example with niches is depicted in the Northern Wei period Cave 11 of Yungang (Wong 2004: fig. 8.11). In this frieze dated to the late 5th century, a row of Xianbei donors is shown at the base of a stupa-temple with niches decorated with Buddhist images and surmounted by a particular type of harmika with chattras which can be considered as potential derivations of those that probably existed at the top of Mori Tim Stupa B. This comparative evidence suggests that Stupa B was constructed in the 5th century CE.


Kushan models are definitely important in assessing the dating for Stupa A, nevertheless since there is no substantial evidence for a definitive chronology the comparison should be more inclusive, also taking into account material from Gandhara, Swat and the Karakorum range. From this evidence, Mori Tim Stupa A could date from between the 2nd and 6th centuries CE. However, circumstantial evidence at the site tells us that both Stupa A and Stupa B were probably built at the same time. The size and type of the bricks used were identical and both stupas sit on a common natural platform, leading to the provisional conclusion that Stupa A, like Stupa B, was built around the 4th or early 5th century CE. This does not exclude the possibility that both Stupas A and B were originally built earlier and then rebuilt or renovated around the 4th-5th century CE.

Another important Buddhist monument is the Cave of the Three Immortal Buddhas, on the rock cliff above the Chakmak River, north of modern Kashgar. This was one of the early cave temples of the Tarim Basin. It is still not clear though whether this rock-temple was excavated during the period of the Three Kingdoms (3rd-4th century CE), or later during the Jin Dynasty (3rd-5th century CE). Clearly the oasis of Kashgar was instrumental in the diffusion of Buddhism across the Silk Road.

The famous pilgrim Xuanzang must have visited this impressive monument in the early Tang period. Paul Pelliot published a brief description and a detailed plan of the tripartite cave (Pelliot 1906), which is about 10m wide and a bit less than 6m deep. The badly preserved pictorial and sculptural decoration (possibly related to a later restructuring) can perhaps be dated to the 5th or early 6th century, when compared with other Central Asian decorative motifs from northern Silk Road sites such as Kucha.

The Three Immortal Buddhas Cave was connected to an important Buddhist site on the Chakmak River, called Tegurman Tim by Pelliot, which can now be identified with the larger settlement of Yawuluk and the monastic site of Dakiyanus. Remarkably, fragments of Buddhist texts written in Brahmi,
on birch and on paper, were recently found in this site, together with a beautiful vase with three handles and impressed figurations on the body, now in the Kashgar Museum. Its peculiar morphology – in particular the three handles – is a characteristic feature of Inner Asian vases where a number of similar containers have been documented from Khotan, Tumshuq and other sites. Possible derivations can also be identified in the later glazed vases of the Tang period (618-906).

The decoration on the vase with a floral frieze of palmette reveals western models derived from Bactria and Fergana, where late Hellenistic artistic traditions were still substantial in the 6th century CE (Marshak in Watt et al. 2004: 190-191). The medallions show alternating profiles of bearded men wearing a crown with a crescent, betraying definite Iranian elements, and kneeling female attendants holding wine cups and pitchers. An analogous vase from Khotan shows a similar decoration as do other pottery types and terracotta ‘ossuaries’ from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The date proposed by Härte1 and Yaldiz (1982: 62-64) for the Khotanese vase is perhaps a bit too early. The 6th century should be considered more likely for these three-handled vases with figurations, which are stylistically related to the Sogdian diaspora. The depiction of wine drinking scenes on the medallions suggests that this type of three-handled vase contained wine which was then decanted into pitchers and poured into bowls or goblets.

A significant object depicting another wine drinking scene was recovered from Upal in 1972 (Patry Leidy in Watt et al. 2004: 192-193). This artefact, which predates the Yaukuluk vase by several generations, is a small schist tray of the Hephthalite period (5th-6th century CE) probably imported from the Gandharan regions. On a top row it shows a royal Hephthalite personage sitting on cushions and surrounded by two servants while another kneeling figure is paying homage. In the lower row there are two boars flanking a shallow section, perhaps meant to contain some sort of offerings, or some pigment like ‘orpinet’ to be used for rituals. The various sections of the tray are enclosed by beaded stripes, cross-etched decorations and foliate motifs, with two sub-triangular ends at the short sides terminating with jagged edges. The central figure is holding a lobed cup filled with wine by one of the attendants while the other is holding a flywhisk.

The posture is of a person ‘at ease’ with a bent leg and the other outstretched, the loose garment with creases on the tunic and trousers with wavy stripes, and wearing a torque-like necklace. These are all elements of rank and distinction. All images are shown in profile, with a continuing curved line of the forehead and nose characteristic of Hephthalite style. A schist stone lid from Pakistan shows a seated figure in a similar attitude ‘at ease’ and holding a lobate cup while listening to a woman playing an instrument (Ghose 2003: Fig. 3). These lobed cups depicted on Hephthalite schist lids and trays are stylizations of actual cups such as the beautiful silver eight-lobed bowl with the name of the Hephthalite king Khingila inscribed on the rim, which was found at Datong in 1970 (Marshak in Watt 2004: 151).

Patry Leidy refers to the animals in the bottom row of the Upal tray simply as ‘quadrapeds’, and suggests that this is a reference to hunting activities. However, although boar hunting is commonly represented on Sassanian artefacts, the boar, especially if not in a proper hunting context, can also be a symbol of the Iranian kingship and a symbolical allusion to Verethragna, the Iranian god of Victory. In this case there is no hunting scene.

In this article I have discussed a number of different artefacts and monuments to demonstrate how cultural exchanges and inter-ethnic relations have been shaping the social environment of the Kashgar oasis already since the early Iron Age. During the early centuries CE the interactions between the semi-nomadic Yuezhi/Kushans, Chinese and local people expanded the religious life of the oasis with the introduction of Gandharan Buddhist traditions and the creation of monumental structures. The dynamic between the Central Asian horsemen and the oasis dwellers continued during the Hephthalite period, without this time leaving manifest traces: but scattered objects that belonged to the elites have been found.

Despite changed geopolitical situations, it appears that cultural interactions and economic exchanges were never interrupted; instead we can observe long term continuities. For instance the evidence from Yaukuluk demonstrates that next to an active religious institution with monks dedicated to study Sanskrit Buddhist texts written in Brahmi there was space for Sogdian-Iranian merchants, who were dedicated to more mundane activities. This situation did not change much even after the defeat of the Hephthalites, that followed the imperialistic expansion of the Western Turks, who around the middle of the 6th century CE created an empire comprising the old Hephthalite domains in the Tarim Basin, Sogdia, Bactria and Gandhara.
Discussion concerning the differences between the Türk (552-742) and Uighur (744-840) periods in the central-eastern Eurasian steppes has largely focused on the development of urban walled complex building in the Uighur period and the religious conversion of the Uighurs to Manichaeeism. However other differences are traceable. In my TAASA Review December 2012 article ‘Monumental stone sculptures of the central eastern steppes’, I touched on some differences between Türk and Uighur anthropomorphic stones as an indication of a shift in ritual practice by the Uighurs, and here I will discuss some differences in the use of tamga by the Turks and Uighurs of the Mongolian Plateau. This article closely follows Turkologist Takashi Osawa’s chronological division of tamga-signs.

Tamga’ is an old Türkic word with several meanings: a brand (for livestock), seal of author, mark of ownership or political symbol – likened by Sir Gerard Clauson to a European coat of arms (Clauson 1972: 504-505). Türkic tamga-symbols incorporated many influences and drew from a variety of inspirations such as weapons, personal items, astral symbols, flora and fauna, abstract lines, geometric patterns and letters/characters. The use of tamga was not limited to the nomadic peoples of the Mongolian Plateau. The existence of earlier examples from sedentary cultures has been convincingly argued elsewhere. But since the Bronze Age the adoption of this system of symbols was extremely effective for the nomadic and semi-nomadic steppe peoples. The Turks may have continued the use of some symbols that may have existed for hundreds of years (Ol’khovskii 2001).

The term ‘tamga’ has been widely recorded from medieval times and is still used today. A variant of this word is used in Mongolia (tangga) and tamga symbolism still carries value for its functionality - the importance of livestock brands in nomadic social-economy is hugely significant. Mahmud al Kashgari’s 11th century dictionary recorded the terms tanggalik yilki (domestic animal with tamga) and tamga at (marked horse). Türkic tamga engravings on the hinds of zoomorphic stone sculptures and on the hindquarters of horses depicted on rock engravings attest to these records. A Chinese source, the Tang Huiyao, contains important records of Türkic tamgas. It provides a list of tamgas that were branded onto horses of Central Asian tribes, including those of Türks and Uighurs (Tang Huiyao 72.1305-1308). Some tamga recorded in the Tang Huiyao have been recorded as the same or similar to Chinese characters.

In approaching modern Mongolian tamga, ethnologists note that a tamga might not necessarily have a universal vocal pronunciation or interpretation and that different symbols can share the same meaning as another (Waddington 1974: 473-474). Thus despite a linguistic connection between some tamga and language scripts, there may be various interpretations of signs.

While there is similarity between some letters and certain tamga-signs, it is uncertain whether or not tamga influenced the development of Türkic runic, in use from the 7th to 12th centuries. Nonetheless the
appearance of tamgas with runic inscriptions (and numismatics) has certainly helped the study of tamga and their attribution.

As yet no tamgas have been found with the inscriptions of the First Türkic Khaganate period (552-630), split into Eastern and Western Khaganates in 581). For this reason Turkologist Takashi Osawa asserts that: ‘...in this period tamgas were not inscribed as the symbol of the political authority and power of the Ashina in Mongolia, though they did customarily mark tamgas on the bodies of their animals as a distinguishing sign’ (Osawa 2010: 347). Tamga on coins from the Western Türkic Khaganate, with its political centre in the Chu Valley of modern Kyrgyzstan, were, however, distributed in this period. These were used as symbols of political authority and were probably issued in Sogdiana or in Sogdian colonies along the ‘Great Silk Road’ (Osawa 2010: 348).

Horse brand tamga are listed in the Tang Huiyao during Tang administrative control over the Mongolian region (630-682). No memorial stele or inscriptions assist with the dating of sites and tamga of this period. However, significantly, numerous tamga have been found at the Türkic Ungut memorial complex, hypothetically dated to the mid 7th century Khagan Yinan of the Xueyantuo polity (Voitov 1987: 104-105). These may indicate the identity of those serving the rulers commemorated by or buried at the site (Osawa 2010: 344). In this way the collection of tamga symbols is thought to display the union of multiple tribes, with multiple tamga types such as at the memorial site Shiveet Ulaan in Mongolia serving such a purpose.

But none of the memorial sites without textual inscriptions have been convincingly dated, therefore we cannot comment with any certainty about the use of Türkic tamga on stele from this period. In fact, steadily increasing archaeological evidence from Mongolia is showing the use of Chinese cultural forms in this period, pointing to the employment of tribal leaders as governors of this region. For this reason Osawa claims there is no clear evidence that Old Türkic tribes marked stele with their own tamga in this period and that they did not interact with the Tang Chinese from a position of strength or independence (Osawa 2010: 347).

Conversely, the Second Eastern Türkic Khaganate that put an end to Tang rule on the Mongolian Plateau (682-742) is well known for its use of tamga-symbolism. Its clan ‘heraldic’ tamga was used as a political symbol of authority, closely linked with the rise of Türkic nationalism (Osawa 2010: 347). The tamga featured the silhouette of a horned arkhar (‘mountain goat’) that usually had a long upright line on its back. This modification has been interpreted as a transformation of the creature into a mythical predator, a dragon, with long twisting tail – although other interpretations are viable (Samashev and Bazylkhan 2010: 310). This tamga represented the ruling Ashina clan of the Second Eastern Türkic Khaganate.

Snake tamga are sometimes found with the arkhar tamga (such as the second Karabalgasun inscription and tortoise stele base of the Mukhar monument) and are also considered to pertain to this polity. The arkhar tamga is found on many Türkic sites in various permutations, but best recognised on the stele within the Köshöö Tsaidaam monuments – memorial complexes attributed to Bilga Khagan (d. 734) and his brother Kül Tegin (d. 731).

As the Ashina clan was deposed and the Second Eastern Türkic Khaganate destroyed by a coalition of Basmils, Qarluqs and Uighurs, it is unsurprising that the arkhar tamga fell out of use. Identifying the tamga of these polities is made easier by the Tang Huiyao tamga list; however archaeologists have also discovered tamga in Mongolia. According to the 2006 investigations of the Ungut memorial complex by Osawa and Suzuki, several tamgas were discovered on stone sarcophagi panels: relating to the Ashina (two headed) arkhar, Uighur (like the shape of the runic ‘b’), Qarluk (circular composed of several lines) and other tribes. It is argued that the multiple tamga markings in this vein identify the followers that had served rulers commemorated by or buried at the site (Osawa 2010: 343-344). The Bombogor stele at the complex contains a runic inscription that records a Qarluq victory over the Basmil tribe, historically attributed to 744-745. It is possible that the tamga associated with the inscription are related to the multiple tamga found on the sarcophagi.

As briefly put forward in my previous TAASA article, the Eastern Uighur Khaganate (744-840) practiced a different format of tamga and ritual culture and a shift in the use of tamga as signs seems to be evident.

Apart from using different tamga-symbols to the preceding Eastern Türkic Khaganates, the Yağlakar (first ruling clan of the Uighur confederacy) also engraved tamga at the head of their stele. This is evidenced on the Shine-Usu and Tariat inscriptions associated with the second Uighur Khagan, Moyanchuo (r. 747-759). As with the Second Eastern Türkic Khaganate’s tamga of the Ashina, these are seen as symbols of the personal political power of the
‘owner’. Additional tamga on the Tes, Tariat and Shine-Usu inscriptions were noted below their inscriptions (fig. 3 bottom row), which Osawa posits are the tamga of the scribe and likens the employment of these scribes (bitigli) to those of the Western Uighur Khaganate of the Kocho Kingdom in the 10th-14th centuries. Osawa furthermore sees a progression from the use of tamga as clan/political symbols to a sign indicating the writer’s identity – a practice that was later widely used on Western Uighur contracts by way of a seal (Osawa 2010: 348-358).

The Karabalgasun Inscription (in runic, Sogdian and Chinese) is the only verified stele of the Adiz period of Uighur rule (795-840) and is dated to the 820s. Unfortunately it is highly fragmentary and many parts are lost. One side of the headstone survives and contains runic script within its title shield, but no tamga-signs are present. Whether or not a tamga was present in the shield of its opposite face is unknown.

Tamga inscribed on Uighur architectural ceramics have been noted. An example of an incised tamga motif on a roof tile from Por-Bajin displays a symbol not greatly different from those of the Western Uighur Khaganate of the Kocho Kingdom in the 10th-14th centuries. Osawa furthermore sees a progression from the use of tamga as clan/political symbols to a sign indicating the writer’s identity – a practice that was later widely used on Western Uighur contracts by way of a seal (Osawa 2010: 348-358).

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In conclusion, both the Turks and Uighurs practiced the use of tamga which they had inherited from other ancient traditions. In Türk and Uighur cultures these tamga were used as symbols of ownership, heraldic signs, expressions of political power and clan and familial heritage. Artistically, these symbols drew from influences such as language scripts, ancient designs and others. They were implemented on various media including rock faces, stele, architectural materials, personal-portable objects and ritual materials.

There were some distinct developments in the use of tamga on monuments. The early ruling Türks branded the bodies of their livestock, as recorded in the following period of Tang political dominance of the Mongolian Plateau. Scholars have no firm theories for the political/ownership use of tamga (on stele) at this time. The Second Eastern Türkic period introduced the employment of tamga, particularly the arksar symbol, on memorial stele (and other media) probably undertaken to roll back Türkic sinification. The early Uighurs of the Eastern Uighur Khaganate used their own tamga, whilst arguably introducing an author’s tamga or seal. The study of walled sites in the Uighur period has also revealed the use of tamga on roof tiles and possibly bricks. Attributing meaning, function and semantic relationships of these intriguing art forms will continue to be the subject of research, as understanding tamga is important for our interpretation of the cultures that used them.

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Shangjing (literally ‘upper capital’) was the capital of the Bohai kingdom (698-926) formed by ethnic Mohe (the forebears of the Manchu) and Goguryeo. Situated on the Mudan River in north-eastern China, the site of Shangjing consists of a 1,593,000 sq. m. city enclosed by remnants of the city wall. The extensive remains of palaces, temples, city walls and city gates have provided us with good samplings of Bohai material culture, exposed in three epochs of excavations, that of Harada Yoshito and Komai Kazuchika in 1934, that of China Archaeological Institute in 1963-4, and that of Heilongjiang Provincial Archaeological Institute, ongoing since 1998 (Harada & Komai 1939; Arch. Institute of China 1996; Heilongjiang Prov. Arch. Institute 2009).

Of particular interest are the extant roofing tiles found at Shangjing. As a segment of these tiles collapsed at the site with their placement undisturbed, the original roof tile configuration has been preserved. This shows that, while Shangjing tiles follow the general range of types familiar in Tang dynasty China (618-907), the type of eaves-cover tiles used here is distinctive and uncommon in the Tang. These cover tiles are long and half-round.

Once the under tiles are laid on the roof, the cover tiles cover the gap between the adjacent under tiles. Cover tiles with round antefixes (wadang) at one end are found in the lowest row of covers along the eaves.

Recovered on the floors of palace buildings no. 3, 4, 5 and 50, as well as temples no. 1 and 9, the tiles are designed to slope up considerably toward the front; and each long side is vertically cut out in a semi-circular shape just behind the wadang. Each tile has a depressed flange where there is a hole for nailing or pegging the tile to the clay or timber. The outer surface is finely smoothed. The wadang is decorated with a lotus pattern commonly used in the Tang Empire.

Twenty-two pieces of this kind of tile were recovered from temples no. 1 and 9 in the 1963-4 excavations, within which three sizes can be distinguished: large, 16-17cm in width; medium, 13-14cm in width, and small, 9.5cm in width. They are similar in dimensions within groups, and slightly different in shape between groups.

Although we do not know why the eaves cover tiles slope up toward the eaves, the visual effect of the raised eaves once the tiles are in place can be imagined. The tile cut out in the semi-circular arch just behind the wadang must have accommodated something which is now missing. We are uncertain about how the under and cover tiles interlock. Many under tiles have been discovered in Shangjing, unfortunately no under tiles to go with the sloped cover tiles have yet been found. Apparently, this type of eaves cover tiles are only used on Bohai state architecture, no examples have been preserved from either Tang or Goguryeo (2nd century-668) architectural sites. Are they typical products of the Bohai roof-tile industry?
The Shangjing tiles are comparable to that used in Gordion, the capital of the Phrygian kingdom (8th century BCE) in Anatolia. From the evidence of extant Gordion tiles, the following characteristics can be established: the eaves cover tile has an arched opening on each side of the cover proper, whilst the eaves-under tile has an upturned front edge and a long narrow spout. The arched side openings of the cover tile are designed to fit over the raised edge of the underlying tile, thus interlocking with each other.

The Gordion roof, as reconstructed by Matthew Glendinning (1996: 99-119) has been suggested as a good design to deflect rain water away from the mud brick and wood walls below. The Gordion tiles reveal a number of design principles applied to the tiled roof as established in Anatolia. This spouted-eaves design does not occur in mainland Greece and yet is quite common in Phrygia, so the idea of tiling in this style probably came to Anatolia from somewhere other than Greece.

At Shangjing, the arched eaves cover roof tiles appear to be connected to the earlier roof tiles found at Gordion. From the suggested reconstruction of the Gordion style of roof tiling, we might assume that the arched opening on the long sides of the eaves cover tile at Shangjing would also have rested directly on the eaves under tile.

These similarities in design and shape offer us clues about architectural links and cross-cultural contact between the Bohai kingdom and the broad Asian world over such widely separated geographic regions and time span.

Taken together, these connections could indicate that the design of the roof tiles found at Shangjing belongs to a tradition stretching back across the continent to Phrygia, based on contact which may have taken place over a long period of time, perhaps many centuries. The whole issue is extremely complex and needs further investigation.

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Most of us do not associate Christianity with Inner Asia, especially not early Christianity, and yet Eastern-rite Christian communities were established in the region by the 5th century CE. There was a Christian bishop at Merv (Turkmenistan) and a Metropolitan at Samarkand (Uzbekistan) by the 6th century, and there were communities at Kashgar and Turfan in Chinese Inner Asia (Xinjiang) by the 7th-8th centuries. Most remarkably we have evidence for Christians in China at the Tang capital of Chang’an (Xi’an) by 635. We know this date from a stele with an inscription recorded in Chinese and Syriac discovered in the 17th century (Keevak 2008). However, much of the archaeological evidence for the Christian presence in Inner Asia was unknown before the early 20th century. It was largely as a result of the explorations by Western scholars such as Aurel Stein, Paul Pelliot and Albert von Le Coq that this evidence came to light, but since then more finds have been made.

But who were these Christians? Initially they came from Persia where we know there were Christian communities from at least the 3rd century CE. It was mainly as a result of the international trade on the Silk Road that Christians established themselves in the oasis towns of Inner Asia. The Christians of this region used Syriac as their liturgical language, but the discovery of textual fragments at Turfan shows that they also used local languages, such as Sogdian and Uighur. Sogdiana was the ancient name given to the region that covers much of modern Uzbekistan. An important witness to Christians in Sogdiana was the Muslim scholar al-Biruni who came from Chorasmia south of the Aral Sea and who provides first hand information about the Christians communities in the late 10th century (Sachau 1879). Before the dominance of Islam, Christians lived alongside Buddhists, Zoroastrians and Manichaean in many towns in Inner Asia, where they formed part of the melting pot of ethnic groups and religious cultures (Vaissière 2005).

There were two denominations of Eastern Christians in Inner Asia during the first millennium CE, the Church of the East and the Melkite Church. The Church of the East (mistakenly called the ‘Nestorian’ Church) declared its independence in Sasanian Persia in 424, that is, before the Council of Ephesus in 431 deposed Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople (Baum and Winkler 2003). Nestorius came from Antioch and was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria. The Council of Ephesus saw the triumph of Alexandrian theology over that of Antioch. Subsequently the name ‘Nestorian’ was imposed upon the Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire and it was labelled heretical by the Western (Greek and Latin) churches. The church was Antiochene in its theology and recognised Nestorius as a saint. It was this church that by 635 had reached China and was translating works into Chinese by the 8th century. In Inner Asia Christians were known by the Middle Persian tarsak, meaning ‘one who fears (God)’, while in China they were known by the Chinese jingjiao, meaning followers of the ‘luminous religion’. The Church of the East still exists today in Iraq and Iran, but with large overseas communities, including Australia and New Zealand (Wilmshurst 2011).

The second denomination found in Inner Asia is the Melkite Church, whose name derives from the Syriac for ‘royalist’ or ‘imperialist’. This community followed the Byzantine-rite, adhered to the Council of Chalcedon of 451, and owed allegiance to the patriarch of Antioch. It is not clear when Melkites began to identify themselves by this name, but members of this church saw themselves as belonging to a trans-national community with a presence spread throughout the Middle East. Christians from this community were taken as captives from Antioch and resettled at Seleucia-Ctesiphon by the Sasanians in 540. Under the Abbasid caliphate the community was transported in 762 from Baghdad to Chach in the region of Tashkent in today’s Uzbekistan for the purpose of colonisation. We have references in the sources to Melkites in Inner Asia through to the 14th century (Parry 2012a). However, since 1729 the term...
has been used almost exclusively for the Arabic-speaking Greek Catholics of the Middle East.

Among the artefacts relating to early Christianity in Uzbekistan are several ossuaries inscribed with crosses found in the region of Samarkand, as well as cross-inscribed tiles from the site of a monastery at Urgut, near Samarkand. Several Syriac inscriptions have been located in a gorge not far from the monastery site. These remains are dated from the 7th to 9th centuries and are thought to belong to the Church of the East. The tradition of using ossuaries is attested from the early Christian period, and it is a practice that continues among some Eastern Christian communities today, when the bones of the deceased are exhumed after a number of years. Ossuaries were also used in Zoroastrian funerary practice and several tanbars, as they are called, have been found near Samarkand and dated to around the same period.

Recent archaeological finds at Qarshovul Tepe near Tashkent suggest the presence of a Christian community, perhaps associated with the Melkites of Chach, but it is too early to draw firm conclusions. While these finds are relatively recent many of the texts and artefacts discovered in the early 20th century by Western explorers can be seen in museums in London, Berlin and Paris. Visitors to Turfan can see several sites where some of these earlier discoveries were made, while in Xian the stele with the bilingual inscription is on display in the Forest of Steles Museum (Xian Beilin). The stele was erected in 781 and in the top section is depicted the cross on the lotus flower.

A silk fragment from Dunhuang now in the British Library discovered by Aurel Stein who dated it to the 9th century, also depicts the cross on the lotus flower. The fragment illustrates a bodhisattva-like figure with a nimbus and his right hand held in the gesture of the teaching or discussion mūdra. The figure is shown wearing a pectoral cross, a cross on a lotus flower in a Sasanian-style headdress, while holding a processional cross in his left hand (Parry 1996). The cross on the lotus flower in the headdress is similar in design to the cross on the lotus flower on the Xi’an stele. The figure appears to be Buddhist in inspiration but Christian in orientation, and indicates the possibilities for artistic eclecticism in Inner Asia during the Tang period (Parry 2006).

In 2006 an octagonal pillar dated 829 was discovered at Luoyang, the second capital of the Tang dynasty, which shows an iconographic feature that till 2006 was known only from the later Yuan or Mongol period (Parry 2012b). The text on the pillar is inscribed in Chinese while the iconographic feature in question shows flying apsaras flanking the cross on the lotus flower. The importance of this iconographic feature lies in the fact that it helps bridge the gap between the Tang and Yuan periods, a period of more than 300 years, during which we lack archaeological evidence for Christians in China. However, this new discovery confirms that the Church of the East most probably survived in Inner Asia and retained memory of its iconographic tradition.

It was during the Yuan period in the 13th and 14th centuries that Christians from the Church the East became prominent among the Mongols. There were Christians among the Turkic tribes in Inner Asia who were incorporated into the Mongol confederation. The Church of the East and several Khans showed favouritism towards Christianity (Weatherford 2010). The presence of Christians in Inner Mongolia is attested by a number of inscribed tombstones dating from the Yuan period (Halbertsma 2008). This was the period
when many foreigners, such as Marco Polo, became involved in the international trade with China. At Quanzhou in South China there are archaeological remains from the Hindu, Christian, Manichaean and Muslim communities, showing the multicultural nature of this port city.

Among the monuments at Quanzhou are Christian gravestones that depict the cross on the lotus flower as well as flying *apsaras* (Parry 2012a). A team of Australian scholars has recently completed a research project investigating the evidence for Christians and Manicheans at Quanzhou (Lieu, Parry, et al. 2012). This was the port from where Marco Polo left China to return to Italy and where the Muslim traveller ibn Battūta landed in China. It was known to foreigners as Zayton. From the inscriptions on the Christian gravestones it would appear that some members of the community came from Inner Asia. It was the policy of the Mongols to settle people from Inner Asia in different parts of China, but the evidence from Quanzhou suggests that some local Chinese were converted to Christianity as well. However, Christianity in China both during the Tang and Yuan periods was never more than a minority religion. After the end of the Mongol period in 1368 we lose sight of Christians in China and Inner Asia until the arrival of the Jesuits in the 17th century.

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The exhibition Three Perfections: Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting in Chinese Art explores the interconnections between poetry, calligraphy and painting. In traditional China, scholars and scholar-officials were cultivated in these arts as vehicles of self-expression. Painting was regarded as ‘silent poetry’ and poetry ‘painting with sound’. Scholars trained in the ‘art of handwriting’ or calligraphy at an early age used calligraphic brushstrokes in their paintings.

The exhibition consists of paintings and calligraphy from The National Gallery of Victoria’s (NGV) Asian collection. The works dating from the 14th century to the present will show the uniqueness of Chinese art and the contrast between traditional and contemporary art in the continuity of a living tradition.

This exhibition was inspired by Professor Michael Sullivan’s lecture and book The Three Perfections, Chinese Painting, Poetry and Calligraphy. According to Professor Sullivan, the term ‘Three Perfections’ originated in the middle of the 8th century when the Chinese poet, painter and calligrapher Zheng Qian (d. 764) presented to the emperor in Changan a gift of his work. The emperor was delighted and inscribed on it Zheng Qian sanjue meaning Zheng Qian’s Three Perfections (Sullivan 1974: 7).

From the 3rd century BCE to 1911, China was governed by a civil bureaucracy of scholar-officials under the Emperor. First appointed by the Emperor and later recruited by a system of civil examinations, scholars were educated in the moral teachings of the Confucian classics. Ideally they were endowed with inner virtue (noble character and moral integrity) and outward refinement (cultivated and versed in the fine arts of poetry, calligraphy, painting and music).

On the art of calligraphy as a means of self-expression or revealing a person’s nature or character, the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) Confucian scholar Yang Xiong (53 BCE–18 CE) has written: ‘Speech is the voice of the mind; writing is the delineation (hua: painting or picture) of the mind. When this voice and delineation take form, the princely man and the ignoble man are revealed.’ (Cahill, 1964: 92).

Calligraphy, the art of handwriting, is regarded in China as the highest art form. Its artistic and expressive qualities are independent of
the meanings of the written words. In the calligraphy of Plum-blossom study, dated mid 1640’s by Chen Hongshou (1599-1652), a poem is written in the expressive semi-cursive script of calligraphy. A seven character quatrain written in four columns (read from right to left, top to bottom) translates:

The Plum-blossom study crowd by chariots of war,
I have already lost my home but my uncle has a house;
In dreams, I go to the plum blossoms and wake up in the study,
But thick frost and light snow have finished the blossoming plums.

The poem, composed by Chen, is autobiographical. In 1644 Chen, who was from a scholar-gentry class in Zhejiang province, witnessed the fall of the Ming dynasty to the Manchu tribes from the north. Chen wrote the calligraphy for a special friend, using symbols of nature and literary puns to convey different levels of meaning, alluding to the devastation of war. The plum blossom symbolises the strength to survive under harsh conditions, as it has the power to regenerate itself. After surviving the cold winter, the prunus is the first tree to bloom in early spring, often before the snow has melted. The last character hua meaning ‘blossoms’ in mei (plum) hua (blossoms) also means ‘China or Chinese civilisation’. By implication China, like the plum blossom, will survive the foreign rule of the Manchu invaders and will regenerate. The poem thus has political undertones.

The artist has freely transformed the characters from their original regular script into a semi-cursive style expressing his inner anguish with elegance and restraint. The character can (reading from right to left, second character from the bottom of the third row), meaning ‘remnant, remaining or light’, is written in soft, light ink, in almost one continuous brushstroke. The brushstrokes and tonal textures of ink are evocative of the resonance of the life force (qi in Chinese) of nature, and the spontaneous movement of the brush reflects the natural flow of the artist’s life energy.

In China, painting was not equated with poetry until the 11th century in the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127). Scholars who were versed in poetry and calligraphy took on painting as a vehicle of self-expression. Su Shi (1037-1101), a famous scholar of the Northern Song, inscribed a painting by Wang Wei (699-759), famous poet of the Tang dynasty (618-906) in the golden age of poetry, with an accompanying poem:

When one savors Wang Wei’s poems, there are paintings in them.
When one looks at Wang Wei’s paintings, there are poems. (Bush 1971; 24, 25)

Huang Tingjian’s (1045-1105) inscription on Li Gonglin’s (1049-c.1105) painting of Resting in contemplation reads:

Master Li had a phrase he did not want to express in words,
So with light ink he sketched out a soundless poem. (Bush, 1971; 25)

In his album of 12 leaves, Wang Gai (1677–1705), a scholar-amateur artist, has expressed his experience of the seasonal changes in the Jiangnan (South of the Yangtze River) region. Wang Gai was a native of Xishui, Zhejiang province, but lived in Nanjing for most of his life. He became well known as the author of Mustard seed garden manual of painting, the most influential of all Chinese instructional manuals on painting.

In Listening to the rain, on the first page of the album a poem is inscribed by the artist in the regular style of calligraphy in the left hand corner in the sky of the landscape:

Trees full of blossoming wisteria cover thatched huts
Water birds stand in a lake of spring water
Fishing boats, facing my window, take shelter for the night
At dawn, misty lamps resemble a string of stars.
Beyond my boat, lake clouds are like flowing water.
Ten miles of loaded curtains bring back memories of Yangzhou.
This solitary sail only allows me to keep a long flute, fully loaded with wanderings through rain and mist in Jiangnan.

In a secluded corner of the lake, enclosed by mountains, a solitary figure, the artist, takes shelter in a boat and listens to the spring rain. The movement of the reeds in the water and the misty trees create the sensation of drizzling rain. Painting and poetry are so subtly interwoven that one wonders whether the poem inspired the painting or vice versa. It crystallises the literati theory that painting is silent poetry and poetry, painting with sound. It also follows that poetry is painting without form and painting, poetry with form.

Huang Shen (1687-1768), one of the eight eccentric masters of Yangzhou, was known to excel in the three perfections of the scholar-artist, well demonstrated in the album of 10 leaves of flower and bird paintings. The 5th album leaf Red Orchid is beautifully composed. The spray of red orchid sketched with swift brushstrokes in red and green is cropped at the top. A calligraphic inscription is integrated with the painting into an abstract design leaving empty space in the left half of the painting. The poem is translated as follows:

The newly ripe cherries scatter like coins of elm seeds.
It is also April in Yangzhou.
Last night red orchids in the thatched hut burst into blossom
Worrying about the wind and rain [that might ruin the blossoms], unable to sleep.

The poem is written in a highly individualistic style of cursive calligraphy. Simplified and
abbreviated, the Chinese characters appear broken up, united by a scattering rhythm.

In the *Huaya Lu* written by Shitao (Daoji) (1642-1707), a Chinese Zen (or Chan) Buddhist monk and painter, he comments:

*Painting is the idea (yi) within poetry. Is it not poetry the Chan (Zen) in painting?* (Coleman, 1978; 135)

Shitao compares poetry to Zen in painting. The wisdom of Zen Buddhism is transmitted from mind to mind without relying on words. Like Zen, poetry in a painting is unspoken and wordless in expression and communication. It relies on self-wakefulness.

*The Way, a spiritual path* by Kim Hoa Tram (2005) is inspired by the philosophy of Zen Buddhism. Kim Hoa Tram (Ch: Shen Jinhe) was born in Saigon, Vietnam in 1959. His family came originally from Fujian province in China. He migrated to Australia in 1984 and now lives in Melbourne. For more than 20 years, Kim has immersed himself in the Zen or Meditative sect of Buddhism, which began in China in the 6th century.

*The Way, a spiritual path* is a highly original and creative work that evokes a spiritual and aesthetic experience. With a mastery of calligraphy and ink, the artist has created a work that appears unassumingly simple in execution but is imbued with profound spiritual meanings. Underlying an apparent simplicity, it reveals layers of meaning and perception.

In deep meditation. We also see the image of a mountain, tree and a semi-circular moon behind the mountain. A graceful, sweeping movement of calligraphy flows like a stream from behind the mountain towards the viewer. Or it could be the flowing robes of the monk or the words he is chanting. A quiet stillness is created by the empty space at the centre of the painting. As a focus for meditation or contemplation, the void at the centre of the painting tends to calm ‘the mind’, removing all anxieties.

Inspired by Buddhist philosophy the artist has composed and written the poem in the expressive semi-cursive script of Chinese calligraphy, translated as follows:

*Led by our karma, we come to this life. Load with karma, we depart from this world. In life, so much anxieties, a lot of confusions We simply cannot free ourselves from the perplexities of delusions. Perhaps, in this state of confusion, the Way (Dao) [to spiritual enlightenment] will sprout forth.*

In the middle of the calligraphy is a red seal, irregular in shape – like a leaf, which says suiyuan, meaning following the interconnections or cause and effects in one’s destiny. The two most important characters of ‘man’ (ren) and ‘Way’ (Dao) are accentuated in darker ink to show their importance in the meaning of the poem. (Pang, 2008; 55)

In his set of nine photographs, Zhang Huan has introduced the traditional art of Chinese calligraphy to contemporary art. Zhang Huan was born in Anyang, Henan Province, north China in 1965. After receiving his artistic training and holding several art performances in China, he moved to New York in 1998. Since then, he has been very active in holding performances and exhibitions internationally.

Instead of writing in ink on paper or silk, he writes directly on the faces of one woman and two men, one of whom is the artist himself to the right of each photograph. As we move from the first to the last of the series, the calligraphy becomes denser and the faces become darker until finally in the last photograph, the faces become totally black and behind them are high rise apartments. Chinese has the expression *miinse*, which literally means the colour of the face and by extension meaning complexion, subtle facial expression. There is a Chinese saying that the ‘face colour (miinse)’ expresses more than what is actually said. One may ask: do the black faces express anger, hopelessness or a way of hiding one’s feelings? In its repetition and progression the photographs also resemble stills in a film, a modern performance medium.

Both works by Chen Hongshou and Zhang Huan express their inner anguish in reaction to their political and social situations. In *Plum-blossom Study*, Chen Hongshou is reacting to the foreign invasion of the Manchu in 1644. In *Shanghai Family Tree*, it seems that Zhang is expressing the impact of modernisation in China when families are uprooted from their traditional homes and moved to high rise apartments. While Zhang’s protest is daring, direct and confronting, Chen’s is hidden, subtle and metaphorical, but full of hope.

Being one of the most creative, original and imaginative artists in the contemporary art scene, Zheng has transformed and regenerated Chinese traditional art and brought it to a new dimension, that of contemporary international art.

*Three Perfections: Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting in Chinese Art* is being held at the NGV, Melbourne, 6 December 2013 – 9 June 2014. Dr Mae Anna Pang is Senior Curator, Asian Art at the NGV.

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It is always pleasant to discover an unexpected treasure in one's possession. All the more so when the treasure is a work of rare value and precious beauty.

In the collection of the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), a large Tibetan scroll painting (*thangka*) has languished largely unseen for two decades while it awaits conservation. Designated simply as *Buddhist painting (thangka) depicting a lama*, the painting was donated by the family of Rear Admiral Leighton Bracegirdle who had acquired it during his military service in Peking in 1901.

Close examination reveals it to be an 18th century portrait of the fifth Tai Situpa, a high lama of the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. The subject’s name, Chokyi Gyaltset, is inscribed on the lacquer table in front of him. His life spanned 70 years from the late 16th into the 17th centuries and thus his tenure coincides with those of the 9th and 10th Karmapa lamas. The Karmapas are the ecclesiastic heads of the Karma Kagyu lineage and hold a position equivalent to that of the Dalai Lama within the Gelug tradition.

Unlike many other lamas of the Karma Kagyu school and even other incarnations of the Tai Situpa lineage, Chokyi Gyaltset left no major legacy of published works and is relatively obscure within his own tradition. His most important historical role is as a teacher to the young 10th Karmapa, Choying Dorje.

There are a number of features which mark this painting as worthy of close scrutiny. Its size, the quality of detail, and the fact that it depicts a relatively unknown individual from an incarnation lineage which is itself rarely depicted, all mark this as an unusual and special painting. Equally important, and all too often overlooked in cases like this, the painting is also a beautifully composed and exquisitely executed work of art.

Despite a few small areas of significant paint loss (primarily some of the skin pigments of the face), the overall composition is clear and colour palette still vibrant. The brocade, which had already been partly replaced (almost certainly in the 19th century), is in need of significant stabilisation and conservation.

The picture’s composition consists of two major tableaux: the main scene with the

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Christopher Haskett

**THANGKA DEPICTING A LAMA, TIBET, 18TH CENTURY, COTTON, PIGMENTS, SILK SURROUND PAINTING, 127.0CM (H) X 86.0CM (W). NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, IN MEMORY OF REAR ADMIRAL SIR LEIGHTON BRACEGIRDLE**
Tai Situpa portrait and a secondary scene occupying about a third of the upper right hand side, showing an arhat seated in a cave. These two sections are divided by a cloud border. The painting's bottom right and upper left corners depict wrathful deities while the bottom left corner shows a mythical semi-divine guardian king.

The primary tableau is dominated by the portrait of the lama. Seated on an ornate chair under a blossoming fruit tree, he is ceremonially clad and displays a serene countenance. Near him are two tables, one in front and one to his left, which hold food and religious implements respectively. Also in front and to his left are unnamed attendant monks rendered in the radically reduced scale common to this genre. In the painting's bottom right hand corner is the protector deity Mahakala in his black-garbed, two-armed form called Bernag Chen. In the bottom left corner is Vaishravana, the guardian king of the north. In the upper left corner is another wrathful protector, Rakta Yamari, in union with his consort Vajra Vetai.

The secondary tableau depicts the arhat Chudapantaka in a cave. The setting is a rustic landscape in the Chinese style characteristic of this Karma Gardri style of painting. In contrast to the shallow depth of the lama's scene, the waterfalls and mountains recede far into the background. A family of deer graze nearby in the arhat's benign presence. His Tibetanised name, Lamtren Ten, is inscribed below him in abbreviated form. He wears a simple green and red robe under an orange and blue cloak. He is oriented in three-quarter profile to his left, in the same direction as the lama in the centre of the primary tableau. His hands are not joined in a meditative posture, as might be expected, but are merely clasped palm to palm. His facial expression is not easy to discern in detail due to paint loss. His eyes appear to be open and facing forward rather than heavy-lidded or gazing down as would be expected if he were meditating. The open mouth of his smile suggests he may be quietly laughing.

It is clear that this painting is the work of more than one hand and is likely the product of one of the ateliers contracted by the monasteries of Eastern Tibet. The single-letter abbreviated colour instructions laid out by a master or senior artist for his subordinates are clearly visible where paint loss has revealed the ground. There is also a clear difference in the skill level applied to different elements within the work. For example, the rendering of the lama's garment is masterful and a clear contrast to the rough details of the Rakta Yamari figure. The monks outside the arhat's cave are surprisingly cartoonish, especially when contrasted with the individuated face and postures of the monks surrounding the Situpa.

Both the orientation of the lama and the inclusion of the arhat figure indicate that this painting was part of a larger set which probably totalled 16 or 18. The slightly off-centre placement and three-quarter depiction of the lama indicate he is turned toward a central painting which would have hung to his left. Had this been a single portrait, the lama would almost certainly have been placed in the centre, facing the viewer directly.

A second, more definitive indication of the set size is the presence of an arhat. Even when included as merely subordinate figures, as in this thangka, the full group of 16 arhats must always be depicted - on one canvas or divided, usually evenly, over a set. Depicting an incomplete set in Tibetan religious art is simply not done. The size and quality of this thangka argue against the possibility of this being either a mistake or deliberate heterodoxy, so we are safe in asserting that the other 15 arhats must have been included in the associated works.

The Tai Situpa lineage lists 11 pre-incarnations which, when added to the necessary five named Situpa incarnations, make up the requisite 16 paintings. The painting's age allows for the possibility that the set might also have included the next two Situpas as well, in which case the final two paintings would have depicted Dharmata and Hvashang, the arhats' attendants.

This series of paintings would have been hung horizontally as a complete set with Maitreya at the centre and the later incarnations placed sequentially, alternating outward to the right and left of the central painting. Just as the presence of the arhat is definitive in proving the number of paintings in the set, the presence of the guardian king of the north is definitive in placing this thangka among the last four within that set. Guardian king images 'guard' access to sacred spaces such as mandalas. The kings of the four directions are found at the outsides of painting sets such as these because, in a religious sense, one 'enters' the set at its periphery and 'progresses' toward the central figure via the intervening portrayals. Thus this painting would have been one of the two most outside on Maitreya's right (the viewer's left).

Foremost among the many wonderful features of this painting is the rendering of the lama's hat. Hats are of huge significance in Tibetan Buddhist culture and play an important role in its iconography. The fifth Tai Situpa was the first wearer of that lineage's emblematic hat with its distinctive notch about two-thirds along the brim. That makes this likely to be its earliest depiction.

Just as interesting, there is a subtle, perhaps even whimsical, ambiguity present in the way some of the painting's elements interact. Traditionally the three deities placed in the corners of this work would not be considered fully part of the rest of the picture ie they sit on the scene more than in it. But here that 'fourth wall' seems to be compromised. First, in front of the lama, the standing monk's motion to join his three seated colleagues appears arrested by the sight of the guardian king. Then there is the guardian king himself who seems to be gazing on the lama even though he would not normally be considered to 'be' in the same depicted space. Finally, the three monks apparently showing devotion to the lama are actually oriented more toward the Mahakala figure, also not usually considered to 'be' in that space.

These first steps in identifying this painting and bringing attention to its true significance have also revealed new questions to pursue. Who commissioned the work and for what monastery? Are any other members of this set still waiting to be found and identified? How and why was it in Peking in 1900, nearly 1000km from the nearest Karma Kagyu monastery?

Hopefully it will not be long before this wonderful and important work is available for public display.

Christopher Haskett is a digital archivist at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Previously he worked at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center in New York, the National Gallery of Australia as an assistant curator of Asian Art and subsequently as a writer and researcher at Himalayan Art Resources in New York.

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Stairway to Heaven: Art from the Himalayas, on view at the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) from 8 June to 16 December 2013 presents over 40 works from the collection as well as local lenders. All the works have been created primarily in the Himalayan region, or inspired by its sacred traditions, such as Tibetan or vajrayana Buddhism, and its physical environs. The display examines influences on the development of Tibetan Buddhism, through ritual implements essential to tantric practitioners such as the vajra, thangka depicting spiritual masters and Lamas as well as sculptures created in metal, clay and wood.

Beside these works are contemporary photographs, prints and paintings, which portray Australian artists’ engagement with the Himalayan region, together with artists of the Tibetan diaspora living in the west, who negotiate their place and identity within Tibet’s rich and formalised artistic legacy. As Gonkar Gyatso (b. 1961, Lhasa), the ‘transnational’ artist and founder of the Contemporary Tibetan Art Gallery, Sweet Tea House, has stated, his artistic project is ‘modernising the visual culture of Tibetan Buddhism’ (Masters 2010: 24).

The title of the display was inspired by the Indian poet and dramatist Kalidasa (5th century CE), who described the Himalayan region ‘as a stairway to heaven’ in his Meghaduta or Cloud Messenger. In this lyric poem, a ‘lovelorn’ yaksha, banished by Kubera, entreats a monsoon cloud to carry a message to his consort in the fabled city of Alaká, located on Mt Kailash. The yaksha describes the sapphire studded peaks and emerald steps which the cloud will see on its journey which parallels the dissemination of tantric spiritual practices from northern India to Himalayan societies of Tibet, Nepal, Kashmir and Bhutan via spiritual masters such Atisha Dipamkara (982-1054). Atisha is credited with the ‘second diffusion’ of Buddhism and is believed to have studied with the 84 Indian mahasiddhas or ‘accomplished ones’ who came to personify the ‘spiritual realisations’ of the highest tantric path (mahamudra) as described by Abhayadatta Shri (11th-12th century) in The History of the Eighty-four Mahasiddhas.

Through the generous support of Alan Myren and Lee Grafton Stairway to Heaven includes three 18th century thangka: of The Great Indian Adept Luipa, portrayed eating fish guts, and of two teachers of the Dharma - a rare portrait of the The Seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso (1708-1757) and The Great Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092-1158). Sachen Kunga Nyingpo is considered one of the great founders of the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. A seated monk, probably representing the painting’s donor, offers him a pyramid shaped mandala symbolising the Buddhist universe. Above the saint is depicted the multi-armed deity, Hevraja, embracing his consort, and in the sky on a throne of clouds is Virupa, the 9th century Indian Tantric adept. The wrathful protector Mahakala stands in the lower left. The inscription along the bottom of the painting reads:

I beseech the loving Sachen Kunga Nyingpo Blessed by the Glorious Hevraja, Great holder of the ocean of secret Tantra, Served by Mahakala, guardian of the tent.

These meditational images stand in direct contrast to the ‘realistic’ depiction of a Lama in saffron and red robes carrying ‘dharma trumpets’ (dungchen), created in 1932 by the Franco-Russian painter and draughtsman Alexander Jacoboff (1887-1938) and acquired by the gallery in 1938. Jacoboff was the official artistic adviser to the Citroën Asiatic Expedition, sponsored by the National Geographic Society, which in part replicated Marco Polo’s 13th century journey along the trade routes that once stretched from Beirut to Beijing. The image is emblematic of the early 20th century, marked by explorers and scientists who sought to ‘conquer’ ‘unexplored’ areas of Asia. Their exploits were published in magazines such as National Geographic, inspiring fictional portrayals of Tibet such as James Hilton’s Lost Horizon (1933).

According to Tibetan tradition, a small statue of the Indian goddess Arya Tara spoke to Atisha while he circumambulated the great stupa at Bodhgaya, stating that the trip to Tibet ‘would shorten his life but be of immeasurable benefit to the enlightenment tradition’ (Mullin, 2003: 58). Stupas were derived from ancient Indian burial mounds and served as reliquaries for the remains of spiritual leaders. They are votive monuments whose architectural details reflect metaphysical principles of the Buddhist faith such as the Historical Buddha’s enlightenment. As such they appear across Asia in different forms and styles and remain important pilgrimage sites for devotees. A photograph in the display portrays a stupa in a style distinctive to the Kathmandu valley, Nepal: with a tiered...
The practice of dedicating laksha sacred pilgrimage sites throughout the region.

The depiction of three stupas, such as in the set of brass images (20th century) and on a tsa-tsa (18th-19th century) are said to represent the body, mind and speech of enlightened beings. Tsa-tsa or small votive images, a number of which are found in the display, were created as an act of devotion from clay and sacred ash, and were meant to be distributed at sacred pilgrimage sites throughout the region. The practice of dedicating laksha (100,000) miniature clay stupas to derive merit became popular in the Nepal from the 14th century.

The photograph of A small temple behind Swayambhunath stupa (1973) by the Australian photographer Max Pam (b. 1949, Melbourne) is typical of artists of the 1970's, inspired by the Himalayan region's lofty peaks and mythic representations as depicted in western literature. A range of his photography is on show, documenting the extent of the Himalayan range from Hindu Kush, Afghanistan, to the Chang Chu Tang plateau, Tibet, and includes his original journal, lent by the artist, published as Kailash in 2002. Pam described the impact of the Himalayan region in his book Going east: "I grew up in Asia, many times I grew up walking through the Himalayas, half dead from a dose of diarrhoea and surrounded by paradise." (Pam 1992: 59).

According to the First Dalai Lama’s commentary to the White Tara healing meditations, anyone who holds the initiation and recites the mantra will become invincible... even if the most definitive signs of death appears, he or she will fully recover (Mullin, 2003: 101). The Gallery’s sculpture of White Tara, created in Eastern Tibet during the 18th century, presents the saviour mother of all Buddhas and tantric goddess as a 16 year old princess replete with flowers uptala flowers blossom on either side. The seven eyes of pristine awareness which appear on her face, hands and feet are a reminder of her promise to alleviate all suffering of sentient beings. At first glance, White Tara appears green, the result of white pigment darkening with time, acting as a reminder that Avalokitesvara manifested two aspects of Tara from his tears, believed to have been reborn as the Nepalese (Green Tara) and Chinese (White Tara) wives of King Songsten Gampo (7th century).

Framing the seated White Tara in a shimmering field of tiny dots is the nine-panel painting Onumatapao painted in 2006 by Tim Johnson (b. Sydney,1947), Karma Phuntsok (b. Lhasa, 1952 ) and Brendan Smith (b. Britain, 1964). Incorporating an esoteric constellation of sacred Buddhist iconography from Tibet, Japan and China as well as secular imagery from Japanese anime, the painting illustrates Johnson’s interest and personal experiences in Asia as well as his previous collaborations with the Indigenous artists at Papunya.

Four of the 9 canvases which comprise Onumatapao depict dakini or ‘sky walkers’ and enlightened buddhas of the vajrayana pantheon created by Karma Phuntsok. The work exhibits a symmetry consistent with Buddhist painting which may be the result of Phuntsok’s knowledge of Tibetan religious thangka painting which he studied in Nepal after fleeing Tibet for India in 1959. Since 1993 the two artists have created various paintings and projects together. The creative process for this painting has been described by Johnson as ‘a collaboration which happened naturally’ during which he would send blank canvases to Phuntsok’s home with little or no instructions. Described as contemporary Buddhist art, Phuntsok’s work is an expression of his life experiences as a child in Tibet under Chinese oppression, as a refugee in India, his time in the Australian bush, and veneration for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. His paintings often depict Tibetan deities and yogis such as Guru Rinpoche (c. 8th century) inhabiting and floating over sacred Australian icons, such as Uluru.

Throughout the Buddhist world the image of the Historical Buddha in the bhumsparsha (earth touching) mudra is one of the most easily recognised and revered, representing the moment of enlightenment when he called the earth to witness his unshakable faith and resolve. Stairway to Heaven includes a 15th century gilded bronze Buddha created in Tibet, which portrays many of the 32 lakshanas or signs of a great man according to pre-Buddhist Indian traditions, such as the protuberance on the top of his head or ushnisha. On the bottom of the sculpture is an inscribed image of a double vajra as well as evidence of consecrated items in the body.

This iconic image has been placed next to Gonkar Gyatso’s (b. 1961, Lhasa) screen printed rendering of the same image titled Sakyanun Buddha, 2007 generously lent to the gallery by Peter Weeks. Gyatso has literally filled in the outline of the Historical Buddha forming the earth touching mudra with stickers from contemporary cultural icons in Asia and the West, such as corporate logos, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Japanese anime, the Cultural Revolution, Hindu gods, sports stars and screaming jets. The stickers themselves are placed on top of a grid, reminiscent of preliminary drawings handed down from one generation of artists to the next. Gyatso has turned these bisecting lines into a street directory with avenues from London and China. From a distance the image seems to be solid, while on a closer inspection it disintegrates into a melange of pop cultural references and naïve Buddhist statements in comic dialogue bubbles, such as Colonel Sanders stating: ‘Dear God I love chicken but please don’t let me come as a chicken in my next life’.

Gonkar Gyatso began using the image of the Buddha in 1985, and has stated that though art comes easily to him, connecting emotionally to his Tibetan cultural tradition is a struggle - the result he says, ‘of being disconnected from cultural observances of previous generations of Tibetans.’ (Masters 2010:18). Gyatso grew up in Lhasa during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1969–79), when Tibetan religious practice and art was suppressed. He studied brush painting in Beijing, thangka painting in Dharamsala and postmodern art at Chelsea College of Art and Design. Gyatso’s struggle to come to terms with his heritage and his seemingly contradictory life parallels the reflections of the Tibetan scholar and iconoclast Gedun Chopel (1903-1951) who has said:

This is our tradition as it stands today: The material magic of miracles that benefits everyone, And the ritual magic of ominous signs that are harmful to all. Each are sharp sides of a double-edged wisdom sword, Each are counterparts certain to meet! (Masters, 2010:18).

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IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN: A KHOTAN RUG AT THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

Christina Sumner

This colourful pile-weave village or workshop medallion rug was made in or near Khotan, an oasis city on the southern border of the Tarim basin in what was once East Turkestan and is now Xinjiang province in Western China. Khotan was on the southern route of the ancient Silk Roads and the area is traditionally inhabited by the Turkic language speaking Muslim Uighur people. Written evidence suggests that carpets were woven in Khotan as early as the 7th century and, by the late 1800s, around 5000 carpets were being exported annually from Khotan and its surrounding villages. This rug was probably made between 1920 and 1950.

Although some rug historians continue to debate the attribution of rugs from the Xinjiang region, the other main candidates being Yarkand and Kashgar, Khotan is generally thought to be the source of most East Turkestan medallion rugs like this example. Other design types or elements, which are often combined, include coffered gul, vase-pomegranate, and designs imported from other areas. Both Khotan and Yarkand are located on the southern route round the Tarim basin and Taklamakan desert, where they were important staging posts on the Silk Road, while Kashgar is further to the west, at the point where the trade routes going north and south of the Taklamakan rejoined before proceeding on to Tashkent and Samarkand.

The design of this rug, which is bright with synthetic dyes, is unusually cosmopolitan, revealing a cross-pollination of Chinese and Central Asian decorative motifs. Typically for rugs from the Khotan area, its imagery demonstrates the harmonious blend of imported cultural elements and influences from both east and west. The central medallion is a highly stylised lotus, reflecting the Buddhist faith whose adherents populated many parts of Central Asia for centuries. In each corner is a triangular fretwork pattern whose angular linear form is derived from the Chinese cloudband pattern. These contrast with six large floral roundels that are reminiscent of the guls (octagonal motifs) on Central Asian rugs, and also with six branching pomegranate motifs.

Although rug weaving in East as well as West Turkestan was traditionally carried out by women of nomadic heritage, the establishment of village carpet weaving workshops in the 1900s encouraged the employment of men as weavers, with professional master weavers moving between workshops and, in all probability, providing the designs.

Distinctions in the attribution of these Khotan rugs have been based primarily on their structural characteristics, and secondarily on their designs. Earlier Khotan rugs were characterized by their cotton warps and three shots of wool weft between the rows of knots, while later Khotan rugs, including this one, typically have cotton wefts as well as warps. The asymmetrically knotted pile is of wool, most of which has been dyed with synthetic dyes although some has been left undyed and natural. At the time this rug was woven, there was a wide range of synthetic dyes on the market and its colour palette of bright red with yellow, green, ivory and black also originally included purple (possibly mauve) and a pale blue.

Nothing is known of the first few decades in the life of this well-travelled rug from its production in the Khotan area some time in the first half of the 20th century and its purchase in Hong Kong in 1960. The Hong Kong buyers were Alastair Morrison and his wife, the photographer Hedda (Hammer) Morrison. Professionally, Alastair Morrison was a colonial administrator and high-level public servant; he was also an inveterate traveller and a passionate collector, a great conversationalist and generous donor.

Alastair and Hedda Morrison had been living and working in Sarawak since 1949, and they took the Khotan rug back to Sarawak on returning there. Subsequently, in 1967, it travelled with them to their new home in Canberra, Australia, and was one of a group of five Asian rugs and textiles given to the Powerhouse Museum by Alastair Morrison in 1994. This gift also included two fine Ningxia rugs from northern China, a ceremonial warp ikat pua from Sarawak, and a silk weft ikat kain limar from Palembang in Sumatra.

Christina Sumner OAM was formerly Principal Curator Design & Society at the Powerhouse Museum, where she worked with the decorative arts and design collection for 28 years. She is a founding member of TAASA and currently sits on the Society’s Management Committee.

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BOOK REVIEW: THE SILK ROAD

Jeffrey Riegel

The Silk Road: A New History
Valerie Hansen
Oxford University Press, 2012
RRP US$34.95, hard cover, 304 pages

In the first few pages of her account of the oasis towns that are strung together by the trading routes - popularly known as 'The Silk Road' - that linked the early capitals of China with Eurasian neighbours to the west, Professor Hansen lists a few of the common misconceptions she wants to correct. She is careful to point out, for example, that the term 'Silk Road' is a relatively recent invention coined in 1877 by the German geographer and surveyor Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen. There is no pre-modern counterpart for 'Silk Road' in the Chinese language; modern Chinese Sichou zhi lu is a translation from English. Moreover, the Silk Road was not actually a road that, unbroken and in a straight line, traversed great distances but rather unmarked and shifting tracks that connected neighboring oasis towns. What moved along these tracks was not only silk but numerous other goods including leather, glass, and paper.

Those familiar with other studies of the oases of Central Asia might object that there is nothing really new in such arguments. Certainly many of the other subjects that occupy Professor Hansen - for example, religions such as Buddhism, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, and Nestorian Christianity and the art that they inspired in the region - have been well treated in earlier studies. And accounts of the legendary 19th and early 20th century European explorers of the oasis towns - Aurel Stein, Paul Pelliot, and Albert von Le Coq, among others - are found elsewhere and are arguably presented in a more compelling fashion in Peter Hopkirk's Foreign Details on the Silk Road (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

What is new in Hansen's 'new' history is the careful and comprehensive use of the most authoritative secondary scholarship - published in Chinese, Japanese, and Russian (as well as other European languages) - that relates to the material culture and other features of the daily lives of the traders and monks who occupied the old oasis towns. Hansen meticulously documents her sources in 47 pages of notes. Given the richness of her scholarly sources, it is, however, unfortunate that she fails to provide a bibliography for those like myself who wish to have the works that an author cites brought together in a single definitive list.

The Silk Road makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the Central Asian oasis towns and market cities by singling out the most important for detailed treatment. Thus readers will find the essential facts of the Kingdom of Koraina, Kucha, Turfan, and Khotan, as well as of Samarkand and Chang'an. A 'Silk Road Timeline' at the beginning of the book will help readers piece together these individual narratives, as will the frequent cross-references to contemporaneous sites provided in the text.

Of the numerous peoples, religions, and places Hansen studies, I found most stimulating and illuminating her account of the prominent traders, the Sogdians, their Zoroastrian beliefs and lives in their homeland of Samarkand and in the old Chinese capital of Chang'an. Referring to Chinese-language sources and the caches of Sogdian documents found near Dunhuang and Samarkand, and making good use of the work of several earlier authorities - most notably the late Boris Marshak of the Hermitage Museum - Hansen devotes chapter four to an overview of the history and archaeology of Samarkand, an ethnography of the Sogdians, and an account of a handful of Sogdian merchants - whose lives are known from letters between them and their families - that of An Jia, who before his death in 579 was an official leader of the Sogdian community - was decorated with murals that combine Chinese and Sogdian motifs.

As Hansen notes, other Sogdian tombs have been discovered in the vicinity of modern-day Taiyuan in Shanxi province (most notably the burial of Yu Hong whose marble sarcophagus, carved with elaborate Sogdian and Zoroastrian motifs, was recently exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales). It is regrettable that Hansen otherwise ignores these discoveries, arbitrarily and erroneously excluding ancient Taiyuan as a site relevant to an understanding of the Silk Road when historical sources record that Tang dynasty Taiyuan was home to a large and influential Sogdian community. Further information on the Shanxi Sogdians can be gleaned from Albert Dien's Six Dynasties Civilization (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). Also worth consulting in this regard is Zhang Qingjie's brief article on Yu Hong's sarcophagus published in English in Volume 13 (2000) of the China Archaeology and Art Digest.

We should be grateful that Hansen provides what is probably the best account in English of the contents of an early 8th century Tang dynasty treasure hoard discovered in the 1970s in Hejiacun, a village in the southern part of modern-day Xi'an. The numerous gold and silver objects, precious gems, medicines, coins, and other items that make up the hoard were found in three pots at a site which was, in Tang dynasty times, between the famous Western Market and Eastern Market of Chang'an. In June 2013 I saw an exhibition of the Hejiacun artifacts at the Shaanxi Province History Museum in Xi'an and can confirm their beauty and their importance to an understanding of Tang art and commerce. Hansen reviews those pieces from Hejiacun that have Sogdian characteristics and may even have been made in Samarkand or in other locales that were part of the trade network that linked the markets of Chang'an with those of ancient Central Asia.

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Samarkand is, of course, most visited for its glorious medieval Islamic architecture from the time of Tamerlane. However, it can offer surprises. These include an important work created by quite another culture some centuries earlier: the painted walls of a 7th century CE royal palace from Samarkand’s predecessor, Marakanda, city of those unique and vigorous Central Asians known as Sogdians. At the time these paintings were made, Sogdian was the lingua franca of the Great Silk Road. Now only one tiny village in Turkmenistan still speaks a language related to Sogdian.

The murals are housed in Samarkand’s Afrasiab History Museum, a marble edifice (1970, Russian-built) at the foot of the huge, ancient tell called Afrasiab, in the north-eastern suburbs of the present-day city. This vast site is said to contain 11 levels of human occupation, from the sixth century BCE onwards. Principally, the tell holds the ruins of the great cities of Afrasiab (destroyed by Alexander the Great in 329 BCE) and Marakanda (destroyed by Genghis Khan in 1220 CE). After viewing the Hellenistic and Sogdian artefacts in the museum, you can trawl the tell’s rather sad, dusty mounds and fissures for glass and pottery shards or pieces of ancient bone (it’s hot, don’t forget your hat).

Inside the museum itself, the ancient palace’s painted room has been recreated so that visitors can walk in and be surrounded by the frescoes which covered all four walls of the original. Line drawings on free-standing pedestals assist in deciphering the worn shapes, but wonderful colours immediately leap out – especially blues. It has been argued that the ‘Afrasiab paintings’ form a complex symbolic world composition, and that they incorporate allusions to actual historical events. The principal figure on the Western wall (opposite the entrance) may be King Varxuman or Varhuman, prime ruler of Sogd at this time, who may have commissioned the paintings. The figure is very degraded and difficult to identify, and other experts argue it may have depicted a Sogdian god (or even two). This wall also shows rows of both seated and standing armed figures, some of whom could be the king’s Turkic personal guards. Other figures, to the viewer’s left, are more clearly visible and appear to be tribute-bearers, dressed in gorgeous long silk gowns decorated with pearled medallions – Iranian imagery which travelled east to China and even Tibet.

The figures on the other walls of the Hall are said to be representatives from other nations who have come to pay homage to the Sogdian ruler. The Eastern (entrance) wall is said to have shown India, but there’s nothing left now except a few lotus. On the northern wall, a Chinese empress surrounded by attendants peers modestly from a boat, her hand in varadha (boon-offering) mudra. To her right, mounted huntsmen pursue leopards with spears and bows and arrows, in a lively manner reminiscent of the Tang.

The paintings on the southern wall opposite were first interpreted as showing the entry of foreign ambassadors to Samarkand (hence the room’s familiar name ‘Hall of Ambassadors’). It is now argued that the painting depicts a Zoroastrian Nowruz (New Year) procession, an Iranian religious funerary procession to honour the ancestors. As it is complete with riderless, be-ribboned horse in the Iranian style and a charming...
procession of sacrificial geese (very clearly visible even to the flash-less digital camera) and Zoroastrian-looking priests to the far left, this seems most likely. The procession also includes a delightful small elephant, two camels, and many more horses richly caparisoned in the Iranian style.

These beautiful, battered paintings are not only tantalising and atmospheric, they are also very rare. The culture of the Sogdians has been destroyed or buried under later civilisations. I personally first became closely acquainted with a work of Sogdian art only this year, when the 6th century Sarcophagus of Yu Hong went on display at the AGNSW (ref. Jeffrey Riegel’s article, p.47 of this issue). This captivating work of relief sculpture depicts (in addition to the usual Buddhist imagery), Zoroastrian priests and a fire altar; camels and elephants replace Chinese dragons; a Central Asian dancer spins in a trance beneath the images of the deceased couple, whose facial features are certainly not Chinese. It seems that Yu Hong, although he died in Taiyuan, China, was most likely a Sogdian trader/diplomat from Central Asia. He was a representative of a people who actively looked both ways – west to Iran, east to China – but whose culture, descendants and language have virtually vanished today.

Sandra Forbes is a former editor of TAASA Review. One of her current interests is the Silk Road.

Wednesday 4 December 2013 from 6-8 pm. TAASA end-of-year party at the Korean Cultural Office, Elizabeth Street, Sydney (opposite Museum Station). There will be Korean art and craft exhibits on show as well as a short Korean performance.

Price including canapes and drinks $20 for members: $25 for guests.

For further information and booking (essential) contact Ann Guild on annguild@optusnet.com.au or (02) 9460 4579

A DATE FOR YOUR 2014 DIARY

Chinese Opera
Thursday 27 February, for members and their guests: a Chinese banquet and introduction to Chinese Opera at the Marigold Restaurant, Haymarket. Fiona Reilly, Head of Costume at NIDA, will give a short talk; the application of the exotic make-up for Chinese Opera will be shown followed by a short performance.

For further information please contact Ann Guild as above.

TAASA EVENTS 2014 (PROVISIONAL LISTING)

May

TAASA Oration
This is a new initiative to introduce distinguished speakers and their challenging ideas. We are delighted to announce that Professor David Christian, Professor of Modern History at Macquarie University has agreed to be our initial TAASA Orator. Some TAASA members may recall that Prof Christian spoke at two TAASA seminars in 1999 and in 2000 and was the star speaker.

June

A weekend event in Canberra to view the Indonesian photography exhibition at the NGA as well as the ‘Bali’ exhibition also at the NGA.

July

A full day textile seminar at the Powerhouse Museum focussing on symbols on textiles.

August

Japanese war kimonos. A display and discussion by a noted collector

We also plan Melbourne and Queensland based events - to be advised early in 2014.
RECENT TAASA ACTIVITIES

TAASA IN VICTORIA
PRIVATE MELBOURNE COLLECTION VIEWING
3 October 2013

In early October a capacity group of TAASA Victoria members and guests were privileged to attend an exclusive viewing of a private collection of Buddhist art of Tibet and Mongolia. Our host was Boris Kaspiev who assembled the group of more than 400 sacred objects over the past 25 years, along with the late Richard Price. The items range in age from the 12th to 19th centuries and include thangka (painted Buddhist hanging scrolls) and tsakli (miniature ritual paintings), manuscript pages, textiles, bronze and wooden sculpture and other ritual pieces.

After generously treating us to a selection of wines from his cellar, Boris led the group through the various rooms of his inner-city house where the collection is beautifully displayed on almost all available walls and surfaces. He spoke about some of the painted objects, especially the intriguing tsakli, and also focussed on some of the Tibetan and Mongolian bronzes, each with their characteristic styles. Some recent acquisitions were also on view and several members particularly enjoyed perusing Boris’ large library of Asian art publications.

It was an enlightening and congenial evening and all members fortunate enough to be there appreciated the opportunity. Many thanks are due to Boris Kaspiev for his hospitality and for sharing his passion and knowledge, and to Margot Yeomans and Ian Strachan for their assistance in organising.

Susan Scollay

TAASA CERAMICS STUDY GROUP, SYDNEY
Simplicity of chance: Japanese tea ceramics
12 October 2013

A ceramicist, a tea practitioner and a collector shared their experiences and knowledge of the Japanese tea ceremony with an enthusiastic audience on 12 October at the College of Fine Arts Sydney.

Paul Davis shared his experiences with the Saka family from Hagi as an apprentice moving up through the ranks in the family workshop. His presentation provided many intimate insights of his experiences as a young Australian potter coming to grips with the aesthetic underpinnings in the Japanese tea environment. The Saka family have worked on the same area of land since the early 1600s and everything they need, including the materials for ceramic production, is obtained from their locality. Paul brought along the tools used in making Japanese tea bowls.

Ann MacArthur spoke about her experiences learning the tea ceremony over a year spent at the Urasenke School, a school which developed from the tea ceremony as practiced along the principles of Sen no Rikyu. She introduced the objects used in order of their ranked importance and high-lighted the aesthetic choices to be made in selecting objects to be used for each tea ceremony according to the season, the guests and the occasion. Her presentation illustrated that not only were Japanese unpretentious vessels valued, but Chinese and Korean vessels were also held in high esteem.

John Freeland generously brought along a collection of tea wares, mainly bowls, and used a quotation from Yanagi Soetsu as the basis of his finely crafted talk which was illustrated by examples of those wares. His approach focussed on the philosophical underpinnings of tea wares made in Japan. We all felt extremely fortunate to have heard such thoughtful, entertaining and informative presentations.

RUTH HADLOW: UNPACKING MY SUITCASE, TEXTILE TALES FROM WEST TIMOR
9 October 2013, COFA

What a treat was in store for TAASA members, friends and COFA students. Beautiful images of the people, cultural objects, and traditional way of life accompanied Ruth’s interesting talk.

Ruth - artist, writer and educator - filled us in on the background of her decision to live in Kupang, West Timor, a rural and poor country, explaining the effects of colonists, the Dutch and Portuguese, on its culture and traditions. Whereas the Dutch attempted to stifle, the Portuguese accommodated the animist traditions, belief in spirits and ancestor worship amongst others. Today animist traditions co-exist with Christianity.

The traditional colours of woven textiles, wraps, skirts, shoulder cloths, were natural dyes of blue, red and black, but now weavers are not averse to including bright colours, pinks, yellows, oranges, greens in their works. The patterns are unique to a particular region. The decline in weaving (knowledge and practice) was the impetus for implementation of a special scheme to teach young teenage girls. Most weavers were over the age of 35. A grant has helped in setting up classes as part of the school curriculum.

We were shown photographs of the girls seated on the ground weaving their textiles on traditional back-strap looms. They were enjoying themselves, and at the same time obviously proud to ensure these skills are not lost. An added bonus is that with the sale of their textiles, they are able to finance their schooling, and possibly further education.

Ruth brought along a selection of textiles and also carved horn or cow bone and wooden lime containers, kalat sunat, used in the betel nut chewing ritual. We all had a wonderful time rummaging.
WHAT’S ON IN AUSTRALIA: DECEMBER 2013 - FEBRUARY 2014
A SELECTIVE ROUNDUP OF EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

Compiled by Tina Burge

ACT

The art of Gandhara by Dr Angelo Andrea Di Castro
22 February 2014, 2pm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Dr Di Castro, Lecturer, Archaeology, Monash University, will discuss Gandhara, Afghanistan and the intersection of Indian and Greek culture, seen in the eclectic mix of style in Gandharan art in the National Gallery’s collection.
For more information go to: www.nga.gov.au

Garden of the East: Photography in Indonesia 1850s - 1940s
21 February - 22 June 2014
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Garden of the East will feature photography by Walter B Woodbury and James Page from the mid-19th century. Woodbury & Page’s distinctive rich-toned, detailed prints survive today as the major archive of Jakarta and 19th-century colonial Indonesia in the NGA’s collection.
For more information go to: www.nga.gov.au/GardenEast

NSW

Connoisseur and philanthropist - 25 years of the Sternberg Collection of Chines
31 January - 27 April 2014
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

After falling in love with Chinese art in the 1950s, Goldie Sternberg started donating works to the Art Gallery of NSW in the 1980s. In 1989, her husband, Edward Sternberg, proposed providing funds for the Gallery to invest, with the income used to buy Chinese art. Since then, over 30 artworks have been either gifted to the Gallery by the Sternbergs and friends inspired by their philanthropic spirit, or purchased with the Edward and Goldie Sternberg Chinese Art Purchase Fund. Covering a wide range of artistic styles from the 1st century (Han Dynasty, 206 BCE -220 CE) to modern times, they help to enrich our understanding and appreciation of the continuity and diversity of Chinese civilisation.

QUEENSLAND

Cai Guo-Qiang: Falling Back to Earth
23 November 2013 – 11 May 2014 Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA), Brisbane

Spanning the ground floor galleries of GOMA, this exhibition presents major, large scale installations by Cai Guo-Qiang. A centrepiece of the exhibition is a dramatic new commission, Heritage 2013, which features 99 life-sized animals from around the world gathered together at a watering hole. Also featured is Head On 2006, with its stream of 99 life-sized wolves leaping through the air and crashing into a glass wall. Other new work in the exhibition is inspired by the artist’s experiences in Australia, drawing upon local landscape, history and culture. For more information go to: www.qagoma.qld.gov.au

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Realms of Wonder: Jain, Hindu and Islamic art of India
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
9 October 2013 - 27 January 2014

The first major exhibition exclusively dedicated to the art of India at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Realms of Wonder includes almost two hundred paintings, sculptures, textiles and decorative art objects dating from the eighth century till the present day. The exhibition features art inspired by the three great spiritual traditions of India: Jainism, Hinduism and Islam and is the first comprehensive survey of Jain art ever staged in Australia.

Paradise on Earth - Flowers in the arts of Islam
Until January 2014
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Paradise on earth presents works of art from the Middle East, India and Indonesia that feature floral subjects, a favourite theme of Muslim artists. The works date from medieval times to the present era and include textiles, painting, ceramics and metalware. The Gallery’s renowned Yakob ‘Polonaise’ carpet, woven in Iran in c.1624–30, forms a highlight of the display.
For more information go to: www.artgallery.sa.gov.au

VICTORIA

Three Perfections: Poetry, Calligraphy and Painting in Chinese Art
National Gallery of Victoria, International, Melbourne
6 December 2013 - 9 June 2014

Three Perfections explores the interconnections between poetry, calligraphy and painting. In traditional China, scholars and scholar-officials were cultivated in these arts as vehicles of self-expression. Painting was regarded as ‘silent poetry’ and poetry ‘painting with sound’. Scholars trained in the ‘art of handwriting’ or calligraphy at an early age used calligraphic brushstrokes in their paintings. This exhibition consists of paintings and calligraphy from the Asian Collection. Works dating from the fourteenth century to the present will show the uniqueness of Chinese art and the contrast between traditional and contemporary art in the continuity of a living tradition.
For more information go to: www.ngv.vic.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/exhibitions/three-perfections
THREE PERFECTIONS
POETRY, CALLIGRAPHY
AND PAINTING IN
CHINESE ART

Free Entry
6 DEC 2013 –
9 JUN 2014

NGV International
180 St Kilda Road
10am–5pm
Closed Tuesdays
ngv.vic.gov.au

WU Zuoren
Panda and bamboo, 1984 (detail)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of an anonymous donor, 2007
© Wu Zuoren Estate

Three Perfections is the first exhibition at NGV’s newly reopened Asian Temporary Exhibitions Gallery at NGV International