

Figure 23  
*Digambara Jaina Shrine of the  
Tirthankara Rsabanatha*  
India, Northern Karnataka, Kolhapur(?),  
Chalukya(?)  
c. 11th or 12th century  
bronze  
Harn Museum of Art Collection  
Gift of George P. Bickford



## PERSONAL DEVOTIONAL OBJECTS

in Buddhist Asia

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BUDDHISM IS A UNIVERSAL RELIGION THAT HAS INFLUENCED THE DEVELOPMENTS OF MOST ASIAN CIVILIZATIONS. THE RELIGION WAS FOUNDED BY SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA (563-483 B.C.E.), WHO WAS BORN A PRINCE OF THE SHAKYA PEOPLE IN A KINGDOM IN THE FOOTHILLS OF PRESENT-DAY NEPAL. SIDDHARTHA WAS BROUGHT UP IN SHELTERED LUXURY IN THE PALACE, BUT WHEN HE BECAME AWARE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF LIFE HE LEFT THE PALACE IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS TO LIFE'S EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS.

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At first he became an ascetic in the forest; however, he realized that extreme asceticism was not the answer, but that the Middle Way, a path of balance, was the way to enlightenment. When Gautama gained understanding of the ultimate truth, he became known as the Buddha, "the Awakened One." He was also given the honorific title of Shakyamuni, or "sage of the Shakya clan." Among the Buddha's many teachings are the Four Noble Truths, which hold that life is full of suffering; the cause of suffering is desire; the means to end the suffering caused by the chain of birth and rebirth (*samsara*) is to eliminate desire; and enlightenment may be gained by following an eightfold path which emphasizes moral discipline. Having gained this insight at the age of thirty-five, the Buddha spent the rest of his life traveling and teaching. He established the monastic order (the *sangha*) for his followers, advocating the ideal of the monk. When he passed away, the Buddha was said to have attained Nirvana, total extinction or the end of the cycle of birth and rebirth. The Buddha, the Dharma (his teachings), and the *sangha* came to be known as the Three Treasures of the religion.

Buddhism continued to grow after the Buddha's death. By the time of the common era, a schism occurred within the religion, dividing the early schools, called Hinayana (the small vehicle), from the later schools, called Mahayana (the great vehicle). The older schools of Buddhism emphasized morality and spiritual discipline as a path to personal salvation. In the new schools, however, the emphasis shifted to devotional faith and reliance on the supernatural powers of the Buddha and other deities for salvation.

The growth of Mahayana Buddhism in the first few centuries of the common era also witnessed the interactions with and mutual influences of Buddhism and the other two Indian religions, Hinduism and Jainism. The rise of the Mahayana cults of Bodhisattvas—spiritual beings who were destined to gain enlightenment but postponed it for the benefit of suffering beings—for example, coincided with the developments of theistic worship of Hindu gods such as Shiva, Vishnu,

and Devi (the Great Goddess); Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, later became one of the most popular devotional deities (see figures 4-6). Buddhist and Hindu deities took on iconographic marks and attributes that resembled each other; for example, Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, shared many features with the Hindu god Shiva. Jainism, founded in the sixth century B.C.E., emphasized monasticism and an austere, ascetic code of behavior. Although atheistic, Jains worshiped their prophets called *Tirthankaras*. Images of *Tirthankaras* began to be made about the same time the Buddha began to be represented in anthropomorphic form. Jain and Buddha images also resembled each other, except that the former type were distinguished by their nakedness. Like Buddhist and Hindu icons, *Tirthankaras* were honored in household shrines in personal devotional worship (figure 23).

Originally the Buddha was anchored in the historical person of Gautama. In Mahayana Buddhism the concept of the Buddha became deified and abstracted into a transcendent being. Ultimately the Buddha was identified with his teachings, the Dharma. To express the notion that the Buddha's teachings were eternal and omnipresent, Buddhists believed that numerous Buddhas existed in past, present, and future ages, and in all regions of space. Personifications of the different qualities or epithets of the Buddha gave rise to a large pantheon of colorful characters. Most important of all, Bodhisattvas became major cult figures in devotional Buddhism. Spirits and deities from the Hindu and Indian folk traditions have also been incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon. As a result, later devotional Buddhism was characterized by a large number of deities to whom devotees prayed for intercession, protection, and blessings.

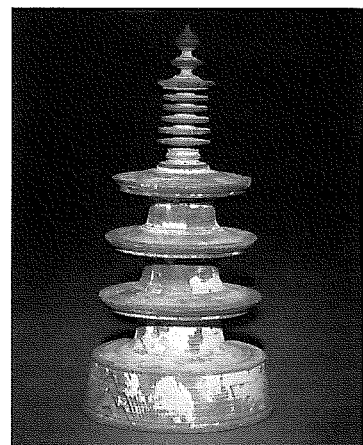
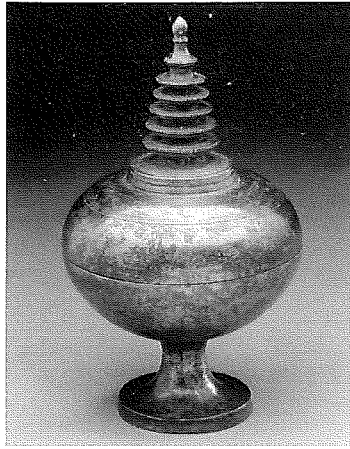
From its origin in India, Buddhism spread to other parts of Asia. Hinayana Buddhism influenced countries in South and Southeast Asia, including Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand. Mahayana Buddhism spread to North and East Asia: China, Korea, and Japan. The last stage of the development of Buddhism is called Vajrayana (or Tantrayana) and was practiced primarily in Tibet and, to some extent, in Japan. Vajrayana placed special emphases on ritual, such as the use of *dharani* (short phrases that embody the Buddha's teachings) for magical efficacy, and meditative practices.

Devotional practices in Buddhism are performed on both formalized, regular occasions as well as in more informal, private ways. Regular visits to Buddhist temples to worship, to pray, to learn about the Buddha's teachings, and to make offerings were and still are an important part of devotees' religious activities.

Worshippers may also embark on long and sometimes arduous journeys to visit the holy sites. In India the sacred sites first evolved around locations associated with key events in the Buddha's life. Later, in India and in other Buddhist countries, the list of holy sites enumerated, developing into important pilgrimage routes. During the journey to holy places, pilgrims were physically removed from the routine of their daily lives, anticipating their coming into the presence of divinities in sacred spaces. En route, the participation in devotional practices such as chanting, praying, or meditation heightened their emotive experience of the sacred. If traveling in groups, the atmosphere of piety and devotion was further reinforced with a sense of community.

In early Buddhist India, the Buddha was not represented in anthropomorphic form. Instead, worship focused on *stupas*, mounds that contained the Buddha's relics. Around the first century C.E., coinciding with the development of the Mahayana, anthropomorphic images of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas began to be made. Buddhist temples or rock-cut caves enshrined sculptural or mural depictions of icons as well as narratives for worship and meditation. At Buddhist shrines or pilgrimage sites, worshippers offered incense and flowers. In addition, they made votive offerings of miniature *stupas*, clay tablets, or plaques containing images or Buddhist phrases. They also purchased personal icons, talismans, amulets, and charms to take away as souvenirs. Usually carried on the body, these devotional objects were believed to protect the wearer from evil, illness, or harm. Sometimes a printed record of a pilgrim's map served to remind the individual of the journey and was a testimony to his/her piety (plate 8).

Monastic or lay Buddhists also carried out daily private rituals of devotional worship. They prayed, meditated, and made offerings of flowers and incense to deities to whom they vowed obeisance and from whom they sought blessings and protection. Small sculptural icons were sometimes placed in household shrines and pictorial images were hung on the wall, serving as the focus for devotional worship and meditation. When praying or reciting the names of Buddhist

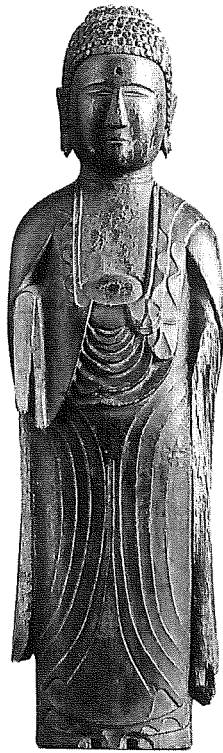


**Figure 24 (left)**  
**Miniature Votive Stupa**  
 China, Gansu Province  
 Northern Liang Period (397-460)  
 dated 435  
 steatite  
 The Cleveland Museum of Art  
 Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund

**Figure 25 (center)**  
**Miniature Stupa with Illustrations of  
 Jataka Tales**  
 China  
 Five Dynasties Period (907-960)  
 dated 955  
 bronze  
 Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum  
 Harvard University Art Museums  
 Gift of Nasli M. Heeramanek

**Figure 26 (right)**  
**Miniature Pagoda Containing a Printed Dharani Charm**  
 Japan  
 c. 764-770  
 wood, gesso  
 Courtesy, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA

**Figure 27 (top center)**  
**Stupa Reliquary**  
 China  
 Tang Dynasty (618-907)  
 silvered bronze  
 Harn Museum of Art Collection  
 Museum purchase, gift of  
 Dr. and Mrs. David A. Cofrin  
 1999.16



**Figure 28 (center)**  
*Shakyamuni Preaching: A Votive Stele*  
China  
Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581)  
c. 565  
yellow mottled stone  
The Cleveland Museum of Art  
Gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust

**Figure 29 (left)**  
*Shakyamuni*  
Korea  
Koryo Period  
(918-1392)  
wood, traces of black lacquer  
The Cleveland Museum of Art  
John L. Severance Fund

**Figure 30 (right)**  
*Seated Buddha*  
Indonesia, Java  
9th century  
bronze  
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco  
Gift of the Lyda Ebert Foundation

deities, prayer beads or a gong were used. The Buddha's relics or Buddhist texts sometimes replaced icons as objects of devotional worship.

Common forms of personal devotional objects in Buddhist Asia included votive *stupas* (reliquaries), household shrines, small icons, votive tablets or plaques, talismans, block-printed images and charms, rosaries, and *sutras* (Buddhist sacred texts). Relatively small, they were mostly portable and could be easily carried. Depending on the donor's economic means, some of these objects were exquisite works of art fashioned with sumptuous materials. Others were mass-produced with little concern for artistic quality; what was important was the symbolic significance and the magical efficacy of the objects.

Two major principles guided the creation of devotional objects. First, sacredness and supernatural power were endowed upon certain material objects, which in turn served as objects of devotion. Articles such as relics, *stupas*, icons, tablets, amulets, and sacred texts were deemed sacred because of their associations with either the physical presence or the teachings of the Buddha. They were thought to be repositories of power—the superhuman power of the Buddha and other deities and saints who have gained knowledge of transcendent truth. The transference of magical properties to material objects was manifested in a number of cults in the Buddhist tradition: the cult of relics, the cult of images, the cult of votive tablets and amulets, and the cult of books. In sociological terms, the “charisma” of the Buddha as a religious founder and leader has been objectified and concretized in physical matters. Buddhist institutions manufactured votive objects for sale to worshipers and pilgrims, who donated them as offerings or kept them as souvenirs or personal talismans. In economic terms, the mass production and consumption of votive objects constituted a process of fetishism and commercialization of these objects.

Second, the Buddhist notion of charity (*dana*) as an act of piety and a means of accumulating merit was another motivational force behind the practice of making votive offerings. In Mahayana Buddhism especially, the advocacy of making donations as a religious virtue was cultivated to involve the laity. Passages from Buddhist scriptures exhorted worshipers to honor the Buddha or objects that were reminders of the Buddha's presence by making offerings. Worshipers were also urged to give to monks and monasteries, since Buddhist institutions relied on donations from lay followers. In return worshipers gained religious merit for their material gifts. In East Asia, the Buddhist concept of transference of merit merged with funeral cults; donors often made offerings for the benefit of deceased relatives or for rebirth in the Pure Land.

#### STUPA AND RELIC WORSHIP

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One of the earliest forms of Buddhist devotional practice focused on the *stupa*—the mound containing the Buddha's relics. In India there was an ancient tradition of building large funeral mounds to honor kings or great men. After the Buddha's death, his body was cremated and the ashes and remains were divided and placed in relic mounds in different places for followers to worship.

Some of the greatest *stupas* in early Buddhist India have survived from the few centuries before and after the common era, including those at Bharhut and Sanchi in central India and at Amaravati in southern India. The Indian *stupa* consists of a base, a round drum, a hemispherical dome, and a mast with several umbrellas of gradually diminishing sizes. The structure is enclosed within a railing with gates placed at the four cardinal directions. Architecturally the *stupa* is conceived as a cosmological diagram. The mast, rising from the dome-shaped mound, symbolizes the world tree or axis of the world. The parasol, a symbol of royalty, is an emblem of the Buddha's role as a spiritual ruler of the universe.

Reliquaries and other sacred deposits were placed in a sealed chamber inside the *stupa*. A relic can be hair, ashes, or a tiny fragment of bone. Objects associated with the Buddha, such as fragments of his begging bowl or his robe, are also considered relics. Buried alongside the relics were offerings made by donors—small objects in gold, silver, pearl,

precious or semiprecious stones, or glass beads that were once used as rosaries. Reliquaries were fashioned in a variety of shapes, frequently as miniature *stupas* containing all the elements of the large structures.

When visiting a *stupa*, pilgrims pay respect by circumambulating the monument in a clockwise direction. The railing and sometimes the body of the *stupa* are embellished with carvings of Buddhist narratives and other motifs. These carvings serve as visual aids for contemplation, reminding the viewers of the Buddha's path of enlightenment as a model to follow. Pilgrims also make offerings of flowers, incense, and votive items, which they purchase at the *stupa* sites or nearby monasteries and which they sometimes take away as mementoes.

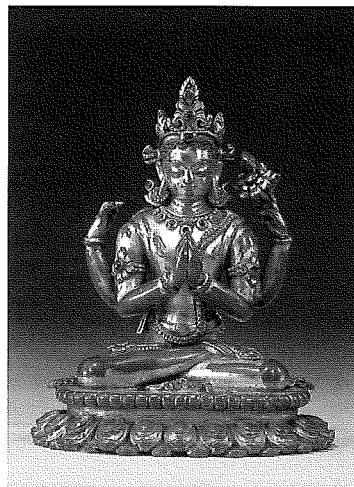
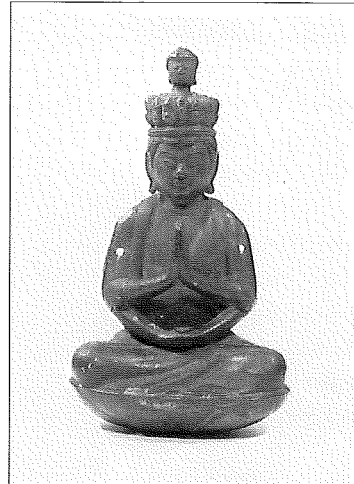
Lay worshipers contributed towards the building of *stupas*. Passages from canonical Buddhist texts encouraged worshipers to build *stupas* to honor the Buddha. Such devotional acts would generate merit, for builders, donors, and worshipers. It did not matter what size the *stupas* were. Many pilgrims dedicated miniature reliquaries as offerings, large numbers of which have been found in and around *stupa* and monastery sites in India. Votive *stupas* were fashioned in a variety of materials. Modest examples made of clay were pressed from molds and then baked or sun-dried. Like votive plaques or tablets (see discussion below), these terra cotta *stupas* were mass-produced and were among the most common forms of devotional offerings. Some of these *stupas* contained an impression of the Buddhist creed—a phrase or sentence that represents the Buddha's words or teachings. Placing miniature *stupas* bearing the Buddha's words functioned to consecrate the holy sites. The hair or ashes of eminent Buddhist monks or saints were sometimes mixed with the clay for fashioning these *stupas* as well as other votive objects.

As Buddhism spread to other parts of Asia, the *stupa* took a variety of forms: from the multistoried *pagoda* of East Asia, the *dagoba* of Nepal and Tibet, to the grand expression of the *stupa* as a three-dimensional cosmic diagram at Borobudur, Java. Because of the diversification in form, votive *stupas* also took numerous shapes. Featured in this exhibition are examples from China, Japan, and Tibet (figures 24-27). The steatite votive *stupa* is one of the earliest examples from China (figure 24). Dating to 435 of the Northern Liang Period (397-460), the reliquary is rendered in the Indic cylindrical form in three sections. The top and bottom sections are carved with Buddha and Bodhisattva images while the mid-section bears a Buddhist text in Chinese. Perhaps the most interesting elements of this *stupas* are the Chinese trigrams, the three horizontal lines, continuous or broken, above the standing figures in the bottom section. These are concerned with the cosmic forces of *yin* and *yang* and their interactive dynamic. The presence of the trigrams suggests a commingling of indigenous Chinese and Buddhist traditions, which enhances the object's magical potency. The Northern Liang princes were devout Buddhists, and the discovery of several similar votive *stupas* from the Gansu and Turfan regions has been attributed to their patronage of Buddhism. Another Chinese example of the votive *stupa* dates to the Tang dynasty (618-907) (figure 27). Cast in bronze with gilt silver, the reliquary is in the Indic shape with a dome surmounted by a mast with five umbrellas and a bud-shaped finial. The dome is engraved with bands of fine lines. The round drum is supported on a waisted stem with a widely splayed foot. Two other reliquaries associated with Buddhist sovereigns are included in the exhibit. The small wooden *stupa* simply rendered with three discs and a parasol is one of a million miniature reliquaries, each inserted with a small printed *dharani* charm, commissioned by Empress Shōtoku of Japan in gratitude after the suppression of a rebellion in 764 (figure 26). The other reliquary, dated 955, is one of 84,000 commissioned by King Qian Hongshu of the Wuyue Kingdom of China. It consists of a square base surmounted by four acroteria (a central mast is missing in this example) and is cast in bronze with motifs of *jatakas* (stories of the Buddha's previous lives), Buddha figures, and guardian deities (figure 25).

## IMAGES

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In early Indian Buddhist narratives, the Buddha was not represented but was indicated by symbols such as his footprints, his throne, or the bodhi tree to mark his presence. Anthropomorphic images of the Buddha were created in the first century of the common era. Some of these early images functioned like the *stupa*, as a reminder of the physical presence of the Buddha, and thus of his deeds and his path of enlightenment as a model for worshipers. However, the cult of images certainly developed in conjunction with the deification of the Buddha and the development of Bud-



**Figure 31 (top left)**  
**Banner Painting of Standing Guanyin Attended by Two Donors**  
 China  
 Tang Dynasty (618-907) to Five Dynasties Period (907-960)  
 c. 9th-10th century  
 Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum  
 Harvard University Art Museums  
 First Fogg Expedition to China, 1923-1924

**Figure 32 (bottom left)**  
**Bodhisattva Guanyin**  
 China  
 Tang Dynasty (618-907)  
 7th-8th century  
 gilt bronze  
 Asian Art Museum of San Francisco  
 Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alexander D. Calhoun, Jr.

**Figure 33 (top right)**  
**Eleven-headed Kannon**  
 Japan  
 Late Heian (794-1185)-early Kamakura Period (1185-1333)  
 12th century  
 bronze  
 The Cleveland Museum of Art  
 Gift of Mrs. John Lyon Collyer in memory of her mother, Mrs. G. M. G. Forman

**Figure 34 (bottom right)**  
**Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara**  
 Nepal  
 13th century  
 gilt bronze, semi-precious stones  
 Harn Museum of Art Collection  
 Museum purchase, gift of Michael A. Singer





**Figure 35**

***Shōtoku Taishi as a Child***

Japan

Kamakura Period (1185-1333)

early 14th century

joined wood, black lacquer, traces of color,  
crystal

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James Campbell Weir

in memory of

Dr. and Mrs. William Hawksley Weir

dhism into a popular religion in the Mahayana. The representation of the Buddha is not a realistic portrayal of him as a mortal person but as a superhuman being who has extraordinary wisdom. The Buddha image is therefore an idealized depiction of the accomplishment of spiritual perfection through the human form.

The Buddha is said to have thirty-two distinguishing marks (*lakshanas*), including a cranial protuberance (*ushnisha*), long earlobes, three ring marks on his neck, and webbed feet. Since the Buddha advocated the ideal of monasticism, he is depicted wearing a monk's robe. The Buddha is shown either standing or seated; when seated, his feet are crossed in the yoga, or meditating, position. His hand gestures, called *mudras*, codify symbolic meanings and include the *abhaya mudra* (with the right hand raised, palm outward) that reassures or gives blessing; the *dhyana*, or meditation, *mudra* (with hands folded in the lap); and the *bhumisparsa*, or earth-touching, *mudra* (with the right hand reaching down, palm inward) that recalls the critical moment before enlightenment when the Buddha called upon the earth to witness his victory. Later in India, canonical proportions were devised to express the ideal anatomy of the Buddha.

Statues or pictorial images of the Buddha were enshrined in temples or cave shrines for worship throughout all of Buddhist Asia. Although the iconography of the Buddha remained constant, there was much diversity in style and regional characteristics. Small images that functioned as personal devotional icons also demonstrated variations from medium to style; examples in this exhibit are drawn from China, Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia (figures 28-30). Placed on home altars or hung on walls, these icons received prayers and offerings of flowers and incense. In Thailand, worshippers also made donations by placing gold coins inside the hollow image or applying gold leaf onto the statue.

The Bodhisattva ideal is a principal tenet of Mahayana Buddhism. In contrast to the Buddha, who wears a monk's robe, Bodhisattvas are shown as princely figures adorned with crowns and jewels, modeled after Gautama's role as a prince before he gained enlightenment. The great Bodhisattvas became some of the most popular savior figures of devotional Buddhism. Among them Avalokiteshvara (called Guanyin in Chinese, Kwannon in Korean, and Kannon in Japanese), the Bodhisattva of Compassion, was the most important (figures 31-34). Avalokiteshvara, literally "the lord who sees the world," can manifest in thirty-three forms, both male and female. The deity is worshiped and invoked in times of perils such as fire, drowning, or robbery. Women often prayed to the Bodhisattva to grant them children. In the banner painting from Dunhuang, China (figure 31), the standing Bodhisattva is shown with the pious donor and donatrice, who are making offerings. The Japanese example (figure 33) bears eleven heads, a Tantric form of Avalokiteshvara, while the exquisite four-armed Nepalese piece (figure 34) demonstrates yet another manifestation of the Bodhisattva. Corresponding to Avalokiteshvara's thirty-three forms, a circuit of thirty-three temples was established in Japan as the pilgrimage route for Kannon devotionalism. A block-printed pilgrim's map lists these thirty-three numinous places, shown with images of Kannon, or the Bodhisattva, in different forms (plate 8).

Other Buddhist icons in the exhibit include a small image of Prajnaparamita, a Tantric female deity personifying the perfection of wisdom (plate 9). It is beautifully crafted in copper with copper and silver inlay, as well as inset semiprecious stones.

Historical persons in the Buddhist tradition may also become deified and worshiped as personal deities. In Japan, a major cult evolved around Prince Shōtoku (574-622), the preeminent statesman who established the Buddhist faith as the religion of the land. A favorite portrayal of Prince Shōtoku as a cult image shows him at the age of two, when he proclaimed his devotion to Buddhism (figure 35). Dressed in a red skirt, the infant is depicted with hands clasped in prayer. In Tibet, devotees commissioned images of their teachers, which were worshiped to emphasize spiritual lineage from master to pupil. The gilt bronze figure inset with turquoise and silver (plate 10) has been identified as Yongs-'dzin ngag-dbang bzang-po (1546-1615), an abbot and famous scholar of the Kagyu sect.

Votive tablets, or plaques, are usually small images of the Buddha or other deities stamped on clay from pottery or metal molds and then baked or sun-dried. Like terra cotta miniature *stupas*, votive tablets are inexpensively produced in large quantities at temples or other pilgrimage sites. Worshipers or pilgrims purchase these tablets to offer at the holy sites or keep them as personal icons or souvenirs.

The practice of making votive tablets, alongside that of votive *stupas*, originated in India around the beginning of the common era, but became popular during the Gupta (320-647) and Pala (c. 730-c. 1197) periods. There are two types of votive tablets: one portrays Buddhist figures; the other, called *dharani* sealings, bears a magical Buddhist formula or verse. The latter type, like the votive *stupas* stamped with a Buddhist creed, are usually found inside *stupas* or other sacred monuments for consecration purposes. Votive tablets are found in and around *stupa* and temple sites or in caves used for seclusion or meditation. One favorite motif on these tablets is the Buddha seated under the Mahabodhi Temple and the bodhi tree, his hands in the earth-touching gesture. Many examples dating to the tenth and eleventh centuries have been found. The Pala style of these votive tablets was closely followed in Thailand during the tenth century and in Burma during the Pagan Period from the twelfth to the fourteenth century.

Votive *stupas* and votive tablets were among the first mass-produced objects of devotion. In addition to the multiplication of *stupas* or images for the sake of accumulating religious merit, the reduplication of Buddhas corresponded to the Mahayana notion of numerous Buddhas. The motif of Thousand Buddhas, represented in relief carvings or in murals of cave-temples, expressed the notion that Buddhahood was eternal and omnipresent. In conjunction with the practices of meditation and reciting Buddhist phrases or the names of Buddhas, the sheer number of these images attained a mystical efficacy. Furthermore, stamping the image of the Buddha repeatedly was a pious, devotional deed likened to counting the rosary. Images of the Buddha were stamped on sand, clay, or paper. The exercise of printing images (see below), painting numerous icons, or writing out many Buddhist phrases every day were similar devotional activities. Two examples from the Edo Period (1615-1868) are the Zen monk Hakuin Ekaku's calligraphy (figure 36), and the painting of Kitano Tenjin, a deified cultural figure and patron-saint of scholarship worshiped in Buddhist-Shinto contexts (figure 37).

Amulets, also made of clay or other materials, are smaller versions of votive tablets. They are worn on the body for protective purposes. In Thailand and in Tibet the use of Buddhist amulets developed into major cults that have survived into modern times. Those from Thailand feature Buddhist deities, kings, and forest saints. Today they are widely sold and collected, and almost every Thai wears one. In Tibet, Buddhist amulets are commonly known as *tsha-tsha*. They feature a wide range of deities, both benign and ferocious, from the pantheon of esoteric Buddhism. Those made from clay mixed with ashes or pulverized bones of incarnate lamas are highly valued as talismans. These amulets are placed on home altars, carried in charm boxes called *ga'u*, or enshrined in rough shelters in open air. A particularly beautiful *ga'u* box, which contains an amulet of the Bodhisattva Manjusri, is cast in silver with floral decorations and Buddhist iconography (figure 11). Another exquisite example of an enshrined amulet comes from Edo Period Japan (figure 38). Shaped in the form of a lotus petal, the miniature shrine opens to reveal relief representations of the Historical Buddha Shakyamuni (Japanese: Shaka Nyorai) preaching the Buddhist Law while seated on a lotus throne. The Buddha is flanked by two attendant Bodhisattvas: Manjusri (Japanese: Monju Bosatsu), riding a lion, and Samantabhadra (Japanese: Fugen Bosatsu), riding an elephant, all amidst stylized clouds. The carving of the tiny interior figures is quite detailed, enhanced with polychromy and gilt against the natural grain of the fragrant sandalwood. The exterior of the shrine is decorated with motifs of lotus petals and the Sanskrit seed character for Shakyamuni in gold lacquer on a gunmetal-gray lacquer ground. Such shrines were made in many sizes, but this small one was probably intended to be carried as an amulet (perhaps by a warrior into battle).

The process of stamping images on clay and other materials was no doubt a precursor to printing on paper. With the advent of woodblock printing and the invention of paper, block printed images or charms became another important



**Figure 36 (left)**  
**Hakuin Ekaku**  
 Japanese (1685-1769)  
*Calligraphy with the Posthumous Name of Prince Shōtoku*  
 Edo Period (1615-1868), 18th century  
 ink on paper  
 Private collection, Cambridge, Massachusetts

**Figure 37 (right)**  
**Konoe Nobutada**  
 Japanese (1565-1614)  
*Kitano Tenjin*  
 Momoyama Period (1573-1615)  
 ink on paper  
 Private collection, Cambridge, Massachusetts



**Figure 38 (top)**  
(exterior and interior views)  
*Miniature Shrine in the  
Form of a Lotus Petal*

Japan, Edo Period (1615-1868)  
late 18th-early 19th century  
sandalwood, polychromy, gilt  
Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum  
Harvard University Art Museums  
Gift of Dorothy A. Heath and Milan A. Heath, Jr.  
Class of 1959, in honor of John M. Rosenfield

**Figure 39 (center)**  
*Amulet Worn by Shugendo Practitioner*  
(detail)

Japan  
Edo Period (1615-1868)  
woodblock print on paper  
Private collection, Cambridge,  
Massachusetts

**Figure 40 (bottom)**  
*Dharma Master rDo rje seng ge*  
Tibetan (1152-1220)  
*Book Cover with Buddhist Deities*

Nepal or Tibet  
c. 15th century  
wood, polychromy, gilt  
Courtesy of the Arthur M. Sackler Museum  
Harvard University Art Museums

medium for fashioning devotional objects. The sealed library of the Dunhuang cave-temples in northwestern China has yielded many Buddhist prints dating from the ninth century, featuring devotional icons such as Avalokitesvara. Long scrolls were made of joined sheets of paper impressed with images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. One notation recorded that twenty-one images were printed on certain days of each month. From China the practice spread to Japan, where blocks were usually carved with multiple images of ten or one hundred. Devotees paid for the printing, but the temple retained the printed sheets and put them as bundles inside wooden images. Placing these printed images inside statues established a link between the donors and the divinities represented by the statues. Small sheets printed with Buddhist phrases, as magical emblems of the Buddha's teachings, were placed inside votive *stupas* of East Asia (see figures 25-26).

Small rolls of printed images also served as amulets. The amulet in figure 39 was probably worn by a practitioner of the Japanese Shugendō, a Buddhist creed that emphasizes austere practices such as mountaineering. The amulet contains a long roll of stamped images; the section illustrated shows the Sixteen Benign Deities who guard the *Heart Sutra*. A short version of the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*, the *Heart Sutra* was particularly known for its magical efficacy. The cult of the *Heart Sutra* was advocated by Xuanzang (600-664), the celebrated Chinese pilgrim and translator who traveled to India to bring back Buddhist scriptures. Xuanzang is shown here as an itinerant monk; his role in spreading the Buddhist faith afforded him a place among the supernatural deities.

#### BOOKS

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The Buddha's teachings were first transmitted orally for several centuries. During the Maurya period (322-185 B.C.E.) in India, Buddhist texts began to be written down in Pali and then in other vernaculars. With the development of the Mahayana, Sanskrit became the canonical language for composing new scriptures. As Buddhism spread to the rest of Asia, the Buddhist canon was translated into many languages, from Chinese to Tibetan and Mongolian. Since the scriptures preserve the teachings of the Buddha, the book also became the object of devotional worship. Two texts were particularly worshiped as cult objects: the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* in South Asia and the Himalayas, and the *Lotus Sutra* in East Asia. Both were considered the final scriptural statement of Mahayana philosophy. The *Lotus Sutra* was worshiped like a relic in Japan, where scrolls of the text were placed in cylindrical reliquaries and then buried in sutra mounds. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries of Pala India, the art of the book reached a peak when lavish copies of Buddhist texts written on palm leaves and embellished with illuminated manuscripts were commissioned. The illuminations depict transcendental Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and other divinities; not necessarily related to the texts, these divine figures served as foci of meditation and devotion in Tantric practices. Devotees commissioned these Buddhist texts as a pious deed, bringing merit to all associated with the production, from the donors to the painters and the monasteries where the *sutras* were enshrined. The art of the book was destroyed in India with the Muslim invasion in the twelfth century, but the tradition continued in Nepal and Tibet, where the text became increasingly worshiped as a mystical cult object. Book covers were often fashioned in wood and carved with Buddhist divinities (figure 40).

Although Buddhism declined in India after the Muslim conquest, the religion continued to be a vital spiritual force in many Asian countries, especially in Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Tibet. In China, Buddhism suffered a major setback in the persecution of 845, but survived in the form of Chan (known as Zen in Japanese) Buddhism and in folk Buddhist practices that later commingled with local cults. Buddhism was introduced to the West at the end of the nineteenth century. Combining modern scholarship on Buddhism, Buddhists in countries East and West continue traditional forms of devotional worship as well as religious practices such as meditation.

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**Plate 8 (left)**  
***Print for Pilgrims***  
 Japan  
 Edo Period (1615-1868)  
 woodblock print on paper  
 Lent by Drs. Geoffrey and Ming-mei Redmond

**Plate 9 (right)**  
***Prajnaparamita***  
 Central Tibet  
 13th-14th century  
 copper alloy, copper and silver inlay, semi-precious stones, traces of paint  
 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond  
 The Berthe and John Ford Collection, Gift of Berthe and John Ford



**Plate 10**  
*Lama, Yongs-'dzin-ngag-dbang bzang-po*  
Tibet  
18th century  
gilt bronze, turquoise, silver  
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco  
Gift of Raymond G. and Milla L. Handley



D. Wong

INTIMATE RITUALS AND PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

Spiritual Art through the Ages

Larry David Perkins

with contributions from

Michael Bennett

Oleg Grabar

Robin Poynor

Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie

Dorothy C. Wong

Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art

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