

Kimbell Education Programs

From the
Lands of Asia

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection



Kimbell Art Museum

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PREPARING STUDENTS IN ADVANCE

We look forward to welcoming your school group to the Museum. Here are a few suggestions for teachers to help to ensure a successful, productive learning experience at the Museum.

LOOK, DISCUSS, CREATE

Use this resource to lead classroom discussions and related activities prior to the visit. (Suggested activities may also be used after the visit.)

REVIEW MUSEUM GUIDELINES

For students:

- Touch the works of art only with your eyes, never with your hands.
- Walk in the museum—do not run.
- Use a quiet voice when sharing your ideas.
- No flash photography is permitted in special exhibitions or permanent collection galleries.
- Write and draw only with pencils—no pens or markers, please.

Additional information for teachers:

- Please review the bus parking information provided with your tour confirmation.
- Backpacks, umbrellas, or other bulky items are not allowed in the galleries. Free parcel check is available.
- Seeing-eye dogs and other service animals assisting people with disabilities are the only animals allowed in the Museum.
- Unscheduled lecturing to groups is not permitted.
- No food, drinks, or water bottles are allowed in any galleries.
- Cell phones should be turned to silent mode while in the Museum.
- Tobacco use, including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, electronic cigarettes, snuff, and chewing tobacco, is not permitted in the Museum or anywhere on the Museum's grounds.

VOCABULARY AND PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Amida	Buddha of the Western Paradise ah-MEE-dah
Bodhisattva	An enlightened being who has put off their own nirvana to assist mankind on the path to salvation boh-dee-saht-vah
Buddha	“The Enlightened One” boo-dah
Cham	Lively masked and costumed dance associated with Tibetan Buddhism and Buddhist festivals chahm
Edo period	Japanese dynastic period; 1615–1868 eh-doh
Furisode	Long-sleeved kimono worn in Japan fur-ee-so-duh
Guanyin	East Asian bodhisattva of compassion gwahn-yin
Han dynasty	Chinese dynastic period; 206–220 BC hahn
Heian period	Japanese dynastic period; 794–1185 hey-an
Huang	Very thin, arched jade pendants crafted in Neolithic China, particularly at the end of the Eastern Zhou period (770–221 BC) hwahng
Jiangxi	Province in China, location of Jingdezhen kilns jee-ahng-she
Jingdezhen Kilns	(Jiangxi province) Ming and Qing dynasty imperial porcelain kilns jing-duh-juhn

Junzi	In China, a gentleman / a Chinese gentleman jwun-zuh
Kamakura period	Japanese dynastic period; 1185–1333 kah-mah-kur-ah
Kaolin	Crumbly white clay combined with feldspar and water to create porcelain kay-uh-lin
Kendi	Vase from which one drinks without touching the lips ken-dee
Kimono	Long garment worn by both women and men since the 16th century in Japan kee-mo-no
Kosode	Japanese undergarment that predates the kimono and was worn by the aristocracy and as everyday attire by lower classes koh-so-duh
Kundika	Sanskrit term meaning vase from which one drinks without touching the lips kun-dee-kah
Leizu	Wife of the mythological Chinese Yellow Emperor (r. 2698–2598 BC) lay-zoo
Liangzhu	Chinese Neolithic culture; c. 3300–2200 BC lee-ang-jew
Mandala	Cosmic diagram used as a meditational aid in Tantric Buddhism MAHN-dah-lah
Mantras	Chanted or recited prayers mahn-trahs
Meiping	Plum vase may-ping
Ming dynasty	Chinese dynastic period; 1368–1644 ming

Mongols	Foreign invaders from the north who ruled China in the Yuan dynasty (1278–1368) mon-gohls
Mudra	Ritual gesture moo-drah
Nirvana	The extinction of all desires; perfected knowledge nir-vah-nah
Noh	Traditional form of Japanese theater in which masked actors present scenes of mysterious tales accompanied by melancholic music no
Qing dynasty	Chinese dynastic period; 1644–1912 ching
Samurai	Japanese warrior sah-muhr-ai
Shakyamuni	“Sage of the Shakyas”; name of the historical Buddha shah-key’ah-moo-nee
Shang dynasty	Chinese dynastic period; c. 1500–1050 BC shahng
Siddhartha Gautama	Name of the prince who became the historical Buddha (563–483 BC) in India sid-har-tha / goh-tah-mah
Song dynasty	Chinese dynastic period; 960–1279 song
Sutras	Written teachings of the Buddha su-trahs
Tale of Genji	Earliest Japanese novel, written by Lady Murasaki (c. 973–c. 1015) in the late Heian period ghen-gee
Tang dynasty	Chinese dynastic period; 618–907 tahng

Tantric Buddhism	Buddhist tradition that subscribes to sacred texts known as tantras, as well as ritual practices for achieving enlightenment including mantras, mandalas, and visualizations of deities. Also known as Vajrayana or Esoteric Buddhism. tan-trick
Yu	Chinese word for jade, the stone nephrite, a mineral of extreme hardness that must be worked with abrasive sand in a procedure involving great expenditures of time and skill you
Yuan dynasty	Chinese dynastic period; 1271–1368 yu'en
Zhou Dynasty	Chinese dynastic period; 1045–256 BC joe

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

From the Lands of Asia

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection

When Americans Sam and Myrna Myers visited Paris in the mid-1960s, they became so enamored with the city that they decided to make it their home. There, over the course of fifty years, they built an extraordinary art collection. Beginning by acquiring Greek and Roman antiquities, and eventually focusing on Asia, the Myers ended up assembling some five thousand works that, together, offer a very personal vision of the world of Asian art. This exhibition presents over four hundred objects selected from this remarkable collection, which until now has never been exhibited publicly, with works representing key periods in the history of the art of China, Japan, Tibet, and Korea.

The exhibition revolves around a passion for Asia and covers a broad historical range, from the Neolithic era to modern times. The objects are also highly varied in nature, from porcelain, ivory, and precious stones such as jade and rock crystal to Buddhist art and textiles and stunning costumes from Central Asia, Tibet, China, and Japan. Each treasure is exceptional in its shape, rarity, quality, function, or inherent message. The exhibition recounts fascinating historical events through themes such as the symbolism of Chinese jade, the trade in blue-and-white porcelain, Buddhism, **Noh** theater, the Japanese **samurai**, the tea ceremony, and the scholar's studio. The astonishing array of outstanding works of art in the Myers Collection is testimony to Asia's rich cultural heritage and unique customs and offers a broad panorama of Asian history in all its beauty and diversity.



COSTUMES AND CUSTOMS

Textiles have always played a prominent role in East Asian culture. Clothing from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries is an endless source of information about the customs of these diverse societies. To discover this richly woven world, we must consider the different types of people who wore this clothing: officials and scholars, courtesans and actors, dancers and cavaliers. Whether from China, Tibet, Japan, or Uzbekistan, these garments embody the social values of these cultures and reflect the status and personality of those who wore them.

According to legend, silk was discovered in China in the third millennium BC by the empress **Leizu**, wife of the Yellow Emperor. Its earliest known use dates from well before even the **Shang** dynasty (c. 1500–1050 BC). Silk is made from the cocoon woven by the larvae of the mulberry silk moth. Over time, the Chinese learned how to unwind the cocoon's strong filaments and make it into thread, creating a unique source of textile fiber. The technique for making silk remained a secret until the **Tang** dynasty (AD 618–907), when the silk moth was smuggled into the Byzantine Empire.

SELECTED OBJECTS



Long-sleeved kimono (*furusode*)
Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)
Embroidered silk

Full-page reproduction on p. 24

A long garment worn by both women and men since the sixteenth century, the **kimono** is Japan's emblematic garment. It evolved from the older *kosode*, originally worn as an undergarment by the aristocracy and as everyday attire by lower classes. Its "T" shape is made from four strips of fabric folded in half and sewn together to form the sleeves and body of a robe that opens in front. Reduced to its essential form, the **kimono** is surprisingly modern and provides an ideal background for decorative motifs that are often unique, drawn from a limitless repertoire.

The name *furusode* means "swinging sleeves." These long-sleeved **kimonos** identified the wearer as a girl or an unmarried woman and were worn for formal occasions such as weddings, ceremonies, and visits to temples. The typical bright colors and lavish decoration called public attention to their wearers. The elaborately stenciled, dyed, painted, and embroidered patterns on this *furusode* allude to the amorous pursuits of princely courtiers celebrated in *The Tale of Genji*, depicting a view, through clouds, of bamboo blinds and curtains seen from flower-filled gardens.



Dancer's robe
Tibet, 18th century
Silk brocade

Full-page reproduction on p. 25

An exclusive and coveted commodity, Chinese silk was used as an instrument of diplomacy with foreigners during the **Yuan** dynasty (1279–1368). Lavish gifts and commerce helped maintain alliances. During this time, Tibetan leaders enjoyed special prominence due to the strong attachment of the **Mongol** court to **Tantric** Buddhism. **Yuan** practices of bestowing gifts and titles on Tibetan religious leaders and of sanctioning trade in luxury goods lasted into the seventeenth century, and imperial patronage of Tibetan Buddhism continued throughout the **Qing** dynasty (1644–1911).

Many of the textiles sent to Tibet were originally produced for the Chinese court. Textiles amassed by the imperial household were often held in reserve for such purposes. Although highly prized, garments and fabrics were often recut to fit Tibetan costume styles or to serve new functions. This robe, worn by Tibetan monks who performed masked *cham* dances on major religious festivals, was recut from a Chinese dragon robe in order to strategically position the dragon ornament.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Compare the shape and design of these two garments. What might their differences tell us about the wearers?

Describe the detailed images on each garment. How do they differ? Where do you see inspiration from the natural world? Which details are especially dramatic? How do the colorful designs complement the shapes of each garment?

Imagine how the Tibetan dancer's robe would look while worn by a monk engaged in the traditional *cham* dance. How would its shape and design help to dramatize and enhance the dancer's movements?

Look closely at the Tibetan dancer's robe, which was made from repurposed silk textiles originally made in China. Can you guess how many textiles were repurposed to create this garment? How were the original textiles cut and rearranged to enhance the robe's exciting design? Think about the strategic use of symmetry, pattern, color, and shape.

If you designed a garment for yourself, what sort of imagery would you incorporate to signal your interests? What color would it be? What symbols would you use in your design? Try your hand at sketching a design for such a garment.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Watch videos highlighting different traditional Japanese processes for producing textiles:

[Victoria and Albert Museum, “Making Kimono”](#)

[Mingei International Museum, “Weaving Nishijin Textiles”](#)

Learn about the great Japanese literary classic that inspired the makers of the kimono:

[Encyclopaedia Britannica, “The Tale of Genji by Murasaki Shikibu”](#)

Compare the kimono with Edo-period screens depicting scenes from *The Tale of Genji*:

[Metropolitan Museum of Art](#)

[Yale University Art Gallery](#)

Learn about the history of traditional *cham* dances:

[The Rubin Museum, “Cham Dances: Ritual, Spectacle, and Beauty”](#)

[Video of a contemporary *cham* dance performance](#)

AN OCEAN OF PORCELAIN

During the Renaissance, Chinese porcelain intrigued the Europeans, who knew little to nothing about how to produce it. Widely traded in eastern Asia since the eleventh century, the Chinese invention had only found its way to Europe in the early sixteenth century, carried by intrepid Portuguese mariners. In the next century, the Dutch were in full command of a lucrative porcelain trade.

Unlike silk, porcelain is heavy and could only be exported by ship. Underwater excavations have revealed treasures from junk and cargo wrecks. A remarkable testament to five hundred years of porcelain production, the pieces presented here are among the most precious finds. Even porcelains exposed to centuries of seawater in sunken vessels have lost none of their brilliance.

Seven steps to produce Chinese porcelain:	
1.	Kaolin , a crumbly white clay that, at the time, was only found in China, was combined with feldspar and water to form a paste.
2.	The paste was then shaped and fired at a low temperature.
3.	Once the piece was cool, it was decorated with cobalt blue.
4.	The piece was then fired again in another kiln at a high temperature.
5.	The heat from the second firing brought out the cobalt blue design and left a glossy finish on the piece.
6.	Polychrome enamels were sometimes added, after which the piece was fired again at a low temperature to set them.
7.	Finally, the piece was packaged for sale on local and international markets.

SELECTED OBJECTS



Meiping vase

China, Yuan dynasty (1279–1368)
Porcelain, blue-and-white ware

Full-page reproduction on p. 26

The **Yuan** dynasty changed the course of history by introducing the use of underglaze cobalt blue in porcelain made in **Jingdezhen** in **Jiangxi** Province. The foreign-ruled **Mongol Yuan** court was infatuated with this new style. The real mastery of this technique occurred at the beginning of the second quarter of the fourteenth century, and the industry reached maturity around 1350.

The orderly decoration of this *meiping*, in three horizontal registers separated by double lines, is evidence of the division of tasks and the specialization of the workers at the principle kiln centers in **Jiangxi** province, which were under imperial control. Above the panel of lotuses that surround the narrow foot, there is a central frieze of dragons amid clouds, the symbol of the emperor. The fluidity of the bodies covered with scales, the spines that outline their backs, and their aggressive claws accentuate their power. Flying phoenixes amid floral scrolls decorate the broad shoulders.



Phoenix kendi

China, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), 16th century
Porcelain, blue-and-white ware

Full-page reproduction on p. 27

The distinctive forms of *kendi* indicate that many of the pouring vessels made in **Jingdezhen** during the **Ming** dynasty were destined for the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The *kendi*'s unique shape does not originate in China but is derived from drinking vessels first made and commonly used throughout Southeast Asia and, later, the Middle East as well. The term *kendi* is derived from the Sanskrit *kundika*, meaning a vase from which one drinks without touching the lips. Fourteenth-century *kendi* were bulbous vases with a spout and a tubular neck. By the sixteenth century, their bases had become more elegant, often resting on a foot, and their shoulders more marked, with long necks that narrowed at the opening.

Jingdezhen potters had great imagination for plastic arts and created *kendi* in the forms of dragons, phoenixes, buffalos, and toads. This phoenix *kendi* is an exceptional piece—a rare object that is both functional and mysterious, like this hybrid creature, which has fascinated the Chinese since antiquity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Compare these two vases. What do they have in common? What do you notice about their shapes and decoration? Imagine that you collect Chinese porcelain, like Sam and Myrna Myers. Which object would you choose to display in your home? Why?

How does “white space” work in each object? How is the decoration organized? Which part of the design would you like to paint?

Each vessel shows at least one mythological animal that represents imperial power. What creatures would you use to suggest power and movement?

The term “**kendi**” comes from the Sanskrit word “**kundika**” and refers to a vase from which one drinks without touching the lips. In what situation would such a vessel prove useful?

The potters of **Jingdezhen** showed great imagination when they molded **kendi** in the forms of dragons, phoenixes, buffalos, and frogs. What other animals would you like to see as a **kendi**? Sketch a design to show one of your ideas.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Chinese Invention of Porcelain:

[British Museum article on the Chinese invention of porcelain](#)

Porcelain Decorations:

[Khan Academy, “Chinese Porcelain: Decoration”](#)

Exporting Chinese Porcelain:

[Munger, Jeffrey, and Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen. “East and West: Chinese Export Porcelain.” In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001–.](#)

A THOUSAND YEARS OF BUDDHISM

Prince **Siddhartha Gautama**, who later became the historical **Buddha, Shakyamuni**, and upon whose teachings Buddhism was founded, was born in Northern India in the sixth century BC. Both a religion and a philosophy, Buddhism is above all a quest to reach the enlightened state of **nirvana**, in which all desires are extinguished, and to be released from the endless cycles of rebirth. As it evolved, the religion adopted different doctrines, which led to the development of multiple sects of Buddhism.

From India, the Buddhist faith was steadily transmitted along the Silk Road by missionaries, merchants, and pilgrims to East Asia, where it served as a major cultural force. In its long history, it experienced both prosperity and suppression; its triumph can be variously attributed to imperial patronage, the universal appeal of salvation obtainable to all, and its ability to adapt to different cultures and assimilate native beliefs.

In the Buddhist art of China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet, Indian models provided the basis for style and iconography, but ultimately, each culture created a vocabulary imbued with its own artistic traditions, resulting in a corpus of Buddhist art exhibiting a rich variety of styles in a wide range of media.

SELECTED OBJECTS



Bodhisattva Guanyin
China, Song dynasty, c. 1125
Polychromed wood

Full-page reproduction on p. 28

During the **Song** dynasty (AD 960–1279), Buddhist sculpture continued to develop in wood and stucco, with the introduction of greater naturalism to depict deities such as the ever-popular **bodhisattva** of compassion, **Guanyin**. The divinity is seated in the meditative attitude of “royal repose,” with the right hand resting on the raised right knee and the left hand on a book, presumably a **sutra**. Originally, the figure would have been placed on a sculpted wooden rock or mountain.

The model for this sculpture is likely based on images in eighth-century **Tang** dynasty paintings. During the **Song** dynasty, there was frequent collaboration between painters and sculptors to satisfy demands for images, which resulted in a greater sense of anatomical accuracy. The fluidity of the sculpture is evident in the juxtaposed curves of the drapery, the calligraphic flow of the scarves, and the sophistication of the jewelry.



Amida Buddha
Japan, Kamakura period (1185–1333)
Bronze

Full-page reproduction on p. 29

Buddhism was introduced into Japan from Korea in the sixth century AD. During the late **Heian** period (897–1185), Buddhism was characterized by the marked increase in the worship of **Amida Buddha** and his Western Pure Land Paradise, which became even more widespread during the **Kamakura** period (1185–1333). The principal belief of practitioners in this esoteric Buddhist sect is that ritual invocation of **Amida's** name was sufficient to gain admittance into his Western Paradise.

The **Kamakura** period is notable for the emergence of a ruling military elite, who favored a dramatic sculptural style characterized by intense realism, muscularity, and power. Seated in meditation, this **Amida Buddha** wears a monastic robe carefully placed to reveal his lightly modeled chest. His face is framed by ears with extended earlobes and hair in spirals. This bronze figure also exhibits a striking plasticity, its solidity reinforced by its seated position. The cascading robe that covers his lower body, the breadth of his torso, and the rounded geometry of his face all give this representation a real presence, tempered by the almost abstract drapery.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

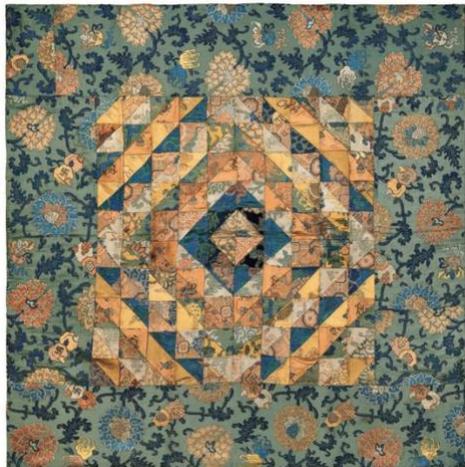
Compare the poses and facial expressions of the **Bodhisattva Guanyin** and **Amida Buddha**. What words would you use to describe the mood of each?

Do they seem still or active? Where do you see movement? Consider balance and symmetry—as well as realism and abstraction—in each sculpture.

Describe what each figure is wearing. What do you notice about their hairstyles? What does the appearance of each sculpture tell you about their spiritual roles?

Compare the materials used to create both sculptures. What processes would be involved? Describe their different surface textures. How does color and light work with each object?

SELECTED OBJECT



Mandala
Tibet, Ming dynasty (1368–1644)
Chinese silk

Full-page reproduction on p. 30

Buddhism came to Tibet in the seventh century and was flourishing by the late tenth century. Most Tibetan art was created in connection with the complex rituals and meditational practices of **Tantric**, or esoteric, Buddhism, in which repeated **mantras**—chanted or recited prayers—are a means of attaining **nirvana**.

A counterpoint to intense prayer is the decoration of religious textiles. Used as aids in the process of spiritual enlightenment, **mandalas** (cosmic diagrams) form the focus for visualization and meditation. In Tibet, imported silks were always in short supply; the practice of making patchworks of luxury silks became a pious act born of necessity. Geometric patchworks made of tiny triangles were seamed to form squares with contrasting halves and assembled to form larger cloths.

The design of concentric lozenges may have served as sacred diagrams (**mandalas**) to focus meditation. The number of pieces and their colors and arrangements were linked to numerology and divination. **Mandalas** were used by Tibetans in daily and religious life. Numerological diagrams were important systems for calculating horoscopes and forecasting the future.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How does the **mandala** compare with patchwork quilts you might have seen or made in the past?

Examine the **mandala**'s use of color, repetition, and geometry. How might these elements contribute to the **mandala**'s use as a focus for meditation? Describe your experience of visually traveling through its complex design.

Consider the detailed process of creating this **mandala**. How might the cutting, sewing, and repurposing of the original textiles have contributed to a spiritual practice? Can you name other repetitive activities that may support quiet thinking or meditation?

Study the varied colors, symbols, and natural images that appear in the **mandala**. How many unique silk patterns were used to produce this design?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Listen to a guided meditation centered around the Amida Buddha:

[Kimbell Art Museum's ARTMinded podcast](#)

The origins of Buddhism and the life of the historical Buddha Shakymuni:

[Victoria and Albert Museum article, "Buddhism"](#)

[Brown, Kathryn Selig. "Life of the Buddha." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.](#)

The Buddha's iconography and mudras:

[Victoria and Albert Museum article, "Iconography of the Buddha"](#)

[A to Z Photo Dictionary Japanese Buddhist Statuary, "Mudra: Hand Gestures with Religious Meaning"](#)

Buddhism in China:

[Asia Society article, "Buddhism in China"](#)

[Leidy, Denise. "Chinese Buddhist Sculpture." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.](#)

Buddhism in Japan:

[Asia Society article, "Buddhism in Japan"](#)

Compare the exhibition's **Amida Buddha** with this [monumental Amida Buddha in Kamakura, Japan](#)

Buddhism in Tibet:

[Brown, Kathryn Selig. "Tibetan Buddhist Art." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.](#)

THE MAGIC OF JADE

In China, jade was revered as the most precious of stones. Rare, mysterious, and difficult to carve, it was used to organize daily life and, at the same time, symbolized the chaos of the invisible forces of the universe. Believing it to possess special powers and magical properties, the Chinese manipulated jade to create an extraordinary array of ritual objects and tools, ceremonial weapons and royal insignia, ornaments and fittings, figural sculpture, and funerary attire.

For over five thousand years, this enigmatic stone has been an obsession for the Chinese. They see in its hardness, subtle colors, and translucency something that goes beyond mere material value and encompasses the spiritual realm. It is a source of ritual and magic, a symbol of immortality, an object of ornamentation, the physical expression of imperial power, and a metaphor for virtues. Confucius likened the purity of jade to the moral purity of the Confucian gentleman, *junzi*.

Jade remains unique, both for its exalted place in Chinese culture and for its position as a reflection of Chinese values and beliefs.

What is jade?

Jade, the substance known as *yu* to the Chinese, is the stone nephrite. It is a mineral of extreme hardness. It cannot be cut with a metal blade but must be worked with abrasive sand in a procedure of slicing and drilling that involves great expenditures of time and skill.

The color of nephrite is determined by the mineralogical composition of the stone, which is often a complex blend. It may be green, brown, red, yellow, blue, gray, or a range of other colors. It is made up of fine-grained, highly interwoven, and randomly oriented microcrystalline fibers that give it its typical compactness and toughness and its evocative “matted” or “felted” texture, which has always been appreciated by the Chinese for its resemblance to a miniature landscape.

Polishing jade, the last step in making an object, is probably the most important phase in the carving process since it enhances the inner beauty of the stone by highlighting its crystalline texture and making the stone shine. Jade was appreciated by the Chinese primarily because of its translucency—its capacity to allow light to pass through it—which varies greatly according to the composition and the impurities in the stone.

SELECTED OBJECTS



Tall *cong*
China, Liangzhu culture (c. 3300–2200 BC)
Jade

Full-page reproduction on p. 31

Cong cylinders are among the most enigmatic of all jade shapes created in the Neolithic period. Their possible ritual function and cultural significance still defy viable explanation. *Cong* may have played a significant role in representing the authority and power of their owners and were probably used in ceremonial contexts. Their angular form may have symbolized the earth.

The unique, squarish shape of *cong* is especially remarkable among Neolithic jades, which otherwise have rounded and smooth shapes. Most of the early jades are carved from slabs of raw material and are basically bi-dimensional, while *cong* are three-dimensional. *Cong* vary in height and have a carved-out circular center. Most are decorated with simple mask motifs that evoke human and animal forms.

The internal perforation, which runs throughout the whole length of the object, was obtained by using tubular drills in bamboo operated together with abrasive sands rich in quartz in a slow and time-consuming process. The perforation was drilled from both sides of the object, most probably to avoid possible breakage of the jade.



Complex pendant
China, Eastern Zhou (770–221 BC)
and Han (206 BC–AD 220) periods
Jade

Full-page reproduction on p. 32

During the Eastern **Zhou** period, it was common practice among the elite to wear elaborate pendants formed by different types of jades. They were probably linked by twisted silk cords, as evidenced by the jades found in tombs, which literally covered the bodies of their owners. This assemblage of jades illustrates what such pendants might have looked like. The shapes are those most commonly employed in complex pendants formed by multiple jades—rings, arched *huang*, and dragon-shaped pendants.

Jades were considered beautiful because of their inherent virtues—texture, translucency, luminescence, and shades of color. They were meant to dignify and reflect the virtues of the person who wore them, who was expected to live by strict moral and physical codes of behavior. The orderly composition of pendants acted as a visual metaphor for the orderly nature of the person wearing them. They accompanied him in burial because they were inseparable from him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For both jade objects, use Harvard’s Project Zero routine for exploring works of art, “See / Think / Wonder”:

- What do you see?
- What do you think about that?
- What does it make you wonder?

* Recommend this first as an individual writing exercise and then as a group discussion.

Historians are still debating the use of *cong* in Neolithic times. Based on what you see here (and what you might have learned about **Liangzhu** culture using the resources below), challenge yourself to venture a few theories about their use.

Imagine these jades strung together on a silk cord. How might it feel to wear this elaborate pendant? How might it appear in shifting light? What sounds might it have made as the wearer walked?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Neolithic China:

[Department of Asian Art. "Neolithic Period in China." In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–.](#)

Liangzhu culture:

[Freer | Sackler—The Smithsonian's Museum of Asian Art, "Ancient Chinese Jades"](#)

[UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "Liangzhu Archaeological Site"](#)

[Khan Academy video, "Jade Cong"](#)

Working with jade:

[Asian Art Museum video featuring traditional jade working methods, with images from a Qing dynasty \(1644–1911\) jade working manual and contemporary practices](#)

[National Palace Museum, "Art in Quest of Heaven and Truth"
"Jade without Grinding is of No Use"](#)



Long-sleeved kimono (*furusode*)

Japan, Edo period (1603–1868)

Embroidered silk

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection



Dancer's robe

Tibet, 18th century

Silk brocade

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection



Meiping vase

China, Yuan dynasty (1279–1368)
Porcelain, blue-and-white ware
The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection



Phoenix kendi

China, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), 16th century

Porcelain, blue-and-white ware

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection



Bodhisattva Guanyin

China, Song dynasty, c. 1125

Polychromed wood

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection



Amida Buddha

Japan, Kamakura period (1185–1333)

Bronze

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection



Mandala

Tibet, Ming dynasty (1368–1644)

Chinese silk

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection



Tall cong

China, Liangzhu culture (c. 3300–2200 BC)

Jade

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection



Complex pendant

China, Eastern Zhou (770–221 BC)
and Han (206 BC–AD 220) periods

Jade

The Sam and Myrna Myers Collection