

Chapter 17

The Age of Faith



Learning Objectives

- 17.1** Describe the principal architectural and decorative features of early Christian and Byzantine places of worship.
- 17.2** Explain the origins of the mosque and describe its chief features.
- 17.3** Describe the chief characteristics of the Carolingian, Romanesque, and Gothic styles.
- 17.4** Describe how Indian art and architecture reflect the Hindu religion, and how the Buddhist faith is evident in the arts of China and Japan.
- 17.5** Describe some of the characteristic works of the Ife, Shona, and Zagwe cultures.

Our study of the ancient world—from ancient fertility statues, to the Egyptian *ka*, to the rise of Buddhism—shows how powerful religion can be in setting the course of a culture, and the advent of Christianity in the Western world makes this abundantly clear. So powerful was the Christian story that in the West the common calendar changed. From the sixth century on, time was recorded in terms of years “BC” (before Christ) and years “AD” (*anno Domini*, the year of Our Lord, with the number indicating the years since his birth). Today, usage has changed somewhat—the preferred terms, as we use them in this text, are BCE (before the common era) and CE (the common era)—but the West’s calendar remains Christian.

At the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (Fig. 17-1), all three of the great Western faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—intersect. In Jewish tradition, it was here that Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. The Jewish Temple of Solomon originally stood here, and the site is further associated, in all three religions, with God’s creation of Adam. The Second Temple of Jerusalem also stood on this spot until it was destroyed by Roman soldiers when they sacked the city in 70 CE to put down a

Jewish revolt. Only the Wailing Wall remains, part of the original retaining wall for the platform supporting the Temple Mount and, for Jews, the most sacred site in Jerusalem. To this day, the plaza in front of the wall functions as an open-air synagogue where daily prayers are recited and other Jewish rituals are performed. On Tisha B’Av, the ninth day of the month of Av, which occurs either in July or August, a fast is held commemorating the destruction of the successive temples on this site, and people sit on the ground before the wall reciting the Book of Lamentations.

One of the earliest examples of Muslim architecture, built in the 680s, the Dome of the Rock’s **ambulatory**—its circular, colonnaded walkway—encloses a projected rock that lies directly beneath its golden dome. By the sixteenth century, Islamic faithful claimed that the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven from this spot, on a winged horse named Buraq, but there is no evidence that this story was in circulation when the Dome was originally built. Others thought that it represented the ascendancy of Islam over Christianity in the Holy Land. Still others believed the rock to be the



Fig. 17-1 The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, late 680s–91.

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center of the world, or that it could refer to the Temple of Solomon, the importance of which is fully acknowledged by Muslims, who consider Solomon a founding father of their own faith. All of this suggests that the Dome was meant to proselytize, or convert both Jews and Christians to the Muslim faith. The sanctity of the spot, then, in the heart of Jerusalem, is recognized by

Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, and the intersection of these three religions, together with the spread of Buddhism in Asia and the growth of the Hindu faith in Southeast Asia, is the subject of this chapter. The powerful influence of all these religions throughout the first millennium and well into the second gave rise to an age of faith.

Early Christian and Byzantine Art

What are the principal architectural and decorative features of early Christian and Byzantine churches?

Christianity spread through the Roman world at a very rapid pace, in large part due to the missionary zeal of St. Paul. By 250 CE, fully 60 percent of Asia Minor had converted to the religion, and when the Roman emperor Constantine legalized Christianity in the Edict of Milan in 313 CE, Christian art became imperial art. The Classical art of Greece and Rome emphasized the humanity of its figures, their corporeal reality. But the Christian God was not mortal and could not even be comfortably represented in human terms. Though His Son, Jesus, was human enough, the mystery of both Jesus' Virgin Birth and his rising from the dead most interested early Christian believers. The world that the Romans had celebrated on their walls in fresco—a world of still lifes and landscapes—was of little interest to Christians, who were more concerned with the spiritual and the heavenly than with their material surroundings.

Constantine chose to make early Christian places of worship as unlike Classical temples as possible. The building type that he preferred was the rectangular **basilica**, which the Romans had used for public buildings, especially courthouses. The original St. Peter's in Rome, constructed around 333–90 CE but destroyed in the sixteenth century



Fig. 17-2 Santa Costanza, Rome, ca. 354 CE.
© 2015 Photo Scala, Florence.

to make way for the present building, was a basilica (see Fig. 14-27). Equally important for the future of Christian religious architecture was Santa Costanza (Fig. 17-2), the small mausoleum built around 354 CE for the tomb of Constantine's daughter, Constantia. Circular in shape and topped with a dome supported by a barrel vault, the building defines the points of the traditional Greek cross, which has four equal arms. Surrounding the circular space is an ambulatory, similar to that found in the Dome of the Rock, that was used for ceremonial processions.

The circular form of Santa Costanza appears often in later Byzantine architecture. By the year 500, most of the Western Empire, traditionally Catholic, had been overrun by barbarian forces from the north. When the emperor Justinian assumed the throne in Constantinople in 527, he dreamed of restoring the lost empire. His armies quickly recaptured the Mediterranean world, and he began a massive program of public works. Justinian attached enormous importance to architecture, believing that nothing better served to underscore the power of the emperor. The church of Hagia Sophia, meaning "Holy Wisdom," was his imperial place of worship in Constantinople (Figs. 17-3 and 17-4). The huge interior,

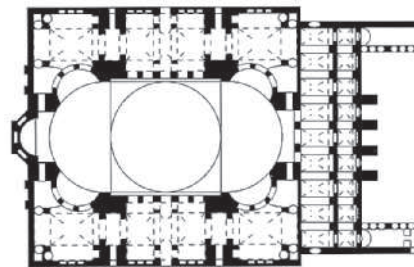


Fig. 17-3 Anthemius of Tralles and Isidorus of Miletus,
Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, and plan, 532–37.
Photo: Ayhan Altun/Altunimages.



Fig. 17-4 Anthemius of Tralles and Isidorus of Miletus, Interior, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul, 532–37.

Photo: Ayhan Altun/Altunimages.

crowned by a dome, is reminiscent of the circular, central plan of Ravenna's San Vitale (see Fig. 17-6), but this dome is abutted at either end by half-domes that extend the central core of the church along a longitudinal axis reminiscent of the basilica, with the apse extending in another smaller half-dome out one end of the axis. These half-domes culminate in arches that are repeated on the two sides of the dome as well. The architectural scheme is, in fact, relatively simple—a dome supported by four **pendentives**, the curved, inverted triangular shapes that rise up to the rim of the dome between the four arches themselves. This dome-on-pendentive design was so enthusiastically received that it became the standard for Byzantine church design.

The interior of Hagia Sophia was decorated with **mosaics**—small pieces of stone, glass, or tile arranged in a pattern or image. Many were later destroyed or covered over in the eighth and ninth centuries when **iconoclasts**,

meaning “image-breakers,” who believed literally in the Bible’s commandment against the worship of “graven” images, destroyed much Byzantine art. Forced to migrate westward, Byzantine artists discovered Hellenistic naturalism and incorporated it into later Byzantine design. The mosaic of Christ from Hagia Sophia (Fig. 17-5) is representative of that later synthesis.

Mosaics are made of small pieces of stone called **tesserae**, from the Greek word *tesseres*, meaning “square.” In ancient Rome, they were a favorite decorative element, used because of their durability, especially to embellish villa floors. But the Romans rarely used mosaic on their walls, where they preferred the more refined and naturalistic effects that were possible with fresco. For no matter how skilled the mosaic artist, the naturalism of the original drawing would inevitably be lost when the small stones were set in cement.



Fig. 17-5 Christ, from *Deësis* mosaic, 13th century.

Hagia Sophia, Istanbul.

Photo: Ayhan Altun/Altunimages.

The Byzantine mosaic artists, in fact, had little interest in naturalism. Their intention was to create a symbolic, mystical art, something for which the mosaic medium was perfectly suited. Gold tesserae were made by sandwiching gold leaf between two small squares of glass, and polished glass was also used. By setting the tesserae unevenly, at slight angles, a shimmering and transcendent effect was realized, which was heightened by the light from the church's windows.

Though only a few of the original mosaics at Hagia Sophia have been restored, and later mosaics were few, the light in the interior is still almost transcendental in feeling, and one can only imagine the heavenly aura when gold and glass reflected the light that entered the nave through the many windows that surround it. In Justinian's own words:

The sun's light and its shining rays fill the temple. One would say that the space is not lit by the sun without, but that the source of light is to be found within, such is the abundance of light. . . . The scintillations of the light forbid the spectator's gaze to linger on the details; each one attracts the eye and leads it on to the next. The circular motion of one's gaze reproduces itself to infinity. . . . The spirit rises toward God and floats in the air.

At Ravenna, Italy, from where Justinian could exercise control over the Adriatic Sea, he built a new church modeled on the churches of Constantinople—San Vitale (Fig. 17-6). Although its exterior is octagonal, the interior space is essentially circular, like Santa Costanza before it. Only in the altar and the apse,

which lie to the right of the central domed area in the floor plan, is there any reference to the basilica structure that dominates Western church architecture. But if the facade of San Vitale is very plain, more or less unadorned, local brick, inside it is elaborately decorated with marble and glittering mosaics, including two elaborate mosaics that face each other on the side walls of the apse, one depicting Theodora, the wife of Justinian (Fig. 17-7), and the other Justinian himself (Fig. 17-8). Theodora had at one time been a circus performer, but she became one of the emperor's most trusted advisors, sharing with him a vision of a Christian Roman Empire. In the mosaic, she carries a golden cup of wine, and Justinian, on the opposite wall, carries a bowl containing bread. Together they are bringing to the Church an offering of bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist. The haloed Justinian is to be identified with Christ, surrounded as he is by 12 advisors, like the 12 Apostles. And the haloed Theodora, with the three Magi bearing gifts to the Virgin and newborn Christ embroidered on the hem of her skirt, is to be understood as a figure for Mary. In this image, Church and State become one and the same.

These mosaics bear no relation to the naturalism that dominated Greek and Roman culture. Here, the human figures are depicted wearing long robes that hide the musculature and cause a loss of individual identity. Although each face has unique features—some of Justinian's attendants, for example, are bearded, while others are not, and the hairstyles vary—all have identical wide-open eyes, curved brows, and long noses. The feet of the figures turn outward, as if to flatten the space in which they stand. They are disproportionately long and

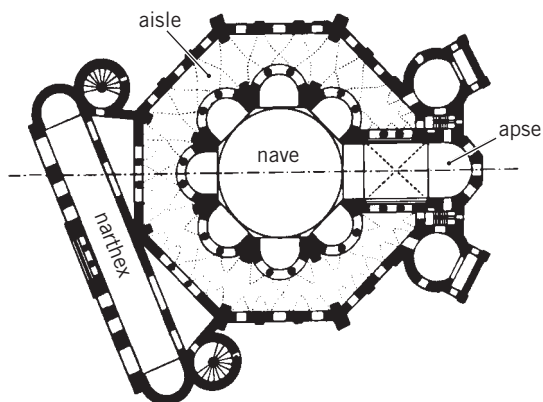


Fig. 17-6 Plan and exterior, San Vitale, Ravenna, dedicated 547.
Canali Photobank, Milan, Italy.



Figs. 17-7 and 17-8 *Theodora and Her Attendants (top), Justinian and His Attendants (bottom), San Vitale, ca. 547.* Mosaic, each 8 ft. 8 in. × 12 ft. CAMERAPHOTO Arte, Venice.

thin, a fact that lends them a heavenly lightness. And they are motionless, standing before us without gesture, as if eternally still. The Greek ideal of sculpture in the round, with its sense of the body caught in an intensely personal, even private moment—Nike taking off her sandal (see Fig. 16-23), for instance, or Laocoön caught in the intensity of his torment (see Fig. 16-26)—is gone.

All sense of drama has been removed from the idea of representation.

Justinian's reign marked the apex of the early Christian and Byzantine era. By the seventh century, barbarian invaders had taken control of the Western Empire, and the new Muslim Empire had begun to expand to the east. Reduced in area to the Balkans and Greece, the Byzantine

Empire nevertheless held on until 1453, when the Turks finally captured Constantinople and renamed it Istanbul, converting Hagia Sophia into a mosque.

The Rise of Islam

What is the origin of the mosque and what are its chief features?

Born in Mecca on the Arabian Peninsula in about 570 to a prominent family, Muhammad, the founder of the Islamic faith, was orphaned at age six and received little formal education. He worked in the caravan trade in the Arabian Desert, first as a camel driver for his uncle, and then, after marrying a wealthy widow 15 years his senior at age 25, as head of his wife's flourishing caravan firm. But at the age of 40, in 610, he heard a voice in Arabic—the Archangel Gabriel's, as the story goes—urging him, "Recite!" He responded, "What shall I recite?" And for the next 22 years, he claimed to receive messages, or "recitations," from God through the agency of Gabriel. These he memorized and, probably later, scribes collected them to form the scriptures of Islam, the Qur'an (or Koran), which means "recitations." Muhammad also claimed that Gabriel commanded him to declare himself the "Seal of the Prophets," that is, the messenger of the one and only Allah (the Arab word for God) and the final prophet in a series of God's prophets on earth, extending from Abraham and Moses to Jesus.

At the core of Muhammad's revelations is the concept of submission to God—the word Islam, in fact, means "submission" or "surrender." God, or Allah, is all—all-powerful, all-seeing, all-merciful. Because the universe is his creation, it is necessarily good and beautiful, and the natural world reflects Allah's own goodness and beauty. To immerse oneself in nature is thus to be at one with God. But the most beautiful creation of Allah is humankind. As in Christianity, Muslims believe that human beings possess immortal souls and that they can live eternally in heaven if they surrender to Allah and accept him as the one and only God.

In 622, Muhammad was forced to flee Mecca when its polytheistic leadership became irritated at his insistence on the worship of only one God. In a journey known as the *hijra* (or *hegira*, "emigration"), he and his followers fled to the oasis of Yathrib, 200 miles north, which they renamed al-Medina, meaning "the city of the Prophet." There, Muhammad created a

community based not on kinship, the traditional basis of Arab society, but on common submission to the will of God.

At Medina, Muhammad also built a house that surrounded a large open courtyard, which served as a community gathering place, on the model of the Roman forum. There, the men of the community would gather on Fridays to pray and listen to a sermon delivered by Muhammad. It thus became known as the *masjid*, the Arabic word for **mosque**, or "place of prostration." On the north and south ends of the courtyard, covered porches were erected, supported by palm tree trunks and roofed by thatched palm fronds, which protected the community from the hot Arabian sun. This many-columned covered area, known as a **hypostyle space** (from the Greek *hupostulos*, "resting upon pillars"), would later become a required feature of all Muslim mosques. Another required feature was the *qibla*, a wall that indicated the direction of Mecca. On this wall were both the *minbar*, or stepped pulpit for the preacher, and the *mihrab*, a niche commemorating the spot at Medina where Muhammad planted his lance to indicate the direction in which people should pray.

The Prophet's Mosque in Medina has been rebuilt so many times that its original character has long since been lost. But not so at Damascus, where, in 705, the Muslim community had grown so large that radical steps had to be taken to accommodate it, and a Byzantine church was torn down, leaving a large courtyard (Fig. 17-9), the



Fig. 17-9 Courtyard of the Great Mosque of Damascus, 705–16.
Photo: Christopher Rennie, Robert Harding World Imagery.

732

Furthest Muslim advances
in western Europe

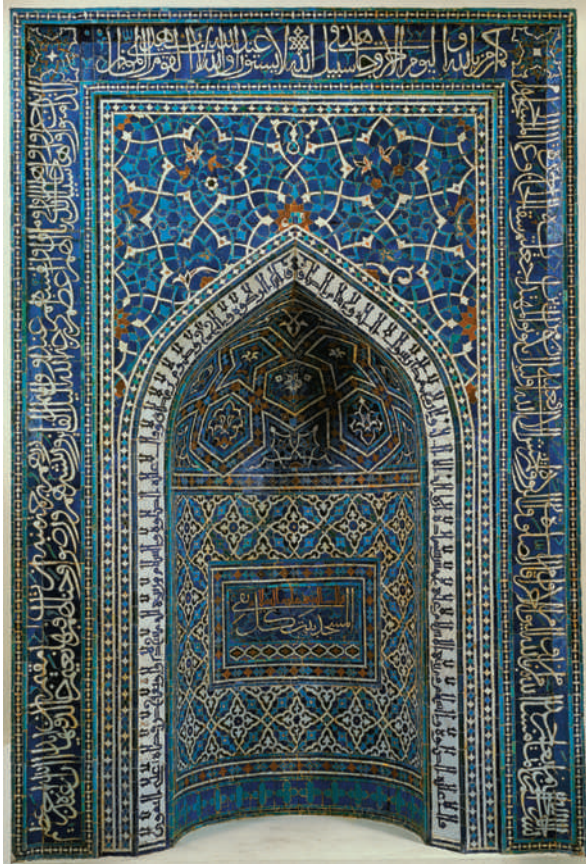


Fig. 17-10 Tile mosaic *mihrab*, from the **Madrasa Imami, Isfahan, Persia (Iran), ca. 1354 (restored)**. Glazed and cut ceramic, 11 ft. 3 in. × 7 ft. 6 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 19.20. © 2015. Image copyright Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence.

compound walls of which were transformed into the walls of a new mosque. A large prayer hall was constructed against the *qibla* wall and decorated with an elaborate mosaic facade, some of which is visible in the illustration, facing into the courtyard, while the street side of the mosque was left relatively plain.

One of the most important characteristics of Islamic culture is its emphasis on calligraphy (see Fig. 2-4), and the art of calligraphy was incorporated into Islamic architecture from the beginning. By the mid-ninth century, the walls of palaces and mosques were covered by it, and throughout the following centuries, the decoration became more and more elaborate. The mosaic *mihrab*, originally from a *madrasa*, or teaching college, in Iran, contains three different inscriptions from the Qur'an (Fig. 17-10). The outer frame is a description of the duties of true believers and the heavenly rewards in store for those who build mosques. The next contains the Five Pillars of Islam, the duties every

believer must perform, including, at least once in a lifetime, a pilgrimage to Mecca. And, finally, in the center of the inner wall, the reminder: "The mosque is the house of every pious person." All of this is contained in a beautifully balanced and symmetrical design.

After the Prophet Muhammad fled Mecca for Medina in 622, the Muslim Empire had expanded rapidly (see **Map 17-1**, showing the expansion of Islam). By 640, Muhammad's successors, the Caliphs, had conquered Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. Two years later, they defeated the army of Byzantium at Alexandria, and, by 710, they had captured all of northern Africa and had moved into Spain. They advanced north until 732, when Charles Martel, grandfather of Charlemagne, defeated them at Poitiers, France. But the Caliphs' foothold in Europe remained strong, and they did not leave Spain until 1492. Even the Crusades failed to reduce their power. During the First Crusade, 50,000 men were sent to the Middle East, where they managed to hold Jerusalem and much of Palestine for a short while. The Second Crusade, in 1146, failed to regain control and, in 1187, the Muslim warrior Saladin reconquered Jerusalem. Finally, in 1192, Saladin defeated King Richard I of England in the Third Crusade.

The Muslim impact on the culture of North Africa cannot be overstated. Beginning in about 750, not long after Muslim armies had conquered most of North Africa, Muslim traders, following the routes created by the Saharan Berber peoples, began trading for salt, copper, dates, and especially gold with the sub-Saharan peoples of the Niger River drainage. Gradually they came to dominate the trans-Saharan trade routes, and Islam became the dominant faith of West Africa.

In 1312, a devout Muslim named Mansa Moussa came to the throne of Mali. He built magnificent mosques throughout his empire, including the Djingareyber Mosque in Timbuktu (Fig. 17-11). Still standing today and made of burnt brick and mud, it dominates the city. Under Moussa's patronage, the city of Timbuktu grew in wealth and prestige and became a cultural focal point for the finest poets, scholars, and artists of Africa and the Middle East. To draw further attention to Timbuktu, and to attract more scholars and poets to it, Moussa embarked on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1334. He arrived in Cairo at the head of a huge caravan of 60,000 people, including 12,000 servants, with 80 camels carrying more than 2 tons of gold to be distributed among the poor. In fact, Moussa distributed so much gold in Egypt that the value of the precious metal fell dramatically and did not recover for a number of years.



Map 17-1 The Expansion of Islam to 850 CE.



Fig. 17-11 Djingareyber Mosque, Timbuktu, ca. 1312.

© Danita Delimont/Alamy.

1258

Mongols sack and
destroy Baghdad



Fig. 17-12 Interior, Sanctuary of the mosque at Córdoba, Spain, 786–987.

© Bednorz-images, Cologne.

In Spain, the center of Muslim culture was originally Córdoba. For its mosque, Islamic rulers converted an existing Visigoth church. The Visigoths, a Christianized Germanic tribe who had invaded Spain three centuries earlier, had built their church with relatively short, stubby columns. To create the loftier space required by the mosque, the architects superimposed another set of columns on top, creating two tiers of arches, one over the other, using a distinctive alternation of stone and red brick voussoirs (Fig. 17-12). The use of two different materials is not only decorative but also functional, combining the flexibility of brick with the strength of stone. Finally, the hypostyle plan of the mosque was, in essence, infinitely expandable, and subsequent Caliphs enlarged the mosque in 852, 950, 961–76, and 987, until it was over four times the size of the original and incorporated 1,200 columns. As in all Muslim design, where a visual rhythm is realized through symmetry and repetition of certain patterns and motifs, the rhythm of arches and columns unifies the interior of the Córdoba mosque.

Christian Art in Europe

What are the chief characteristics of the Carolingian, Romanesque, and Gothic styles?

Until the year 1000, the center of Western civilization was located in the Middle East, at Constantinople. In Europe, tribal groups with localized power held sway: The Lombards in what is now Italy, the Franks and the Burgundians in regions of France, and the Angles and Saxons in England. Though it possessed no real political power, the papacy in Rome had begun to work hard to convert the pagan tribes and to reassert the authority of the Church. As early as 496, the leader of the Franks, Clovis, was baptized into the Church. Even earlier (ca. 430), St. Patrick had undertaken an evangelical mission to Ireland, establishing monasteries and quickly converting the native Celts. These new monasteries were designed to serve missionary as well as educational functions. At a time when only priests and monks could read and write, the sacred texts they produced came to reflect native Celtic designs. These



Fig. 17-13 Purse cover, from the Sutton Hoo burial ship, ca. 625. Gold with Indian garnets and cloisonné enamels, originally on an ivory or bone background (now lost), length 8 in. The British Museum, London. 1939,1010.3. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

designs are elaborately decorative, highly abstract, and contain no naturalistic representation. Thus, Christian art fused with the native traditions, which employed the so-called “animal style.” Some of the best examples of this animal style, such as this purse cover (Fig. 17-13), have been found at Sutton Hoo, northeast of present-day London, in the grave of an unknown seventh-century East Anglian king. In this design two pairs of animals and birds, facing each other, are elongated into serpentine ribbons of decoration, a common Scandinavian motif. Below this, two Swedish hawks with curved beaks attack a pair of ducks. On each side of this design, a male figure stands between two animals. Note particularly the design’s symmetry, its combination of interlaced organic and geometric shapes, and, of course, its animal motifs. Throughout the Middle Ages, this style was imitated in manuscripts, stone sculpture, church masonry, and wood sculpture.

In 597, Gregory the Great, the first monk to become pope, sent an emissary, later known as St. Augustine of Canterbury, on a mission to convert the Anglo-Saxons. This mission brought Roman religious and artistic traditions into direct contact with Celtic art, and, slowly but surely, Roman culture began to dominate the Celtic-Germanic world.

Carolingian Art

When Charlemagne (Charles, or Carolus, the Great) assumed leadership of the Franks in 771, this process of Romanization was assured. At the request of the pope, Charlemagne conquered the Lombards, becoming their king, and on Christmas Day 800, he was crowned Holy Roman emperor by Pope Leo III at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. The fusion of Germanic and Mediterranean styles that reflected this new alliance between Church and state is known as **Carolingian art**, a term referring to the art produced during the reign of Charlemagne and his immediate successors.

The transformation in style that Charlemagne effected is evident if we compare the work of an artist trained in the linear Celtic tradition to one created during Charlemagne’s era. In the former (Fig. 17-14), copied from an earlier Italian original, the image is flat, the figure has not been modeled, and the perspective is completely askew. It is pattern—and the animal style—that really interests the artist, not accurate representation. But Charlemagne was intent on restoring the glories of Roman civilization. He actively collected and had copied the oldest surviving texts of the Classical Latin authors. He created schools in monasteries and cathedrals across

ca. 800–1000

England and Europe invaded by
Vikings, Magyars, and Muslims



Fig. 17-14 *St. Matthew, from the Lindisfarne Gospels, ca. 700.* Manuscript page, approx. 11 × 9 in. British Library, London. © British Library Board, Cotton Nero D. IV, f.25v.

Europe in which Classical Latin was the accepted language. A new script, with Roman capitals and new lowercase letters, the basis of modern type, was introduced. A second depiction of St. Matthew (**Fig. 17-15**), executed 100 years after the one on the left, demonstrates the impact of Roman realism on northern art. Found in Charlemagne's tomb, this illustration looks as if it could have been painted in Classical Rome.

Romanesque Art

After the dissolution of the Carolingian state in the ninth and tenth centuries, Europe disintegrated into a large number of small feudal territories. The emperors were replaced by an array of rulers of varying power and prestige who controlled smaller or larger fiefdoms (areas of land worked by persons under obligation to the ruler) and whose authority was generally embodied in a chateau or castle surrounded by walls and moats. Despite this atomization of political life, a recognizable style that we have come to call **Romanesque** developed



Fig. 17-15 *St. Matthew, from the Gospel Book of Charlemagne, ca. 800–810.* Manuscript page, 12¾ × 9⅞ in. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Inv. SK XIII18.

throughout Europe beginning in about 1050. Although details varied from place to place, certain features remained constant for nearly 200 years.

Romanesque architecture is characterized by its easily recognizable geometric masses—rectangles, cubes, cylinders, and half-cylinders. The wooden roof that St. Peter's Basilica had used was abandoned in favor of fireproof stone and masonry construction, apparently out of bitter experience with the invading nomadic tribes, who burned many of the churches of Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries. Flat roofs were replaced by vaulted ceilings. By structural necessity, these were supported by massive walls that often lacked windows sufficient to provide adequate lighting. The churches were often built along the roads leading to pilgrimage centers, usually monasteries that housed Christian relics, and they had to be large enough to accommodate large crowds of the faithful. For instance, St. Sernin, in Toulouse, France (see Figs. 14-19 and 14-20), was on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, in Spain, where the body of St. James was believed to rest.

1054

Schism between Latin and
Greek Christian churches

1071

The fork is introduced to Europe
by a Byzantine princess

Thanks in large part to Charlemagne's emphasis on monastic learning, monasteries had flourished since the Carolingian period, many of them acting as feudal landlords as well. The largest and most powerful was Cluny, near Maçon, France. Until the building of the new St. Peter's in Rome, the church at Cluny was the largest in the Christian world. It was 521 feet in length, and its nave vaults rose to a height of 100 feet. The height of the nave was made possible by the use of pointed arches. The church was destroyed in the French Revolution, and only part of one transept survives.

With the decline of the Roman Empire, the art of sculpture had largely declined in the West, but in the Romanesque period it began to reemerge. It is certain

that the idea of educating the masses in the Christian message through architectural sculpture on the facades of the pilgrimage churches contributed to the art's rebirth. The most important sculptural work was usually located on the **tympanum** of the church, the semicircular arch above the lintel on the main door. It often showed Christ with His 12 Apostles. Another favorite theme was the Last Judgment, full of depictions of sinners suffering the horrors of hellfire and damnation. To the left of Gislebertus's *Last Judgment* at Autun, France (Fig. 17-16), the blessed arrive in heaven, while on the right, the damned are seized by devils. Combining all manner of animal forms, the monstrosity of these creatures recalls the animal style of the Germanic tribes.



Fig. 17-16 Gislebertus, *Last Judgment*, tympanum and lintel, west portal, cathedral, Autun, France, ca. 1125–35. Stone, approx. 12 ft. 6 in. × 22 ft.

© Bednorz-images, Cologne.

Gothic Art

The great era of **Gothic** art begins in 1137 with the rebuilding of the choir of the abbey church of Saint-Denis, located just outside Paris (see Fig. 13-15). Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis saw his new church as both the political and the spiritual center of a new France, united under King Louis VI. Although he was familiar with Romanesque architecture, which was then at its height, Suger chose to abandon it. The Romanesque church was difficult to light, because the structural need to support the nave walls from without meant that windows had to be eliminated. Suger envisioned something different. He wanted his church flooded with light as if by the light of Heaven itself. After careful planning, he began work in 1137, painting the old walls of the original abbey, which were nearly 300 years old, with gold and precious colors. Then he added a new facade with twin towers and a triple portal. Around the back of the ambulatory he added a circular string of chapels, all lit with large stained-glass windows, “by virtue of which,” Suger wrote, “the whole would shine with the wonderful and uninterrupted light.”

It was this light that proclaimed the new Gothic style. Light, he believed, was the physical and material manifestation of the Divine Spirit. Suger wrote: “Marvel not at the gold and the expense but at the craftsmanship of the work. Bright is the noble work; but being nobly bright, the work should brighten the minds, so that they may travel, through the true lights, to the True Light where Christ is the true door.” As beautiful as the church might be, it was designed to elevate the soul to the realm of God.

As the Gothic style developed, French craftsmen became increasingly accomplished in working with stained glass, creating windows such as Chartres Cathedral’s famous rose window (see Fig. 7-9). Important architectural innovations also contributed to this goal (Fig. 17-17). The massive stonework of the Romanesque style was replaced by a light, almost lacy, play of thin columns and patterns of ribs and windows all pointing upward in a rising crescendo that seems to defy gravity, even as it carries the viewer’s gaze toward the heavens.



Fig. 17-17 West facade, Chartres Cathedral, France, ca. 1134–1220; south spire, ca. 1160; north spire 1507–13.

© Bednorz-images, Cologne.

Compare, for instance, the Romanesque south tower of Chartres Cathedral to the fully Gothic north tower, which rises high above its starkly symmetrical neighbor. Extremely high naves—the nave at Chartres is 120 feet high, Reims 125, and highest of all is Beauvais at 157 (the equivalent of a 15-story building)—made possible by flying buttresses (see Figs. 14-23 and 14-24) add to this emphasis on verticality. They contribute a sense of elevation that is at once physical and spiritual, as does the preponderance of pointed rather than rounded arches.

In Germany's Cologne Cathedral (**Fig. 17-18**), the width of the nave has been narrowed to such a degree that the vaults seem to rise higher than they actually do. The cathedral was not finished until the nineteenth century, though built strictly in accordance with thirteenth-century plans. The stonework is so slender, incorporating so much glass into its walls, that the effect is one of almost total weightlessness.



Fig. 17-18 Choir of Cologne Cathedral, Germany, 13th and 14th centuries. Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques.
© Svenja-Foto/Corbis.

The Gothic style in Italy is unique. For instance, the exterior of Florence Cathedral (**Fig. 17-19**) is hardly Gothic at all. It was, in fact, designed to match the dogmatically Romanesque octagonal Baptistry that stands in front of it. But the interior space is completely Gothic in character. Each side of the nave is flanked by an arcade that opens almost completely into the nave by virtue of four wide pointed arches. Thus nave and arcade become one, and the interior of the cathedral feels more spacious than any other. Nevertheless, rather than the mysterious and transcendental feelings evoked by most Gothic churches, Florence Cathedral produces a sense of tranquility and of measured, controlled calm. This sense of measured space is in large part a function of the enormous size of the dome above the crossing, the architectural feat of Filippo Brunelleschi.

The Gothic style in architecture inspired an outpouring of sculptural decoration. There was, for one thing, much more room for sculpture on the facade of the Gothic church than had been available on the facade of the Romanesque church. There were now three doors where there had been only one before, and doors were added to the transepts as well. The portal at Reims (**Fig. 17-20**), which notably substitutes a stained-glass rose window for the Romanesque tympanum and a pointed for a round arch, is sculpturally much lighter than, for instance, the tympanum at Autun, France (see **Fig. 17-16**). The elongated bodies of the Romanesque figures are distributed in a very shallow space. In contrast, the sculpture of the Gothic cathedral is more naturalistic. The proportions of the figures are more natural, and the figures assume more natural poses as well. The space they occupy is



Fig. 17-19 Florence Cathedral (Santa Maria del Fiore), begun by Arnolfo de Cambio, 1296; dome by Filippo Brunelleschi, 1420–36.
© Vanni Archive/CORBIS. Photo: Ruggero Vanni.

1209
Founding of Cambridge
University

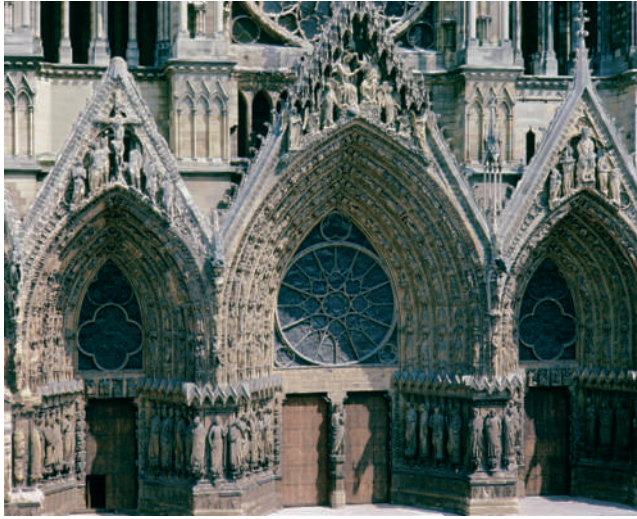


Fig. 17-20 Central portal of the west facade, Reims Cathedral, France, ca. 1225–90.

© Art Archive/Gianni Dagli Orti.

deeper—so much so that they appear to be fully realized sculpture in-the-round, freed of the wall behind them. Most important of all, many of the figures seem to assert their own individuality, as if they were actual persons. The generalized “types” of Romanesque sculpture are beginning to disappear. The detail of figures at the bottom of the Reims portal (Fig. 17-21) suggests that each is



Fig. 17-21 *Annunciation and Visitation* (detail), west portal, Reims Cathedral, France, ca. 1225–45.

© Angelo Hornak/Alamy.

engaged in a narrative scene. The angel on the left smiles at the more somber Virgin. The two at the right seem about to step off their pedestals. What is most remarkable is that the space between the figures is bridged by shared emotion, as if feeling can unite them in a common space.

Developments in Asia

How do Indian art and architecture reflect the Hindu religion, and how is the Buddhist faith evident in the arts of China and Japan?

In Asia, Buddhism spread out of India and into China in the first century CE. By 600 CE, it had found its way into Japan. It would not take root in Southeast Asia until the thirteenth century. There, the dominant religion was Hinduism.

India

As early as 1500 BCE, Aryan tribesmen from northern Europe arrived in India, bringing a religion that would have as great an impact on the art of India as Islam had on the art of the Middle East. The Vedic traditions of the light-skinned Aryans, written in religious texts called the *Vedas*, allowed for the development of a class system based on racial distinctions. Status in one of the four classes—the priests (*Brahmans*), the warriors and rulers (*kshatriyas*), the farmers and merchants (*vaishayas*), and the serfs (*shudras*)—was determined by birth, and one could escape one’s caste only through reincarnation. Buddhism, which began about 563 BCE, was in many ways a reaction against the Vedic caste system, allowing for salvation by means of individual self-denial and meditation, and it gained many followers.

From the *Vedas* in turn came the *Upanishads*, a book of mystical and philosophical texts that date from sometime after 800 BCE. Taken together, the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* form the basis of the Hindu religion, with Brahman, the universal soul, at its center. The religion has no single body of doctrine, nor any standard set of practices. It is defined above all by the diversity of its beliefs and deities.

As Hinduism developed, the functions of Brahman, the divine source of all being, were split among three gods—Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; and Shiva, the destroyer—as well as various female deities. Vishnu was one of the most popular. In his role as preserver, he is the god of benevolence, forgiveness, and

love, and like the other two main Hindu gods, he was believed capable of assuming human form, which he did more often than the other gods due to his great love for humankind. Among his most famous incarnations are his appearance as Rama, the ideal son, brother, husband, warrior, and king, who provides a model of righteous conduct, and as Krishna, a warrior who probably accounts in large part for Vishnu’s popularity, since in the *Vishnu Puranas* (the “old stories” of Vishnu), collected about 500 CE, he is depicted as seducing one after another of his devotees. His celebration of erotic love symbolizes the mingling of the self and the absolute spirit of Brahman.

If Brahma is the creator of the world, Shiva takes what Brahma has made and embodies the world’s cyclic rhythms. Since in Hinduism the destruction of the old world is followed by the creation of a new world, Shiva’s role as destroyer is required, and a positive one. In this sense, he possesses reproductive powers, and in this manifestation of his being, he is often represented as a *lingam* (phallus), often carved in stone on temple grounds or at shrines. As early as the tenth and eleventh centuries, artists in the Tamil Nadu region of southern India began making large bronze and copper editions of Shiva in his manifestation as Shiva Nataraja, Lord of the Dance (Fig. 17-22). Such images were commissioned as



Fig. 17-22 *Shiva as Lord of the Dance (Nataraja), Tamil Nadu, India, Chola period (880–1279), ca. 11th century.* Bronze, $44\frac{1}{2} \times 40 \times \frac{3}{4}$ in. The Cleveland Museum of Art. Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund, 1930.331. Photo © Cleveland Museum of Art.

1000–1200

Islamic groups first move into India

icons for the region's many temples. Since Shiva embodies the rhythms of the universe, he is also a great dancer. It is said that all the gods were present when Shiva first danced, and they begged him to dance again. Shiva promised to do so in the hearts of his devotees as well as in a sacred grove in Tamil Nadu itself. As he dances, he is framed in a circle of fire, symbolic of both creation and destruction, the cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation.

Goddess worship is fundamental to the Hindu religion. Villages usually recognize goddesses as their protectors, and the goddess Devi is worshiped in many forms throughout India. She is the female aspect without whom the male aspect, which represents consciousness or discrimination, remains impotent and void. She is also synonymous with Shakti, the primordial cosmic energy, and represents the dynamic forces that move through the entire universe. Shaktism, a particular brand of Hindu faith that regards Devi as the Supreme Brahman itself, believes that all other forms of divinity, female or male, are themselves simply forms of Devi's diverse manifestations. But she has a number of particular manifestations. In an extraordinary miniature carving from the twelfth century, Devi is seen in her manifestation as Durga (Fig. 17-23), portrayed as the 16-armed slayer of a buffalo inhabited by the fierce demon Mahisha. Considered invincible, Mahisha threatens to destroy the world, but Durga comes to the rescue. In this image, she has just severed the buffalo's head and Mahisha, in the form of a tiny, chubby man, his hair composed of snake heads, emerges from the buffalo's decapitated body and looks up admiringly at Durga even as his toes are being bitten by her lion. Durga smiles serenely as she hoists Mahisha by his hair and treads gracefully on the buffalo's body.

The Hindu respect for sexuality is evident even in its architecture. The Kandariya Mahadeva temple (Fig. 17-24) represents the epitome of northern Hindu architecture. Its rising towers are meant to suggest the peaks of the Himalayas, home of the Hindu gods, and this analogy would have been even clearer when the temple was painted in its original white gesso. In the center of the temple is the *garbhagriha*, or "womb chamber," the symbolic sacred cavern at the heart of the sacred mountain/temple. Here rests the cult image of the Brahman, in this case the *lingam* of Shiva. Although it is actually almost completely dark, the *garbhagriha* is considered by Hindu worshipers to be filled with the pure light of Brahman.

By the twelfth century, Hinduism had spread from India southeast into present-day Cambodia, where



Fig. 17-23 *The Goddess Durga Killing the Buffalo Demon, Mahisha (Mahishasuramardini), Bangladesh or India, Pala period, 12th century.* Argillite, height. $5\frac{1}{16}$ in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Diana and Arthur G. Altschul Gift, 1993.7. Image copyright Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence.



Fig. 17-24 *Kandariya Mahadeva temple, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, India, Chandella dynasty, ca. 1025–50.*

© Neil Grant/Alamy.



Fig. 17-25 Angkor Wat, Cambodia, early 12th century.

Andrew Gunners/Digital Vision/Getty Images.

Hindu art achieved a monumental imperial grandeur. In Cambodia, the Khmer monarchy established its capital at Angkor, about 150 miles northwest of present-day Phnom Penh. Covering about 70 square miles, the city was crossed by broad avenues and canals and filled with royal palaces and temples. The largest of these temples, Angkor Wat (Fig. 17-25), was created by Suryavarman II in the twelfth century. Five central towers, representing the five peaks of Mount Meru, the center of the Hindu cosmos, rise above a moat surrounding the complex. The approach to the galleries at the towers' base is from the west, crossing a long bridge over the moat, which symbolizes the oceans surrounding the known world. On June 21, the summer solstice and the beginning of the Cambodian solar year, a visitor to the temple arriving through the western gate would see the sun rise directly over the central tower. In this way, the symbolic evocation of the cosmos, so fundamental to Hindu temple architecture, is further elaborated in astronomical terms.

China

In China, and throughout much of Asia, Buddhism exerted the same power to stir the human imagination

as Christianity did in the West. And as images of Christ became a central feature of art in the West, so too did images of the Buddha in the East.

The first Chinese Buddhist monk to set out on the Silk Road in search of Buddhist scripture to translate into Chinese was Zhu Shixing of Hunan province. His journey dates from about 260 CE. At the same time, far away on the Silk Road, a resident of Dunhuang (see Chapter 1) began his life's work as a translator of Buddhist texts. One of the most telling manifestations of the religion's spread is the appearance everywhere of images of the Buddha (Fig. 17-26). In early Buddhist art, the Buddha was never shown in figural form. It was believed to be impossible to represent the Buddha, since he had already passed to nirvana. Instead, his presence was symbolized by such things as his footprints, the banyan tree, the wheel (representing *dharma*, or the Wheel of Law), or elephants, symbols of mental strength. By the fourth century, during the reign of the Gupta rulers in India, the Buddha was commonly represented in human form. Typically his head is oval, framed by a halo. Atop his head is a mound, symbolizing his spiritual wisdom, and on his forehead is a "third eye," symbolizing his spiritual vision. His demeanor is gentle, reposed, and meditative. His elongated ears refer to his royal origins, and his

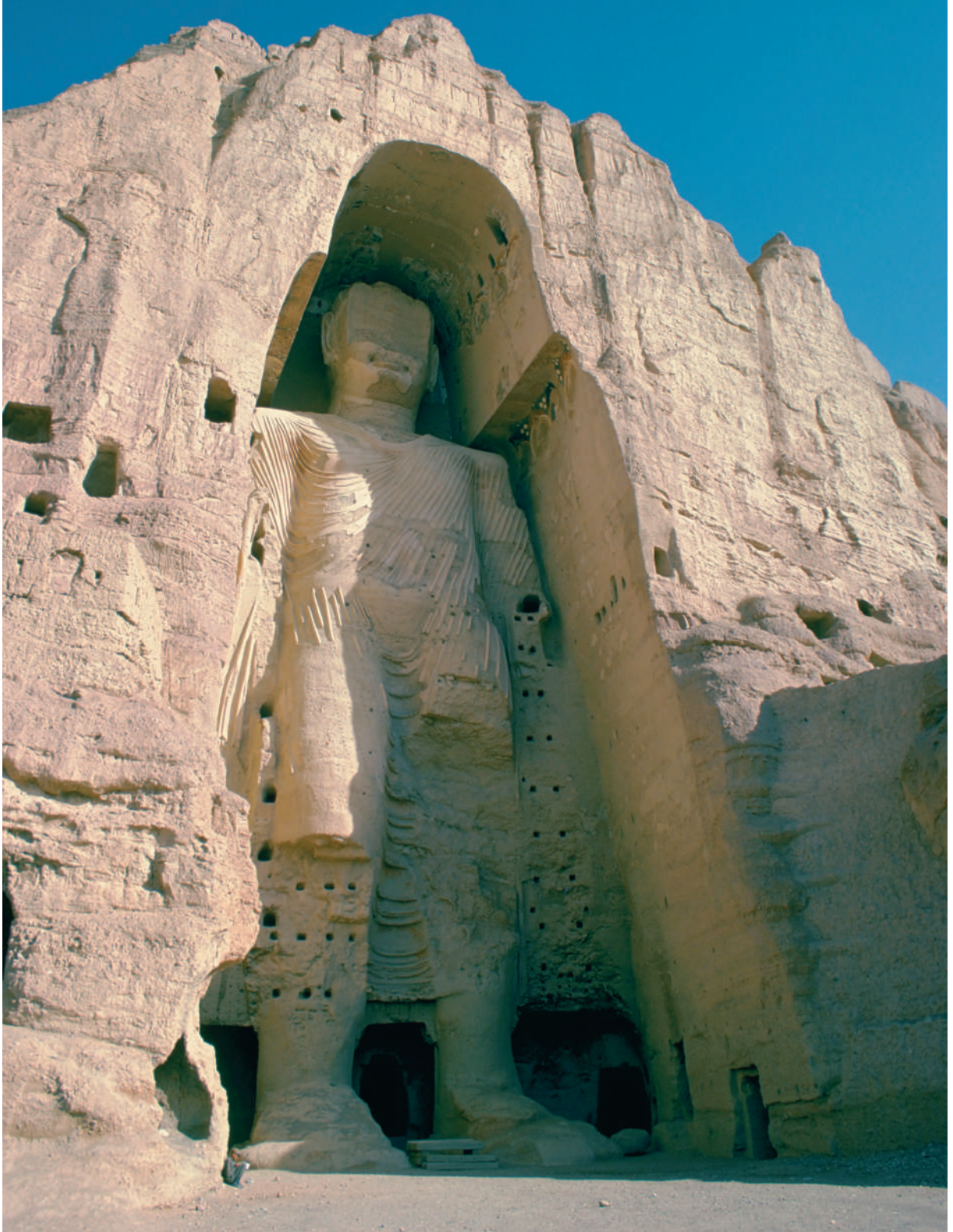


Fig. 17-26 Colossal Buddha, Bamiyan, Afghanistan, ca. 3rd century CE. Stone, height 175 ft.
© Ian Griffiths/Robert Harding World Imagery/Corbis.

ca. 1040

A Chinese writer describes three forms of gunpowder

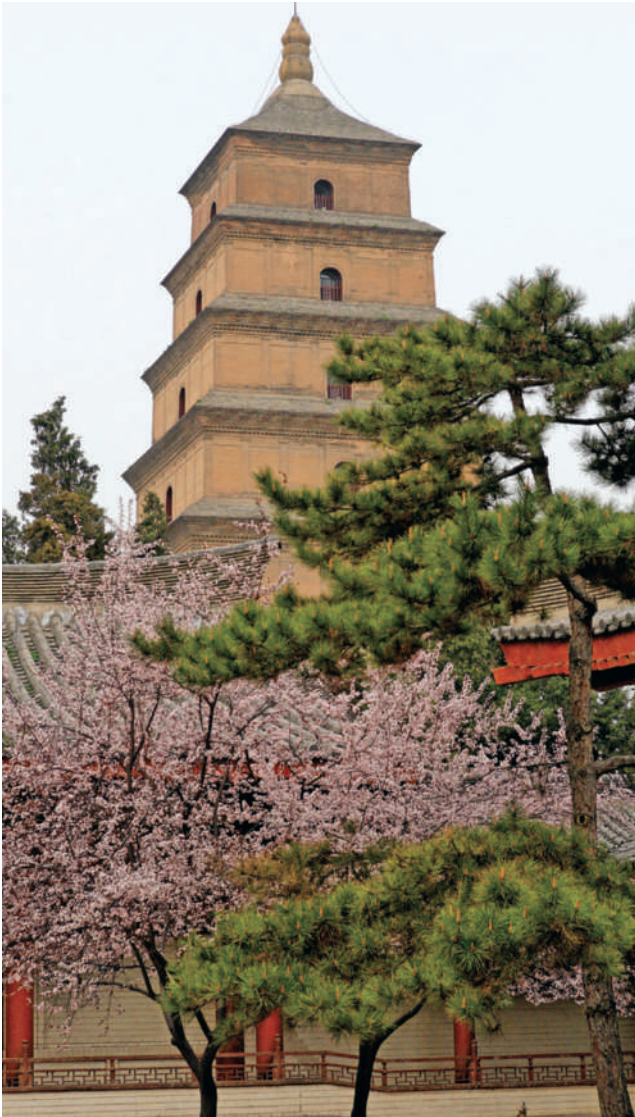


Fig. 17-27 Great Wild Goose Pagoda at Ci'en Temple, Xi'an, Shanxi, Tang dynasty, first erected 645 CE.

© Jean-Pierre De Mann/Robert Harding World Imagery.

hands are set in one of several symbolic gestures, called mudras. At Bamiyan, on the Silk Road in present-day Afghanistan, two massive Buddhas, 175 and 120 feet tall, were carved into a cliff face in the third century CE. These figures were completely destroyed by the fundamentalist Islamic Taliban in 2001. However, many surviving replicas from the Silk Road era suggest that the hands of these Buddhas, which succumbed to natural forces long ago, were held up in the *Dharmachakra* mudra, the teaching pose, which symbolizes intellectual debate and is often associated with Buddhist centers of learning. Painted

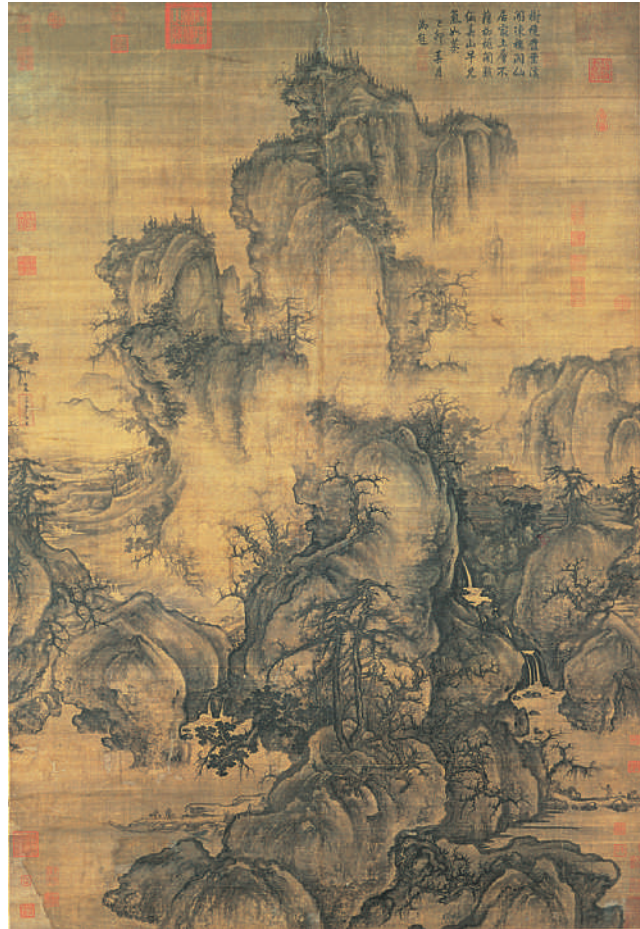


Fig. 17-28 Guo Xi, *Early Spring*, Northern Song dynasty, 1072. Hanging scroll, ink, and slight color on silk, length 60 in.

Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

© Corbis.

gold and studded with jewels, and surrounded by caves decorated with Buddhist wall paintings, these enormous images reflect the magnitude of the Buddha's eternal form, at which the earthly body can barely hint.

Beginning in 618, at about the same time that Islam arose in the Middle East, the Tang dynasty reestablished a period of peace and prosperity in China that, except for a brief period of turmoil in the tenth century, would last 660 years. During this period, the **pagoda** became a favored architectural form in China. A pagoda is a multistoried structure of successively smaller, repeated stories, with projecting roofs at each story. The design derives from Indian stupas, which had grown increasingly towerlike by the sixth century CE, as well as Han watchtowers. In fact, the pagoda was understood

to offer the temple a certain protection. The Great Wild Goose Pagoda (Fig. 17-27) was built in 645 for the monk Xuanzang, who taught and translated the materials he brought back with him from a 16-year pilgrimage to India. In its simplicity and symmetry, it represents the essence of Tang architecture.

Since the time of the Song dynasty, which ruled the empire from 960 until it was overrun by Kublai Khan in 1279, the Taoists in China had emphasized the importance of self-expression, especially through the arts. Poets, calligraphers, and painters were appointed to the most important positions of state. After calligraphy, the Chinese valued landscape painting as the very highest form of artistic endeavor. For them, the activity of painting was a search for the absolute truth embodied in nature, a search that was not so much intellectual as intuitive. They sought to understand a concept shared by both Confucian and Buddhist thought, the *li*, or “principle,” upon which the universe is founded, and thus to understand the symbolic meaning and feeling that underlies every natural form. The symbolic meanings of Guo Xi’s *Early Spring* (Fig. 17-28), for instance, were recorded in a book authored by his son, Guo Si, titled *The Lofty Message of the Forests and Streams*. According to this book, the central peak here symbolizes the emperor, and its tall pines the gentlemanly ideals of the court. Around the emperor, the masses assume their natural place, just as around the mountain, the trees and hills fall, like the water itself, in the order and rhythms of nature.

Japan

Until the sixth century CE, Japan was a largely agricultural society that practiced Shinto, an indigenous system of belief involving the worship of *kami*, or deities believed to inhabit many different aspects of nature, from trees and rocks to deer and other animals. But during the Asuka period (552–646 CE), the philosophy, medicine, music, food, and art and architecture of China and Korea were introduced to the culture. At about this same time, Buddhism was introduced into the country. According to the *Kojiki*, or *Chronicles of Japan*, a collection of myths and

stories dating from about 700 CE, a statue of the Buddha and a collection of sacred Buddhist texts were given to Japanese rulers by a Korean king in 552. By 708, the Fujiwara clan had constructed a new capital at Nara and officially accepted Buddhism as the state religion. Magnificent temples and monasteries were constructed, including what would remain, for a thousand years, the largest wooden structure in the world, the Todaiji temple (Fig. 17-29). It houses a giant bronze, known as the Great Buddha, over 49 feet high and weighing approximately 380 tons. According to ancient records, as many as 2.6 million people were required to aid in the temple’s construction, although that number represents close to half of Japan’s population at the time and is probably an exaggeration. The original temple was twice destroyed by warring factions, in 1180 and again in 1567. The current Buddha is in fact a 1691 reconstruction of the original, and the Todaiji temple is itself a reconstruction of 1709. The restored temple is considerably smaller than the original, approximately two-thirds its size, and now stands 188 feet in width and 156 feet high.

As early as the seventh century, Buddhist doctrine and Shinto had begun to influence each other. In the eighth century, the Great Buddha at Nara became identified with the principal Shinto goddess Amaterasu, from whom all Japanese emperors are said to have descended, and Buddhist ceremonies were incorporated into Shinto court ritual. But, between 784 and 794, the



Fig. 17-29 Todaiji temple, Nara, Japan, 752, reconstructed 1709.

© Sakamoto Photo Research Laboratory/Corbis.



Fig. 17-30 *Night Attack on the Sanjo Palace (detail)*, from the *Scrolls of Events of the Heiji Period*, Kamakura period, late 13th century. Handscroll, ink and colors on paper, 16¼ in. × 22 ft. 11½ in. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Fenollosa-Weld Collection, 11.4000. Photo © 2015 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

capital of Japan was moved to Heiankyo—modern-day Kyoto—inaugurating the great elegance and refinement of the Heian period. Heiankyo quickly became the most densely populated city in the world. According to records, the move occurred because the secular court needed to distance itself from the religious influence of the Buddhist monks at Nara.

During the Heian period, the emperors had increasingly relied on regional warrior clans—samurai (literally, “those who serve”)—to exercise military control, especially in the countryside. Over time, these clans became more and more powerful, until, by 1100, they had begun to emerge as a major force in Japanese military and political life, inaugurating the Kamakura period, which takes its name from the capital city of the most prominent of these clans, the Minamoto.

The Kamakura period actually began when the Minamoto clan defeated its chief rival, the Taira, in 1185, but the contest for power between the two dominated the last years of the Heian period. The complex relationship between the Fujiwara of the Heian era and the samurai clans of the Kamakura is embodied in a long handscroll narration of an important battle of 1160, from the *Scrolls of Events of the Heiji Period*, painted by an unknown artist in the thirteenth century, perhaps 100 years after the events themselves. In 1156, Go Shirakawa ascended to the head of the Fujiwara to serve in what had become their traditional role as regent to the emperor, the highest position in the government. But Go Shirakawa resisted the Fujiwara attempt to take control of the government, and in 1157, they recruited one of the two most powerful samurai clans, the Minamoto, to help them stage a coup and imprison the emperor. *Night Attack on the Sanjo Palace* (Fig. 17-30)

depicts the moment troops led by Fujiwara Nobuyori attacked the emperor’s palace, taking him prisoner and burning his palace to the ground. This is the central scene of the scroll, which begins with the army moving toward the palace from the right and ends with it leaving in



Fig. 17-31 *Armor (yoroi)*, late Kamakura period, early 14th century. Lacquered iron and leather, silk, stenciled leather, copper-gilt, height 37½ in., weight 38 lb. 3 oz. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Gift of Bashford Dean, 1914.100.121. Image copyright Metropolitan Museum of Art/ Art Resource/Scala, Florence.

triumph to the left. The chaos and violence of the events are captured by the sweeping linear ribbons of flame and smoke rising to the upper right and the confusion of horsemen, warriors, fleeing ladies, the dead, and the dying in the foreground, all framed by an architecture that falls at a steep diagonal to the bottom left.

The samurai warriors, dressed in elaborate iron armor, were master horsemen and archers. In this scene, many hold their bows, the lower portions of which are smaller than the top in order that they might pass over a horse's neck. They wore a special armor, known as *yoroi*, made of overlapping iron and lacquered leather scales (Fig. 17-31). A breastplate and backplate were strapped together with leather thongs, and a separate piece of armor protected the right side, particularly vulnerable when the archer raised his arm to draw his bow. A four-sided skirt was attached to the armor to protect the upper legs. And the helmet was made of iron plates from which a neckguard flared sharply outward. Diagonal bands of multicolored lacings originally decorated this *yoroi*, a symbol of the rainbow and a reminder that both beauty and good fortune are fleeting. Stenciled in the leather breastplate is an image of Fudo Myo-o ("The Immovable"), one of the five great guardians of the Buddhist faith. Because he is unshakable in his duty, fierce in his demeanor, and exercises strict mental discipline, Fudo Myo-o was a figure venerated by the samurai.

~~The Cultures of Africa~~

What are some of the characteristic works of the Ife, Shona, and Zagwe cultures?

Just as in Europe and Asia, powerful kingdoms arose across Africa in the early centuries of the second millennium. As we have seen, the influence of Islam helped to establish a powerful culture in the kingdom of Mali (see Fig. 17-11). Farther south, along the western coast of central Africa, the Yoruba state of Ife developed along the Niger River. Near the southeastern tip of Africa, the Shona civilization produced urban centers represented today by the ruins of "Great Zimbabwe." On the eastern side of Africa, the Zagwe dynasty maintained a long Christian heritage introduced in the first millennium from the Middle East.

By the middle of the twelfth century, Ife culture was producing highly naturalistic brass sculptures depicting its rulers. An example is the *Head of a King* (or *Oni*) (Fig. 17-32). The parallel lines that run down the face



Fig. 17-32 *Head of a King (Oni)*, Ife culture, Nigeria, ca. 13th century. Brass, height 11⁷/₁₆ in. Museum of Ife Antiquities, Ife, Nigeria.

Photo © Dirk Bakker/Bridgeman Images.

represent decorative effects made by scarring—**scarification**. The hole in the lower neck suggests that the head may have been attached to a wooden mannequin, and in memorial services the mannequin may well have worn the royal robes of the Ife court. Small holes along the scalp line suggest that hair, or perhaps a veil of some sort, also adorned the head. But the head itself was, for the Ife, of supreme importance. It was the home of the spirit, the symbol of the king's capacity to organize the world and to prosper. Ife culture depended for its welfare on its kings' heads.

Inland from the southwestern coast of Africa, the Shona people built an entirely indigenous African civilization in the region of today's Zimbabwe beginning in about 1100. As trade developed along the African coast, the Shona positioned themselves as an inland hub where coastal traders could travel to procure goods for export. From surrounding regions they mined or imported copper and gold, and received in return exotic goods such as porcelain and glass from Asia and the Middle East.



Fig. 17-33 Bird carved from soapstone, Great Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe, ca. 1200–1400. Height 13½ in., atop a stone monolith, total height 5 ft. 4 in. Great Zimbabwe Site Museum, Zimbabwe.

© Colin Haskins/Alamy.

Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Shona erected the massive stone buildings and walls of a city known today as Great Zimbabwe. The origin of the Shona word *zimbabwe* is debated, but a composite of various meanings suggests that it referred to the “palaces of stone” in this city. A huge city for its time, the ruins cover 1 square mile and are believed to have housed a population of somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000. Great Zimbabwe has several distinct, separately enclosed areas with ceremonial platforms decorated with carved geometric patterns and tall rock monoliths topped by carved birds (Fig. 17-33). The bird topping this monolith is not a recognizable species and includes certain human features, such as toes instead of talons. This has led to speculation that the figure may represent deceased Shona rulers who were believed to have the power to move between the spirit and human worlds. A crocodile, possibly another symbol of royalty, climbs up the front of the monolith.

One of the dynasties of greatest cultural importance in medieval East Africa was that of the Zagwe, who reigned for approximately 150 years, from the early twelfth century to 1270. They carved massive churches into the soft rock of the region (Fig. 17-34). The most famous of these was commissioned by the emperor Lalibela. In the town now known by his name, he ordered the construction of a series of these sunken rock churches. Engineers had to conceive of the completed building in advance, including decorative details, because subtractive techniques such as carving do not allow for repair of mistakes. Once the shell of the building was carved, the interior was hollowed out into rooms for use in Christian worship and study.



Fig. 17-34 Beta Ghiorghis (House of St. George), Lalibela, Ethiopia, 13th century.

© Kazuyoshi Nomachi/HAGA/Image Works.

Thinking Back

17.1 Describe the principal architectural and decorative features of early Christian and Byzantine places of worship.

The emperor Constantine chose to make early Christian places of worship as unlike Classical temples as possible. He chose a rectangular building type called the basilica, which the ancient Romans had used for secular public functions. Early Christians and, later, Byzantines also used circular buildings, which derived from mausoleum architecture. What is an ambulatory? What was most notable about the worshiper's experience of Hagia Sophia? How is San Vitale decorated?

17.2 Explain the origins of the mosque and describe its chief features.

At Medina, Muhammad built a house that surrounded a large open courtyard, which served as a community gathering place, on the model of the Roman forum. There, the men of the community would gather on Fridays to pray and listen to a sermon delivered by Muhammad. It thus became known as the *masjid*, the Arabic word for mosque, or "place of prostration." Covered porches were erected to protect the community from the hot Arabian sun. This many-columned area, known as a hypostyle space, would become a standard feature of mosques. Mosques are required to have a *qibla*, a wall that indicates the direction of Mecca. What is a *minbar*? What is a *mihrab*?

17.3 Describe the chief characteristics of the Carolingian, Romanesque, and Gothic styles.

Soon after Charlemagne assumed leadership of the Franks in 771, he was crowned Holy Roman emperor by Pope Leo III at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The fusion of Germanic and Mediterranean cultures reflected a new alliance between Church and State that resulted in a Carolingian style of art. How does the illustration of St. Matthew from the *Gospel Book of Charlemagne* reflect this new style?

Romanesque architecture is characterized by its easily recognizable geometric masses—rectangles, cylinders, and half-cylinders. Romanesque buildings have large vaulted ceilings, which require massive walls, typically lacking windows. The art of sculpture began to reemerge in the Romanesque period. What role did the pilgrimage route play in church-building? What is a tympanum, and how would it be used in church decoration?

Light is a defining feature of Gothic buildings. Unlike Romanesque structures, Gothic buildings are well lit. Light was believed to serve as a manifestation of the divine. Gothic buildings are defined by an emphasis on verticality. What role did Abbot Suger play in the development of the Gothic style? How does the Gothic style in Italy differ from the French Gothic style?

17.4 Describe how Indian art and architecture reflect the Hindu religion, and how the Buddhist faith is evident in the arts of China and Japan.

Hinduism is defined above all by the diversity of its beliefs and deities, all of which were, together with lesser gods, often depicted in sculpture. How is the Hindu respect for sexuality reflected in its architecture? By the fourth century, the Buddha was commonly represented in human form. How does the Great Goose Pagoda reflect a Buddhist heritage? What is *li*, and how is it manifest in Guo Xi's *Early Spring*? By 600 CE, Buddhism had reached Japan. How did it merge with the indigenous Shinto religion? How did the samurai reflect its values?

17.5 Describe some of the characteristic works of the Ife, Shona, and Zagwe cultures.

Ife art is distinguished by its brass sculptures depicting its rulers. What importance do the Ife attach to these heads? The Shona people of Zimbabwe were great traders, and between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries they built a great city known as Great Zimbabwe. What is unique about the churches of Lalibela?