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# A PAGEANT OF ASIA

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MANJUSRI

Attributed to WU-TAO-TSE of T'ang

# A PAGEANT OF ASIA

*A STUDY OF  
THREE CIVILIZATIONS*

BY

KENNETH SAUNDERS

LITT. D. (CAMBRIDGE)

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J. E. S.  
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## PREFACE

THIS book is in part a record of impressions and reflections during ten years spent in the countries with which it deals. In teaching the History of Religion during another decade I have found it necessary to study the 'secular' life of the three great peoples here discussed, and on three special journeys of more than two years' extent I have had opportunities of leisurely talks with leading thinkers, artists, and social reformers. These I owe to the generous help of Dr. John Mott, the Guggenheim Foundation, and Mr. Charles Crane, who set me free from routine duties to make this study.

I gratefully acknowledge my debt to them, and this little tribute would have appeared more promptly—it was largely written between 1926 and 1928—but for the crisis in these years, when every one was too preoccupied to attend to such matters. I believe there is now a growing interest in them, and I am convinced that it is time to put Asia 'on the map' of Western Schools and Colleges. I am glad, too, to acknowledge help from my Asiatic students in California who have translated passages for me and given me much encouragement. I hope that there is enough material here to provide an introduction to cultures of profound interest and beauty. With all their failures India, China, and Japan have a proud place in the family of nations, and a certain cultural unity underlies their deep differences.

If India is mystical and metaphysical China is rationalist and humanist, and Japan is at once utilitarian and poetical. All have elements of mysticism and of a deep aesthetic and poetic genius, and all have produced men of action as well as men of vision. Yet it remains true that the Indian ideal is the Rishi—the Yogi—the Mahatma—men of transcendental vision: the Chinese ideal is the man of affairs who is also a scholar, and the Japanese ideal is the Samurai, or loyal servant of Emperor and overlord,

faithful to death, stoic in endurance, touched to finer issues by a sad sense of the transiency of the world and its joys and sorrows. And in all Buddhism has quickened the native aestheticism, and taught ideals of compassion and contemplation.

The modern revolt against its other-worldliness may be a passing fashion: yet it contains within it the strong sense that the masses must be helped in more practical ways to enter into their rich heritage.

It is clear that we who are heirs of Greece and Judaea are also debtors to Asia. We owe much in the past to its vision: we owe it in the present the duty of trying to understand it.

In choosing three great civilizations I have naturally had to reject much: but these three are the heart and brain of Asia, and other cultures, Muslim and Persian, are at any rate touched upon as they have influenced these.

With the domination of the Mongols I have had to leave them: with this and with Europe knocking at its doors Asia was to become a new Continent, and in another little book *Whither Asia?* I have discussed the effect of Western civilization upon its great modern leaders.

Though my manuscript was complete when Sansom's admirable *Japan, A Cultural History*, appeared I have made free use of it in revising some sections of Part III. To the author and publishers of this work and others quoted, and to museums and collectors acknowledged below, I am grateful for kind co-operation.

K. S.

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS,

*April 1933.*

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PART I  
INDIA



# I

## THE ARYANS BECOME INDIANS

(*First Millennium B.C.*)

'Him, the Alone Real, sages call by many names.' RIG-VEDA.

# I

THE great peninsula of India, whose inhabitants number about one-sixth of the human family, is divided into three well-defined regions. First is the north-west, the country of the Indus, from which the whole sub-continent is named. Bounded by the great Himalaya range on the north, it is continuous on the south with Hindustan, the country of the Ganges and Jumna Rivers, a vast plain which makes up the main part of northern India. Below this is the Deccan, that is Dakshina, or the 'southern country', from the Vindhya Mountains to Cape Comorin.

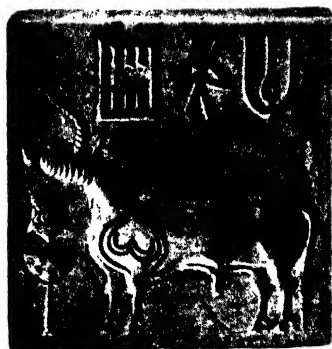
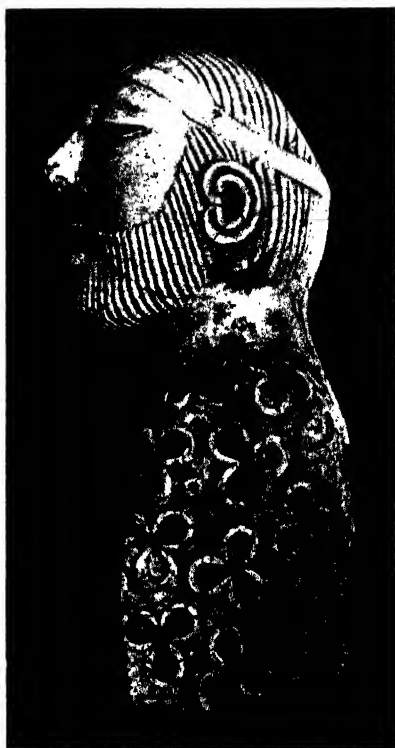
Into the first of these regions have poured many invaders, and they have left their mark upon its many languages and national groups. It is a country transitional in physical character between India and central Asia, and is the key to India proper. The second great region has been the scene of imperial ascendancy, from which great emperors, Hindu, Buddhist, and Muhammadan, have ruled India, from which too the more lasting supremacy of the Brahmins has held sway. The third region differs from both in being the stronghold of darker peoples, probably representing earlier waves of invasion, and a distinctive type of civilization which has successfully resisted that of the north, or absorbed and assimilated it.

These Dravidian peoples of the south have contributed many characteristic elements to what we know as Indian culture, which is a blend of what the Aryan invaders brought into India with what they found there. And there are large groups representing racial intermingling and fusion; Turko-Iranian in the north-west, Mongolo-

Aryan in the north-east, Scytho-Dravidian in the west, Aryan-Dravidian in the United Provinces.

Of the aborigines certain groups remain, about five millions still at a primitive stage of culture, using flint implements and hunting with bow and arrow—animists in terror of demons. Of pre-Aryan settlers we know much from recent excavations: they built fine cities of brick, such as those at Harappa (Punjab) and at Mohenjo-Daro (Sind), used gold jewellery and coins, and had a highly developed art which survives in images of superb modelling and seals of consummate craftsmanship. 'The best of the figures', says Sir John Marshall, 'are distinguished by a breadth of treatment and a feeling for line and form unequalled in the contemporary glyptic art of Elam or Mesopotamia or Egypt.' He identifies figurines of a much-jewelled woman with the 'mother-goddess' familiar in Mesopotamia and farther west. Particularly interesting are the animals, presumably sacrificial; the humped bull characteristic of India to-day, the elephant, the rhinoceros (now extinct). Here too are a cobra rearing its many-hooded heads over a human figure, which may be the prototype of Buddhist images, and a sacred tree which may be the Banyan (*Ficus religiosa*) prominent in Buddhism.

Colonists then, akin to the Sumerians, seem to have come to India some 3,000 years before Christ, and to have settled in the north and west, perhaps beginning the process of pushing south the dark-skinned Dravidians which the Aryan invaders continued fifteen centuries later. It may be, on the other hand, that the Dravidians are their descendants, or even that early Sumerians were settlers from India. It is noteworthy that a group of people in Baluchistan still speak Brahui, a language akin to the Dravidian. Are these a colony from the south, or a little group which budded off from an immigrant people on the march, who left colonies also in the Punjab and in Sind? The Coorgs of the south present a parallel problem, an island of Scytho-Dravidians in the midst of the darker peoples.



STATUES AND A SEAL  
From MOHENJO DARO



Interesting questions are raised by the discovery of cuneiform tablets belonging to the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C., at Boghaz Koi near Angora in Asia Minor, on which treaties with kings of the Mitanni bearing Aryan names are recorded. These were Mesopotamians conquered by the Hittites, a group of whom still seems to survive in the near neighbourhood; and on these tablets they invoke certain gods, 'Mitra, Uruwana, and Indara', who are to be identified with gods of the Aryan conquerors of India whom we meet in the Rig-Veda. Does this mean that a group of Indians had taken their gods with them to the west, or does it not rather mean that we should date the coming of the Aryans to India as about contemporary with the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt? This is the view accepted by most Western scholars; and the hymns of the Rig-Veda, which are songs of praise and prayer to the gods, just over a thousand in number, are thus of very great significance and interest. They are our earliest Aryan literature. Arranged in ten cycles, or mandalas, of which the tenth is the latest, and belongs to about the ninth century B.C., the bulk of them belong to the preceding five centuries. Eight of these mandalas are attributed to priestly families—the Gautamas, the Vishvamitras and others, and they are written in Vedic, the sacred tongue of ancient India. Used as early as the seventh century B.C., for rock inscriptions, this script was much later adapted to the making of books, and these hymns were for centuries handed down orally by priestly families.

What do they tell us of the Aryans as they settled down in the Land of the Five Rivers? We find a military aristocracy despising native pani, traders, and moving southward with sword in one hand and spade in the other. We can hear their martial songs as they drive the original inhabitants before them, invoking Indra, god of battles, and claiming that he has smitten with his thunderbolt the Blacks or Dasyus, and given victory to the Aryans. Like Valkyrie the gods appear in battle-array to help their



worshippers—and in lightning and thunder Indra meets and quells the demon of drought. If they have been placated with food and with libations of soma, an intoxicating drink, often deified, and made from a plant which grew upon the mountains, these bright nature-gods will do their part. As to their worshippers, they will do theirs, with sword and plough. We see them driving their chariots, armed with javelin and battle-axe, and clad like their Greek cousins in helmet and cuirass, or we watch them at work in the fields of the fertile Indus Valley, with plough, mattock, and hoe; invoking the gods of fertility, digging canals, and using spells to bring rain. And if they use primitive medicine and drink healing waters and herbs they also employ spells to drive out fever—sending it into a black or yellow neighbour. But some regard sickness as the punishment of sin sent by Heaven.

Of their social life we get hints in these hymns, sufficient to reconstruct a clear picture. Kingship is hereditary, and there is a separate priesthood, which we see beginning when the king appoints a substitute to attend to the sacrifices. Neither child-marriage nor the burning of the widow on the pyre of her husband, practices characteristic of later India, are found among the Aryan tribes. But the exposure of infants and the infirm aged is practised according to the Yajur-Veda, the prayer-book of this early society.

Relationship is counted through the father, and monogamy is the rule, the wife having an honourable position; and the beginning of the joint-family may be traced. Beginnings, too, of settled civilization may be seen in the pur or fort, a rough palisade, into which they hurried their herds and other possessions in case of attack. In coalitions of tribes we see the beginning of the state, and the king is chosen to protect his people and to administer justice. The chief weapon is the bow, but slings, spears, swords, and axes are also used, the ordinary soldier fighting on foot, kings and nobles from a crude chariot. Horses are used for racing and for war, bulls and oxen draw the ploughs and carts. Seed is sown in furrows, especially

barley and wheat, which are made into bread and fermented to make sura or brandy. Weaving, spinning, tanning, carpentry, and metal work are practised, and there are artists as well as craftsmen. We read of an image of Indra carried into battle, no doubt a kind of fetish: and an early poem asks, 'Who will buy my Indra?' The images of the Dasyus, on the other hand, the Aryans condemn as indecent; and, as we find in the Indus Valley cities, phallic emblems were plentiful long before the Aryans arrived. The West still regards as obscene what most Indians worship as sacred.

Looking at the hymns in more detail we may choose a ploughing hymn 'the oldest pastoral in the Aryan world', a wedding ritual, and a funeral hymn, which give us vivid glimpses of Vedic society in its glad moments of work and play, and at the solemn hour of death. In all we find a sense of unseen presences, and of the kinship of men with mother-earth. The ploughing hymn reveals a cheerful society passing from nomadic to settled life:

O Lord of the field, give us sweet rain  
And copious: may the cows give us milk;  
May the Lord of the waters bless us.

May our crops be sweet, and skies rain sweetness  
May the Lord of the Field be gracious to us;  
So will we follow him unharmed by our foes.

May the oxen work gladly; gladly  
May ploughman and plough go forward;  
Gladly tie we the traces, gladly ply we the goad.

Of their home-life we get many glimpses, such as early rituals of marriage and death. After fire has been kindled on the family altar the bride is given away by the father, and the priest addresses bride and groom: 'Abide ye together. Leave not one another, but enjoy happiness with your children.' The groom takes the right hand of his bride and says, 'For weal I take thee by thy right hand, that we may reach old age together.' After the wedding-feast the bride is addressed in these words: 'Enter the

home of thy husband with lucky omens. Cherish his servants and his cattle. May thine eyes be free from anger: minister to the joy of thy husband. May thy beauty be bright and thy mind cheerful. Bear him heroic sons. Worship the gods. O Indra, bless this lady with worthy sons. May she be mother of strong men.' Then the bride and groom say in unison, 'May all the gods unite our hearts and may the gods of hope keep us united.'

An early funeral hymn reminds us of many an epitaph of Greek and Roman:

From the dead hand I take the bow he wielded,  
To gain for us dominion, might, and glory.  
Thou there, we here, rich in heroic offspring,  
Will vanquish all assaults of every foeman.

Approach the bosom of the earth, the mother,  
This earth, extending far and most propitious:  
Young, soft as wool to bounteous givers, may she  
Preserve thee from the lap of dissolution.

Open wide, O earth, press not heavily on him,  
Be easy of approach, hail him with kindly aid:  
As with a robe a loving mother hideth  
Her son, so shroud this man, O Earth our Mother.

This early society expects from its gods material blessings in return for sacrifices, but in it there is dawning a moral sense. This expresses itself chiefly in the hymns to Varuna, the sky-god; they declare that his friendship is worth more than all else, and they realize that sin separates men from him. 'Restore to us', says one hymn, 'our former friendship,' and others ask his forgiveness for cheating at dice, and for offences against justice.

Here in the concept of Rita, or Order, is the first germ of Indian philosophy. By keeping its laws the gods obtained immortality. Varuna, its guardian, guides the stars in their courses, 'stretches out the heavens like a tent', and watches over the moral law in the hearts of men. These are very early ideas, for the Iranian cousins of the

Indo-Aryans had the twin concepts of Arta or Asha, Order, and of Ahura Mazda, the Good: and the gods Mitra and Indra are further proofs of the common origin of the two groups, and of their common heritage. Gods like Dyaus Pitar, the sky-father, remain to show the kinship of Vedic India also with Homeric Greece, which worshipped Zeus Pater and had a civilization and a language closely akin. Their views of the life of the departed are also similar:

Go thou whither thy fathers have gone. Go thou and meet King Yama and King Varuna, who are pleased with our offerings. Leave sin behind, enter thy home, that happy heaven where our forefathers are. Go thou to King Yama, and reap the fruits of thy virtuous desire. . . . O ye shades, go hence and leave this place; for the fathers have prepared a place for the dead, and Yama makes it beautiful with day, with sparkling waters and light.

Depart, O Death . . . harm not  
Our children, nor the heroic dead.

Here there is no mention of hell or its tortures. Yama is a Lord of Heaven, not of Hell, and fear of hell has not yet driven men to human-sacrifice. The Atharva-Veda (a compilation from the Rig) forbids this practice, making Varuna, like Yahweh, appear in person to release the victim; but a very early sculpture shows us Indra on his giant elephant, and before him three human figures suspended to a tree—sacrifices perhaps to induce the god to send rain in time of drought: for the thunder-clouds are 'the elephants of Indra' and thunder is their trumpeting. The fear of hell and death gradually laid its cold hand on the Aryan heart—a contamination perhaps from native cults. Speculative thought also marks this period of transition, and though some resist it and poke fun at priests drunk with soma and croaking antiphonally like frogs, yet gradually the mind of the priest dominates this early society as it pushes west and south, and early colour-prejudice is rationalized into a divinely appointed social order. A growing other-worldliness, the belief in

Karma and Samsara—rebirth according to action—and the rigid law of caste all seem marks of Brahmin influence, growing potent as the Aryans settled down in their Holy Land, Brahmarshidesa. This is the upper part of the country between Jumna and Ganges: to it belong the priestly Brahmanas, as the hymns of the Rig-Veda belong to the north-west—Brahmavarta, the Holy Land.

Was it climate or the influence of the aborigines which cast over the Aryan mind this spell of contemplation upon the problems of life, and this fear of death-and-birth, and bound them hand and foot with a network of social tabus and practices from which they have not yet escaped? Probably it was the coincidence of such circumstances with the coming of certain great thinkers. Faced with the race-problem, with a growing division of function, with the obvious inequalities of human lot, they devised the ingenious theory of Karma-Samsara, which if it is unprovable is also irrefutable. We can see it in the making in the great mystic treatises, the early Upanishads, which belong to this region and to this era, the ninth, eighth, and seventh centuries B.C.

As the Greeks sought a sovereign power greater than the gods, so we see Vedic India seeking the One behind the Many. 'Him, the One Real, sages call by many names' says a hymn of the first cycle, and by the end of the Vedic Age the notes of speculation and of agnosticism are clearly sounded in the Creation Hymn of the tenth cycle: 'Who knoweth? Who can tell the Maker?'

The hymns of the Rig-Veda show a marked progress from the naïve nature-cults of the earlier to the more wistful speculation of the later age. And the tenth cycle is a bridge between the Vedic and the Brahmanic period. With it, the Aryans are becoming Indians—obsessed with the problems of whence, whither, and why, and of salvation from birth and death. Their great Seers are seeking Reality, and the Upanishads—the source of all later systems—are in the making.

## II

In contrast to the naïve naturalism of the Rig-Veda and the religiosity of the Brahmanas these 'mystic teachings' are full of grand intuitions of the One Reality; and they teach definitely and clearly that so long as man fails to realize it he is doomed to birth and death. It is to escape the round of rebirth that all subsequent religious systems in India and their philosophical teachings exist.

From the latest of the Vedic thinkers asking 'Who is the One whom men call by different names?' to the first of the Upanishadic mystics, seeing the One Reality, is a great step: and certain early seekers leave the crowded haunts of men, and as Vanaprasthas, Forest-Dwellers, court this Great Reality. This renunciation is the origin of Sannyasa, and the Sannyasi—ascetic—is one of India's most characteristic figures. The masses we may picture still worshipping their nature-gods, still offering sacrifice, still looking back to the Holy Land of the north-west; but aboriginal cults and the fear of hell have entered their souls and given intensity to their worship. The beliefs of a matriarchal people worshipping dark earth-goddesses have fused with those of the patriarchal Aryans to make Indian religion. The Aryans have become Indians—'Hindus'.

A great poet of this age has embodied in a mystery-play the story of a boy who goes to the realm of King Death and wrests from him the secret of Amritam, Immortality, which is final escape from Samsara, transmigration. In the Katha Upanishad the sage Vajasravasa of the Gautama clan becomes a sannyasi, and at the boy's own request 'gives to Yama' his son Nachiketas: 'Father, to whom wilt thou give me?' thrice the boy asked, and at last the father spoke: 'To Death I give thee.' The boy replies,

Full many go this road, and hide their face . . .  
 What, pray, will Yama do with me to-day?  
 Like corn is mortal man: he springeth up,  
 And, dying, cometh again like corn to birth.

Here perhaps we have some early fertility ritual expressed,

as among so many early peoples, in the sowing of the ear of corn, a symbol of immortality.

The boy, interpreting his father literally, goes down into the realm of death; and Yama, returning after three days' absence, allows him in recompense for such neglect of the laws of hospitality to choose three boons. He asks first that his father's indifference to him be overcome, and, when this is granted, goes on in these striking words:

There is a heavenly realm where fear comes not.  
 Thou art not there, nor is there fear of ill;  
 Death and decay come not; hunger and thirst  
 Are left behind. So mortal men come there  
 Where sorrow is not, tasting heavenly joy.  
 Tell me, O Death—for thou alone canst tell—  
 That Higher Sacrifice by which men win  
 To Immortality. Pray tell it me!  
 For I have faith. This is my second choice.

Death replies that an altar of a thousand bricks is to be made, and reveals the plan on which it is to be built. He promises that this sacrifice shall be known by the boy's name, and that the performer shall pass beyond birth-and-death to heavenly joy.

The boy's third boon is that Death shall reveal to him the nature of the departed soul: 'Some say the dead exist and some say no.' Death seeks to buy him off by offering him children, cattle, horses, elephants, gold, and a fine palace in which to live as long as he will, and grants him a vision of fair maidens and musicians, imploring him to ask no more about the life to come, of which 'the gods themselves are oft in doubt'. But the boy, shaking himself free from the snare, replies:

These things are transient, and undo  
 The glory of man's powers. Fleeting indeed  
 Is human life; keep for thyself thy gifts,  
 Thy dances and thy songs. Never with things of sense  
 Is man content. Shall we take joy in gold  
 When we have seen thee? Can we be said  
 To live when thou dost reign?

The rest of this remarkable mystery is the revelation to the ardent soul that there is but one Supreme Being, Brahman, indestructible Reality; that it and the soul are one; and that immortality consists in realizing this unity. Here we have passed beyond the unreflective nature-worship of the early immigrants to that central thought which becomes the light of all their seeing. And Yama uses words destined to become classical in India's later and greater mystery-play, the Bhagavad-gita: 'It dies not when the body dies. . . . There is no slayer and no slain.'

We are to think of the Aryans, then, as settling in the 'Field of Kurukshetra' where the scenes of the Gita are set, and of which the Great Epic says, 'They who dwell in this field dwell in Heaven.' The Brahmins are coming into power, and begin to lay down the law of Karma, which plays a vital part in later Indian thought. 'As a man acts, so he becomes,' they teach; and as this theory is linked up with the doctrine of transmigration, the natural order of society which divides it into the religious leader, the warrior, the cultivator, and the servant, hardens into the caste-system. Varna, colour, becomes jati, birth: a man is born into the class he deserves. Before the Rig-Veda closes we find the statement, used to-day at every Vaishnavite altar, that Brahma the creator made the Brahmins from his head, the Warriors or Kshatriyas from his chest and arms, the Vaisyas or cultivators from his loins, and the Sudras or servants from his feet. The white-skinned invaders are in fact beginning to rationalize their social order. They consign the dark-skinned peoples to the lowest of the four castes, just as later they will keep out of the caste-system altogether certain groups whose occupations and origins seem to them unclean. And they justify their colour-bar by accusing the Dasyus of filthy practices and phallic worships, and commenting on their snub noses and dark skins.

Now, too, we find the beginning of the teaching that Trishna, thirst or desire, is *the* enemy, and that it is this which 'brings death, again and again'. Death in fact is



becoming an obsession, and the living alone can help the dead, by caring for them with food and ritual. From such early germs has developed the doctrine of Samsara, or transmigration. The Aryan has begun to be obsessed with the longing for salvation from it. The soul 'which goes as a caterpillar from leaf to leaf', which 'puts on as a garment a new body', can escape by the conquest of Desire and of Egoism—realizing that it is itself the One Reality—Atman, Breath or Spirit. Ignorance is with Desire and Egoism the root of all evil: mystic insight is the way of escape.

To this period of transition belongs the great figure of Yajñavalkya, a pioneer in bridging the gulf between the later Vedic and the earlier Upanishadic ages, in leading India from naïve to ordered reflection, and in preparing the way for her greatest son. He is the first personality in Indian history, dim yet gigantic. A friend of the boy Nachiketas and of his father, we see this great thinker at the court of King Janaka, in North India. He has been called the father of Hindu philosophy, and is among the greatest of her rishis or seers.

With a company of wandering scholars he is met by the King, who gives him a hundred cows for his pre-eminence in discussion. It is characteristic of this stage of development that the King, a Kshatriya, is found instructing as well as rewarding Brahmins. At another time we find Yajñavalkya at the King's court on the occasion of a great horse-sacrifice. This, known as the Asvamedha, was the most elaborate and important of later Indian sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> It was the special privilege of kings, and had a political as well as a religious significance. In early spring, a week before the full moon, the priests assembled. On the sixth day a horse, chosen as the best in the country, was purified, and the gods were invoked with music and singing to protect it. It was then let loose to wander at will, accompanied only by a body-guard. Wherever it wandered was proclaimed a royal domain. Meanwhile the festival went

<sup>1</sup> Later editors of the Upanishads have added this part of the story.

on; and after a year the horse was brought back, and sacrificed with other victims to the accompaniment of elaborate chants and rituals.

It was to some such sacrifice that King Janaka invited all the learned men of his country. Desiring to find out which of them was the wisest, he offered as a prize one thousand cows, with coins of gold tied to their horns. Yajñavalkya, we read, bade his followers drive away this great herd, claiming victory without trial. But the others insisted upon the test, and eight, a woman among them, entered the lists against him. One of his most distinguished competitors was the father of Nachiketas. Their discussions centred about Brahman or Ultimate Reality. 'He', says Yajñavalkya, 'is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker . . . he is thine inner self, immortal.' To his woman-competitor, Gargi, he describes Brahman as Reality, Consciousness, and Joy (Sat, Chit, Ananda), and silencing all in turn, establishes himself as the greatest teacher of the age.

The King, moved by his insight, offers him the kingdom. But a Brahmin leaves to Kshatriyas the work of ruling and Yajñavalkya reveals the secret of Karma: Each is what he deserves to be: the doer of good becomes good: the doer of evil becomes evil. When men are freed from Trishna they become immortal. This teaching too the Gita develops. It is India's greatest contribution to ethics: 'Do thine own caste-duty: in doing that of another is great peril.'

The secret of the influence of this great man lay, like that of the Buddha after him, not only in the clarity of his teaching but also in the fact that he embodied the reality of his teachings, living on the high plane of mystic realization, though he showed some arrogance and greed in claiming his reward!

Here then is a stage in which India has advanced to a high spiritual and intellectual level, where men and women meet freely and discuss ultimate truth. Now has begun her age-long quest for salvation. It is summed up

in the beautiful prayer, perhaps the most perfect of all mystical utterances:

From the unreal lead me to the Real;  
From darkness lead me to Light  
From death to Immortality.

Lead me, in a word, from delusion to enlightenment. Now, too, India makes articulate the division of the life of man into the asrams, or stages of discipline. He is first a boy in the house of his father, and of his religious teacher, learning to study the Scriptures and to fit himself for the duties of life. He is next a householder, doing the duties of citizenship and of religion, such as alms-giving, meditation, and worship, until he sees his children's children. He is then free to wander away, and become a vanaprastha, or forest-dweller; and later ages added a fourth stage, that of the monk with no ties to bind him to earth.<sup>1</sup>

The speculations or 'guesses at the truth' of these solitary thinkers are collected in rather haphazard fashion in the Upanishads. Like the Rig-Veda they contain much that is childish, side by side with so much that is profound that all Indian systems are based on them, and that Deussen could say, 'To every Brahmin to-day the Upanishads are what the New Testament is to the Christian,' and that Schopenhauer could call them his own 'solace in life and death'.

Our illustrative readings will perhaps suffice to indicate both aspects of these early works of Indian genius in which ritual, legend, cosmogony, and other speculations are presented side by side with sublime intuitive utterances, and impossible etymologies annoy the critical reader just as he has been rapt into the presence of the Unseen. But India maintains that criticism and worship go haltingly together, and is not troubled by bad etymology or uncritical judgements. What has the One to do with trifles of scholarship?

Impersonal in the earlier Upanishads, the Unseen be-

<sup>1</sup> For the guru's precepts to his chela see Illustrative Readings II(e).

comes a personal Lord in the later ones, such as the Svetasvatara and the Bhagavadgitopanishad, which hymn Siva and Vishnu, incarnate for men and their salvation. For all alike there is the sublime faith that Ultimate Reality is spirit, and that man is saved by realizing his oneness with it. *Tat tvam asi*, 'Thou art it'; this is the personal realization of the great truth, 'Atman alone is the whole world.' But if this Reality is ineffable, 'that from which words turn back', it is also usually moral, 'that from which evil turns back'. 'As water clings not to the lotus-leaf so evil clings not to him who knows this.'

The Indians have arrived then by about the eighth century at a Platonic concept of an Unseen more real than the seen, which can be realized by the man of pure life and devout meditation. Like Heracleitus they believe that all is transient; like Plato, that One abides. But this reality is not yet for the masses, who continue to worship the old gods and to be more concerned with a good rebirth than with Nirvana, or escape.

That the Upanishadic ideal was too abstract seems clear, and the later Upanishads were dedicated to personal gods like Vishnu, a sun-god, and his incarnation Krishna. The Unseen Reality is here revealed in the form of a personal saviour.

Another great but dim figure emerges from the age of the early Upanishads: this is ~~Kapila~~ Kapila, founder of the dualistic Sankhya. If the mysticism of these early utterances can be monistically interpreted it can also be made the basis for atheism. Kapila, taking his stand upon the same ground as Yajñavalkya, began a century before the Buddha to teach an atheistic doctrine. There are, he said, two eternal Realities, Prakriti, nature, and Purusha, spirits, which enter into union, until spirit triumphs and asserts its freedom from matter. Once the mirror frees itself from the objective world it ceases to reflect objects, and is saved from entanglement with them: once the dancer frees himself from his partner he is no longer deluded by the lure of sense.

If later Hinduism returns to the mystic monism of the Upanishads it also makes much of this view of salvation; and the Buddha, who must next engage our attention, was probably aware of both schools of thought.

By the sixth century before Christ, then, India has philosophies and theories enough. What masses and leaders alike need is a saviour to show men Reality. That such an embodiment in a human life was needed is clear from the success of the heretical movements which we know as Buddhism and Jainism. These were reforms within Brahminism which gathered momentum and developed into new religious sects, and in studying them we shall see that the power of the Brahmins was now to be challenged, that the sacrifice of animals had become abhorrent to the awakened conscience, and that a developing ethical ideal began to reform the older religion, till powerful social customs such as those of caste were attacked in the interests of humanity. It is a movement as heretical and as ethical as that of Hebrew prophecy; but it has no such flaming sense of the wrath and love of God. The new teachers are seers—like the old: not prophets who have 'heard the whisper of God'.

They agree with the Rishis in finding egoism the root of evil, and in offering escape from samsara; but they re-define the goal in more clearly ethical terms, and they offer to the lay-people a more ringing challenge, especially emphasizing Ahimsa, innocence of life, harmlessness. The founders were laymen who challenged the priests, and their appeal to the second and third castes is an important element in their success. Before we study these movements, therefore, we must consider the life of the lay-people as contrasted with that of priests and monks, and keep in mind the great difference between the masses and their spiritual lords.

### III

We have very full evidence for the secular civilization of these times in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the

two great epics of India, edited at a later date, but embodying many of the traits of this early society. These great poems have long been for the masses a treasure-house of song and story, of moral ideals and of religious instruction.

Recited by some bard to a fireside audience, or carved on the walls of temples, they are a veritable bible for the masses; and through them, as through strolling singer and actor, the wisdom of the ages has filtered down among the people, and Indian civilization has been safeguarded, but also crystallized. Illiterate yet not uncultured, the women of India have been moulded for nearly three thousand years by the example of the loyal wife Sita; and her soldiers, hardly more literate, have been inspired by the exploits of Rama and his companions; while in Krishna, the ever-youthful shepherd, they have found the perfect lover, human and divine. In these their ancient sun-god Vishnu is incarnate, and the qualities of Indra the warrior find ever new expression.

The Epics have been so edited and re-edited that it is probable that they contain elements some six centuries later than the early Upanishads. Fortunately we have also the early Buddhist writings as a check, and we may say that the salient feature of this age is a growing resentment of the Kings and Warriors, Kshatriyas, against the claim of the Brahmins that they are themselves gods, and have power over nature itself. Many of the Upanishadic seers were non-Brahmins, and were already challenging these claims. Both Kings and Brahmins are revered. The King is both commander-in-chief and supreme ruler in civil affairs, consulting his counsellors when it suits him. The kingdoms of Kasi and Videha are ruled by men whom we meet in the Upanishads, and gradually there emerge not only the revolt of these laymen against the priests, but also their wars against one another. If the Epics can be read as in any sense history, the great struggle of Kauravas and Pandavas went on for centuries, and by the beginning of the Buddhist era the field of civil war had moved east—

the rising power of Magadha challenging the great kingdom of Kosala, to which the Buddha's own clan was feudatory. These Kings and those of Videha and Avanti rule a civilized people with great capitals and market-towns. They are entitled to one-sixth of the produce of the country, and are expected in return to dispense an even-handed justice. If the King fails he may be deposed: 'a bad ruler is like a leaky boat'. Kingship was either elective or hereditary, according to local custom, and rajas were of many kinds. Some, like the Buddha's father, were petty chieftains, others kings of great and powerful realms. Kosala, for instance, stretched from the eastern foot-hills of the Himalayas to the Ganges at Benares, and its claim to a wider empire, challenged by Magadha and the Licchavis, is the outstanding political event of this era.

The chiefs meet in a hall for public business, and the villagers have local assemblies. These are the forerunners of panchayats, councils of five, which for two thousand years or more have made each village a little republic, caring for the affairs of temple and well, of common lands and boundaries, and settling local disputes with a rough and ready justice. For bigger questions there are judges, magistrates, and other officers.

The Magadhan capital of Rajgir or 'The King's House' was first a hill-fortress, whose cyclopean walls attest a very early date, and it was moved in the time of the Buddha to the foot of the hills. The fortifications of both cities, four and a half miles in circumference in one case, three in the other, show how far the Indians have advanced from their early mud forts. Their construction is, however, not more elaborate than that of the Indus Valley cities nearly two thousand years earlier. India is soon to enter upon an era of great architectural and artistic achievement, but for domestic purposes wood and brick still suffice; and nothing has yet been unearthed to tell us in detail of the style and nature of palace or house or temple. We read in early Buddhist works of seven-story buildings, and Indus

Valley remains suggest that these were Ziggurats, as was argued long ago by Rhys Davids. Hot-air baths are also mentioned in Buddhist works; and again the Indus Valley remains tell us of a very highly developed bathing and drainage system, long before the Buddhist age.

The discovery of these towns means the re-thinking of much that has been accepted by scholars. Hitherto we have conceived of the art of writing as brought back at a later date by Indian scholars from Mesopotamia. But if the Aryans passing through the Punjab met the earlier colonists, they would learn this art and many another from them; and there is no reason to reject the idea that this early civilization lived on in parts of India after it had been destroyed elsewhere. It seems to be part of a widespread chalcolithic culture which extended from the Adriatic to Japan, but gathered chiefly in the great river valleys; and India passed through the same phases of culture as her neighbours. Apart from their seals, not yet deciphered, we can trace the use of writing among the Indians back to the seventh century B.C. and we have coins of about the same time: but these may both be links in a much longer chain. We can watch the growth of the art of incising birch-bark and of blacking-in the characters; Buddhist monks, who still use this method, seem to have invented it.

The coming of Gotama Buddha is an epoch of the greatest importance to India and to the rest of Asia, and he should be studied as the climax of one era and the beginning of another. With him India emerges into history, and becomes the teacher of the Asiatic nations. But creative as was the Buddha he could not but build upon the foundations of the Rishis, and there are Vedic as well as Upanishadic elements in his system, which was at once a Way of Mystic Realization for the specialist and a Way to Heaven for the masses. In blending those Ways or Paths he achieved a new and far-reaching synthesis.



## THE SPIRIT OF ANCIENT INDIA

## I. PASSAGES FROM THE VEDIC HYMNS

*(a) An Early Hymn to Indra*

(Soma is offered and Indra is asked to destroy the enemy).

For thee O mighty here is strong drink  
 And potent unto victory, as thou  
 Victorious Indra, hero, conqueror,  
 Urgest to victory the chariots of men.  
 Burn thou the lawless Dasyu as a flame,  
 Who stolest from the sun his chariot wheel  
 To quell the demon of destroying drought.  
 Mighty is thy rapture, thy might sublime,  
 O slayer of foes, giver of bliss, winner of steeds,  
 O joy of ancient singers; as drink to thirsty men  
 Send food to us who sing thy praises now,  
 And lead us to water and safe bivouacs. (i. 175.)

*(b) To Agni—God of Fire*

Put on thy robes, O Lord of prospering power,  
 Thyself worthy of offerings, offer our gifts.  
 Stand as our priest, our chosen, ever young,  
 Through whom the father intercedeth for the son,  
 Friend for his chosen friend, and here  
 Upon the sacred grass may gods as men  
 Gather—the victors, Varuna and Aryaman  
 And Mitra—all we offer gifts through thee.  
 Rejoice thou Herald-God in rite and hymn.  
 May we be dear to thee, beloved priest,  
 Lord of our hearths for whom we kindle fires.  
 (i. 26.)

*(c) To Varuna*

The tribes of men are wise by His great might  
 Who stayed asunder wide heaven and earth:  
 Who moved the high and mighty sky, and the ancient stars and  
 spread out the earth:  
 With my own heart I commune 'How shall Varuna and I be at  
 one?  
 What gift will He accept unangered?

When may I confidently await His gracious favour?  
 Seeking to know my sin, I question the sages, O Varuna,  
 And all make answer 'Varuna verily is wroth'.  
 What, O Varuna, is my great sin, that Thou slayest him thy friend  
 and psalmist?  
 Tell me, O Lord of Might who may not be deceived, and straight-  
 way will I put away my sin and give Thee homage.  
 Loose us from our fathers' sins and from our own.  
 Loose us, O King, as the thief looses cattle from the halter.  
 Not our will, but weakness of the flesh and thoughtlessness made us  
 stray, O Varuna: wine, dice or anger seduced us!  
 The old are at hand to tempt our youth: slumber leadeth us to evil.  
 I thy servant would serve Thee, bounteous Lord:  
 Sinless would I serve Thee and propitiate Thy wrath.  
 Thou, gracious one, givest wisdom to the simple:  
 Thou, wise one, leadest the wise to riches.  
 O Lord Varuna, may my meed of praise come nigh Thee, and creep  
 within Thy heart.  
 So may we prosper in work and rest.  
 Preserve and bless us evermore, ye gods.

Rig-Veda, vii. 86.

Here ancient India trembles on the brink of an ethical monotheism, yet in her love of Varuna does not forget the other gods. All her prayers to Varuna contain a cry for forgiveness. He is the embodiment of Law, physical and moral. But she never shook off unworthier concepts of God, and in the following passage we seem to be contemplating one of the great and tragic turning-points of her religious history.

I, Agni graceless one, desert the Gracious:  
 I leave the Father, for my choice is Indra.

Rig-Veda, x. 124.

(d) *A Late Vedic Hymn*

The One Above the Gods

(c. 900 B.C.)

Non-being then existed not nor being:  
 There was no air, nor sky that is beyond it.  
 What was concealed? Wherein? In whose protection?  
 And was there deep unfathomable water?

## THE ARYANS BECOME INDIANS

Death then existed not nor life immortal;  
 Of neither night nor day was any token.  
 By its inherent force the One breathed windless:  
 No other thing than that beyond existed.

Darkness there was at first, by darkness hidden;  
 Without distinctive marks, this all was water.  
 That which, becoming, by the void was covered,  
 That One by force of heat came into being.

Desire entered the One in the beginning:  
 It was the earliest seed, of thought the product.  
 The sages searching in their hearts with wisdom,  
 Found out the bond of being in non-being.

Their ray extended light across the darkness:  
 But was the One above or was it under?  
 Creative force was there, and fertile power:  
 Below was energy, above was impulse.

Who knows for certain? Who shall here declare it?  
Whence was it born, and whence came this creation?  
Then who can know from whence it has arisen?

None knoweth whence creation has arisen;  
 And whether he has or has not produced it;  
 He who surveys it in the highest heaven,  
 He only knows, or haply he may know not.

Rig-Veda, x. 129.

Translated in the original metre by  
 A. A. Macdonell.<sup>1</sup>

This great hymn is the climax of speculative thought in the Rig-Veda. It belongs to the Tenth Mandala, the latest collection, and is a link with the monism of the Upanishads. The singers of these hymns give pre-eminence first to one and then to another of the Gods, and at last turn to seek an Absolute or Ultimate Reality above and behind them and all phenomena.

## II. PASSAGES FROM EARLY UPANISHADS

(c. 800 B.C.)

(a) *Chandogya Upanishad* (iii. 19)

In the beginning this world was non-existent: (*Asad*) It began to be. It became an egg. It lay idle for a year, and then split open.

<sup>1</sup> *Hymns of the Rig-Veda*, Oxford University Press.

Of the two parts of the shell one was silver, one gold. The silver shell is Earth; the gold is Sky. The outer membrane is Mountain; the inner cloud is Mist. What were vessels are rivers. What was fluid is Ocean.

(b) *Yajñavalkya instructs Gargi*

Brihad-aranyaka (iii. 8, 9)

Verily at the command of that Unchanging One, Sun and Moon stand apart. At His Command Earth and Sky are separate. At the command of that Unchanging One, moments and hours, days and nights, seasons and years are separate. At His Command some rivers flow east from the high mountains, some west. He is the Unseen Seer; the Unheard Hearer; the Unthought Thinker; the Unapprehended Apprehender. Other than Him is naught, seer or hearer or thinker or apprehender. From this Unchanging is space woven as warp on woof.

(c) *Ibid.* (ii. 4)

As, when a drum is being beaten, one would not be able to grasp the external sounds, but by grasping the drum or the beater of the drum the sound is grasped:

As, when a conch-shell is being blown, one would not be able to grasp external sounds, but by grasping the conch-shell or the blower of the conch-shell the sound is grasped:

As, when a lute is being played, one would not be able to grasp the external sounds, but grasping the lute or the player of the lute the sound is grasped:

So by comprehending Atman or Brahman, everything is comprehended.

(d) *From a late Upanishad, The Svetasvatara*

*'Invisible we view Thee.'*

Beyond the darkness I know Him the great Spirit, shining in the sun:  
Knowing Him is immortality: that only is the Path by which men  
escape Death:

Naught is there so high, so intangible, so powerful:

As a tree He standeth in the heavens firmly rooted:

His spirit filleth all the universe.

Without form, sorrowless is the Most High:

Knowing this man escapeth Death; knowing it not he cometh  
utterly to grief.

Pervading all things He dwelleth within; He the Lord whose

Countenance is in all places, the gracious One whose Presence is everywhere.

Within the heart, as the heart and mind conceive Him, dwelleth He in the inward Soul of all.

To know this is Immortality. . . .

Himself void of sensation, He revealeth Himself in all

Senses, Lord of all, of all Ruler and Refuge. . . .

Handless He holdeth, footless He speedeth:

Eyeless seeth He, earless He heareth. Knowing all

Himself unknown: yet known of man as the First, the great Spirit. . . .

Yes I know Him ageless ancient of days,

All-soul pervading all things, birthless, eternal.

*(e) Practical Precepts to a Student*

Having taught the Veda, a teacher further instructs a pupil:

Speak the truth,

Practise Virtue,

Neglect not study:

One should not be negligent of truth;

One should not be negligent of virtue;

One should not be negligent of welfare;

One should not be negligent of prosperity;

One should not be negligent of study and teaching.

One should not be negligent of duties to the gods and to the fathers:

Be one to whom a father is as a god;

Be one to whom a mother is as a god;

Be one to whom a teacher is as a god;

Be one to whom a guest is as a god.

Those acts which are irreproachable, and no others, should be practised.

Those things which among us are good deeds should be revered by you, and no others.

One should give with faith;

One should not give meagrely;

One should not give without modesty;

One should not give without respect;

One should not give without sympathy.

Taittiriya Upanishad.

## III. FROM THE ATHARVA-VEDA

*A Charm for Luck*

Oh dice, give play that profit brings,  
 Like cows that yield abundant milk:  
 Attach me to a streak of gain,  
 As with a string the bow is bound.

Translated by Arthur A. Macdonell.

IV. FROM THE AITAREYA BRAHMANA  
about 600 B.C.*On the Importance of having a Son*

In him a father pays a debt  
 And reaches immortality,  
 When he beholds the countenance  
 Of a son born to him alive.

Than all the joy which living things  
 In waters feel, in earth and fire,  
 The happiness that in his son  
 A father feels is greater far.

At all times fathers by a son  
 Much darkness, too, have passed beyond:  
 In him the father's self is born,  
 He wafts him to the other shore.

Food is man's life and clothes afford protection,  
 Gold gives him beauty, marriages bring cattle;  
 His wife's a friend, his daughter gets him pity:  
 A son is like a light in highest heaven.

Translated by Arthur A. Macdonell.

## TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

About 1500-600 B.C.

<i>External Events</i>	<i>Indian History</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Literature</i>
Akhnaton's Reforms. Israel in Egypt. Exodus, c. 1300.	Aryans immigrate:  into Punjab.	Gradual formation of Triple Priesthood.	Gradual forma- tion of the Ritual Hymns: Com- pilation of Rig- Veda.
Moses and the Judges.			Compilation of Sama-Veda
The Trojan War.		Rise of priestly education.	(Chants). Compilation of Yajur-Veda (Chants).
Hebrew Poetry and Prophecy begin.			
David in Israel, c. 1000.	into Kurukshetra.	Theory of Four Castes.	Compilation of Atharva-Veda (Incantations).
The <i>Iliad</i> composed.		Priestly supremacy.	The Brahmanas. (Ceremonial Treatises).
Elijah the Prophet, 9th century.	into the Mid-Land.		Aranyakas and Upanishads (Works of my- sticism and speculation).
Roman Beginnings. The Avesta.			The earliest of these are pre- Buddhist.
Isaiah, 700.		Laymen emerge as speculative thinkers.	
Zarathustra in Iran.	Rise of Hermits and Friars. -		

## II

# SAKYAMUNI THE BUDDHA, INDIA'S GREATEST SON

(563-483 B.C.)

One thing only do I teach, O Monks: Sorrow and its extinction. . . .

SAKYAMUNI.

I lay no wood, Brahmin, for altar-fires: within the self burn the fires I kindle.

Ibid.

### I

THE first clear-cut figure in Indian history is also the greatest. The foot-hills of the Himalayas, where he was born, are thickly clothed with jungle. Gradually as the paths wind upward the tropical growth gives place to mighty cedars and deodars, and beyond these tower, range upon range, the snowy peaks of Himalaya. Often hidden in clouds, they are on a clear day a stupendous spectacle, and above them all soar Everest and Kanchinjunga.

Such is the grand figure of Sakyamuni. Suddenly out of the jungle and the mists of early Indian history, and towering above the great rishis, or seers, of her first religious visions, this stupendous figure soars serene, clear-cut, and majestic.

This is a simile for him which his followers love to use:

As men gaze at its towering peaks and judge Himalaya,  
So when they see the Buddha, Peak of Righteousness,  
Serene, unmoved by passion's stormy blast  
Tower aloft in wondrous calm and peace,  
Where evil dies, and lust can breathe no more,  
'High as Himalaya the Hero and his Word'

They cry: 'How great his power to redeem from ill.'<sup>1</sup>

Or they liken him to some lordly elephant, the type of solitude and of chastity; or to the Indian lotus, unsoiled by the mud, unwetted by the water in which it grows:

Lo! As some mighty elephant superb  
Amidst Himalayan forest-trees, he goes;

<sup>1</sup> Milinda Pañha, 346: a work of about A.D. 100.



## SAKYAMUNI THE BUDDHA,

So rapt in contemplation, breathing deep,  
 And calm in body as in mind serene.  
 As some pure lotus bloometh undefiled,  
 So liveth he, the Uncontaminate.<sup>1</sup>

These are fit symbols. The Himalayas, the elephant, and the lotus are the constant inspiration of Indian literature and art. The Himalayas are the abode of the High Gods, the sources of India's mighty rivers, themselves deified, the great natural barrier against her foes, the symbol of the high and holy. The lotus is a common Indian symbol alike for the awakened mind and the pure life.

From earliest times, too, her people have understood the capture and the mastery of elephants; their martial strength as well as the labour of their foresters and builders and the pageantry and sport of their kings depended upon this art.

To Sakyamuni these figures were early applied, and it is evident that they were not enough: very early sects call him Elder Brother, Good Physician, and Conqueror, and soon the claim was made that he had ousted even the great Brahma from his throne, and was 'God over the gods'.

The secret of this growing adoration is to be found in his insight, sincerity, and kindness. To all alike he had a message of strenuous endeavour and a gospel of salvation. Buddhism was from the first both ethic and religion, for the Founder, having had a great mystical experience, believed that by way of moral living man can arrive at transcendental rapture. Men are of various temperaments and abilities; to each he adapted his teaching and that of his predecessors. To those ready for the heights of mysticism he offered The Eightfold Path—which begins in right ideas, and goes on to ecstatic and rapt contemplation. Brahmins and other religious leaders began to join his yellow-robed company, which has become widespread and influential. To others he offered a way of part-time devotion: to morality of a simple kind he calls the laity:

<sup>1</sup> Theragatha, ccxlvii.

the occasional keeping of holy days and occasional mild asceticism.

What the new teacher had to say was already in germ in the Upanishads. With them he insists that the man of pure life is on the road to salvation from rebirth. With them he holds out the promise of rebirth in a heavenly world to the good householder who cannot detach himself from the duties of his station. With them he offers to all moral ideals suited to their attainments and position. He, too, sees Trishna—Desire—as the great enemy, and detachment as the spirit in which it may be overcome. But he makes more of Ahimsa and allows no animal sacrifices, and he lays great emphasis on Compassion, Karuna, and on Love, Metta. 'All other ways are not worth a fraction of the way of Love', says one early anthology, the Itivuttaka—an analogue of the Sermon on the Mount or of the Analects of Confucius—sayings of the Master collected by disciples. These all made much of Love. And if there are warnings against affection—Pema, in such Buddhist texts as the Dhammapada (an analogue of *The Imitation of Christ*) these may well be monastic notes of the more stoical monks of a later day. Certainly Sakyamuni fulfilled his own ideal of 'Benevolence to all, attachment to none'. What higher ideal is there for a schoolmaster? And from these anthologies we can at least gather the impression of his spirit and the general purport of his teachings. If we cannot reconstruct the Sakyamuni of the sixth century B.C. we can gain a consistent idea of his message. For each caste as for each individual he has wise and revolutionary words.

To his own Kshatriyas he says, 'Be kind: oppress none. All love their lives.'

To priests he says, 'Better is the life of morality than many sacrifices. He is the true Brahmin who leads a pure life.'

To the ascetic he says, 'Better than matted hair and ashes are truth and discipline.'

He condemns austerity, but approves askesis: the body and the spirit alike must be as a well-strung bow or a well-

tuned lyre. And to all alike he offers a sane Middle Path, and preaches it in the vernacular and in homely parables.

To us nurtured in a more compassionate tradition there is at first acquaintance something ruthless about the realism of Sakyamuni as he applies the water of common sense to the fire of emotion. A young mother weeping for her child is bade 'Go gather mustard seed—but gather it at a house which death has not visited': and in the discovery that sorrow is universal she finds comfort. There is something starkly humanist, too, in Sakyamuni's impatience with religious observances. When he sees a young layman over-scrupulous in genuflexions to the four quarters, he adapts the Upanishadic text which says that parents, teachers, wife, and child are to be the objects of devotion.<sup>1</sup> In such insistence on the human values Sakyamuni reminds us of Jesus, and in a certain homely humour and irony, of Socrates. All are practical physicians of the soul—laymen daring to do the work of professionals, heretics who are to be the corner-stones of new temples of humanity. To one persistent and too-speculative inquirer as to origins the Indian teacher says that in a sick world men must not question the doctor. If the patient insists on asking too many questions, 'he will die before the doctor can do his work'. As by Jesus and Socrates such rebukes were given with a smile; and for fifty years this kindly ministry went on—as he passed from jungle to village and from village to court, calling men to choose the True Way, and quizzing them with kindly irony.

Sakyamuni is in many things a physician of sick souls, but he is also a surgeon, using the knife when it is needed with precision and firmness. May we not say he is physician but not metaphysician, moral reformer but not moralist? After seeking out the orthodox he found his own Way, and as I have said elsewhere<sup>2</sup> 'it is not difficult to picture the young teacher whose story has been so often

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 26(e).

<sup>2</sup> I have tried to retell it in a biographical sketch *Gotama Buddha*, and this passage is from *Epochs of Buddhist History*, ch. i, Chicago Univ. Press.

told. Lonely at first, subject to periods of depression at the stupidity and inertia of those about him, repelled as he ate the first meal of scraps thrown into his begging-bowl, but gathering courage and inspiration as disciples began to attach themselves to him, and to help him formulate the rules of a new religious democracy. We may think of them in peaceful retreat upon these hills gazing down upon the fertile plains of the Ganges Valley, or gathered about him on the bare Peak of the Vulture that rose clear above the wooded hills, and pouring out in that serene air a paean of thanksgiving and joy in their new-found liberty of mind and peace of soul:

As swans who soar in tracks of sunlit air,  
As sorcerers in realms of space are free;  
So does the sage win through to mastery  
Of Mara, and the transient world's despair.

In order to give them this liberty, however, the new teacher first convinced them of the universality of law. Before they could be free in the universe they must realize that it was lawful to the core. This was a truth already accepted in theory, but men were ignoring it in practice. Amongst the first of his converts were two Brahmins, Moggallana and Sariputta, and from the story of their conversion we gather how large a part the mind played in the new Way, and how central in it was the doctrine of Causality, which has been well called its keynote.<sup>1</sup> These men had been companions and fellow seekers in the religious life. Like their fellow Hindus they were familiar with such teaching: accepting the axioms that life is evil and that Karma brings rebirth, they were seeking Moksha, freedom from the whole process. Meeting a Buddhist monk and struck by his calm and radiant bearing, Sariputta learned the essentials of the truth in these simple words:

Of all things springing from a cause  
The Buddha hath the causes told:  
Of how they all shall cease to be—  
This, too, our Teacher doth unfold.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. Anesaki, *Nichiren*, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Mahavagga, i. 23, B.T., pp. 87-91.

It is difficult to believe at first sight that these two learned Brahmins were so easily converted, and that this doctrine became to them and to many a real gospel. Even if they had not heard it from their own religious teachers was it a truth so emancipating? The answer seems to be twofold: first, that it is one thing to know a doctrine, another to be gripped by it, and to meet men who are radiant with it; and second, that this is what Sakyamuni achieved. . . .

Let us picture this courageous teacher with his disciples grouped about him on the Vulture Peak, or some similar height. For twenty-five centuries they have sought the mountain tops, and these are still the fastnesses of the Dhamma.<sup>1</sup> Master and disciples sit calmly meditating, and after the Indian manner they wait for him to speak. At last a smile lights up his face, and he points to where a peasant is carrying his burden of faggots down from the hill-side: 'Listen, O monks.' 'Speak, lord.' 'I will teach you the parable of the burden and its bearer, of the taking of it up, and the laying of it down.'<sup>2</sup> He then proceeds to show that the burden is bodily existence, that the bearer is the individual consciousness, that the taking up of the burden is Tanha, that it is the craving to be and to have which brings man to rebirth, and that the laying down of the burden is the putting aside of such craving. And then that they may the better remember it, he sings them a little gatha or hymn:

This body is of Khandhas made,  
'Tis man this burden bears.  
Oh! with what joy aside 'tis laid,  
'Tis taken up with tears.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dhamma is the Pali form of Dharma, Law, or Norm: Tanha is the Pali form of Trishna, Desire or Thirst: Nibbana of Nirvana; Gotama of Gautama.

<sup>2</sup> Mahavagga, i. 21, B.T., p. 351.

<sup>3</sup> Samyutta Nikaya, B.T., pp. 159-60. This little parable was not unnaturally misunderstood in later days, the Sammitiya School interpreting it to mean that man is something more than the Khandhas which make up his 'burden', see Poussin, *E.R.E.*, vol. xi, Sammitiyas—and note his endorsement of this view as 'a good and truly Buddhist one'.

And all the company, having already experienced something of the joy of laying aside this burden,<sup>1</sup> rejoice with the teacher who has shown them the way. So did Pilgrim rejoice when the load fell from his shoulders. And if it be objected that here was a poor materialistic 'gospel', the Buddhist replies: 'It is not materialistic: for of the five Khandhas, four are not material: Vedana, sensation: Sañña, perception: Vinnana, consciousness: and the Sankharas, a complex group including will.

We may imagine another typical scene in the neighbourhood of Benares. The master and a thousand disciples are seated calm and collected on Gaya Head, a hill-side near the spot where he attained enlightenment, when a fire breaks out in the jungle below; they watch it blaze, and then he begins once more to improve the occasion: 'All, O monks, is aflame: eye, ear, nose—all the organs of sense. All nature is aflame. What is the cause of this universal conflagration? It is Tanha.'<sup>2</sup> Hate, lust, infatuation—these are the flames. Then, in order that he may help them in their task of teaching a world to extinguish the blaze that is destroying it he gives them a new and different chant, a dirge that still resounds mournfully in ten thousand monasteries:

Sabba dukkha,  
Sabba anatta,  
Sabba anicca.

Sorrow is everywhere,  
In man is no abiding entity,  
In things no abiding reality.

The conflagration, in a word, is to be extinguished by the waters of Truth. Face life as it is, sorrowful, transient, and you will no longer crave for it. If the doctrine of Causality is the keynote of the Buddhist metaphysic, the doctrine of Anatta is the unique thing in its psychology. And both doctrines are applied with an ethical purpose.

<sup>1</sup> Though still carrying the burden of bodily existence they had got rid of the intolerable obsession of rebirth and of Tanha.

<sup>2</sup> Mahavagga, i. 21, B.T., pp. 351-3.

Like Hume two thousand years later, Gotama, with remorseless logic, analyses the 'self' into its component parts. He seeks to get rid of the 'ego' of animism in order that he may get rid of the 'ego' of egoism. The self is unreal because it is compound. Analyse it, and see that it is a stream of consciousness made up of elements of sensation, of cognition, of volition, and you will realize that there is no 'soul' in the ordinary sense of a separate entity or substance, such as that which only a century ago men of science in the West were trying to weigh and to locate. Nor is there even a 'substratum' in which qualities inhere. Much less is there an Atman such as Hinduism conceived in almost physical terms, a small immutable microcosm identical with the macrocosm or Brahman. To believe that is to sacrifice moral freedom. Yet the self is real enough, because it is a manifestation of Kamma, energy or action, and it is free, in spite of the past, to direct its energies aright in the present.

Out of the seeming pessimism of this philosophy of transiency emerges a sane optimism, as is beginning to be recognized by Western writers. Buddhism insists on Dukkham, sorrow, in order that it may show men the way to Suddham, happiness: 'One thing only do I teach, O monks—sorrow and the uprooting of sorrow.' Over against the world of birth and death, of Samsara, it sets the unchanging calm of Nibbana, beyond joy and sorrow. All religions, as William James has pointed out, are alike in having as their basis (1) an uneasiness, (2) its solution. Gotama has his own solution to offer. He is a physician; if medicine is pessimistic then he is a pessimist . . . Having diagnosed the disease he goes on to prescribe for its cure.

## II

If the Buddha was physician rather than metaphysician he was mystic as well as moral reformer. But as the mystic may rationalize his experience and teach morality, so Sakyamuni has much to say which appeals to reason as







THE MONKEY-KING'S SACRIFICE



A KING'S OFFERING

ASOKAN SCULPTURE, BARHUT RAIL

well as to faith, and which closely connects ethics and religion.

Freedom—Salvation—is to be found in realization, and the path is by way of morality. Love, sympathy, detachment are cardinal virtues of the Middle Path, and a popular summary is 'to do good, to cease from evil, to cleanse the mind'.

Yet it remains true that it was his grand personality rather than any new teaching that made Buddhism a new movement and sent it on its triumphant mission. It became the vehicle for Indian culture because it was essentially Indian—an epitome of the best things in the older religions; but the impetus came from his contagious example.

It is clear that the people of his day recognized in him the realization of familiar ideals. Like others he emphasizes Karma and Samsara, like others he offers a way of salvation, and inculcates meditation, detachment and gentleness. But in other ways he was the prophet of a new day, and he fitted the claims of religion to the man of action. Like the Gita of a later date he told men to find salvation in their duty—to use their power to help men, and so to find Reality. Their admiration for him, their desire to gain merit, as well as his fame and the sanity of his teachings of the Middle Path attracted rich men and women who became patrons and lay-adherents. In our illustration we see a King who is covering a park with gold pieces to buy it for the Order; and upon it are already two Viharas or monasteries destined to become famous. The great frescoes of Ajanta were the work of painters of a later day working under royal patronage. Some indeed have inscriptions of the donors, as have many of the sculptures of Sanchi, Karli, and Barhut. Some of the great craft-guilds also became donors and patrons. One gateway is the gift of 'The Ivory Workers of Mithila', and we get many a glimpse (in the works of the third and first centuries B.C.) of the organization of these societies, and of the civilization of these early Buddhist ages.

'A great spiritual genius, smiled on by kings and nobles, beloved by the people for his kindness and sanity, supported by a great experience—the Buddha moves across the stage of Indian history. Sane, realistic, kindly if caustic at times, serene always, he embodies the Indian ideal of the Guru or Teacher, and soon people begin to acclaim him as a Chakkavatti in the realm of Spirit—an emperor with a begging bowl!'<sup>1</sup>

His first sermon, a simple and unimpassioned statement of the Middle Path, is called, 'The Turning of the Wheel'—or 'The Founding of the Empire of the Truth, or Dhamma'—and he is indeed a kingly figure, whose influence was very soon to spread far afield.

By the guidance of providence, as some would say, or by a kind of irony of history, according to others, this great Indian monk, calling men to an other-worldly peace, became the father of great secular civilizations, and of a true internationalism. The meaning of this is surely that the love which he embodied was a wine too strong for the old monastic bottles, and that the contagion of his humanity—so wise, so courteous, so serene, so gracious—has been and is the living core of his religion. His missionaries embodied it, and kings like Asoka showed on an imperial scale its power to mould a nation.

### III

That Buddhism has had a long and complex evolution is true; that at times it has incorporated too easily the crude superstitions and moral practices of the peoples whom it converted is also true. Yet whenever it has been true to itself it has been a mighty power for good; and its message to the Peace Conference at Versailles, calling men to build a new world on the basis of love, is eloquent testimony that the spirit of Sakyamuni is still with us, and still pleads in vain with most of us! The cold calm of Nibbana may not attract us, yet we may all walk along the Buddha's Middle Path of virtue and sanity; above all we shall do well to accept his teaching that all other means

<sup>1</sup> From my *Heritage of Asia*.

are not worth a fraction of the means of loving-kindness and compassion. The secret of his success is, in a word, his love. If he did not know the God of love he at any rate embodied His spirit. And when after a ministry of forty years he died in 483 B.C., he left a group of men and women filled with devotion to his person and faith in his teaching. The inspiring person of the Buddha—this is the original thing in Buddhism. His magnetism was such that men were converted in many cases long before their reasons can have been satisfied, and such was his insight into human hearts that we find him adapting his method with so sure a touch as to win the title 'Physician', and with so much love that even when he used the knife his patients loved him no less devotedly. They found in him one who was intensely interested in them, never impatient, and in whom was no respect of persons. The poor sweeper Sunita, who had seen him moving serene and majestic amongst kings and nobles, adored the courtesy with which he smiled as he greeted him, and to the humblest he gave of his best, sometimes discerning beneath rags and sores a mind ready 'as a clean and spotless robe for the dye', and only waiting for the right word to be numbered among the saints. Men respected the fearless teacher who re-defined so many of their religious and social catchwords, and who set up a new religious democracy in which worth rather than birth was the standard, and in which liberty was sanely tempered and controlled by law.

Here was a new and reasonable way, which had nothing of priestcraft and yet gave access to divine truth, which cut at the roots of religiosity, and yet kept much of the mystery and glamour of religion, which struck a sane balance between austerity and worldliness, between scepticism and credulity, and between self-culture and altruism. Here, above all, was an authentic voice speaking of the things of real experience, however ineffable, and a contagious joy, quiet yet unmistakable, amid the charlatans and sophists of the day, who told men the way to Nirvana, but without conviction or enthusiasm, and who

handed out to starving souls either husks or recipes for making bread. The followers of Sakyamuni might be compared to these in the words used by Tertullian of the early Christian Church: 'Our common people are more virtuous than your philosophers.' They either left all and followed him, accepting his simple challenge, 'Come, Friar,'<sup>1</sup> as a call to lifelong discipline, or if he did not so order it, as laymen served him and his brethren with simple and sincere devotion.

So this master of men lived among them, in the world yet not of it, 'as a fair lotus unsullied by the mud in which it grows'; so he set up a realm of righteousness and love which in his lifetime centred about him, and when he passed away claimed him as its King. The story of its growth is one of the great chapters in human history. Not least of the claims of early Buddhism to originality is its missionary spirit. Contemporary Hindu philosophy seems in comparison an arid intellectualism. The Buddha awoke it to new life; and it is chiefly owing to his personality that Indian culture began its great work of civilizing rude peoples and of imparting to ancient civilizations a new tide of spiritual beauty. Like Francis of Assisi he saw life with new and serene eyes, and Buddhism is to Brahmanism what Franciscanism is to mediæval Christianity—a simplification and a chastening, a deepening and a humanizing. For each embodies in a radiant personality the essence and the true spirit of the old Faith.

#### IV

Buddhism then was from the first not only a Middle Path between extremes: it was also a Two-fold Path. For the monk the Eight-fold Path to Nibbana—escape from Rebirth; for the layman rebirth in a better state through alms and morality. 'The monks are the harvest-field of merit' is an old saw. The laity in supporting them and in following the simple ethic of the Buddha may attain salvation.

<sup>1</sup> Bhikkhu i.e. Mendicant.

The way for the monk and nun is at once more direct and much more difficult—it is a way of mild asceticism, and of difficult practices of mystical or transcendental contemplation.

But as the lay-devotees grew in number and the monks in influence the monastery became a centre of art and learning, and there grew up great abbeys such as that of Ajanta in west India and Anuradhapura in Ceylon, and great university foundations such as Nalanda in east India and Taxila in the north-west. These flourished from about the first century of our era to the seventh, and Buddhism during this time spread its influence to China, Korea, Japan, and the Islands of the Pacific. This is the greatest epoch of Buddhism—a veritable golden age of its secular as well as its religious influence.

The Gupta renaissance in India, no less than that of T'ang in China and the awakening of Japan under Shotoku's regency, is the fruit of the seed sown by Sakya-muni in the sixth century B.C. Its carriers were in all cases monks. Before this great expansion there were two other great eras—that of Asoka (third century B.C.) when Ceylon was civilized by a Buddhist mission and that of Kanishka (first century A.D.) when the barbarians who conquered north-west India became Buddhist, and Buddhism began its long pilgrimage through the hinterland of the Himalayas.

The secular forces which helped it were the gradual unification of India as the kingdom of Magadha advanced to leadership; and a growing interest in the surrounding lands.

Buddhism itself helped both these processes, and became the vehicle for Indian culture to Indonesia, China, Korea, and Japan. In the south—in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam—it became more stoical and less sure of the technique of meditation, yet inspired kings and scholars to great efforts. In the north it became more emotional and gradually more theistic as the founder became a god, the monk a priest, and the memorial mound a temple. This Mahayana or Great Way offers an easy salvation to all—that of

the stoical elders it labels Hinayana or Narrow Way. In the south Nibbana was an ever-receding goal: in the north, Paradise was a present reality. In the south men sought more and more despairingly to imitate the Founder: in the north they rather worshipped him and other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or heavenly helpers of their aspiration.

## THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM

### I. WHAT IS TAUGHT AND WHAT IS WITHHELD

Once the Exalted One was staying at Kosambi, in Simsapa Grove. Then the Exalted One, taking up a handful of simsapa leaves, said to the brethren:

‘Now what think ye, brethren? Which are more, these few simsapa leaves that I hold in my hand, or those that are in the simsapa grove above?’

‘Few in number, Lord, are those simsapa leaves that are in the hand of the Exalted One: far more in number are those in the simsapa grove above.’

‘Just so, brethren, those things that I know by my super-knowledge, but have not revealed, are greater by far in number than those things that I have revealed. And why, brethren, have I not revealed them?’

‘Because, brethren, they do not conduce to profit, are not concerned with the holy life, they do not tend to repulsion, to cessation, to calm, to the super-knowledge, to the perfect wisdom, to Nibbana. That is why I have not revealed them.’

‘Then what, brethren, have I revealed? That This is Ill, brethren, has been revealed by me: that This is the arising of Ill: that This is the ceasing of Ill: that This is the approach to the ceasing of Ill. And why have I so revealed it? Because, brethren, it conduces to profit — to Nibbana.’

‘Wherefore, brethren, do ye exert yourselves to realize “This is Ill, this is the arising of Ill, this is the ceasing of Ill, this is the approach to the ceasing of Ill”.’

Samyutta Nikaya, v.

### II. THE NOBLE EIGHT-FOLD PATH TO NIBBANA

- |   |   |                          |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Right Understanding,<br/>Sammaditthi</li> <li>2. Right Mindedness,<br/>Sammasankappo</li> </ol> | } | I. Pañña, Enlightenment. |
|---|---|--------------------------|

- |   |   |                              |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| 3. Right Speech,<br>Sammavaca           | } | II. Sila, Morality.          |
| 4. Right Action,<br>Sammakammanto       |   |                              |
| 5. Right Living,<br>Samma-ajivo         |   |                              |
| 6. Right Effort,<br>Sammavayamo         | } | III. Samadhi, Concentration. |
| 7. Right Attentiveness,<br>Sammāsati    |   |                              |
| 8. Right Concentration,<br>Sammāsamadhi |   |                              |

### III. THE DEATH OF SAKYAMUNI

Then the Lord addressed the venerable Ananda: 'Let us go hence, Ananda, to the further bank of the river Hiravivati, to the town of Kusinara, and to the sandal-grove of the Mallas.' The venerable Ananda assented; and the Lord with a large company of monks set out and drew near to the sandal-grove. And having drawn near, he addressed the venerable Ananda, saying: 'I am weary, Ananda, and would lie down. Make me, then, a bed, I pray thee, between two sandal-trees with its head to the north.' So the venerable Ananda, assenting, did so; and the Lord lay down in the lion-posture on his right side, and placing foot upon foot, lay there with mind attentive and aware.

Now at this time the two sandal-trees were in full bloom, though it was not the flowering-season; and the blossoms scattered themselves upon the body of the Blessed One in worship. And divine Erythrina blossoms fell from the sky, and strewed themselves upon the Blessed One in worship. And music sounded in the heavens in his praise, and heavenly choirs adored him.

Then the Lord spoke to the venerable Ananda, saying: 'It is not by all this, O Ananda, that the Lord is honoured, revered, and worshipped. But the monk or nun or the lay-disciple who fulfils the duties of religion with propriety and obedience to the precepts—by them is the Lord revered and worshipped with acceptable worship. Train yourselves, O Ananda; observe the precepts, and do the duties of religion.'

Now the venerable Upavana stood before the Lord fanning him. And the Lord spake harshly to him: 'Stand aside, monk! Out of my



way!' And Ananda reflected: 'This venerable Upavana has been the servant of the Lord, waiting at his beck and call these many years. Yet the Lord in his dying moments is harsh with him: why is it so?' So he asked the Lord why he spoke thus to Upavana, and the Lord made answer: 'Almost all the gods of the ten worlds, Ananda, have assembled to see me. For twelve leagues about us there is not a spot as big as the point of a hair that is not thronged with these mighty ones. And they are angry, Ananda, saying: "Far have we journeyed to behold the Lord: for seldom does a Lord, a Holy One, a Buddha Supreme, appear. And now in the last watch of the night will the Lord pass into Nirvana, and this robust monk stands before the Lord and hides him from us." It is thus, Ananda, that gods are angered.'

'What are the gods doing, Lord?' 'Some of them, Ananda, with mind set on earthly things, are tearing their hair and screaming; they fall headlong to the ground and roll in agony, saying: "Too soon, too soon will the Lord, the Beatific One, pass into Nirvana. Too soon will the Eye of the World pass out of sight." But there are some gods who are free from attachment, aware and mindful. These endure patiently, saying, "Fleeting are all things. What is born must die".'

Then the venerable Ananda entered the Vihara, and leaning against the doorpost, he wept, crying: 'Behold, I am but a beginner, not yet enlightened. And my Teacher who was so kind to me is about to pass into Nirvana.' Then the Lord called the monks: 'Where, monks, is Ananda?' And they told him; and he sent one of them saying: 'Go, tell the venerable Ananda that the Teacher calleth him.' And when Ananda drew near, and had greeted the Blessed One, he sat reverently beside him, and the Lord spake, saying: 'Come, come, Ananda. Weep no more. Have I not told you many times that it is in the nature of all things near and dear to us that we must leave them, and tear ourselves away? How can it be, Ananda, that what is by nature passing should not pass? It cannot be. Long, O Ananda, hast thou been very close to me in acts of constant love, cheerful, single-hearted, unsparing in service of body and spirit. Great merit hast thou gotten, Ananda. Be zealous, and thou too shalt be free from evil. . . .' And the venerable Ananda, after he had been praised by the Blessed One, addressed him, saying: 'Sir, it is not fitting that thou, the Blessed One, should'st pass into Nirvana here in this jungle-village of mud and wattle. There are great cities, sir, like Champa, Rajagaha, Savatthi, Saketa, Kosambi,

and Kasi. Let the Lord enter Nirvana in one of these. For there are in all of them many rich Ksatriyas, Brahmins, and Merchants who are loyal followers of the Blessed One, and they will see to the last rites.' 'Say not so, Ananda. . . . This city Kusinara was once the capital of Sudassana, the great Emperor, a righteous King, victor of the four quarters of the earth, ruling in security, owning the Seven Precious Jewels. . . . Neither by day nor night was the capital without the sounds of elephants and horses, of chariots, of drums, of pipes and lutes, of song and cymbals and gongs, and the voice of the people crying, "Eat ye and drink!" Go then, Ananda, to Kusinara, and say to the Mallas: "To-night in the last watch the Blessed One enters Nirvana. Be favourable, lest ye suffer remorse that the Blessed One should pass into Nirvana in your borders, and ye did not seize the chance to be present".'

So the venerable Ananda, taking bowl and robes, went with another monk to Kusinara; and the Mallas were met together in their Moot-hall. And he came to them and told them his tidings.

And they and their children and their wives were overcome with grief. . . . And they drew near to the sandal-tree grove; and Ananda, thinking, 'Let me marshal the Mallas by families to reverence the Lord,' brought them before him before the first watch of the night was ended.

And at that time the wandering friar Subhadda dwelt at Kusinara; and hearing it said, 'To-night Gotama the Solitary will enter Nirvana,' he thought, 'I have heard it said by friars who were old teachers of teachers that seldom does a Lord, a Holy One, a Buddha Supreme appear among men. To-night in the last watch Gotama the Solitary will enter Nirvana. I have a question in my mind, and I believe that he can teach me and ease my doubt.' Then he came to the sandal-tree grove, and asked the venerable Ananda if he might see Gotama the Solitary. 'Enough, brother Subhadda; trouble not the Lord. He is weary,' said Ananda. And when this had happened three times the Blessed One chanced to hear them speaking, and called to the venerable Ananda: 'Come, Ananda, hinder him not, but let Subhadda see me. Whatsoever he shall ask me will be not to trouble me, but to learn. He will soon understand my answers.' So the venerable Ananda said: 'Come, brother Subhadda; the Lord grants you an audience.' So the friar came, and greeted the Blessed One, and sat reverently by him and asked him: 'O Gotama, tell me of those monks and Brahmins who are renowned

leaders and esteemed by the multitude—have they done as they say and found Truth?’ ‘Enough, Subhadda. Let us not ask this question. I will teach you the True Doctrine. Do you listen attentively,’ said the Lord.

Then he spoke these words: ‘In whatsoever doctrine and discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, there is not found the true monk of whatever degree. In whatsoever doctrine and discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is found, there too is found the true monk. In my doctrine and discipline is found the Noble Eightfold Path, and here alone the true monk. All other ways have no true monks. But let these my monks live aright, and the world will not lack saints. . . .’ Then Subhadda spoke, saying: ‘Wonderful, wonderful! It is, O reverend sir, as though that which was overthrown were set up, that which was hidden were revealed; as though the lost traveller found his way, as though a lamp were lighted in a dark place. So has the Blessed One set forth his teaching in divers ways. To him go I for refuge, to his teaching, and to the company of his monks. Allow me to receive ordination, Lord.’

‘Whoso, Subhadda, has belonged to another sect, and desires to be ordained according to my doctrine and discipline must spend four months as a probationer: after that zealous monks ordain him, and receive him into the Order. But in this matter of probation we recognize that some are worthier than others.’ ‘I am ready, sir, to spend four years as a probationer.’ ‘Then, Ananda, let Subhadda be received into the Order.’ Then Subhadda cried, ‘Great is thy good fortune, brother Ananda! Fortunate are you above men, all you that have received the sprinkling of discipleship from the Teacher himself.’ So he retired from the world, and received ordination as a monk of the Blessed One, and straightway began to live solitary and retired, watchful and full of zeal. And in no long time he came in this life to realize and to possess that Highest Good to which the Holy Life leads. Then he knew that for him there would be no rebirth, that he had lived the Holy Life, had done what must be done, and was no more for this world. And he was the last disciple made by the Blessed One himself. . . .

Then the Lord addressed the venerable Ananda: ‘Maybe, Ananda, some of you will think, “The Word of the Teacher is no more: we have no Teacher.” Think not so, Ananda. Your Teacher when I am gone is to be the Doctrine and Discipline. . . .’ Then the Lord addressed the monks: ‘Maybe, O monks, one of you has a doubt or difficulty regarding the Buddha or Doctrine or Order or

Path. Ask now, O monks, that afterwards ye feel no remorse, thinking, "Our Teacher was with us, and we failed to ask him". And this he said a second and a third time, and all remained silent. . . . And the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One: 'Wonderful sir, marvellous indeed it is! In all this company, I verily believe, not one has a doubt or a difficulty regarding the Buddha, the Doctrine, the Order, the Path or the Way of Conduct!'

'With thee, Ananda, it is a matter of faith. But with me it is a matter of knowledge. For of all these five hundred monks the most backward has entered the Path; he will not be reborn, but is destined to Buddhahood.'

Then the Blessed One said to the monks: 'And now, O monks, I bid you farewell. All that is is fleeting. Be diligent and win salvation.' This was the last word of the Blessed One.

(Maha-parinibbana-Sutta, v and vi.)

#### IV. THE SPIRIT OF THE ORDER

O Joy! We live in bliss: amongst men of hate, hating none.  
Let us indeed dwell among them without hatred.

O Joy! In bliss we dwell; healthy amidst the ailing. Let us indeed dwell amongst them in perfect health.

Yea in very bliss we dwell: free from care amidst the careworn.  
Let us indeed dwell amongst them without care.

In bliss we dwell possessing nothing: let us dwell feeding upon joy like the shining ones in their splendour.

The victor breeds enmity; the conquered sleeps in sorrow.  
Regardless of either victory or defeat the calm man dwells in peace.

There is no fire like lust; no luck so bad as hate. There is no sorrow like existence: no bliss greater than Nirvana (rest).

Hunger is the greatest ill: existence is the greatest sorrow. Sure knowledge of this is Nirvana, highest bliss.

Health is the greatest boon; content is the greatest wealth; a loyal friend is the truest kinsman; Nirvana is the Supreme Bliss.

Having tasted the joy of solitude and of serenity, a man is freed from sorrow and from sin, and tastes the nectar of piety.

Good is the vision of the Noble; good is their company. He may be always happy who escapes the sight of fools.

He who consorts with fools knows lasting grief. Grievous is the company of fools, as that of enemies; glad is the company of the wise, as that of kinsfolk.

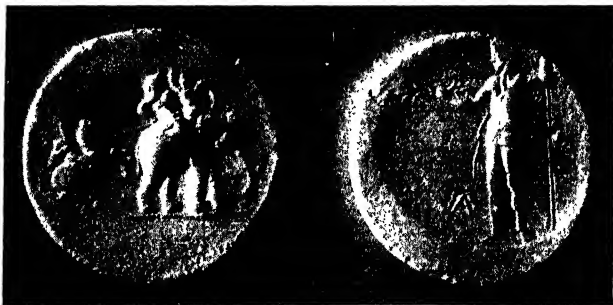
Therefore do thou consort with the wise, the sage, the learned, the noble ones who shun not the yoke of duty: follow in the wake of such a one, the wise and prudent, as the moon follows the path of the stars.

(From *The Buddha's Way of Virtue*,  
ed. by K. J. Saunders and W. D. C. Wagiswara.)





AN ASOKAN CAPITAL



POROS AND ALEXANDER

### III

## ASOKA AND HIS HOUSE

'Greatest of gifts is the Law of Piety.' ASOKAN INSCRIPTION.

### I

INDIA is now to reap the fruits of the Buddha's sowing, and to be quickened by the touch of Hellenism to new life. We read in Herodotus that 'Cyrus in person brought the upper regions of Asia under the yoke'; and we know that he advanced as far as Balkh, the ancient capital of Bactria—a key to the passes of India as to the great trade-routes of China. Xenophon tells us that 'he conquered both Bactrians and Indians' and that an embassy came to this Great King from India. Megasthenes and the writers who quote him are agreed that none before Alexander the Great successfully invaded India, but it is certain that whether Cyrus succeeded or not, Darius subjugated a large part of the Punjab and all Sind, and Persian influences were both widespread and profound for centuries in India, as its art and architecture remain to prove. Very few 'darics'—the gold coins of Persia—have been found in India, but Greek coins and medals abound—those of Alexander and his satraps, and in them Persia exerts a great and lasting influence on India.

Most interesting is the unique medal struck by Alexander in India to commemorate his victory. It shows us the noble Indian Raja Poros, seated on his elephant and thrusting back at Taxiles, the ambassador of Alexander, who has followed him on horseback with the offer of a satrapy. The scene is vividly described by the Greek historian of Alexander's invasion, and the reverse of the medal shows us the great conqueror himself, holding in one hand a spear and in the other what appears to be a thunderbolt. If so he is posing as Zeus; and we know that he was fond of 'playing the god'. But that he kept his sense of humour is proved by this medal, which



commemorates the courage of the lion-hearted Paurava in defying him, and reveals the magnanimous spirit of the great conqueror who treated a fallen foe 'as a king'. Alexander, a pupil of Aristotle, also sought acquaintance with Brahmins. To one Dandamis he sent an imperious summons; only to be reminded that he was not God, that a sage had no use for anything Alexander could offer, and that a Brahmin had no fear of death: 'Dandamis hath need of nothing from thee; come thou to him if thou hast need of wisdom.' Here the ancient East speaks, conscious of power. It is clear that if India had been united under such a leader as Poros even Alexander could have done little against her. As it was, he might well have pushed the victory to her eastern shores. Under his superb leadership, a united and powerful army faced the divided Indian forces. Their chariots and elephants were opposed by the sturdy spearmen of Macedonia, and the skilled cavalry of Greece, backed by mercenaries, Thracians, and others used to guerrilla warfare, Bactrians and tribesmen of the Hindu Kush, mounted archers and slingers. With them marched the Indians of Taxila, eager to break the power of Poros, and of the kingdoms of the south. What could a divided India do against this seasoned and united force?

The brilliant soldier Sandrakottos or Chandragupta, who finally thrust back the Greek successors of Alexander, himself declared that had Alexander pushed forward into the Ganges Valley, nothing could have stopped him. Of this great adventurer, we know enough to help us understand his amazing success in doing what Alexander failed to do. The time was ripe for an Indian leader to unite the kingdom of Magadha, and to thrust out the invaders. With better fortune Poros might have done these greater deeds. As it is, he achieved undying fame, and Alexander's magnanimity has helped to shed lustre on a brave foe. Poros is an admirable figure; brave, independent, loyal, and kingly. Plutarch tells us in his *Life of Alexander* that his faithful elephant, having protected him through the battle, knelt and drew out the arrows with which he was

pierced, before he fled with him to safety. We hear also of the death in this battle of Bucephalus, Alexander's own great war-horse, after whom he named the next city which he founded.

The Greek writers tell us little else of the Indian king, who seems to have been chosen for his beauty and strength according to an old custom in the Land of the Five Rivers. His name Paurava means ruler of the Purus. They were an old and powerful people, of whom we hear in the dim dawn of Indian history, and they were later merged in the Kauravas, whose war with the Pandavas is the central theme of the Great Epic or Mahabharata. India was indeed for very long the battle-field of warring kings and clans, and as the Greeks tell us, even Poros with his wide realm and his powerful personality had jealous enemies like the King of Taxila on the north-west frontier, and others on his southern and eastern borders.

Poros remained for a time to enjoy the throne restored to him by Alexander, but he was foully done to death by another satrap, Eudemos. His strong hand being removed, the tribes revolted, and gave Chandragupta his chance. With him there comes on to the Indian stage a man of genius, able to weld together its scattered peoples and to fulfil the old Indian dream of a Chakkravarti, or universal emperor.

## II

There are two main theories of kingship in ancient India; one is that the king is of divine origin, created for the protection of the world, and himself called 'Deva', God or Shining One. Manu, the later codifier of Indian law, thus expresses this theory: 'Having taken immortal particles from Indra (god of battles and of thunder) from Vayu (the wind god), from Yama (lord of hell), from Sun and Moon, from Fire and Water, Brahma the creator made therefrom the King to protect the world. Therefore he surpasses all in brightness.' This is a very old idea floating in Indian tradition long before Manu's time.

Allied to it was the belief, long prevalent in India and

Ceylon, that the king was of solar origin—a dogma still taught to every child in Japan. The symbol of the king's power, the Wheel or Cakkra, is the Sun-god's Chariot-wheel; and Alexander was unconsciously realizing an Indian ideal when he played the god, and claimed the empire as Zeus, 'god over gods'.

Lest we should smile at these far-off beliefs we may remind ourselves of his most Catholic Majesty James II, who solemnly told his Parliament at the end of the seventeenth century, 'Kings are justly called gods. . . . They make and unmake their subjects. . . . Have power of life and death, and . . . are accountable to none but God.'

The idea of a 'social contract' never penetrated the thick skulls of the Stuarts, though Cromwell did his best upon them! But it was very early a theory in India. In the Arthasastra we read 'The people suffering from anarchy, when as the proverb says the large fish swallow the small ones, elected Manu to rule over them, and set aside one-sixth of their farm produce and one-tenth of their merchandise as royal dues. In return for this pay Kings assumed the duty of protecting their subjects, and became answerable for their sins.'<sup>1</sup>

The same authority tells us of the still nobler Indian ideal that 'the King should find his religion in promptness of action, that the discharge of his duty is a religious sacrifice, and that readiness to attend to all alike is his consecration'. This amazing book, a strange mixture of high ideals, of Machiavellian subtlety and of childish superstition, goes on to use words which Queen Victoria herself seems to have quoted in assuming responsibility as Empress of India: 'In the happiness of his subjects lies the King's happiness, in their welfare his welfare. Not his pleasure but theirs shall he consider. Ever active shall he be in the discharge of duty, for in activity lies the root of well-being.'

We are not surprised therefore to find in a Buddhist book that the king disclaims power over his subjects,

<sup>1</sup> Kautilya's Arthasastra, I. xiii.

unless they are rebellious and evil; 'I am not their Lord and Master,' he says, and we shall see the great Asoka claiming to be the Father of his people. It is an ideal found before him, but best realized in his example.

Chandragupta did not reach these heights. In the first place he had to seize the power and to consolidate the Empire which his grandson enjoyed, and in the second place he seems to have made full use of the unscrupulous but astute Brahmin who is believed to have been the author of the Arthasastra. This remarkable man, Chanakya, or Kautilya, is credited with the overthrow of the Nanda Dynasty and with being the constant adviser and inspirer of Chandragupta. While this cannot be regarded as history, it is a very early tradition, and appears as a prophecy in the Vishnu Purana, clearly written after the event, but embodying early tradition. If we take another glance at the Arthasastra we shall see that there are contained in it just those ideas of ruthless ambition and clever diplomacy which an adventurer would need in seizing the throne. He is advised to employ spies freely, to keep an especially close eye upon his ministers, and to test their loyalty. He is equally to keep watch upon the young princes, 'for princes, like crabs, are noted for their tendency to devour their begetter'.<sup>1</sup>

There are several ways by which neighbouring States can be won over, or their loyalty undermined.

Whoever, among the neighbouring kings, seems to threaten with an invasion, may be invited for some festival, marriage, capture of elephants, purchase of horses, or of merchandise, or to take possession of some lands ceded to him, and captured; or such an enemy may be kept at bay by an ally till an agreement of not condemnable nature is made with him; or he may be made to incur the displeasure of wild tribes or of his enemies, or whoever among his nearest relatives is kept under guard may be promised a portion of his territory, and set against him.<sup>2</sup>

If the Arthasastra is the ladder by which the ambitious Chandragupta climbed to empire, it is also apparently the

<sup>1</sup> Arthasastra, I. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., II. ii.

lamp by which Asoka read his first lessons in kingship. It lays down the royal duty to care for orphans, the aged, the afflicted, and the helpless;<sup>1</sup> it emphasizes the fundamental importance of economic progress;<sup>2</sup> and it gives in outline the duties of the officials of the empire, and in detail the heavy duties of the king's day.<sup>3</sup>

Study of this book makes it clear that it was not only the monks of the Yellow Robe to whom Asoka was indebted for guidance, and their chronicles must be read with caution. They are anxious to connect Chandragupta with the clan to which the Buddha himself belonged. They tell us that he was the son of a local raja in one of the countries of the foot-hills of the Himalayas, which abounded in peacocks. This is a characteristic piece of etymology, the word for peacock being *Mora*; and this became the emblem of the Maurya house which Chandragupta founded. Other legends make him the bastard son of Nanda, whom he thrust from the throne of Magadha in 315 B.C., and all are agreed that the Brahmin Chanakya helped him in this unnatural deed. One legend gives as the motive an old and bitter insult which Nanda had unwisely inflicted upon the Brahmin. Another, with more show of reason, makes Chanakya the leader of a Brahmin rebellion against the growing power of the warrior-caste, and the pride of its kings. In any case, it seems clear that Chandragupta had to wait long for success, that he was an exile in the Punjab, and that he won the throne by a bold invasion at the head of an army of adventurers. There may be truth, too, in the story that he met Alexander in person; it is possible that from him or from Poros he took lessons in strategy.

He made of the capital Pataliputra a mighty city, which according to Megasthenes 'stretched in the inhabited parts of it about nine miles on each side, had a breadth of a mile and a half, and was the shape of a parallelogram. It was girt with a moat 600 feet in breadth, into which the sewage of the city flowed. Within this was a massive

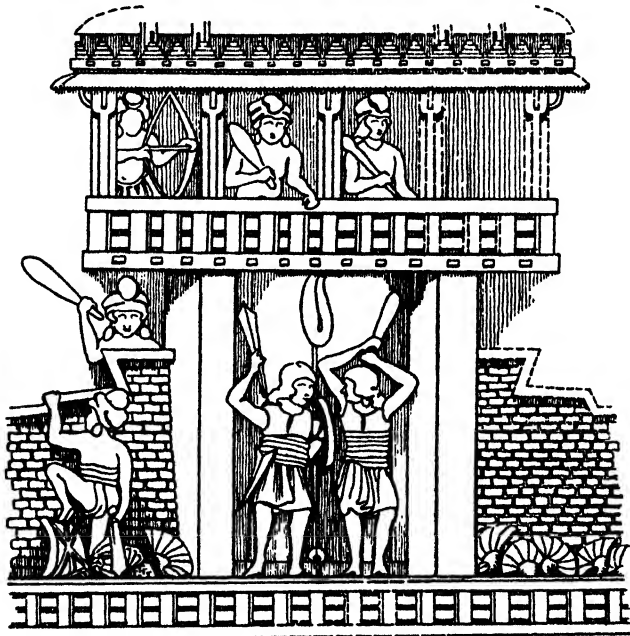
<sup>1</sup> *Arthashastra*, II. i.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I. vii.

palisade of timber with loop-holes for archery, and with 570 towers and 64 gates.'

Recent excavation has discovered parts of this massive woodwork showing remarkable skill in carpentry, and our



A City Gate. From a relief at Sanchi.

illustration shows a typical fortified city of the Maurya period combining brickwork below with wooden turrets above, from which archers are seen shooting their arrows at the enemy who were mounted upon elephants and chariots. The Emperor we are told was able to put a great army in the field, 600,000 infantry, 300,000 cavalry, and a great company of chariots.

The Greeks were chiefly impressed with his splendid force of 9,000 elephants. These play a great part in contemporary art, and no nation has rivalled the Indians in their mastery or in their portrayal. What could be more life-like and at the same time more decorative than the

great processions of these lordly beasts on the architraves of the Sanchi Gateways, or on the frescoed walls of the Ajanta and Bagh caves? When the Greeks made their half-hearted attempt to recover the provinces ceded to Chandragupta he had little difficulty in buying them off with a bribe of 500 elephants. Legend has it that their alliance was cemented by a marriage between the Emperor and a Greek Princess, following the example of Alexander and the fair Roxana.

By about 305 B.C. Chandragupta was firmly seated upon the throne of a great empire, which reached beyond the Hindu Kush on the north and into Afghanistan on the north-west. He seems to have had viceroys at important centres such as Taxila and Ujjain, where later his grandson Asoka got his training in government. It was a period of great splendour and of wise rule. We read of vast works of irrigation with State control of the water supply, and of the revenues derived from it. There was much road-building, one great military highway stretching from the north-west frontier to the capital, the breadth of India.

The population, says the Greek Megasthenes, consisted of seven classes; at the head were the philosophers, the Brahmins, and other religious groups whose duty it was to officiate at public sacrifices, to read the auguries, and so to guide the king in matters of politics and agriculture. Next to them came the great mass of the people, the cultivators and main tax-payers of the empire. Only in the fifth class does Megasthenes place the warriors, most numerous after the cultivators, and an immense drain upon the resources of the empire. The other classes mentioned are smaller—hunters, traders, boatmen, spies, and lastly the king's councillors. From them are chosen the various officials of the empire, civil, military, and naval.

It is difficult to see upon what the Greek bases this division of Indian society; it corresponds very loosely with the castes as we know them, or as they appear in early Indian literature.

In the midst of his people dwelt the king in a palace of

great splendour and apparently of Persian design. Dr. D. B. Spooner in excavating Pataliputra found, some sixteen feet below the surface, a wooden floor covered with a deposit of eight or nine feet of alluvial soil, and over this a layer of ashes; ashes also filled the holes where once stone pillars stood in rows. He concludes that a great fire, followed by a prolonged flood, destroyed this great structure; and it is interesting to find a very early Buddhist book putting into the mouth of the Buddha himself a prophecy that 'three dangers will threaten Pataliputra; fire, flood, and dissension among friends'. Is this the observation of a shrewd mind, noting its position upon the banks of the river and its wooden structures, or is it a comment after the event added to the older writing by a later scribe?

For the rest we do not know much of the artistic achievement of the early Mauryan era. The coins are crude, and such sculpture as there is is naïve, illustrating Jatakas<sup>1</sup> and other folk-lore; as in the Barhut rail preserved at Calcutta. But we can imagine Indian craftsmen—skilled jewellers and carpenters—beginning at this time to feel the influence of the sculptors and builders of Greece and Persia, and within a short century we find Indians working in stone with great skill.

### III

With the enlightened Asoka (274–232 B.C.) dawns a Golden Age of Indian art, which from now on develops rapidly. Let us come down two centuries and visit the great Stupa at Sanchi, one of the most delightful spots in central India, where skilful archaeology has reconstructed great works of Buddhist art. They crown a low hill with wide views over the shimmering Indian plain, and are a picture-gallery in stone. The great central mound with its four gateways is especially worthy of close study, and here we get our first glimpse in art of the stories of the Buddha and of Asoka. On the eastern gateway, as the

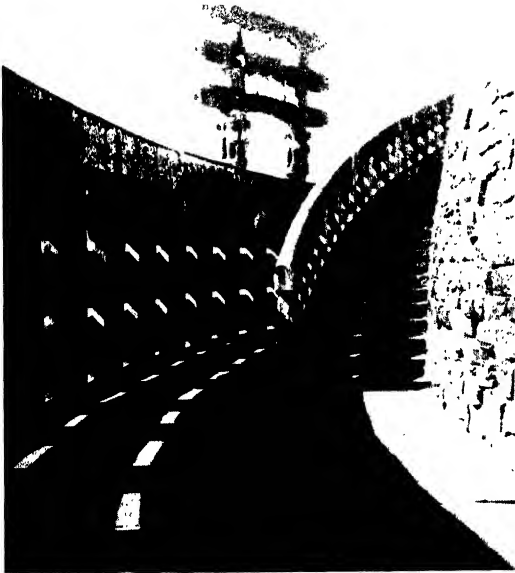
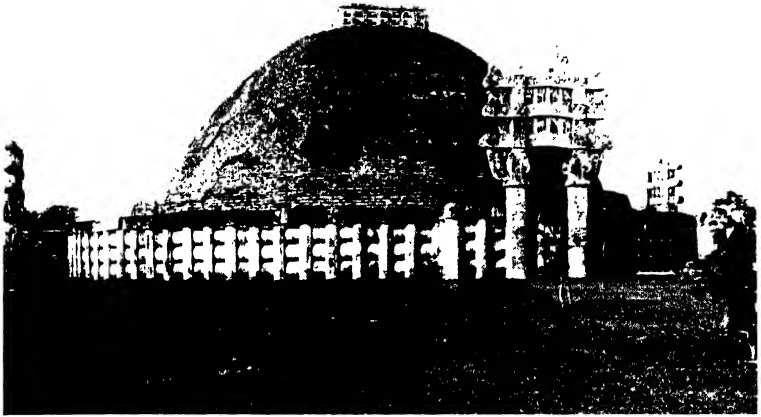
<sup>1</sup> Birth-stories of the Buddha in former incarnations.



rising sun lights up the rich texture of its sculptures, may be seen a great procession of men and elephants to a tree around which is a low building, and on the side lintels are pairs of splendid peacocks and winged lions. These symbols give us the key to the meaning of the procession. The great Asoka, whose crest is the peacock, is coming to pay honour to the Bo-tree under which the 'Lion of the Sakyas', the Buddha, obtained enlightenment. We see the king getting down from his kneeling elephant, and pouring a libation before the tree. Turning to the books we discover the old story of the jealousy of one of his queens whose 'evil eye' had bewitched the tree, until it began to wither. Asoka hears of this and comes with bowls of scented water to revive it.

Above this scene are representations of Asokan Pillars, and upon other gateways are depicted his pilgrimage to the Deer Park of the Buddha's first sermon. We see the Emperor with two of his queens coming to the park, which is indicated by the Wheel of the Law and by deer; and below this is a second panel which represents Asoka in his Chariot, with his courtiers about him. The Emperor has left us his own account of these pilgrimages, which took the place in the India of his day of the hunt and the games in which other kings had delighted.

The gateways at Sanchi cannot be said to give us a portrait of Asoka; but not very far away in Bhopal State is a group of caves once occupied by Buddhist monks, and on the wall of one of these is a magnificent fresco which may well represent the Emperor at the critical moment of his conversion to Buddhism. A young and princely figure is seen seated on the royal elephant, amidst a great procession. As the great beasts swing forward and eager crowds receive the victor returning from a war of conquest, his eye lights on a group of yellow-robed mendicants seated by the roadside. He looks up startled, and the lotus droops in his hand. A great Indian artist, Nanda Lal Bose, the first in our time to copy this stupendous work of art, thinks that it is Asoka, stabbed awake by the



SANCHI: MAIN STUPA AND PROCESSION PATH



sufferings of the Kalingas; and we may imagine that it was some word of these monks, perhaps the old dirge which sounds mournfully in their monasteries to-day: 'Sabba Dukkha, Sabba Anicca', 'All is sorrowful, all things pass away,' or some call to Ahimsa, the old Indian virtue of harmlessness, which crystallized out the Emperor's leanings towards Buddhism. He came of a religious stock, and the Jains, the great rivals of the Buddhists at this time, who also made much of harmlessness, claim that his grandfather ended his days as a monk of their Order. If this is true, Asoka may well have gained an impression in early infancy which was to change his whole life.

#### IV

A sincere convert, Asoka rapidly became a zealous exponent of the Buddhist faith, and sent his missionaries into many lands to forge an international bond of goodwill. The edict that we know as the thirteenth is one of some forty which have been discovered in India during the past century. It tells of his conquest of the Kalingas, of his conversion by the sight of their sufferings, of his missions to Greek and other neighbouring kings, whose names enable us to date his reign; it speaks of his eagerness to win the outlying tribes to his way of life, and gives us some data for estimating the extent of his dominion. It ends by expressing a pious hope that his sons and descendants shall refrain from further conquests in the material sphere, and shall consider that alone as a victory which belongs to the sphere of morality.

It is clear that Asoka aimed, as he says, at being the father of all his people, even of the wild tribes of the forest, and he instructs his ministers that they are to regard themselves as 'nurses of the people'. We may imagine the surprise of men trained in the school of Chanakya, and their chagrin on being exhorted to give up the hunt and other pastimes for pious pilgrimages. It is clear that they did not always obey the austere voice of the monarch; nor

did all his neighbours, to whom he sent missionaries, turn Buddhist.

The mission to Ceylon, however, headed by his son or nephew, Mahinda, in the eighteenth year of his reign, was crowned with success. The story is fully told in the *Great Chronicle of the Island*,<sup>1</sup> where one may visit the rock-hewn study of the princely monk and gaze over the wide plain once fertile and populous, now almost deserted, as the great irrigation works which this mission inaugurated have fallen into decay. Eight miles away tower the great Stupas of the sacred city of Anuradhapura, which came to rival the monuments of Asoka himself.

Of Asoka's other missionaries, remains have been found at Sanchi. Here a relic-box of sandstone was discovered, and the inscription tells us that it contained the relics of 'all the teachers beginning with Kassapagota'. Within were four caskets and the names of ten great teachers. The first of these were missionaries to the wild tribes of the Hemavakas or Himalayas. In Rajputana there has been found an edict of Asoka addressed especially to the Buddhist monks who were his representatives in this important outpost. It begins with a statement of his faith in the Buddha, his Teaching, and his Order of Monks, wishes them health and happiness, and goes on to commend all the Teachings of the Buddha; 'all that has been said by the Lord has been well said'.

But it recommends certain passages of scripture as essential both for monks and laity. Though these passages are variously identified by scholars, there seems no doubt that they represent a selection from the great mass of the Buddhist books, and include certain rules of discipline and of meditation, and certain passages of ethical precepts such as the sermon the Buddha delivered to his son Rahula on speaking the truth, and that to the young layman Sigalo, instructing him to find in the duties of daily life the true worship of the gods.

It is clear that the Emperor aimed at uniting his people

<sup>1</sup> *Mahawamsa*, ed. by W. Geiger.

in the bonds of a religion which was not too difficult for them, and that he realized the great importance of a united and well-disciplined Order of Monks, attending to the essentials. In calling their attention to these things he by no means claims to be temporal head of the Church, but rather to enforce the discipline which they had themselves worked out. Such was the Buddha's own method, and the Vinaya is a collection of such practical rules, made as occasion demanded.

Stimulated and inspired by his religious faith, Asoka set himself to fulfil the Indian ideal of kingship. He caused roads to be made, wells to be dug, and trees to be planted along these roads 'to give shade to men and beasts'. He organized the distribution of charity, and established hospitals for beasts as well as men. He more and more discouraged the taking of life and inculcated respect for the animal-world. It may be noted that the Arthashastra recommends that certain animals should be exempt from slaughter; and Asoka's list is a strange one, from parrots to queen-ants. It seems that the royal peacock, the totem of his family, continued for a time to supply the Emperor's table, although in one of his later edicts he expresses a resolve to eat it no more.

It is not least these little details which make Asoka's edicts so interesting. And in the great things—tolerance for other sects, emphasis upon truth, upon respect, upon gentleness and liberality—the Emperor is revealed as a man of large and spacious mind, with a capacity for hard work and an earnest desire to be the servant of his people. He claims that he is accessible at all hours and to all classes, even in the apartments of his women, and he is eager to see the same spirit in his viceroys and ministers.

As to his domestic life, we have many conflicting accounts. His father Bindusara is credited with a hundred other sons, quite a possible achievement to an oriental monarch. His mother is said to have been the beautiful daughter of a Brahmin family, but another legend makes her a member of the Maurya clan. The Buddhist chronicles

maintain that Asoka seized the throne upon his father's death, killing all rival claimants to it, and the Chinese pilgrims tell us of the prison or 'Hell' into which he threw his rivals, and tortured them to death. All this is possibly based upon fact, but very highly coloured—to make the wonder of his conversion more striking, and to shed more lustre upon the Buddhist religion.

In his married life he was not entirely happy, being cursed with a queen so jealous that she could not even tolerate his interest in the Bo-tree of the Buddha's enlightenment, and that she caused Asoka's son to be blinded. He was the child of a rival, and was named Kunala because of the beauty of his eyes, which resembled those of the Kunala bird. Other sons served as viceroys in important provinces, and a daughter, Sanghamitta (Friend of the Order), went with her brother Mahinda to Ceylon. A fresco at Ajanta shows us this noble pair, who were ordained six years after their father's coronation, setting out with a slip of the Bo-tree for Ceylon. They had then been twelve years in the Order, and were well qualified to become teachers, and to introduce not only the religion but the civilization of Mauryan India to the peoples of the island.

The older Island Chronicle, the Dipawamsa, and the later Great Chronicle, Mahawamsa, a much more artistic work, agree in making the great Asoka a friend of the Sinhalese King Tissa. He called himself Devanampiya, 'Friend of the Gods', in imitation of Asoka, and welcomed the Buddhist mission.

'We are followers of the Dhamma, Lord, in compassion to thee have we come,' said Mahinda, and proceeded to preach to the king and his hunting-party the parable of the spoor of the elephant.

The Way of the Dhamma leads to freedom from rebirth—it is the Way of the Path-finder, and his path is as easy to trace as the footprints of the elephant.

As in Japan nearly a thousand years later, the seed fell on fruitful soil, and Ceylon soon became a civilized nation

—awakened at the right moment by the touch of a master-hand. The names of Mahinda and of his sister Sanghamitta are revered as are no other names in the island.

## V

Of the life of the masses during this period we know little. But we cannot imagine that their lot was an easy one even under the fatherly rule of Asoka. That they worked in their fields undisturbed by foreign invasion or civil warfare was itself a great boon. But that they were free from their perennial struggle against famine, flood, and pestilence is not likely; and they had their taxes to pay to the Emperor, and their gifts to make to priests and monks.

In the case of Lumbini, the Buddha's birthplace, religious taxes were exempted, and the usual tax to the Emperor of one-fourth of the produce was reduced to one-eighth. Even this is a heavy burden for people who seldom rise above starvation, and even the organized charity of the Emperor and his queens cannot have done much to relieve their distress. This being so, one wonders how much the reiterated statement of the edicts—'that the Dhamma is the greatest of gifts' meant to the people. That in India and Ceylon they soon began to groan under the enormous burden involved in the building of great religious edifices is clear. Some of these mounds cover seven or eight acres of ground, and the numerous Pillars of Asoka, monoliths fifty feet high, brilliantly polished, were transplanted to points all over the empire. These were great engineering feats, but the labour involved was colossal. General Cunningham, who did so much for the archaeology of India, estimated that the average weight of these pillars is fifty tons, and when the Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlak had one of them moved the comparatively short distance of 120 miles, it involved the use of enormous mattresses of cotton, and of a specially-built carriage with twenty-one pairs of wheels. At each wheel toiled 200 men; an army of no less than 8,400 was thus employed, and this gives us some faint picture of the labour involved in the quarrying,



polishing, sculpture, and transportation of these amazing monoliths.

The story of the deciphering of their inscriptions by Western scholars which was begun more than a hundred years ago is no less noteworthy; and to Prinsep in particular is due the great credit of finding the key to the script, of identifying the Piyadasi of the Edicts with the Emperor Asoka, and of revealing this great personality to the world. By a curious freak of destiny it is the last pillar to be discovered which is actually the earliest, and the only one in which the Emperor calls himself by his own name. This is a crowning proof of the accuracy of the work done, and Asoka is now as well known and life-like a figure as Marcus Aurelius or Constantine, with whom he is so often compared—or as St. Paul, who like him made an imperial religion of a small and struggling sect. His devotion to the Dhamma is the most significant thing in Asoka—for its sake he does all his beneficent works.

In the art of this age it is evident that enormous strides had been made since Alexander's invasion. Their progress can be best appreciated by comparing the massive pre-Mauryan portrait statue of Kunika Ajatasatru (who died 618 B.C.) in the Mathura Museum, with the bull-capital of the Asoka column in the Indian Museum at Calcutta.<sup>1</sup>

Of the former and its peers Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy says, 'These human figures, over life-size, resting their immense weight firmly on the earth, are immediate and affirmative expressions of physical energy. . . . Neither philosophic introspection nor passionate devotion have yet affected art: there is no trace of romanticism or refinement.'<sup>2</sup> Yet these statues show the beginnings of realism, and if they are uncouth they are amazingly strong. Within four centuries the court-artists of the Asokan age begin to combine strength with grace, and realism with charm. Their animal-forms are technically perfect, and as decoration they are unrivalled. It is reasonable to see in the bell-

<sup>1</sup> See illustration facing p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Indian Art*. See illustrations in this fine work.

or lotus-shaped capitals of the pillars, in their high polish, and in their use as standards for royal edicts, the influence of Persian and of Hellenistic art.

Little more than two generations had passed since Alexander the Great had planted in Bactria a powerful colony of Greeks, who, occupying as they did a tract of country on the very threshold of the Maurya dominions, where the great trade-routes from India, Iran, and Central Asia converged, and closely in touch as they were with the great centres of civilization in Western Asia, must have played a dominant part in the transmission of Hellenistic arts and culture into India.

What does this mean, except that these branches of the Aryan stock—Greek, Iranian, and Indian—are now meeting after long separation, and that Alexander's dream of uniting East and West is coming true?

It is very fitting that it was to do honour to India's greatest son that these gifted sister-races lent their powers; of this the very symbols used by the Asokan artists are proof: if the bell-capital and the lotus are of Persian provenance, the humped bull is Indian, and so probably are the lions which stand back to back in the grand stylized capital at Sarnath, where the 'Lion of the Sakyas' first preached. Indian too are the Wheel of the Law, and the Geese of this great work of art, symbols of religious wisdom. And if the form of Asoka's inscriptions is borrowed from that of Persian emperors their spirit is Indian. Its teaching of Ahimsa, of the glories of peace and of the blessings of piety, is in a very different key from that of its prototypes. The symbolism too of Asokan art breathes the message of the compassionate Buddha, and tells of the great moments of his life.

These animal-forms, the Bull, the Elephant, the Horse, and the Lion, have seldom been equalled. Symbolizing the Birth, the Renunciation and the first Sermon of the Buddha, they were carved by master-workmen who were close students of nature; and critics are agreed that in their dignity as well as their realism they are masterpieces, 'unsurpassed, I venture to think, by anything of their kind

in the ancient world', says Sir John Marshall, who is responsible for the brilliant restoration of Sanchi, and who has shown that while Indian art may have learned much from Persia and from Greece it was yet filled with a genius of its own, and remained true to form. To stand before these great columns, to wonder at their high polish and their noble capitals, above all to read the august messages of the Emperor carved upon them is to be filled with respect for the India of the Mauryan Age, and above all for the great personality of Asoka. He is a unique figure, the ideal Indian king, and only to be understood as he fulfils this ideal of his people, and pours into it the spirit of Sakyamuni.

In this spirit he showed tolerance to all religious sects, respect for all religious leaders, and a kindly attitude to all—important kings his neighbours no less than villagers and vassal princes; 'small and great alike must be honoured,' and 'by all great happiness may be attained here and hereafter'. He seeks peace and goodwill among men—and bases it upon the hope of heaven.

It is not Nirvana to which he summons these lay-followers of the Buddha: that is for the specialist. His concern is with a religion for the masses, and in him the Upasika, or lay-adherent, finds noble expression. Some of his words are as imperishable as the rocks and pillars upon which they are inscribed.

'What is the Dhamma? It is to do little harm but much good, to exercise kindness, liberality, truthfulness and purity.'

'All sects I honour with offerings. But the sect of one's own choice is most important.'

'External discipline avails little: the meditation of the heart avails much.'

'In all places and at all times am I approachable by the people: let them realize that the King is their father, feeling for them as for himself: and that they are to him as his own children.'

It is the august voice of a royal yet fatherly autocrat; and it still sounds in the ears of India and charms her heart.

## VI

The six remaining Mauryan rulers were weak and ineffectual. Antiochus III of Syria, after conquering Parthians, Bactrians, and Persians, invaded the north of India in 208 B.C. and for nearly two centuries Greek rulers held the frontier passes. In 184 Pushyamitra overthrew the last of the Mauryas, and set up the Sunga House, making himself champion of Brahminism, and, according to Buddhist records, burning monasteries and looting shrines.

In 155 Menander, a Greek king of Bactria, led his armies as far as Pushyamitra's capital, Pataliputra, only to be repulsed; and in 75 the Sungas were succeeded by the Kanvas, while the Greek kingdoms were ravaged by Yuetchi, or Scythians.

In both Menander and the barbarian Kanishka Buddhism found stout allies and even converts, and from now on for some centuries it enters into much more friendly relations with Hinduism, and much more intimate understanding is the result.

If this is the age which produces the Bhagavad-gita it is also the age of the Saddharmapundarika, its Buddhist analogue, and of the Milinda Pañha, sometimes attributed to the great Nagarjuna—greatest of Buddhist schoolmen. It is the greatest of Buddhist prose works. In other words the century before the Christian era and the century after it are great in intellectual achievements: though India is harassed by wars within and invasions from without the seed of the Buddha and of Asoka is bearing a rich harvest.

In mid-India arises the great Andhra House, and at Sanchi, Amaravati, and Anuradhapura in Ceylon are remains of their great classical art: while in the north-west the more direct influence of Hellenism is seen, Corinthian columns taking the place of those of Persepolitan design, and classical togas beginning to clothe the images of the Buddha—who is found in company with Heracles and the Lion, and with Pallas Athene—while

Fauns and Bacchantes, Eros, and Pan begin to take on Indian forms, and the unbearded and haloed Bodhisattva is a Greek god with Indian tiara and necklaces.

This Hellenistic influence is to penetrate as far south as Ceylon, as far east as Japan, and with it goes much else of Greek provenance—medicine and music and perhaps canons of dramatic art. Greece is giving to Asia not only a new ikon, but also something of her science and art; and India is being prepared for her great task of civilization. In other words two great branches of the Aryan world are now being grafted the one on the other.

Mongol and Scythian, too, are being brought into touch with older and more advanced cultures and putting new sap into the maturing tree of Aryanism. The fine fruits of this long process are to be seen in the developed arts of the next era, in the chivalry of Rajput kingdoms, in the secular as well as in the religious achievements of Andhras and of Guptas, while in the Dravidian south an independent and quite different civilization is maturing in preparation for the high task of sharing with the Aryan north the cultural conquest of Ceylon, Java, and the Peninsula of Indo-China.

Meantime, while these processes are developing, missions from India are penetrating as far east as Loyang—capital of the Han in China; Kashmir, Kashgar, and the Hinterland are being won to the popular forms of the Mahayana, with its paradises and saviours, its rich rituals, and sonorous chanting, its notes of universality and compassion; and Ceylon is becoming a fastness of the more stoical and austere Hinayana, with its note of effort and renunciation, its promise of an ever-receding Nirvana, its preoccupation with merit and with meditation, its other-worldly dirges and its sad insistence on the transiency of life.

If this suited the tropical south something more picturesque and alluring was needed by hardy mountaineers and uplanders just emerging from barbarism, men of Turkic or Mongol stock, Yuetchi, Sakas, Indo-Parthians,

Wei-Tartars. All in turn were to leave their impress on Buddhism and its art.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MAURYAS

### I. ALEXANDER AND POROS

When Poros, who had nobly discharged his duties throughout the battle, performing the part not only of a general, but also that of a gallant soldier, saw the slaughter of his cavalry and some of his elephants lying dead, and others wandering about sad and sullen without their drivers, while the greater part of his infantry had been killed, he did not, after the manner of Darius, the great king, abandon the field and show his men the first example of flight, but, on the contrary, fought on as long as he saw any Indians maintaining the contest in a united body; but he wheeled around on being wounded in the right shoulder, where only he was unprotected by armour in the battle. All the rest of his person was rendered shot-proof by his coat of mail which was remarkable for its strength and the closeness with which it fitted his person, as could afterwards be observed by those who saw him. When he found himself wounded, he turned his elephant around and began to retire. Alexander, perceiving that he was a great man, and valiant in fight, was anxious to save his life, and for that purpose sent to him first of all Taxiles the Indian. Taxiles, who was on horseback, approached as near the elephant which carried Poros as seemed safe and entreated him, since it was no longer possible for him to flee, to stop his elephant and listen to the message he brought from Alexander. But Poros, on finding that the speaker was his old enemy Taxiles, turned around and prepared to smite him with his javelin; and he would probably have killed him had not Taxiles instantly put his horse to the gallop and got beyond the reach of Poros. But not even for this act did Alexander feel any resentment against Poros, but sent to him messenger after messenger, and last of all Meroes, an Indian, as he had learned that Poros and this Meroes were old friends. As soon as Poros heard the message which Meroes brought just at a time when he was overpowered by thirst, he made his elephant halt and dismounted. Then, when he had taken a draught of water, and felt revived, he requested Meroes to conduct him without delay to Alexander.

He was then conducted to Alexander, who, on learning that Meroes was approaching with him, rode forward in front of his line with a few of the companions to meet him. Then, reining in his

horse, he beheld with admiration the handsome person and majestic stature of Poros, which somewhat exceeded five cubits. He saw, too, with wonder, that he did not seem to be broken and abased in spirit, but that he advanced to meet him as a brave man would meet another brave man after gallantly contending with another king in defence of his kingdom. Then Alexander, who was the first to speak, requested Poros to say how he wished to be treated. The report goes that Poros said in reply: 'Treat me, O Alexander! as befits a king,' and that Alexander, being pleased with his answer, replied, 'For mine own sake, O Poros! thou shalt be so treated, but do thou, in thine own behalf, ask for whatever boon thou pleasest,' to which Poros replied that in what he had asked everything was included. Alexander was more delighted than ever with this rejoinder, and not only appointed Poros to govern his own Indians, but added to his original territory another of still greater extent. Alexander thus treated this brave man as befitted a king, and he consequently found him in all respects faithful and devoted to his interests. Such, then, was the result of the battle in which Alexander fought against Poros and the Indians of the other side of the Hydaspes in the month of Mounychion of the year when Hegemon was archon in Athens.

(After McCrindle.)

## II. A STORY ILLUSTRATED IN ASOKAN SCULPTURE

### *The Ape's Sacrifice*

(Jataka, 497)

Once on a time, . . . the Bodhisat was born as an ape. He grew up strong and sturdy, and lived with his tribe of eighty thousand on the foot-hills of Himalaya. Now by the banks of Ganges stood a mango-tree with dense leaves and sweet fruits of heavenly taste and smell, large as goblets. From one branch they fell to earth, from one into the river, and from two into the cup of the trunk itself. . . . Now despite the vigilance of the Bodhisat a fruit fell into the river, and was carried down to where the King of Benares was bathing. It stuck in a net upstream, and as he was going home that evening fishermen found it and brought it to him. None knowing what it was he called his foresters who told him that it was a mango. So making them taste it first he ate a piece himself, and gave some to his women and ministers.

The taste of it filled his whole being with a desire to eat more. Learning from the foresters where the tree stood he pushed upstream

upon rafts, and . . . came in due course to the tree. At its foot he had his bed made and encamped with his retinue, setting guards and making a fire. Then, while all slept, came the Bodhisat with his tribe of apes at midnight. And eighty thousand swung from branch to branch eating the fruit. The King awoke, and seeing them, called his archers to surround the apes and shoot them: 'To-morrow', said he, 'we'll eat mangoes and the flesh of apes.' 'Aye, aye, Sire!' said the archers and stood about the tree with arrows aimed. The apes, chattering with fear, cried to the Bodhisat, 'Sire! the archers! What are we to do?' 'Fear not, I will give you life,' he said, and with words of good cheer he climbed an upright branch, and passing along another which leaned towards the Ganges leaped from it, a hundred bow-lengths, to a bush upon its banks. Marking the distance, he cut a bamboo shoot; but in reckoning the length forgot a part of it wound about his loins. Then he leaped, like a cloud driven by the wind, but failed to reach the trunk. Grasping a branch firmly he called to the troop: 'Come, and good luck prosper you. Pass along my back to the bamboo-shoot.' So all escaped, saluting the Bodhisat. But Devadatta thinking, 'Here is a chance to be rid of my rival', climbed high up, and leaped on the Bodhisat's back, breaking his heart with piercing pain. Then off he went, and Bodhisat was alone.

The King of Benares saw it all, and lay thinking, 'This noble beast, not counting his life dear, has saved his tribe.' And when day came he thought to himself: 'It is not right to kill this King of Apes. Let me bring him down and care for him.' So he had the Bodhisat brought gently down and clad him in a yellow robe and washed him in Ganges water, and gave him sweet drink, and anointed him with fine oil. And so, laying him on a bed of oiled skins, spoke thus to him:

A bridge thou madest for thy tribe to escape;  
What are they then to thee, most noble Ape?

Then the Bodhisat instructed the King in verses:

Victorious Monarch, I, the monkeys' King,  
Protected them from fear and suffering.

No fear of death have I, nor feel the pain  
Giving my life, my people's life to gain . . .

A parable for thee, O King, to learn is here  
The welfare of thy realm—be that thy chiefest care.

So the Bodhisat instructed the King.



## III. EDICTS OF ASOKA

(H. V. Smith)

*(a) From Minor Rock Edicts*

## Edict I

*The Fruit of Exertion:*

Let small and great exert themselves.

## Edict II

*Summary of the Law of Piety:*

Father and mother must be hearkened to; similarly, respect for living creatures must be firmly established; truth must be spoken. These are the virtues of the Law of Piety which must be practised. Similarly, the teacher must be revered by the pupil and towards relations fitting courtesy must be shown.

This is the ancient nature (of piety)—this leads to length of days, and according to this men must act.

*The Bhabra Edict:*

Whatsoever, Reverend Sirs, has been said by the Venerable Buddha, has been well said.

*The Kalinga Edicts:*I. *The Borderers' Edict:*

The King is to us even as a father; he loves us even as he loves himself; we are to the King even as his children.

II. *The Provincials' Edict:*

All men are my children, and just as I desire for my children that they enjoy every kind of prosperity and happiness in this world and the next, so also I desire the same for all men.

With certain natural dispositions, success is impossible, to wit, envy, lack of perseverance, harshness, impatience, want of application, laziness, indolence. You must desire that such dispositions be not yours. The root of the whole matter lies in perseverance and patience in applying this principle. The indolent man cannot rouse himself to move, but one must needs move, advance, go on.

*(b) From The Fourteen Rock Edicts*

## Edict I

*The Sacredness of Life:*

Here (in the capital) no animal may be slaughtered for sacrifice, nor may the holiday-feast be held, because His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King sees much offence in the holiday-feast.

## Edict III

*The Quinquennial Circuit:*

The Law of Piety—A meritorious thing is the hearkening to father and mother; a meritorious thing is liberality to friends, acquaintances, relatives, Brahmins, and ascetics; a meritorious thing is abstention from the slaughter of living creatures; a meritorious thing is small expense and small accumulation.

## Edict V

*Censors of the Law of Piety:*

A good deed is a difficult thing. He who is the author of a good deed does a difficult thing.

## Edict XI

*True Almsgiving:*

There is no such almsgiving as is the almsgiving of the Law of Piety—friendship in piety, liberality in piety, kinship in piety.

Herein does it (true almsgiving) consist—in proper treatment of slaves and servants, hearkening to father and mother, giving to friends, comrades, relations, ascetics, and Brahmins, and sparing of living creatures. Therefore, a father, son, brother, master, friend, comrade, nay even a neighbour, ought to say, 'This is meritorious, this ought to be done.'

## Edict XII

*Toleration:*

His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King does reverence to men of all sects, whether ascetics or householders, by gifts and various forms of reverence. Concord . . . is meritorious, to wit, hearkening and hearkening willingly to the Law of Piety as accepted by other people.

## IV

### THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA

(c. 150 B.C.—A.D. 300)

'When unrighteousness prevails I am born among men.' GITA.

#### I

THE age which followed the Mauryas is in many respects obscure and chaotic. We know it from coins of Indo-Greek satraps and Scythian invaders, from ruined cities such as the frontier-capital Taxila, from legends such as the Lives of Saint Thomas the Christian missionary and martyr, and of Asvaghosa the poet-philosopher of northern Buddhism. But though the history is obscure, with the Sunga Dynasty of Magadha (184–72 B.C.) ruling a diminishing empire, retreating from the great Andhra advance in the south, pushed by successive waves of 'barbarians' from the north-west—yet certain great figures stand out, and so many literary masterpieces survive that this era may well be called one of the great flowering periods of the Indian spirit.

The Greek Menander, for example, immortalized in the later Buddhist work the *Milinda Pañha*, or 'Questions of Menander', is revealed as a just and wise ruler: inquiring with a truly Greek spirit into the teachings of Buddhism, and a worthy counterfoil to the Sage Nagasena—a typical Buddhist Elder, detached, calm, and logical. Menander's date is about 150 B.C., and he ruled most of central India. Another Greek, Heliodorus, set up a pillar two centuries later to Vasudeva, or Vishnu; and we may infer that many Greeks made themselves at home in India, and that some became Hindus.

A valuable old astronomical work in Sanskrit tells us that the 'Yavanas'—i.e. Ionians—pushed as far west as Pataliputra, but retired because of strife among themselves in their own kingdom: that they were eventually conquered

by a Saka king, whose people in turn yielded to another invader. We may see in this a reference to the internecine feuds between the various Greek kingdoms. We know that just after Asoka conquered Kalinga the Bactrian kingdom of Diodotus and the Parthian kingdom of Arsaces arose; and that various Greek dynasties wrested the power from one another. Thus the house of Eucratides, to which Menander belonged, seized the throne from that of Diodotus, and was ousted in turn from Gandhara by the Sakas. They, in due course, were defeated by the Hindu king Vikramaditya<sup>1</sup> in 58 B.C., whose era follows that of the Sungas. These glimpses of history we get from coins and inscriptions, which tell us too that the Yavanas held out in the Kabul Valley till the onward rush of the Kushanas under Kadphises I swept them away. Their coins and an impress on Indian art remain as their only monument.

But it is a noble one: many a statue survives, from Gandhara in the north-west to Ceylon in the far south, which seems to represent an Indian Apollo—but which is in fact a Graeco-Indian Buddha. The great Guru has become the greatest of the gods; and Greece has supplied the type. Now, too, Hinduism is putting out a great effort to set up a god as attractive, and finding in Krishna Vasudeva, warrior and shepherd, a truer expression of her national ideals. An early warrior, he is in the centuries just before and just after the birth of Christ becoming first a demigod, and then an avatar or incarnation of the Supreme.

In the interplay of these forces India achieves a great civilization, in spite of invading hordes of Bactrians, Parthians or Pahlavas, and Scythians or Sakas. Perhaps it is in the effort to win and Indianize them, as she later won the Moguls, that her religions awake and put forth great missionary works, retelling the story of the Buddha in the sublime epic of Asvaghosa, the Buddhacarita, and of Krishna in her greatest poem, the Bhagavad-gita. These two great rival gods now become universal 'Lords of

<sup>1</sup> This is really a title 'Sun of Power': there were several rulers so called. See Ch. v for Vikramaditya under whom the 'Nine Gems' flourished.

the World', saviours with a message of hope and encouragement all the more alluring as the political horizon grows dark and threatening.

To an India troubled with much fighting, and puzzled by the failure of the Vedic gods, the Gita of the Hindus and the Lotus of the northern Buddhists were veritable gospels. We may imagine them as works of great thinkers living at such cosmopolitan centres as Taxila and Indraprastha—capitals of the Buddhist and Brahmin world, where devotees of both cults met, and men of many races. This era then from the second century B.C. to the beginning of the fourth century A.D. is for India, as for China, a formative and even a brilliant age, in spite of chaos and apparent failure. And it is as necessary to study it in India as it is necessary to study the age of the Han in China: without this era the great achievements of Guptan India and of T'ang China were alike impossible and unintelligible. The inspiration of the Buddha plays a great part in both: it is in fact the quickening touch which revives both civilizations, and begins the great task of blending them.

## II

When then the last of the feeble descendants of Asoka yielded to the Sunga usurper, Pataliputra remained the capital of the empire of Magadha, and Ujjain the seat of its western viceroy—a city which maintained its place of power and high culture for a thousand years. In old Indian dramas we find both cities lauded. Pataliputra is 'The City'; here are to be seen:

Givers of largesse, arts in high esteem,  
 Women both fair and courteous, wealthy lords  
 Neither effeminate nor niggardly, and cultured men  
 Of every class and caste, each honouring each with gladness—  
 The very gods might well take joy in such a home!

Of Ujjain in the west another dramatist exclaims: 'Ah! the wondrous beauty of Ujjain, queen of Avanti, rich in

varied merchandise, painted ornament of India, earth's fair cheek'.

Here holy Vedic chants, trumpeting elephants;  
Here chariots throng and horses, bow-strings hum,  
And 'midst the turmoil rise calm voices of the wise.  
Hither is merchandise from the four oceans brought,  
And song and music, dice and junketing:  
Gossip of rakes, and all the arts are here;  
Houses of pleasure, cages full of birds  
A-tinkle with jewellery on arm and lovely waist.

A chain of such cities from Pataliputra to Kasi and Mathura and Ujjain supported the religious—Brahmins within the city, monks and friars close at hand. And the Buddhist writers give us much the same impression of the cities of the time as we find in the secular dramatists and in Brahmin books. Here is a detailed account from the *Questions of Menander*:

'A city fine and regular, measured out into suitable quarters, with trenches and ramparts thrown up around it, with strong gateways, watch-towers, and battlements, with wide squares and open places and junctions and cross-ways, with cleanly and even roads, with regular lines of open shops, well-provided with parks, and gardens, and lakes, and lotus-ponds, and wells, adorned with many kinds of temples to the gods.'

We read too of

'nobles and Brahmins, merchants and workers; soldiers mounted on elephants, on horseback, and in chariots; infantry, bowmen and swordsmen; standard-bearers, officers, and camp-followers; high-born warriors whose delight is in war, fighting champions, men mighty as elephants, heroes, men who fight in buckskin, devoted fighting-men born of slaves in great houses or of the privates in the royal army; troops of professional wrestlers; cooks and curry-makers, barbers and bathing attendants, smiths and florists, workers in gold and silver and lead and tin and copper and brass and iron, and jewellers; messengers; potters, salt-gatherers, tanners, carriage builders, carvers in ivory, rope makers, comb makers, cotton-thread spinners, basket-makers, bow manufacturers, bow-string makers, arrow fletchers, painters, dye manufacturers, dyers, weavers, tailors,

assayers of gold, cloth-merchants, dealers in perfumes, grass cutters, hewers of wood, hired servants, people who live by gathering flowers and fruits and roots in the woods, hawkers of boiled rice, sellers of cakes, fishmongers, butchers, dealers in strong drinks, play actors, dancers, acrobats, conjurers, professional bards, wrestlers, corpse burners, casters out of rotten flowers, savages, wild men of the woods, prostitutes, swingers and jumpers, and the slave girls of bullies—people of many countries.’<sup>1</sup>

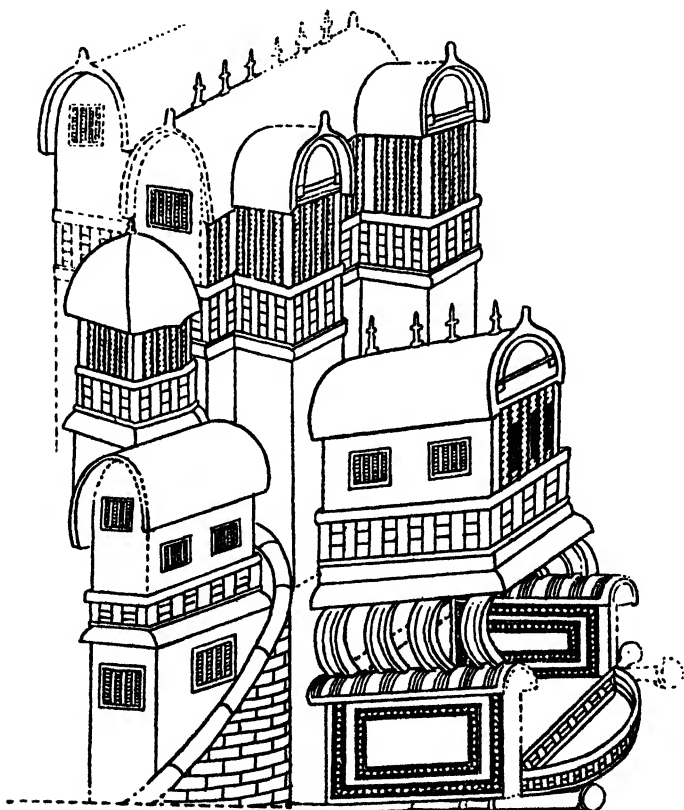
It is a picture of a complex civilization, and we know from other Buddhist writings and from monuments of the first century A.D. that these walled cities were built four-square, with a gatehouse at the centre of each wall; that a moat surrounded them, with a bridge crossing it and leading under the torana or arch of the gateway, into a hall and thence into a customs house. Passing this the traveller was free to go on his way into the city by one of four main roads. As the great cities of the Dravidians in the south surround the temples, and follow their ground-plan, so these Buddhist cities seem to follow the general plan of the stupa with its toranas at each point of the compass, and its pilgrim-ways leading to the central shrine. The city in fact is a microcosm, representing the earth and its four quarters, and so is the stupa.

That such a city as Ujjain, at the meeting of three great trade-routes, had a continuous life from the time of Chandragupta Maurya (fourth century B.C.) to that of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Chang (seventh century A.D.), indicates that the wars of invasion which continued intermittently from Alexander to the Huns who broke up the Guptan empire, left important parts of the country undisturbed. We know indeed that these invaders pressed one another too hard to make tenure of even the northern and central parts of India very secure. The Bactrians, for example, were harassed by the Parthians and both by the Greeks, and all in turn succumbed to the virile Sakas and Yuetchi—Scythians and Huns whose migrations play so great a part in the history of Asia, and indeed of the world.

<sup>1</sup> From T. W. Rhys Davids, *Questions of King Milinda*, S.B.E., vols. xxxv-vi.

## III

One of these conquerors stands out even more clearly than the Greek Menander. Soon after St. Thomas came to the court of the Pahlava Gondopharnes at Taxila, arose



Model of a gatehouse and buildings against the city-wall, from Amaravati

Kanishka, a Scythian general, to establish in the north-west a second Holy Buddhist Empire: his stupa or mound near Peshawar has been discovered—traced by M. Foucher from the diary of Fa Hian; and in it a silver reliquary with a portrait of the king in long Scythian boots and trousers,



and images reputed to be those of the Buddha, whose statuette surmounts it, and whose disciples are symbolized in the hamsa or geese—birds of wisdom in India,<sup>1</sup> which form a fine decorative frieze.

That Kanishka summoned a Buddhist council to settle issues between the rival schools we know: that he had the Buddhist commentaries engraved on copper plates, and that Asvaghosa was the great ornament of his court are well-attested legends. In him northern India had a wise and tolerant ruler, whose coins suggest his interest not only in Buddhism, but in Zoroastrianism and Hinduism. And in Taxila are remains of a Persian sun-temple, an Aramaic inscription, many Buddhist shrines and such unique and eloquent remains as the double-headed eagle of the Huns, and the birch-bark medical treatises of the Buddhists. Coins of Gondopharnes and of his brother Guda also exist, and the legend of St. Thomas wins growing acceptance—if not in its picturesque and symbolic detail, yet in its general statement of a Christian mission to India in the apostolic age. It is possible that Asvaghosa got some hints from an early Christian liturgy which he developed into a Buddhist service of praise, homily, and reading. And Buddhist stupas begin to give place to pillared chapels as the Buddha-cult becomes a worship, the relic-shrine an altar, and the monk a priest.

At Karli and Nasik, both in western India, are fine first-century cave-temples where this process is seen in full swing. Their main purpose is corporate worship, their fine pillared halls surrounding the monastic cells of the monks, and the stupa—once the main element in a Buddhist shrine—is now an altar. At Ajanta we see how sculpture and painting were used for edification: the Buddha-legend supplying splendid material for the teaching of renunciation and the higher joys of the solitary life. Here is an art at once sensuous and detached. The young

<sup>1</sup> Paramahansa, 'Greatest of Geese', is a title for the great religious Guru, or Teacher: he can sift truth from falsehood as the goose can separate milk from water!

Kshatriya is surrounded by luxury; he goes forth and awakes to the facts of suffering, old age, disease, and death; and realizes the calmness and serenity of the monk. All this is told in dramatic dialogue by Asvaghosa. The prince asks with bated breath at the sight of old age:

Who, who is this that cometh, tottering?  
 White are his beard and hair, his eyes deep-sunken,  
 Bent on his staff, his shrunken limbs a-tremble!  
 Is't Nature's work or accident, my Channa?  
 Old Age, Sir Prince, it is that breaketh him,  
 That thief of beauty, pilfering our manhood:  
 Begetter of sorrow, lustihood's vanquisher,  
 Foe of the mind and ravisher of memory.  
 He too once hung upon his mother's bosom,  
 He too once crawled, and slowly learned to walk.  
 Slowly he came to youthful strength and beauty,  
 Till eld came slowly creeping, creeping o'er him.

The women's attempts to enchant the young prince are another favourite theme for poet and artist. Asvaghosa's version is as follows:

And Udayi, the chaplain's son, addressed the women and said, 'Come, all you fair and lovely ones, devise some lure, for transient is the power of beauty, yet holds the world in chains by guile and subtle arts. Let not the King fail of an heir to the throne. Weak women are set on high, and mighty is their sway over men. What may their arts not do, inflaming men?'

Then all of them, as a horse touched by the whip, put forth new powers of allurements, and went to the prince, and strove in the exercise of their arts. Their light draperies revealing their fair forms, they joined in music and in smiling converse, lifting an eyebrow, flashing white teeth and sidelong glances. So, with dainty, mincing gait they came, as a bride shyly approaching her lord.

But the Prince sat unmoved, still and resolute, even as the great Elephant stands calm amidst the restless herd.

This is from the Chinese version of the Buddhacarita. The Sanskrit poem is much more explicit in its description of the wiles of the women. It sets forth the various types of courtesan with a discernment hardly to be expected in

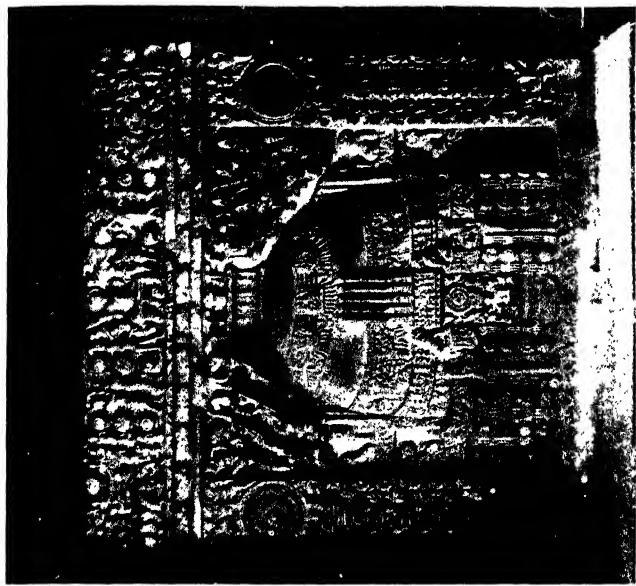
a Buddhist monk. Yet it is fine poetry, and they form a splendid foil to the prince, who mocks their advances, unmoved. So the great tale unfolds: his victory over Mara the Tempter and his armies, his enlightenment after heroic search, his gathering of the first disciples, his power over men and women of all classes. We read, too, of the power of the Buddha's 'soul-force' over the mad elephant, illustrated in a lovely little medallion of this time, and belonging to south India.

On the King's highway Devadatta let loose a rogue elephant, inflamed with drink: through the streets and lanes of the city he raged, wounding and killing, till bodies lay across the roads, and brains and blood were spattered far and wide. All fled in terror to their homes, or with shrieks and cries of panic fled far from the city and hid in caves and holes. . . . Then came the Blessed One with five hundred monks towards the city. Men leaning from windows and doors urged them to come no further. But he with perfect calm, his heart tranquil and serene, reflected only on the sorrow caused by hate, and yearned in his heart of compassion to assuage it. . . . His monks all fled, save only Ananda, who stood unshaken, bound by the ties of duty. Then the drunken elephant looking upon the Buddha came at once to himself, and bending low worshipped at his feet. As a mountain he fell to earth; and as the moon lights up a cloud so the Blessed One placed upon his head a lotus-hand. The Elephant himself can do no hurt to the Mighty Dragon.

At Sanchi there is a fine early fragment showing the elephant as he takes the dust from the Buddha's feet. Equally beautiful and more detailed is the Amaravati medallion illustrated here. It is easy to see why the devout Hiuen Chang called this great poet 'one of the four suns which light the world'. And of his pregnant stanzas I Ching wrote in the next century: 'He clothes manifold ideas in few words, which so charm the heart that it never wearies of them.' He tells us too that these poems are widely read in the India of his day 'and in the Southern Islands'. They evidently inspired the art of Amaravati in India and of Borobodur in Java, and even the brief passages quoted above will make it clear that the Buddhism of this



THE TAMING OF THE ELEPHANT



A STUPA FROM AMARAVATI

EARLY SOUTH INDIAN ART



age was popular and colourful enough to inspire great art and to commend itself to the masses.

#### IV

The Milinda Pañha shows us that it prescribed an orderly and clean-cut scholasticism to the more serious. Described by its translator, Dr. T. W. Rhys Davids,<sup>1</sup> as the best work of a controversial kind that had been written at that time in any country, and as 'the masterpiece of Indian prose', it is in fact nothing less than an early historical romance in the form of dialogues between the Greek king and the Buddhist sage, Nagasena. It is fascinating as an early chapter in the meeting of East and West.

The form of the dramatic dialogue was already well known in India, and religious plays were as much a part of her civilization as the miracle-plays of Christianity were of the Middle Ages in Europe. The Milinda Pañha is an early example of the use by Buddhists of this technique, as the Gita is of its use by Hindus. In each case we see the lay-mind at work, seeking satisfaction in matters of religion and theology. Or it may be that both great works were written by religious leaders for the instruction of the laity; for both religions were making a bid for the adherence of the masses, and especially of the kings and warriors, who play a leading role at this time.

The great pacifist and internationalist Asoka had proved how useful Buddhism could be in building a nation, but under his feeble successors his empire had fallen to pieces, and the Gita raises as one of its central themes the age-old problem of pacifism, and answers it by strongly reaffirming the Hindu theory of caste: a man must perform his caste duties, for he is born in that station in life which he has earned by his own actions: kings and warriors exist to rule and to fight. It is their dharma, or métier: for their Karma or deeds have caused them to be Kshatriyas.

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, vols. xxxv-vi.

The Milinda Pañha applies this same doctrine of Karma to the solution of the still more universal problem of human inequality. Why, asks the King, are some men born to happiness and prosperity and others to sorrow and poverty? And the Sage replies that just as plants vary according to the seed sown, so, by a law of nature no less fundamental, men reap the harvest of their acts.

The book concerns itself also with redefining the terms Brahmin and Kshatriya; the Buddha is both, a Brahmin in his spiritual freedom, 'cultivating within himself the highest and best states of mind, and enjoying the supreme bliss of ecstatic meditation,' and also a king, 'exalted above all ordinary men, making his friends rejoice and his opponents mourn.' Priest and Ruler meet in a Kingly Teacher, and old terms are redefined.

In the same bold spirit the book deals with eighty-two problems set by the king. Beginning with the cardinal teaching that the 'soul' or person is a collection of states of consciousness, as the king's chariot is built up of its component parts, it goes on to show that rebirth means the transmission of energy, as one lamp is lit from another, and leads up to the high and difficult doctrine of the Goal Nibbana. This it describes as a state rather than a place. 'Is there any spot upon which a man may stand and . . . realize Nibbana?' asks the King: 'Truly, Sire, there is such a spot,' replies the Sage. 'Where then, Nagasena, is that spot to be found?' 'Virtue, Sire, is that spot . . . wheresoever he be, the man who orders his life aright will realize Nibbana.' With this splendid climax the main part of the book ends. Another section brings home to the lay mind, in a brilliant series of similes, the excellences of the Buddhist life. The following is typical:

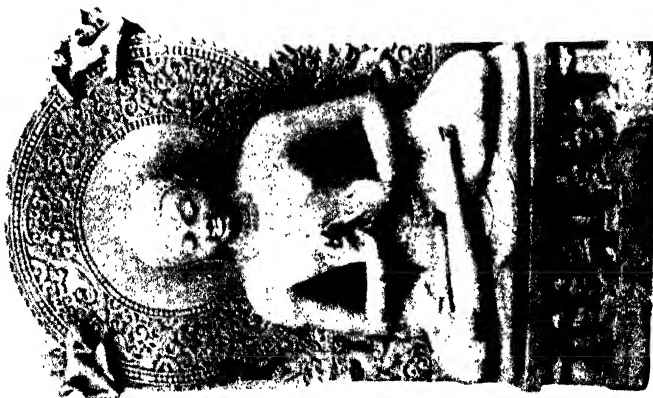
Just as the mongoose only attacks a snake when he has protected himself with an antidote, so, Sire, should the earnest and active monk as he goes out into the world of anger and hate where quarrels and enmities rage, keep his mind ever protected with the antidote of love. For it was said by the Commander of the Faith, Sariputta the Elder,







ANDHRA BUDDHA IN MEDITATION (Samadhi)  
ANURADHAPURA



GUPTAN BUDDHA IN  
TEACHING POSE (Dhammachakra)  
SARNATH

For one's own kin should love be felt,  
For strangers too: let all the world  
Be circled with a heart of love:  
This is the way of Buddhas all.

Besides these attractive summaries of the Buddhist religion in its monastic form, the book gives us many a glimpse of the secular civilization of the time, with its highly developed military machine, its well-planned cities, its courtiers and artisans, and the natural beauties which delight the heart in the pages of the best Buddhist and Hindu literature. We get glimpses of India's veneration for Himalaya 'towering aloft in heights serene and calm', and of her interest in the elephant, which is the motive for so much of the art of the period. 'As the elephant revels in the water, plunging and sporting in cool clear ponds where many-coloured lotuses abound, so should the earnest monk plunge into the waters of self-mastery, pure and clear as truth, and full of the flowers of freedom.'

It is a book to read and re-read, alike for its content and for its style. And though it contains many accretions and some passages which are less direct and of less worth than those quoted, it nevertheless remains the most artistic of Buddhist scriptures, and Nagasena is as attractive as Kim's Lama.

Like Megasthenes of an earlier day, the Greeks of Menander's time no doubt found much to admire and respect in India. The Guptan statue here illustrated, which shows us the Buddha as Teacher, betrays Greek influence on Buddhist art, and there was no doubt much give-and-take between the two peoples.

That Buddhism long continued a serious rival to the popular gods of Hinduism is clear, and at this time it is seen imitating the Krishna-cult, and becoming a religion of passionate devotion to an incarnate Lord, who offers salvation to all, and claims to be the Eternal dwelling in time. But for Nagasena as for his first followers, he is still the great Elder Brother and Physician, supernormal but not supernatural, the discoverer of the eternal Dhamma or

Truth. He is the Architect and Founder of a 'City of Righteousness' whose work among men continues in the activities of his Order of the Yellow Robe. 'Just, O King, as hungry men seek for food, and sick men for medicine, as in need they seek a friend and in danger a place of refuge, as they look to a teacher for instruction and for promotion to the King, so do the followers of Buddha seek after virtue by keeping the vows of renunciation.'

Those who dwell in the City of Righteousness are said to be 'free of lust and malice and infatuation, to endure hardness, eating but once a day, to be content to sleep anywhere; calm and tranquil, delighting in meditation and the transcendent powers which meditation brings; they become Commanders of the Faith: rebirth is at an end, and they are no more for this world.' This is the Buddhist ideal of Sainthood in its Arhat manifestation which now dominates Ceylon, Siam, and Burma, and influences all the Far East. It may be compared with the Hindu ideal of the Yogi, and with the Bodhisattva ideal of later Buddhism, which we shall study in the Lotus Scripture, and which is summed up in the words of a great Buddhist teacher: 'Servant of all, a very sweeper for humility, friend of those who need a friend, food of the hungry, medicine of the sick.' Here Buddhism and Christianity meet in a common ideal. For Buddhism develops as it adapts itself to the needs of men. Aristocratic and monastic it has always tended to be; yet it has never wholly forgotten the common man and his needs.

## V

The greatest secular works of this time are the Panchatantra, or 'The Five Ruses,' and the Epics, now edited in their final form. The greatest religious scripture is the Bhagavad-gita, and if this era had produced nothing else than these it would still be unique. It is characteristic that this great poem, written in 'ecstatic verse', occurs in the midst of the Mahabharata, the Great Epic, and that its setting is the famed battle-field of Kurukshetra. In such

surroundings the stern lessons of duty, of detachment, of religion in action, come home with special force. Kurukshetra is the citadel of the Holy Land of India, and the key to its mastery; here we find the rival armies of the Pandavas and the Kauravas engaged in civil war. Splendid pictures are given us of heroes whom we have met in the early parts of the Mahabharata, in all the pageantry of war. And as the old king sounds the signal for battle we hear the blare of trumpets and of horns, the rolling of drums, and the crash of gongs and cymbals. Here is Arjuna with the god Krishna beside him, seated in a chariot of gold, drawn by white horses and with the great banner of Hanuman, the monkey-god, unfurled. He asks the divine charioteer to drive him into the 'No Man's Land' between the armies, that he may gaze upon the enemy before battle is joined. He sees a great multitude of his own kin in both armies, and his heart melts within him:

When Krishna, I behold my kin  
To battle's fury led

I feel my mouth go dry; I feel  
My fainting members fail;  
My hair stand up in horror, and  
My trembling body quail.

The bow Gandiva drops from out  
My hand; my skin is burning;  
I can no longer keep my feet;  
My maddened brain is turning;

The evil omens threaten me;  
Krishna, it is not right  
To look for any blessing, if  
I kill my kin in fight.

I do not wish for victory,  
A kingdom or its joys:  
The kingdom, its delights, and life  
Would then be foolish toys.

## THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA

A kingdom, its delights, its joys  
 I only need for those  
 Who venturing their lives and wealth  
 Stand yonder as our foes:

Our teachers, grandsires, sires, the sires  
 And brothers of our wives,  
 Our uncles, grandsons, sons, the kin  
 Dear as our very lives.

Although they kill me, Krishna, I  
 Have no desire to slay;  
 The earth would not reward me, nor  
 The universe repay.<sup>1</sup>

It is a magnificent protest. Here the innate pacifism of the Indian thinker is deepened and made poignant by the fact of kinship with the enemy; it is the call of the blood; and in answering, Krishna has to marshal arguments from all sides. Patriotism, and the justice of the cause, the shame of cowardice, the splendour of courage: these familiar arguments which sound continually in the pacifist's ear are buttressed with the Indian doctrines of caste, duty to the One Life pulsing in all things, making death a mere incident, the dead and killing an illusion! The last is admirably (and unconvincingly) set forth:

Whence, Arjun, in your hour of trial  
 Comes this ignoble shame,  
 Unfit for heaven, repugnant to  
 An honourable name?

Yield not to impotence, for you  
 An unbecoming pose!  
 Shun paltry feeble-heartedness!  
 Arise! Distress your foes!

Since naught unreal can come to birth,  
 No real thing cease to be,  
 The limits of the twain are plain  
 To them who truly see.

<sup>1</sup> The passages from the Gita are quoted from the translation by Arthur W. Ryder, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Chicago Univ. Press).

Eternal, then, is that by which  
Creation's web was spun;  
Destruction of eternal life  
Is possible to none.

These bodies pass; but he within,  
With life immortal dight,  
Is neither limited nor lost;  
Therefore, brave hero, fight!

If the red slayer think he slays,  
The slain think he be slain,  
They err: the slayer vainly kills;  
The victim dies in vain.

This passage is taken from the Katha Upanishad: it is fine poetry and sound philosophy—misapplied. We cannot wonder that the great heart of Sakyamuni and his acute reason rebelled against it, and taught that man is responsible for his own act, and that there is no Atman, or absolute, to relieve him of responsibility.

Having stated the problem and noticed some of the answers of Krishna, it may be well to turn back and draw the ground plan of this amazing scripture. It is made up of three main books, each containing six chapters. The first deals for the most part with the way of Karma or Action. 'Do your caste-duties,' says Krishna, 'play the man as a warrior, and you will win salvation.' He reconciles this teaching with the other doctrine of inaction or meditation, by showing that action may be performed in the calm meditative spirit of the Yogi, that the warrior may fight in the spirit of the judge, detached and serene 'as the tortoise drawing his limbs within his shell'.

It is Mr. Gandhi's faith in the spirit of his people and in this teaching which has led him to believe that they could burn other men's property and keep calm in doing it. Shivaji, the heroic leader of the Mahrattas against the Moguls in the seventeenth century, justified many an act of savage cruelty and treachery by claiming that it was done in this spirit; and in our own day Indian students

have gone out to hurl bombs at defenceless people, with the Gita as their inspiration.

There is no more characteristic statement of the caste-system, its strength and its weakness, than is found here. Indian nationalism replies in the Gita to the pacifism and the anti-caste tendencies of Buddhism, that caste is a divine system, and that the warrior has no choice but to fight. Cleave as he does to this book, Mahatma Gandhi can justify at once his pacifism (for it teaches the doctrine of ahimsa or harmlessness) and also his action in recruiting soldiers for the army, for it very strongly emphasizes the duties of caste.

The second main part of the Gita deals largely with the way of Bhakti: this is the way of loving devotion—an easier path to salvation:

If any moved by utter love,  
Is minded me to bring  
A leaf, a flower, fruit, water, I  
Receive love's offering.

It goes on to state that the Bhagavan is as his worshipper should be, loving and equable to all:

I look on life with level eye;  
I have no foe nor friend;  
Yet they are mine, and I in them  
Who love me to the end.

Yes, even the most complete of rogues  
In whom no passions fight  
With love of me, is deemed a saint,  
Because his heart is right.

Soon virtue enters into him;  
Enduring peace draws nigh;  
Oh, never doubt, brave Arjuna,  
My faithful do not die.

Side by side with this doctrine of a personal God over against his personal devotee this book contains also the greatest statement in all literature of the indwelling power or Atman: it is a philosophical as well as a devotional work:

To all the world of life I am  
Creation; I am death.

Apart from me, brave Arjun, there  
Exists no single thing;  
The universe is strung on me  
Like pearls upon a string.

I am the taste in water; sound  
In ether; none the less  
Am I the mystic word that gives  
All scriptures power to bless;  
I am the light in moon and sun;  
In man the manliness;

I am the fragrance in the earth;  
I am the heat in fire;  
The life in life; the energy  
In men of stern desire;

I am the everlasting seed  
All forms of life to save;  
I am the wisdom of the wise;  
The courage of the brave;

I am the strength of those too strong  
For lust or passion's toll;  
I am the pure, permitted love  
Toward every living soul.

Here then are combined in the central teachings of this great book the two doctrines of immanence and transcendence, both of which are needed if religion is to be at once philosophical and practical.

'There cannot be worship', says Rabindranath Tagore, 'unless we admit duality, and there cannot be devotion unless we fix our gaze on One.' Like the Gita he swings between the Vaishnava emphasis upon Bhakti, and the Upanishadic doctrine of the One Reality.

## VI

But to these the Gita seeks also to reconcile the Sankhya teaching of the two eternal realities, Nature, Prakriti, and Souls, Purusha, and here is a reconciliation far less happy:



there cannot be at once only one real, and two realities.  
But the attempt is nobly made.

Know thou that Nature and the Spirit both  
Have no beginning! Know that qualities  
And changes of them are by Nature wrought;  
That Nature puts to work the acting frame,  
But Spirit doth inform it, and so cause  
Feeling of pain or pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

Krishna then begins to teach that Purusha, or Spirit, is linked to Prakriti, or Nature, in order that it may awake to its own reality, and withdraw from this entangling alliance: and the system is removed from the danger of materialism by being linked with the Yoga doctrine, or the practice of the spiritual life. Man is to realize the One Spirit supreme over nature and flesh, uncontaminated, ethereal, omnipresent:

Soul, changeless, passive and supreme,  
Discarnate, uncreated,  
May dwell within the body, yet  
Be uncontaminated.

As ether penetrates the whole  
Yet subtly shrinks from stain,  
So soul is stainless in its wide  
Corporeal domain.

The sun is single, yet to him  
All darkneses must yield:  
And so, brave prince, one knower can  
Illuminate his field.

Distinguishing the knower and  
The field with wisdom's eye,  
And life's release from matter, man  
Attains the goal most high.

The last book, in which these Sankhya passages occur, deals primarily with the way of Jñana, or intuitive realization, and to the Indian these three great ways seem satisfactorily combined in this amazing book.

<sup>1</sup> *The Song Celestial*, Edwin Arnold.

Here, too, is set forth the great ethical ideal of Indian sainthood. The worshipper is to be like his God,

'hateless towards all, void of the sense of I and mine, bearing indifferently pleasure and pain, undismayed in the presence of the world and causing it no dismay, empty of joy and sorrow, of fear and dismay, pure, impartial . . . indifferent alike to foe and friend, enduring honour and dishonour, heat and cold, shame and joy without attachment.'

Such is the Jivan-mukta—the liberated soul, the saint of India:

The man who hates no living thing,  
Kind, patient, and humane,  
Unselfish, unpretentious, calm  
In pleasure as in pain.

Content, controlled and disciplined,  
From wavering fancies free,  
Whose brain and intellect and love  
Are mine, is dear to me.

Abhorring none, by none abhorred,  
Whom fear and fever flee  
With triumph and intolerance,  
He too is dear to me.

He who, uncalculating, deft,  
Scorning ambition's fee,  
Impartial, pure, and unperturbed,  
Loves me, is dear to me.

This is the key to the understanding of the images of many of the gods of Hinduism and Buddhism, sitting aloft, immovable, serene, untouched by human infirmity.

That Indian sculpture has affected the thought of the Gita is also clear, for there is in the centre of the book a transformation-scene in which the kindly warrior-god gives place to the terrible form of Vishnu with devouring tusks and many arms, and all the weapons and symbols of Indian iconography. The object of this manifestation is to reveal that the enemy are like moths being burned in

a flame, that it is the god himself who dooms them to destruction, that Arjuna is to see in the battle a part of the eternal process:

Death am I, and my present task  
 Destruction. View in me  
 The active slayer of these men;  
 For though you fail and flee,  
 These captains of the hostile hosts  
 Shall die, shall cease to be.

. . . . .  
 They are already slain by me;  
 Be thou the instrument.

. . . . .  
 Then banish pain and slay the slain!  
 To fight and conquest go!

## VII

The Gita, then, is a work of post-Mauryan India. But the tale of the achievements of the age is still incomplete. The Buddhist analogue of the Gita—called into being perhaps by this challenge of Krishna—is the ‘Lotus of the Good Law’, Saddharma-pundarika,<sup>1</sup> as influential in the Buddhist world, and therefore more widespread in its influence; for Hinduism never became so notable a missionary religion as Buddhism. In this book India makes its most characteristic contribution to the Far East, and provides both China and Japan with new inspiration, and with new concepts of God and man. It is on every Buddhist altar in Japan, as much the foundation of her civilization as the Gita is of India’s.

We have seen that the Gita relates Krishna to the Eternal Atman of the Upanishads: that it is in fact a layman’s Upanishad. The Saddharma-pundarika is a work of similar import. It reveals Sakyamuni as Eternal Being, Lord and Father of the world, who has existed and worked from eternity, and whose influence will endure for ever. In a

<sup>1</sup> S.B.E., vol. xxi.

prelude of vast spaces and periods of time we are introduced to this eternal Sakyamuni on the heavenly Vulture Peak. He is seated surrounded by living creatures of all ranks, and there is an air of expectation; he is about to break his long silence. Then a vast ray of light pours from his brow and reveals the utmost confines of space. Maitreya, the coming Buddha, addresses Manjusri, the president of the assembly, and asks what is the meaning of this revelation. He is told that the Blessed One is about 'to pour forth the good rain of the law, to beat its great drum, to raise its great banner, to kindle its great torch, to blow a blast upon its great trumpet'. The divine Buddha, in fact, is about to utter a new Gospel, and to send a refreshing rain upon the expectant multitudes.

At last he speaks, but it is only to express the difficulty and profundity of the doctrine. Yielding, however, to his hearers' importunity, he consents to reveal it, at which 5,000 proud monks and nuns salute him and depart. Congratulating the rest upon having thus been winnowed of the chaff, he proceeds to reveal the central object of his mission on earth; it has one object only—to show all creatures the true Buddha-knowledge, and to open their eyes. Though there is but one road to Nirvana, yet in his skilful tact (*upaya*) he has opened three gates, one for Sravakas, or candidates for Arhatship; one for Pratyeka Buddhas, who are inclined to lonely meditation and solitary achievement; one for Buddhas who are sociable and altruistic. There is but one vehicle, the Buddha-vehicle, and even boys who in their play dedicate their little sand-heaps to the Victorious One, even they reach enlightenment; yea, even such as absent-mindedly have made one single act of homage at a shrine. Great is the skill of the teacher; 'Buddhas ye shall all become. Rejoice and be no longer doubtful or uncertain. I am the Father of you all.'

Such is the new gospel, and several parables in the next three sections bring home the teaching that men in different ways accept what is given to them; as plants take what they need from the impartial rain; as the oculist gradually

accustoms the eye to the light; as a father rescues his children from a burning house by devices suited to their understanding—so does this Teacher of gods and men, this spiritual Father of all, adapt his lessons with skilful pædago-gy. Let them all teach the Sutra, which alone reveals the essence of the faith, 'entering the abode of the Blessed One which is his strong Love, donning his robe which is Forbearance, and sitting in his seat which is the doctrine of Sunyata, or Transcendent Reality'. So shall all become Buddhas, winning their way to Nirvana, as their leader by great and heroic perseverance throughout the ages has won through to it. To each by name he gives a word of cheer, and while all are rejoicing in the good news, there comes an apocalyptic vision of a stupa containing the faint and emaciated body of a former Buddha; a seven-fold light shines from it, and a voice comes forth praising the work of the Lord, and expounding the new Gospel. All present bow in worship, and from the utmost confines of the universe, again lit up by a ray from the Buddha's brow, come the heavenly hosts; the old Buddha graciously invites the new one to share his throne, and confesses his own desire to hear the gospel. Whereupon Sakyamuni reveals that the time for his departure is at hand, and calls for volunteers to proclaim it to all the universe.

Manjusri now modestly declares that he has already preached it with such effect that the eight-year-old daughter of the Naga king has reached enlightenment, and even the false Devadatta has become a Buddha. Many are ready to preach this good news to babes and sinners, and are taught the qualifications of steadfastness and patient meekness under many trials, of caution in sex and other relationships, of a practical grasp of mystical truth leading to detachment, of a quiet and equable mind, and of a life of kindness and benevolence.

There follows a pause of many million years, and Buddhas from many worlds appear—great multitudes whom no man can number. Who are they? They are disciples whom the Buddha has aroused to perfect enlighten-

ment, his spiritual sons, of whom he is eternal Lord and Father, Self-existent, Supreme Spirit, Creator, Ruler, and Destroyer of the Universe. The events of his historical life are skilful adaptations, part of his gracious strategy to win men. As a wise physician may feign death in order to move his disobedient children to take the medicine nothing else will induce them to touch, so by an emptying of himself the eternal Buddha became man for the sake of the erring family of men. And as a father departs to a far country so the great physician has left the world that his erring and ailing children may use the medicines he has prescribed.

Like the Gita the Lotus has a prologue and three main sections: the first revealing the One Way, the second the One eternal Lord, the third the Living Church. In its emphasis on salvation for all, and on devotion to the Lord, it is clearly a Buddhist answer to the claims of the Gita. It is noteworthy that both hold out the hope of salvation to women, who have seldom been given their rightful place in Indian religion.

At Mathura, where the Chinese pilgrim found so many Buddhist monuments, their ruins may be seen to-day side by side with the temples of Hinduism. For this is the Holy Land of Krishna, and many a Buddha or Bodhisattva or Scythian devotee may be found on Hindu altars converted by the application of paint and garlands into a Hindu god! Here too may be found some of the strongest examples of Buddhist sculpture, which tell of an art quickened by contact with the Greeks, yet remaining truly Indian. It is an art much grander than the Eurasian art of Gandhara: we may accept the statement of an expert who finds in it 'on the one hand a direct continuation of the old Indian art of Barhut and Sanchi and on the other the classical influence derived from Gandhara'.

How splendid was Mathura at its zenith—when Fa Hian saw it, with glistening domes and noble stone rails, where silent Buddhas of gracious mien and classic pose received the homage of yellow-robed monks, and knights

in arms, and women in the famed fabrics of Benares, and the masses in their white pilgrim-robos.

Nor must we fail to notice the great art arising during this time at Amaravati, in south India—a sophisticated, graceful, and sensuous sculpture; and at Anuradhapura in Ceylon, with the strong and severe lines and the massive forms of colossal Buddhas in contemplation—inspired perhaps by the Yogi ideal of the Gita, ‘still as a flame burning clear in a windless place’. These artists caught the very spirit of Indian religion at its best, whether Hindu or Buddhist. Some of the oldest frescoes of Ajanta seem to belong to this age. They represent a dark and slim people with the same physique and costume which are found at Amaravati.

The so-called Hindu Renaissance of the Gupta Era is more truly an awakening of an India which has drunk deep at both springs. The Buddhist images of Sarnath are as typical of this awakening as the poems of Kalidasa. A new intellectualism was in the air, reflected in architecture and sculpture as much as in literature and science—a logical beauty which reminds us in many ways of Greece at its zenith, as in its spirit of adventure and of the zest of life it reminds us of Elizabethan England. Of such times poets like Shakespeare and Euripides and Kalidasa are as typical as sculptors like Praxiteles or the unnamed masters of Sarnath, or the pioneers of a new science like Francis Bacon and Aryabhatta and Archimedes.

And if the purpose of the great sculptor and painter is to reveal the Hidden Beauty, this is the aim also of the physicist and mathematician, and of the true poet. A great religious impulse may have much to do with these secular achievements, and nowhere is this clearer than in the India of the fourth and fifth centuries of our era. Hindu philosophy had aided Hindu religion in its passionate search for the One behind the Many: Buddhism had emphasized the unchanging amid change, the calm amidst turmoil, of a Buddha meditating amidst the assaults of Mara, or the lamentations of men and gods as he enters Nirvana.

Unified by the forces of the spirit within, by the popularizing of Hinduism in the great epics, by her pilgrimages and strolling minstrels, India is unified also by pressure of external foes, and ready for a great leader to unite her in a new empire and a new synthesis. Krishna's promise came with peculiar force to the men of this age. The Indian historian sees its fulfilment in great religious awakenings at dark times in Indian political life. And these in turn prepare the way for political emancipation.

When Righteousness  
Declines, O Bharata! When Wickedness  
Is strong, I rise, from age to age, and take  
Visible shape, and move a man with men,  
Succouring the good, thrusting the evil back,  
And setting Virtue on her seat again.<sup>1</sup>

## THE WISDOM OF PRE-GUPTAN INDIA

### (1) *A Son*

Food for man's life and clothes for his protection,  
Gold for adornment, marriage for enrichment,  
A wife for distraction, a daughter for affliction,  
A Son alone is as the Sun in his perfection.

(The Sage Narada to King Harischandra.)

### (2) *When Silence is Golden*

(Needlebeak, an interfering Bird, is admonished by a Monkey.)

If you are wise and court success,  
On busier men yourself don't press,  
Nor speak to gamblers who have lost  
Or hunters who have missed the scent—  
Or you will soon be sorrow-tossed!

(The Bird refuses this advice and the Monkeys wring its neck—  
their leader continuing):

Wood that is stiff cannot be bent  
Nor is hard stone by razor dressed,

<sup>1</sup> From Sir Edwin Arnold's *Song Celestial*.



## THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA

So seek not, friends, a fool to teach,  
Silence is wiser than the wisest speech.

(Panchatantra—written in prose with verse summaries for the instruction of princes about the first century A.D.).

'The Five Ruses' are largely Machiavellian counsels given by a Brahmin to three ignorant princes in the guise of animal stories which were translated into Persian and Arabic and thus reached Europe. Originally folk-tales, some of them appear also in Buddhist guise.

(3) *A Good Friend*

Who is not made a nobler man  
By friendship with a noble friend?  
The dew-drop on the lotus leaf  
May e'en the pearl itself transcend.

Ibid.

(4) *A Bad Son*

To what good purpose can a cow  
That brings no calf nor milk be bent?  
Or why beget a son who proves  
A dunce and disobedient?

## THE EPIC TEACHINGS

(after Monier Williams)

(1) *Ramayana*

Truth, justice, and nobility of rank  
Are centred in the King; he is mother,  
Father, and benefactor of his subjects.

(ed. Bombay) II. lxvii. 35.

Whate'er the work a man performs,  
The most effective aid to its completion—  
The most prolific source of true success—  
Is energy without despondency.

(ed. Bombay) v. xii. 11.

He who has wealth has strength of intellect;  
He who has wealth has depth of erudition;  
He who has wealth has nobleness of birth;  
He who has wealth has relatives and friends;

He who has wealth is thought a very hero;  
 He who has wealth is rich in every virtue.  
 (ed. Bombay) vi. lxxxiii. 35, 36.

(2) *Mahabharata*

Thou thinkest: I am single and alone—  
 Perceiving not the great eternal Sage  
 Who dwells within thy breast. Whatever wrong  
 Is done by thee, he sees and notes it all.

i. 3015.

A wife is half the man, his truest friend  
 Source of his virtue, pleasure, wealth—the root  
 Whence springs the line of his posterity.

i. 3028.

Conquer a man who never gives by gifts;  
 Subdue untruthful men by truthfulness;  
 Vanquish an angry man by gentleness;  
 And overcome the evil man by goodness.

iii. 13253.

Triple restraint of thought and word and deed,  
 Strict vow of silence, coil of matted hair,  
 Close shaven head, garments of skin or bark,  
 Keeping of fasts, ablutions, maintenance  
 Of sacrificial fires, a hermit's life,  
 Emaciation—these are all in vain,  
 Unless the inward soul be free from stain.

iii. 13445.

To injure none by thought or word or deed,  
 To give to others, and be kind to all—  
 This is the constant duty of the good.  
 High-minded men delight in doing good,  
 Without a thought of their own interest;  
 When they confer a benefit on others,  
 They reckon not on favours in return.

iii. 16782, 16796.

Sufficient wealth, unbroken health, a friend,  
 A wife of gentle speech, a docile son,  
 And learning that subserves some useful end—  
 These are a living man's six greatest blessings.

v. 1057.

## THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA

How can a man love knowledge yet repose?  
 Would'st thou be learned, then abandon ease.  
 Either give up thy knowledge or thy rest.

v. 1537.

No sacred lore can save the hypocrite,  
 Though he employ it craftily, from hell;  
 When his end comes, his pious texts take wing,  
 Like fledglings eager to forsake their nest.

v. 1623.

A king must first subdue himself, and then  
 Vanquish his enemies. How can a prince  
 Who cannot rule himself, enthral his foes?  
 To curb the senses, is to conquer self.

xii. 2599.

Enjoy thou the prosperity of others,  
 Although thyself unprosperous; noble men  
 Take pleasure in their neighbour's happiness.

xii. 3880.

This is the sum of all true righteousness—  
 Treat others, as thou would'st thyself be treated.  
 Do nothing to thy neighbour, which hereafter  
 Thou would'st not have thy neighbour do to thee.  
 In causing pleasure, or in giving pain,  
 In doing good, or injury to others,  
 In granting, or refusing a request,  
 A man obtains a proper rule of action  
 By looking on his neighbour as himself.

xiii. 5571.

Heaven's gate is very narrow and minute,  
 It cannot be perceived by foolish men,  
 Blinded by vain illusions of the world.  
 E'en the clear-sighted who discern the way,  
 And seek to enter, find the portal barred  
 And hard to be unlocked. Its massive bolts  
 Are pride and passion, avarice and lust.

xiv. 2784.

## CHRONOLOGY

(From E. J. Rapson's *Ancient India*)

- B.C.**
- 250 Establishment of the kingdom of Bactria by Diodotus, and of the kingdom of Parthia by Arsaces.
- 230 Euthydemus, King of Bactria, supplants the house of Diodotus.
- 220 Establishment of the Andhra power (Catavahana dynasty).
- 209 Invasion of Bactria and the Kabul Valley by Antiochus III the Great, King of Syria (223-187 B.C.).
- 200-100 Graeco-Indian kings of the house of Euthydemus ruling in NW. India.
- 184-172 The Sunga dynasty of Magadha and Malava.
- 175-125 Graeco-Indian kings of the house of Eucratides ruling in NW. India.
- 171-138 Mithradates I, King of Parthia.
- 135 The Saka invasion of Bactria.
- 58 Initial year of the Vikrama era.
- 50 A Pahlava dynasty (the family of Vonones) ruling in NW. India.
- 25 Conquest of the Kabul Valley by the Kushana chief Kujula Kadphises.
- A.D.**
- 21-50 Gondopharnes, Pahlava King of NW. India.
- 78 Kanishka, Kushana King.

## V

# THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE GUPTAS

*(Fourth to Sixth Centuries A.D.)*

'The householder is as holy as the Brahmin.' MANU.

## I

ON one of the pillars of Asoka, which sets forth the victories of the compassionate spirit, a later hand has inscribed a very different tale. It is in Sanskrit, whereas that of Asoka is in one of the dialects, and it commemorates the deeds of a great conqueror. 'Skilled in a hundred battles, relying only on the strength of his right arm . . . he captured and liberated the kings of Kosala and many others . . . and with violence exterminated many in the North, reducing to serfdom the kings of the Forest Lands and to vassalage forest states both East and West.' 'By him the whole tribe of kings on earth', we read in another inscription, 'were overthrown and bereft of their sovereignty.' But we learn also that he 're-established many royal families' and we get a pleasing picture of his skill as a poet, 'whose various works were fitted to give a livelihood to the learned and to set free the powers of poets', that he put to shame the musician Narada by his skill as a master of choirs, and of musical accomplishments; and by his sharp and cultured mind overcame Kasyapa, the teacher of Indra.

Who is this great conqueror, so accomplished as a man of letters and a musician? The inscription is written in poetry and prose by Harisena, the court poet of Samudragupta, and was made at the order of his successor, Chandragupta. These two great men inaugurated a veritable Golden Age of Hindu culture, some six centuries after the Asokan Era, and in them we see Hinduism re-establishing itself as the national religion. This national awakening, like the Elizabethan Age in England and the T'ang Age in China, saw an outburst of genius in many fields, and its achievements in mathematics, in

astronomy, in dramatic and other poetry, in painting and in sculpture, are now becoming known to the western world, some fifteen centuries after China and the Far East began to take cognizance of them, and some twelve centuries since much of their achievement passed into the culture of the Arab world.

The first Gupta king ruled only a small kingdom, with its capital at the old Mauryan city Pataliputra. Marrying a princess of the neighbouring clan of Lichchavis he ruled as Chandragupta I and became the father of the great Samudragupta, who succeeded him in A.D. 330 and built upon the foundations he had laid. An admirable coin commemorates the union of his parents, and on the reverse is the goddess Lakshmi, seated upon a couchant lion. Samudragupta here proudly commemorates his mother's lineage, and on almost all his coins pays homage also to this goddess of good fortune who so signally favoured him. With extraordinary success in arms he united an India greater than that of any since Asoka, and we find him celebrating the *asvamedha*, or horse-sacrifice, and commemorating it upon another coin. In doing so he definitely challenged India to accept his imperial authority, and proclaimed himself an orthodox Hindu; for Buddhism had protested against this practice, and it had fallen into disuse for five centuries.

Of the happy condition of India during his reign there are many proofs. It is significant that one of the highest tributes to the Guptas comes from the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian, who, while he had eyes only for the activities of the Buddhist Order, nevertheless noted at the beginning of the fifth century that the people as a whole were prosperous, 'paying no head-tax and unharassed by officials. Only the farmers of royal lands pay an assessment, and they are free to go as they wish. The kings rule without corporal punishment, but criminals are fined. Even in cases of repeated offences the penalty is only the loss of the right hand. . . . Throughout the land the people abstain from taking life or drinking wine, and only the Chandalas (outcasts), eat garlic or onions.' Evidently Buddhism had

left its stamp upon manners and morals. This is a very different India from that of the Arthashastra, even if all allowance be made for the fact that Fa Hian was prepared to see the best, and that his 'travel-diary' is propaganda to awaken the monks of his own land to the beauty and benefits of Buddhism.

His visit actually came during the reign of Chandragupta II, who took the title of Vikramaditya, or Sun of Power, and India thrived under him. In one of the loveliest poems of Kalidasa, 'The Cloud Messenger', scene follows scene in vivid portrayal of a peaceful and happy land, stretching from the Himalayas to the Vindhya. The subject of endless legends, 'Vikramaditya is to the Hindus what Charlemagne is to the French, what Alfred is to the English, what Asoka is to the Buddhists, and what Haroun al Raschid is to the Muhammadans'. Romances have been written in all the main languages of India about him, and villagers assemble to this day under many a giant tree to listen to his exploits.

Moving the capital from Pataliputra in the east to Ujjain in the middle-west, he made it a great centre of art and learning. The 'Nine Gems' of his court seem to have included the poet-laureate Kalidasa and the court-astronomer Varahamihira, famous like his predecessor Aryabhata as a mathematician.

A good system of arithmetic and algebra has come to us through Arab scholars from Guptan India. The decimal system of notation for example may be traced to this source, one of the great achievements of humanity.

In literature we have not only several dramas and lyrics of Kalidasa, but other works of more universal and modern character like the 'Little Clay Cart', and the historic play *Mudra Rakshasa*, which tells the story of Chandragupta Maurya and his usurpation of the throne. It shows us the crafty Brahmin Kautilya as his chief helper, and in this and similar works we have a true picture of ancient India with its elaborate court, its Brahmins and ascetics, its courtiers and buffoons, its hermits and wandering philosophers.

In *Shakuntala*, first introduced to Europe by Sir William Jones at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and now universally known and acclaimed as a work of genius, we have, for example, a classic picture of the Indian ascetic:

See where stands the hermit, horridly austere,  
Whom clinging vines are choking, tough and sere:  
Half buried in an anthill that has grown  
About him standing post-like and alone;

Sun-stared with dim eyes that know no rest,  
The dead skin of a serpent on his breast,  
So long he stood unmoved, insensate there,  
That birds built nests within his mat of hair.<sup>1</sup>

Here clearly Indian asceticism has reverted to a type much less worthy than that of the Bodhisattva, the Servant of Man, which Buddhism had striven with splendid sanity to establish. It is noteworthy that Fa Hian accepts as historic such legends of the suffering Bodhisattva as his giving his own flesh to redeem the dove caught by a hungry hawk. He may well have seen this picture in the Caves of Ajanta, where the dove is seen weighed in a golden balance against the flesh of the saint, and eager as Herodotus for marvels, have interpreted it as history.

The relations of the secular and the religious are well illustrated in the drama of India. Some scholars see a dramatic quality in the dialogue hymns of the Rig-Veda: and these were probably recited antiphonally. In the Upanishads this is a marked feature, and such poems as the *Katha Upanishad* are still so recited. Under the lovely *Sal Trees* of Dr. Tagore's *Asram* I have listened spell-bound to this antiphonal chanting of the dialogue between King Death and the boy Naciketas, who wrests from him the secret of immortality.

These are the beginnings of miracle-plays or 'mysteries' which develop into the popular religious dramas of Krishna or of the Buddha, and into the still more popular dramas of the Gupta age.

<sup>1</sup> *Shakuntala*, A. W. Ryder.



'It is difficult', says Berriedale Keith, 'not to see in the Kansavadha, the death of Kansa at the hands of Krishna, the refined version of an older vegetation ritual.'<sup>1</sup> And he finds here a very interesting parallel in the theory that the Greek drama has its roots in a mimic conflict between summer and winter. Early fertility rituals would seem to be almost everywhere the germs from which dramatic art developed. An element of race and class conflict gave an added zest as the Aryan Krishna, a Kshatriya, defeats the black Sudra Kansa.

The festival of the Birth of Krishna is popular and spectacular, and the Buddhists had their rival attraction in the Legends of Sakyamuni. Opposed at first to all 'spectacles and shows' on account of their loose morality, the Buddhists produced such dramatists as Asvaghosa, and the earliest surviving Indian dramas are from his pen; such apocalyptic works as the 'Lotus of the True Law' are developed mystery-plays in dialogue form, and the Ajanta frescoes show that the Buddhists of the Guptan Era were not backward in their appreciation of dance and song.

'The evidence is conclusive on the close connexion of religion and the drama, and it strongly suggests that it is from religion that the decisive impulse to dramatic creation was given.'<sup>1</sup>

Let us now return to Ujjain and see it through the eyes of the great French Orientalist Sylvain Lévi, whose *History of the Indian Theatre* makes it clear that the heroic comedy or nataka is the Indian type of dramatic work, which draws its subject from well-known legends and chooses some important hero, born of a line of kings or gods, and expresses chiefly sentiments of the heroic and the erotic, moving always to a happy climax. 'The genius of Kalidasa', he says, 'is recognized in the regular development of the plot, in the just proportions of the cast, in the happy choice of the incidents, in the majesty and charm of the stage effects. . . . The Indian Theatre presents the spectacle, perhaps unique, of a theory accepted without

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Keith, *Sanskrit Drama*, pp. 27, 44-5.

protest and applied with servile respect for fifteen centuries.'

In this great art, religion has still a central place, and the Indian dharma or way of life is here as always inextricably interwoven with faith in the Unseen. 'I went', says another French writer, 'thinking only to be present at the staging of a mystery-play: I came away with the feeling that I had seen the celebration of a religious rite.'

An admirable exercise in the reconstructive imagination of the historian is M. Lévi's description of the 'first night' of Shakuntala.

The Spring Festival is at hand. Ujjain, city of rich merchants, intellectual capital of India, glorious and prospering under a wise and victorious king, is preparing to keep the feast with a pomp worthy of its wealth and culture. The season and other circumstances are propitious to the drama; the palace of Vikramaditya is hospitable to letters. But where is a work to be found exquisite enough to satisfy the critical faculty of the King, of his Nine Gems, and of all the court? . . . Kalidasa has just finished a heroic comedy, and it has been hailed by his friends as a masterpiece. . . . The honour of presenting a play by Kalidasa before the most illustrious Sovereign of India brings out keen competition among the troupe of actors who have gone up to Ujjain for the feast. But the poet has his own comedians, whom he has trained and perfected in his "Malavika and Agnimitra". When the company is chosen, the director goes to the palace and examines the hall. Cord in hand he takes the measurements, fixes the pitch and dimensions of the stage, and leaves his assistant to direct the arrangements. . . . The actors, who have been well-trained in appreciation, recognize the masterly qualities of the play, the cleverness of the intrigue, the correct balance of the sentiments, the freshness of the imagination. The orchestra rehearses the melodies, the dance tunes, and the instrumental music.

The Festival of Spring has come. Poet and players, anxious and nervous, arise very early in the morning to hasten the last preparations. As the sun rises, Vikramaditya enters, followed by his court, and seats himself upon the throne: his women stand on his left, and on the right are vassal kings who have come to pay him homage, princes, officers, men of letters and sages, grouped about Varahamihira the historian, and Amarasinaka the lexicographer. The hall glows with lights: precious stones sparkle, set in the gold of the

pillars and in the diadems of the kings. Banners of many colours hang from the columns. The roll of a drum announces the opening of the show. A chorus chants welcome and pays homage to gods, brahmins and kings. The director recites the opening blessing, turns toward the wings and summons an actress; talks with her a moment and calls for a song to charm the audience. The two lovely figures stationed before the curtain draw its folds apart, and Dushyanta, bow and arrows in hand, is seen mounted in his chariot. . . . He and his charioteer approach the hermitage and the king. At the sound of girls' voices curiosity thrills the spectators, for Shakuntala, daughter of an apsara and creation of Kalidasa, is the incarnation of all charms. Will the actress be able to realize the ideal and to satisfy the connoisseur? She appears, clad in a simple tunic of bark which at once hides and reveals her form. The lines of her face, her large eyes, languorous and dark, her ample bosom and her delicate arms, leave the imagination to complete her charms. Her attitude, her gestures, ravish the heart and eyes, and when she speaks her voice is a song. The court of Vikramaditya trembles with a serene and deep emotion: a new masterpiece has just put on immortality.

It is indeed a noble poem, loosely knit as drama, but with unforgettable scenes of love and courtship, and like all the work of Kalidasa it abounds in rich imagery, and in fine appreciation of nature. Our illustrative passages may be taken as typical. They are in themselves a corrective of Fa Hian's description of magic begging-bowls and of the austere life of Buddhist scholars, and remind us that India, like the rest of the world, rejoices in the loves of men and women and in the secular as well as the religious.

## II

Monasteries were only some of many centres of its teeming life. These Fa Hian found flourishing greatly in northern India. He saw the great Stupa of Kanishka near Peshawar, rediscovered for us by another brilliant Frenchman, who found it by following on the map the footsteps of Fa Hian. When he crossed the Indus he found many more monasteries: at Mathura, which has since become a veritable Holy Land of Hinduism, he saw some twenty

Buddhist monasteries: 'The Faith is here becoming very popular, and all the kings in Northern India to the west of the desert are sworn believers. When they make offerings to the monks they take off their caps of state, and together with their courtiers wait upon the monks at table. The meal ended, they spread rugs upon the ground and sit facing the Abbot, not daring to take higher seats in the presence of the monks.'

He tells us that there were four great centres of pilgrimage still visited by the faithful, though he mentions a different four in two parts of his little book, and he paints for us a vivid scene of Buddhist religious processions, which 'are held on the eighth day of the second month, with cars adorned with gold, silver, and brass, and rich with silk banners and canopies conveying images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas from street to street, with music and singing and much offering of flowers and incense'. He says that the 'Brahmins invite the Buddhists', and this evidently means that Hinduism and Buddhism exist side by side and tolerate one another. Of free hospitals and medicine we hear, too, and there is evidently a good deal of a typical Buddhist civilization remaining. It is a mistake to think that it was ever separated from the rest of Indian life, or that a 'Buddhist India' ever existed. Some regions became predominantly Buddhist, that is all; and the country of Bihar which he visited keeps in its name the record of its many Viharas, or monasteries.

Here our pilgrim visits the Vulture's Peak, and is moved to tears by the thought that the great Buddha himself once lived upon it, and that he, Fa Hian born too late, can only gaze upon scenes of his human life. He visited Bodhgaya: here evidently as to-day, Hinduism had re-established itself; but in the Deer Park at Benares he found monks, and turning back from there to central India he resumed his search for books of Buddhist discipline. Students of Buddhism and of the fifth century in India will find the travels of Fa-Hian one of the most interesting of books. He was gone from his home for fifteen years (A.D. 399-

414) and had walked from central China across the terrible deserts of Gobi and the almost impassable heights of the Himalayas, and across the long northern plains of India to the mouth of the Hooghly. An heroic and incredible journey.

If this great traveller is too ready to accept wonders, and is interested more in relics than in persons, we yet owe him an immense debt of gratitude, and by comparing what he has to say with the accounts of his successor Hiuen Chang, we can obtain a picture of the decline of Buddhism in India, and yet realize that in its great universities such as Nalanda and Taxila, and in abbeys like Ajanta, it lived on, and that there continued to be Buddhist groups side by side with the more powerfully organized Brahmins. Amaravisha, one of the 'nine gems' of Ujjain, built the great Stupa of Bodhgaya at this time and we know that during the reign of Samudragupta, Meghavarna of Ceylon built a large monastery for pilgrims to the Bo-tree, and that Hiuen Chang found this still thriving, and occupied by a thousand monks, in the seventh century. But the best evidence of the power of the Buddhist Order is preserved for us in the great monastic foundation of Ajanta, in western India. Here Buddhist monks settled in a secluded valley, and here through several centuries they hollowed out caves, some thirty in number, and made cells for themselves, and places of worship for the people. Into these cells they retreated during the rainy season for meditation and study, and to these chaityas or worship-halls gathered the faithful. Many rich patrons, accepting their teaching that the monks are the 'harvest-field of merit', lavished gifts upon them; and some of India's greatest artists were brought here by kings and rich merchants, and decorated the walls of some of the great caves.

### III

Ajanta is a cradle of Asiatic art. Japanese visitors have often exclaimed on the kinship between its great frescoes

and those of Horiuji. Japanese artists have made some of the best copies of them, almost entirely destroyed, alas, in the great earthquake; but those which survive seem to have caught the very spirit of Ajanta.

Scholars have now the materials for working out the long journey of this art eastwards to the grottoes of Tun Huang and Miran in Chinese Turkistan, and on to Horiuji, and southwards to Sigiri Rock in Ceylon. I have often climbed to that wonderful gallery, and gazed in amazement at its procession of princesses and handmaidens still glowing with splendid colour, and alive with the spirit of the Indian renaissance.

That this art is Indian, and that the Indian exponents of Buddhism were its 'carriers' is clear; but it is also clear that it developed in each new environment. Horiuji shows some of these developments; it is a museum of Asiatic culture where the influence of T'ang China and Turkistan can be seen moulding the spirit of Guptan India.

That this is a living spirit Indian artists of to-day have shown. Not only have they repeatedly copied its masterpieces, they have also learned from them much of their technique, have drunk deep of their joy in the beauty of Indian womanhood and of the great beasts of the jungle. For Buddhism was an awakening of the Indian spirit and while it was in part world-denying, it was also so filled with joy that it could not but rejoice in the beauty of the world. Even the fair forms of women, a 'snare of Mara' for the monk, were to the artist a part of the splendour of his native land. These lovely forms but thinly veiled are perhaps the first impression which the visitor receives. And the next is that of great herds of elephants and groups of inimitable monkeys which suggest that these monks knew alike the life of the city and of the country-side. More and more as these great works of art are made accessible and as the tide of Indian nationalism mounts, will the lover of Mother India turn to this lovely valley; and the visit will become an imperishable memory.

Here, some 300 miles from Bombay, in a great semi-circular valley a little stream 'murmurs its perpetual plain-song'—a fitting place to meditate. Here some 2,000 years ago a little group of monks made their first home. The frescoes of Caves IX and X seem to belong to about the first century A.D., and here for perhaps a thousand years their communal life went on, until Ajanta was a mighty abbey, and the simple caves had developed into great pillared cathedrals or chaityas and rows of monastic cells or viharas. Their walls glow after all these centuries of use and of neglect, and of amateur copyists, with the rich tones and the rhythmic processions of an art already highly developed by the Guptan age. Here one may reconstruct the splendour of these early monastic haunts of Buddhism, and may still drink deep of their peace.

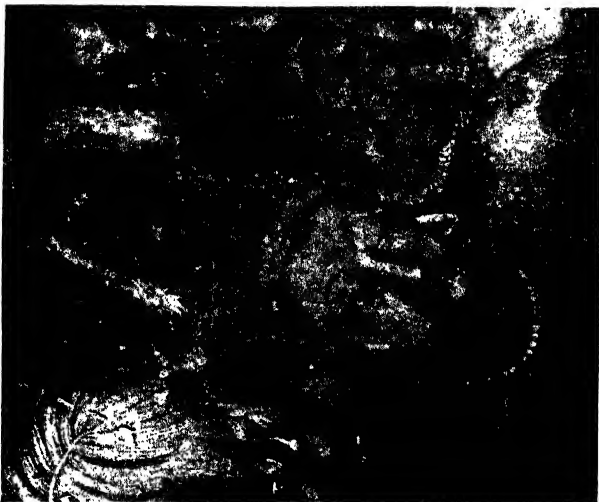
A delightful pilgrimage it is to visit the Buddha's birthplace, to pass on to Patna, the old capital of the Mauryas, to the venerable Bo-tree and the Deer Park, and so to become attuned and prepared to understand the great things of Ajanta, and of Sanchi on its lovely hill-top, a few hours' journey away. This was a pilgrimage of great Buddhist rulers and we find as early, at any rate, as Asoka, that the symbols of these great scenes in the life of the Buddha were the chosen *motifs* of the earliest art. How well they suited the genius of India. The elephant, always her best beloved of animals, came to symbolize the dream of the Buddha's mother, the great humped bull stood for the month of May when Taurus is in the ascendant, and the lion was the symbol of the Buddha's first preaching. These were stamped on tokens for the faithful, and they reappear on the primitive sculptures of Barhut and the highly wrought pillars of the Asokan age.

At Ajanta the symbolism remains, but it has largely given place to realistic pictures of these events, and of the Temptation and Death of the Buddha.

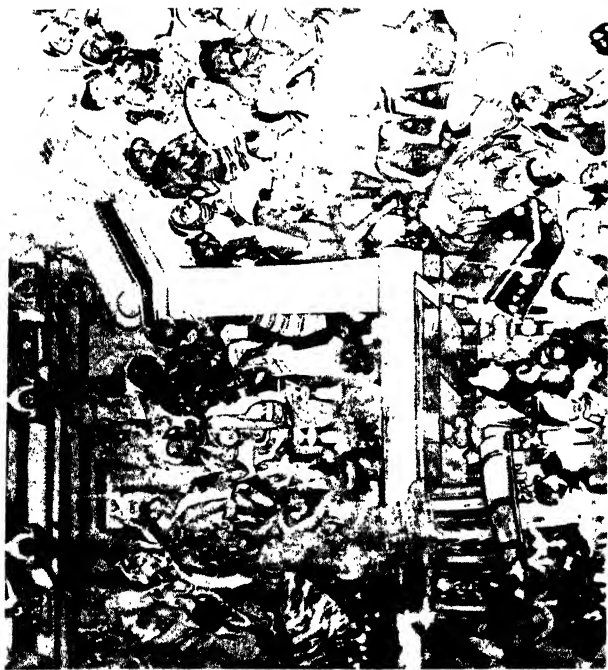
The artists believed, too, that for many aeons he had been born in other forms, and these supplied them with many a delightful theme. Here were grand opportunities







PADMAPANI



THE PRINCE IN PALACE AND CITY

AJANTA FRESCOS

for painting herds of elephants or apes sporting in the jungle; and a spice of quaint humour was added to their art as these familiar forms were endowed with human reason and emotion. Fa Hian, who visited India and Ceylon in the fifth century, the age of the great Guptas, of Kalidasa and Kumarajiva, tells how popular pageants dramatized these admirable folk-tales, and his contemporary, the commentator Buddhaghosa, sums up their Buddhist interpretation: 'More than the ocean is the blood he poured out, more than the stars are the eyes he sacrificed.'

From this wealth of material—there are 550 Jatakas and several versions of the Legend of Sakyamuni—the artists chose some incidents which recur again and again like a solemn fugue, because they best serve to show his great compassion, or because they form an effective contrast between his early life as a prince, and his life of sacrifice as the wandering recluse who became the Buddha.

Let us accompany the Curator of the caves, Mr. Syed Ahmad, himself an able artist. In the early morning he will guide us to these frescoes, which he has studied so lovingly and knows in such intimate detail. First we visit Cave XVI. Here is a fine series of scenes from the Buddha-legend as set forth in the *Lalita Vistara*, from the Birth of Sakyamuni to his Enlightenment. In our illustration the technique of the artist is clearly revealed. On a carefully prepared surface of plaster he outlined his subject with a thin flowing line of red, and then filled in the outline with glowing colour. It is amazing how with one stroke of the brush he would trace the contours of some lovely female form, or express in the turn of a hand or in the arch of an eyebrow some subtle emotion. Almost all the incidents of the legendary life of the Buddha are depicted at Ajanta, and the artist had clearly entered deeply into that wonderful story.

Here too are certain scenes from the Jatakas which occur again and again in Indian art. The artist rejoiced in such stories as that of Chaddanta, the noble elephant, yielding up his tusks to the vengeful queen, who had him

treacherously shot, but could not ruffle his equanimity nor soil his magnanimous spirit. Was he not to be reborn as the Buddha? Such is the didactic purpose of the fresco; but who can doubt that the artist revelled also in these great herds of elephants, a veritable pageant of the jungle? If these are 'memory pictures' as Dr. Coomaraswamy maintains,<sup>1</sup> they are also the work of very keen observers of Nature, exact and vigorous.

That is a combination which is of the essence of Oriental, as of all great art. The artist is to know the 'skeleton', say the canons of Chinese art, in order that he may 'express the spirit which informs the rhythm of Nature'. And early Indian canons also insist that behind the physical world of form, which must be observed, lies a more real meaning, which must be interpreted.

The poet works in no other way. He refuses with Wordsworth 'to make an inventory of Nature'; but goes forth 'in meditative mood', observes carefully, and at a later day embodies his memory-pictures, presenting us with the soul of what he has seen.

The Buddhist birth-stories, which deal so largely with animals and plants, with the jungle as well as with the village, gave full scope to the artist for interpretation as well as for observation. They and the pictures which illustrate them are proof that the Indian loved nature, even while he used it for didactic purposes.

A favourite with the artists of India is the story of the Bodhisattva when he was King of the Apes. The King of Benares, hearing of a mango-tree whose fruits had floated to his city, sought it out, and found the monkeys in possession. Manlike he began to shoot, until their King, forming a bridge, let his tribe escape over his own body to safety. The villain of the Buddha legend, afterwards to be reborn as the traitor Devadatta, leaps on his back and breaks it, and the Ape King, with his dying breath, teaches the King of Men the great Buddhist principle of ahimsa, so vividly realized in the life and teachings of India's greatest living

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to Indian Art*, pp. 20-2.

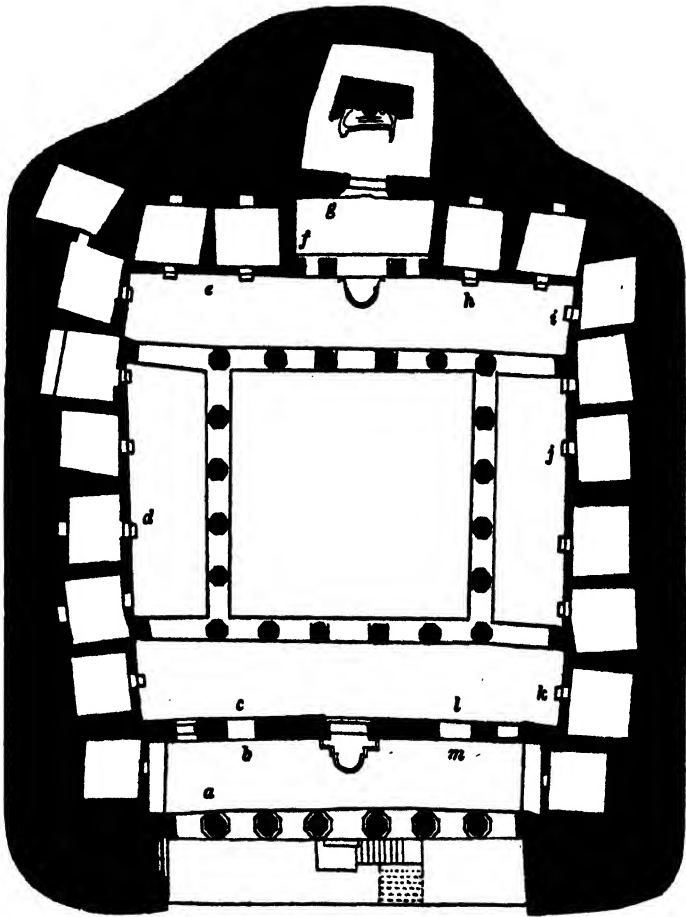
son. 'It is more kingly', he urges, 'to save life than to destroy it.' As Mr. Gandhi would say, 'If there is blood shed, let it be our blood'.

These lessons, together with that of liberality in giving, are made, if possible, more vivid by pictures like that of the Prince of the Sibis, who here and at Borobodur, is seen cutting off his own flesh as a ransom for the dove caught by a hungry hawk. Here is a counterpart of the Merchant of Venice, which is very Buddhist; and in the same cave we will find, as at Sanchi, the story of Vessantara, who refuses no sacrifice, even that of wife and child, in his search for salvation. By such stories the minds of multitudes have been prepared for the inner meaning of the Buddha legend as it is told in such texts as the Introduction to the Jatakas, the Lalita Vistara, and the Buddha-charita; for these form the living core of Buddhism even to-day, and a visit to its ancient shrines is of more than archaeological interest. Here the student will discover those things which make Buddhism a religion, as well as those missionary impulses which sent it out on its triumphant course through Asia.

As the setting sun casts its long level light into the recesses of Caves I and II, other scenes from the Buddha legend are lit up. Here in Cave I is the Temptation by Mara and his demon armies, a vortex of horror about the calm central figure.

In Cave II are stories of the Infancy and Jatakas; but even more striking are the great figures of the Bodhisattva with the lotus, Padmapani, and another, which help us to realize how noble a pantheon later Buddhism developed, and which critics have not hesitated to compare with the work of Michael Angelo.

The frescoes of Ajanta have for Asia and the history of Asian art the same outstanding significance that the frescoes of Assisi, Siena, and Florence have for Europe and the history of European art. The whole course of art in Eastern Asia is bound up with the history of Buddhism in its successive phases; and the student of that art finds himself continually referring back to Ajanta as the one great



PLAN OF CAVE XVII, AJANTA

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (a) Wheel of Samsara                          | (g) Offering of handful of dust                                      |
| (b) Gandharvas                                | (h) Sarabha Jataka; Matriposhaka Jataka; Matsya Jataka; Syama Jataka |
| (c) Shaddanta Jataka; Mahakapi Jataka         | (i) Mahisha Jataka   |
| (d) Visantara Jataka                          | (j) Simhala Avadana  |
| (e) Sutasoma Jataka                           | (k) Sibi Jataka B  |
| (f) Interrogation of Sariputra and the Sermon | (l) Mriga Jataka; Bear Jataka  |
| (m) Subjugation of the furious elephant       |  |

(From a plan made by the Archaeological Department of H.H. the Nizam)

surviving monument of the painting created by Buddhist faith and fervour in the land which gave birth to that religion.

So writes Mr. Laurence Binyon. And these great figures in Cave II are perhaps the crowning achievement of the Ajantan artists. They stand there as twin guardians of the shrine where the eternal Sakyamuni sits on his Diamond-throne, and remind us that behind the elaborate developments of Buddhism is the historic Founder. Hard indeed it is to return to the Diamond-throne and to recapture the Sakyamuni of history. Is he Rationalist, or Divinity conscious that he had come to dethrone the gods of his people? Is he Philosopher or Yogi, Reformer or Conservator? Is he 'the honoured Elder Brother' of the austere monks or 'the God above the gods' of the masses? Is the view taken of him by the theologians of the Mahayana as the Absolute dwelling in time a possible view?

These views are all to-day maintained by reputable scholars of East and West, and here we can only mention them so far as they affect the work of the Indian artist. He has, for the most part, seen in Sakyamuni the great Yogi, seated in rapt contemplation of his own inner consciousness. The glorious pageant of his princely life is only of interest because it culminates in the mystic trance beneath the Bo-tree. The lovely forms of the Bodhisattvas are but sentinels of the antechapel, and they point the worshipper to the inner shrine where he sits in Samadhi, or rapt contemplation. Yet the masses will go a-worshipping; and these other figures attracted to themselves the reverence which should have gone wholly to the master; and he himself, partly in competition with these fair forms and with the popular gods of Hinduism, came to be regarded as a living deity. Such is the meaning of the famous Lotus Scripture, the Saddharma-pundarika, whose influence on east Asian art has been profound. It is, as we saw above, an apocalypse revealing the eternal Buddha and the universality of his gospel.

Of the technique of these Ajanta paintings others better qualified have written. How they were done, how much

they owe to foreign influence—these are questions which I neither dare nor desire to discuss. What is to me significant is that they are essentially works of Indian art, and that in their spiritual realism, their love of nature and of fair human forms, they prove that Indians who were also Buddhists belong to the great tradition which we have been apt to claim for the West. Buddhism was, in fact, a revolt against the other-worldly mysticism of the Upanishads—a claim that man's life, transient though it is, is real. As it developed it went on to claim that all are by nature Buddhas: they are real, not dreams. This is the essence of the Lotus Scripture, 'All are my children . . . all may attain to Buddhahood'.

This emphasis on the reality and value of human life is one note of the Buddha's thought; but with it there went also the old Indian emphasis on the greater Reality over against this fleeting world, the One behind the Many. Man was only of value because in him the Eternal might be realized. And these two ideas of constant change over against eternal rest are the key-notes of oriental art. It seeks to sound both clearly, and to harmonize them. And so the pageant of Ajanta is best understood if we see in it this contrast—the eternal calm of the Enlightened as he sits beneath the Bo-tree serene amidst the whirlpool of the senses—the daughters of Mara dancing to allure him, or demon armies attacking him, or the life of the careless world about him. This contrast is exquisitely brought out in a little Amaravati medallion.<sup>1</sup> Here we see on the one hand the elephant maddened by alcohol and the crowd which he is dispersing, and the women laughing at the lattices. Then the whirlpool ceases as the calm figure of the Buddha appears, and the elephant kneels in submission at his feet, and the crowd is hushed in awe. This, from south India, is very Ajantan, and the fresco of the Dying Princess is a noble example of the realistic idealism of these early artists—alluring in its beauty and pathos. It shows that the artists were not merely interested in

<sup>1</sup> See p. 82.

human life as a foil to the life of the Buddha. That life itself was human, and all life might be brought to the same calm balance and perfection. I cannot agree with Sir John Marshall's dictum that 'the beauty of man and man's intellect awaken no response in the Indian mind, bounded as it was by the immortal rather than the mortal, the infinite rather than the finite'.<sup>1</sup> Sir John, to whom all lovers of India's art owe an incalculable debt, goes on to contrast Indian thought with the ethical and rational thought of Greece. Yet Sakyamuni was an Indian, in some ways the most Indian of Indians; and as he was a lover of the ethical and the rational, and as he pointed to the Middle Path between the life of the senses and the life of austerity, so Indians turned inevitably to the ideal of a body which, like the mind, could become the servant of the higher life. It is possible to trace in these frescoes three schools or periods of art: some are pre-Guptan and depict a darker slighter race; many are Guptan, and some are Chalukyan—belonging to the seventh century—sensuous and strong as the sculptures of Elephanta and Ellora.

Such is the setting of the monastic life of the Guptan Buddhists. The ritual they used was no doubt a form of Asvaghosa's 'three-part service' of chanting, reading, and preaching, and we may picture the life of the Buddhist monks going on undisturbed by the revival of Hinduism so near at hand as Ujjain, where once Asoka ruled as Viceroy, and which the Guptas made a centre of culture typically Hindu, and greater than anything of its kind and time elsewhere.

Buddhists indeed claim that Vikramaditya took a personal interest in their religion, and appointed the great scholar Vasubandhu of Peshawar as tutor to his son. Certainly the age produced leaders of Buddhist thought, but it is clear that the Guptas were devout worshippers of Vishnu; and the teachings of such books as the Gita suited their imperial aspirations far better than the insistence of Buddhism that he is the true warrior who wars on none,

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, vol. i, p. 649.



and in spreading the dharma of the gentle Buddha wins the greatest glory.

The India of this age needed such warriors as Samudragupta and Vikramaditya. Not only had the great Scythian Kanishka conquered the Indian peoples of the north-west, but Yuetchi and other wild tribes were at hand; and while this pressure for a time helped in uniting India, the Guptas were later overwhelmed by an irresistible flood. Their civilization went down, and the Dark Ages closed in upon India. But there were periods of enlightenment, such as the reign of Harsha of Thanesar in the early seventh century, when art and literature thrived; and in the southern kingdoms there is so much intellectual vigour that a separate treatment of them is needed.

#### IV

Meantime from the high vantage-ground of Guptan supremacy let us look back, and trace the development of Indian art and religion from the Golden Age of Asoka to the Golden Age of the Guptas. Massive statues of pre-Mauryan India have been succeeded under Greek inspiration by the perfect animal-forms of the Asokan columns, than which there is nothing finer anywhere. As I have said elsewhere<sup>1</sup> these are followed by the decorative panels of great stupas illustrating Jatakas, and expressing the popular beliefs of the people. It is a folk-art as contrasted with the imperial works of Asoka's court artists. Then come the masterpieces of the Andhra age, such as the great gateways at Sanchi and the solitary Buddha at Anuradhapura. Men who have worked in wood or ivory are showing mastery of intricate design, of perspective and of the technique of stone-carving. With the deification of Sakyamuni and of Krishna a new impetus is given to Art as to Literature. We see the Ikon of Buddha develop from the Eurasian and provincial figures of the vast majority of the Gandhara works to the strong and intellectual types of

<sup>1</sup> *The Heritage of Asia*, p. 42.



THE DYING PRINCESS



Mathura and Ceylon: the Buddha is represented as the calm ascetic Yogi and teacher, and these works of the third century A.D. are unsurpassed as pure sculpture. More delicate and decorative are the contemporary Amaravati sculptures, but less other-worldly and impressive. They may be compared with the earliest frescoes of Ajanta, and with their contemporaries of the Gandhara school. The images of the Guptan age are sophisticated and idealized. They are not perhaps as strong or as vigorous as those of Mathura, but they are highly wrought classical masterpieces. Greek inspiration has brought out the true genius of Indian sculpture.

In painting too India has leapt forward; from the earliest Ajanta frescoes, belonging perhaps to the second century A.D. (themselves no doubt the successors of lost works), to the masterpieces of Caves XVI and XVII, is a great advance. And this series is a very precious record. We see the artists growing in architectonic power, in mastery of technique and in understanding of the dramatic contrast between the lovely yet transient world of the senses and the lovelier unchanging calm of Nirvana. They were guided consciously or subconsciously by the Canons of Indian painting which insist on knowledge of form, on balance of composition, on the impression of charm, and on the artistic use of colour.

To study the best of the Ajanta compositions is to understand these Canons at a glance. These painters are at once secular and religious—they see the fair forms of women and their lures, but they use them as parts of a process leading on to a heavenly calm. They are masters too of realistic portrayal of nature: the elephant, the monkey, the peacock and all the rich and varied life of the jungle to which the Buddha had gone for his parables and similes, and which Buddhist teachers found ready to their hand in the folk-lore of old. Of the portrayal of secular life by the Ajanta artists we may say with an early poet, 'it is that of great courts and palaces charming the mind by their noble routine'.

Such are the splendid contemporary works at Sigiri in Ceylon: ladies of the harem going to worship.

The religious life of this age is in a word no longer separate from that of the world: it is socialized and humanized, and 'is manifested in an art that reveals life not in opposition to spirituality, but as an intricate ritual fitted to the consummation of every perfect experience. . . . A culmination and a perfection have been attained in which the inner and outer life are indivisible.'

The Bodhisattva is now preferred to the Arhat, or in a word the ideal of sainthood is socialized. 'Mix not with the herd,' says the Dhammapada or *Way of Truth* of the older Buddhism, 'wander lonely as the elephant.' 'Let me be medicine to the sick, the friend of all, a very sweeper', says the *Path of Light*, a fifth-century work. And in Brahmanism the same change can be seen as it passes from the austerity of the earlier Upanishads to the lay ethic of the Gita. 'Desert not your own duty: in no other can salvation be found', says Krishna to Arjuna. The Dharma of the Buddhist Middle Path has profoundly affected India; and the by-products of its monasticism are great civilizations. The Dharma of Hinduism has become a veritable 'web of Indian life', which is henceforward a unity, with every act and every detail of life controlled by religious sanction. The Laws of Manu say 'Pure is the hand of the craftsman at work on his craft'; and 'the householder is as holy as the Brahmin'. Each caste is also a trade-guild, supplying the expert knowledge, the code of ethics, and the social life of the artisan; and regulating the relations of the workers with those of other trades.

Of the preparations for the marriage of a Hindu princess of this era we have the following contemporary account; depicting the craft-guilds at work it is of great interest:

From every county were assembled companies of skilled craftsmen. . . . Carpenters were given white flowers, unguents, and cloth to make the marriage altar. . . . The outer terraces of the palace resounded with goldsmiths beating out their gold. . . . Here a group of skilled artisans painted auspicious scenes, and a multitude of sculptors made fishes, turtles, crocodiles, and fruits. Even Kings

girded themselves in decorative work, doing the behest of their Sovereign Lord.

The king, says Manu, must examine and uphold the laws of the guilds; and the merchant and craftsman hold a very important place in society. The king must regulate prices once in five days, and all weights and measures must be duly marked. 'Let the King re-examine them twice a year.' This was to protect merchant and buyer alike, and to establish confidence. Manifold were the duties of Indian kingship, but they were made possible by a theory, the Varnashramadharma, or 'sanction of caste-duties', which still holds Indian society together, and which Indian patriots seek to reform but not to change. This unity of Indian life it is which underlies the achievements of the Guptan era. Each worker is to find salvation in doing his appointed task, and the Emperor is hailed by the artist as a fellow-craftsman.

The code of Manu belongs in its present form to the first five centuries of our era. Originally representing the customs of the Brahmins it has become binding on Hindu society, for it sets forth not only rules for religious observances, but also for the administration of justice, and regulates domestic life in all its details. A Hindu is, in fact, one who observes this dharma.

Perhaps the best source-book for the ethical life of India is the Great Epics. Here, too, the hand of Brahmin editors can be clearly traced, and their influence through these immense poems has been incalculable. The *Mahabharata*, which is more than twenty times the length of the *Aeneid*, is known everywhere in India. It deals with an ancient civil war between Pandus and Kurus. The *Ramayana*, which is much shorter, deals with the advance of the Aryans into southern India. If the earlier epic tells us of the Lunar race of the middle country, the latter deals with the Solar people of the west, and sets before us Sita, the loyal wife, and Rama her husband, the ideal warrior of India. Their adventures and their alliance with bear- and monkey-people of the south are favourite themes

of art and song. Whether these are actual tribes of men or not they are represented as animals, not the grotesque ape of our western humour, but man's prototype and friend. To help Rama they build bridges and go on embassies, showing a loyalty and intelligence which often put their human brothers to shame. Hanuman their leader is the beau idéal of the devoted henchman.

During the Guptan era Indian science also made great advances. We know that Indian astronomy was already far advanced when the Greeks arrived, and that India learned from the invader a new system. But it was Indian astronomy which passed on to Europe in Arab translations in the Middle Ages.

As to medicine, both Hindus and Buddhists made considerable advance, the former practising dissection of animals, and demonstrating operations upon wax figures. It is clear that Indian medicine helped on the marvellous advances made by the Greeks, and the foundations of Arab medicine can be traced to the ninth-century translations from Sanskrit works. If doctors in India to-day are largely Muslim this is because of the Muhammadan conquest which destroyed the Buddhist schools, and also because of a growing system of tabus against handling diseased or dead bodies.

In music the Hindus have exerted an immense influence on the West, perhaps through Greece, and also on Asia, where the Indian quarter tones and subtle harmonies can be found everywhere, as they may be found in Spain and other countries whither the Arabs carried them. As in everything else in India, there is here an intimate relation between nature and art. The ragas or modes of Indian music correspond to the six seasons of the year and each has raginis or variations appropriate to the hour and day and season. As Rajput painting deals with the legends of the gods and with the dharma of India's daily life, so Indian music is intimately concerned with religious expression of both kinds. And as the Indian artist painted for a small coterie of connoisseurs, so the Indian musician with his stringed instruments,

flutes, and drums was content with chamber concerts for the elect, or with the small groups which gathered about village wells and in the shade of banyans. To such audiences court musicians on the one hand and wandering minstrels on the other have sung from time immemorial of the loves of Krishna, or of the heroic deeds of Rama.

The caste system helped to maintain the skill of the guilds, handing on traditional crafts and training apprentices. It is still possible, in spite of the industrial age with its mass production, aniline dyes, and ruthless competition, to watch the looms of Benares and the shawl makers of Kashmir at work on crafts which have survived the vicissitudes of 2,000 years. The caste system has indeed been a conservative force for good as well as for evil, and in the mediaeval Hindu city with its streets of the silver- and goldsmiths, of the brocade makers and the sari sellers, there survives an epitome of the Middle Ages which reveals excellent city planning, and an ordered social life. At the centre is the great temple, and about it lies the city in concentric squares.

The great achievement, then, of the Guptan era is the unification of Indian culture, and the vitality of the age is so great that it passes on from India to south-eastern Asia and the Far East. 'Almost all that belongs to the common spiritual consciousness of Asia, the ambient in which its diversities are reconcilable, is of Indian origin in the Guptan period.'<sup>1</sup>

## THE SPIRIT OF THE GUPTAS

### I. A SCENE FROM KALIDASA'S *SHAKUNTALA*

The *Malavika and Agnimitra* is the earliest of Kalidasa's plays: it begins with a respectful reference to earlier works of Bhasa, Saumilla, and Kaviputra, already classical. In other words, just as the fourth- and fifth-century art of Ajanta and Sarnath is an advanced classical art, so the works of Kalidasa follow an already developed and classical art of the drama. Like his great predecessor Asvaghosa, Kalidasa is known to us chiefly by his poetry and a few legends.

<sup>1</sup> A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 91.



Like him too he is attached to the Court of an enlightened and tolerant sovereign. The poems show respect for Buddhist, Saivite, and Vaishnavite alike: and in this no doubt reflect the spirit of the age. Like Asvaghosa too he travelled widely in India, knew its beauties by personal observation—'The Kokila mad with love,' 'the asoka trees shedding blooms like tears'—and delighted to depict the charms of nature and of art.

The following passages are typical:

*Shakuntala*<sup>1</sup>

Act VI, Scene ii, pp. 71-5

MAID. Your Majesty, here is the picture of our lady. (*She produces the tablet.*)

KING (*gazing at it*). It is a beautiful picture. See!

A graceful arch of brows above great eyes;  
Lips bathed in darting, smiling light that flies  
Reflected from white teeth; a mouth as red  
As red karkandhu-fruit; love's brightness shed  
O'er all her face in bursts of liquid charm—  
The picture speaks with living beauty warm.

CLOWN (*looking at it*). The sketch is full of sweet meaning. My eyes seem to stumble over its uneven surface. What more can I say? I expect to see it come to life, and I feel like speaking to it.

MISHRAKESHI. The king is a clever painter. I seem to see the dear girl before me.

KING. My friend,

What in the picture is not fair,  
Is badly done;  
Yet something of her beauty there,  
I feel, is won.

MISHRAKESHI. This is natural, when love is increased by remorse.

KING (*sighing*).

I treated her with scorn and loathing ever;  
Now o'er her pictured charms my heart will burst:  
A traveller I, who scorned the mighty river,  
And seeks in the mirage to quench his thirst.

<sup>1</sup> *Kalidasa, Translations of Shakuntala and Other Works*, by Arthur W. Ryder. Everyman's Library (J. M. Dent and Co.).

CLOWN. There are three figures in the picture, and they are all beautiful. Which one is the lady Shakuntala?

MISHRAKESHI. The poor fellow never saw her beauty. His eyes are useless, for she never came before them.

KING. Which one do you think?

CLOWN (*observing closely*). I think it is this one, leaning against the creeper which she has just sprinkled. Her face is hot and the flowers are dropping from her hair; for the ribbon is loosened. Her arms droop like weary branches; she has loosened her girdle, and she seems a little fatigued. This, I think, is the lady Shakuntala, the others are her friends.

KING. You are good at guessing. Besides, here are proofs of my love.

See where discolorations faint  
Of loving handling tell;  
And here the swelling of the paint  
Shows where my sad tears fell.

Chaturika, I have not finished the background. Go, get the brushes.

MAID. Please hold the picture, Madhavaya, while I am gone.

KING. I will hold it. (*He does so. Exit maid.*)

CLOWN. What are you going to add?

MISHRAKESHI. Surely, every spot that the dear girl loved.

KING. Listen, my friend.

The stream of Malini, and on its sands  
The swan-pairs resting; holy foot-hill lands  
Of great Himalaya's sacred ranges, where  
The yaks are seen; and under trees that bear  
Bark hermit-dresses on their branches high,  
A doe that on the buck's horn rubs her eye.

CLOWN (*aside*). To hear him talk, I should think he was going to fill up the picture with heavy-bearded hermits.

KING. And another ornament that Shakuntala loved I have forgotten to paint.

CLOWN. What?

MISHRAKESHI. Something natural for a girl living in the forest.

KING. The siris-blossom, fastened o'er her ear,

Whose stamens brush her cheek;  
The lotus-chain like autumn moonlight soft  
Upon her bosom meek.

CLOWN. But why does she cover her face with fingers lovely as the pink water-lily? She seems frightened. (*He looks more closely.*)

I see. Here is a bold, bad bee. He steals honey, and so he flies to her lotus-face.

KING. Drive him away.

CLOWN. It is your affair to punish evil-doers.

KING. True. O welcome guest of the flowering vine, why do you waste your time in buzzing here?

Your faithful, loving queen,  
Perched on a flower, athirst,  
Is waiting for you still,  
Nor tastes the honey first.

MISHRAKESHI. A gentlemanly way to drive him off!

CLOWN. This kind are obstinate, even when you warn them.

KING (*angrily*). Will you not obey my command? Then listen:

'Tis sweet as virgin blossoms on a tree,  
The lip I kissed in love-feasts tenderly;  
Sting that dear lip, O bee, with cruel power,  
And you shall be imprisoned in a flower.

CLOWN. Well, he doesn't seem afraid of your dreadful punishment.

(*Laughing—to himself.*) The man is crazy, and I am just as bad, from associating with him.

KING. Will he not go, even though I warn him?

MISHRAKESHI. Love works a curious change even in a brave man.

CLOWN. It is only a picture, man.

KING. A picture?

MISHRAKESHI. I too understand it now. But to him, thoughts are real experiences.

KING. You have done an ill-natured thing.

When I was happy in the sight,  
And when my heart was warm,  
You brought sad memories back, and made  
My love a painted form. (*He sheds a tear.*)

MISHRAKESHI. Fate plays strangely with him.

KING. My friend, how can I endure a grief that has no respite?

I cannot sleep at night  
And meet her dreaming;  
I cannot see the sketch  
While tears are streaming.

MISHRAKESHI. My friend, you have indeed atoned—and in her

friend's presence—for the pain you caused by rejecting dear Shakuntala.

*Enter the maid* CHATURIKA

MAID. Your Majesty, I was coming back with the box of paint-brushes—

KING. Well?

MAID. I met Queen Vasumati with the maid Pingalika. And the queen snatched the box from me, saying: 'I will take it to the king myself.'

CLOWN. How did you escape?

MAID. The queen's dress caught on a vine. And while her maid was setting her free, I excused myself in a hurry.

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES. Follow me, your Majesty.

CLOWN (*listening*). Man, the she-tiger of the palace is making a spring on her prey. She means to make one mouthful of the maid.

KING. My friend, the queen has come because she feels touched in her honour. You had better take care of this picture.

CLOWN. 'And yourself,' you might add. (*He takes the picture and rises.*) If you get out of the trap alive, call for me at the Cloud Balcony. And I will hide the thing there so that nothing but a pigeon could find it. (*Exit running.*)

## II. THE CLOUD-MESSENGER

### *The City of Ujjain*

Stanzas xxvii—xxxix

Swerve from thy northern path; for westward rise  
The palace balconies thou mayst not slight  
In fair Ujjain; and if bewitching eyes  
That flutter at thy gleams, should not delight  
Thine amorous bosom, useless were thy gift of sight.

The neighbouring mountain-stream that gliding grants  
A glimpse of charms in whirling eddies pursed,  
While noisy swans accompany her dance  
Like a tinkling zone, will slake thy loving thirst—  
A woman always tells her love in gestures first.

Thou only, happy lover! canst repair  
The desolation that thine absence made:

Her shrinking current seems the careless hair  
That brides deserted wear in single braid,  
And dead leaves falling give her face a paler shade.

Oh, fine Ujjain! Gem to Avanti given,  
 Where village ancients tell their tales of mirth  
 And old romance! Oh, radiant bit of heaven,  
 Home of a blest celestial band whose worth  
 Sufficed, though fallen from heaven, to bring down heaven on earth!

Where the river-breeze at dawn, with fragrant gain  
 From friendly lotus-blossoms, lengthens out  
 The clear, sweet passion-warbling of the crane,  
 To cure the women's languishing, and flout  
 With a lover's coaxing all their hesitating doubt.

Enriched with odours through the windows drifting  
 From perfumed hair, and greeted as a friend  
 By peacock pets their wings in dances lifting,  
 On flower-sweet balconies thy labour end,  
 Where prints of dear pink feet an added glory lend.

Black as the neck of Shiva, very God,  
 Dear therefore to his hosts, thou mayest go  
 To his dread shrine, round which the gardens nod  
 When breezes rich with lotus-pollen blow  
 And ointments that the gaily bathing maidens know.

Reaching that temple at another time,  
 Wait till the sun is lost to human eyes;  
 For if thou mayest play the part sublime  
 Of Shiva's drum at evening sacrifice,  
 Then hast thou in thy thunders grave a priceless prize.

The women there, whose girdles long have tinkled  
 In answer to the dance, whose hands yet seize  
 And wave their fans with lustrous gems besprinkled,  
 Will feel thine early drops that soothe and please,  
 And recompense thee from black eyes like clustering bees.

Clothing thyself in twilight's rose-red glory,  
 Embrace the dancing Shiva's tree-like arm;  
 He will prefer thee to his mantle gory  
 And spare his grateful goddess-bride's alarm,  
 Whose eager gaze will manifest no fear of harm.

Where women steal to rendezvous by night  
 Through darkness that a needle might divide,  
 Show them the road with lightning-flashes bright

As golden streaks upon the touchstone's side—  
 But rain and thunder not, lest they be terrified.

On some rich balcony where sleep the doves,  
 Through the dark night with thy beloved stay,  
 The lightning weary with the sport she loves;  
 But with the sunrise journey on thy way—  
 For they that labour for a friend do not delay.

The gallant dries his mistress' tears that stream  
 When he returns at dawn to her embrace—

Prevent thou not the sun's bright-fingered beam  
 That wipes the tear-dew from the lotus' face;  
 His anger else were great, and great were thy disgrace.

Tr. A. W. RYDER.

## VI THE POST-GUPTAN AGE AND THE SOUTHERN KINGDOMS

‘Are not the sons of a Pulai woman and a Brahmin also Brahmins?’

### I

AFTER the decline and fall of the great Guptas arose an Eastern Gupta dynasty in Magadha, which lasted till 720. Meantime in Harsha (606-47) northern India produced another great ruler who waged war against the Chalukyas under Pulakesin II, and built great shrines to the Sun, to Buddha, and to Siva. Of his court and of his patronage of scholars and poets we read in the travel-diary of the great Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Chang, whom he welcomed as a champion of the Mahayana and as a messenger from T'ang China.

Buddhism thrived under his patronage at such great centres as Nalanda—also visited and described by Hiuen Chang when at its zenith in the seventh century—a university whose remains are now being unearthed, and whose long history of a thousand years demands a monograph. Its gay towers and observatories, its red pillars and tiled roofs have influenced Far Eastern architecture, and its scholars from Nagarjuna in the second century A.D. to Silabhadra, teacher of Hiuen Chang, in the seventh, and to Padmasambhava, apostle of Tibet, in the eighth, are great international figures. Harsha himself is credited with dramas and other poems, and with a treatise on grammar, and Bana's *Harshacarita* is an historical romance which gives much accurate information and ‘tedious and affected rhetoric’ in praise of the last of the Chakravartis. With him the unity of the Indian Empire perishes, to be revived by the Moguls nearly a thousand years later; and Hinduism as we know it emerges—with its Bhakti or passionate polytheism—its Saktis or female energies—emanations and consorts of the gods, and its tantras and mantras—erotico-mystical texts and spells.

This strange development affects Buddhism too, and in its tantric form it survives in Nepal and Tibet, fused with the older spirit-worship. Harsha's successor, the weak Arjuna, was conquered by Tibetan soldiers of Srontsan-gampo and taken captive to China, which under its new great dynasty of T'ang was claiming all neighbours as vassals and all gifts as tribute.

## II

We must now turn to the south and look at a different India with its own remarkable culture and its own long story of warring kingdoms.

When groups of Aryans first came into the Dakshina Patha—south of the Narbada River—about the time of the Buddha, they colonized Vidarbha in the centre and Kalinga on the east coast, and had an important port at Bharukaccha on the west. They soon developed their own social code—that of Apasthamba—and intermarried with Telugus under Andhra rulers in the east and Rastrakutas on the west. South of these were other Dravidian dynasties—Kerala (modern Travancore), Pandya, Chola, and later Pallava and Chalukya—ruling Tamil populations whose worship of dread spirits persists, but whose general culture was as high as that of the Aryans, and who kept even the great Mauryas at bay.

From the west coast Solomon imported 'apes and peacocks and ivory', about the time when the Rig-Veda was being compiled, and our word pepper, for one of the spices which inspired Western expansion into India, is derived from the Tamil pippali. Babylon traded with China by way of the Dravidian south, and Arab traders have kept up unceasing commerce with it.

Roman coins are found in large numbers in this southern part of the peninsula, and with the great Poros medal of the north we may compare one found in the south on which is commemorated the conquest of Britain by Claudius (A.D. 41-54). From this centre there spread many cultural influences: from Kalinga they passed to Java (where 'Kling'

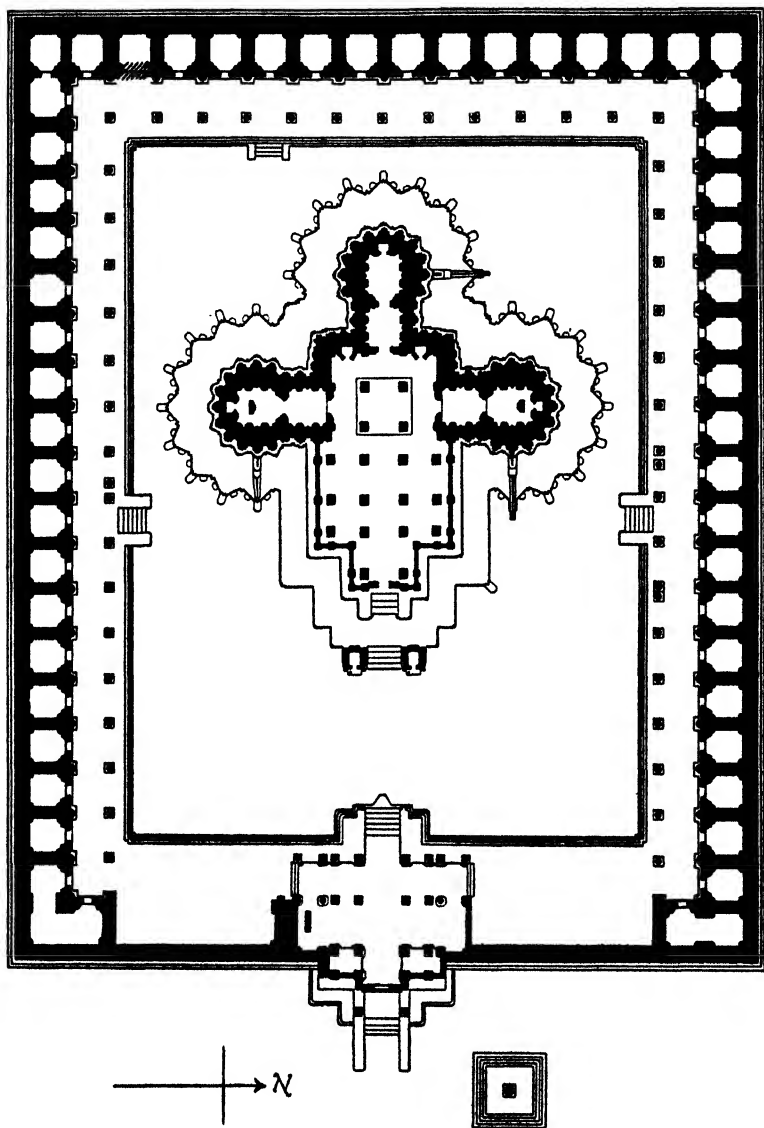


still means Hindu): from the Andhra kingdom to Ceylon, where great sculpture remains to tell us of Buddhist missions: from Pandya and Chola to Indo-China—geographically a peninsula of China, culturally an offshoot of India. In India itself southern influence penetrated north-west to the peoples of Maharastra, and mingling with Andhra and Guptan art at Ajanta are works of the Chalukyan style—more sensuous and full of the devotion of the tropic south.

As to dates and dynasties we know that the Satakarni House ruled the Andhras from about 250 B.C. to A.D. 236, and built up a stable and elaborate civilization, tolerant of religious differences but favouring Buddhism, whose magnificent monuments are scattered from Amaravati to Karli and Ajanta in the west, and to Ceylon in the south.

As this great power declined, a Scythian satrapy defeated it and ruled an important south-western kingdom till Vikramaditya Gupta overthrew it in 388. Gujarat was part of this 'great satrapy', and after a period of rule by White Huns a Rajput kingdom arose in 495—from which descend the Sesodhias of Udaipur—India's foremost Rajput house. Meantime Pallavas (perhaps Parthians) penetrated the south and waged unceasing war with the Chalukyas, who in the seventh century defeated them, and made the Marathas a great power. A fresco at Ajanta shows Pallavas paying tribute to the Chalukya, Pulakesin II, and the exquisite star-shaped temples in Mysore are another monument of the great Chalukyan power.

In the eighth century a Maratha chief Rastrakuta revolted, and his House ruled till 973—hewing out the grand Kailasa at Ellora. A vast temple cut from the solid rock, and about eighty feet high, it is supported on ornate rock-pillars, and surrounded with animal sculptures—elephants trampling and rending demons and chimaeras. Other temples stand about it, and deities abound in this world of tropical luxuriance, some of great beauty, some



Plan of the Kesava Temple at Somnathpur, Mysore.

(Mysore Archaeological Survey.)

to our Western eye grotesque. 'This contrast of refined grace and massive horror is indeed the most striking note of Dravidian art.'

The more familiar figures of the contemporary Elephanta caves are also Dravidian, the grand Trimurti or Three Aspects of the Godhead being a work of unique power, a massive and yet serene symbol of power creative, indwelling, and destructive.

Mystery too is essential in religion, and I know of no more impressive temple than the dark cave in which these gigantic and splendid torsos loom in the dim twilight, nor is there anywhere a more magnificent dramatization of the earth's forces than another Dravidian group near Kanchi, where Siva is seen seated with his consort on the mythical Mount Kailasa, steadying it as it rocks beneath the heavings of the demon Ravana.

Here religious art becomes a true expression of the science as well as the philosophy of a people. History and geography find dramatic expression in such massed figures as those upon a hill-side near the Seven Pagodas where the descent of the Ganges is depicted; while in many Dravidian temples in Mysore and elsewhere the whole pageant of Hindu story is magnificently set forth, as didactic as the frescoes of Ajanta and as full of religious symbolism and secular meaning.

If Ajanta with its three classic schools of painting is a cradle of Indian painting for all Asia, and if in its frescoes can be seen Greek and Persian as well as Guptan and Chalukyan influences, these Dravidian galleries of sculpture became the inspiration of the peoples of Indo-China and Java—where by the ninth century Buddhist and Hindu myths are being made into friezes of charm and of astounding power, till a Borobodur in Java leads on to an Angkor Wat in Cambodia. So too the music, drama, and dance of India find ready imitators among peoples of Polynesian and Mongolian stock. To China also Dravidian Buddhist teachers, driven out by Hindu rivalry, took a kind of Vedanta which China found congenial, and Chinese pil-



SOURCE OF THE GANGES WITH HERMIT, SHRINE, GODS,  
AND ANIMALS  
MAHAMALLAPURAM



grims visited Southern India—from Fa Hian who came to Ceylon to Hiuen Chang who visited the Pallava city of Kanchi in 640, and the kingdom of the great Pulakesin II in the following year, just before it went down before the Pallavas. Within a century the tables were turned, and the Chalukyas also defeated the Cholas in the eleventh century, after they had pushed as far north as Bengal.

The Dravidian south, then, has its own great record of peace and war, but we can only glance at it here. Influenced by the Aryan invasion of the north, by the coming of the Greeks and by the Buddhist movement, it was not dominated by any of them, and it leads its own life to-day, less modified than the rest of India by the coming of the West. Some of its kingdoms, such as that of the Cholas, became predominately Saivite, and the cult of Siva is marked by its great Dravidian temples. Saivism is in fact a development of old phallic worships which the Aryans found in India. As the Vedic sun-god Vishnu has attracted to his cult a northern and Aryan architecture, so Siva has dominated the southern kingdoms. Yet the Pandyas were largely influenced by Jainism, and the Pallavas, patrons of northern culture, were largely Vaishnavite. Their great capital Kanchi is full of monuments which date back to Guptan times, and are perhaps a reflex of the Hindu awakening in the north with its great religious revival manifested in the rise of Bhakti—devotion to personal gods—and its emotional hymnology.

To this the south contributed its own passion, and Tamil literature is largely the product of this age and of this spirit. It spread far afield, and took Dravidian culture with Chola armies into Ceylon and with Hindu missions to Indo-China.

Tanjore, greatest of Dravidian shrines, was built by Rajaraja at the time of the Norman Conquest to celebrate the victory of his armies, and Angkor Wat, last outpost of Hinduism, rose in the ninth century to proclaim that of the missions.

Pallava genius reared the temple of Kanchi; and at Mahamallapuram 'the Seven Pagodas' or monolithic Rathes blend secular and religious in a happy synthesis. Completed by Mahamalla (625-45) who conquered and slew Pulakesin II, they are named after him.

Some of these rulers were men of real statesmanship, tolerant and far-sighted, others were persecutors and tyrants. The great Chola conqueror Rajaraja was the noblest of them—a great builder and an able administrator, who had revenue surveys made, abolished internal tolls and customs, and kept up the roads and irrigation tanks so much needed in the south. Pulakesin II of the Chalukya was also a great soldier and statesman, known to the Arabs and courted by the Sasanian Chosroes II, whose embassy is celebrated at Ajanta and whose splendour was known to China. He was a contemporary of Harsha and of T'ai Tsung. His brother founded another dynasty—the eastern Chalukyas—which produced some great rulers and lasted till the thirteenth century, and is noted for the efflorescence of Telugu literature.

On the ruins of these kingdoms rose Hoysalas of Mysore, Yadavas of Devagiri, and others, to be crushed by the power of Islam, which swept on into the extreme south till in 1336 arose Vijayanagar, founded by Hoysala and Yadava refugees and noted for its magnificence and for its courage in defying the Muslim power till Akbar's time. Then in 1565 its splendid capital fell and was destroyed after the fierce battle of Talikota.

How far the Brahmins influenced the statecraft of these kingdoms is illustrated in the first-century Kural of Tiruvalluvar, a didactic poem setting forth political, social, and religious ideals in 133 chapters, some clearly indebted to Manu and to the Arthashastra, but all having special reference to south India. The poet was a low-caste weaver of Mylapur with a lyric gift and a keen understanding. From this early start southern religious thought reached its climax with the great Vedantists Sankara and Ramanuja. They did for Hinduism what Aquinas and the Schoolmen

did for Christianity in the Dark Ages. Born in 788 at Kanchi, of Saivite parents, Sankara was too great a mind for sectarian interests, and seeking to unify Brahminism he travelled ceaselessly, attacking Jains and Buddhists and triumphantly vindicating monism. 'As Fire which is one, assumes many forms, so the Atman—one and indissoluble—is in all, and is all', says Sankara. This is orthodox Upanishadic teaching, and Sankara was followed by a school of teachers such as Madhava, abbot of the great Sringeri Abbey, founded by his master. Ramanuja, a Vaishnavite, held that there are three Realities, not one—Brahman, Man, and Nature. His system is akin to the Sankhya of Kapila in recognizing the world and eternal spirits as real, and akin to that of Sankara in its devotion to the Godhead. But with the influence of Islam becoming potent this One is thought of as personal, and Bhakti, or devotion to him, as the real way of salvation.

The way was prepared by wandering bards—Vaishnavite Alvars and Saivite Adiyars—who hymned the Divine Grace and offered salvation to all: as in Japan and in the west, the chief difference between men was not between the claims of morality and religion: all agreed that without Divine Grace man is nothing—'his righteousness is but filthy rags'. What divided them was the question whether there was room for human effort. Should man be passive as a kitten whose mother carries it to safety—or, like the little ape, do his part by holding on? These differences of emphasis hardened into sects; in the thirteenth century the Tungalai corresponded to the followers of Shinran, their contemporaries in Japan, in magnifying the Divine Grace, while the Vadagalai insisted with the Jodo of Honen on some effort on the part of the devotee.

Ramanuja's piety, in a word, like that of St. Paul and of Nagarjuna, gave birth to sect-feuds, and in devotion to God men were stirred to conflict with their brothers.

The deep impress of religion on the south is seen in its devotional lyrics and in its great temples, where it appears



as symbolic and erotic, and as little mindful, may we not add, of the claims of men?

The Gopuram, or tower of the Dravidian temple, symbolizes the One behind the many; and within, in the Vimana or Shrine, are to be found the phallus of Siva, or a vast reclining Vishnu, emblems of this pantheistic monism. This on the one hand, and the popular cults of Krishna and Rama on the other, inspired erotic poetry such as the *Gita-govinda* of Jayadeva in Bengal, and the lyrics of Namdev and Tukaram in the west, and art such as the superb dancing Sivas of the South, emblems of cosmic activity and of the play of the Eternal in time. Secular art is also stimulated by this tide of spiritual thought, and bronze figures of kings, singers, and courtiers, survive to show how the South spread its characteristic culture side by side with that of the Guptan North into Further India, a bit of Mongolian Asia now half Indian. A luxuriant and even voluptuous beauty clothes the energy of its genius, and crowded friezes of intricate and graceful pattern celebrate the cosmic activities of the gods and the warlike prowess of epic heroes. Khmer art is a wonderful blend of Aryan, Dravidian, and Mongolian, and we shall look more closely at it in the last section of this brief sketch of a great culture.

### III

The Island of Ceylon on the other hand is a bit of India; palm-fringed and rising to a noble mountain-peak, it is a paradise for the anthropologist, the archaeologist, and the historian. Several waves of invaders have left notable traces upon it, and animism, Buddhism, and Hinduism have been welded into an interesting whole.

Two characteristics determine the island's history: its geological unity with India, its national spirit of separateness and pride in the culture which it has made its own. 'In its tropical forest, a very Eden, it has kept alive its mystic dream until our own day. A bit of Indian soil kept intact from the time of Asoka where ancient wisdom



THE NATARAJA  
DANCING SIVA OF THE DRAVIDIAN SOUTH IN TANDAVA DANCE



has perpetuated itself into the Middle Ages—that is Ceylon', says René Grousset.<sup>1</sup>

While, then, the aboriginal Veddas survive in forest-fastnesses, still using bow and arrow, and while out-caste tribes tell of Hindu victories over Buddhist tolerance, the Sinhalese claim descent from several Aryan invasions from Bengal, and the Tamils claim to be the children of later invasions from south India. And these two races have each built a characteristic civilization, mingling at times in intermarriage and synthesis. The real history of Lanka begins in the third century B.C. with the classic mission of Asoka's son Mahinda, whose rock study at Mihintale is perhaps its most sacred spot. That, and the aged Bo-tree (*ficus religiosa*) at Anuradhapura—a symbol of the Buddhist religion and of its vitality through twenty-two centuries—are solemn reminders of the great-hearted missionary.

From Behar (land of Viharas) he and his sister came, and soon stately dagobas or stupas arose, with monasteries, lotus-pools, and pilgrim-shelters clustering about them. From such centres the Way of the Buddha in both its Theravada, or more stoic, and its Mahasangha, or more liberal forms, spread to surrounding lands. Kings, influenced by great abbots, vied with one another as builders of monastery and dagoba, Abhayadushta (early first century B.C.) founding the Bronze Hall or Lohaprasada, Vatta-gamini thirty years later the great Abhayagiri for the heretical monks of the more liberal school. In its prime it towered four hundred feet above the plain, overshadowing and rivalling the exquisite little Thuparama, attributed to the first Buddhist king—Devanampiyatissa, 'Beloved of the Gods'—friend and imitator of Asoka, who built it to lodge the collar-bone of the Buddha himself. Such is the legend, which also tells of his dramatic conversion when hunting with his court. All this and much more can be read in the Great Chronicle or Mahavamsa—a pious narrative, with much historic truth and much edifying legend, which reminds us of the Diaries of Fa

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de l'Asie*, ii. 150-1.

Hian. They confirm much of his picture of a great Buddhist kingdom, and his contemporary Buddhaghosa came from Magadha in A.D. 420 and at the Great Monastery translated the Ceylon version of the Tipitaka back into Pali, writing a commentary and a great original treatise—the Visuddhi Magga—the Pure Road to Nibbana. It is a classic of Pali Buddhism, clear, concise, and eloquent, and Buddhaghosa went on as a missionary to Burma, and was followed by several missions to Indo-China.

#### IV

There in three great river valleys different races pursued their destiny—the Talaings and Burmese in that of the Irrawaddy, the Cambodians in that of the Menam, the Khmers in that of the Mekong; and there Hindu and Buddhist influences from Ceylon and India began to mould the Chinese and native cultures. So arose the characteristic civilizations of Indo-China.

Meanwhile Hindu civilization was invading Ceylon—Pandyas from Madura, Cholas from Coromandel and others, and Saivite temples rose side by side with Buddhist dagobas—while warring sects were united in face of the common foe or yielded slowly to their pressure, and saw the Buddha becoming an Avatar of Vishnu. In 1161 Parakrama Bahu I brought all together, and initiated a great new era of building. His armies invaded south India, and he made alliances with Burmese rulers. His great capital at Polannaruwa is an interesting blend of Buddhist and Hindu styles of architecture, and a vigorous statue reveals him as of Dravidian type, reading a Buddhist book of palm-leaf strips.

In the thirteenth century Vijaya and his son Parakrama Bahu III went on with the work of building a united people, but the latter, like his neighbours, had to bow to the all-conquering Kublai Khan, and Marco Polo, his ambassador, was the first European to visit the lovely island, which has since fallen in turn to Portuguese, French, Dutch, and English. The worthy Marco—perhaps

because of his sympathetic interest, is honoured as an Arhat in China. His contemporary Dharmakirti continued the succession—Ceylon's proudest heritage—of great and saintly monks.

The influence of Buddhism has been and is profound and pervasive. From Dutugamini, who became a pacifist in the first century, to Parakrama Bahu III, who abolished capital punishment in the fourteenth, great kings have demonstrated its gentle power. And if there are unsavoury chapters like the revolt of the parricide and usurper who shut himself into his great rock fort of Sigiri, there are in its vast fortifications and amazing frescoes ample proofs of the cultural mission of Buddhism—a true civilizer of the Island as of the mainland. Neither caste nor the erotic excesses of the Saivite South have reared their heads in Ceylon, and its people have learnt the lessons of peace and of detachment. 'Why do you no longer build great monuments and irrigation works?' I asked my Pali teacher: 'You English run about so vigorously we like to sit and watch you', was the calm yet incisive reply of this true Stoic. We called him Nagasena, for in all things he resembled the classic sage of the Milinda Pañha. So the soul of ancient India lives on, and a friendly but detached calm is its true expression. In the jungles of Anuradhapura sits a great Buddha in meditation, a true Indian Yogi with hands folded and eyes closed 'erect as a flame in a windless place'. It is a work contemporary with both the Gita and the Milinda Pañha—a masterpiece of Andhra sculpture as these are of Indian poetry and prose, and like them is a true symbol of the soul of a great culture.

## V

In Burma a different task met the monks of Buddhism, and to Mongolian cheerfulness and wisdom was added a touch of other-worldly Indian sadness, much as in Japan. In these kingdoms Buddhism of the two great types may be best studied—adapting itself to national needs, moulded by national genius, and free from foreign suzerainty.

In Siam the king's brother is Head Abbot, and the monarch himself cares for the welfare of the monks, promotes their unity, and stimulates their education and their work as schoolmasters. As in Burma every boy is at some time a novice, and Buddhism is 'Siam-custom' as it is 'Burma-custom'—a potent influence in national life. In Cambodia it has had to struggle with Hindu rivals, and Angkor Wat is to Hinduism what Borobodur is to Buddhism—a monument of the confidence of these missions from the mainland and a picture-gallery of the legends of epics and puranas.

## VI

The development of Hindu temple architecture may now be traced from the exquisite little Rathes of Mahamallapuram near Madras to the vast quadrangles and pyramidal towers of Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Both commemorate epic heroes and the cosmic activities of Vishnu and Siva, and both are free from the erotic and phallic—happy blends of Aryan and Dravidian culture.

Let us glance first at 'the Seven Pagodas' of Mahamallapuram. From great monoliths artists of about the seventh century have carved life-like and gigantic animals—the elephant and the bull of Siva, towering beside the little Rathes which are exquisite miniature shrines; they belong to an age of sobriety and hero-worship rather than to one of the erotic and phallic worships which gradually spread from the early to the later conquering groups; and with this process went the development of a tropical imagination, which reared vast towers, gopurams, about the central god-shrine and carved every inch of their surfaces with the teeming figures of the pantheon.

Like the early Buddhist stupas these temples are rooted in sun-worship, and Hindu processions circulate through their open courtyards, as those of the Buddhists circulated around the shrines at Sanchi and Amaravati. Here too Jains reared characteristic monuments, with vast rock-sculptures of the Founder, and it was not without a struggle



'THE SEVEN PAGODAS', AND A  
SCULPTURED PANEL  
MAHAMALLAPURAM





A CLOISTER AND A FRIEZE. ANGKOR WAT

that the south became Hindu. These religious battles went on side by side with wars between the kingdoms—long and learned debates between chosen champions, accusing each other as in Sung China of ignorance and heterodoxy, and claiming for their own interpretations the authority of great names.

If in Ceylon Buddhist scholasticism was victorious, in Dakshina Patha it was the monism of Sankara and its popular polytheistic expressions which drove out both Jains and Buddhists and stimulated the already sensuous devotion of the south and its already tropic imagination. These reared the vast and intricate gopurams of Trichinopoly and Madura where mystery and grotesque symbolism abound, and erotic mysticism degenerates into strange forms of perversion.

But before this development missionaries had carried the best art of the south to Cambodia.

Here about the tenth century was built the great temple of Angkor Wat, and about a century later the exuberant and rather florid Angkor Thom—a city of palaces. If the palaces are good examples of baroque the temple is the best preserved example of classic Khmer art, and is indeed one of the world's architectural masterpieces. Facing west it is dedicated to Vishnu whose image (as in Somnathpur) was set up in the central shrine, a high pyramid some 200 feet above the pavement, to which the lines of the whole structure converge. It is built on five terraces, and like Borobodur is in effect a series of sculpture-galleries. Here they vary from massive avenues of snakes and lions to delicate lace-work of trees and dancing-girls and intricate friezes of heroic legend—Hanuman and his monkeys rescuing Sita, Krishna sheltering sheep and shepherd from the storms of Indra by holding a mountain over them, the churning of the sea, and other cosmic activities of the gods and demons. Here in a word is the whole fantastic world of the Puranas transplanted to Chinese soil.

Nor is the didactic element lacking: here are hells worthy of the Italy and Japan of this age: and amidst

all this turmoil the calm serene Buddha in several masterly statues, which are in striking contrast with their pure and simple line and their spiritual aloofness.

At the corners of each main terrace are towers, and the height of each terrace is twice that of the one below—a device which increases the impression of height and space, and of a whole strange world of fancy incredibly intricate and bizarre—a world deserted yet living to remind us of a perished civilization. Was it malaria, or an earthquake, or some caprice which led to its desertion soon after the immense toil of its creation?

To turn from it to its Buddhist analogues is like passing out of a nightmare into a placid dream. Here too are legend and myth, but imagination is harnessed to history and the middle path of sanity has prevailed.

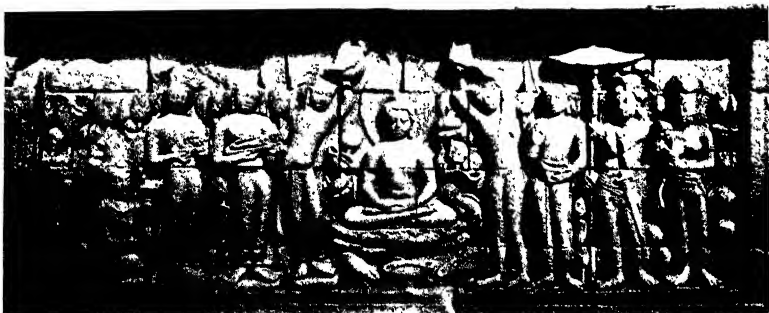
## VII

The development of Buddhist architecture may be studied from the stupa of Sanchi to the much more elaborate Borobodur of Java with its galleries of didactic art, in which crowds of figures are blent in a harmonious and rhythmic whole. It is a long evolution from the naïve and spontaneous to the classical and sophisticated—yet naturalism is not lost, especially in plant and animal forms in which India still excels.

Sir John Marshall's skilled work of reconstruction at Sanchi supplies us with the opportunity of studying another early masterpiece of Buddhist art. Here is a fine specimen of an Asokan pillar and a simple stupa, or mound, of about the same period (the third century before Christ), with its flat reliefs and naïve folk-art—at once crude and arresting, with a kind of childlike charm. This early Indian art, so well illustrated on the Barhut rail in the Indian Museum of Calcutta, is of great interest. Lacking as it is in composition and weak in perspective, yet it is a great beginning; it is essentially Indian, and often has lovely plant forms, even if its animals and men are clumsily done; and it passed rapidly into the noble art of such masterpieces as that of the



BOROBODUR. GENERAL VIEW



THE BUDDHA ANOINTED BY DISCIPLES



main stupa at Sanchi, which, like it, is largely independent of Greek influence and is much greater art than that of the North-West Frontier, which is so obviously and so poorly Greek.

Here at Sanchi we have, in fact, an art which is Indian, and which sometimes rises to sublime heights, and we can enjoy it in a perfect setting. It is easy here to let the imagination have free play and to people this lovely hill-top with a long procession of monks in yellow robes and pilgrims in clean white garments as it winds its way up the great stone stairs and enters by the Eastern gate. Though this is not the earliest of the gates,<sup>1</sup> it is part of a scheme gradually completed, and was no doubt set up so that the pilgrims should enter it as the rising sun revealed the meaning of its sculptures. Here they would pause as some revered teacher explained these symbolic scenes of the young Sakyamuni leaving his father's city—his horse and the royal umbrella tell us what is happening—of his illumination beneath the Bo-tree—an empty seat is here the symbol—of the homage paid to him, and of various miracles attributed to him until the Nirvana is reached. This is symbolized by a stupa with worshippers, human and divine. All this, however familiar, was a story which they loved to hear; and there was ample time in the long Indian day to follow the sun's course in the Buddhist pradakshina around the platform of the stupa. At each gateway they would pause to study its lessons afresh. Here at the north is the Vessantara story set out in great detail and that of the six-tusked elephant which is also told on two other gateways.<sup>2</sup> Here are incidents in the life of Sakyamuni, such as the Temptation, and the gift of a bowl of food by a monkey.

<sup>1</sup> The South gate is the oldest. For an admirable study of the East gate see A. Foucher in *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, pp. 62-110.

<sup>2</sup> For an interesting interpretation of the development of the art of Sanchi as illustrated by these elephant scenes of the South and West gates—from the low 'tapestry' relief of the earlier to the high relief of the later—and also from a work of creative genius to the more finished yet less masterly imitation—see Marshall's *Guide to Sanchi*, pp. 1-4.

So do the sublime and the homely mingle in these charming works of art. On the Western and Southern gateways similar, often the same, incidents occur. And as the procession passes out through the Western gate, emphasis is laid, as we should expect, upon the Nirvana. With thoughts full of the meaning of this victory of the spirit—this final conquest—they depart as the sun sets, and the stonework changes from rose-red and gold to black and silver.

Of the date of this great monument we are not sure, but it may well belong to the first century before the Christian era. If these admirable sculptures show Greek or Persian influence they are yet in subject-matter and in execution Indian, and it was an Indian impulse which passed on from these centres to Cambodia and Java, to Siam and Burma. It was an Indian impulse, too, which carried the Greek influence of Gandhara to Chinese Turkistan, and so on to the Far East. From Barhut to Borobodur, even more than from Gandhara to Horiuji, is a natural development covering in each case nearly a thousand years, and illustrating the evolution alike of Buddhist art and thought. Here one may trace the growth of the stupa from a simple burial mound to an elaborate terraced cenotaph. One may see the Buddha legend grow from the story of a young chieftain who renounced the joys of home to find salvation for himself, to the cosmic drama of a god above the gods, who revealed, as men were able to receive them, the mysteries of Transcendent Truth.

At Barhut and Sanchi some of this mystery no doubt was present from the beginning. It is partly because of this that the Buddha appears only in symbols. They tell us of his birth, first sermon, and enlightenment, or of his death, and we know that pilgrimages were instituted by Asoka to the sacred spots connected with these events. In the account of his death, the most lifelike and touching of Buddhist scriptures, the Master himself is represented as instituting them.

Before these symbols kings and other lay-people, animals,







DETAILS OF SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS LIFE  
BOROBODUR

and the gods themselves are seen at worship; and one can trace the growth of this bhakti upon the monuments, until with the coming of the artists, or artisans, of the North-West Frontier, it was inevitable that Buddhist devotion, wedding Greek art, should produce a young Indian Apollo, or a young Greek Buddha, with halo and toga. This is an art of little significance except as a link between Western and Eastern forms, and only at times does it rise above Eurasian mediocrity. Yet it introduced the ikon and the features and draperies of the Greek gods, and so its influence can be easily traced southward to Mathura, Benares, Magadha, Amaravati, Anuradhapura; northward and eastward to Turkistan and China, and thence to Korea and Japan. From now on images of the Buddha replaced symbols, and we can trace the transition in the Amaravati sculptures, where indeed there are some panels which represent him by symbols side by side with others, perhaps of later date, but seeming to belong to the same period, where he appears in human form.

Architecturally a development of the stupa with gates and procession-path, Borobodur is a great picture book in stone; it is the work of artists who were missionaries to simple folk and sought to lead them by natural stages, first to a Buddhist view of the universe as an orderly sequence of cause and effect, a drama of retribution, and then to a knowledge of the story of him who so interpreted it and won salvation from it. Beyond this human life of Sakya-muni lay its interpretation; and so in one great gallery they set forth a long series of Jatakas and opposite to them all the wealth of legends drawn from the Lalita Vistara. Beyond these again they depicted the story of the young seeker Sudhana who, after visiting the teachers and deities of the world, learns from the coming Buddha Maitreya the hidden truth.

Entering by the Eastern gateway one passes over a series of splendid carvings. In this lower terrace the villagers must have taken special delight, for here are set forth vivid scenes of the worldly life, with its lures and its

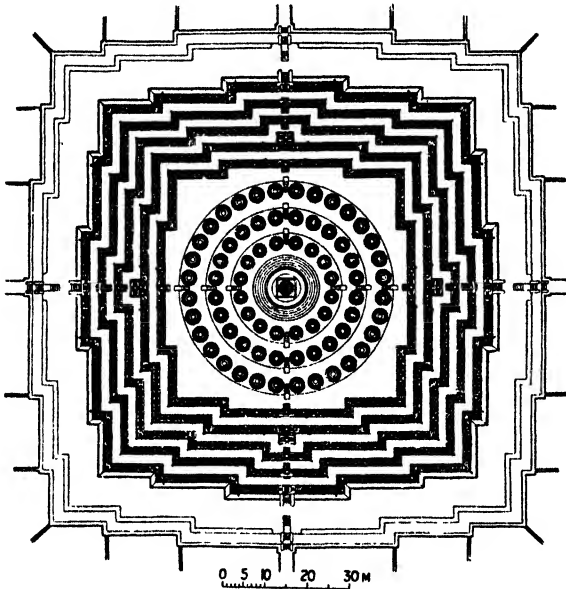
punishments. Here are men who beat their wives being cast into hell by the torturers of King Yama. Here are women making turtle soup. It is done, we are not allowed to forget, by plunging the living creature into a cauldron of boiling water. Here beside it, as the wheel of Samsara revolves, the cooks are being cooked!

This lowest series of sculptures has only lately been re-discovered by archaeologists. For centuries it had been buried, proving perhaps too attractive to simple minds; or perhaps the great structure began to slide and needed buttressing; or it may be that it was deliberately hidden by artists who conceived this life of man as a kind of underworld. The Borobodur does in fact represent the Universe of Buddhist Cosmogony.

Next above these human scenes are set out gods and demi-gods, the Yakshas and the Devas of Indian mythology, and only above them do we come to the first main gallery with its scenes of Jatakas facing those of the Buddha legend. These begin at the East gate with the young Bodhisat in the Tusita heaven, declaring his intention of being born on earth; and they pass right round the great stupa until they end again at the East gate with his attainment of bodhi and his anointing, or abisekha. We are shown the great moments in the classic story—the joy in the Tusita heaven that he is to be born among men, his prowess as a young Rajput Prince, his first meeting with the fact of disease.

Passing up beneath splendid archways, or torana, we enter now upon the world of mystical or transcendent truth. As in the series below he was seen handing his crown to the next Buddha, Maitreya, so here it is Maitreya who is the Teacher. The scenes are drawn from the Gandha Vyuha, one of the nine great scriptures of Nepal, and a portion of the Avatamsaka Sutra. It tells how the young seeker Sudhana found ultimate truth, and sets out in great detail his long search. Gods and men, monks, ascetics, and Bodhisattvas, all are consulted. Maitreya alone can initiate him.

Here, besides these long galleries of pictures, are innumerable small stupas, each with its Dhyani-Buddha; so that whole great building resembles nothing so much as a mandara of the sect which thrives to-day on Koya San.



The Ground Plan of Borobudur.

It may well be that the central stupa which crowns the whole work is meant to be occupied, like the central place in a mandara of this school, by the Sun Buddha, Vairochana.

The whole building, as it was lit up with innumerable candles in the niches of its small stupas, must have glowed like a galaxy of stars about a central sun.

Here in any case is symbolized the central idea of Buddhist art that behind the many is the One. Perhaps it is a symbol of the main thought embodied in the Lotus Scripture that behind the many ways there is one way, and that behind the many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas there is the eternal Sakyamuni. It may well be that we are led back from the elaborate pantheon and the mystical formulæ to the historic Founder, for an unfinished statue

discovered in the Central Stupa may be a copy of the Bodh-Gaya Sakyamuni.

It is pathetic to-day to find that there is nothing left of this great system except the stones, and one little bit of local worship. Before one of the sculptures we may see a small group of Javanese villagers lighting their little sticks of incense. It is an illustration of one of the Jatakas, which tells how the Bodhisat in the form of a great turtle rescued a shipwrecked crew and took them on his back to safety. Here women come, believing that these small figures are babies, and that here is magic which will help them to become mothers. All that remains of a great and stately cultus is this—a few peasants seeking to propitiate a local godling—that and the stones of a mighty past.

Here, outside India and for a brief moment, Indian art reached its climax, and Indian religion sought to popularize amidst simple peasants the amazing philosophy of a cosmopanteistic realism, to-day best studied in Japan. Here, then, was the swan song of Indian Buddhist artists—or as they prefer to say, the glorious efflorescence under tropic skies of the venerable tree about to die. Unique architecturally—even if a great French critic has called it *une omelette mal soufflée*—its sculptural decorations are a fine flower of the ancient tree which flourished during the long era from Asoka and Kanishka to the Guptas (200 B.C. to A.D. 500) and which now in the eighth and ninth centuries blossomed once more luxuriantly.

It is not only due to the wonderful vastness and the excellence of those hundreds of panels which adorn the walls and balustrades of the four long passages through which the faithful, rising from terrace to terrace, performed the solemn perambulation of the monument. It is, above all, the spirit of supreme repose, of serene calmness pervading them in which the Buddhist religious ideal finds so eloquent an expression.<sup>1</sup>

Nor can one ever forget that lovely setting. On a small hill rise the six square terraces and the crowning stupa, set amidst its rings of smaller ones; beyond are the green fields—

<sup>1</sup> J. Ph. Vogel in *The Influence of Indian Art*, pp. 57-8.

a patchwork such as Sakyamuni saw in Magadha and took as the pattern for robes of his order—the great trees, the vast circle of high peaks—Merapi, Minoreh, Soembing, Sindoro. It is a place of enchanting loveliness, at dawn or in the bright sunlight, or in twilight with its lovely after-glow. And the Buddhas of north, south, east, and west—Amoghasiddha, Ratnasambhava, Akshobhya, and Amitabha—vie with the great Vairochana of the zenith for the honour of the most lovely view. There they sit, ninety-two images of each gazing out over the wide and fertile plain and the distant peaks, and over all towers the simple and serene stupa of Sakyamuni. Even Vairochana with his many images at last gives place to the historic Founder.

What are they all, with their gestures of protection, of giving gifts, of meditation, of witness and of preaching—what are they but reflexes of the Great Monk of Kapilavastu? What is this serene and lovely monument but the embodiment of his spirit?

But if Java reminds us of Sakyamuni and the great things of Buddhist India it reminds us too of Muhammad and the sword of Islam with its clean-cut monotheism. These had won much of Asia as well as of Africa by the tenth century A.D., and with the coming of the great Mongols India and China as well as the Islands begin to yield to a Semitic influence—strong in its insistence on the unity of God, and of all believers in His resistless power and His great compassion. To all who did not make submission Islam was a veritable scourge, and much of the finest culture went down before its ruthless iconoclasm. But if it destroyed it also preserved, in Asia as in Europe, what it felt to be worth preserving—and the services of its great soldiers are in themselves an interesting and intricate study.

## THE SPIRIT OF SOUTHERN INDIA

## I. FROM THE KURAL

(The Tamil Veda of Tiruvalluvar)

*Home-Life*

He lives home-life who stands in Virtue's path,  
And helps the orders three in their good paths.

He lives true home-life who's a help  
To the lost, the poor and to the dead.

Pitris, gods, kin, one's guests and self—  
To serve these five is duty chief.

Ne'er shall be lack of offspring in his house,  
Who fearing ill, gives ere he enjoys.

If in the home true love and Virtue dwell,  
Home-life is full of grace and fruit.

If home-life's lived always in Virtue's way,  
What good is there in leaving house and home?

He, who lives home-life worthily,  
Shall first among all strivers be.

Home-life, that helps the saints and swerves from Virtue ne'er,  
Endures more trials than lonely hermit-life.

Home-life itself is Virtue's way;  
The other, too, is good, if men no fault can find.

He, who lives home-life worthily on earth,  
Will win a place 'mong gods who dwell in heaven.

Tr. H. A. POPLEY.

*Love*

Is there a bolt that can avail to shut up love?  
The trickling tears of loving eyes would tell it out.

All for themselves the loveless spend;  
The loving e'en their bones for others give.

The link of soul and body, say the wise,  
Is but the fruit of man's own link with love.

Love doth the trait of tenderness beget;  
That, too, begets true friendship's priceless worth.

The bliss of earth and heav'n the blessed gain,  
The learned say, is rooted in a loving life.

The foolish say, 'Love helps the good alone';  
But surely 'tis a help 'gainst evil too.

As the sun's heat burns up all boneless things,  
So virtue doth burn up all loveless things.

To live the home-life with a loveless heart  
Is like a withered tree flowering in barren sand.

To those who lack the inward means of love  
What use is there in any outward means?

The living soul subsists in love;  
The loveless are but skin and bone.

Tr. H. A. POPLEY.

## II. A HYMN OF THE ALVAR PERIYA

'He condescends to them of low estate.'

### *Tirumangai*

Thou didst not call him dull, or foe to life,  
Or low of caste, but pitiedst him,  
On him thy kindly grace didst pour, and say:  
'She with the shy deer's modest glance  
Thy friend is—and my brother thine'; and when  
He would not stay behind, for joy,  
'Thou art my friend: stay here!' thou saidst. Such words  
So fit my heart that I have found  
Thy feet, thou with the colour of the seas,  
Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous trees.

Thou didst not spurn the great son of the Wind  
As Ape, and of another race,  
But, so that love and longing greater grew  
Than ocean, thou didst love, and say:  
'There cannot be a recompense for all  
That thou hast done for me; I will  
Embrace thee, thou of faultless truth!' That such  
A shining boon to me may come,



Longing, the refuge of thy feet I seize,  
 Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous trees.

When gathering lotus in a beauteous pool  
 By groves of fragrant flowers girt,  
 The elephant by mighty crocodile  
 Was seized, so that its end was nigh:  
 He thought upon the shelter of thy feet . . .  
 Knowing the mighty wrath thou hadst,  
 Such that the life of that beast, cruel-mouthed,  
 Was shaken, I, too, come to thee,  
 Thy slave, the refuge of thy feet I seize,  
 Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous trees.

When came a poison-dropping angry snake  
 To Thee for refuge, terror-struck,  
 Thou didst become its refuge, and didst give  
 It for protection to the Bird,  
 Thy beauteous slave. Knowing this grace thou show'dst,  
 I, fearing Yama's messengers  
 So harsh of speech, and cruelties which they,  
 Fierce ones, will do, have come to thee:  
 Thy slave, the refuge of thy feet I seize,  
 Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous trees.

Tr. J. S. M. HOOPER.

The Alvares are the wandering poets of the South, forerunners of Ramanuja, inspired by the Gita. The above are from volumes in 'The Heritage of India Series', Oxford University Press.

### III. A SOUTHERN CHALLENGE TO BRAHMINS OF WESTERN INDIA

'Ye Brahmins, hearken to what I say! When men die and their sons give you a seat and food so that you recite delusive catch-prayers and enjoy yourselves, tell me, who has ever seen (the ghosts), stirred by hunger, come back and stand there thrusting out their hands? whose hunger is assuaged by the food that you consume! In the various lands of the Ottiyas, Mlechchhas, Hunas, Sinhalese, the slender-waisted Jonakas, Yavanas, and Chinese there are no Brahmins; but ye have set up in this land a fourfold division as if it were an order distinguished in primal nature. By conduct are distinguished high and low degrees. The bull and the buffalo are unlike of kind; have male and female of these two classes ever been seen to unite one with another and breed offspring? But ye men, who are by

birth all of the same kind, do ye not see that if male and female of the orders which ye proclaim to be different unite one with another, offspring is born from the union? Whatever be the seed and whatever the ground whereon it is sown, on that same ground that very seed will spring up; it would be against nature's law that it should become different. Are not the sons of a Pulai-woman united with a Brahmin likewise Brahmins? . . .'

"Kapilar"—a Southern Poet. Tr. L. D. Barnett in "The Heart of India", *Wisdom of the East*: John Murray.

#### IV. SOME POEMS OF TUKARAM

##### (a) *Creator and Protector*

Who guards the unborn babe within the breast?  
 How skilled His hands, who guides and holds  
 This Universe! Who cherishes the little snake  
 That its unnatural mother would molest!  
 Who feeds the life within the dry cocoon,  
 And pulses in the living rock. Awake!  
 And firmly meet thy fate, says Tukaram.

TUKARAM (A.D. 1608-49).

By birth a Sudra, a small shopkeeper by occupation—he was a great-hearted 'devotee whose hymns are probably the largest religious influence in the Maratha country. These Bhajanas are in an irregular rhymed metre. Naïve and spontaneous, they are full of trust and confidence in God, who is all-pervading, yet very present and personal. We easily comprehend him for what he is, an unlearned man struggling with the mysteries of faith by such light as he can find. This light is sometimes reflected from the great Sanskrit classics, it is sometimes borrowed from the traditions of Krishna worship and the Bhakti school of Bengal. It is always concentrated, however, on the image of Vitthoba at Pandhapura in which Tukaram finds a power actually present to help and save him.'

##### (b) *God Immanent yet Transcendent*

Father, Mother, bosom-friend,  
 Treasure, darling of my heart!  
 Thee I know—no other proof attend:  
 On Thee I lay the burden of my care!  
 All action Thou, all deeds of piety,  
 Clan art Thou, Guru, Vows, Austerity:  
 The very place of pilgrimage Thou art.

## THE POST-GUPTAN AGE

In every spirit dwells Thy life divine,  
 As fire in fire-stick, even so it hideth!  
 Reflected lights in every vessel shine:  
 The vessels break: yet still the Light abideth.  
 Pound thou the grass—no milk dost find:  
 Yon cow doth chew, and change it:  
 The plantain blossoms into fruit and flower—  
 Search thou its stem—what trace dost find?  
 None knoweth this strange alchemy,  
 Save He who's in it all, save He  
 Who wields o'er all His power.

215-16.

*(c) Vishnu*

We see Thy footprints, Vishnu, everywhere:  
 Lord of the misty hue, lo! all are Thine!  
 The ground beneath us is Thine altar-stair,  
 And by Thy love all days auspicious shine.  
 Thou art our all, our hope, our very life,  
 Our livelihood. The daily meal we eat  
 An offering is to Thee, e'en to the betel-chew!

We walk—around Thy throne circle our feet:  
 We sleep—before Thy Face we lie so still!  
 We talk with folk—to find Thine Image there.  
 Wells, rivers, lakes are all by Ganges filled:  
 Huts, palaces, alike are temples that we build  
 To Thee. All sounds Thy Name declare,  
 All worlds are Thine, that are or ever were.  
 Of Thy great love Thy servants take their fill.

1703.

*(d)*

He who this universe pervades  
 Does He not dwell within my heart?  
 His grace my spirit guides and aids,  
 My mind empowers to do its part:  
 My energies quiescent lie,  
 No purpose of my own have I.  
 See how the puppets dance and move  
 The strings are in His hands above!

2881.

*(e) Tukaram and Sivaji*

When the great Marathi emperor Sivaji invited him to his court, Tukaram refused. 'Look upon my modest speech,' he wrote, 'as a grace of Him who dwelleth in the hearts of all men; for we that have submitted ourselves to Panduranga are not poor or pitiable; Panduranga guards and supports us; what are others compared to Him? What can I ask of thee, that I should see thee? I have brought to naught all worldly longings. My fief is Desirelessness, for which I have surrendered the land of Desire: as the chaste wife longs only to see her lord, such am I to Vitthala. All the world is to me Vitthala, naught else; thee likewise I behold in Him.'

Tr. L. D. BARNETT.

## VII

### AKBAR AND THE GREAT MOGULS

The success of a Government hangs on the King's use of his leisure.—

AIN-I-AKBARI.

This world is a bridge—build not on it.—INSCRIPTION AT FATEPUR-SIKRI.

#### I

IN 712, within a century of Muhammad's death, Arabs set up an Islamic kingdom in Sind, and in 987 a freed slave of Ghazni in Afghanistan declared war on Hindu India, routed the Rajput clans, and left to his son Mahmud the grim task of repeated invasion and conquest. Thus while the Cholas were conquering Ceylon, and the Normans England, the Ghaznis were gaining a precarious foothold in India, and by 1193 were lords of northern Hindustan. Mahmud, first sultan, made of his task of conquest a Jihad or Holy War, and in addition to raids and looting began a peaceful penetration by encouraging such men of letters as Firdausi, and Albiruni the mathematician, to produce their great histories—the Shahnama or 'Tale of the Kings', and the 'Treatise on India'. But all about his court at Lahore were proud Rajput kingdoms also promoting their own culture, and to this age belong the flower of Indian chivalry and the efflorescence of Hindu popular literature—the Bhagavad Purana and the Ramayana of Tulsi Das as well as the tales of warlike deeds against the invader and against rival kingdoms under such leaders as Bhoja of Malwar, Jaichand of Kanauj, and the Prithiviraja Chauhan of Ajmer and Delhi.

In Delhi itself there are traces of seven cities, where as upon the ancient Kurukshetra, successive rulers vied with one another in rearing new tombs and mosques: thus in the eighth century Amangpala, a Hindu ruler, built a temple where the mosque by the Kutub Minar now stands, and from this to the great Pearl Mosque the evolution of Indian Islamic architecture may be traced. It is a syn-

thesis of Hindu, Persian, and Arab styles as Hindustani, the *lingua franca* of the North, is a blend of Hindi, Persian, and Arabic. Now minarets rise beside vimanas—sultans vie with rajas, fakirs with sannyasis, and dervishes with bhaktas in the long processes of rivalry and mutual influence; and a slave dynasty rules in the name of the Prophet over proud solar houses which stoop to marriage with the outcaste ‘Turks’.

Some of these slave kings were ruthless, some enlightened rulers, and patrons of learning and letters. But iconoclasm was a religious duty, and many noble works of art—Buddhist and Hindu—perished. The slave dynasty was succeeded by Khiljis who ruled thirty years (1293–1323), led by able conquerors who penetrated far south, and were succeeded by Tughlaks, of mixed Hindu and Turkoman descent, who ruled till 1410, and are remembered for the amazing Muhammad, ‘learned, ruthless, religious, mad’, who promoted fantastic wars, and no less fantastic experiments in finance and statecraft, attempting to move all Delhi to his new capital Daulatabad seven hundred miles away. In such caprices he reminds us of Richard II of England, who was almost contemporary with him, and also brave, good, and cultured, but a little mad. After Muhammad came Firoz (1351–88) a much less brilliant but more stable character. Both were zealous builders, and Firoz made canals still used between Jumna and Sutlej, and did other useful things. But the main interest of these early Islamic dynasties is that they were forerunners of the Great Moguls and pioneers of a new synthesis between Semitic and Aryan cultures in which the age-long struggle finds surcease and fruition.

## II

The Mogul dynasty, like that of the Mauryas—and many another—was founded by an adventurer. Babur, the Tiger, had long watched from his lair at Kabul the rich prize for which ‘lesser breeds’ wrangled in the plains

of Hindustan. Then with one irresistible leap, he seized it, and spent the rest of his days holding it. In this raid he avoided the hideous cruelty which had disgraced his ancestor Timur, when prisoners were massacred in cold blood and cities were sacked without reason. And though he carried away much loot, he left no great bitterness behind him.

But he held India as conqueror, and, like Alexander, seems to have dreamed of it as a province in a much vaster empire. And he too died before he could consolidate it even as a province, holding Agra for five short years. Nor had he, like Chandragupta, a Chanakya to do his thinking for him. A great soldier, a poet and a man of genius, he was no administrator: and the need for one was urgent.

The India of the fifteenth century was more divided and much harder to unite than that of Chandragupta. Many Hindu kingdoms were still unconquered, and the Muhammadan rulers of Delhi had only the title of emperor: none of them had yet made himself at home in India, nor learnt the art of conciliation. They all made the fatal and characteristic mistake of ruling by armed camps, and their generals became rebel kings. One great Hindu kingdom, Vijayanagar, defied them all: it covered all the south up to the limits of Asokan India, and it took an Akbar to subdue it. Above it stretched a line of Muhammadan powers—Gujarat, Malwa, and the Deccan—and north of these was the solid Hindu wedge of Rajputana, resentful and haughty, unbending before the conquering might of Islam, and eagerly watching its internal divisions, Afghan and Turk, Shia and Sunni. These cleavages, whether of race or of sect, also took an Akbar to bridge: and the great Rajput dynasties, claiming descent from the Sun, were either to go down before his ruthless imperialism, or to be won over by his policy of conciliation.

Above this wedge of solid Hinduism lay a northern group of Muhammadan powers stretching in a great sweep from Sind to Bengal, kingdoms still nominally vassal to

Delhi. What a prize and what a task awaited the conqueror! Only a leader of infinite daring and skill could subdue all these proud powers, most of whom kept up large standing armies. Then, as now, the task was only made possible by a 'balance of power': each great Islamic group being flanked by a strong Hindu kingdom, with pride of race and religious intolerance to inflame the ambitions of its rulers. To the Hindus the Muhammadans were upstart invaders, defilers of Mother India and of the temples of her gods. To the Muhammadans, even the great Rajput princes were infidels—to crush whom was to serve Allah, to die in battle with whom was to win Paradise.

Such was the India of the fifteenth century: and the masses, terribly taxed to support great armies and visited with devastating famine, were busy with the problem of living. Nor were their rulers much concerned with helping them in the struggle for existence: by their system of tax-gatherers and local governors they made life only the more intolerable. The landlords collected even more than the rulers exacted, and the governors decided cases without appeal. To the rulers who preceded Akbar and to his successors we may apply these words of an ancient Chinese patriot, who said of the kings of his day: 'In their kitchen there is fat meat; in their stables are fat horses. But the people are famished, and in the fields lie the starved bodies of the dead.' But there was no one at the court of the conquerors to voice the crying needs of the people. There was not even a courtier like Mencius to remind this race of connoisseurs that the people hearing the sweetness of the music within the palace, cry, 'How our ruler loves music. But why does he reduce us to such misery?' And as these mighty hunters went out against lions and tigers, there was no one to dare their anger and say: 'The people hear the noise of your chariots and horses. They see the splendour of your plumes and pennons, but with aching brows they cry, "How our ruler loves hunting, but we perish with misery"'. The Moguls were to do something to alleviate India's pain; Akbar realized that their sorrows were



chiefly economic: as the Arthasastra says, 'The one great need is wealth'. But Mogul splendour was an added burden.

Of the founder of the great Mogul dynasty, Babur, we know much. His own *Memoirs* give us a partial autobiography, though with long gaps, and there are contemporary works of art, including portraits, and descriptions of the great adventurer and his romantic career. Here is excellent reading for those who like tales of bloodshed and of personal heroism; but he stands almost outside the story of India, though he regarded himself as rightful heir to the Empire of Timur.

Like all his house, he was a strange mixture; often drunk, yet always religious; frank about his sins, which he often renounced; a poet as well as a soldier, a devoted father who set his face against the family rivalries so usual in this age, a just ruler according to his lights; 'a very gallant gentleman' says his latest biographer. A man of immense vitality, with a genius for friendship and a broad humanity, he 'had not merely to conquer a kingdom; he had to recreate a theory of kingship'. And for this he had neither the capacity nor the length of days granted in overflowing measure to his grandson Akbar.

Nor had his son, Humayun, the personality and the gifts. He is like Bindusara, son and father of a genius, himself of less than average ability. He was a slave to opium and lacked moral purpose in other ways. Yet he handed on to Akbar—born of a romantic marriage with a girl of thirteen—the charm and culture of his race. And he tried to give him a good education, though he was for many years himself a homeless wanderer. He died in 1556, when Akbar was thirteen.

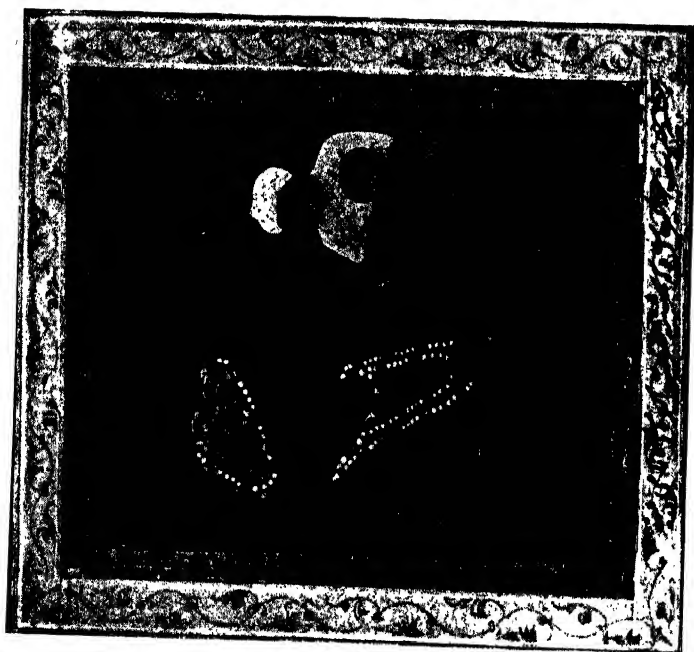
### III

Akbar was named Badru-d-din—'the Full Moon of the Faith'—and Muhammad Akbar—'Muhammad the Great'. If ever names mean anything these were big with destiny





THE BOY AKBAR  
ON 'SKY-ROCKET'



AKBAR'S SON JAHANGIR  
WITH HIS FATHER'S PORTRAIT

—good or evil, as we interpret the life and character of this great man.

We know that his baptism of fire came when he was still an infant. Kabul had been captured by his uncle Kamran, who basely exposed the child until the besiegers withdrew; and he grew up amidst camps and marches and the alarms of war.

His tutors naturally found it hard to turn his thoughts to book-learning, and to the end of his days this man of action—religious reformer, patron of poets and artists, collector of a unique and priceless library of manuscripts, student of art and of music—was unable to read and write. Cultured but unschooled, he is a type of ruler not unfamiliar to history in Europe as in Asia.

His mastery of animals as of men began early, and the story of his taming of the mad elephant is well illustrated in a contemporary picture. He is seen seated on Hawai or 'Sky-rocket', whom he has pitted against Ran Bagha—'Battle Tiger'. They have crossed a bridge of boats after a furious combat and Akbar is mastering the victor, while his attendants flee in terror and amazement. It is a symbolic scene, for Akbar had greater tasks ahead.

Heir to little more than a claim to suzerainty, he was busy for many years taking and consolidating his empire. As we have seen, it was a desolate and unhappy India that he found, devastated by a terrible famine, impoverished by misrule, and divided into warring kingdoms. That he left it settled, united, and, if not prosperous, yet with some measure of economic as well as political stability—this is his chief claim to greatness. A pupil and ward of the great general Bairam Khan, he rallied his forces at Panipat, where India has thrice been lost and won, and defeated the great army of the Afghan pretender Hemu, whom he slew in cold blood with his own hands at the bidding of Bairam Khan. They entered Delhi in state, and a month later turned north against another rebel, Sikander Sur, whom they also defeated, but not without a severe struggle. So in the first year of his reign the Boy Emperor had made

himself master of northern India, and set himself to the tremendous task of uniting the rest of the empire.

Finding the high hand of Bairam Khan intolerable he 'allowed him to go on pilgrimage to Mecca'. As he was setting out an assassin killed him, and Akbar found himself free to work out his own policies. He had not only to make India his, he had the more delicate task of making himself India's. To both problems he found a key in the proud kingdoms of Rajputana, whose heroism and pride of race at once attracted and challenged him. As Alexander found an Indian king ready to submit and another prepared to die first, so Akbar: the Raja of Amber gave him his daughter in marriage, but the proud scions of Udaipur fell defending their rock-fortress, Chitor, 'sanctified by the memory of eight centuries of heroic deeds and heart-rending tragedies'. A curse fell upon it, and it is still derelict.

The flight of its degenerate ruler was an even more crushing blow to Rajput pride than the alliance of Amber with the Muslim. But his successor, Pratap Singh, long kept up a stout resistance. He succeeded in reconquering some of the lost territory and at last, as the Mogul genius waned, his house came once more into its own.

But like the Manchus in China the Moguls lasted nearly three centuries in India; and while the pride of China and Rajputana are alike inexhaustible, the Rajputs have neither the patience nor the long view of the Chinese, who knew that their rulers would become degenerate if they were given time and wealth. The Rajput chiefs chafed under the barbarian yoke, though Akbar tempered it to the submissive, and made it crushing to the restive.

At Chitor he slew as ruthlessly as Timur, till the castecords of the slain were gathered up in baskets: yet he set up statues to the brave defenders Jai Mall and Patta, and 'finally succeeded in healing the wounds his ambition had inflicted'.

The repeal of two oppressive levies within the first eight years of his reign, a poll-tax and a pilgrim-tax, which had

borne very heavily upon the Hindus, greatly aided the healing process; and in this and other acts we can watch Akbar's growth in understanding and sympathy.

The Rajputs, true to their race, won even in yielding to the victor; and Akbar, though he had no drop of Indian blood in his veins, became in a true sense an Indian, as he gradually fell in love with Indian civilization. Which is the more remarkable, the military genius of this youthful conqueror, or the magnanimity and understanding which guide him in the moment of victory to conciliate the vanquished? It is small wonder that the name of Alexander, so long forgotten in India, begins in Akbar's time to be remembered with respect.

Nor did his work of conciliation stop with his peers. High office was given to Hindus as to Muslims, and Todar Mall, his wazir, worked loyally with him for the financial and economic reforms India so sorely needed. Upon his work the British in India have founded their fiscal system.

Tax-farming was done away: the land was re-assessed, and taxes levied on crops rather than on soil. This mitigated the burden in times of drought, though it was still heavy. Agriculture was encouraged by loans, and though the traditional levy of one-sixth of the produce was sometimes raised, and although official corruption cannot be wholly prevented even by an autocrat, Akbar did much to prevent extortion and to fix tariffs.

English residents in India in the early seventeenth century bear out the official records in stating that food was fairly plentiful and very cheap, and that wages were terribly low, when judged by Elizabethan standards. One of them lived on from a penny to twopence a day; but the day labourer got less than a penny, and in hard times the people died like flies. Nor was life and property secure even to the rich, and under Akbar's successors the dangers increased, and there was little encouragement to commercial enterprise. Akbar himself hoarded enormous sums of money and jewels, as did the royal house of Vijayanagar.

## IV

The process by which Akbar made himself an Indian of the Indians can only be understood by a study of his religious life. Religion is the most potent factor in Indian culture, and fascinating as is the story of Akbar as conqueror, reformer, and patron of arts, the story of his religious development is at once the most characteristic and interesting chapter in his history. Did he inherit from the poetic and adventurous Babur and from the gentle and dreamy Humayun this strain of mysticism and this theological aptitude, which makes him so remarkable a figure among the kings of the world?

Babur was a devout and orthodox Muhammadan; and there is an interesting story that he met Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, who spoke with him of a Universal Faith. It may be that this meeting bore fruit fifty years later in Akbar's strange attempt to find one, for Humayun was also religious, and did his best to turn the boy's mind to serious things. As Abul Fazl is fond of saying, the boy was for some years 'behind a veil'. He was in fact under the influence of the women of the harem, who were orthodox Sunni Muhammadans, while his guardian, Bairam Khan, made himself hated as an adherent of the Shiah.

The boy was thus early impressed with the endless rivalry between these two sects, whose original difference concerned the Khalifat, or secular headship of Islam. He soon began to rejoice in playing off one against the other, and there is no question that their squabbles had much to do with his repudiation of Islam. A first step in this direction was taken when he married the princess of Amber, and was able to see Hinduism in practice. It is greatly to his credit, and to hers, that underlying its sectarian differences he found a depth of devotion to the Unseen, a noble ideal for the home, and an all-inclusive code, the dharma of Hindu life, Hinduism is much more a way of life than a set of beliefs.

Another great milestone in Akbar's religious develop-

ment was the birth of a son to this Hindu wife. He had prayed for a son, and had been promised one by Salim Chisti, the saintly recluse of Sikri near Agra. When the child was about to be born he went with his queen to the hermitage, and made it the nucleus of the great and noble Fatepur Sikri, a city built partly in Hindu style and partly in that of Islam, and a superb symbol of the work of reconciliation which now began. Here and at Ahmedabad the blending of Hindu and Muslim styles may be conveniently studied: never perhaps were two widely differing traditions more successfully wedded.

The buildings at Sikri include the noble mosque where Akbar was soon to act the mullah, and the great hall known as the Ibadat Khana, where religious discussions were held every Thursday night, and often prolonged to the small hours of the morning. That it has completely disappeared is probably due to his more orthodox successors, for he went far in his search for a universal religion. In the eighteenth year of his reign the Sufi leader Sheikh Mubarak and others met him returning from a victorious campaign, and made the subtle suggestion that he should become spiritual as well as temporal head of the Empire. On this fateful hint he acted six years later in the famous proclamation of 1579, which Colonel Malleon calls the Magna Carta of his reign, and which Dr. Vincent Smith condemns as a monument of folly and ridiculous vanity. If we look at this act in the light of Hindu ideals it is rather one of policy than of either magnanimity or conceit; but its detailed working out was to say the least unwise.

In this decree Akbar claims to be the head of the Din Ilahi, a monotheism which some authorities regard as a reformed sect of Islam, but which the accurate Jesuit fathers who were summoned to his Court at this time, and the orthodox Muhammadan Badaoni, are agreed is tantamount to a repudiation of Islam. The latter quotes a form of confession used by its adherents: 'I . . . do voluntarily and with sincere devotion and of my free will utterly and entirely renounce and repudiate the religion of Islam,



which I have seen and heard of my fathers, and do embrace the Din Ilahi of Akbar Shah: and I accept the four stages of entire devotion—sacrifice of property, life, honour, and religion.’ These are no doubt suggested by the four asrams of Hinduism, and the new faith had in it more of Hinduism and of Zoroastrianism than of Islam, though it interpreted these monotheistically with a tinge of pantheism, and laid great stress upon sun-worship. Akbar was in fact like Louis XIV, *le Roi Soleil*, and deliberately fulfilled the old Indian tradition of the solar origin of the king. The crux of the matter lay in his assumption of infallibility, and the initiation-ceremony of the new Order, which included prostration at his feet, was conducted by the Emperor in person. He gave to the initiate a tablet engraved with his own name, using the ambiguous words ‘Allahu Akbar’, which (in this connexion) had a blasphemous sound to orthodox ears, and his portrait, to be worn in the turban of the faithful, was a symbol of his lordship in matters spiritual as well as secular. Initiates were accustomed to meet one another with the greeting ‘Allahu Akbar’, ‘Great is Allah’, and the response ‘Jalla Jalaluhu’, ‘Resplendent is his brightness’.

It seems clear that the Emperor went out of his way to annoy the orthodox, even insisting that members of the Faith should be buried with their heads towards the sun, and their feet towards Mecca. This is sun-worship after the old Vaishnava tradition, and an insult to Islam, and it was so meant.

No man was to build a mosque, or to repair those in existence; and later on mosques were actually destroyed; the slaughter of cows was forbidden, and for more than a hundred days in the year all India was to abstain from eating meat. For Akbar had accepted the Hindu doctrines of ahimsa to animals, and of the sanctity of the cow.

There is here, as in so much that he did, a mingling of genius and stupidity, of magnanimity and pettiness. Right in conciliating his Hindu subjects, he was perverse in persecuting Muhammadans, and his interest in the Parsis and in sun-worship seems to have been enhanced by his

claims to be the ideal and inspired Indian king, while his coquetting with the Jesuits led to no good result. Rome and Islam are agreed in this at any rate—they abhor the free-lance in religion. Both see in the individualism of the mystic a danger to the stability of the Faith.

Mysticism is indeed a heady wine; and Akbar quaffed deep of it. His attitude toward the orthodox theologians of the day is that of the Sufi poet,

Come leave we the pious to their piety,  
And get us to the Tavern of Reality.

This means of course let us drink of the wine of mysticism, and find truth at first-hand. There is this element of sincerity in Akbar's quest, and his friends Faizi and Abul Fazl, sons of Mubarak, were constantly with him to encourage this tendency. In an inscription which Abul Fazl prepared for a shrine in Kashmir the philosophy of this search is well set forth:

O God, in every shrine I see Thy people seeking Thee,  
In all tongues, O God, I hear Thy people praising Thee.  
The devotee of many gods and of One feel after Thee,  
Crying 'Thou art one, unrivalled: there is none else.'  
If it be a mosque men are there murmuring holy prayers:  
If it be a church there are bells tolling in love of Thee.  
I frequent the cloister or the mosque, and 'tis Thee I seek,  
For neither heretic nor orthodox may pass within the Veil of  
Truth:

Heresy to the heretic, to the orthodox orthodoxy:  
But the fragrance of the rose-petal is in the heart of the perfume-  
seller.

Religion in other words is a matter of inner experience, and Akbar was subject to moments of mystical realization of truth. On the great gateway at Fatepur Sikri are words which show us that beneath the egoism and the frivolity of his religious search there lay a deep sense of the transiency of the temporal, and of the mystery of the Eternal:

Jesus saith 'The world is a bridge: Pass over it, but build not on it:  
The world passeth as an hour: spend it in prayer, for the Unseen  
is at hand.

But on the other pillar of this stupendous gateway, erected to glorify the emperor, are the haughty words:

His Majesty, Lord of Lords, enthroned in the shadow of Allah, Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar, Emperor, hath conquered the Deccan. . . .

These two inscriptions, read together, remind us of Asoka's Kalinga Edict in their blending of pride and humility; and we may picture to ourselves the scene which reveals Akbar as preacher, like Asoka earnestly concerned with religious truth. The vast courtyard within the great gateway is crowded with the nobles of the Mogul court in their splendid brocades and flashing jewels. Here is some orthodox moulvi standing in austere disapproval, and near him the tense and eager forms of Faizi and Abul Fazl triumphant in this crowning moment, as the Emperor, clad in white, mounts the pulpit, and begins the service with the hymn of Faizi:

To me hath God the Empire given;  
My strength and wisdom are of heaven.  
Mercy and justice in Me blend,  
And love of truth doth Allah send:  
No mortal tongue his might can state.  
Allahu Akbar! God is great!

Here perhaps he caught the eye of the critical leaders of Islam, aghast at the blasphemy of his claims, for he here sets himself up as Sultan-i-Adil—Just Ruler, Head of the Faithful. Or perhaps it was the vision of a united India with himself as Prophet and Father. Or again perhaps it was the emotionalism of the epileptic, and the stab of an uneasy conscience not yet toughened to his new role: who shall say? He broke down, and hurriedly left the pulpit.

Yet he persisted, continued to bait the orthodox, and as the Jesuit Bartoli tells us, in due course

summoned a general assembly, keeping out only Father Rudolfo, who could not but oppose himself to this sacrilege. . . . When he had them all assembled in front of him he spoke in a spirit of astute and

knavish policy saying, 'For an empire ruled by one head it were a bad thing to have the members divided among themselves and at variance one with the other. . . . We ought therefore to bring all into one . . . not losing what is good in any religion, and each gaining from the other. So would honour be rendered to God, peace given to the peoples, and security to the Empire. Let all who are present voice their concerted opinion';

and he would not move until they had spoken.

And the men of note, especially the commandants, who had no god other than the king, no law other than his will, all with one voice responded 'Yes, he who is nearer to heaven both in his high office and his lofty intellect should prescribe for the Empire as to gods, ceremonies, sacrifices, mysteries, rules, solemn ritual, and whatever else be needed to make a perfect and universal religion'.

Yet there were many, even of the Hindu generals who served him so faithfully, that rejected the new faith, and his own family were puzzled as to what the Emperor himself really believed. Thus we find Jahangir sustaining at his father's tomb the readings of the Koran and the solemn dances of the dervishes, and giving gifts and money to its Muhammadan custodians, but at the same time decorating it with Christian pictures. In these at any rate Akbar delighted, and he had an image of the Virgin Mary in his private apartments. Perhaps it was this benign Presence at the Court, as well as that of his three Hindu queens, which moved him to attempt reforms of Hinduism especially in the interests of women. He forbade the practice of sati, and on one occasion rode in person 120 miles in two days, to attempt to stop a young widow from burning herself on her husband's pyre. There are several striking instances of such attempts; but they were all vain. The hideous yet heroic practice went on, and we learn from European travellers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of its appalling frequency. The Emperor and his court-poet were alike deeply moved at the proof of this devotion on the part of a child-wife whose husband had

been killed on the day of their marriage, and the following verses of the poet have come down to us:

May those whose hearts burn with the flame of Love  
Catch from this pure girl the flame of courage too!  
Teach me, O God, the Way of Love, and so  
Inflame my heart as hers with Love's pure fire.  
And for that maiden rare and pure, I pray  
Exalt her head, accept her sacrifice.

But it was only the abuses of Hinduism that Akbar attacked. He encouraged the Rajput nobles to build shrines to Krishna at Brindaban and Mathura, the holy cities of Vaishnavite Hinduism; and a very remarkable work of art has preserved for us the spirit of his reforms. Here is a band of dancing dervishes whom a group of courtiers, two Europeans among them, are watching. Below are seated a row of Hindu sannyasis—with critical eyes examining this exhibition of ecstasy. Familiar in Hinduism with the emotional cult of Krishna, the dances for instance of Chaitanya, it could not but be distasteful to them as a Muhammadan practice. Their still forms, their dignity, their natural poses, and the expressions on their strongly drawn features make this a superb example of the portraiture of the Mogul artists.<sup>1</sup>

Akbar's own attitude to art is a proof of his courage and emancipation in matters of religion. The traditional tabu of Islam is said to have sprung from the teachings of the Prophet, that to paint a human form is to usurp the functions of the Creator, who will summon the artist at the Day of Judgement to do in reality what he has presumed to do in idea—to give life to his painting. Akbar's revolt against this is represented in the famous passage:

There are many that hate painting; but such men I dislike. It appears to me as if a painter had quite peculiar means of recognizing God; for a painter in sketching anything that has life, and in devising its limbs, one after the other, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work, and is thus forced to think of God, the Giver of life; so he will increase in knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> See *Court Painters of the Grand Moguls*, Arnold and Binyon.

This is a bold and noble reinterpretation of tradition, one of several examples which go to show that he was sincere and original.

Like the Prophet he seems to have experienced intuitions which came to him with the authority of a divine visitation. One of these occurred during the cruel practice of an animal-drive, when the game were penned into an enclosure, and wholesale slaughter followed. Suddenly 'a strange state of strong ecstasy came upon him. . . . a sublime joy took possession of his bodily frame, and the lure of the vision of God shed its light on him'.

These phrases are taken from different authors, the first from the critical Badaoni, the second from the devoted Abul Fazl. They are agreed that he immediately ordered the hunt to be stopped, and proceeded to give alms to the poor and to the fakirs, that he shaved his head, and laid the foundations of a great building to commemorate this vision. It seems clear that it was some kind of realization of the unity of all life which is the underlying thought of Hinduism; 'some thought that the beasts of the forest had with tongueless speech revealed divine secrets to him'. It is clear that like all his gifted family, he was a combination of gifts and tendencies not often found in one person. A mighty hunter he was also a lover of nature, and sensitive to her voices.

Of his interest in the sun-worship of the Parsis, we have clear evidence. He learned their rites and was accustomed to prostrate himself before the sun and before fire; a fire-temple was built within the palace, and Abul Fazl was put in charge; courtiers were bidden to stand as the lamps were lit in solemn reverence for fire, which is Agni the priest among the gods of ancient India, whom the emperor had long worshipped with his Rajput queens in the Hom or Fire Rite. It is this reverence which helps to explain, if it does not condone, his passionate outburst when a lamp-lighter was hurled from the palace walls for carelessness in his duty.

From his Rajput wives Akbar no doubt learned too the Gayatri, the orthodox salute to the sun, in whose worship

Vaishnavism had its origin. As the sun rises the upper castes greet it daily with the words: 'May he, the life-giver, enlighten our minds.' No man ever more urgently needed light and guidance in a great task: that Akbar sought it from many sources is not surprising. His family had a way of consorting alike with mullah and sannyasi, and the lovely painting of such a visit here reproduced is a supreme example of the blending of Hindu and Islamic cultures. The women at the well and the whole atmosphere of the scene are Indian.

The immemorial life of the Indian fields goes on in its wide tranquillity around these seated figures—the Emperor Shah Jahan, divested of all his pomp, and the Mullah before whom he is reverently seated on a mat in front of the teacher's hut; and the whole scene is bathed in a tender quietness. We feel the happiness, which the painter must have had in escaping to this congenial atmosphere, overflow in his work.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a key to much in Akbar and his family. India's wide spaces and her stillness are at work on these scions of a mountain stock. The Persian streak in them is being developed and the Turk and Mongol, though they flame up at times, are being mastered. The transcendent God, absolute and autocratic, finds a corrective in the mysticism of the Sufi and in the monism of the Hindu. And if a sense of the 'numinous' is a hall-mark of the religious, Akbar was a religious genius of no mean order; indeed if he had developed this gift he might be known for it better than for his many activities. Being a king he had to return to his duties, and his Hindu advisers would remind him that in doing the duties of his high station he was to find God. This is the central theme of the Gita, and we know that translations were made at this time of the Mahabharata, in which it occurs as in an interlude in the Civil Wars of India. It was a Mogul translation of the Upanishads which first came to Europe and won the devotion of Schopenhauer. From this source no doubt Akbar gained

<sup>1</sup> *The Court Painters of the Grand Moguls*, by Laurence Binyon and T. W. Arnold.



EMPEROR AND MULLAH



SANNYASIS (WATCHING DERVISHES)





his sense of the unity of all things, of the indwelling of the divine spirit in matter, of the joy of God in his world. It helped also to develop his tolerance, and Akbar tells us of its growth.

Formerly I persecuted men into conformity with my faith and deemed it Islam; as I grew in knowledge, I was overwhelmed with shame; not being a Muslim myself, it was unmeet to force others to become such; for what constancy can be expected from proselytes on compulsion?

This tolerance grew as Akbar realized the strength of religious conviction in Muslim and Hindu alike, and as he grew to hate the bitter intolerance of the orthodox moulvies and pandits. He came as we have seen even to admire the idealism in such hideous practices as sati, in which the less sympathetic eyes of European visitors saw only a method invented by men to prevent their wives poisoning them! Cruel as it was, Indian heroism sometimes rose in this custom to great heights: Akbar could not but admire the Rajput women of Chitor. 'I am the lioness-mate of a great soul', said one Indian Rani to her son when he sought to hold her back from the flames. And the Mogul women were not less devoted or heroic.

## V

Of the family life of the Moguls it is hard to speak without exaggerating on the one hand its fineness and on the other the brutality into which it often lapsed. 'Do nothing to hurt your brothers even if they deserve it', said the dying Babur to Humayun, who kept the charge at terrible cost. His life in spite of hardship and failure was one of married happiness with Hamida, and their great son Akbar was a good father and generous to all his house.

But Jahangir rewarded him by black treachery, and we see Shah Jahan and Aurungzeb both in turn lapsing into deeds of unnatural cruelty, such as the blinding of the charming Prince Khusru and the imprisonment of the aged Shah Jahan in his turn by his ambitious son. Bitter experience speaks in the saying of Aurungzeb, 'Never

trust your sons'. There are indeed many unsavoury deeds to show that the Moguls were men of their times; that they rose above them in some splendid cases is greatly to their credit. They were all better as fathers than as sons, sometimes over-lenient, always ready to forgive. When Humayun was sick his father after religious ceremonies walked solemnly around his bed three times, declaring that he was taking on himself his son's illness: no other sacrifice, even that of the famed Koh-i-noor, would suffice. Whereupon, say the records, the son began to recover and the father to sink. 'I have borne it away, I have borne it away,' cried the Emperor in exaltation of spirit.

Of Akbar, too, it is recorded that when his advisers urged him to put out of the way his treacherous foster-brother, then in open revolt against him, he replied, 'No! no! There flows a stream of milk between us'.

And though the Moguls surrounded themselves with innumerable concubines, their history is not lacking in romantic and lifelong married devotion. Jahangir allowed Nurjahan to rule him, even to the extent of inducing him to give up drunkenness and some of the opium to which he was addicted. Most touching of all is the passionate and romantic affection of Shah Jahan for Mumtaz. The Taj Mahal, most perfect of memorials, was built in her memory, and she was not, as is sometimes thought, a young bride, but the mother of fourteen of his children. He planned for himself another Taj in black marble to stand on the other bank of Jumna, and to be linked with the tomb of Mumtaz by a silver bridge, that their spirits might meet and commune for ever.

Are we to see in the later Moguls the qualities of a mixed race? They were all descendants of Timur and of Chingiz Khan and, as we have seen, Akbar married the Princess of Amber, and his son, Salim or Jahangir, was the fruit of this marriage. The later Moguls were thus partly Indian, and very much of Mogul civilization stands to the credit of India, which won their whole-hearted devotion.

Abul Fazl tells us that three-fourths of the court artists





A RAJPUT IDYLL  
DEER ENCHANTED BY THE RAGINI TODI

were really Rajput painters working under Mogul patronage, and compares them with the Persian painters: 'Their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few, indeed, in the whole world are equal to them.' It has been well said that the so-called Mogul art 'however magnificent its brief achievement, was but an episode in the history of Indian painting. Rajput painting . . . belongs to the main stream'.

The real life of India went on, in fact, not greatly affected by the splendour of the Moguls. The Hindu painters of this time continued their work at many a court, nominally vassal, but carrying on its own independent life. The old legends of the Krishna cult, his childhood and mischievous pranks, the animals charmed by his flute, his loves and his heroic deeds—these are themes which meant little to the orthodox Muhammadan, and though the emperors had translations made of the great epics into Persian, yet all this belonged to a different world, and it is this world which Rajput art illuminates—'a magic world, where all men are heroic, all women are beautiful and passionate and shy, beasts both wild and tame are the friends of man, and trees and flowers are conscious of the footsteps of the Bridegroom as he passes by'. How different all this is from the elephant-fights, the lion- and tiger-hunts, the durbars and barbaric pageantry of the Mogul painters. If these rose to their height in noble portraits of emperors and their courtiers, that of the Hindu painters reached its zenith in its dedication to romantic love, to the life of the people with their wayside camps, their pilgrimages, their eternal quest for the Unseen. While therefore Mogul art perished with the dynasty which had called it into being, Rajput art lives on, albeit with a feeble flame.

It is curious yet not entirely unintelligible that in his quest for a religion which should unite his people, Akbar seems never to have met or heard of the great poet Tulsi Das, whose Hindi Ramayana has much more profoundly influenced India than all the splendours of Agra and Fatepur Sikri.

The keen interest of the Moguls in natural phenomena

and their curiosity is well illustrated by Jahangir's account of a report which had come in from one of his subjects.<sup>1</sup> This curiosity in the make-up of the Moguls might well have led them into scientific research; it often led them to unnatural deeds of cruelty. As an example of the former tendency there is the story of Akbar, who in his keen interest in deciding whether religion is inborn is said to have isolated a group of infants. As they grew up they were questioned about their religious beliefs: all were found to be dumb. This discovery pushed farther has led in our time, under the impulse of the Christian spirit, to the invention of methods of teaching the deaf and dumb; but in Mogul India it remained sterile.

Of the lengths to which this spirit of curiosity could go there is an unpleasant example, amounting to sadism, in the treatment by Jahangir of one of his children, a little boy of seven. Failing to make the child cry by a severe beating, he thrust a needle through his cheek, and was proud to note the child's stoicism.

All the Moguls, though Akbar seldom and only under the impulse of a burst of temper, allowed themselves deeds of abominable cruelty. Several of them had men flayed alive, and enjoyed the death agonies of criminals. The following reports are from the record of Captain William Hawkins, who from 1609 to 1613 was a careful observer of Jahangir's India. He notes the strange mixture in the character of this queer man, who surrounded himself with religious pictures and expressed great respect for Christ and for the Virgin Mother, who was as covetous in accumulating possessions as he was generous in rewarding his servants, and who thought no act too small or undignified to have it recorded by his secretaries, who as we have seen had a real love for nature and a genius for appreciation side by side with a barbaric strain which expressed itself in such incidents as the following recorded by Captain Hawkins:

My selfe, in the time that I was one of his Courtiers, have seene many cruell deeds done by him. Five times a weeke he commandeth

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 191.

his brave elephants to fight before him; and in the time of their fighting, either coming or going out, many times men are killed or dangerously hurt by these elephants. But if any be grievously hurt which might very well escape, yet nevertheless that man is cast into the river, himselfe commanding it, saying: dispatch him, for as long as he liveth he will do nothing else but curse me, and therefore it is better that he die presently. I have seene many in this kind. Againe, hee delighteth to see men executed himselfe and torne in peeces with elephants. He put to death in my time his Secretary, only upon suspicion that Chanachanna should write unto the Decan King; who, being sent for and examined about this matter, denied it; whereupon the King, not having patience, arose from his seate and with his sword gave him his deadly wound, and afterwards delivered him to be torne by elephants.

Yet Jahangir's journals are full of notes of the beauty of some bird or plant, and he would instruct his court painters to make drawings of any that especially pleased him. He tells us that Mansur painted more than a hundred of the wild flowers of Kashmir: and he was himself a connoisseur of ability: 'My love for painting and my critical sense are so developed,' he writes, 'that when any work is put before me, either of dead or living artists, I can tell at once whose work it is. And if it contains many portraits by different pens I can say which is the work of each. Even if it is an eye or an eyebrow which has been done by another hand I can tell who did it and who did the face as a whole.' There is something of the child as well as the connoisseur here, and it is certain that his courtiers encouraged him in these claims to infallibility. He never knew when he was wrong! He had the collector's rage, and would pay ridiculous prices for anything which seemed rare or curious. Thus one courtier was rewarded with the sum of thirty thousand rupees for bringing him a good specimen of some mottled ivory which was the craze of the moment. 'He was an amateur of all rarities and antiquities,' says a contemporary Dutchman.

But the true artist in the Emperor shines out in many passages in his diaries. Of a valley in Kashmir he writes: 'How shall I sing its praise? As far as eye could see



many-hued flowers bloomed, and through the green meadows flowed rivulets. A page truly limned by the Painter of Destiny with the brush of creation! The very heart burst into bloom beholding it.' In another passage he quotes enthusiastically a poem full of exaggerated imagery, but his own words are simple and sincere. 'In the entrancing spring hill and plain are full of bloom; the gates, walls and courts, the very roofs are lit up by the flames of tulips, like torches at a feast.'

That is well and aptly said: but we cannot help wondering if his eye missed the much greater and more sublime spectacle of the Himalayas, and the lakes whose still waters mirror the snowy peaks of Kashmir. That Jahangir thought and saw for himself is clear. 'The old songs', he exclaimed in youth, 'wearied my heart: few were read at all. If we sing let it be of what we have seen, and are seeing ourselves.' This quick eye for facts redeems with a touch of humour the dullness of his diary, for the most part a sequence of rewards and punishments, of trivial acts, of the collection of curiosities, and of pleasure-trips. Here is a note that the Kashmiris 'though living by the water's edge are unclean within and without': and there is a delightful contrast in his description of a noble lady and of a fat courtier. She is described as 'sitting down in the bride-chamber of the eternal'; he as 'leaving his mass of clay in the dustbin of the transient'.

Jahangir has been aptly compared to his contemporary James I, who longed to be librarian of the Bodleian rather than King of England. As the curator of a natural history museum Jahangir would have been happier, says his translator, than on the throne of Akbar.

The family love of the Moguls is tragically illustrated by our portrait of Princess Zeb-un-Nissa, eldest daughter of Aurungzeb. It is surrounded by verses of a poem by her lover Aqil Khan, written in nastalik script of great beauty, and has a poignant history or legend. The poet, it is said, found his way to the apartment of the Princess; and her father, who doted on her and took great pride in her poems

and in her strange Mongolian beauty, heard of the intrigue. He made his way unannounced to her apartment, and she had just time to hide her lover in a large bronze bath, which stood full of water and with firewood ready to be lit under it. The Emperor and his daughter chatted as usual, and she recited her poems. Aurungzeb then, being informed by a spy of the hiding-place of the poet, ordered the fire to be lit, and a heavy weight to be placed on the cover of the bath. It is said that neither lover showed any sign of pain during this terrible ordeal, and while the poet was boiled to death, the Emperor and his daughter continued to discuss poetry. Though Aurungzeb had his informer killed, the crime became known to Bernier and to the general public, who idolized the Princess as they had idolized the unhappy and charming Khusru, the victim of Jahangir. The painting shows the Princess mourning under the tree where her lover is buried, and the verses at the top mean 'the painter has here drawn a living picture of this idol of China. Life itself were not too great a price to pay to look upon his face'. The first reference is of course to the Chinese beauty of the Princess, for the Mogul Court greatly admired the golden complexion and the long eyes of the Chinese type; and the second verse seems to mean that the Princess is ready to die to see her lover once more. She did not long survive him, but was buried in the 'Garden of Thirty Thousand Trees' by the Kabul gate of Delhi: her tomb was destroyed when the railway was built.

The extreme artificiality of the Court poets of the Mogul Era is illustrated by the poems of this ill-fated Princess, whose mother was a Persian:

Like Laila I, my heart like Majnun loves:  
 Manlike my mind to desert spaces moves,  
 But woman's shyness anchors fast my heart.  
 Lo! To my garden comes the nightingale:  
 My pupil she in love's melodious tale,  
 The moth himself my pupil in love's art.

This is true to its Persian models, devoted to the tales of Laila and Majnun, or of Yusuf and Zuleikha which form

the theme of many poems and miniatures. But sorrow attuned the Princess to pity and to kinship with the people, and some of the spirit of India breathes in other lines:

An Emperor's daughter I have gazed on dire distress:  
Ornament of women—Zeb-un-Nissa I,  
And poverty adorns my comeliness.

In similar strain the glorious and masterful Nurjahan wrote her own epitaph:

Upon the graves of us the poor no light nor wreath,  
Nor voice of nightingale, nor fluttering wing of moth.

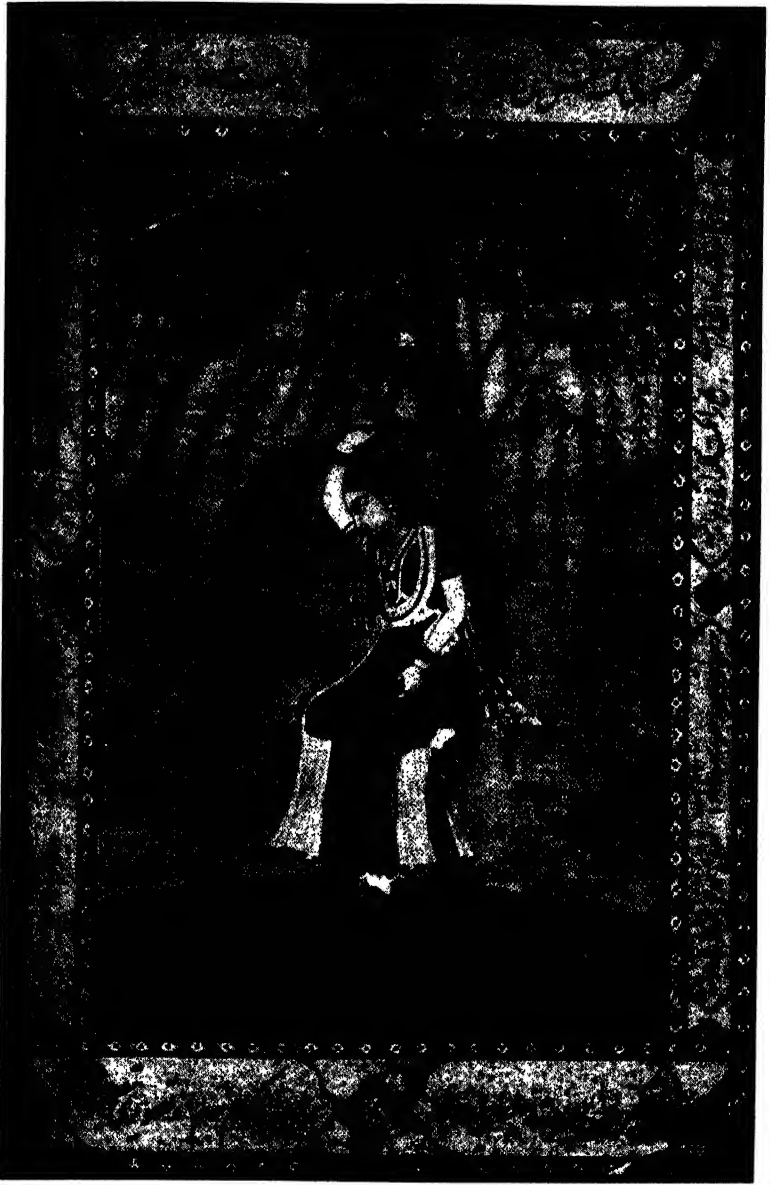
Here too the simplicity of India is seen at work subduing the luxury of the Moguls.

## VI

We may close this study with a few scenes which are at once typical of their chief actors and interesting moments in the rich pageant of India.

It is March 1627, and the fierce heat and dust of the Punjab summer is beginning. Jahangir is sick to death and longs for the coolness and beauty of Kashmir, its Persian gardens and its rich memories, Mansur painting some exquisite flower, Nurjahan herself beside him, and the long pleasant days by the Jhelum with only the famous Journal to demand attention. So the Court moves north, only to find that old joys cannot be renewed, nor the torch of life rekindled. Autumn comes, and they go south again till at the gate of the Vale of Kashmir, the Emperor is seized with a desire to hunt once more. A horrible accident—one of his servants dashed to pieces on the rocks—hastens his end, and he dies blaming himself for it.

His son, Shah Jahan, lies dying in his gilded cage at Agra. He gazes out at the Taj, a vision of moonlit witchery, and thinks of Mumtaz, and of his sons. In the palace garden without sits Aurungzeb. His servants bring him the head of his brother Dara, foully done to death. He tramples it under foot with a sneer: 'Behold the head of this aspirant to the Realm of the Moguls'.



A MOGUL IDYLL  
ZEB-UN-NISSA MOURNS HER LOVER



This fanatic Aurungzeb is on his way to worship in the great mosque at Delhi, when he meets a funeral procession of musicians chanting a dirge: 'Whom are you burying?' he asks: 'It is Music whom the Emperor hath slain,' says a voice from the crowd: 'See that you bury her deep,' says this devotee of Islam. Of him his brother had said: 'It is the prayer-monger whom I fear'.

With these glimpses of the later Moguls we must be content. They are of interest largely as a study in heredity, and throw light on the complex character and the varied gifts of Akbar. In Jahangir it is the connoisseur and the observer which come out; in Shah Jahan it is the artist and the sensualist; in Aurungzeb it is the religious fanatic. Upon all India plays as on a harp of many strings and they, as is the Mogul habit, call out much that is best in her. But none is worthy to compare in true piety, in nobility of character, or in service to India, with Akbar. 'He was great with the great, lowly with the lowly,' says a contemporary, and even the Jesuits, of whom he hardly deserved so much, pay generous tribute to his memory. 'Never for a moment did he forget God,' says Jahangir; and his critical English biographer, Vincent Smith, to whom this sketch owes much, writes: 'He remained a mystic to the end,' and also, 'He was a born king of men . . . one of the great sovereigns known to history'.

## VII

In the century and a half during which they dominated India, 1556-1770, the great Moguls had unified the country, kept peace (often at the cost of great punitive expeditions such as those of Aurungzeb against Shivaji and the Marathas), developed an elaborate administrative system much of it admirable, and fostered the arts and crafts for which India was famous until Western competition killed them.

They are also noteworthy for opening the door to the West, and in one dramatic story this is well symbolized, for the West came characteristically with Science in one hand and Commerce in the other, and if Benares is the symbol

of Hindu India, and Delhi of the Moguls, Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras with their universities, wharfs, and factories are the symbol of the British in India.

Shah Jehan's beloved daughter Jahanara had been so badly burnt that her life was in danger. The English surgeon Broughton was called in, and his skill saved her. The Emperor, overjoyed, offered him any reward he liked to name, and he chose a grant of land and the concession of equality with Dutch and Portuguese for the Trading Company which was to become the great East India Company and the instrument with them for the 'awakening' of Asia.

If India and the Middle Ages of Europe made a business of religion, the new era was to make a religion of business, and to introduce a new order into Asia.

#### CHIEF EVENTS OF AKBAR'S REIGN

<i>Date</i>	
1549	Birth of Akbar at Umarkot in Sind.
1556	Enthronement of Akbar at Kalanaur. Hemu defeated at Panipat by A. and Bairam Khan. Surrender of Sikandar Sur at Mankot. A. arrives at Delhi. Fall of Bairam Khan.
1563	Remission of pilgrim-tax.
1565	Founding of Agra Fort. Mines exploded. Birth of Prince Salim.
1569	Abolition of <i>jizya</i> . Non-Muslim poll-tax. Orders given for building Fatepur-Sikri. A. arrives at Fatepur-Sikri; Shaikh Mubarak's address.
1573	Revenue settlement of Gujarat by Raja Todar Mall.
1574	Abul Fazl and Badaoni presented at court.
1575	A. at Fatepur-Sikri: orders for building the Ibadat-Khana.
1576	Two Jesuit missionaries in Bengal. Comet; Todar Mall resumes office of Vizier; reorganization of mint.
1578-9	Debates on religion.
1579	The 'infallibility decree'. Arrival of First Jesuit Mission at Fatepur-Sikri.
1582	Proclamation of Din Ilahi.

- 1582 Close of formal debates on religion; abortive embassy for Europe.
- 1591-2 Second Jesuit Mission.
- 1600 Rebellion of Prince Salim.  
Queen Elizabeth's charter to E. I. Co.
- 1601 Prince Salim assumes royal title.
- 1605 Death of Akbar.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MOGULS

### I. EARLY EUROPEAN COMMENTS

#### (a) *On the Shalimar Garden*

The most beautiful of all these gardens is one belonging to the king, called Chah-limar. The entrance from the lake is through a spacious canal bordered with green turf, and running between two rows of poplars. Its length is about five hundred paces, and it leads to a large summer-house placed in the middle of the garden. A second canal, still finer than the first, then conducts you to another summer-house, at the end of the garden. This canal is paved with large blocks of freestone, and its sloping sides are covered with the same. In the middle is a long row of fountains formed into a variety of shapes and figures.

The summer-houses are placed in the midst of the canal, consequently surrounded by water, and between the two rows of large poplars, planted on either side. They are built in the form of a dome, and encircled by a gallery, into which four doors open; two looking up, or down, the canal, and two leading to bridges that connect the buildings with both banks. The houses consist of a large room in the centre, and of four smaller apartments, one in each corner. The whole of the interior is painted and gilt, and on the walls of the chambers are inscribed certain sentences, written in large and beautiful Persian characters. The four doors are extremely valuable, being composed of large stones, and supported by two beautiful pillars. The doors and pillars were found in some of the idol temples demolished by Shah-Jahan, and it is impossible to estimate their value. I cannot describe the nature of the stone, but it is far superior to porphyry.

SIR THOMAS ROE.

#### (b) *On Mogul obstinacy*

I found it impossible to convince them that the Christian faith was designed for the whole world, and that theirs was mere fable and gross superstition. Their answer was amusing enough. 'We



pretend not', they replied, 'that our law is of universal application. God intended it only for us. We do not even say that yours is a false religion; it may be adapted to your wants and circumstances, God having, no doubt, appointed many different ways of going to Heaven.'

IBID.

(c) *Three Jesuit Fathers on Akbar*

The King is by nature simple and straightforward.—FR. MONSERATE.

He is naturally humane, gentle, and kind.—FR. PERNUSCHI.

He never gave anybody the chance to understand rightly his inmost sentiments or to know what faith or religion he held by, but in whatever way he could best serve his own interests he used to feed one party or the other with the hope of gaining it to himself, humouring each side with fair words. A man apparently free from guile, as honest and candid as could be imagined, but in reality so close and self-contained, with twists of words and deeds so divergent from each other and most times so contradictory, that even by much seeking one could not find the clue to his thoughts.—FR. BARTOLI.

## II. SAYINGS OF AKBAR

### *Akbar on Kingship*

The noblest quality of princes is the forgiveness of faults.

The test of government is how the ruler uses his leisure.

### *Akbar on the Divine Faith*

We ought therefore to bring them all into one, but in such fashion that they should be both 'one' and 'all'; with the great advantage of not losing what is good in one religion, while gaining whatever is better in another. In that way, honour would be rendered to God, peace would be given to the peoples, and security to the empire.

## III. A POEM OF NANAK

Make contentment thine earrings, modesty and self-respect thy  
wallet, meditation the ashes (to smear on thy body).

Make thy body, which is only a morsel for death, thy beggar's coat,  
and faith thy rule of life and thy staff.

Make association with all thy church, and the conquest of thy heart  
the conquest of the world.

Hail! Hail to Him,

The primal, the pure, without beginning, the indestructible, the  
same in every age!

Make continence thy furnace, forbearance thy goldsmith,

Understanding thine anvil, divine knowledge thy tools,

The fear (of God) thy bellows, austerities thy fire,

Divine love thy crucible, and melt God's name therein.

In such a true mint the Word shall be coined.

This is the practice of those on whom God looketh with an eye of  
favour.

Nanak, the Kind One, by a glance maketh them happy.

The air is the Guru, water our father, and the great earth our  
mother;

Day and night are our two nurses, male and female, who set the  
whole world a-playing.

Merits and demerits shall be read out in the presence of the judge.

According to men's acts, some shall be near and others distant  
(from God).

Those who have pondered on the Name and departed after the  
completion of their toil,

Shall have their countenances made bright, O Nanak; how many  
shall be emancipated in company with them!

NANAK (1469—).

From L. D. Barnett's 'The Heart of India'. *Wisdom of the  
East*. John Murray. (After Macauliffe in *J.R.A.S.*)

#### IV. JAHANGIR—NATURALIST

One day in the courtyard of the house I saw a mouse rising and  
falling in a distracted state. It was running about in every direction  
after the manner of drunkards, and did not know where to go. I  
said to one of my girls: 'Take it by the tail and throw it to the cat!'  
The cat was delighted, and jumped up from its place and seized it  
in its mouth, but immediately dropped it and showed disgust. By  
degrees an expression of pain and trouble showed itself in its face.  
The next day it was nearly dead, when it entered into my mind to  
give it a little treacle (opium?). When its mouth was opened, the  
palate and tongue appeared black. It passed three days in a state of  
misery, and on the fourth day came to its senses. After this the grain  
of the plague (buboes) appeared in the girl, and from excess of

temperature and increase of pain she had no rest. Her colour became changed—it was yellow inclining to black—and the fever was high. The next day she vomited and had motions, and died. Seven or eight people in that household died in the same way.<sup>1</sup>

#### V. A HYMN OF KABIR

##### *The Joy of Creation*

Formless is He yet hath a myriad forms,  
 God of his creatures, and their Living Norm.  
 His Body infinite, unfathomable,  
 Immaculate and indestructible!  
 In rapture dancing, waves of form He maketh;  
 When his great rapture this our body shaketh  
 It and the mind leap up in ecstasy!  
 In all our thought He dwells immersed,  
 In all our joys and sorrows versed,  
 Endless is He, beginningless  
 Containing all things in perpetual Bliss.

KABIR (A.D. 1440-1518).

In Kabir, the weaver of Benares, we find blended the mysticism of the Muhammadan Sufi and the monism of philosophical Hindus. Possibly there is also Christian fervour in his hymns, for the India of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was eclectic.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Jahangir*, ii. 66.

PART II  
CHINA



## VIII

# THE BEGINNINGS OF CHINESE CIVILIZATION

'Seek to act always in accord with Reason.'  
'Human nature is essentially good.'

### I

CHINA, like India, is a triangle—though a much less obvious one. Its apex is the Pamirs, its base the ocean: its irregular sides are: on the north Turkistan and Russia; on the south Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, French Indo-China—many of whose peoples are akin to the Chinese in race and language. This vast triangle, nearly four and a half million square miles in area, slopes like India from the roof of the world to the sea, and has like India many kinds of climate and many varieties of soil—from the bare uplands of Gobi to the rich and populous river valleys. As on the banks of the Indus and Ganges in India, so on those of the Yellow River and the Yangtse, vast populations live. And, again as in India, mountain-ranges fan out from the roof of the world, nearly five miles high, to the ocean, dividing the vast continent. The rainfall here too depends upon the monsoon, and the great range of climate between uplands and sea helps to account for many differences between south and north, differences of temperament and of achievement.

If the Southerner is more poetic, he is also more adventurous—these qualities are akin—and as in India, so in China, early merchant-adventurers were first found in the south. The Northerner has tended, on the other hand, to dominate the political and more prosaic life of China. Early migrations were from east to west, and from north to south, and a number of races have fused and united to form the Chinese nation: not only the five whose colours made the flag of the First Chinese Republic,<sup>1</sup> but earlier

<sup>1</sup> Red—Chinese; Yellow—Manchus; Blue—Mongols; White—Turks; Black—Tibetans.

groups of invaders, Huns, Scythians, and Turks, frontiersmen who have given new energy to China, and have driven the aborigines, Miao and others, ever southward.

Thus China of to-day is very intimately related to the peoples on her borders, and her rulers have largely come from them. They have conquered only to be absorbed, and have adopted Chinese culture even as they gave it new vigour and brought out its characteristic genius. Possibly the relative positions of these peoples is still very much what it was at the dawn of history—from east to west Koreans, Manchus, Turco - Mongols, Turco - Tibetans, Mongols, Tibetans. The whole of the left bank of the Yellow River was for long controlled by various tribes of such 'Tartars', and the theatre of early Chinese history is small, and subject to inroads from all sides.

The great territory between the Yellow River and the Great Wall was almost entirely outside this area. Into it they slowly moved from north and east, themselves gradually changing from nomadic to settled life. 'If the Tartar is a nomad Chinese, the Chinese is a settled Tartar,' says Okakura Kakuzo, who has written so brilliantly of the unity of Asia. Yet the Chinese people had a long start in civilization, and we may picture them at the dawn of history—as they have pictured themselves ever since—a civilized group surrounded by barbarians gradually debouching upon the plains of the Yellow River, learning to clear their fields by fire and to irrigate them, improving their agricultural methods, and cultivating rice as well as millet. Marcel Granet in fact, while declaring that 'the problem of Chinese origins remains entirely unsolved', finds in the earliest texts evidences of this taming of nature and of the assimilation of small tribes of more primitive peoples, and suggests that in the mingling of the terrace-people, who cultivated and worshipped millet, with the plainsmen who cultivated rice, may be found the rise of a truly Chinese civilization: 'The first may have contributed the influences of the steppe and the second those of the sea'.

If so, we have in primitive China as in primitive Japan

a blending of two hardy peoples, one nomads from the uplands of continental Asia, the other seafarers, who settled first along the sea-coast, gradually making their way up the rivers, and meeting the Northerners on their march southward and eastward. The masses of China are still either hut-dwellers or boat-dwellers—farmers or fishers.

As in Vedic India, it is from the agricultural groups that the earliest songs have come down to us—though probably the seafarers had better songs—and we see them in the *Shih-Ching* or *Book of Odes* at work subduing nature by ritual dance and song as well as with plough and hoe:

Ho, there! Clear off the weeds,  
 Ho, there! Dig out the stumps!  
 Break up the clods with the plough,  
 Fall to in thousands with hoes!  
 Down to the valleys, up to the hillocks,  
 There go the chief and his firstborn,  
 Here are the little ones, helpers and journeymen! <sup>1</sup>

If such 'chanties' helped them to swing the hoe and to plough the furrow, we may be sure that the Southerners had sea-chanties. These early hymns attribute the ordering of the country and the beginnings of its culture to heroic figures. We hear them singing as they work under 'King Yao':

Sun-up to work:  
 Sun-set to rest:  
 Dig thou to drink,  
 Work thou to eat.

And an ancient harvest-home song is also recorded in the history of Sse-ma-ch'ien:

Baskets filled in the upper fields,  
 Carts laden in the fields below!  
 May plenty bless our harvest-home,  
 Our fields producing plenteously.

Then, as now, it is an industrious and skilled people, getting wonderful results from their fields. Long before the classic

<sup>1</sup> *Shih-Ching*, c. 439.



age they had four or five crops—rice, millet, soy beans, and wheat or barley, and they are said to get nearly twice as much wheat per acre to-day as the American farmer: for they return to the soil what they take from it, and hoe it with amazing zest.

The lands belonged to the overlord, but all got their share of the produce, and their toil was alleviated by great festivals of merry-making—sometimes developing into orgies. These are intimately related to the religious and sex-concepts of the people.

In the plains of Old China two moments are clearly marked. The climate is continental and the alternating rhythm of the seasons has an arresting character. Both short-lived, coming between the hard dry cold of winter and the warm summer damp, the spring and autumn, with their gentle rains and their changing sky, are like two wonderful moments. Nature, at one breath, begins or ceases to live. A sudden blossoming and a quick fall of the leaf, the return and departure in a body of migratory birds, the rapid swarming and disappearance of insects, which one by one herald in the fields the pathetic awakening of life or its untoward ending, make a kind of dramatic framework for the changes which the Chinese peasants impose upon themselves after the likeness of their own sky. Thus at one blow they revolutionize their habits. Forgetting, in the confusion of the moment, their everyday interdicts, they feel the necessity of coming to the help of nature, and co-operating amongst themselves.

When the Chinese philosophers wished to build up a theory of love they explained that in springtime the girls were attracted by the boys, and in autumn the boys by the girls, as though each of them in turn feeling his nature to be incomplete, was suddenly seized with the irresistible desire to perfect it. Spring was the season of betrothals: in old times the initiative came from the girls. Autumn was the time for setting up house: the wife must come, without delay, to live at her husband's home. In autumn the husbandmen were rich in grain, garnered for the winter: but the women, in spring, had abundance of still more precious riches, stuffs newly woven. At first the women weavers had the means of attracting the husbandmen: then they, in their turn, had the means of making themselves agreeable to the weavers. All, alternately, had their charms and were able to realize their desire.

Far from avoiding each other then, as they did in the ordinary course, they sought each other out: 'Weave your linen no longer!—go to the market-place! dance! dance!'—'Withered leaves! withered leaves!—the wind will come and blow upon you!—Come sirs! come sirs! sing, we will join you.' In autumn and in spring, once the labours of the fields and of the weaving were finished, great assemblies were held in the open country, where the boys and girls from the neighbouring hamlets met. Winter was about to imprison each family in its lonely village, or else summer would compel men and women to live apart from each other. Held in autumn or spring, the meetings began by confirming in every heart the feeling of the need for solidarity. Exclusive groups and rival corporations confirmed their alliance while they proceeded to the collective festivals of marriage.

These festivals consisted of communions, orgies and games. After so many days of a life of restraint wasted in self-centred labours and sordid thoughts, a feeling of generous rivalry seized upon the reunited multitudes. Nothing came amiss to feed the passion for sport which was suddenly let loose in them, it was all turned to account in merry meetings and courteous rivalries.<sup>1</sup>

Such are the crude yet colourful beginnings of Chinese civilization which in this pre-industrial form was to last three thousand years or more, and to reach great heights. How has it been built up? What are its characteristic achievements and abiding values, now in danger of being lost? These are interesting and important questions, for this great and virile people—at once stable and mobile, stoic and sensitive—has still a great part to play in the family of nations, and has been, like India, the teacher of her neighbours: Indo-China, Korea, and Japan can only be understood in the light of China, and to all India has also made great gifts of the spirit. Asia must indeed be studied as a unit, however the great constituent countries differ from one another.

## II

Unlike India, China begins her traditional history with great men of affairs, idealized as symbols of a golden age—the three August Ones, and the Five Sovereigns. For

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Granet, *Chinese Civilization*, pp. 160—2.

while Sse-ma-chi'en begins his history with the latter group, there are legends and bas-reliefs of three August Ones, Fu-hsi (Tamer of Animals), his sister, Nu-kua, and Shen-nung ('Divine Farmer'), who are thought of as inaugurators—the first two of marriage-rites, and the third of laws of agriculture and of ploughing. Shen-nung, whom Fu-hsi appoints as his successor, is god of husbandry and of the cleansing fires which prepare the fields for sowing. Another early hero is Yu the Smith, a kind of Demiurge who commands the thunder; and in their honour great annual feasts are held. Are these idealized personalities, or stages of progress personified? Probably the latter, and when names like 'Nest-possessor' or 'Fire-man' appear in these legends the probability becomes certainty. It is characteristic of China that she idealizes farmers, engineers, and other men of action rather than seers and mystics.

The first Five Sovereigns are also heroic types—representing the Five Elementary Virtues, and radiating Peace and Harmony. They cause order to rule among men, and inspire their ministers to great inventions like the making of arms and of pottery, good specimens of which are found in China at least three thousand years old: they instruct them to observe the High Heavens and to make reckonings of stars and constellations: they are divine Sages, types of Chinese wisdom, proofs of her early emphasis on the virtues of peace. Of the three last we find an account in the *Shu-Ching*, or 'Book of History', edited by K'ung Fu-tse, or Confucius, and we are on firmer ground, if still in the rosy light of an ideal dawn.

'Three names summarize the history of China from 2145 to 1979 B.C., Yao, Shun and Yu. . . . There is no Chinese book which has not mentioned them, no Chinese scholar who has not remarked them.'<sup>1</sup> If they are legendary yet they tell us much of Chinese ideals.

The first part of the *Shu-Ching* deals with Yao, who is said to have come to the throne in 2145 B.C. The name is a title meaning 'The High', and he is remembered as the

<sup>1</sup> Wiegner, E. T., *China throughout the Ages*, p. 10.

compassionate ruler who said, 'I hunger with all my hungry subjects, and am cold with all who are cold: with all the oppressed I suffer oppression.' To him Mo-tse, the altruist, looked back two thousand years later as the great exemplar, and his 'instructions' as to the solar and lunar calendar are famous.<sup>1</sup>

Shun whom Yao chose in preference to his own son to help him as Regent, and whom he appointed to succeed him in 2105 B.C., is acclaimed as a friend of the aged and an educator of children. 'Those who want instruction may beat the drum: those who seek justice may strike the gong: those who have public business may sound the cymbal: those who are in need, the musical stone, and those who have other business, the tambourine', was the inscription on the fine musical instruments at his court, where he lived in humility and simplicity, and where music was the monopoly neither of superstition nor of a licentious nobility. Tasting the liquor invented in his reign, he said, 'It is good, but it would ruin the state'. To him is given the credit of winning the allegiance of 'the nine tribes and the landed class', and of centralizing authority in a council. He is famous, too, for filial piety, and this alone is enough to make him a model to all China.

Most remarkable of all was Yu, a great engineer, who controlled the flood, himself working in the midst of his people 'till his legs were worn smooth'. 'He divided the land . . . felled the timber, and fixed the boundaries.' Humble and simple, he organized vast public works, such as canals to control the waters, and to irrigate the fields. The enthusiasm with which his people remember him is also eloquent: benefactors of the masses are rare in Chinese history. The story of Yu's engineering feats no doubt embodies a memory of early days, when the great Yellow River had to be dammed, and its waters let loose on the dry lands of the plains. The Chinese understand such matters very well.

While still a subject, Yu was entrusted with the sup-

<sup>1</sup> Illustrative Reading, II (c).

pression of the rebellious Miao, turbulent aborigines who still survive in the south-west. The *Shu-Ching* tells us that this war lasted thirty years—and the Miao still held out. Whereupon Yu tried peaceful persuasion, and this succeeded. Yu wept with a condemned criminal as himself responsible, and those two incidents bring out very clearly both early Chinese pacifism and the representative character of the Ruler. These early figures seem to mark a stage of transition from the matriarchal to the patriarchal system. For Yao is said to have sent Shun, a man of the people and son of a blind musician, two daughters in marriage, to 'test' him, whereas under the matriarchal system the son-in-law went to live with his wife's family. His name, originally that of a plant, came to signify 'benefactor, holiness, and intelligence'.

We hear of his great interest in music: fifteen centuries later K'ung Fu-tse became an enthusiastic admirer and exponent of the 'nine airs' of this early religious music, which moved him by its numinous quality. They can still so move men: 'The tones so mysteriously reminiscent of the phenomena of nature, the rhythm which grips men and lifts them out of themselves, the pantomimic dances all imbued with a deep cosmic significance, produce an unmistakable effect of something transcending the soul of man and directly influencing terrestrial events'.<sup>1</sup> Even under the Republic these old airs still resound on solemn occasions such as the birthday of Sun-yat-sen.

Any one who has seen the ritual dances of New Mexico and Arizona, listened to the pulses of their music, and watched the trance-like absorption of the dancers, may get a glimpse of those early Chinese ceremonies. Here is an art of other-worldly weirdness, devoted to securing worldly goods, and as there are Kosharis among American Indians to represent the departed spirits and to be bribed to give a blessing, so it was in China four thousand years ago. Religion then, as now, had its head in the heavens, but its feet upon earth.

<sup>1</sup> R. Wilhelm, *History of Chinese Civilization*, p. 74.

Men and spirits, living and dead, gods and worshippers, were bound together by a common interest which had also a note of communion and of mysticism:

When we touch lute and harp and join in song,  
 See the ancestral spirits round us throng:  
 They take their places at the royal board,  
 And every prince a courteous welcome doth afford.

The *Shih-Ching* or *Book of Odes* is a collection of three hundred and five such early songs and ballads, chosen by K'ung Fu-tse and set to music: it is arranged under four heads: those sung by the peasantry, those sung at festivals and on grand occasions at court, and lastly, sacrificial odes. They mention the flute, the drum, the bell, the pipes, and the lute: they tell of sacrifices and incense of which 'God smells the savour and is pleased'. They tell too of a kindly agricultural society:

See the rolling banks of cloud,  
 The soft refreshing showers:  
 May it water first the common lands,  
 And visit next these farms of ours.

Here leave we uncut stalks of grain;  
 And here some sheaves unbound:  
 Here drop some corn for widows' alms,  
 Some herb to heal their pain.

As in India of the second millennium B.C., so in contemporary China we find a cheerful patriarchal society living about the village well and worshipping gods of hearth and home. Outside the village was a sacred grove and stream, where fertility-cults were practised. For here dwelt gods of soil and seed, and their cults mingled with Dionysiac revels, the young people in masks of cats and tigers dancing, the elders presiding. And as in Vedic India fire-rituals played a great part, so in early China fire was brought from the domestic hearth in spring, and duly carried back in autumn.

As in all ancient cults, offerings to the departed were made, and gradually a priestly kingdom grew up, which

became hereditary before the end of the neolithic age. Before the historic era opens, distinction was made between bright gods who dwelt aloft, and underground spirits to whom sacrifices were burnt alive in pits. Human sacrifices seem to have been gradually done away—to revive later; but dark and weird rites were associated with the groves. At these K'ung Fu-tse shuddered.

Divination was made by the markings on tortoise and other bones, and by the diagrams collected later in the *Book of Changes*. This system seems to have developed from the trigrams of Fu-hsi (perhaps a series of numbers or letters), but was elaborated into hexagrams by Wen Wang, Duke of Chou, and his son Chou K'ung, and with them we come definitely to history.

The earlier dynasties, Hsia (c. 2205-1766) and Shang (c. 1766-1150), 'followed the usual path from glory to ignominy'. It is enough to note that monarchy became hereditary, and that coins were introduced by T'ang, who also figures as the hero in a disastrous famine. Offering himself as a sacrifice in a mulberry-grove, he prayed for mercy upon the starving masses, and as he prayed the rain came. From very early time the monarch is a Son of Heaven and also a symbol of his people.

Of the Shang Dynasty the bones discovered in large quantities in Honan tell us that while all were ancestor-worshippers, some were devout and others were sceptical. Much of the *Shu-Ching* and of the Odes is borrowed, and much may be corrected by further study of these valuable documents of the second millennium B.C. The discovery of these relics has already thrown much light on the Chinese of the twelfth or eleventh century B.C. and the early roots of their civilization. They know how to write, using characters which have passed beyond the pictorial form, and they engrave them on bone and ivory as well as on wood and bamboo. They are to develop this art into that of incising stone and making rubbings: and ultimately of printing with wooden blocks long before any other people. Some of the Odes collected in the *Shih-Ching* five

centuries later no doubt belong to this early civilization, and were actually written down in this way. Comparing the characters and ideas in them with the bones, scholars may yet settle this vexed question. We know too that the Shang had a developed bronze art, and used cowries for money. Their year had twelve lunar months of thirty days and each month had three ten-day periods.

Their territory stretched all along the east bank of the Yellow River to the Gulf of Pechili, north to the neighbourhood of what is now Peiping (Peking), south to the Yangtse, and west to the present borders of Shensi. These lands were held in fief for feudal lords, a system which was to endure another millennium, and these lived in palaces of considerable size, centres of settled communities, courts of justice in peace, and forts in war.

During the severe winter all hibernated about their chiefs in small huts where they spun hemp and silk, wove, made tools for hunting and farming, and prepared for the strenuous work of spring, summer, and autumn. They cultivated millet, rice, and other grains, and hunted for sport as well as for food. Their passion for the chase in fact early became a menace, and an ode laments the growing luxury of the chief and his hunting, and the bitter toil of the people in the fields.

This is a lament which sounds all down the ages—not more in China than elsewhere, perhaps, but more articulately. The poets were the voice of the poor, and living in the country, saw what the luxury of cities cost the people.

Ancestor-worship is seen as the basis of feudalism; and the chief's house is temple as well as fort and court of justice. For the early ruler was priest as well as king, and made numerous sacrifices of bulls' blood and of whole animals to ancestors as to other 'gods'. Temples clustered about the palace, and there were no doubt assistant-priests as there were prime ministers and other officials of secular life. We read their requests for oracles upon crops and weather, campaigns and treaties; and learn that their armies consisted of chariots and horsemen armed with bronze



weapons—some of which survive—and with leathern shields, bows, and arrows. So early history may be gradually disentangled from legend and the symbols of later Chinese art may be traced to their sources. Dr. Li Chih has argued that the so-called *tieh* or 'ogre's head' of Chou and later bronzes is a bull's head which marked the sacrificial vessel for blood, and that the comb of girls' head-dresses is a cock's head symbolizing industry. For they must rise at dawn, and this is their badge of servitude, proudly worn as an ornament, stylized almost beyond recognition.

This early oracle-seeking people who dwelt in and about Honan was finally conquered in the twelfth century B.C. by the western Chou, living west of Shensi, whose odes reveal them as worshippers of Shang-ti (the Supreme God) and of Hao-t'ien (the August Heaven). These they held to be just and friendly powers.

These beliefs were gradually blended into what may be called Sinism, the classical religion of China, with its twin pillars of ancestor-worship and obedience to the Divine Will. A hierarchy of spirits was indeed soon established. Shang-ti in company with the gods of Sun, Moon, and Stars and other objects of Nature together with the deified ancestors of the race form the upper tier: below them were family spirits and tribal gods. As newly conquered peoples were added to the empire and foreign influences penetrated it, this pantheon continued to grow. In it to-day there are many Indian as well as frontier gods side by side with Taoist and Sinitic figures.

### III

The early sacrificial bronzes are works of art—revealing 'plastic harmonies of the most surprising kind', and this many centuries before the Greeks. China begins in fact to show her supremacy in art. She attributes the beginnings of bronze-casting to the Yellow Emperor, about 4,500 B.C., and also believes that Yu cast nine three-legged vessels of metal brought in as tribute from the nine pro-

vinces of his kingdom. If these are legends they are to some extent borne out by the forms of early neolithic pottery—three-legged and very similar to the bronzes of the classical age.

The earliest forms of Chinese ideographs as found on the bones of the second millennium B.C. are clearly pictures: and painting and calligraphy are not only the most important of Chinese arts; they are very intimately related in origin and technique. 'There has hardly ever been a good painter who was not at the same time a good calligraphist,' says Dr. Tsai Yuan-Pei.

Even earlier than the Shang ideographs, however, are the painted pots of the neolithic age whose designs in red or black show decorative skill and are similar in form and pattern to those of the Indian pueblos of North America: using not only spirals and other geometric patterns but also animals, birds, and human beings. The discovery of these remains is as important in the reinterpretation of Chinese history as of that of the Indus civilization in India. It too seems influenced by Sumeria. 'Very probably', says Dr. V. K. Ting, 'divination, hieroglyphic writing, the calendar and the flood legend had their inspiration from Mesopotamia.'

These Chinese contemporaries of Hammurabi and of Moses have also the beginnings of a moral code and of a theocratic concept: many of its maxims are preserved in the *Shu-Ching*:

'Seek to act always in accord with reason.'

'God has granted to the people a Moral Sense: obeying it they will keep right.'

'To know is easy: to do is difficult.'

'The way of Heaven is to bless the good, and to punish the bad with misery.'

Education was carried out in schools set up by the monarchy for training certain classes: these sons of nobility learnt much besides book learning—the arts of war and music. Books of bamboo tablets were used, and such works as the *Shih-Ching* in its earliest form were no doubt

studied, together with legends of the great ones of the past. Ritual music and dances were taught, and music has from the beginning played a great part in Chinese education: 'Poetry is the expression of earnest thought and singing is its prolonged utterance', says the *Shu-Ching*, and the practice of the eight musical instruments was from the first a religious affair.<sup>1</sup> To make such instruments as pitch-pipes and bells and gongs of jade requires mathematical knowledge, and this is shown also in early Chinese astronomy. These early Chinese had an accurate solar-lunar calendar; and their astronomy, mingled as it was with astrological practice, yet involved the use of spheres and tables for exact observation and calculation.

Archery was carried to a fine art, and long remained an essential of a gentleman's education. The Liu I or 'Six Arts' are ritual, music, archery, mathematics, calligraphy, and surveying or measurement.

In plotting out their lands began the arts of drawing and painting, in ritual those of music and drama, and in the decoration of canoes and weapons and of the instruments of their cult are the roots of that great art of bronze-casting of which they were soon to become masters. They call the practice of these arts i-shu or 'the mysteries of art', and the name sums up their appreciation of technical skill, and suggests the hereditary craftsman instructed in the mysteries of his art. 'Though a man be a genius, unless he is trained in technique, he cannot express his ideas', says a Chinese proverb.

In the mastery of the brush for writing or the earlier knife for incising there was a discipline which was exacting and educative, and which was to give to Chinese painting its peculiar verve and freedom.

As to the economic life of those days, we know that the government was supplied with adequate funds from land-taxes: under the Hsia each able-bodied man was given

<sup>1</sup> 'The Chinese are nursed, if not born, to music, married to music, and buried to music. They worship to music, work to music, sell to music and even study to music', says Y. R. Chao. (*Symposium on Chinese Culture.*)

fifty mou of land and paid a tithe to the monarchy. Under the Shang eight families cultivated a farm and paid one-eighth in taxes. The first is known as 'Tribute', the latter as 'Aid', but it is a difference chiefly in name. The pretext of the Shang revolution under T'ang was that the Hsia 'had no pity on the people': for the Son of Heaven must live up to his name, or Heaven abandons him. The *History of the Three Dynasties* is in fact a commentary on this text. It 'sets out to show the principles underlying the greatness and the decadence of the royal houses. Its task is done when it has brought to light the glorious virtue of the royal founders, and the fatal character of the kings of perdition.'<sup>1</sup> In a word early Chinese history is didactic, and almost as theocratic in tendency as that of early Israel.

Authentic history begins with the Chou, and to this—the classic age of China—close attention must be given. In the fusion of Shang and Chou Chinese civilization has its roots. Early Sinism is a blend of Chou theism with Shang divination and ancestor-worship.

#### IV

The vigorous and warlike tribes of the north-west who supported the Duke of Chou are described by Meng-tse (or Mencius) as barbarians, and the Chou themselves were a hardy northern people, whom the Chinese regarded as foreigners. But they had been settled for centuries, and they soon made themselves at home, and became model rulers. They called into being the real genius of China; the era of the Chou (1150–249 B.C.) 'is the beginning of the classic period of Chinese civilization, the foundation of all culture and all beauty, and has been regarded as a mighty prototype throughout the ages'.<sup>2</sup>

The first Chou emperors owed their power not only to the unpopularity of their predecessors: they were leaders of men, and successfully brought feudal chiefs and barbarians alike to heel, and bound them to the throne by

<sup>1</sup> M. Granet, *Chinese Civilization*, E. T., p. 16.

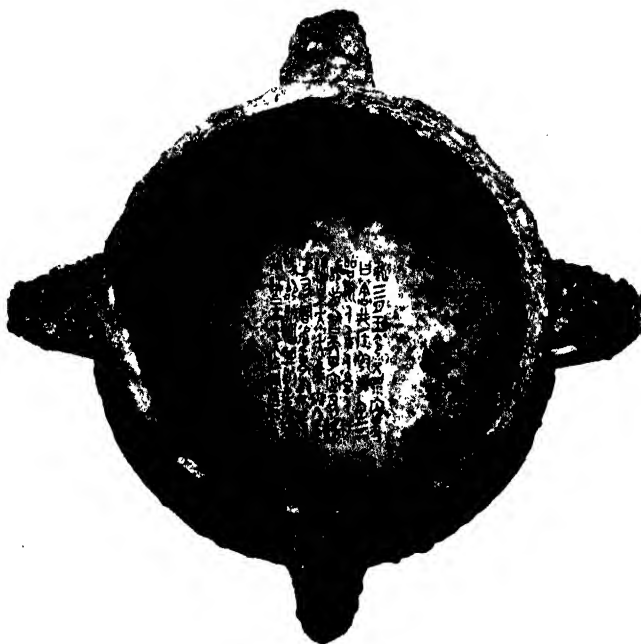
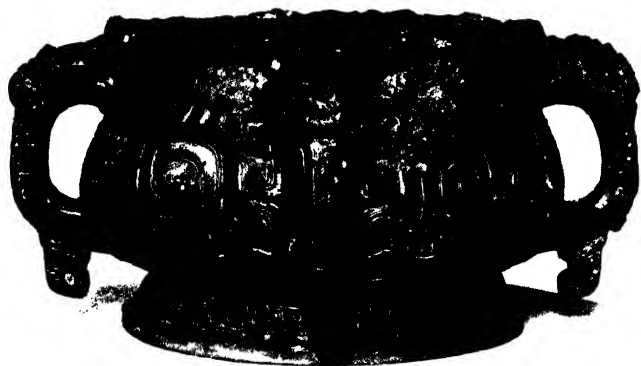
<sup>2</sup> R. Wilhelm, *The Soul of China*, p. 95.

formulating a feudal system based on loyalty of the lords to the throne, and of vassals to their lords. They bound the people also to themselves by humane and wise rule; making it clear that they and their subjects had a common interest, and held the empire as common property. They took advantage of the emerging concept of the Ruler as Son of God, and encouraged the worship of the One God as against the old gloomy polytheism of the groves. This was made a mighty factor in empire, a centralized ruler on earth corresponding to the Supreme Ruler of Heaven.

Superstition now begins to fade away—at any rate in the cities, which become centres of enlightenment: and the court becomes a centre of refinement and of loyalty. The Emperor as Son of Heaven sacrificed for his people at the Winter Solstice, and the great ceremony became 'the foundation of all morals', so that K'ung Fu-tse could declare that he who understood the meaning of the Great Sacrifice could grasp the cosmic system clearly. Here were king and people bound in a solemn sacrament—as he to his vassals, so God to him, the centre and source of life.

Here art and music united to produce a symbolic pageant whose significance was clear to all: and the Chou by sacrificing to their own ancestors when they sacrificed to Shang-ti made it still more significant. The Emperor is at once Priest and Vice-gerent of Heaven: and the feudal lords are in their turn his vice-gerents, offering sacrifices to the local gods, who are satellites of T'ien and Shang-ti. All alike join in ancestor-worship: and the feudal hierarchy is marked by the number of ancestral shrines allowed to each rank. The later monarchs' robes were full of symbols—embodying the Chinese theory of kingship. Sun, moon, and stars are upon his shoulders for he is Vice-gerent of Heaven: the mountains on his upper garment are earth which he rules, powerful as the dragon and kingly as the phoenix, while upon his lower robe are the cup symbolizing his priesthood, the water-plant his literary elegance, the grain his husbandry, the flame his position





A CHOU BOWL OF THE TWELFTH CENT. B.C.  
WITH TAO-TIEH AND ELEPHANT HEADS

as head-smith, the battle-axe his leadership in war, and the *fu* his harmonizing power.<sup>1</sup> Here in symbols of a later age we have the whole theory of kingship in China, which remained unchanged for four thousand years.

As an example of the sacrificial vessels of the Chou era, we may look at the 'silver cauldron' on plate 3 of the Burlington Magazine monograph<sup>2</sup> or at that illustrated here, which is noteworthy for its inscription, as well as for its superb craftsmanship. It is a four-handled bowl of dark bronze, and has acquired a turquoise patina. Its handles seem to be elephant-heads, and round the base runs a conventional spiral. The archaic characters in the interior are interpreted to be a grateful recognition of the services of the Marquis of Hsing, and a statement that the bowl was cast by his command in honour of the Duke of Chou. For 'God above forever commands the holders of the Empire of Chou to pay honour to their departed sire'.<sup>3</sup> This then is a document of the twelfth century B.C. and commemorates the Duke who had become the pattern of devotion to the Throne.

We see here that bronze-casting very early reached a high standard, that the Emperor's title 'Son of Heaven' is a very early one, that sacrifices to ancestors and the practice of rewarding a man by honouring his parents are all of an ancient order of Chinese civilization.

From such sources spring Chinese art, one of the greatest the world has seen. In landscape-painting and in ceramics it is supreme, and what remains of early sculpture has some masterpieces. It is characteristic of this aesthetic nation that it finds its first ancestor in Pan-ku, the artificer, and that it traces the beginnings of its painting to the third millennium B.C. At this time Sumerian art had passed its zenith, and some scholars would find in the obliquely-set eyes of Sumerian monuments, in their ideographic script, and in the apparent identity of some of their ideographs

<sup>1</sup> After E. T. Williams, *A Short History of China*, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Petrucci dates it twelfth century B.C. Bushell 812 B.C.

<sup>3</sup> For full text see Illustrative Reading VI.



with some in ancient China, proofs of racial and cultural affinity. There are other affinities, such as the cycle of sixty and the seven-day period, which support the theory: and it is possible that invaders drove the Sumerians eastward to China as well as to India. But as to such matters nothing can yet be placed beyond conjecture.

The foundations of Chinese arts in general—pottery, weaving, jewellery, as well as painting, sculpture, and architecture, can be said to be well and truly laid before the end of the classical age of Chou.

As I have said elsewhere:<sup>1</sup>

During this era too the foundations of the joint-family system and of the guild—twin pillars of Chinese society—were firmly laid. As the family regulated and controlled the individual relations and duties of the Chinese, so the guild-system was the regulator of all group relations. Unofficial and self-sustaining, these were the real machinery of the country—its ‘web of life’, as the caste-system was of India—the basis of stability and order. Thus while governments have changed, society has ‘carried on’ without serious upheaval, and the Chinese have been able to regard government as relatively unimportant. The humorous tolerance of the masses occasionally gives way to the caustic criticism of a Lao-tse or a Chwang-tse, for whom the chief duty of government is an extreme policy of wu-wei or laissez-faire: for the family and the guild are natural and spontaneous, whereas the formalism of the court and of the official is artificial and unnatural.

‘The family is for China the unit, and family life, patriarchal in theory, often in fact dominated by the grandmother, was a rigidly disciplined affair. The spirit of it was one of accommodation and forbearance, each member knowing his place and keeping it, as the stars their orbits. A typical Chinese story is that of a great family of 1,200 which was given a grant by a Sung Emperor for its family loyalty. And when the patriarch of another family was asked the secret of unbroken harmony he wrote the character for “forbearance” a hundred times.

‘It must be remembered that innumerable villages in China are in reality large clans, all having the same family name, and that the ancestral hall and common lands are family possessions. Such a clan

<sup>1</sup> *The Heritage of Asia*, pp. 18, 20.

can control every movement of every member, and a very thorough-going communism is practised. Property is held in common, and without the village council (i.e. the family elders) nothing is done. They are like the panchayat of the Indian village, but are often of one clan, and so more likely to be conservative. In normal times no official of the empire was needed, no criminal code, and equally no paternalist measures of charity-organizations or insurance. The village was an autonomous family: the family a self-supporting and self-governing village.

'This is the setting for the Chinese emphasis on filial piety: it was an economic and patriotic as well as a religious duty to have children and to support parents, and public pressure could be brought to bear most heavily at just those points which in the West are usually considered most intimate and personal.

'What the joint-family system was in such matters the guild was in matters economic. It framed and carried out regulations of production and distribution, fixed standards of quality, weights and measures, trade ethics and procedure, and was in effect a commercial tribunal; for each guild, like each village, had its committee of elders, and the individual much preferred their arbitration to the tyranny and graft of some strange official. They assessed penalties and could expel from the guild any one who refused their decision. Thus the individual lived within a network of unwritten yet binding regulations, which, however, protected him even from the powerful imperial officials. In the family and in the guild he was a free man—free to do right—that is, to conform to traditional folkways. Yet the family and the guild have both changed, adapting themselves to changing conditions, and are to-day in a process of very rapid transition.'

Next to the family and the guild comes the school, which has always been in China a place for the study of the classics. These were state-supported from Chou times till the eighth century A.D. From then on education has been a private affair: government supplying the special examiner and controlling the supply of graduates, but leaving education to private initiative.

The Chinese boy to-day knows the same basic classical works as he learnt more than two thousand years ago: after a preliminary course in such elementary works as the *Canon of Filial Piety* and the *Book of a Thousand Characters*

he studies first the Four Books, which include the Analects and the Sayings of Meng-tse, and then the Five Classics, which are: *I-Ching*, or *Book of Changes*; *Shu-Ching*, or *Book of History*; *Shih-Ching*, or *Book of Poetry*; *Li-Chi*, or *Book of Rites*; and the *Ch'un Ch'iu* or *Spring and Autumn Annals* of the Chou Dynasty.

Chinese children are first instructed, in a word, in the duties and models of filial piety, and are indoctrinated with the native goodness of human nature, and the great men who showed this in its classic form. They are then trained to guard and cherish their body and their heritage in general;<sup>1</sup> and are impressed with tales of youths who have won eminence and fame through uprightness and sobriety and obedience to the family. These are the qualities most emphasized for boys. For girls similar exemplars are held up, and it is interesting that the earliest Chinese painting now in existence illustrates the *Admonitions of a Court Lady* written by Chang Hua in the third century of our era. On this foundation of sound moral instruction is raised the whole Confucian system as contained in the other books, and if the student is baffled by the *Book of Changes*, he has the comfort of knowing that the great K'ung Fu-tse was himself unable to make much of it, and for the rest that he himself either wrote or edited and commended the other books to his countrymen as the basis for a sound society.

Lastly in the *Li-Chi* and in the "Annals" the Chinese finds a thesaurus of the customs and morals of his nation, some account of her administrative machinery, and of his own duties to his country and to heaven.

This system of education co-operated with the family and the guild to make China stable if conservative, and to set the character of her people in a mould. The ideal man was to be like the horse, obedient, disciplined, and brave: the ideal woman was to be like the cow, industrious, chaste, and gentle.

The boy on completing his education, which lasted till about his twentieth year, was initiated with great ceremony:

<sup>1</sup> Illustrative Reading (*f*) in Ch. II.

his hair was done in a different style, the two tufts of boyhood being cut off, a new name was given him, and a man's hat. He was now free to become a soldier, and to hold land in fief from the sovereign or in his own right, and to enter upon an official career. Service to the King, the Son of Heaven, was his ambition, and under royal favour he could become a rich and powerful lord, even a prince or one of the three dukes to whom the Sovereign intrusted the guardianship of his son.

## V

Of the personalities of the early Chou rulers we know enough to say that the vigour of their northern blood persisted for some generations. If King Wen was a great and wise ruler and Duke Chou a model governor, it is to Duke T'ang, grandson of the Founder, that China owes great precedents. He is to Wen what Asoka is to Chandragupta, and both houses justified their usurpation of the throne. In China the example became classical, and the theory that if the Son of Heaven misbehaved too seriously he could not be tolerated was from now on tacitly accepted. China's last sovereign expressed his dignified acceptance of the wish of the people as the voice of Heaven, and the first of whom we know in detail based his rule upon the same theory.

The Chou administration too became formative for all the Far East. With its six great ministers, in spite of their poetic titles, here was a true civil service functioning under the Ruler. Their titles express the cosmic beliefs as well as the theory of government of this age. Thus the Minister of Heaven was Prime Minister and Controller of Court and Treasury, the Minister of Earth had the portfolio of Education, Commerce and Supervision of the feudal states; the other four ministers, called after the seasons, were responsible for such mixed duties as Ritual and Foreign Affairs, Court ceremonial and Law and Order. These are much more closely connected in the mind of early China than with us.

The Founder was kept busy by the incursions of Huns on the northern frontier. Posthumously raised to royal rank as King Wen, he is called by Meng-tse 'a western barbarian', but his family can be traced back to the eighteenth century B.C., to the person of the Duke Liu, and they are no more 'barbarian' than the rest. The House of Chou had a clear goal from early times—that of the Imperial Throne, and to this end they had been moving before the time of Wen.

The people were sick of the debaucheries of the Shang, and when the last of them appointed Wen chieftain of the West he was already ruler in the eyes of all. Organizing the country into two great districts, Shao, outside China proper, and Chou, or the feudal states already leagued with the Throne, he and his successors established a strong patriarchal rule based on the monotheistic worship of Shang-ti, and the clear-cut concept of the Ruler as Vicegerent became a dominant factor in unifying the empire.

But though they ruled for nearly a thousand years (1150-249 B.C.), and instituted much of great and permanent value, the House of Chou did not make great progress beyond their frontiers. Making heredity the rule of succession they were often well served, as when the great Duke of Chou was guardian of the grandson of Wen. By his example of loyalty he did much to establish the power of the Son of Heaven, and family life has remained as a basis of loyalty to the Throne. But many of the rulers were loyal neither to Heaven, nor to their House nor to their People, and only at long intervals does the spirit of the founders flash out, as in the delightful anecdote of Duke Wen, who as late as the mid-seventh century showed a royal magnanimity. His war-horse having strayed was eaten by peasants, who were caught and brought before him: 'They'll get indigestion unless you give them some wine. Give it then and let the poor devils go,' said the Duke, and in his bitter need in a civil war he was saved by their courage and devotion.

China delights in such tales, and sees the Chou era

through rose-coloured spectacles. But though the era set many good standards, this tendency was overdone, and its examples tend to stereotype Chinese life.<sup>1</sup> Nor was the treatment of the people by the Chou much better than that of the earlier dynasties. Forced labour and conscription bore heavily on them. In the sixth century B.C. an essayist, Lu, proposes money payment for all crimes, but the letter rather than the spirit of this law ruled in Chinese courts and elsewhere. Literary honours were often sold by corrupt officials, with the offices that went with them. The spirit of reverence for ancestors also led to the horrible practice of burying numbers of concubines and servants alive, and in 621 B.C. 177 persons were so immolated with the dead body of Duke Mu. An Ode of the era expresses the people's horror, but the evil practice went on for centuries. In the sixth century the poor were taxed as much as one-fifth of the produce of the land, and violence and corruption continued till the Chou Dynasty went down in ruin.

On the other hand we must note that a mint was established in 1103 B.C., minting bronze coins with a square hole in the centre. China shares with India and Lydia the honour of the invention of coins, and in the seventh century she made salt, which has played so great a part in her history. As we have seen, the education of the upper classes thrived: but knowledge remained their prerogative and the peasantry were neglected. 'Ritual does not reach down to the masses, nor does the penal code reach up to the lords', is a saying applied by Dr. Wilhelm to this age; and the splendour of all ancient dynasties is dimmed by the dumb pain of the mass of their subjects: always hungry and always taxed to support the rich, yet not unhappy in their unremitting toil, protected by their guilds from too great oppression, and finding relief in song and drama and dance.

That the poor were not always without a voice in China

<sup>1</sup> 'Its conventionality restricted human ingenuity and its literary canons set various boundaries to individual expression,' says King Chu, a former minister of education.

is to the credit of her literary men, from the singer of early Odes, which contrast the lot of rich and poor, to Mo-tse, the great altruist of the closing years of Chou, and the later poets. At times the peasants' discontent has expressed itself in direct action, as when they provided King Chao (1052-1000 B.C.) with a leaky boat, and let him drown on one of his punitive expeditions, as a penalty for his ruthless methods of hunting: as in our own day when street-cars, the juggernauts of the modern age, have been wrecked by an army of riksha-pullers. If K'ung Fu-tse, China's greatest son, is an admirer of the throne and court, and seeks to revive the whole patriarchal system, others, like his disciple Meng-tse and his rival Lao-tse the heretic, are its harsh and severe critics. The former insists that the throne is less important than the people, and the latter pays little heed to it.

The stage is set for these great and formative teachers by the decline of the House of Chou, and with it the break-up of the feudal system into a muddle of warring states, and the intrigues and feuds of rival vassals. Let us instead of following the tedious details of this decline and fall of the dynasty look somewhat closely at the great teachers of this age. If it is necessary to know the Gita to understand India, it is as necessary to know the *Analects* and the *Tao-te-ching*, to understand China. These little books, so tremendous in their influence, show us the impression which K'ung Fu-tse and Lao-tse made upon their disciples, and it is not necessary to discuss the vexed question of the authenticity of all their sayings. On almost all is the impress of master minds.

The *Analects*, or *Lun-Yu*, help us to understand China in its urban life, in the formality of its court, in the twin ideals of the patriarchal family, and the theocratic state. The *Tao-te-ching* on the other hand, helps us to realize the revolt of the countryside against its formalism and its extravagance. If the keynote of this first is good form or Li—courtliness—that of the second is Wu-wei—spontaneity or naturalness.

Here, too, perhaps, the poetic and mystical in the Chinese is contrasted with the practical and secular. It is a combination which makes an individual or a nation great.

THE SPIRIT OF EARLY CHINA

I. FROM THE SHIH-CHING

(a) *Shen-nung, Emperor and God of Agriculture* (2838-2008 B.C.)

That my harvest land thrives  
 All my farmers rejoice:  
 With lute and with tambour  
 The Farm-God we voice;  
 As we pray for sweet rain  
 On our millet and grain,  
 May a harvest of children  
 Make blessed our wives.

(b) *The Lord Above*

Majestic is the Lord On High  
 Over-ruling the world with wisdom:  
 He sends his Four Quarters  
 To test the souls of men,

(c) *He rewards King Wen*

The Lord on High heard of King Wen's goodness. He was pleased and gave his high command to King Wen to slay the Ying.

(d) *King Wen's Reward*

King Wen has gone on high:  
 He lives in glory above,  
 His goings and his comings  
 Are to the Divine Presence.

(e) *The Cry of the Poor*

How free are the wild geese on their wings,  
 And they find rest on the bushy yu trees!  
 But we, ceaseless toilers in the king's service,  
 Cannot even plant our millet and rice.  
 What will our parents have to rely on?  
 O thou distant and azure Heaven!  
 When shall all this end? (Pt. I, Bk. X, viii.)



Shoes thinly woven of the dolichos fibre  
 May be used to walk on the hoar-frost!  
 And the delicate fingers of women  
 May be used to make clothes!  
 Sew the waistband and sew the collar!  
 And the good man wears them!

(Pt. I, Bk. IX, i.)

The mother-wort of the valley  
 Is scorched everywhere.  
 There is a woman left homeless  
 Ever flow her tears!  
 Ever flow her tears!  
 But of what avail is her lament?

(Pt. I, Bk. VI, vi.)  
 Tr. HU SHIH.

(f) *An early poet questions God's Love*

The great God is inconstant in His kindness,  
 And He has spread famine and destroyed the nations.  
 The great God is wrathful: He thinks not, nor plans.  
 Let alone the guilty ones who are destroyed.  
 How about the innocent ones who perish with them?

II. FROM THE SHU-CHING

(a) *He punishes the wayward*

The people of Miao abandoned reason . . . killing the innocent . . .  
 The Lord on High was angry: and misfortune befell them?  
 They could not escape punishment;  
 They perished from the earth.

(b) *Advice of Chi-tse to the last Shang Emperor*

'If you are in great doubt, consult your conscience, consult your ministers, consult the people, and consult the oracles (tortoise-shell and millet).

'If you are in favour of a step which the oracles commend and find that ministers and people approve it, the measure is good. If the people are for it, the oracles support it, and you and your ministers oppose it, the measure is good.'

(c) *The Calendar (2145 B.C.)*

The Emperor Yao spoke saying, 'Listen, O Hsi and Ho. The

solar year has 366 days. Make the lunar year tally with it by means of intercalary months, and establish the four seasons'.

(d) *The Founder of the Dynasty of Chou to his troops*  
(Eleventh century B.C.)

When the army was set in battle array the Duke of Chou addressed it, holding in his left hand his axe and in his right the horsehair standard. Saluting them he said, 'We have come so far, O men of the West, Princes my allies, ministers, chieftains, and captains, and you my men of many races, lay down your shields, for I would speak. . . . The Ruler of Shang listens only to his wife. Stupid with lust he forgets the ancients and his own parents. He has given office to evil-doers and the empire has become a tyranny. I am now to pronounce and apply the sentence of Heaven. To the attack! . . . Courage, brave soldiers. . . . Cowardice will be punished with death.

III. FROM THE CODE OF THE TENTH CENTURY B.C.

Let both parties be heard by the Judges. Let them consider whether the crime draws one of the five punishments, or one of the five fines. If not, let them declare it an involuntary misdemeanour. . . . Let them beware of doing so from wrong motives. Such as fear, or favour, or for disgrace or for bribes. . . .

Branding is the punishment for a thousand crimes. Amputation of the nose is another such. Amputation of the foot is one for five hundred, castration for three hundred, death for two hundred. . . .

For ransom from each thief—from six hundred ounces of copper for escape from branding to six thousand for escape from the death penalty.

IV

*A Great Drought*

(Ninth century B.C.)

Glorious shone the milky way  
Revolving radiant in the heavens,  
When the King cried, Ah me!  
What crime has my people done  
That T'ien sends death and disaster  
And famine comes upon us once more?  
There is no spirit to whom I do not sacrifice,  
There is no victim which I have refused:

Our ritual acts are all performed—  
How is it that no one hears my cry ?

## V

*The Lament of the Soldier's Wife*

It is autumn, the tenth month of the year.  
Truly the Emperor's service must be done!  
My wifely heart is full of anxious care:  
Will they come back, our soldiers dear ?  
It is spring again, the trees in new green dressed:  
Truly the Emperor's service must be done!  
But my wifely heart is restless and distressed,  
Why come they not, my soldier and the rest ?  
Are their chariots worn out, their horses spent ?  
Truly the Emperor's service must be done!  
With trembling heart I scan the omens bent,  
O joy, our soldiers soon retread the way they went.

## VI

*A Chou Inscription*

In the third month Jung and the Minister of the Interior proclaimed the royal decree: "Hsia, Marquis of Hsing, in recognition of your services, We bestow on you the people of the three regions, Chou, Chung, and K'uo, to be your subjects". [The Marquis] bowed his head [to his hands, and then] to the ground. In the Temple at Lu, which is like that of the Son of Heaven, he took part in the sacrifices that bring blessings, and diligently performed the rites to the Three Royal Ancestors. [He said:] "Unceasingly to the end of my days shall I [strive to deserve] this grant from the House of Chou. Mindful [of the merit] of my forbear, I respond to [and extol the royal favour], and dare not let it come to naught. Wherefore I manifest the happiness bestowed, and covenant with these my [new] subjects.' The Son of Heaven caused a brevet of investiture to be drafted; and [the Marquis], in order to pay befitting honour to the royal charge, made this vessel in dedication to Chou Kung.

[Translation of inscription on the four-handled *tui* as given on p. 27, vol. i, of *The George Eumorfopoulos Collection Catalogue of the Chinese and Korean Bronzes, &c.*, by W. Perceval Yetts (vol. i)].

## IX

# THE MASTER MINDS OF CHINA IN ITS CLASSIC AGE

The Tao is that by which the highest man guides the people. . . . KWAN-TSE.  
Right living takes first place: all other things are of less importance. . . . BOOK  
OF RITES.

To attain harmony is the way of man. . . . DOCTRINE OF THE MEAN.

Knowledge is to know men. . . . LUN YU.

Sagehood is the ideal wisdom, kingship the ideal practice. The Sage Ruler unites  
the two. . . . HSUN-TSE.

Use nature do not praise her. . . . Ibid.

One who knows does not talk. One who talks does not know . . . TAO-TE-CHING.

### I

It is becoming clear that China has a long succession of thinkers who may be compared with those of Greece, and who represent many types—from K'ung Fu-tse, moralist and preserver of tradition, to Chuang-tse, rebel and mystic, and from Mo-tse the theist to the atheist Chen Tuan.

From the sixth century B.C. on, there is the double strand of the Confucians and the Laoists. Of the former we must glance here at K'ung Fu-tse and Lao-tse with their great early exponents, and in considering the Harn and Sung eras we shall see how the battle of interpretation of ancient wisdom developed.

All alike are concerned with the Tao or Way of Life: some finding it in Nature's spontaneity, others in her orderliness; and, as in India, some found grounds for theism in her workings, and some for atheism: some were more concerned with the metaphysical, some with the ethical aspects of this complex idea.

The Chinese are an emotional and poetic people, schooled to stoicism and formality; and if K'ung Fu-tse is the schoolmaster, Lao-tse is the exponent of the natural and even undisciplined life. Each makes articulate some aspect of the complex Chinese character: both are claimed,

justly, as types and norms of China; and modern Chinese critics renew ancient debates in discussing whether their people are rationalist and humanist or mystical and other-worldly. In the same volume appear these dicta: 'the Chinese are by nature greater Taoists than they are by culture Confucianists'; 'the Chinese are by nature rationalist and humanist'.<sup>1</sup>

Both Lao-tse and K'ung Fu-tse are true types of Chinese: both have innumerable followings. Tao, from which both start, is written in an elaborate character of which the components are order or progression and intelligence: and it may therefore mean the reason inherent in nature's activities (with Lao-tse), or the way of ordered society based on the cosmic reason (with K'ung Fu-tse). If one emphasizes nature's spontaneous quietism, the other is impressed with her orderly activism: 'The Tao does nothing but achieves all', says the former: but his master Kwan-tse, had said, 'the Tao is that by which the ruler guides the people,' and K'ung Fu-tse was a practical statesman who could not be content with paradoxes or the praises of nature. So conduct is for him a matter of li, good form: it is for Lao-tse wu-wei—spontaneity. Both insist that the good life must be rooted in nature.

Lao-tse (or Laocius) and K'ung Fu-tse (or Confucius), as early missionaries latinized their names, were born at a time of disillusionment and anarchy—intellectual and social. 'The whole world is a seething torrent of change,' said a contemporary; and like Hamlet, they could say, 'the world is out of joint'. The Chinese for this is wu-tao—and Tao is the starting-point for understanding Chinese thought—religious, philosophical, and ethical. It is the Way or Norm—the process of Nature and the standard for man. For Lao-tse man embodies it best when he is autonomous and spontaneous: 'all things live by Tao: it is the mother of all, by it all problems are solved.' For K'ung Fu-tse—social reformer and restorer of ancient wisdom—it is the embodiment of order, and he sought to

<sup>1</sup> Lin Yu-Tang and Hu Shih in *China's own Critics*.

turn man to a formal and disciplined life. 'A great man,' says the *Shu-Ching*, 'is in harmony with heaven and earth.' 'Man is born for rectitude,' says K'ung Fu-tse, and he set about re-ordering the world of his day, and reminding men of the classical patterns of the earlier days of Chou.

But these two great teachers have much in common—a certain calm and humorous detachment, an authority which appeals to reason, an ideal of self-control and even of asceticism in the pursuit of truth.

'Living on coarse rice and water, my elbow for a pillow, I can yet be merry,' says K'ung, a Chinese Epicurus: 'Preserve simplicity, conserve inner beauty, curb self-will, limit desires,' says Lao-tse, a Chinese Zeno.

'Ill-gotten gains and honours are a wandering cloud,' says K'ung: 'There is no calamity like ambition,' says Lao-tse, 'the root of honour is humility'.

K'ung, in fact, while he is the ideal Chun-tse or sage, comes near to being a saint after the pattern of Lao-tse. 'Benevolent, wise, courageous'—that is the Confucian ideal: 'Frugal, gentle, humble,' that is the Laoist.

Lao-tse in his turn fulfils the ideal of K'ung; for he too is reasonable, wise, and kindly. Both too are critics of the existing order. But their diagnosis differs: 'Too many laws and prohibitions,' says Lao-tse; 'Too great laxity,' says K'ung.

A decadent dynasty—'princes who are not princely': parricides who talk of filial piety: ministers who make laws but do not keep them: fathers who set bad examples and yet demand obedience—such is the society of the sixth century B.C. in China. 'All is indeed wu-tao'—unnatural, or out of joint, and K'ung Fu-tse's is the voice of tradition calling men to the old cosmic Tao—orderliness or seemliness. China needed this call to discipline: but she also needed the call of Lao-tse to spontaneity, to natural family life on which all else depends, to an inner goodness without which rules are vain.

If Lao-tse sought Tao as the goal of a mystic and philosopher, K'ung Fu-tse sought it as a way of individual and

social conduct. If for the mystic it is 'unnameable and vague'—for the moralist it must be concisely and precisely defined. 'Words must be made to fit things,' says K'ung Fu-tse—a counsel of perfection in an age of change. Asked by a disciple what he would do first if he were to be ruler, he replied: 'It must needs be the rectifying of words. If speech does not obey its own ruler, nothing can be established. A superior man is never careless in the use of words. To govern is to rectify.'<sup>1</sup>

Lao-tse insists that an inner discipline is better than a strait-waistcoat. And he is justified by history: Confucianism has indeed become a bed of Procrustes to the Far East. 'That is what it has done to us,' said a Japanese statesman, pointing to a stunted tree in a formal garden. The dimmer figure of Lao-tse is like a giant cryptomeria rising amidst the mists of some mountain shrine—a free untrammelled growth of the native genius.

This spontaneity seems to have been attained in old age by K'ung Fu-tse:

At thirty I stood firm:

At forty I had no doubts:

At fifty I knew the will of heaven:

At sixty I had an ear attuned to truth:

At seventy I could follow my inclinations without sin.<sup>2</sup>

Both had served their state as officials, and had learnt much of human weakness, and both gave to the world maxims and aphorisms which have a permanent place in the treasury of the race. But K'ung Fu-tse held the posts of Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, Lao-tse only that of Librarian, and this will help to explain the differences. Another explanation is that one is typical of the mountains and the other of the plains—one of the unattached life of the country poet, the other of the ordered life of the walled city.

For the rest, their teachings must speak for them. They reveal K'ung as a princely teacher—precise, reasonable,

<sup>1</sup> Lun Yu, *Analects*, xii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Lun Yu, xii. 15.

humorous, liberal, sometimes prosaic, sometimes pompous; and Lao-tse as the most elusive of mystics, the most paradoxical of poets, the most anarchical of reformers. So the soul of China stands revealed—both rationalist and mystic: both humanist and religious: both practical and visionary. If one laughs at the other, so does the Chinese laugh at himself. If officials take themselves seriously and walk circumspectly, they too become poets, leaving the city for the hill-side, and li for wu-wei, formality for spontaneity, K'ung Fu-tse for Lao-tse.

## II

Let us look at the Saint of Lao-tse.

He teaches not by words but by acts:  
 He acts but seeks no reward:  
 He works out perfection, seeking no credit.  
 His preoccupation is with the inner life.  
 He puts away excess, and egoism, and softness;  
 Honour and dishonour are alike to him,  
 All are his children. The Tao is his mother.

The saint is compared to water. Gentle and ever seeking the lowest level, water is irresistible and omnipotent: so the saint seeking nothing for himself gains all; emptying himself is filled, avoiding honours gains the chief honour; humbling himself is exalted. Of all the ideals of Asia he comes nearest to the man of the Beatitudes.

The Chun-tse or Scholar of Confucius is also a delightful figure:

'firm but not quarrelsome, sociable but not clannish. He seeks what he wants within himself, while the inferior man seeks it from others. The superior man is courteous but not obsequious, the inferior man is obsequious but not courteous. The superior man takes duty as the groundwork of character, blends it in action with a sense of proportion, displays it in a spirit of unselfishness and perfects it by adding sincerity and truth. He pays special attention to nine points, to see clearly, to look kindly, to behave respectfully, to speak circumspectly, to work earnestly. When in doubt he makes careful inquiry, when in anger he reflects upon the consequences, when tempted by gain he thinks only of duty.'



Chinese officials have made their own such parts of this ideal as are not too difficult; they have treated it as we have treated the Sermon on the Mount, but they have much more nearly approximated to their ideal than we. This is partly because the Confucian ideal is the educated Chinese at his best, whereas the Christian ideal is corrective of the natural man—frankly impossible except through Divine Grace. In Christianity this is central. In the Confucian system on the contrary the ethical is central, and the religious is kept very much at the margin.

Yet it is quite untrue to say as many modern Confucians do that K'ung Fu-tse was irreligious, just as it is untrue, though very common, to say that the Chinese are 'secular'. From ancient times China has accepted the doctrine of T'ien or Heaven, and of Shang-ti as the Father in Heaven.

'He hears and sees; he enjoys offerings; he has a heart or mind; he is aided by men, and deposes his work especially to kings and their ministers; he can be honoured and served; he is awe-inspiring, of dread majesty and to be feared; he confers on men their moral sense, and makes retention of his favour dependent on moral character; his will is glorious, may be known and must be complied with; a virtuous king is after his own heart, but he will have no regard for the ill doer.'<sup>1</sup>

The Tao is universal: man must be in harmony with it. T'ien is just: man must do its will.

With the superstitious veneration of his people for good spirits, and their placation of evil ones, K'ung was less in sympathy. 'Honour them,' he said, 'but leave them alone. We do not know how to serve men; how should we serve spirits? We who have not understood this life how should we know of the life hereafter?' It is these sayings that have led to the common idea that K'ung Fu-tse was merely a moralist. He was rather a sanely religious reformer combating spiritualism and necromancy. Like Sakyamuni he attacked religiosity in the interests of religion; and when his life was threatened he revealed the

<sup>1</sup> W. E. Soothill, *The Three Religions of China*.

hidden heart of his serenity and fortitude. 'Heaven,' he said, 'has entrusted me with my work, what can my enemies do against me?' When he was grievously sick and a disciple wanted to offer up prayers on his behalf, the master said quietly, 'My prayers began long ago'. In a true sense his life of service to men was a life of prayer to God.

K'ung Fu-tse was in fact, as he was fond of saying, 'a transmitter rather than an originator,' a reformer who saw the golden age of the empire as a thing of the distant past, and who did much to stabilize Chinese society by reverence for ancestors and ancestral custom.

With much of his teaching Lao-tse would agree. But with regard to the old Sinism he took an agnostic and even anarchist attitude. 'We cannot know Shang-ti, and all these ceremonials and observances are ruining the empire.' This was his attitude, and it is here that one great difference between the two giants is to be found: for K'ung took up 'a middle position with leanings towards the left' says Hu Shih. Another difference is related to this: their point of view differs with their objective.

One is world-affirming—the other world-denying: one is an official, the other an anarchist: one is a social reformer, the other a naturalistic visionary. And yet both agree that man must be true to the Tao. When the Duke of Chi asked him about the art of government K'ung Fu-tse said: 'let the ruler be ruler; let the minister be minister; let the father be father, and the son son'.

This is li—good form or correctness; and though Laoists mocked at its fussy rectitude it is not so different from their master's wu-wei or spontaneous expression of Tao as it may seem. Both would agree that in these natural relations the China of their day could find her true self.

Lao-tse insisted that it is when things go wrong that men talk of duty; and bade men 'abandon benevolence and put away sagacity. . . . I love quietude and the people become righteous. . . . I practise non-action, and the people reform themselves'.

In a word, it is largely a matter of technique which separates these masters—of temperament and of emphasis too, rather than of philosophy. Perhaps we may say that if Aristotle with his formal logic and regimented ethic is a pupil of the poetic and communist Plato, so K'ung the moralist and formalist is a pupil of the mystical anarchist Lao-tse, whom he visited in 518 B.C.

The social, political, and religious life of China from very early times is recorded in two books which K'ung Fu-tse and all Chinese have held in great respect: the *Shih-Ching* or *Book of Odes*, covering the period about 1800 B.C. to about 600 B.C., and the *Shu-Ching* or *Book of History*, containing fifty-eight documents of various periods down to the Chou Dynasty. The former he edited, choosing some 300 poems which fitted his ideas; from the latter he drew examples of classical rectitude.

K'ung is the first and greatest of the Confucians, the typical Chinese, and his descendants are still in office.

There is no more impressive spot in China than his tomb in Shantung, with its shrines to his great disciples, its gardens, ancient timbers, and tiled roofs. Here are a calm dignity, a spaciousness and a harmony, eloquent of the Master. Scholar, teacher, musician, statesman, he is one of the world's great men.

As an educator he ranks high: 'I learn,' he said, 'without satiety, and teach without weariness,' and he insists that 'words must conform with things,' and that his students must work out their own problems. He realized that the first aim of education is to produce men of character, 'troubled not that men do not know them, but that they do not know men', controlled by the voice of conscience, informed by high ideals, trained in industry and constancy of purpose, enjoying the pleasures of the mind and spirit rather than of the senses, guided by reason.

To this end he made much of music, the polish and harmonizer of character, set the Odes to music and revived ancient ritual. 'By the Odes the mind is roused: by the

Rule of Li character is formed: by music polish is added'<sup>1</sup>—this is his curriculum; and if he is the Socrates of China he is also its Plato.

Lao-tse has been called its Protagoras by Hu Shih, who regards him as a philosophical nihilist and a destructive critic. But it is not easy to account on these lines for his immense influence: he too appealed to something fundamentally Chinese, an attitude of detachment and dislike for centralized government, a recognition of the futility of war, a mystical sense of the transcendent and ineffable.

The remark of K'ung Fu-tse, 'To-day I have seen the Dragon—who can follow his tracks in the sky?' admirably expresses the grandeur of the mystical thinker whose deep sayings form the core of the *Tao-te-Ching*. This little pamphlet of five thousand characters is one of the world's great books, yet it is intelligible only to those acquainted with transcendental or mystical literature and experience. It is the 'Book of the Tao and of Te'—of Nature and a Natural Ethic. Yet the Tao is not the Absolute of the metaphysician, but the Ineffable of the saint: here is no text-book, but a series of ejaculations. Like the Rishi of Vedic India Lao-tse is a seer of the Invisible, a speaker of the Ineffable. He reminds us that 'The Tao that can be told is not the true Tao'—yet it is the source of all life, of all thought, of all that is. If K'ung Fu-tse accepts the Tao, Lao-tse is in love with it; and this gives his intuitions a strangely penetrating quality.

As all Indian systems of thought go back to the mysticism of the Upanishads so the *Tao-te-Ching* inspires the deepest Chinese thinkers. It is tragic but inevitable that in both lands these mystical ideals have also given birth to magic and superstition; for only the mystic can understand the language of mysticism. 'Eternal Life'—a state of transcendental consciousness to the mystic—becomes 'Immortality' to the masses. The mystic's flight on eagle wings gives place to the paganism of short-cuts to longevity, such as the Taoist pill of immortality, and the mantras

<sup>1</sup> Lun Yu, viii. 8.

of Indian shamans. The dictum, 'The corruption of the best is worst,' is here well illustrated. So too is the saying, 'The good is the enemy of the best.' For magic has come in both countries to replace the original mysticism; and to understand it aright we must put off the spectacles of the learned and put on the mind of children, of poets, and of lovers of the Unseen. Lao-tse means the Revered Sage, and the legend is that he was ninety years in his mother's womb. This is a Chinese way of saying that his wisdom is the result of long and brooding meditation, as his emblem, the dragon, is an expression of the soaring and dazzling flights of his intuitive genius. Nor does this symbol express only the greatness and the difficulty of his teachings: the dragon is also the symbol of the mysterious in nature, of which Lao-tse is the mouthpiece.

Another legend describes the writing of the *Tao-te-Ching*. Having devoted himself during a long lifetime to silent study, and having mastered the Wisdom of the Ancients, he set out on his last journey. Arriving at the frontier he was addressed by the warden of the pass, 'Leave us, I pray, a writing to guide us'. Whereupon he wrote the *Tao-te-Ching*, and disappeared from human ken.

No book has stirred more controversy than this pamphlet: 'This absurd little volume,' says the Nestor of British sinologues, who believes it to be a shameless forgery: 'It is the sublime Rule of kings—the inestimable Treasure of the people,' said T'ai Tsu, founder of the Ming Dynasty, who found it a great help in governing the empire.

It is indeed a classic of mystical and ethical aphorisms—in praise of the meek and lowly and of the spontaneity of the ways of nature. But it is also a Chinese treatise on politics, and has been so accepted for twenty-five centuries by the school of *laissez-faire*, and by the pacifists who have seen with realistic eyes what war costs the people.

'Govern a great state as you cook a small fish . . .'

'To become a world-ruler occupy yourself with Tao.'

'How sad if the lord of a thousand chariots conduct himself frivolously.'

'The more rules the poorer the people. The more laws the more law-breakers.'

'He who is compassionate conquers.'

'He who has won a battle should stand in the place of mourning.'

Thus are aphorisms for the man of affairs set side by side with the paradoxes of the mystic, and in the Far East the way of the mystic has often been made that for the man of action. For Buddhism and Laoism have indeed been the inner core alike of quietism and activism; and Lao-tse is, like Sakyamuni, both visionary and teacher of affairs.

If the Tao is the unseen reason the Te is its embodiment in life. It means truth—'What ten eyes see is firmly established'—and is equivalent to virtue: to *mores* becoming the way or standard of morals.

Whether or not the book is his own composition, it is accepted as such by his followers, and the long and learned controversy as to its authenticity is not unlike that concerning the Homeric poems. Were they written by Lao-tse or by some one of the same name? Or are they his thoughts collected and edited like those of K'ung Fu-tse, of Buddha, of Jesus, of all the greatest teachers? What matters is that they are ours to-day. Those who argue most understand least.

### III

The book consists of three parts: the first deals with the problem of moulding oneself according to the Tao; the second with the method of moulding others according to the same mysterious prototype, and the third with the way of ruling a country according to its principles.

Tao is the ancient Chinese symbol for that which is from Eternity, and in it is the abiding proof that the thought of China is not after all so different from that of India. In his concept of a Natural Order, a Divine Reason, lies Lao-tse's claim to be a philosophical as well as a mystical thinker. Using an idea already current in China he deepens it and fills it with new meaning, conceiving it as *Prima-*

val Source as well as Indwelling Power of the Universe: 'From it proceed all things . . . in all things it is found.'<sup>1</sup> It is Norm and Nature as well as Source and Sustainer: 'Heaven itself obeys the Tao.'<sup>2</sup> To work with it or rather to let it work in us is true virtue: 'By it the Sage is made strong: he humbles himself before it, and it exalts him.'<sup>3</sup>

'In the beginning was the Tao.' So Christian missionaries have agreed to translate the first words of the Fourth Gospel; and some Indian scholars would translate the first words of the *Tao-te-Ching* by substituting the word Brahman for Tao. Like the Brahman of the Upanishads, the Tao is 'that from which words turn back'. 'We look at it and do not see it: we listen for it and do not hear it: we seek to grasp it and do not take hold of it. We call it the invisible: the elusive: the subtle.'

These are expressions familiar to all students of mysticism: 'O world invisible, we view thee, O world intangible, we touch thee,' says Francis Thompson. Nevertheless the Tao, ineffable though it may be, is in all things, is the Mother of all things, and human wisdom is to apprehend it, and to let it work in men. Lao-tse says of himself, 'I differ from others, for I seek the nourishment of the Mother of all'. He is the 'Old Child' both because he was born wise and because he was a wise child ever at the breast of mother Nature. He lived in the mountains, and he saw the irresistible power of water, which ever seeking a lower level wears out great valleys and cleaves great mountains. 'The highest goodness is like water. It benefits all things, and it occupies the lower place. It is like the Tao.'

'Without the Tao to lighten them, the heavens would be rent; without the Tao to give it peace, the earth would be dissolved; without the Tao to give life all nature would suffer destruction; without the Tao to bring harmony, rulers would lose their position: hence therefore humility is the root of honour, abasement is the foundation of exaltation.' We are reminded here of the Old Testament

<sup>1</sup> *Tao-te-Ching*, 34. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

doctrine of the Spirit of Wisdom, and of the man of the Beatitudes, meek before God and loving to men.

Having sought to express the inexpressible, Lao-tse goes on to teach the doctrine of wu-wei: 'Clay is made into pots: it is their emptiness which makes them useful.' So the Sage is to empty himself that he may be filled, to seek nothing that he may gain all things, to deny himself that he may be perfect.

This is Te, a natural morality based on the Tao. It is an ideal of quietism, but he does not hesitate to apply it to the problems of the empire. 'When the empire is ruled by the Tao, fine horses are discarded like rubbish; when it is ruled without the Tao, there are war-horses on all sides.' Wars are against the order of nature: 'A well-equipped army is not an auspicious instrument. All nature opposes it. He who possesses the Tao has nothing to do with it.' It is not least as an early pacifist that Lao-tse has an abiding message for the world.

'Great armies are followed by briars and thorns. He who has killed many should stand in the place of mourning. A great victory should be followed by obsequies,' and like Tolstoi and Gandhi, Lao-tse sees in the criminal judge also an example of violence and wrongdoing. He is at best a usurper. 'He tries to be a master-carpenter: not many can do it without cutting their own hands.' To all alike Lao-tse holds up the ideals of wu-wei—natural view in action: of simplicity: of humility: of poverty. Acquisitiveness is the greatest of evils: selfish desire the root of trouble. 'Heaven abides and earth endures. For they live not unto themselves. The Sage puts himself last but is found in the front place.'

To imitate the eternal Tao—to empty oneself that the eternal may enter in—this is the wisdom of Lao-tse. 'Those who follow the Tao desire not to be full of themselves.' And the Tao—'how still it lies—seeming to do nothing it does all. Seeking no praise it completes its work. Master of all, it claims not the lordship.' 'To return to the Tao and Te based upon it', says Lao-tse, 'is to return



to the standard of the Ancients.' For him as for K'ung the Golden Age was past, but might be renewed; and a great Emperor said truly of this mystical booklet, 'It is the sublime Rule of Kings, and the inestimable Treasure of the People.' Incalculable has been its influence on the civilization of China. Its art and its politics alike owe to Lao-tse a great debt. And he and his sayings are the abiding proof that there is in this nation a poetical and mystical strain too often unrecognized. In them as in the sons of India there flows a deep current of the other-worldly and the romantic, and there are many disciples of Lao-tse amongst China's thinkers, artists, and poets.

#### IV

Great as is the renown of K'ung Fu-tse, then, it must not be supposed that he has gone uncriticized. Lao-tse's attack on the formalism of the good is an attack on li, K'ung's ideal of 'good form'; and even if they agree in emphasizing love there is a vast difference between its spontaneous and its calculating forms.

Nor within the school of his own followers does K'ung Fu-tse hold undisputed sway. While Meng-tse or Mencius finds him too much a royalist and emphasizes the claims of the masses, Mo-tse, the great fifth-century altruist, goes much further. He is a teacher who deserves close study, though he has been almost neglected until to-day.<sup>1</sup> Too little have 'the blue-clothed masses' been the concern of the literati of China, though there is a minor key in many of her poets from the Odes on, and an implicit criticism of other rulers in her adoration of Yao, Shun, and Yu, friends of the poor. It is the glory of Mo-tse that he voices their claims, and that universal love is his ideal.

Mo-tse was like K'ung Fu-tse, a native of Lu, and is best understood as a Confucianist disgusted by the very ceremonies which delighted his master. He saw in the teachings of the older sage 'enough to ruin the world': its long

<sup>1</sup> In the T'ang era he had an admirer in Han Wen-kung (768-824), but the Confucian mind has consistently condemned him to oblivion.

mourning, its ceremonial and music, its fatalism, its reticence as to a Divine Ruler, its lack of deep sentiment.

Mo-tse was utilitarian in his desire to see the poor helped in their need; but he stands out also as the great idealist who saw in benevolence to all men everywhere a panacea. He believed that the world is ruled by a loving God, and that man ought to be as loving. His *Universal Love* is a book to which China is at last looking with serious eyes, and its fifty-three articles are packed with practical wisdom and shrewd insight. 'Let us look at history,' he says, 'and realize that the great Sage-Kings—men like T'ang the Restorer and Wu—changed the destinies of the state.' They made history. They refused to let it make them.

This is the test of pragmatism: Did a principle work in the past? To this he adds two others: Does it work now? Will it work in the long run? A principle then is to be based on the conduct of dead sages, on the judgement of the masses, on the practical effects which follow its application.

Like K'ung Fu-tse, he spoke of the Will of Heaven, but made much more of it. 'The Will of Heaven is to me like compass and square. The wheelwright uses the one, and the carpenter the other. I measure by a more perfect standard. The Will of Heaven is to love all people everywhere, for it is all-inclusive and impartial in its activity, untiring in its providence.' This is like the Sermon on the Mount, but Meng-tse and others felt it to be a very dangerous doctrine, destructive of the intense love of family and clan and nation.

Like Lao-tse, Mo-tse is something of an anarchist; yet he bases his teachings upon a close study of Nature, and his ethic is therefore spontaneous. 'Nothing else has worked or will work,' he seems to say, 'why not try love?' He applied laboratory methods to philosophy, and a strenuous note is given to his romantic ethic by the call to work. Let men work as Yu did—then they will prosper. Let them be thrifty, and they will not be poor. Clothing

and houses are for protection, not for ornament. Government is for the people, not for the rulers. Let wise and virtuous men be put in high position, and they will rule with this in mind. Criticized by Meng-tse, he yet seems to have imparted to him and to many others lessons of democracy. His economic views would to-day be labelled socialist, and his altruism admired but disregarded as a vain dream. His pacifism, too, would be praised—in times of peace—and denounced as anarchy in times of war.

In a rough and turbulent age he showed that war is the worst of evils and loved to believe in an ideal of simplicity and of loving-kindness. A modern Chinese scholar has said, 'In his deep consciousness of Heaven or God and his sincere devotion to men Mo-tse is comparable to Christ.' And China has not risen to the stature of Mo-tse any more than the West to that of Jesus. Dr. Hu Shih, historian of Chinese philosophy, sees in Mo-tse also the discoverer of logical method, with a development of paradox akin to that of Zeno, and also considers him the originator of scientific observation. A man who is compared by sober minds to Jesus in religion, to Zeno in logic, and to Archimedes in science is one to reckon with in this day of transition in China. Neglected for two thousand years or more, Mo-tse is coming into his own. Here is an ancient stock on to which new ideas may be grafted. The key-notes of the Confucian ethic are Shu and Jen, negative and positive aspects of benevolence: man is not to do to others what he would not have them do to him—this is Shu. He is to be positively kind and sympathetic—this is Jen; and it is best understood if we look at the great figure of Mo-tse, who about two centuries later arose to call men to universal love.

If K'ung had insisted that men return justice for justice, and Lao-tse that they return good for evil, Mo-tse insists that universal love is a panacea for the world's troubles. God is loving; let man be loving too: there is no other way out of the world's troubles.

With regard to the old Sinism, Mo-tse is the most conservative of the three—holding fast to the God of his ancestors.

And if K'ung wanted a League of Peoples, Mo-tse wanted to abolish war, except as a last resort. Like Lao-tse he was a pragmatist and pointed to the ruinous folly of armed disputes. If God is love, war must be sin; and he went about as a minister of reconciliation till Meng-tse who opposed him could say: 'Mo-tse loved all men and was ready to wear himself out for the good of humanity'. And Chuang-tse, while maintaining that no one could live at these heights, exclaims, 'But Mo-tse was truly a glory to the world.' A practised teacher, he developed the logical theories implicit in Chinese thought: reasoning must be backed by a classical authority, it must be true to present-day experience, and it must have pragmatic proof in utility. 'This was the beginning of logic in China,' says Dr. Hu, and once more the visionary stands revealed as the rational thinker.

Yet this great man had to wait twenty-four centuries for a biographer, and of the fifty-three books attributed to him by tradition, perhaps none was actually his. But his main ideas are clear, and can be studied side by side with those of his fore-runners, successors, and critics in our illustrative readings.

As with some other logical defenders of the faith, his disciples were entangled in their own sophistries, and China became a cock-pit of intellectual wrangling. But the humanist tradition lived on side by side with the mystical. If Meng-tse is the true descendant of K'ung Fu-tse—more democratic but as humanist—Chuang-tse is the spiritual child of Lao-tse—more naturalistic and more sceptical. And as the latter school became fatalist, the former called the more loudly for strenuous activity, for man to master nature and to strive with optimism: 'to neglect human effort and to speculate about nature is to misinterpret the universe,' says Hsun-tse in the third century, in what Hu Shih calls a Baconian Song. He and Han Fei were the inspiration of early empire-builders and belong

to that line of practical men which goes back to the legendary founders. If courage was one of the cardinal virtues of K'ung, progress was a generally accepted principle of social and political thinking of the third and second centuries B.C. And while one school of Mo-tse's followers became preoccupied with his religious idealism, another developed his scientific and logical method.

In a warring age, when the State of Chin was conquering all its rivals, this was more timely than his pacifism and altruism.

'To reward those who kill their enemies and in the same breath to praise acts of mercy and benevolence—to honour those who storm cities and at the same time to confess belief in universal love—how can such confusion produce a strong and efficient state?' asks the logical mind of Han Fei.<sup>1</sup> But these are later developments, and to the classic age belongs Chuang-tse to add scepticism to mysticism, and to re-affirm the naturalism and anarchism of Lao-tse in exquisite parables and pungent aphorisms, and to add to them a touch of cynicism and of humour. He is seen fishing when a deputation arrives to offer him the position of Prime Minister of the State of Chu.

'I hear,' he said without looking up, 'that there is a sacred tortoise which your Prince keeps in a chest in his ancestral shrine though it has been dead these three thousand years. Do you suppose it would prefer to be venerated in death, or to be wagging its tail in the mud alive?'

'Surely the latter', said the officials.

'Then away with you', said the philosopher, 'and leave me to wag mine!' This is what a modern critic calls the 'old-rogue' spirit in so many of China's scholars.

Equally impertinent was he to the memory of K'ung Fu-tse—whom he called 'a word-spinner' throwing dust in the eyes of rulers and turning scholars from the true Tao, making much of filial piety, and confusing men with ancient sophistries. Though we know little of his life we know much of the teachings of this Diogenes of China.

<sup>1</sup> Hu Shih, *The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China*, p. 61.

Well does Sse-ma-ch'ien say, 'He wrote to asperse the school of K'ung Fu-tse, and to glorify the mysteries of Lao-tse.' Though he is not practical enough for the Chinese, they treasure his works as literary masterpieces. Who, even in the West, has not heard of his Berkeleyan idealism? 'Once I dreamt I was a butterfly. I awoke, and there I was, a man. Now I know not if I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or if I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man.'

His style may be judged by two other well-known examples, printed here as illustrative readings, and in death he remained true to his whimsical self.

His disciples, wishing to give him a grand funeral, Chuang-tse said, 'With heaven and earth for my coffin and shroud, with sun, moon, and stars for regalia, with all creation to escort me, are not my funeral pomps to hand?'

'We fear,' said the disciples, 'lest the kite eat our master's body.'

'Above ground,' said he, 'I shall be food for kites, below, I shall be food for mole-crickets and ants. Why rob one to feed the other?' This is a theme early artists delighted in, and his is a truly picturesque life. In his sense of the all-pervading Tao, he met death serenely.

In the epilogue to the *Chuang-tse* it is written, 'In paradoxes, in daring words, with profound subtlety he let his imagination soar. . . . Above he roams in the Company of God: below he is the companion of such as are beyond life and death, and deny the reality of beginning and end.'

In Chuang-tse on the one hand and in Hsun-tse on the other the world-denying and the world-affirming tendencies of Chinese thought find their full fruition. But until the Sung era no systematic philosophy appears, and the age-long debates as to whether man is by nature good or evil are as barren as the question whether the debaters are by nature rationalists or mystics. Man is both good and evil: Chinese man is often both mystic and rationalist.

Chinese history is in some ways parallel to that of the Greeks. Both peoples inherit an older culture, and develop

a classic civilization with a succession of notable thinkers who influence their whole future. If China's Socrates is K'ung Fu-tse and her Protagoras Lao-tse she has also her scientific humanists of the type of Thales and Anaxagoras, and owes much to an imported mysticism akin to that of Pythagoras.

As with the Greeks, too, individualism and rivalry defeat early attempts at federation, and while there is a parallel quest for harmony and reason, there is also the constant lapse into superstition and the persecution of innovators, who are judged by outworn codes and the dead hand of tradition.

But the Chinese men of science make no great or consistent progress as do those of Greece, and barbarians, while they are civilized by Chinese culture as Rome by Greece, are more continually at the gates. These three enemies—individualism, classicism, and invading hordes—trouble the long history of China, and though like Greece she develops an upper class of scholars and a measure of social democracy through education, she has remained almost to the present the milch-cow of dynasties founded by strong rulers and petering out through their own sensuality and superstition.

In aesthetic achievements she is the peer of Greece, and in sculpture, bronze-casting, and landscape painting has had no rival: yet in drama and other forms of literature most will agree that a day at Athens is worth a 'cycle of Cathay'. And her philosophers have wasted centuries in discussing false antinomies: 'Man is good by nature', says one ancient: 'No, he is bad,' says another. 'Action is easy, knowledge difficult,' says one modern: 'Knowledge is difficult, action is not easy,' says another—and causes a grave scandal. And always the activist is persecuted by the passivist and paper maxims are regarded as better than moral effort.

## THE SPIRIT OF CHINA'S CLASSIC AGE

## I. PRE-CONFUCIAN

*The Cost of Empire*

(a)

What leaf is not sere?  
 What day has no march?  
 Who is not sent to roam  
 A soldier at some frontier?  
 What leaf has not withered?  
 Who is not torn from home?  
 Ah! Pity the soldier—  
 Is he not also a man?

II. xii. 10.

(b)

Under the broad sky  
 All is the Emperor's:  
 Within the sea-board  
 All are his serfs . . .  
 Some lie at ease,  
 And some are worn out:  
 Some loll on couches,  
 And some never rest.

II. vi. 1.

(c)

At dawn we rise,  
 At eve we rest,  
 Dig wells to drink,  
 Till fields to eat;  
 What is the might of the Ruler to us?  
 Odes. (After Hu Shih.)

(d) *The Tao*

The people follow him who has the Tao as the starving go after food set before them.

KWAN-TSE (7th cent. B.C.)

If a ruler cleave to the Tao all will spontaneously come to him.

LAO-TSE (6th cent. B.C.)



## THE MASTER MINDS OF CHINA

All creatures by the Tao do live:  
Princes and Kings from It receive,  
The Rules which to the world they give.

IBID.

*(e) Aphorisms of Lao-tse*

Ponder the ancient Tao  
And you may manage the affairs of to-day . . .  
When Tao was lost  
Duty and rectitude appeared.  
Wisdom and shrewdness followed  
And great hypocrisy:  
The natural relationships were upset  
Filial piety became a duty,  
Kingdoms, clans, families fell out  
And loyal ministers made their appearance.

TAO-TE-CHING.

He who stands on tiptoe is shaky:  
He who stiffens his legs can't walk  
He who boasts has no merit  
He who vaunts himself perishes.

IBID.

*(f) Wu-Wei*

He who acts destroys: he who grasps loses.  
Therefore the saint grasps not nor acts:  
He who humbles himself shall be saved;  
He who bends shall be made straight;  
He who empties himself shall be filled.

IBID.

*(g) The Three Jewels of Lao-tse*

I have three precious gems—gentleness, frugality, and humility.

## II. CONFUCIAN

(From the Lun-yu)

*(a) The Cardinal Virtues of K'ung Fu-tse*

The princely man has three virtues. . . . He is truly benevolent and free from care: truly wise and free from delusion: truly brave and free from fear.

*(b) Li*

The princely man will regulate his knowledge by the inner rule of Li—good form . . .

Without this courtesy becomes ceremonious, Prudence becomes timidity, valour becomes violence, and candour rudeness.

(c) *The Chun-tse*

K'ung Fu-tse said: The superior man has nine things which are subjects with him of careful consideration: In regard to the use of his eyes he is anxious to see clearly. In regard to the use of his ears he is anxious to hear distinctly. In regard to his countenance he is anxious that it should be benign. In regard to his demeanour he is anxious that it should be respectful. In regard to his speech he is anxious that it should be sincere. In regard to his doing business, he is anxious that it should be reverently careful. In regard to what he doubts, he is anxious to question others. When he is angry he thinks of the difficulties (his anger may involve him in). When he sees gain to be got he thinks of righteousness.

He who aims to be a man of complete virtue in his food does not seek to gratify his appetite, nor in his dwelling place does he seek appliances of ease; he is in earnest in what he is doing, and careful in his speech, he frequents the company of men of principle that he may be rectified; such a person may be said to love to learn.

The Master said of Tsze-Ch'an that he had four of the characteristics of a superior man: in his conduct of himself he was humble, in serving his superiors he was respectful, in nourishing the people he was kind, in ordering the people he was just.

There are three things that the man of high rank should consider especially important: that in his deportment and manner he keep from violence and heedlessness; that in regulating his countenance he keep near to sincerity; and that in his words and tones he keep far from lowness and impropriety.

To be able to practice five things everywhere under the Heavens constitutes virtue. They are: Gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness.

(d) *World Brotherhood*

When Ta T'ung, or World Brotherhood, becomes effective, all men everywhere will live for the common good; leaders of worth and ability will be selected; their words will be trusted and they will be makers of peace. Men will not love their own parents to the exclusion of parents of others, nor their own sons to the exclusion of sons of others. They will provide sustenance to the aged as long as they live, employment to the able-bodied, opportunity for

development to the young, friendly care to widows, orphans, childless men, and the disabled, for each man a task and for each woman a home. Not wishing to be wasteful of their possessions, they will nevertheless not keep them only for personal use; as to their strength, not wishing to be inactive, they will on the other hand not exert it in their own behalf alone. Thus evil devices will cease and fail to prosper; robbers and traitors will be out of work; and outside doors will not need to be closed; this will be what we call Ta T'ung, or World Brotherhood.

K'ung Fu-tse, in *The Book of Rites*, vii. 2; translation by D. Willard Lyon.

### III. PARABLES OF CHUANG-TSE

(a)

'Have you never heard of the frog in the old well? The frog said to the turtle of the eastern sea, "Happy indeed am I! I hop on to the rail around the well. I rest in the hollow of some broken brick. Swimming, I gather the water under my arms and shut my mouth. I plunge into the mud, burying my feet and toes; and not one of the cockles, crabs, or tadpoles I see around me are my match. (Fancy pitting the happiness of an old well, ejaculates Chuang-tse, against all the water of the ocean!) Why do you not come, sir, and pay me a visit?"'

'Now the turtle of the eastern sea had not got its left leg down ere its right had already stuck fast, so it shrank back and begged to be excused. It then described the sea, saying, "A thousand Li would not measure its breadth, nor a thousand fathoms its depth. In the days of the Great Yu, there were nine years of flood out of ten; but this did not add to its bulk. In the days of T'ang, there were seven years out of eight of drought; but this did not narrow its span. Not to be affected by duration of time, not to be affected by volume of water,—such is the great happiness of the eastern sea.'

'At this the well-frog was considerably astonished, and knew not what to say next. And for one whose knowledge does not reach to the positive-negative domain, to attempt to understand me, Chuang-tse, is like a mosquito trying to carry a mountain, or an ant to swim a river—they cannot succeed.'

(b)

'Chuang-tse one day saw an empty skull, bleached, but still preserving its shape. Striking it with his riding whip, he said, "Wert thou once some ambitious citizen whose inordinate yearnings

brought him to this pass?—some statesman who plunged his country in ruin, and perished in the fray?—some wretch who left behind him a legacy of shame—some beggar who died in the pangs of hunger and cold? Or didst thou reach this state by the natural course of old age?’

‘When he had finished speaking, he took the skull, and placing it under his head as a pillow, went to sleep. In the night, he dreamed that the skull appeared to him, and said, “You speak well, sir; but all you say has reference to the life of mortals, and to mortal troubles. In death there are none of these. Would you like to hear about death?”’

‘Chuang-tse having replied in the affirmative, the skull began: “In death, there is no sovereign above, and no subject below. The workings of the four seasons are unknown. Our existences are bounded only by eternity. The happiness of a king among men cannot exceed that which I enjoy.’

‘Chuang-tse, however, was not convinced, and said, “Were I to prevail upon God to allow your body to be born again, and your bones and flesh to be renewed, so that you could return to your parents, to your wife, and to the friends of your youth—would you be willing?”’

‘At this, the skull opened its eyes wide and knitted its brows and said, “How should I cast aside happiness greater than that of a king, and mingle once again in the toils and troubles of mortality?”’

(Tr. by H. A. Giles.)

#### IV. AN EARLY REBEL

‘Neither Nature nor Government is kind to the people. Nature cannot stay plague and pestilence nor save men from dying of them: Nor does Nature give long life to all good men. Therefore I say that Nature is unkind. Burglars and cheats are driven to crime by poverty. But Government punishes them by ruthless law. Therefore I say that Government is unkind.’

[Attributed to Teng Shih who in the sixth century B.C. ‘taught the relativity of right and wrong’, and was put to death for opposing the Government of Tze Tsan (d. 522 B.C.) and for persistent pamphleteering. His new Penal Code was later adopted by the Government he criticized.]

(See Hu Shih, *The Development of Logical Method*, pp. 12-13.)

## V. MO-TSE (Between 500 and 420 B.C.)

The big rivers do not despise the little brooklets as tributaries. And great men do not neglect any menial task or reject any trifle, and so they become vessels for the world. (*Befriending the Learned.*)

Any virtue that does not spring from the heart will not remain and any (result of) action that is not aimed at by one's self will not stay. There is no short cut to fame and there is no trick to praise. The superior man regards his body but as the vehicle for his character. None who places much importance on personal gains but lightly sacrifices his fame has ever become a gentleman in the world. (*Self-Cultivation.*)

The virtuous who are prosperous must be exalted, and the virtuous who are not prosperous must be exalted too. If it is desired to continue the ways of Yao and Shun, to exalt the virtuous is indispensable. Now exaltation of the virtuous is the root of government. (*Exaltation of the Virtuous, i.*)

Even Heaven does not discriminate among the poor and the rich, the honourable and the humble, the distant and the near, and the related and the unrelated (to those in power). The virtuous were promoted and exalted; the vicious were kept back and banished. (*Exaltation of the Virtuous, ii.*)

Let him who has strength be alert to help others, let him who has wealth endeavour to share it with others, let him who possesses the Tao teach others persuasively. With this the hungry will be fed, the cold will be clothed, the disturbed will have order. When the hungry are fed, the cold are clothed, and the disturbed have order—this is procuring abundant life. (*Exaltation of the Virtuous, iii.*)

If every one in the world will love universally; states not attacking one another; houses not disturbing one another; thieves and robbers becoming extinct; emperors and ministers, fathers and sons, all being affectionate and filial—if all this comes to pass the world will be orderly. (*Universal Love, i.*)

He who rules a large state does not attack small states: he who rules a large house does not molest small houses. The strong does not plunder the weak. The honoured does not disdain the humble. The clever does not deceive the stupid. This is beneficial to Heaven

above, beneficial to the spirits in the middle sphere, and beneficial to the people below. (*Will of Heaven*, i.)

If the gentlemen in the world really desire to have the world rich and do not want to have it poor, desire to have it orderly and dislike to have it in confusion, the doctrine of fatalism must be rejected. (*Anti-Fatalism*, i.)

(Tr. Y. P. Mei, in Probsthain's Oriental Series.)

## VI. MAN'S ESSENTIAL NATURE

### *Discussion between Meng-tse and Kaou-tse*

Kaou-tse: 'Man's nature is like the willow; righteousness is like a cup or bowl. Fashioning benevolence and righteousness out of man's nature is like making cups and bowls from the willow.'

Meng-tse: 'Can you, leaving untouched the nature of the willow, make of it cups and bowls? You must do violence to the willow before you can make cups and bowls of it; (on your principles) you must in the same way do violence and injury to humanity in order to fashion from it benevolence and righteousness. Your words, alas, would certainly lead all men on to reckon benevolence and righteousness to be calamities.'

Kaou-tse: 'Nature is like water whirling round. Open a passage for it to the east, and it will flow to the east; open a passage for it to the west and it will flow to the west. Man's nature is indifferent to good and evil, just as water is indifferent to east and west.'

Meng-tse: 'Water indeed will flow indifferently to east or west; but will it flow indifferently up or down. The tendency of man's nature to good is like the tendency of water to flow downwards. There are none but have this tendency to good, just as all water flows downwards. Now, by striking water and causing it to leap up, you make it go over your forehead, and, by damming it and leading it, you may force it up a hill: but are such movements according to the nature of water? It is the force applied which causes them. When men are made to do what is not good, their nature is dealt with in this way.'

## X

### THE HAN ERA AND ITS AFTERMATH

A clever man builds a city,  
A clever woman lays it low. ODES

What is needed is not speculation but law. HAN FEI.

#### I

THE decadent House of Chou was brought to an inglorious end by the revolt of the State of Ch'in; and in the person of Ch'in-shih Huang-Ti of that State China found her first Emperor. Of uncertain parentage, he succeeded in 221 B.C. and set about the task of breaking up feudalism and unifying China. He divided the country for administrative purposes into thirty-six provinces, and created a new nobility of civil servants to rule them for him. Against the barbarians of the frontier he waged war, and completed that immense fortress the Great Wall, which stretched from Central Asia to the Pacific Ocean, 1,500 miles, a greater achievement than even the great trunk roads of the Mauryas, his contemporaries in India.

Like Chandragupta a successful usurper, he also unified his country; and like Asoka he sought a spiritual and moral as well as a political unity. A new religion was needed: so, though a superstitious materialist, he developed a cultus centring in himself, and his unscrupulous minister Li Sze—another Chanakya—encouraged him in this, and in the destruction of the Books.<sup>1</sup> He is said to have buried alive four hundred scholars for attempting to hide copies of them. But this is probably a libel.

The horror with which literary China has always regarded his vandalism has obscured alike the sound motive—to free China from a dead past—and the fact that he carefully preserved books of agriculture and other technical subjects, including medicine and pharmacy. But

<sup>1</sup> See Illustrative Reading.

divination was also protected and the books of the magicians spared, and the Emperor's interest in the occult has been exaggerated till he has seemed a mere dupe of the magicians and the foe of all culture. Yet he was a man of immense energy and of brilliant gifts—a strong and purposeful iconoclast, who believed that the feudal system and its literature hung together, and must go together. China owes to him the realization of her ideal of unified statehood. And the Han who succeeded him owe him a magnificent lead. Timid by comparison, they carried on his work—and recovered the Classics, which could not be destroyed while scholars lived.

The chief thinker of the First Empire was Han Fei, a pupil of the great pragmatist Hsun-tse, who died about the time that his other pupil Li Sze became Prime Minister, or perhaps some years earlier.

As we have seen, Hsun-tse attacked the sceptical and fatalistic school, and urged that man had been overlooked in the deification of nature. The Tao, he thought, is not the way of heaven but of man: man can and must seize the helm, and control nature to his ends.

The proper study of mankind is man—not speculative theories and argumentation. Men need authoritative government; the wise ruler 'establishes authority over the people, guides them by truths, constantly reminds them by ordinances, brings truth home to them by exposition, and forbids delinquencies by penalties.'

Han Fei—a Prince of Han—is a strangely modern figure, and like Socrates, had to drink the poison sent him by the State. His old fellow-student Li Sze could hardly criticize him for being in advance of his age, and for criticizing old theories and ideals, for he was himself an iconoclast and a pragmatist. He was perhaps jealous of Han Fei, a legalist who insisted that men must be governed by law, not by moralization, and that all men are equal before the law. This of course brought bitter opposition from the privileged classes—especially from officials who have been too often in China above the law,



and from Li Sze who, as prime minister, could not uphold the theories of his youth. The corruption of this class, Han Fei argued, was China's chief peril: 'If they are successful they reach great power; if they fail they attain great wealth'; and 'they are promoted for party reasons, and direct their energies to social entertainments'.

What the State needed was not 'talented persons' but an infallible system of inexorable law. This was a development of Hsun-tse; and like Shan-tao, another of his teachers, Han Fei had his own radical theory of kingship. Here he was a Taoist: 'The king should do nothing; the king is for the use of the state, not the state for the use of the king; we must fit officials for office; not make offices to fit officials.'

It is small wonder that the autocrat Shih-huang-ti and the ambitious Li Sze disliked such radical views. It is to their undying shame that they killed the greatest man of the age, or drove him to suicide. Yet they too were progressive men, and many of their acts are in keeping with Han Fei's teachings.

If the Chou era is that of a classic culture it is also that of excessive reverence for the past, and Ideal Norms—men like Yao and Shun—helped to stereotype its views. The Chin Age, or rather Generation, is one of unification and new ideals of statehood, and is followed by the Han era which combines these tendencies. It recovered the ideals of Chou, and in its unification and expansion of the empire carried on the work of Chin.

But much of its success is due to the policy of *wu-wei* or *laissez-faire* taught by Han Fei and deliberately adopted by T'sao Tsan who became Prime Minister in 193 B.C. After the misery and devastation of a long war this was what the people needed—to be let alone; and prosperity returned in full flood.

If this Laoist ideal worked wonders the superstitious elements in Taoism and in the spirit-worships of the barbarian West did much to corrupt the religion of the Court, and to involve it in intrigue and corruption. 'The

state religion of the Han Empire was the result of co-operation between the Confucian scholars and the magicians, the alchemists and the occultists. And many of the Confucian scholars 'were devout believers in most of these occult things', says Hu Shih.

## II

The era may be divided into that of the Western Han (206 B.C.—A.D. 25), and that of the Eastern Han (A.D. 25—220). The former in its turn may be subdivided into a century of centralization and expansion, and a century of decay: the latter into a half-century of literary splendour, and a century and a half of decay.

This early part of China's middle ages is of such importance that her northern peoples still call themselves Sons of Han. They regard it as the era of their greatest achievement, when they made progress in many fields—organizing and extending their empire, exploring neighbouring lands, entering into friendly relations with some, and conquering others. China now prepared herself for the great role of civilizing Eastern Asia, and to this end she not only organized her own religious and philosophical life, and gathered up the records of past achievement: she received also the immense impetus of Indian culture coming to her in Buddhist guise, and bringing something of Hellenistic art in its train. But she failed in spite of all this to attain a unified political life, and the Han Dynasty fell from the high example of its founders, and wallowed in superstition.

The Han rulers came at a dark time in China's history, which Sse-ma-ch'ien, court-astrologer and father of Chinese history, describes in these words:

'When the House of Han arose, the evils of their predecessors had not passed away. Husbands still went off to the wars. The old and the young were employed in transporting food. Production was almost at a standstill, and money had become scarce. Even the Son of Heaven had not carriage-horses of the same colour; the

highest civil and military authorities rode in bullock-carts, and the people at large knew not where to lay their heads.'

The times called for a strong leader. He came in the person of the northern Liu Pang—a village warden on the Han River, after which his dynasty is called. Getting into trouble through negligence, he became a bandit, and gathering an army, made himself master of China in 206 B.C. Making Ch'ang-an his capital, he beat back the nomads of the north-west, and inaugurated an era of expansion. He established the national cult of K'ung Fu-tse by visiting the tomb of the Sage, and offering sacrifice to his spirit.

China's reverence for her greatest son is thus expressed in a famous passage in the Odes:

While reading the works of K'ung Fu-tse, I have always fancied I could see the man as he was in life; and when I went to Shantung I actually beheld his carriage, his robes, and the material parts of his ceremonial usages. There were his descendants practising the old rites in their ancestral home, and I lingered on, unable to tear myself away. Many are the princes and prophets that the world has seen in its time, glorious in life, forgotten in death. But K'ung, though only a humble member of the cotton-clothed masses, remains among us for many generations. He is the model for such as would be wise. By all, from the Son of Heaven down to the meanest student, the supremacy of his principles is fully and freely admitted. He may indeed be pronounced the divinist of men.<sup>1</sup>

The Han Dynasty realized the great value of the teachings of K'ung Fu-tse: 'I grieve for this,' said Hui-ti, the second emperor, in 189 B.C., as he saw the damage to music and rites done by the burning of the books; and he and his successors made strenuous efforts to collect the scattered fragments. Themselves of lowly origin, the Han emperors became patrons of learning. In 150 B.C. Ching-ti, a son of the fifth emperor, was enlarging his palace in Lu, and demolished the house where K'ung Fu-tse himself had lived. Hidden in a wall were copies of

<sup>1</sup> H. A. Giles, *Chinese Literature*, pp. 103 ff.

the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and of the *Analecfs*. Before the end of the dynasty, all the classics were incised on marble slabs, to protect them from further catastrophe or change. For the recovered copies of the *Analecfs* were found to differ in certain points, and the fixing of the canon was done by Imperial command. This is one reason for the Chinese regard for the Han: another is their success in war. They paid the bills by a poll-tax: and by a uniform levy of five per cent. on all property.

The most noteworthy of the Han emperors in this field is Wu-ti, who came on the stage in 140 B.C. as sixth emperor, and reigned fifty-four years. For more than half of this time he was at war, driving back the Huns of the north-west, conquering Turkistan, and pushing the frontiers of China as far as Parthia. He also annexed the northern part of Korea and reconquered the southern kingdom of Yueh, which had revolted. He completed the colonization of Kan-su and Manchuria, and acquired immense new territories.

But he also sent embassies of peace to many neighbours, and showed a scientific spirit of investigation. At his command the great explorer Chang Ch'ien (whose Odyssey from 138 to 125 B.C. is full of adventure and of marvel) penetrated the Tarim basin, and determined the routes to India by Khotan and Kabul, and so to the sea. He thus opened up trade with the West, and an embassy from Marcus Antoninus is said to have come to China towards the end of the dynasty. Certainly the Romans delighted in her silks, and knew her people as the Seres or silk-folk. Throughout this era Persian influence was increasingly felt, and Greek medicine introduced. Pills, powders, and poultices were made, and a Chinese *materia medica* compiled. Greek geography, too, made itself felt: a third century map of China being made in squares representing definite areas, after the Greek manner.

Chang Ch'ien seems to have acquired other important knowledge such as that of the sources of the Yangtse, and of the customs of the frontiersmen; he also brought

back the grape, alfalfa, and hemp, as well as the bamboo, the walnut, and other useful plants.

Another explorer, T'ang-mang, was in the meantime busy penetrating from Canton up the valley of the Si-kiang.

Did they bring too the first news of Buddhism and its art? It seems certain that one of the Chinese generals had brought back images and monks as early as 217 B.C., and it may well be that others came with caravans from India and Balkh, or by the southern route.

New religious ideas and a new art were slowly penetrating China during this period of her political expansion; as we shall see, the seepage was to become by the end of the era a mighty flood. And if China needed great men at this time, she also needed new ideals and a new hope. It was an age of pessimism and of superstition. Like contemporary Rome, China, great in empire, was weak in spirit. Men sought certainty from omens and wizards: necromancy offered assurances of a dim life after death, and the official religions had no clear word to utter. We see Confucianism and Taoism entering into an alliance, more or less official, with one another, and with the magicians, and recognizing the gods and spirits of the barbarians.

Many of the early Han emperors were at once organizers and revivers of Confucianism and superstitious clients of the magicians. Thus we find Wu-ti, like Ch'in-shih Huang-ti before him, described as a dupe of these practitioners. This credulity led to a family tragedy. His son and heir was accused by a minister of using magic to destroy his father: who thereupon had him and all his family barbarously executed.

It is difficult to form a just estimate of Wu-ti. A great imperialist, a soldier, and an administrator, who carried further the attack of his predecessors on the great feudal families, he was in constant need of money and obtained it at times by unjust means, using informers, selling office and titles when the poor could bear no more burdens, and lavishing upon his own palaces and gardens immense sums.

He sought to fight profiteering by setting up State monopolies in salt and iron, an imperial mint, and a transport system. A great patron of learning, he was at the same time the victim of the magicians, longed for immortality and for commerce with genii and fairies, and himself became the high-priest of a syncretist cult. A new god inaugurating a new age, he continued old practices of consulting tortoise-shells and chicken-bones for oracles, and of animal sacrifices on high places, and spent great sums on alchemy and spiritualism.

He sought to impress the world with the splendour of his person and household, rather than to unify the State: his fiscal reforms aimed at the creation of royal by the extinction of seignorial rights, and taxation remained a kind of tribute or a way to advancement. It is a tragedy that he found no far-sighted minister to check his own opportunist policies, and to create a unified state. Restless and despotic, he was surrounded by men of narrow outlook. But the tragedy is relieved by his repentance and the repeal of unjust measures before his death in 87 B.C. Ruthless to opposition, his despotism continued to the end, and it was in spite of him that his line continued.

When, suspicious of witchcraft, he executed his son and all his family, one infant, reported to be a grandson of the prince, was saved and brought up by the jailor with his own children: and in due course became eighth emperor in 75 B.C. These early years of poverty proved useful to Hsüan-ti, for he sympathized with the poor, and he and his peasant wife brought a breath of domestic goodness into a court which during almost the whole era was the scene of scandal and intrigue.

The story of the rulers of China as a whole is the story of sinister feminine influence, and the Han were no exception. The poor groaned under excessive taxation, which went to pay for the extravagances of the royal mistresses. One of them, the dancing girl Chao-fei-yen ("Flying Swallow"), was actually made empress, and the bad example of the court led officials everywhere to oppress the peasants,

and to live lives of idle luxury. Nepotism was rife, and the power of the eunuchs a menace. Honours were sold, and justice too was venal.

By the beginning of the Christian era the time was ripe for a revolt. A new usurper appeared in Wang Mang. He was appointed grand marshal by his aunt the aged Dowager Empress, and in 8 B.C. the boy emperor P'ing-ti was married to his daughter. But Wang Mang stopped at nothing, poisoned his son-in-law at the very moment when he was worshipping in the Temple of Heaven, and by A.D. 9 had proclaimed himself emperor—founding a one-man dynasty, that of Sin, the New.

He ruled well, was spartan in his habits, and active in reform. Reverting to ancient models, he sought to take China back to a more primitive economic system. But many things of abiding value, such as a new and uniform currency, and the abolition of slavery, are to his credit: 'From now on,' he proclaimed, 'the slave is his own property,'—'and,' he added, 'the land belongs to the State.'

This, too, was a much-needed reform; for great estates had been filched from the people; but it meant vassalage for all. If the people could not be sold, neither could the land; and a number of monopolies were created—in salt, wood, and water, for example: a kind of nationalization of the necessities of life. Public storehouses were built, prices regulated, works of irrigation begun, and ministries of Agriculture, of Public Works, and of Forests, set up.

In the reforms of Wang Mang there is then an interesting blend of a kind of state socialism with archaic centralization of power: and he himself was a complex and baffling personality. Lofty idealism and dastardly crimes, ripe scholarship and fanatical superstition, simplicity of life and overweening egoism, are found side by side in this remarkable ruler, whom China has agreed to regard as a traitor, but who nevertheless did much for the 'blue-clothed multitudes'.

Chinese history has been too exclusively written by

officials. Wang Mang 'made all vested interests his enemies', and they have taken their revenge in painting a very dark picture of him.

The social and political changes of this first period of the Han Dynasty, from Liu Pang to Wang Mang, cover almost exactly two centuries. The founder of the dynasty, like its first disrupter, sought centralization, but realized, as Wang Mang did not, that the support of the people as a whole, and of the army and great barons in particular, was essential to stable government. He saw to it that men of his family held the chief positions; he divided the empire into many districts directly responsible to the throne, and we read of 143 of his officers as well as of his eight sons, receiving grants of land.

Wen-ti, the fourth emperor (179-156 B.C.), is memorable for certain humane reforms—modifying the appalling punishments of the time, which included castration and loss of nose and feet. His successor, Ching-ti (156-140), made further inroads into feudalism by confiscation of the estates of seven leading vassals who had rebelled against him, and by bringing all such landed gentry under authority of the imperial officials.

Wu-ti much further subdivided the empire, and brought the ablest men to the capital, so centralizing power. He was guilty of gross nepotism, and court intrigues on the part of the empresses and their kindred play a great part in this era of decay.

The rôle played by women and eunuchs in the affairs of the Han was undoubtedly a main factor in their fall: even the strong Wu-ti was weak and sensual in his private life, and flaunted his harem before his people.

Well do the Odes declare

A clever man builds a city,  
A clever woman lays it low.

But neither they, nor K'ung Fu-tse, nor the China which quotes them, realize that it is a clever man too often in her long history who has brought women low.



## III

The story passes now to the Eastern Han. Wang Mang having succeeded in making himself disliked by powerful interests, certain Han princes found no great difficulty in getting a following. Liu Siu, leader of a rebel band and descendant of one of the Han emperors, defeated and slew Wang Mang, burnt his capital, and set up his head in the market-place.

Becoming emperor as Kuang Wu-ti (A.D. 25-58), he transferred his capital to Lo-yang in the east, and made himself a noteworthy ruler. He was a Confucian scholar, and carried on the work of the earlier Han in reconciling Taoism and Confucianism, and in making religion the basis for loyalty to the throne. Education was encouraged, and moral and religious ideals were taught in the schools. The emperor's time of exile and hardship yielded good fruit too in his care for the poor. He had a census of people and lands taken, and redeemed the name of his house.

His successor Ming-ti (A.D. 58-76) is credited with his initiative in summoning to Lo-yang a Buddhist mission.<sup>1</sup> Their coming marks an era more momentous than that of the conqueror Wu-ti. It gave to the Chinese new concepts of god and man, new art forms, a new mystical philosophy, a new spiritual impetus.

It is significant that the first book to be printed in China was the *Diamond Cutter Sutra*, which is strangely unlike any of the Chinese classics, and has exerted great influence. It is a difficult work of transcendent and mystical nature, only to be understood by the initiate, and very different from the social ethic of the *Analects*.

Buddhism has in fact succeeded in China because it is complementary to her native religions. As an eminent Chinese writer, himself no friend of Buddhism, says, 'It came with irresistible force . . . it broke down the fatalism of Confucianism and Taoism . . . and brought home to the

<sup>1</sup> Critical scholarship finds in the story of his dream a pious fraud.

Chinese the idea of the indestructibility of the soul, for neither Confucianism nor Taoism maintained the importance of personal salvation.<sup>1</sup>

The first act of the missionaries was to settle at Lo-yang, where in the Pai-ma-se, or White Horse Monastery, the emperor established them. Their little book, *The Sutra of Forty-two Sayings*, is much more intelligible than the *Diamond Cutter*. It puts the wisdom of the Buddha into Confucian form: as the *Analects* begin each section, 'The Master said,' so this little missionary tract is a series of paragraphs, each beginning, 'The Buddha said'.

It contains monastic precepts which were to have immense influence on China: sets forth the Buddhist virtues and vices: reminds the reader that no one can harm the good man; that to attempt to do so is like spitting at Heaven; that evil desire is the dust which clouds the mirror of the mind; that forbearance is the way of peace.

This is all sound monastic Buddhism of the orthodox Theravada type, and Chinese piety was startled by the saying, 'Man is shackled by wife and child as in a prison'. Nor did the ideal of a sexless purity 'like lotus-blossoms in a muddy pool' appeal to many. But, as if to answer the criticism, the Sutra goes on to tell of a monk who was homesick in the monastery, and who when the Master asked him, 'What did you do at home?' replied, 'I loved to play the lute.' 'O monk,' said the wise Teacher, 'if you played it with lax string or with string too tightly stretched, what music did it give? Just as a lute must be tuned, so if the mind is to reach the harmony of Nirvana it must be exercised: let it be neither lax nor over-taut.' In a word, the right kind of discipline is needed—not austerity, but asceticism.

The book ends with a contrast between the mirage of rank and wealth and the abiding realities of the True Way. All things are passing but Nirvana.

For the next three centuries many missionaries poured into China from India and the hinterland—men like An-

<sup>1</sup> Hu Shih in *Chinese Social and Political Review*, vol. xi, pp. 142-50 *passim*.

shi-kao of Parthia, who translated the popular Amitabha scriptures, and the great Kumarajiva, contemporary of Fa Hian and Kalidasa—whose translations of such works as the *Lotus of the Good Law* are still classics. Their optimistic promises of Buddhahood or of Paradise, and their apocalyptic visions, profoundly moved China; and their influence is manifest in the awakening of the pictorial arts. From the flat bas-reliefs on Han tombs to the strong sculptured images of Buddha and his disciples in the great caves at Lung-men is an immense advance. And with it China passes out of a dim flat world of spirits, good and bad, to a world of powerful and compassionate gods visualized in superhuman form. Weariness had numbed the soul of Han China as of imperial Rome its contemporary; and to both came a refreshing tide of other-worldly faith and of hope for this life; and a new concept of personality, human and divine, was its fruit.

In China as in Rome, men were seeking guidance from omens, and thronging the booths of the magicians—when there came to both the assurance that truth and right will prevail in a world governed by benevolent law, and that the way of salvation is open to all men of goodwill.

If there is any literature sadder than that of the world-weary Roman, it is that of the Han general, Li-ling, whose letter provides our fourth illustrative reading. And with this we may compare the rosy picture of the Paradise of Amitabha, where there is no more sorrow and sighing, no more want, but jewels and music and joy. And as to the exile of Patmos came the promise 'There shall be no more sea,' so to the mountaineers of the frontier a land flat as well as fertile is promised hereafter.

In other words, Buddhist apocalyptic writings came into this weary land as the Christian 'Revelation' came to the sad world of slave and martyr and prisoner in the Roman empire.

To the scholar and the prosperous, too, Buddhism made its appeal: as Christianity launched its message to the intellectuals in its Gospel according to St. John, so the

Buddhist missionaries to Han China translated the philosophical treatises of Nagarjuna and of other schoolmen, and many a world-weary politician, as to-day, began to find solace in the transcendentalism of these scriptures, and in the mountain-temples a refuge from the world.

That no Chinese were ordained for several centuries testifies to the national conservatism, and of the power of the Confucian literati, who objected that Buddhism was both unnatural and superstitious, and who, as we have seen, set up at this time the cult of K'ung Fu-tse, and made an alliance with Taoist philosophy.

The Taoists were later to imitate the Buddhist cultus; already in the Han era they were beginning the practice of adopting public men into the pantheon as 'Heavenly Counsellors'. But Confucian scholars have kept up a continuous attack on Buddhism as a foreign superstition, and Lao-tse has been deified to offset the worship of Sakyamuni.

The Han emperors swung between these different groups. We have seen Liu Pang worshipping the spirit of K'ung Fu-tse. Wu-ti, at first a good Confucian, became the dupe of magicians. His mother's influence has been blamed for this degeneration; but the court as a whole was given over to alchemy: the transmutation of metals and the quest of the elixir of life were the vogue. No wonder the *Sutra of Forty-two Sayings* insists that, 'Gold and precious stones are as brick or sand,' and calls men to the undying treasures of the true immortality!

#### IV

Of the family life of the Han Dynasty it may be said that its laxity is relieved by certain examples of filial piety. They were often good sons and usually bad fathers. Liu Heng, a son of the founder by a concubine, showed his devotion to his mother by refusing to change his clothes for three years after her death. He is one of the twenty-four classical examples of filial piety—a strange exception

to the usual humour of the Chinese, and to their insistence upon sanity and right relations. Surely this is to forget the claims of the living in an immoderate and theatrical filial piety.

If we compare with this piety Wu-ti's butchery of the whole family of his son and heir, we may get a fair picture of the Han, whose passions were strong, and whose natural affections were too often blunted by licence. They were often poets and scholars: Liu-che the sixth emperor, for example, was a great patron of the arts and of literature. Under him flourished the historian Sse-ma-ch'ien and other writers, and he emphasized the importance of music in education.

The Shih-chi or 'Historical Record' of Sse-ma-ch'ien is a history of China for a thousand years down to the writer's time (100 B.C.). It has 130 chapters, and is arranged under five heads: (1) Annals of the Throne, (2) Chronological Tables, (3) Music, Rites, Calendar, &c., (4) Annals of the Nobility, (5) Biographies of Eminent Men. Loose and incoherent in style, yet it became the model for all Chinese history. Written on bamboo tablets, this immense book of over half a million words was printed on paper at a later date. For both are early Chinese inventions, paper being made in the Han era, and block-prints some centuries later. Already by the end of the second century A.D. rubbings were being taken of the incised stone tablets of the Confucian books, and in A.D. 400 the invention of ink led on to the use of wood-blocks. The first experiments in book-printing were made as early as the sixth century in Buddhist monasteries, and Japan is the proud possessor of the oldest printed book in existence, made in A.D. 770, very near the beginnings of her civilization.

As we have seen, this age recovered and edited the Classics. In A.D. 175 they were engraved on stone, and from now on the *Book of Rites*, the *Book of History*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of Odes* and the musical airs arranged by K'ung Fu-tse to accompany them, are models, and with, his dry record of the State of Lu—*Spring and Autumn*

*Annals*—are the Five Classics of China. They are a valuable source-book for early Chinese ideas, and are being critically edited so that we can say to a large extent what is of great antiquity, and what belongs to Chou and Han editors.

Some 5 of the 305 Odes belong to the second millennium B.C., the majority to the first.

Similarly of the *Book of History* about one-third is pronounced to be forgery; yet it contains much belonging to the times with which it deals.

The *Book of Changes* is a work of divination—all the more esteemed because it is unintelligible,<sup>1</sup> and from all these classics China has drawn inspiration and guidance. In them her officials have been examined since the Han era, and they and the Four Books have been the core of her educational system for two thousand years.

These Four Books are: the *Lun Yu* or *Analects* compiled by the disciples of K'ung Fu-tse: the *Ta Hsieh* or *Great Learning*—compiled in the Han era from the *Book of Rites*: the *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Chung Yung*, also a Han work, and a key to the understanding of Chinese moderation and sanity in morals and art as well as in institutions. Last of the Four is the *Teachings* of Meng-tse; and if China owes much to these great works she has been to a large extent shackled by them. Not only their ideas, but their form and idiom have been binding upon her scholars for two thousand years, and made her mentally sluggish. Part of her present awakening is a rebellion against this bondage of the past.

Chinese literature has been tortured on this Procrustean bed. But the poets of Han enjoyed freedom and a measure of spontaneity. Most of their lyrics are songs, and it is impossible to reproduce them or even to suggest their rich content for the Chinese mind and eye, which revel in the characters as much as in the sound, and in the allusions as much as in the actual content.

<sup>1</sup> The key to the Eight Diagrams of this early system may be lingual or mathematical: and they may yet become intelligible. If they are really mathematical then, by the third millennium B.C., China had discovered the method of symbolizing values by position—as we do.

Perhaps the illustrative passages at the end of the chapter will suffice as specimens of this literature, and it may be compared both with its classical predecessors, the Odes, and with its T'ang imitators. We can read here the sadness of the age and the other-worldly comfort offered by Buddhism; the greatness of empire and its cost; the joys of the simple life and the artificial luxuries of the court; the artistry of nature in all her moods. Poets turn away from the sad world of men to that of animals and birds and trees, or to the security of monastic life.

Some of this poetry is especially interesting as the work of men like Wu-ti or women like Hsi-chun, a type of many poetesses of the age, who had good cause for tears. And in the works of Wang-I (A.D. 120) and his son Wang Yen-shou there are some great poems. The latter's 'Ape' is as good as Ralph Hodgson's 'Bull', or Rupert Brooke's 'Fish'.

The Shi-chi is a semi-historical work—a precursor of the long Chinese novel, and its interest in the common man is symbolic of a new age.

Astronomers as well as astrologers were busy during the later Han era with the problems of solar and lunar calendars, and some such as Liu Hung obtained notable results. Hemispheres and seismographs were made by Chia-k'uei. A drawing of one ingenious and artistic instrument of his has been preserved. It is a copper cylinder with dragons' heads, each holding a ball in its jaws. Below sit frogs open-mouthed, and this amazing instrument is said to have worked successfully even in the case of a distant earthquake—the dragon of that direction dropping his ball into the frog's mouth!

It is not easy to see why China needed so bizarre a seismograph; but the same people also invented gunpowder, and used it for fireworks. The age of invention began early in China, but for the age of 'the invention of invention' the world, both East and West, waited almost two millennia.

Prognostication and divination went on side by side with such beginnings of scientific investigation: the former







HAN BRONZES

by the use of the Eight Diagrams, the latter by that of tortoise-shells and chicken-bones. A good history, that of Pan Ku (d. A.D. 98) has much information as to peoples ancient and contemporary. The Canon of the Chinese script was compiled about A.D. 200. It contains over 10,000 characters and variants, and is based largely upon the Classics.

But perhaps the chief achievements of the Han Age are the discovery of the art of paper-making in A.D. 105 and the development of the brush for writing and painting on both paper and silk. These were to make her greatest arts possible. Potters, ironsmiths, and other skilled craftsmen abounded, and the age was fruitful of luxuries. Our illustration shows a very delicate painting: the earliest Chinese brushwork known to us, it is on the lid of a lady's toilet box, and is eloquent of a luxurious age.

In spite of all these achievements the era ended in ignominy in A.D. 220 after a long struggle between eunuchs and scholars, and the chaos which follows is the result of long years of anarchy, till China breaks up into the Three Kingdoms—Han on the west, Wei on the north-east, and Wu on the south-east.

It is a dark tale yet full of adventure and romance. The greatest Chinese novel, *San Kuo* or 'The Three Kingdoms', deals with the years 190-220—the decline and fall of the house of Han; and the theatre has no more popular figures than the protagonists in this struggle, though none of them was great or good. This vast novel, an epic of Han China, is the work of a great artist, and though no western mind can follow its great crowds of actors, yet the chiefs are strongly and clearly portrayed. As in our own modern novels there is no plot, and as in life the figures come and go and vanish from our ken.

Ts'ao Ts'ao, wily and treacherous, is a successful general who subdued the Yellow Turbans, and slew the last Emperor Hsien-ti in 215. With the loyal and generous Kuan Yu Chang—later worshipped as God of War—he is the hero of the book. 'The most popular man in China,

type of the successful scoundrel,' says Père Wieger,<sup>1</sup> who has given a long and studious life to China and the Church, and writes caustically of much which China admires. There is indeed much to criticize in the post-Han rulers. The sufferings of the people during two centuries were indescribable. Famine and war reduced the population in the first half of the third century, and in the fourth Turks ravaged and plundered the Han capital Loyang, as well as Ch'ang-an, that of the earlier dynasty. It is in tragic contrast with the great empire of the first century of the era, which extended east to Korea, south to Cambodia, west to Tibet, and north to Inner Mongolia. So the Dark Ages come down on China, leaving her old civilization shattered but not ruined—still capable of a glorious renaissance. For in these dark centuries the spiritual forces of Buddhism were at work with those of Taoism and Confucianism to produce another great awakening. The first five centuries of the Christian era are for China a period of travail. Many great Buddhist scholars were at work translating the scriptures, Fa Hian was bringing back inspiration from Guptan India: Bodhidharma the quietist and Chi-i the systematizer were at work in monastery retreats to give to China a spiritual and philosophic basis for her national life.

Nor must we forget Confucian scholars like K'ung Jung, put to death by Ts'ao Ts'ao, but not before he had written some fine poetry. A descendant of K'ung Fu-tse in the twentieth generation, he reminds us that the great tradition of the Sage lived on unbroken.<sup>2</sup> Ts'ao Ts'ao himself was an accomplished scholar and poet, of whom a rousing drinking-song has come down to us.

The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove were a third-century group of poets and musicians who make it notable, and the tale of China's literary men is a long one even in this age, so unfavourable to the arts of peace.

Pagodas and temples also continued to rise, and massive images of Amitabha Buddha and Kwan-yin were sculptured in stone or cast in bronze. We read of one image

<sup>1</sup> *China throughout the Ages*, E. T., p. 410.

<sup>2</sup> See Illustrative Reading II (d).





KU K'AI-CHIH'S SCROLL  
'ADMONITIONS OF A COURT-LADY'

forty-three feet high, and the noble sculptures of Yung-kang and Lung-men were being made, a reminder to all men of other-worldly peace in the midst of turmoil and travail-pains. Of painting, alas! almost nothing remains—but enough to prove that China had risen to mastery in this field also.

The scroll of the 'Admonitions of the Lady Historian' by Ku K'ai-chih, painted in the fourth century and illustrating a third-century book, is a superb work. Whether it is an early copy or an original, this great masterpiece shows to what good effect the brush was being wielded. Earlier than the greatest of the Ajanta frescoes, this is the work of a master. Over eleven feet long, it has eight scenes, which no one who sees them can forget. They tell tales familiar to ancient China, the brave lady of the Court confronting a bear, who is seen rushing towards the emperor; another, equally brave, refusing to ride in his palanquin; a toilet scene of great elegance, and so on. One has interesting architectural details, and one a primitive landscape, very naïve in contrast to the finished and mature painting of the figures, stately and tall princesses, clad in flowing robes, which speak of a high civilization.

In actual beauty, modulated brush line, ravishingly sweet yet confident in power, no painting of later ages surpasses this [writes Laurence Binyon of this work]. It is suave and tender, yet never soft or weak; firm and precise, yet never dry. The calligraphic element is there, as in all Chinese painting; but there is also lifelikeness and marrow. How beautifully felt is the action of the hands of the tall maiden knotting up the veil of hair in the toilet scene! How delightfully realized the boy struggling on his nurse's knees! How one feels pride, courage, and will in the attitude of the lady who faces the raging bear! How the bearers groan and struggle under the weight of the palanquin bearing the serene Emperor!<sup>1</sup>

It was said of this great artist that he excelled in poetry, in painting, and in folly. Laurence Binyon quotes a good saying attributed to him: 'It is easier to illustrate the verse, *The hand sweeps the four strings of the lute* than this other

<sup>1</sup> *Painting in the Far East*, pp. 42-3.

verse, *The eyes follow the flight of the wild goose*'. This contrast between the painting of the artificial and the natural is admirably illustrated by his only surviving work, and may well suggest the beginnings of that mastery of bird-painting which was to become characteristic of Chinese art.

Strangely different in style is the archaic (or better archaizing) scroll attributed to Ku K'ai-chih in the Freer Collection at Washington. It depicts a fairy paradise of the Taoists, and is possibly a very early copy of a scroll by this great master. For Chinese artists adapt their style with uncanny skill to suit their theme, and a court scene calls for realism much more than a heavenly paradise.

A list of his works shows that in addition to secular and to Taoist themes Ku K'ai-chih was fond of Buddhist subjects, and the tale of his subscription to a Buddhist monastery is revealing. Having rashly put himself down for a million cash the artist entered into the monastery, painted a vast fresco of the lay saint Vimalakirti and collected the money from the crowds who came to gaze at it. Ku K'ai-chih was in a word an original and erratic genius, and as such he is typical of this age, a time of revolt from the conventional.

As the Court and Throne weakened, the revolt of Lao-tse against convention and propriety made itself felt. 'I don't crook my back for cash,' said Tao-chien on being appointed a magistrate. His poem on his retirement is justly a classic. Like the Indian Vanaprastha, the Chinese poet had consolations in leaving the world.

The development of sculpture within the Han and early post-Han era is of great interest. We can watch the impulse of Buddhism at work—and with it that of Hellenism and of Scythian and Iranian cultures. Most characteristic are the bas-reliefs of Han tombs. Two series of these, one dated 129 and the other A.D. 147-9 are in Shantung, the province of K'ung Fu-tse; and we may accept the view that they are attempts to make fresco permanent. In other words, this art is copied from a developed fresco painting,







HAN SCULPTURE

and conventional as it often is, shows mastery of outline and design.

K'ung Fu-tse is said to have seen frescoes of figures of good and evil spirits and of a court of justice at the Chou Court; and in the great architectural era of the Han its practice no doubt continued. In early Korean graves such frescoes have been found; their sinuous line and delicate charm is akin to the applied art of our illustration. These and the grave-sculptures of China are made with the idea of giving the spirits lasting pleasure. The subjects are historical and mythical, and sometimes the incised surface is filled with coloured gesso: the figures are often life-like and vigorous—processions of splendid chariots and cavalry in which the Chinese love for horses comes out as vividly as that of India for elephants; and historical scenes which tell us much of their civilization. Here is a frieze in the flat, and also a precursor of Japan's inimitable battle scrolls.

It was an age of architectural activity, and we see here tiled roofs, decorated walls and columns with splendid finials of phoenix and other heraldic birds. We read of a famous Palace of the Copper Cocks, and in a poem of Wang Yen-shou written in the reign of Wu-ti is a delightful description of the decorative arts used in such palaces: the details, as Ashton points out, following almost line for line those details of the Wu reliefs only sixteen miles away:<sup>1</sup>

On moulding and on panel lotuses upright  
 Breathe art and beauty, bud and opening flower:  
 Poppies burst, and drop their petals white:  
 The wood takes on the form of birds in flight,  
 And beasts: see here the tiger leaps to 'light  
 Upon his prey: his hair bristles with power.

The extraordinary vigour of this early art rises to greatness in a phoenix discovered in 1914, 'possibly the finest piece of Han sculpture extant,' says Ashton.

'The pose . . . is superb, one leg indolently raised to step forward. Both wings are open, beating the air with lofty pinions; the tail flaunts behind and the proud carriage is marked in every curve of

<sup>1</sup> Aften L. Ashton, *An Introduction to Chinese Sculpture*, p. 23.

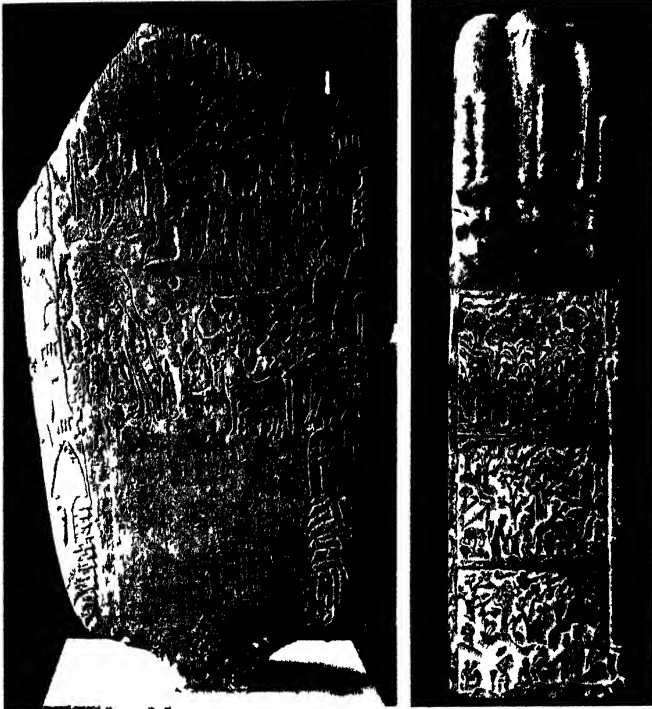
the body, in every turn of the head. The technique is of the simplest, a free-cut outline, a slight modelling of body, wings and talons, a series of deep-cut lines to indicate the decoration of feathers. The simplicity emphasizes the grandeur of the design.<sup>1</sup>

These early animal and bird forms suggest Scythian influence, and it is possible that they were also influenced by Sumerian art—which rejoiced in the decoration of long lines of figures and processions. There is certainly a continuity between Chou bronze decoration and this heraldic animal art, and in that early Chinese achievement there is something of the power and rhythmic movement of the Scythians. But what is of more interest and has much stronger historical basis is the influence of the Buddhist missions. This can be readily grasped by comparing early Han art with that of the Northern Wei of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. We can see the flat bas-relief giving place, first to deep-cut reliefs, and then to fully sculptured figures.

These Tartar conquerors came from the region of Lake Baikal into northern China in A.D. 311 and founded a dynasty with its capital at Ta-t'ung-fu in north Shensi, and later at Lo-yang. They became Buddhists, and great patrons of painting and sculpture, and the caves near both their capitals remain as their memorial, full of images of the Buddhist Pantheon. Our illustrations show their interest in the Buddha legend. Above is the delivery and the reception of the infant Siddartha by the gods. Below Queen Maya stands under a highly conventionalized tree, and the child begins to walk, a lotus springing up at each step. Beside him stands the foal Kanthaka with his mother, and the Bodhi tree with a tree-spirit in it. The tree is here represented apparently as a genko—a Chinese tree—and the costumes of the long graceful figures are all Chinese. The new impetus of the great themes of Buddhism is evident, and the incised stone, like early Han carvings, is still strongly influenced by painting.

Some of the figures of the Yun-kang and Lung-men

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 31.



EARLY TATAR BUDDHIST STELAS ILLUSTRATING  
THE BUDDHA'S BIRTH  
(6th Century A.D.)



caves are earlier still and show the same graceful curves—notably an image of Kwan-yin floating on the clouds, which prepares us for the masterpieces of the next era. These caves, the first series at Ta-t'ung-fu, the second near Lo-yang, are to early China what the Ajanta caves are to India, and like them preserve for the student a series of works of art of the fifth and sixth centuries. Hollowed out of low cliffs, they are fashioned into halls of worship, and supported on pillars. All, at one time, like Ajanta, glowed with rich colour: now only broken sculptures remain; but there is enough to show us that the art of the Tartars blended influences from Gandhara and India on the one hand and from China on the other. The grottoes of Lung-men were dedicated by an empress in the year 516, and a Chinese visitor has inscribed the poem: 'Here the rocks themselves attain to Buddhahood'. Here as at Ajanta, a stream runs past a sheer cliff, and here dwelt the great poet Li-po of the T'ang era.

Once again we see Buddhism at its work of refining the barbarian and bringing to the civilized a new impetus. The work of these Tartar sculptors is noteworthy for 'the genius of rhythm' of which Chinese art henceforth is to make so much, and it may be studied in a stele set up in A.D. 534.<sup>1</sup> Here are Sakyamuni and two Bodhisattvas: one is Kwan-yin, and one seems to be Manjusri. They represent compassion and wisdom, twin qualities of the enlightened, and above their heads fly heavenly choirs. The inscription is of interest as revealing the reverent spirit of these Tartars, and the stele is a living link between Han and T'ang, and a proof that in the inspiration of Buddhist art on Chinese dark ages, all was not dark. China was in fact learning much from the outer world: from Syria the art of making glass, from Persia the arts of design in rich fabrics, and from the Indo-Bactrian world the technique of fresco-painting. If she learnt from Iranians how to sit on chairs she taught them how to make silk. Buddhist friars carried as far as Constantinople silk-

<sup>1</sup> Now in the Philadelphia Museum.

worms hidden in their bamboo staffs, and brought back from their travels Indian books, images, and the knowledge of western kingdoms. Soaring pagodas such as they describe at Nalanda began to rise on many a lovely hillside, and by the shores of lake and ocean, and the unification of Asiatic civilization went on apace. No longer was China an island 'within the four seas' of barbarism. The 'barbarians' are in fact now becoming parts of China—Hiung-nu chiefs and other nomads, Tibetans, and Wei Tartars. All in turn set up dynasties, and from 316 to 446 north China sees the rise and fall of sixteen kingdoms, while in southern China the eastern Chin give place to other Chinese families—Sung, Ch'i, Liang, and Ch'en—all ruling in Nanking. One of the Liang, Yuan-ti, was a minor poet who when forced to abdicate, ended a reign of violence and an era by destroying 200,000 books and paintings, crying, 'The culture of Liang ends with Yuan-ti!'

The barbarians themselves often married Chinese ladies of lesser families, and were gradually absorbed into Chinese life; patrons of Buddhism, they did little else to promote civilization.

Not until the seventh century is there any serious attempt to re-unite the empire against the Turks or Turkueh. This is the work of Sui (589-618) and of T'ang (618-906) with whom Chinese culture attains another glorious epoch. More catholic than that of Han, the civilization of Sui and T'ang is yet rooted in the classic past, and in calling themselves sons of T'ang as well as sons of Han the Chinese people are claiming to be protagonists of a civilization rather than founders of an empire.

The principal Chinese Dynasties are:

Chou		The Classical Age
Han	206 B.C.—A.D. 220	The Age of unification and expansion.
Wei	A.D. 220-264	} Dark Ages.
Chin	265-419	
North Wei	386-532	
Liang	502-556	

Sui	589- 618	
T'ang	618- 905	The Age of Efflorescence.
Sung	960-1278	The Age of Neo-Confucianism.
Yuan	1260-1341	
Ming	1368-1640	
Manchu	1644-1912.	

In choosing Chou, Han, T'ang, and Sung we have to omit much; yet we may gain from these creative eras a true insight into Chinese civilization and some knowledge of the development of Chinese thought and art, and of its contributions to the Far East.

## THE SPIRIT OF HAN

### I. PRE-HAN POLICY

In the thirty-fourth year of the First Emperor (213 B.C.) the Emperor held a feast in the Hsien Yang Palace. Huen-yu-yueh, one of the seventy doctors of the Imperial Court, said to the Emperor: 'That the Shiang and Chou dynasties lasted over a thousand years, was because both had created their generals members of the royal family, as vassal lords who acted as the outposts and supporters of the central government. Now that your majesty has united the whole empire, your children and members of your household possess no titles nor land. In case of usurpation of power by some of the ministers, how can the dynasty maintain itself without outside help? Actions which are not modelled after the wise ancients, can never last long.' The Emperor thereupon ordered this advice to be considered by his counsellors. The Prime Minister Li Sze presented this reply: 'The Five Emperors did not exactly copy one another, nor did the Three Dynasties mould their policies each after its predecessor.

Yet each dynasty achieved its own success, not because they wanted to differ from one another, but because they had to deal with entirely different times and conditions . . .'

But the Prime Minister went on to say: 'In former days the several contending states greatly encouraged private teaching and travelling scholars. Now that the empire is settled laws and ordinances proceed from a unitary source, the common people should devote themselves only to farming and the crafts, and the children need only to know the laws to avoid things that are forbidden. But



the scholars of to-day refuse to study the present, and devote themselves to the ancients on whose authority they dare to criticize the government and mislead the people.

'Your majesty's servant, the Prime Minister, therefore ventures to say this. In olden times when the world was in great disorder, and without a unifying authority, there arose numerous schools of thought, each upholding the ancients to block the policies of the present, each cunningly adorning its empty speculations to the confounding of reality, and each praising its own teaching with which to criticize the actions of the government. Now that your Majesty has united the whole empire, and established a unitary authority for the judgement of right and wrong (literally of black and white), therefore, all those who uphold their own teaching and criticize the laws, who entertain secret opposition to the government and even openly deliberate upon its acts and policies, who take pride in disobedience and rebelliousness, who lead the people in creating complaints against the government,—all these, if not proscribed, will tend to lower the prestige of the government and create parties and partisanship among the people. It is expedient that these be proscribed.

Your majesty's servant therefore recommends that all histories not kept by the Imperial Historian be burned: that, outside of the documents in the Imperial College, all literature and all books of the various schools in the possession of private individuals should be delivered to the magistrates of the several localities to be burned in their presence: that hereafter all those who dare to hold open discussions on the forbidden books should be held liable to capital punishment, that all who uphold the ancients to criticize the present government should be punished by death together with their whole families: that all officers of the law who fail to report any such offences within their knowledge should be punished with the same penalty as the offenders themselves: and that any one who fails to burn his books within thirty days after the date of the ordinance should be sentenced to periods of hard labour. Only books on medicine, divination, and horticulture are exempt from this law.

Hereafter, the people who wish to know the laws and orders of the government, should go to the officers of the law.'

And the Emperor decreed: 'Let it be done'.

## II. HAN POEMS

(a) *Wang Yen-shou, son of Wang I*

(c. A.D. 130)

*The Wangsun<sup>1</sup>*

Sublime was he, stupendous in invention,  
 Who planned the miracles of earth and sky.  
 Wondrous the power that charged  
 Small things with secret beauty, moving in them all.  
 See now the wangsun, crafty creature, mean of size,  
 Uncouth of form; the wrinkled face  
 Of an aged man; the body of a little child.  
 See how in turn he blinks and blenches with an air  
 Pathetically puzzled, dimly gazes  
 Under tired lids, through languid lashes  
 Looks tragic and hollow-eyed, rumples his brow,  
 Scatters this way and that  
 An insolent, astonished glare;  
 Sniffs and snorts, snuffs and sneezes,  
 Snicks and cocks his knowing little ears!  
 Now like a dotard mouths and chews;  
 Or hoots and hisses through his pouted lips;  
 Shows gnashing teeth, grates and grinds ill-temperedly,  
 Gobbles and puffs and scolds.  
 And every now and then,  
 Down to his belly, from the larder that he keeps  
 In either cheek, he sends  
 Little consignments lowered cautiously.  
 Sometimes he squats  
 Like a puppy on its haunches, or hare-like humps  
 An arching back;  
 Smirks and wheedles with ingratiating sweetness;  
 Or suddenly takes to whining, surly snarling;  
 Then, like a ravening tiger, roars.  
  
 He lives in thick forests, deep among the hills,  
 Or houses in the clefts of sharp, precipitous rocks;  
 Alert and agile is his nature, nimble are his wits;  
 Swift are his contortions.

<sup>1</sup> A kind of small ape.

## THE HAN ERA AND ITS AFTERMATH

Apt to every need,  
 Whether he climb tall tree-stems of a hundred feet,  
 Or sway on the shuddering shoulder of a long bough.  
 Before him, the dark gullies of unfathomable streams;  
 Behind, the silent hollows of the lonely hills.  
 Twigs and tendrils are his rocking-chairs,  
 On rungs of rotting wood he trips  
 Up perilous places; sometimes, leap after leap,  
 Like lightning flits through the woods.  
 Sometimes he saunters with a sad, forsaken air;  
 Then suddenly peeps round  
 Beaming with satisfaction. Up he springs,  
 Leaps and prances, whoops, and scampers on his way.  
 Up cliffs he scrambles, up pointed rocks,  
 Dances on shale that shifts or twigs that snap,  
 Suddenly swerves and lightly passes. . . .  
 Oh, what tongue could unravel  
 The tale of all his tricks?  
 Alas, one trait  
 With the human tribe he shares; their sweets his sweet,  
 Their bitter is his bitter. Off sugar from the vat  
 Or brewer's dregs he loves to sup.  
 So men put wine where he will pass.  
 How he races to the bowl!  
 How nimbly licks and swills!  
 Now he staggers, feels dazed and foolish,  
 Darkness falls upon his eyes. . . .  
 He sleeps and knows no more.  
 Up steal the trappers, catch him by the mane,  
 Then to a string or ribbon tie him, lead him home;  
 Tether him in the stable or lock him into the yard;  
 Where faces all day long  
 Gaze, gape, gasp at him, and will not go away.

ARTHUR WALEY.

*(Chinese Poems.)**(b) The Autumn Wind*

By the Emperor Wu-ti (157-87 B.C.)

The wind of autumn rages, white clouds race,  
 Trees and grasses wither, geese fly south apace.  
 Yet orchids bloom and sweet chrysanthemum  
 To call to mind my love; I cannot find relief.

White waves rise round us in mid-stream,  
 The rowers chant to lilt of lute and drum:  
 Amidst our feasting sad reflexions come:  
 The foot of age how sure, youth's span of life how brief.

(c) *The Price of Empire*

(100 B.C.)

(The lady Hsi-chun, married to a nomad of Central Asia  
 for political reasons, laments.)

My own people have married me off ;  
 An exile in this far-off corner of earth.  
 They've sent me to an alien land  
 To the old chief of an alien clan;  
 My home a tent  
 With walls of felt,  
 My food raw meat  
 Mare's milk to drink:  
 Of mine own land I ever think,  
 And sad my lonely heart doth beat.  
 O that I were a yellow crane,  
 And to my own might fly again.

(d) *K'ung-jung on his Dead Infant*

The father sent on an imperial mission  
 Will return when the year is at an end,  
 And coming home will ask to see his son.  
 To hear only the wailing of the women . . .

Holding up his robes he'll seek the grave  
 Among damp wormwood and greenery:  
 There under a small mound lie the little bones,  
 The flesh is dust already on the wind,

Born, he knew not his begetter:  
 Dead, who will know his spirit,  
 Abandoned to wander in the darkness  
 Homeless and uncherished ?

Ah! I had looked to you to bear my name  
 And still my thought cleaves to you, my child.  
 One's days are doubtless numbered, yet I cry  
 Why should Fate allot so few to you, ah why ?

*(e) A Han Wedding*

On both river banks a wedding,  
 The hour is here but no boat comes.  
 The longing heart is hopeless  
 Not seeing its heart's desire.

## III. HAN PHILOSOPHY

*Hsun-tse*

You meditate on what makes a thing a thing:  
 Why not so order things as not to waste them?  
 You vainly seek the cause of things:  
 Why not lay hold of them and use them?  
 To neglect man and speculate about nature  
 Is to misunderstand the facts of the universe.

*Han Fei*

A wise man does not expect to follow ancient ways, nor to set up principles for all time. He studies the conditions of his own age, and then devises means to meet them.

When laws are adjusted to the times there is good government.

Subtle speculation is no business of the people . . . the actual need is common-sense.

Tr. HU SHIH.

## IV

## A HAN EXILE, LI LING, TO TZU-CHING

O Tzu-ching, O my friend, happy in the enjoyment of a glorious reputation, happy in the prospect of an imperishable name,—there is no misery like exile in a far-off foreign land, the heart brimful of longing thoughts of home! I have thy kindly letter, bidding me to be of good cheer, kinder than a brother's words; for which my soul thanks thee.

Ever since the hour of my surrender until now, destitute of all resource, I have sat alone with the bitterness of my grief. All day long I see none but barbarians around me. Skins and felt protect me from wind and rain. With mutton and whey I satisfy my hunger and slake my thirst. Companions with whom to while time away, I have none. The whole country is stiff with black ice. I hear naught but the moaning of the bitter autumn blast, beneath which all vegetation has disappeared. I cannot sleep at night. I turn and listen to the distant sound of Tartar pipes, to the whinnying of

Tartar steeds. In the morning I sit up and listen still, while tears course down my cheeks. O Tzu-ching, of what stuff am I, that I should do aught but grieve? The day of thy departure left me disconsolate indeed. I thought of my aged mother butchered upon the threshold of the grave. I thought of my innocent wife and child, condemned to the same cruel fate. Deserving as I might have been of Imperial censure, I am now an object of pity to all. Thy return was to honour and renown, while I remained behind with infamy and disgrace. Such is the divergence of man's destiny.

Born within the domain of refinement and justice, I passed into an environment of vulgar ignorance. I left behind me obligations to sovereign and family for life amid barbarian hordes; and now barbarian children will carry on the line of my forefathers. And yet my merit was great, my guilt of small account. I had no fair hearing: and when I pause to think of these things, I ask to what end I have lived? With a thrust I could have cleared myself of all blame: my severed throat would have borne witness to my resolution; and between me and my country all would have been over for aye. But to kill myself would have been of no avail: I should only have added to my shame. I therefore steeled myself to obloquy and to life. There were not wanting those who mistook my attitude for compliance, and urged me to a nobler course; ignorant that the joys of a foreign land are sources only of a keener grief.

O Tzu-ching, O my friend, I will complete the half-told record of my former tale. His late Majesty commissioned me, with five thousand infantry under my command, to carry on operations in a distant country. Five brother generals missed their way: I alone reached the theatre of war. With rations for a long march, leading on my men, I passed beyond the limits of the Celestial Land, and entered the territory of the fierce Huns. With five thousand men I stood opposed to a hundred thousand: mine, jaded foot-soldiers, theirs, horsemen fresh from the stable. Yet we slew their leaders, and captured their standards, and drove them back in confusion towards the north. We obliterated their very traces: we swept them away like dust: we beheaded their general. A martial spirit spread abroad among my men. With them, to die in battle was to return to their homes; while I—I venture to think that I had already accomplished something.

This victory was speedily followed by a general rising of the Huns. New levies were trained to the use of arms, and at length another hundred thousand barbarians were arrayed against me. The Hun

chieftain himself appeared, and with his army surrounded my little band, so unequal in strength—foot-soldiers opposed to horse. Still my tired veterans fought, each man worth a thousand of the foe, as, covered with wounds, one and all struggled bravely to the fore. The plain was strewn with the dying and the dead: barely a hundred men were left, and these too weak to hold a spear and shield. Yet, when I waved my hand and shouted to them, the sick and wounded arose. Brandishing their blades, and pointing towards the foe, they dismissed the Tartar cavalry like a rabble rout. And even when their arms were gone, their arrows spent, without a foot of steel in their hands, they still rushed, yelling, onward, each eager to lead the way. The very heavens and the earth seemed to gather round me, while my warriors drank tears of blood. Then the Hunnish chieftain, thinking that we should not yield, would have drawn off his forces. But a false traitor told him all: the battle was renewed, and we were lost.

The Emperor Kao Ti, with 300,000 men at his back, was shut up in Ping-cheng. Generals he had, like clouds; counsellors, like drops of rain. Yet he remained seven days without food, and then barely escaped with life. How much more than I, now blamed on all sides that I did not die? This was my crime. But, O Tzu-ching, canst thou say that I would live from craven fear of death? Am I one to turn my back on my country and all those dear to me, allured by sordid thoughts of gain? It was not indeed without cause that I did not elect to die. I longed, as explained in my former letter, to prove my loyalty to my prince. Rather than die to no purpose, I chose to live and to establish my good name. It was better to achieve something than to perish. Of old, Fan Li did not slay himself after the battle of Hui-chi; neither did Tsao Mo die after the ignominy of three defeats. Revenge came at last; and thus I too had hoped to prevail. Why then was I overtaken with punishment before the plan was matured? Why were my own flesh and blood condemned before the design could be carried out? It is for this that I raise my face to Heaven, and beating my breast, shed tears of blood.

O my friend, thou sayest that the House of Han never fails to reward a deserving servant. But thou art thyself a servant of the House, and it would ill beseem thee to say other words than these. Yet Hsiao and Fan were bound in chains; Han and Ping were sliced to death; Chao Tso was beheaded. Chou Po was disgraced, and Tou Ying paid the penalty with his life. Others, great in their generation, have also succumbed to the intrigues of base men, and

have been overwhelmed beneath a weight of shame from which they were unable to emerge. And now the misfortunes of Fan Li and Tsao Mo command the sympathies of all.

My grandfather filled heaven and earth with the fame of his exploits—the bravest of the brave. Yet, fearing the animosity of an Imperial favourite, he slew himself in a distant land, his death being followed by the secession, in disgust, of many a brother-hero. Can this be the reward of which thou speakest?

Thou too, O my friend, an envoy with a slender equipage, sent on that mission to the robber race, when fortune failed thee even to the last resource of the dagger. Then years of miserable captivity, all but ended by death among the wilds of the far north. Thou left us full of young life, to return a greybeard; thy old mother dead, thy wife gone from thee to another. Seldom has the like of this been known. Even the savage barbarian respected thy loyal spirit: how much more the lord of all under the canopy of the sky? A many-acred barony should have been thine, the ruler of a thousand-charioted fief! Nevertheless, they tell me 'twas but two paltry millions, and the chancellorship of the Tributary States. Not a foot of soil repaid thee for the past, while some cringing courtier gets the marquise of ten thousand families, and each greedy parasite of the Imperial house is gratified by the choicest offices of the state. If then thou farest thus, what could I expect? I have been heavily repaid for that I did not die. Thou hast been meanly rewarded for thy unswerving devotion to thy prince. This is barely that which should attract the absent servant back to his fatherland.

And so it is that I do not regret the past. Wanting though I may have been in my duty to the state, the state was wanting also in gratitude towards me. It was said of old, 'A loyal subject, though not a hero, will rejoice to die for his country'. I would die joyfully even now; but the stain of my prince's ingratitude can never be wiped away. Indeed, if the brave man is not allowed to achieve a name, but must die like a dog in a barbarian land, who will be found to crook the back and bow the knee before an Imperial throne, where the bitter pens of courtiers tell their lying tales?

O my friend, look for me no more. O Tzu-ching, what shall I say? A thousand leagues lie between us, and separate us for ever. I shall live out my life as it were in another sphere: my spirit will find its home among a strange people. Accept my last adieu. Speak for me to my old acquaintances, and bid them serve their sovereign well. O my friend, be happy in the bosom of the family, and think



of me no more. Strive to take care of thyself; and when time and opportunity are thine, write me once again in reply.

Li Ling salutes thee!

#### V. THE PARADISE MAHAYANA. (c. 100 A.D.)

##### *Where the Wicked Cease from Troubling*

Queen Vaidehi, chief consort of King Bimbisara, grieved beyond endurance by the conduct of her unnatural son who has imprisoned his father, comes to the Buddha on the Vulture Peak, and speaks as follows:

My only prayer, World Honoured One, is this: tell me of a world where there is no sorrow and pain, whither I may escape this world of evil where the wicked abound. Let me not hear, I pray Thee, the voice of the wicked any more, let me not set eyes upon them. . . . May the Sunlike Buddha enlighten me.

Then the World Honoured One flashed from his brow a golden ray, and illuminated the innumerable worlds of the ten regions, resplendent and lovely, that the queen might take her choice. She chose the realm of the Buddha Amitayus, the Land of Bliss, *Sukhavati*.

'O Vaidehi,' said the World Honoured One, 'knowest thou not that Amitayus is not far from thee? Do thou apply thy mind to such as have wrought out the good deeds that lead to rebirth in his Paradise. They who would go thither must cultivate a threefold goodness. First they must act with filial piety and support their parents; they must serve and respect teachers and elders; of compassionate mind, let them harm none, but keep the ten precepts. Second, let them observe the vows, taking refuge in the Three Jewels; let them honour all moral precepts and act with dignity in the ceremonial of worship. Third, let them give their whole mind to the attainment of Perfect Wisdom, put steadfast faith in causality, study and recite *Mahayana* scriptures, and lead others to join them. . . . Again, O queen, thou art but an ordinary person endowed with poor intelligence, yet all beings not born blind can see the setting sun. Take thy seat, therefore, looking to the West, and set thy mind to meditate upon the sun when it is about to set, and hangs like a drum in the heavens. Then let its image remain clear and fixed whether thine eyes are open or shut. . . .' Such is the First Meditation.

Meditations on water, ice, lapis lazuli, and fourteen others follow, which lead to the vision of the Buddhas of the ten regions, and

especially of Amitayus and his attendant Bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, the embodiments of Compassion and of Might.

The queen and her women attain to these visions and to full Enlightenment.

*Amitayaur-dhyana Sutra*, 5. 10.  
(1st or 2nd century A.D.)

### *The Land of Bliss*

The Sukhavati of the blessed Amitabha is prosperous, rich, delectable, fertile, lovely, and thronged with gods and men. No hells are there, no brutes nor ghosts nor untimely births. . . . It is fragrant, adorned with jewel-trees, and resounds with the song of sweet-voiced birds. Its trees are of gold and silver, of crystal and coral, of pearl and diamond. . . . Vast lotus flowers abound, and from each there spread rays of light innumerable. There flow great rivers murmuring sweet music, and heavenly instruments take up the lovely sound, deep, clear, delightful, unwearying as though they murmured 'transient unreal, full of peace'. . . . Nowhere is there in that Land of Bliss any sound of sin, sorrow, affliction or destruction. It is above pleasure and pain: therefore it is called Sukhavati, the Land of Bliss.

*Larger Sukhavati Vyuha*, 16-19 *passim*.  
(1st or 2nd century A.D.)

Both the above books are translated in Volume xlix of the *Sacred Books of the East*. They belong to the popular Paradise Mahayana of about the end of the first century A.D. or earlier. They seem to have been introduced to China as early as A.D. 170 and played a very great part like the *Lotus* Scripture in popularizing Buddhism in the Far East. Childish in some ways, they yet voice the demand of the human heart for a Heavenly City, and Han China needed hope and comfort.

## VI. THE DECADENCE

At this epoch, the coinage in use was so heavy and cumbersome that the people themselves began a new issue at a fixed standard of value. But the laws were too lax, and it was impossible to prevent grasping persons from coining largely, buying largely, and then holding against a rise in the market. The consequence was that prices went up enormously. Rice sold at 10,000 cash per picul; a

horse cost 100 ounces of silver. But by and by, when the empire was settling down to tranquillity, his Majesty Kai Tsu gave orders that no trader should wear silk nor ride in a carriage; besides which, the imposts levied upon this class were greatly increased, in order to keep them down. Some years later these restrictions were withdrawn, still, however, the descendants of traders were disqualified from holding any office connected with the State.

Meanwhile, certain levies were made on a scale calculated to meet the exigencies of public expenditure; while the land-tax and customs revenue were regarded by all officials, from the Emperor downwards, as their own personal emolument. Grain was forwarded by water to the capital for the use of the officials there, but the quantity did not amount to more than a few hundred thousand piculs every year.

Gradually the coinage began to deteriorate and light coins to circulate; whereupon another issue followed, each piece being marked 'half an ounce'. But at length the system of private issues led to serious abuses, resulting first of all in vast sums of money accumulating in the hands of individuals; and finally, in rebellion, until the country was flooded with the coinage of the rebels, and it became necessary to enact laws against any such issues in the future.

At this period the Huns were harassing our northern frontier, and soldiers were massed there in large bodies; in consequence of which food became so scarce that the authorities offered certain rank and titles of honour to those who would supply a given quantity of grain. Later on, drought ensued in the west, and in order to meet necessities of the moment, official rank was again made a marketable commodity, while those who broke the laws were allowed to commute their penalties by money payments. And now horses began to reappear in official stables, and in palace and hall signs of an ampler luxury were visible once more.

Thus it was in the early days of the dynasty, until some seventy years after the accession of the House of Han. The empire was then at peace. For a long time there had been neither flood nor drought, and a season of plenty had ensued. The public granaries were well stocked; the Government treasuries were full. In the capital, strings of *cash* were piled in myriads, until the very strings rotted, and their tale could no longer be told. The grain in the Imperial storehouses grew mouldy year by year. It burst from the crammed granaries and lay about until it became unfit for human food. The streets were thronged with horses belonging to the

people, and on the highroads whole droves were to be seen, so that it became necessary to prohibit the public use of mares. Village elders ate meat and drank wine. Petty government clerkships and the like lapsed from father to son; the higher offices of State were treated as family heirlooms. For there had gone abroad a spirit of self-respect and of reverence for the law, while a sense of charity and of duty towards one's neighbour kept men aloof from disgrace and shame.

At length, under lax laws, the wealthy began to use their riches for evil purposes of pride and self-aggrandisement and oppression of the weak. Members of the Imperial family received grants of land, while from the highest to the lowest, every one vied with his neighbour in lavishing money on houses, and appointments, and apparel, altogether beyond the limit of his means. Such is the everlasting law of the sequence of prosperity and decay.

Then followed extensive military preparations in various parts of the empire; the establishment of a trade-route with the barbarians of the south-west, for which purpose mountains were pierced for many miles. The object was to open up the resources of those remote districts, but the result was to swamp the inhabitants in hopeless ruin. Then, again, there was the subjugation of Korea; its transformation into an Imperial dependency; with other troubles nearer home. There was the ambush laid for the Huns, by which we forfeited their alliance, and brought them down upon our northern frontier. Nothing, in fact, but wars and rumours of wars from day to day. Money was constantly leaving the country. The financial stability of the empire was undermined, and its impoverished people were driven thereby into crime. Wealth had been frittered away, and its renewal was sought in corruption. Those who brought money in their hands received appointments under government. Those who could pay escaped the penalties of their guilt. Merit had to give way to money. Shame and scruples of conscience were laid aside. Laws and punishments were administered with severer hand. From this period must be dated the rise and growth of official venality.

SSE-MA KUANG (tr. H. A. Giles).

## VII. A PRE-T'ANG POEM

*Wild Geese*

By Shen Yo (A.D. 441-513)

Where bright waters flood the spring shore  
A journeying flock swerves on bended wing;  
They sip the wavelets, tug the yielding weeds,  
Their folded wings flaked with icy dew.  
A flock they sail, pushing the quiet stream,  
Or singly each his own gleam pursues.  
Now almost earthward they trail a dipping flight;  
Now upward quavering tumbled legions rise.  
Each rushing wing skims the rippled lake;  
At one swoop they are gone to their native land.



SCROLL OF FLYING GEESE  
(MI FLI)



## XI

### THE SPLENDOUR OF T'ANG

(A.D. 618-905)

See the splendours of the Imperial City  
And know the majesty of the Son of Heaven.

'Confucian learning is as necessary to the Chinese as wings to a bird.'

KAO-TSU, FIRST T'ANG EMPEROR.

'Your example will do far more than your laws.'

T'AI-TSUNG TO HIS SON

#### I

THAT the Chinese abroad still call themselves men of T'ang (T'ang-jen) is their tribute to a great man and a great age. Whatever its faults at home, the house of T'ang made China famous abroad. Li Yuan, its founder, was a successful general who revolted against the luxurious K'ung-ti, last of the house of Sui—an able but oppressive ruler whose father had united China after nearly four centuries of misery and anarchy, and of barbarian domination.

Li Yuan ruled as Kao-tsu from A.D. 618 to 627 and his son, Li Shih-min, succeeded him as T'ai-tsung (627-50), the greatest ruler of China—general, statesman, patron of art and learning. T'ai-tsung is honoured as the organizer of a model government and the promoter of international relationships which made China the leader of an admiring Asia, and brought embassies from afar. Greater than Charlemagne, he ruled a China far more civilized than any of her contemporaries, and made his capital, Ch'ang-an, the centre of a splendid cosmopolitan culture.

In a word, he seized the moment when China was being unified in spirit to extend and deepen her influence. As Li Shih-min he waged a five years' war to subdue rebellious kings, and as emperor brought outlying provinces into subjection. A wise ruler, he listened to the advice of such ministers as Wei-chang, on whose death he lamented, 'Alas! I have lost my mirror!' He realized that as the tree needs the pruning knife, so the ruler needs criticism, and



that the people are the waters which bear up the imperial barge—but may also upset it. These are sayings from his famous 'Golden Mirror', which he wrote for his son, and which was to become a model for the Japanese of the next two centuries.

His empress was a noble helpmeet, who began by clearing the Augean stables of the Court—sending away the legions of concubines, and living herself in great simplicity. When she died T'ai-tsung, like Shah Jahan in later days, would gaze out from his palace at her tomb, remembering her wisdom and her goodness.

Their sons were unworthy of such parents. The eldest conspired against the emperor; the ninth succeeded as Kao-tsung. But he was dominated by a former concubine of his father, whom he took from her asylum in a Buddhist nunnery. This evil but brilliant woman killed her own child, accused the empress of the crime, and became the notorious Empress Wu. Ruthless but brilliant, sensual but indefatigable, she ruled for fifty years, conquered Korea, and drove out Khitans and Tibetans. With the Han Empress Lu and the late Dowager Empress she is one of a trio of masterful and able women who have dominated China. To her succeeded Ming-huang or Huan-tsung (713-56), who, beginning as a ruler of great promise in an age of brilliant achievement, fell under evil influences, and ended in tragedy.

First of his ill-omened friends was Li Lin-fu, who weakened the frontier army and opened the door to the Tartars; second was the darling of his old age, Yang Kuei-fei, a concubine of his own son, whom he took into his harem. Her passion for the Turkic general An Lu-shan wrought havoc, and led to the sack of Ch'ang-an, to her own death, and to the abdication of the emperor. In him, however, China had for a while a great ruler, who saved his dynasty as a youth by crushing a conspiracy of the Empress Wei.

He further subdivided the empire into fifteen provinces, and kept peace for thirty years, while he stimulated the

intellectual and moral development of his people. Paying respect alike to Confucianism and Taoism he encouraged scholarship—founding the Han Lin academy of forty scholars, and choosing his chief advisers from their ranks.

In his reign the great poets Li Po (705–60) and his younger friend Tu Fu (712–70) thrived; but they lived on into an old age of disillusionment, as the great dynasty degenerated; and their poems reflect at once the splendours of the court, the joys of youth, and the sorrows of defeat, poverty, and old age.

It is these contrasts which make the T'ang Age so vivid. It was an age of joy and vitality unsurpassed, especially when emperors like T'ai-tsung and Ming-huang gather about them scholars, poets, painters, and men of science. But the poor paid the bill, and such rulers were rare: of the nineteen emperors of this dynasty some were murdered, three abdicated, some succumbed to experiments with the elixir of life, and only eight died a natural death. Eunuchs, concubines, and magicians took the place of the poets, painters, and scholars of T'ai-tsung, and the dynasty after a late revival ended in ignominy.

'The reign of the few energetic rulers, notably Hsien-tsung (805–20) and Hsun-tsung (847–57) may be likened,' says Li Ung Bing of the later T'ang, 'to sunset views on the western horizon'.

In 907 the dynasty petered out in a pitiful boy of sixteen, who went into exile, handing over the empire to the barbarians, who for the next half century reinvigorated China with new blood.

## II

The cultural achievements of T'ang are such as almost to blind us to the corruption and superstition of the Court and the sufferings of the masses, who groaned under heavy taxation in land and salt, and under forced labour. We are told that in the year A.D. 815 the imperial treasury exacted 50 million pieces of silk for military expenditure alone. We read too that civil strife reduced the population from about

50 million to 25 million; and superstition walked hand in hand with murder: except for the two or three great men of the dynasty, the rulers were the dupes of wizards, eunuchs, and courtesans. Yet the empire spread from Siberia to the Himalayas and from the Caspian Sea to Korea; and to the great city of Ch'ang-an with its nine gates, soaring marble pagoda, and gorgeous palaces came scholars and merchants from many lands. We know from the collections at the monastery of Tun-huang in Kansu how cosmopolitan was the life of the time. There were found not only a wealth of T'ang paintings and frescoes, but also a vast library of early documents, a hymn to the Trinity, and Hebrew, Nestorian, and Manichaean MSS., as well as Buddhist and Taoist books. The monks who made this great collection were typical of their age, eagerly awake to a rich and varied world, and, like the empire, they went down before the barbarians, leaving their treasures walled in and secure in that dry land.

We know, too, that a Nestorian mission arrived in the seventh century, and is commemorated by the great tablet set up in 731; and if Christians were thus giving in a simplified form the fundamentals of their faith,<sup>1</sup> Zoroastrians were also preaching their dualistic religion, and Muhammadans their stark monotheism. It was a tolerant age: 'All religions seek the salvation of men,' says T'ai-tsung; and if he proclaims Nestorian Christianity to be 'at once pacific and reasonable, mysterious and useful', even the Muhammadan merchant Abu Zeid exclaims that the Chinese painters of his age excelled all others. We find Buddhists and Christians working together in the comparative study of religion, and the great Kuki of Japan wrote what is the first systematic treatise on this subject after a three years' stay in Ch'ang-an.

T'ai-tsung resembles Akbar in his interest in religious synthesis and in his patronage of the arts: at his Court, as at that of Vikramaditya, mathematicians and astronomers as well as artists and poets found a ready welcome, foreigners

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 320.

as well as Chinese. There is in the Forbidden City in Peking an amazing scroll of foreigners bringing tribute, which belongs to this age. As I was looking at it recently a Chinese soldier, with characteristic friendliness, leaned over my shoulder and said, 'They are the peoples who do not eat pork'. They are certainly Semites—Jews and Muhammadans, whose visits at this time, like embassies from the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid, China accepted as homage. Such embassies carried back to the West tales which were to inflame the imagination of Franciscan friars and Venetian merchants: and when they came later to see for themselves they exclaimed like the Queen of Sheba, 'The half was not told me.'

In this age every one was a poet, and a Manchu anthology published two centuries ago contains nine hundred books, with poems by over two thousand hands. The T'ang emperors themselves made such collections, and the poems of Po Chu-i were engraved on stone by imperial decree. He is perhaps the greatest poet of the age, who in simple and poignant verse sang the sorrows of the poor so that none could fail to understand. His lyrics were sung by farmer and boatman as well as by emperor and courtier, and he came very rapidly into prominence. Son of a poor magistrate, he settled at Ch'ang-an in 801, and lived there in the sunshine of that friendship with other poets which is the Chinese idyll. But 'not being a master of elegant accomplishments such as Calligraphy, Painting, Chess, which bring men together', he was at first content with the society of court-ladies, one of whom was his cousin, at the decadent court of the debauchees with whom the dynasty ended.

Criticizing the mismanagement of military affairs and satirizing the harpies of the public service he heard the cry of the poor. For this he was banished, and then 'promoted' to be governor of Chung-chou, a remote town, to be recalled in due season to the capital.

Again protesting at the high-handed impotence of the Emperor Mu-tung he was again exiled, this time to

Hangchou, until he was able to retire with two dancing-girls, two cranes, and some poultry, to the country. But in 825 his idyll was disturbed, he was made governor of Soochou, and entered upon a very gay official life. Here, living in a government house, he longed for his thatched hut on the Wei River, and after other public duties he retired, and in 832 became a hermit in a mountain monastery, where he died in 846.

He is said to have tried his poems on an old peasant woman; till they were simple enough for her he was not satisfied. A Chinese Horace, he is also a Hesiod. In his didactic poems he defends the impossible theory that art is nothing but a way of instruction; and as it was his satires and sermons in verse which won him exile once more, it is evident that he really believed his own theory. With more show of reason he criticized Li Po and Tu Fu for their lack of earnestness. He is, however, best known for poems which are more in their style—impressions of a passing mood, and he, too, longs for quiet, laughs at himself, and grows old with gay detachment.

His immense popularity during his lifetime is an indication that the age needed a moral tonic, and the poor a champion. His poems were on the tongues of all: Michizane in Japan and the scholars of Korea knew them. He is, says Arthur Waley, 'the subject of a No Play, and has even become a kind of Shinto deity'.

He illustrates the three stages which his translator ascribes to the typical poet in China, and which we may compare with the four stages of the Hindu Dharma.

In the first we find him with his friends at the capital, drinking, writing and discussing: burdened by his office probably about as much as Pepys was burdened by his duties at the Admiralty. Next having failed to curry favour with the Court he is 'exiled' to some provincial post, perhaps a thousand miles from any one he cares to talk to. Finally, having scraped together enough money to buy husbands for his daughters, he retires to a small estate, collecting round him the remnants of those with whom he had shared the 'feasts and frolics' of old days.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Waley, *Chinese Poems*, p. 6. Constable. As sixty of these are by Po Chu-i and are easily available I quote only a fragment.

Such was the career of Po Chu-i, and he did well to avoid elegance in telling of the horrors of misgovernment and of war and the sorrows of the people. Plain speaking is best plain-set. His simplicity, directness, satire, and sympathy are all brought out in our brief illustrative readings. Po Chu-i tells us with critical judgement of the works of his predecessors Li Po (705-60) and Tu Fu (712-70) of which there are many translations. They are in some ways an admirable pair, typical of Chinese friendship and of the independent spirit which sits aloof even to imperial authority: they prefer the bohemian society of the 'Idlers of the Bamboo Valley', a guild of poets and artists: they rejoice in the freedom of the mountains, and despise the artificialities of the Court. As their friend Wang Wei, painter and poet, sings:

The world is a passing show  
What can be better than returning home?

All were influenced in fact by the Buddhist emphasis on the transiency of this fleeting show, and belonged in old age to the period of disillusionment, when the dynasty was sowing the seeds of its own destruction. They sought to drown their sorrow in wine as well as in the beauties of nature, but they show also a love of freedom and of the poor.

Tu Fu says of Li Po 'there is virtue as well as delicacy in his poems', and, we may add, a passionate love of life alternating with fits of melancholy:

Awake through long night hours I sigh and weep,  
As o'er the empire tragic sorrows creep.

In other moods he is very frank, and tells us that wine gave him release:

Three cups will open wide the door to bliss,  
Toss off a goblet and the world is yours.  
What ecstasy from out the wine-cup pours;  
The sober may not quaff its mysteries!  
Why do I live in far-off mountains green?  
I laugh and answer not; my soul serene  
Lives in a heaven and earth that none else knows;  
The peach blooms vanish as the river flows.

Chinese poets and painters are often at their best when wine removes the inhibitions of scholarship and the trammels of tradition. Li Po is called 'The Fairy in Exile' and his poem on 'A Visit to Chong-nan' expresses his devotion to a favourite haunt near the capital to which he escaped when eunuchs, concubines, and courtiers were too much for him:

It is evening. I come down the mountain in the blue darkness. The moon seems to walk with me, and if one turns back to see how far he has travelled he loses himself in the profundity of night. We come holding hands to the threshold of a rustic hut. A young boy opens a gate of withes; down a narrow path we make our way, and the tufted bamboos shroud the entrance in mystery, while the green shrubs brush our silk robes joyously. Joy seizes us that we are come to so charming a retreat. We drink to one another in wine of exquisite fragrance. I sing and sing, a song of the wind which breathes across the pines; and my spirit does not grow weary till the Milky Way pales in the sky.

Li Po's love of solitude breathes also in this lyric on the Ching-ting Peak:<sup>1</sup>

Flocks of birds have flown high and away;  
A solitary drift of cloud, too, has gone wandering on.  
And I sit alone with the Ching-ting Peak towering beyond,  
We never grow tired of each other, the mountain and I.

For Li Po's affection Nature's only rivals were wine and Tu Fu. Born in 712 he went as a boy to the court of Ming-huang, and here found much to charm and captivate eye and mind. Long afterwards in exile he was to turn wistfully to these halcyon days in an enchanted city, a city of lakes and canals, of gardens and parks, as well as of palaces, art-galleries, and libraries.

And I that scan the distant view  
Of torn white clouds and mountains blue,  
Lift to the north my aching eyes:  
'Tis there—'tis there the city lies.<sup>2</sup>

As Ujjain was 'the City' for Kalidasa, so for Tu Fu was Ch'ang-an.

<sup>1</sup> L. A. Cranmer Byng, *The Vision of Asia*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

Refusing office in a distant province, the poet chose rather to remain with his friend Li Po, and to enjoy the gaieties of the Court. 'At sunset how good it is to get into a boat and launch forth: a light wind rises, and the surface of the water is ruffled. Soon tufted bamboos invite us to rest beneath their leaves: nenuphars scent the air in this quiet place, and the young lords are busy making iced drinks, while lovely girls wash the lily-roots to prepare a banquet.'<sup>1</sup> But the joys of his gilded youth passed into melancholy and a passionate partisanship of the poor; and when he was appointed Censor of the Empire by Sou-tsung he made many enemies by his outspokenness, till the women of the Court secured his banishment. He lived in disguise among the shepherds of Ssech'uan, and died in 774 at the age of fifty-nine. Of his friendship with Li Po he writes: 'We slept under the same coverlet, and wandered hand in hand', and they are classical examples of that romantic friendship between men which has played so large a part in Chinese culture, as well as of that ironic detachment from the etiquette and fussiness of the Court which has affected so many gifted minds. Imitating the Han poets they yet sat loose to classical models, used the speech of the people, and widened the range of sentiment.

To this age belong also prose writers like Han Yu (768-824) and Liu-chung Wan (773-819): the former was a robust critic of the superstition of the age, who wrote best when anger against Buddhists and Taoists moved him; and the latter was also a clear and forcible writer. Nor were men of science lacking: Li-chun-feng (602-70) invented an instrument to study the stars, and wrote works on astronomy. In this science, in mathematics and medicine, as well as in art, Buddhist influence reached its zenith, and produced, in spite of Confucian opposition, a great harvest.

Not only did Chinese masters visit India, and Indian missions continue in China: large numbers of exiles driven out by persecution in India settled in the Far East.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by R. Grousset, *Histoire de l'Asie*.



It is interesting to trace the stages by which China adapts the new religion. Staggered at first by its very complexity and by the grandeur of its metaphysic (Han era), she proceeds to simplify and to fit it next to Laoist ideas (T'ang era); and lastly wins a complete victory over it by rethinking Confucianism in its light (Sung era).

That is, I think, a true if schematic account of what happened; but some critics would say that it was rather Buddhism conquering first one fastness of the Chinese soul then another, and some go so far as to call this the domination of Buddhism and the sterilization of China.<sup>1</sup> But the victory was won only at great cost, and if Hindu and Moslem in India forgot their own rivalries in a common attack on the Buddhists, Confucian officials in China were not all as tolerant as T'ai Tsung. Nor is it true that Buddhism fitted the Chinese. It had rather to be fitted to them—a process which began with the first mission and lasted a thousand years.

If it began in Confucian form in the *Sutra of Forty-two Sayings* Buddhism was now adapted to the Laoist Chinese, and its influence is largely due to the reinterpretation of such men as Tao-hsuan (d. 667) and Tao-i (c. 750), masters of Chan (Dhyana, or meditation) who were steeped in Laoist mysticism.

Among the first Buddhist books to reach China were works like the *Yogacara-Bhumi* and the *Amitayur-dhyana-Sutra*—manuals for the mystic. And these were given a Laoist tinge from the fourth century on; Tao-an (d. 387) making much of inactivity and of forgetfulness, as a technique for overcoming desire.

Tao-hsuan includes 133 names of such Chan practitioners in his biographies of Buddhist leaders.

'Without meditation no insight' is an old Buddhist adage, and these leaders were so far orthodox. Even the paradise schools make much of meditation—to contemplate the Buddhas and their paradises is to find one's true self.

But the monks knew their public, and were as busy

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Messrs. Wu Chihui and Hu Shih. See 'China's Own Critics'.

holding up paradise as the goal as the Taoists were active (forgetting Wu-wei) in offering men the medicine of longevity.

The higher religion in each case—Laoism and Nibbanism—is a religion of quality of life: they made it, as the vulgar will, a religion of quantity and duration.

The great Chan masters called both back to reality and to simplicity. Most popular and rugged is Bodhi-dharma or Puti-tamo, 'the wall-gazing Brahmin', who snubbed the eager Wu-ti, and settling near Loyang kept silence for nine years—profoundly impressing a loquacious and contentious age.

His date is A.D. 526 and he reminds us of Chuang-tse, but he no less reminds us of the Upanishads and of the Buddha, for mysticism is of no age or land. It is timeless and universal. 'Seek the Buddha within: so will you find yourself,' is Tamo's summary: 'Find your true self and you will be Buddha.' His snub to Wu-ti—who asked, 'Is there not much merit in my building of monasteries?' only to be told, 'None'—begins a technique developed in the next century by Tao-seng as 'the school of sudden illumination'; and his rugged character inspired such reformers as Tao-i, and gave a new paedagogical method to the school. To bring oneself back to the spontaneous and free life—this is one purpose of the new teaching. Simplicity to the point of bareness—honesty to the point of rudeness—industry to the point of austerity—these are hall marks of such teachers as Hui-neng and Tao-i.

Instead of mendicancy—work; instead of ritual—silence and stillness; instead of superstition—illumination; instead of logic—intuition.

Here is at once a reformation and a simplification of Buddhism and of Taoism.

But to be oneself one must think for oneself; and the rough technique of bringing man to himself by a kick or a snub is characteristic of the Chan or Zen master.

The following anecdotes are typical, and artists loved to paint these bizarre teachers at their task of illumination.

Tien-san of Tan-hsia was an early Zen master (d. 824) who chopped up a Buddha image to make a fire. When he was criticized he said, 'I am burning the image to get the jewel relic in it'. 'You can't find that except in a real body'. 'Well, then, I am only burning wood,' was his reply.

More drastic still was Hsuan-chien. 'Bodhidharma was an old hairy barbarian. The Bodhisattvas are night soil-men. The books are only—paper for base uses: what have all these to do with salvation?'

This was a technique for making the seeker find truth for himself and in himself—of snubbing the discursive reason, and letting intuition have free play.

I am indebted to Dr. Hu Shih for the following admirable summary:

The methodology of Zen has often been misunderstood. Some regard it as mysticism; others call it sheer humbug. There is no doubt that there is a clear method behind all the apparent madness for which many Zen masters were famous. The method, as far as I can understand it, has two important phases. First, the master must not make things too easy for the novice; he must not preach to him in too plain language, or even in any language. This is so important that one of the great masters once said: 'I owe everything to my teacher because he never told anything nor explained anything to me.'

When the novice comes to the master with some such abstract question as the meaning of Zen or the message of Buddhism, the teacher will say to him: 'When I was in Nanking last time, I made a coat, weighing 7 pounds'. Or he will say to him, 'My dear fellow, how fine are the peach blossoms on yonder tree!' Or he will shout at him a deafening shout. Or, if he is really deserving, he will get a box on the ear.

So he retires to the kitchen, puzzled and probably burning with shame or with pain. He stays on and, after a while, will be told to leave the place to try his luck at some other great monastic school. Here begins the second phase of the method which is technically called 'travelling on foot'.

He travels from one hill to another, presenting his silly questions to the various great masters presiding over the monastic schools. If he fails to understand, he moves on. Most of the famous teachers

did much travelling during their period of student-life. A monk travels always on foot, carrying only a stick, a bowl, and a pair of straw sandals. He begs all the way for his food and lodging, and often has to seek shelter in decayed temples, caves, and ruined houses by the roadside. He has to suffer the severities of the weather, and is subject to all forms of danger and hardship.

But all hardships intensify his zeal. The beauty and grandeur of nature ennoble his mind. He comes into contact with all sorts of people, and studies under the greatest minds of the age. He meets kindred souls troubled more or less by similar problems, and he lives with them, befriends them, and discusses things with them. In this way, his experiences are widened and deepened and his understanding grows. Then, some day, he hears a chance remark of a charwoman, or a frivolous song of a dancing-girl, or the chirping of a bird in yonder tree, or smells the fragrance of a nameless flower, and he suddenly understands! All his previous inquiries and searches and experiences become correlated somehow, and the problem seems so clear and the solution so evident. The miracle has happened and he attains his Sudden Enlightenment.

And he travels long distances back to his old master, and, with tears in the eyes and gladness at heart, he gives thanks and worships at the feet of his great teacher who never told him anything.

This is Zen in the Chinese sense.

And inasmuch as great persecutions drove hundreds of thousands of monks into poverty and loneliness, destroying their temples and confiscating their lands, this new inwardness and simplicity was timely.

The more spiritual teachers survived the persecution of 845-7; and as in sixth-century India, it only served to scatter missionaries to remote districts and to neighbouring lands. In Japan especially Zen masters produced a new civilization. For the rest we may note that the first two centuries of T'ang were favourable to Buddhism of the orthodox schools, and art and architecture thrived; side by side with Zen the popular Buddhism went on. Men like Jinagupta (528-605) of Peshawar came by way of Khotan, were sometimes welcomed and sometimes driven out of China, carrying with them scriptures and images to Mongolia, Tibet, and other provinces. Jinagupta

converted the Khan Dobo of Mongolia and was eventually made head of a monastery at Lo-yang where he translated the Buddhacarita and other texts. This may help to account for the great interest in the life of the historic Sakyamuni evident in the sculpture of the sixth century, and in the early Chinese painters.

Fa Hian, too, had turned the mind of China to the historic sites of the Faith and to its colourful legends of the founder. He had told China of the honoured place of Buddhism in Guptan India—though in his fourteen years of pilgrimage he found many signs of neglect. More than two centuries later Hiuen Chang found it flourishing in Gandhara and Kashmir, but derelict in northern India and in the holy land about Benares where resurgent Hinduism had recaptured its ancient citadels. But at Nalanda he found the peace and the intellectual centre he needed, and from it brought back to China the inspiration of learned monks and traditional interpretations going back to the great schoolmen Asanga and Vasubandhu who had brought much Brahmanic subtlety into their adopted faith.

In Siladitya, king of Kanauj, too, he found an ardent champion of the Mahayana who gave him a royal welcome to his capital not only as a scholar and a Buddhist but as representing T'ang China and the new Asiatic entente.

Kanauj was no mean contemporary of Ch'ang-an—and here the last great Chakravarti dreamed out his days with poets and philosophers and monks, dying in 648, two years before the great T'ai Tsung, who seems to have regarded him as a vassal, and whose armies brought his successor Arjuna in triumph to Ch'ang-an, captured by Tibetan subjects under the great Srong-Btsan-Gampo. Thus the picture of 'an Asia united for a thousand years by missions of goodwill' and of 'Buddhism as the religious bond of union' is unhistorical. Mighty as it was in its work of civilization Buddhism like Christianity had enemies without and within, and Buddhist sovereigns were as seldom consistent as their Christian contemporaries. It is perhaps enough justification that as the one great way produced its Fa Hians,





HIUFN CHANG RETURNS  
(A JAPANESE PAINTING)  
A CHINESE SHADOW PLAY OF HIS JOURNFY

its Hiuen Changs, its Bodhidharmas and Jinaguptas, the other had its Augustines and its Nestorians—missionaries of goodwill in an empire of the spirit. The real cultures of Guptan India and T'ang China on the one hand and of the Europe of Charlemagne on the other are in large part the by-product of their devotion to the Unseen.

It is one of the tragedies of history that the rising tide of Islam, while it was the carrier of another great culture, destroyed so much of what it disliked and set up a great barrier between east and west, which is not yet thrown down.

The intolerance of the Semite has waged perpetual war upon the Aryan interest in the new and the Mongolian reasonableness, destroying where they were content to tolerate and absorb. Thus, while the dreaded Turks poured into Europe and battered upon the gates of India, and while Christians, equally resolute, sought by force to win a pagan world, forgetting their Greek heritage in their zeal for their Semitic one, Buddhists bowed to the storm of persecution and became missionaries of the cross-fertilization of cultures.

Or to put it in other words the heretics of both worlds—Nestorian Christians, Buddhist Hindus—driven alike by intolerance in their own groups and by the sword of Islam, became pioneers of goodwill and of international co-operation in the T'ang Age.

The Buddhists brought a new artistic and spiritual impetus. The greatest works of T'ang sculpture and painting are Buddhist, and in our illustration we see the Master of the Law, Hiuen Chang, returning from India to China after his long pilgrimage laden with books and images; he plays a very notable part in sending China to study things Indian, and the great T'ai-tsung tried to make him a Minister of State. When the Master refused, saying that he was as ignorant of secular things as of Confucian scholarship, the Emperor established him in the Monastery of Great Joy by the gate of the city, bidding him write an account of his travels. In 648 the Prince Imperial honoured the monk



by writing a preface to this work, and one of the most delightful incidents of the time was the friendship between the monk and the Emperor, who himself presided at a great festival, when the treasures brought back from India were officially received. The scene is vividly described by M. Grousset:

It was a gorgeous festival, at which the royal presence enhanced the splendour of Buddhist ritual. The sacred books and images were borne on fifteen hundred chariots gaily decorated, and one might see two statues of the Buddha, one in silver and the other in solid gold, innumerable statues of Bodhisattvas, of which some must have belonged to the Gandhara school; two hundred painted banners by the most famous masters in India, Gandhara and Kashgar, no doubt resembling the frescoes found at Tumchuk and Tun-huang. Before these images moved a procession of monks scattering flowers and singing hymns; and above their heads floated five hundred banners of silk embroidered in gold, and three hundred sunshades of precious stuffs. The Imperial bands sounded their drums, their gongs and their bells. The veterans of T'ai-tsung, returned from the Tartar wars, lined the streets, and the Emperor, installed with all his court in one of the pavilions at the city-gate, burned incense as the procession passed him.<sup>1</sup>

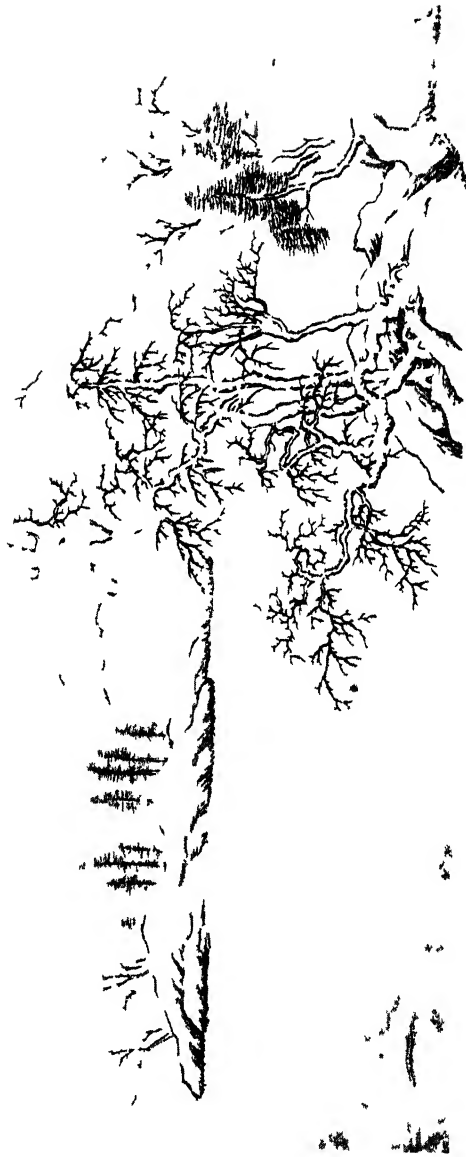
At the death of the Master there were nearly four thousand Buddhist monasteries in China.

### III

The greatest Buddhist painter of the age is Wu Tao-tse—the Chinese Michael Angelo—who worked with creative genius in developing the already eminent school of Chinese painting. He is described as painting 'as if a whirlwind possessed his hand', and we are told that his strong and bold brushwork set a new standard. But unfortunately there is nothing left of it, and the Manjusri of our frontispiece, part of a triptych in Japan, is probably a copy. Other rival schools are represented by Wang Wei, whom we have already described as an eminent poet, and Li Ssu-h'sun. The latter is well represented in the album of Royal

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de l'Asie*, pp. 263-4.





A WINTER SCENE  
by WANG WEI

Palaces in the British Museum, and is the first example known to us of a familiar style of Chinese painting, in which gold lines enrich the blue and green of rock and mountain.

Wang Wei, who made his house into a Buddhist monastery, painted mountains, undulating hills, and admirable pines. A good example of his style may be seen also at the British Museum in the landscape scroll by a later imitator—Chao Meng-fu. Of Wang Wei it was said that every poem was a picture and every picture a poem. His school is known as that of the South, while that of Li Ssu-h'sun is known as that of the North, the difference between them being largely concerned with methods of brush work, that of the South being more suave and that of the North more vigorous.

To interpret a mood, not merely to record a fact, is one of the canons of Chinese art, and another insists that into the skeleton of the picture must be infused the rhythm of nature. The well-known canons of Hsieh-ho, who belonged to the sixth century, admirably express the ideals of this poetic art, and are summarized in our illustrative reading. Dealing with portraiture they insist upon a careful knowledge of form as well as upon grace of line and balance of composition. As Lao-tse had insisted upon the importance of emptiness, so these artists realized the great value of empty spaces, alike in painting and in poetry—'the value of reserves and silences, the invitation to our imagination in the thing left unexpressed'. The artist, too, must pierce beneath the mere aspect of the world to seize and to be possessed by the rhythm of the universe, which is to pour itself through him as the wind through a flute. In our illustration of a typical landscape by Wang Wei we can understand the dominating position which he reached: the vigour of these skeleton trees and the rolling masses of these snowy mountains were copied by great artists down to the time of Sesshu and his school in Japan. This scroll is covered with the seals and appreciations of the Emperor Hui-tsung, the Jahangir of the Sung, himself a

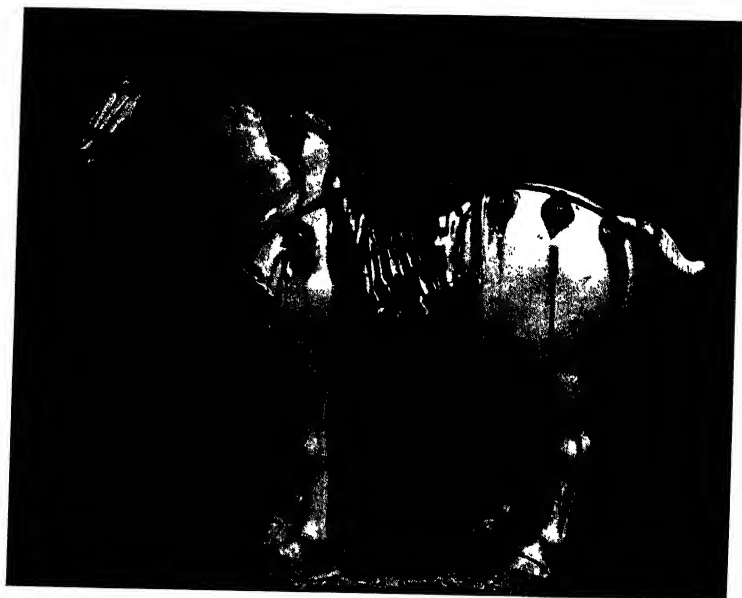
great painter, and of scholars of later dynasties who are lyric in its praises. 'It is truly a song without words,' says a modern Japanese artist, and it makes one long to see the great little scroll described by his friend Tu Fu in our reading, which blent the bold and intricate, great spaces and minute detail—'ten inches for a thousand lively scenes'.

This great eighth-century trio—Li Po, Tu Fu, Wang Wei—were heirs of a grand tradition.

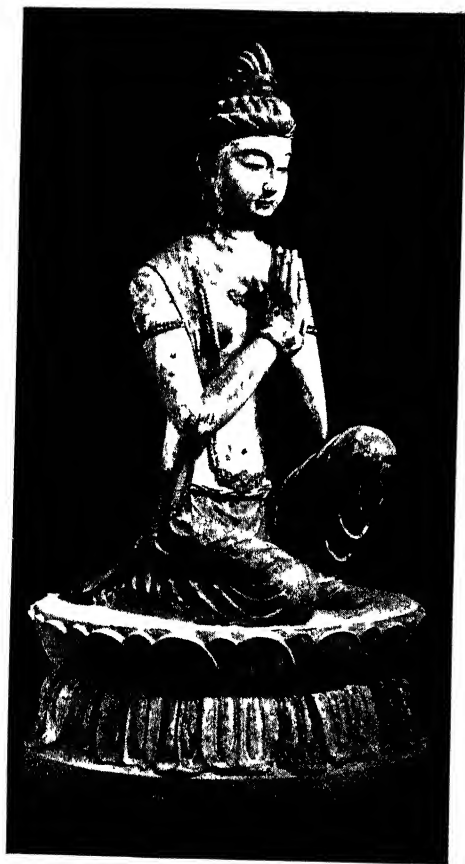
Of Yen Li-pen (an official and painter of the seventh century) we have several works of great power. Of one of them—the Emperor T'ai-tsung handing 'the Golden Mirror' to his young son—there are several versions: I have seen three. All are excellent paintings, and it seems likely that one of them, and a part of the great scroll of Emperors in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, are authentic works. This amazing work is seventeen and a half feet long, and has portraits of thirteen early emperors, from Han to Sui, with their attendants—a reliable record of personalities and costumes. There are also occasional notes: thus of Wuti of the Later Chou we read: 'He destroyed the Buddha's Law'. Not all Chinese rulers were as tolerant as T'ai-tsung. This scroll is mentioned by the great Mi Fei of the Sung Dynasty: he was well qualified to appreciate it, and it has many autographs and comments of other Sung critics.<sup>1</sup> The portraits are strong and vigorous, showing insight into character, and it is interesting to remember that Yen Li-pen regarded himself rather as a scholar than as a painter, and flew into a rage when the Emperor bade him make a sketch of a strange bird that interested him. T'ai-tsung praised him as 'a master of divine power'.

Further light is thrown on the painting of the later T'ang by discoveries of Chinese scrolls in Kansu and in Turkistan. While mostly painted by monks and craftsmen working for them some are fine portraits of donors, and some groups show noble composition. One discovered

<sup>1</sup> See the admirable Bulletin of the Boston Museum by Kojiro Tomita, xxx.



T'ANG HORSES  
(The lower from tomb of T'AI-TSUNG)



BODHISATTVAS OF CHINESE TURKESAN AND KOREA  
(7th or 8th Centuries A D)

CAVES OF ILN HUANG AND SOKUJAM

by Sir Aurel Stein at Turfan has strong affinities with the early screens at Nara—the tall elegant figures of such early masters as Ku K'ai-Chih have given place to stouter forms with rounded faces and full lips. Perhaps here we may see the result of Tartar invasions. There are also portraits of the ninth century preserved in Japan, attributed to Li Chen; and some splendid statues are finding their way from these frontier collections into Western museums. Notable is that brought from Tun-huang to the Fogg Museum by Mr. Langdon Warner—a masterpiece of clay modelling with the gay original colours preserved in that dry upland, and showing the costume and head-dress of late T'ang.

'The imagery and formula are Indian, but the artistic idiom is Chinese,' says Mr. Binyon of the wall-paintings and scrolls thus miraculously preserved in a remote monastery. They make us eager indeed to discover a genuine masterpiece—some spirited group of horses by Han Kan or some great altar-piece by Wu Tao-tse.

It seems clear that as each artist was also a calligraphist and often a poet, so many were not content to paint on silk or clay but also used the chisel or engraved their work on stone, and it is far from impossible that some portrait of Confucius or some Buddhist Paradise of T'ang will be found—successors of the Han bas-reliefs and the incised Wei Tartar steles of the Buddha's nativity. The great scrolls of his Nirvana still treasured in Japan are no doubt successors and imitations of paintings of this time.

Similarly the great Buddha of Lung-men—a T'ang masterpiece—can be traced back to the 'strong pillar-like form' of the T'o-shan figure<sup>1</sup> which belongs to the sixth century—and behind that through the long succession from Gandhara and Mathura to the caves of Yun-kang, which show very little Chinese influence. The Buddhist sculptor in fact worked by fixed canons of iconography, and only gradually did local influence assert itself.

It is interesting to watch the development at these caves from the flat to the more deeply incised bas-relief, and then

<sup>1</sup> 112 in Siren's article in the *Burlington Magazine* monograph.

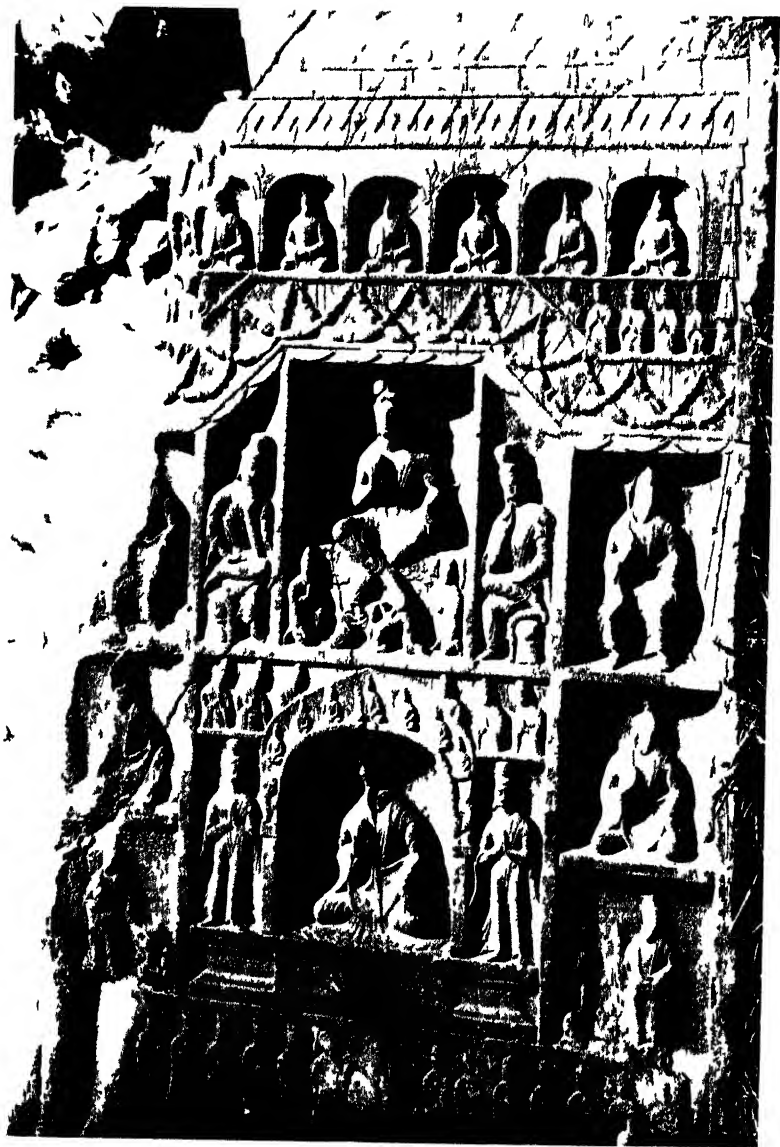


to the fully rounded sculpture of the main images. While the drapery is Graeco-Indian in the earlier figures, and Gupta influence is evident in the later examples, yet Wei Tartar art has its own characteristic verve and energy. From the lovely Maitreya of our illustration to the Sakyamuni of the Kondo at Horiuji, early Chinese art develops by logical steps: and is characterized by its use of cylindrical and ovoid forms and flat draperies of graceful and sweeping curves.

The relation of sculpture to painting may be expressed by saying that if the Han reliefs are transcripts of painting, the brush of some of these T'ang artists, such as Wu Tao-tse, was almost a chisel, so statuesque were their great figures. Three hundred painters are known to us by name as belonging to this era, but almost all their work has perished—to live on in inspired memories and less inspired copies. Yet even in these we can rejoice in the grandeur of mountains, range beyond range, and in the bird's-eye perspective which looks up to mountain-tops and down into valleys. The hieratic figures of Buddhas and saints also reveal how greatly Indian culture had stimulated the Chinese. Though it is the fashion amongst modern Chinese scholars to decry the influence of this 'alien mysticism' it did in fact fit the poetic Chinese, and with Laoism saved them from the rather sterile rationalism of the Confucian schools, who continued to oppose it and often to persecute the monks.

The sculpture of the T'ang Age reveals a gradual waning of Buddhist influence and a growing secularism. But the early masterpieces—in religious art the colossal Buddha of Lung-men, and in secular art the spirited chargers of the tomb of T'ai-tsung, are great achievements. Expressing on the one hand spiritual calm and on the other vivid action, they are both symbols of Indian influence on this age; and China has passed far from the dim world of Han, and even from the classic world of Wei.

Famous amongst T'ang sculptors is Yang Hui-chih, a friend and fellow-student of Wu Tao-tse, but most of the works that have survived are anonymous, and it is only in



BAS RELIEFS AND STATUES OF LUNG MEN



A BUDDHIST COLUMN

such rare centres as Tun-huang that we can see T'ang masterpieces in their true setting or be sure of their history.

The wooden pillar of our illustration, if it is genuine, was perhaps one of a colonnade once bright with colour, which led the eye of the worshipper through a long vista of fair forms to the majestic Buddha of the high altar in some 'Hall of the Great Hero'. Here Greek draperies and Indian eikon are fused in the crucible of T'ang genius—itsself a blend of Wei Tartar and pure Chinese. Of the statelier figures of this age perhaps the greatest are two series of Lohan here reproduced, magnificent in their serenity as in their realism.

The animal forms of T'ang graves—camel and war-horse and bull—suggest the grandeur of the works of such masters as Chang Seng-yu—and the lovely Tanagra-like figures of dancers and minstrels are eloquent of an age of luxury; the dead were critical indeed if they were not content with the company of so much charm and sensuous grace. From the wood and clay burial-figures of Han China has advanced to this great climax. Greek and Indian genius have met that of China in this cult of the dead.

Outside T'ang tombs stood great winged horses, and noticeable among them is a superb figure, at once natural and symbolic, at the tomb of Kao-tsung, erected in A.D. 683, and reminiscent of the Scythian animal-forms which play so interesting a part in the funerary art of Europe and Asia. The great emperors saw that such lasting memorials should keep their memory green. Dynastic histories did the rest, and court-historians flourished, for the T'ang like the Han encouraged the writing of eulogistic history. Liu Chi-ki wrote his *Comprehensive Survey of Historical Works*, and Tu Yu (who died in A.D. 812) his *General Institutions*, which deals with politics, government offices, military science, geography, national defence, and other institutions and their development.

More ambitious still is the history of Sse-ma-ch'ien (1019–86) who in the Sung era wrote a comprehensive account of the preceding five and a half centuries. 'To

him', says Dr. Wilhelm, 'history was no lifeless store of knowledge, but a living mirror, the right use of which would supply the basis for right government.'

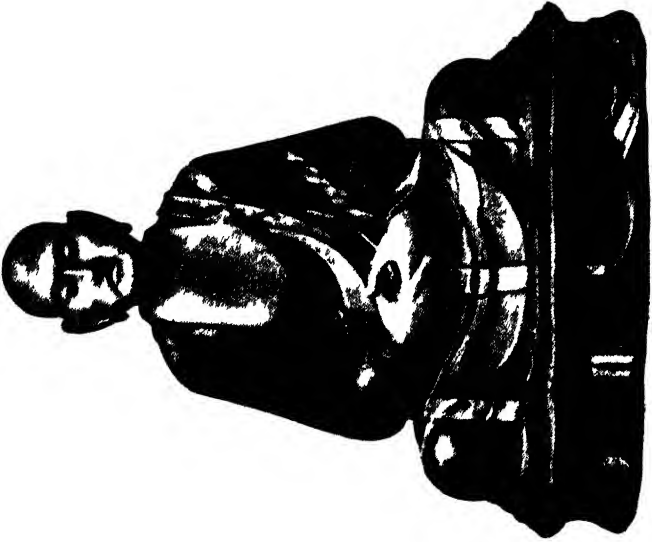
In spite of this verdict the learned critic says that the appointment of historiographers in the early days vitalized Chinese historical literature, and in the later days paralysed it. For in the attempt to obtain objectivity by having the history of a dynasty written in the time of its successors, dullness ensued. History, like other art, must be 'infused with the life-spirit' of the imaginative intellect, and not reduced to the mere 'skeleton' of a chronicle of events.

#### IV

The art and architecture of China lived on in Korea and Japan and with a study of these countries and of the Sung era we can obtain a better understanding of its grandeur and of the principles which guided the artist. Of the character of Chinese drama, too, much can be gleaned by a study of the No and of other Japanese plays; but there is an unbroken dramatic tradition in China itself, and as it was Huan-tsung who first patronized the 'Disciples of the Pear Orchard' singers and dramatic dancers, whose present chief Mei Lan-fang is well known in the West, we may comment on this great art as a characteristic product of the T'ang Court.

As a small boy of four the poet Tu Fu saw a famous dancer of the 'Pear Blossom Orchard', and later wrote this poem:

On all sides men are stirred at her dancing;  
 It is the dance of the 'Two-edged Sword':  
 Tier on tier they gaze breathless:  
 Her posturing would move Earth and Heaven:  
 Her scarf is loosened: it is the nine suns  
 Falling, as Prince Li lets loose his shaft.  
 She rises: it is like dragons soaring three abreast.  
 She comes: it is the first clap of a thunder-storm,  
 Rattling and making men shudder with fear.  
 She makes an end: it is clear light on seas and rivers of ice.



(Glazed Porcelain)



Stone)

ARHATS IN MEDITATION



Where is there a more exquisite figure to-day than the Yang Kuei-fei of Mei Lan-fang as she enters the Pavilion of a Hundred Blossoms, singing languid lyrics to the moon, or as she begins her drunken dance when she finds the emperor has deserted her and seeks to drown her sorrows in wine? The theatre is still a mighty force in China where, as in India, it educates millions of 'illiterate' peasants to know their country's history, and to appreciate the subtleties of its art. Dr. Tagore has told us of a village audience in Bengal sitting spellbound at a play in which strolling artists, without properties and lit only by the flare of a naphtha lamp, dramatized the subtleties of Hindu metaphysics: so the Chinese villager has seen scores of dramas and tales such as the famous *Tale of the Three Dynasties*<sup>1</sup> which have played a large part in inspiring the chivalry of Japan. Half the human race is to-day educated chiefly by wandering minstrel and actor and story-teller.

Dr. Hu Shih, known as the father of the Chinese renaissance, says, paradoxically,

Nowhere in this modern world are to be seen such vivid presentations of the irrevocably lost steps in the slow evolution of the dramatic art as are seen on the Chinese stage to-day. There one sees every historical survival preserved and carried out with artistic perfection. The mask is seen in the gorgeously painted face, the dance in the conventionalized rhythmic movements, the acrobatic games in the mimic fight on the stage, the soliloquy in almost every play; and the symbolic scenery . . . is most skilfully handled by the property men.

In Japan we have drama of the Sung era crystallized in the No plays, where the old aristocratic art of poetical soliloquy may be seen in the process of popularization. The subtleties of dance and poetry are not enough for the crowd, which demands also action and dialogue.

It needs a trained eye to note with one of Mei Lan-fang's Chinese admirers that his facial expression 'may be compared with the adaptability of running water, which placed in a square basin is square, but in a round basin is round'. But which of us cannot enter into the intoxication

<sup>1</sup> San Kuo Chih.



of Yang Kuei-fei, first with love, then with wine, and into the miseries of her jealousy and lust so marvellously suggested in the difficult poses of the great actor? Here his waist 'strong and straight as a poplar on a mountain-side . . . like a sail in a brisk breeze', and his feet 'moving in dainty animation', suggest to the crowd what eyes and hands might tell to the critic, and the long sleeves of his lovely costumes 'fluttering like a frightened swan, swift as a sportive butterfly' add a joy to the eye which the more intellectual drama despises.

The religious background of many Chinese plays is interesting; the Confucian ethic of filial duty and of loyalty, the calm quiet and the splendid ritual of Buddhist temples, the fairyland of Taoist imaginings—these strike a familiar note, and go far to prove that religion plays a considerable part in the everyday life of the Chinese. 'To know their theatre is to know, in no small degree, the Chinese people.'

The form of the typical play deserves study. First comes a brief prologue which hints at what is to come. Then come couplets by the actors, who announce their names, and then go on to a more detailed statement of the theme.

Here, as in approaching any other work of art, there is ceremony and preparation of the mind for the play. It begins with recitative or song, and rhythmic dance, and concludes with a recitation of four lines of poetry. For the rest, the splendid costumes and the weird strident music combine to make a deep impression even upon the Western mind, which can at best understand but little of the real significance of this great art.

Immensely popular too are shadow-plays and puppets. Originally of a religious character, the shadow-plays are now thoroughly secular and often caricature the pious. First mentioned in the *History of Sse-ma-ch'ien*, where we find it as a kind of necromancy, this art rapidly sought its inspiration in the stirring deeds of the 'Three Kingdoms' or in the Travels of Hiuen Chang to India (here illustrated), and through it culture is widely disseminated to-day.

The puppet-plays of China begin in the T'ang era,

brought to Ch'ang-an from Turkistan, but originating in Greece. As in the ancient West, these puppets brought gaiety and instruction into the home, and gradually a religious colour was given to them by use at funerals; in such ways they still play a part in instructing simple people and children. Our illustration shows how readily the adventures of the monk lend themselves to the edification and amusement of the home,<sup>1</sup> and illustrates the processes of mass education in Asia.

## THE SPIRIT OF T'ANG

### I. THE SIX CANONS OF HsIEH-HO: PRE-T'ANG CRITICISM

The canons of painting of Hsieh-ho (6th century) apply only to portrait and figure painting; they emphasize:

- I. Rhythm and spiritual tone.
- II. The art of rendering the bones, i.e. organic structure.
- III. Form answering to nature.
- IV. Accurate and appropriate colour.
- V. Composition and grouping.
- VI. The study of classical models.

'The first of these canons is the all-important one, for the others are concerned rather with means to attain the end which the first defines.' Laurence Binyon in the *Flight of the Dragon*, p. 13.

### II. EARLY T'ANG STATECRAFT

#### JUDGEMENTS OF T'AI-TSUNG

##### (a) *On Christianity*

Religions vary—religion is one: it is for the salvation of men.

Carefully examining this doctrine we find it profound, mysterious and spiritual: it establishes the importance of our birth and growth: and is profitable to men. It should circulate wherever we hold sway.

##### (b) *On Good Government*

(To his son—a last will and testament)

Be just, but above all be humane. Rule yourself, and you will easily rule the hearts of men. Be sparing with punishments—generous with rewards. Postpone no boon: but rather postpone punishment.

<sup>1</sup> See B. Laufer, *Oriental Theatricals*. Field Museum, Chicago.

## III. T'ANG POETRY

A. Li Po

*(a) The Lady Yang Kuei-fei at the Peony Festival*

(i)

Glory of trailing clouds is in her dresses,  
 The bloom of peonies upon her silken cheek ;  
 Do I behold her at the moonlit lattice  
 Fanned by the dewy breezes of the spring :  
 Is this the royal palace and the Emperor's Lady,  
 Or faëry vision of the Jade Mountain-Peak ?

(ii)

She is herself a flowering branch of peony,  
 But richer in fresh fragrance of honey-dew :  
 Her's is the glamour of the vanished fairy,  
 Who broke the heart of the dreaming Emperor  
 In that old tale of 'Cloud Who Changed to Rain'.  
 Pray who in the glorious Han Palaces  
 Can we compare to our own Emperor's Lady,  
 Save Flying Swallow clad in all the freshness  
 Of her incomparable loveliness ?

(iii)

Upon the balustrade behold her leaning,  
 In the Aloe Pavilion of Chen-hsiang-ting.  
 Conquered is love's unconquerable longing  
 Wafted into the heart by soft winds of spring.  
 The queenly flower and the flowery queen together  
 Rejoice in the amorous glances of their Lord and King.  
 The original is in twelve lines of seven words each.

*(b) Coming to Wine*

(i)

Sirs, have you not seen the Yellow River waters coming from the  
 distant heights ?  
 It rushes on even to the sea, and never returns.  
 Or have you not seen a bright mirror in a high tower, sadly reflecting  
 white hair ?  
 In the morning of life it was like black silk, in the evening it has  
 become snow.

To fulfil its mission a man's life must exhaust all its joy.  
 No one would raise an empty goblet to the moon.  
 Heaven gave me life, and must have had use for such stuff as I.  
 A thousand gold coins all scattered will come back to you;  
 Cook the sheep, kill the ox,—all for pleasure!  
 We meet, and for this one drink we will need three hundred cups.  
 My master Chin, my pupil Tan Chiu,  
 Come to the wine, let not your cups pause,  
 I will sing a song for you,  
 Please, sirs, lend your ears, and listen.  
 I wish only to be drunk and I do not wish to sober up.  
 From of old the good and wise have lived in solitude unknown,  
 Only the drinkers have left a name.  
 Once upon a time the king of Chen feasted in peace and pleasure,  
 With ten thousand measures of wine in reckless merriment.  
 Why, gentlemen, do you talk of being short of cash?  
 Trifles may be sold to get you drink,—  
 My spotted horse, my thousand dollar fur coat,—  
 I'll call the boy to take and exchange them for good wine,  
 And with you, together we will dissolve the wrongs of ten thousand  
 years. (Tr. by H. W. Houlding.)

## (ii)

The things I know when wine has mastered me  
 I'll never tell to those who are not drunk.

(c) *About My Own Business*

Because of wine I had not known that it had become dusk.  
 Falling petals had covered my clothes.  
 Drunken I strolled along the moonlit stream.  
 Birds had gone to rest and men were already few. . . .

(d) *Green Water Quatrain*

Green water bright with the autumn moon,  
 In the South Lake picking white water-lilies  
 Where the lotus charms and whispers of desire,  
 Melancholy smites the girls in the boat with longing.

*(e) On Going Down the Yangtse Gorges*

This morning I left Pai Ti (White Lord) in the midst of coloured  
 clouds,  
 Passing in one day the thousand li to Chiang-ling.  
 On both banks monkeys wailed unceasingly;  
 The light boat has passed ten thousand heavy mountains.

*(f) To A Japanese Friend*

Ah! my friend, thou leavest the Imperial City  
 To sail the Seas of Isles of many a story.  
 Forever the bright moon sinks in the blue depths of ocean,  
 And dark clouds of sorrow fill the far southern sky.

*(g) Chuang-tse's Dream*

Chuang-tse became a butterfly in his sleep:  
 The butterfly awoke from Chuang-tse's dream.  
 Which was the real—the insect or Chuang-tse?  
 Who can tell the end of endless change?  
 The waters lost in the far-off ocean deep  
 Return again to the clear shallows of the stream;  
 The gardener growing melons by the City Gate  
 Was once maybe the Prince of the far Eastern Range.  
 Rank vanishes, and riches pass away;  
 Ye know it—yet toil on—to what end pray?

Li Po has been called 'the poet of heroic abandon'; he urged his age to live  
 dangerously and to revolt against dullness.

## B. Tu Fu

*(a) On a Landscape of Wang Wei*

Ten days to paint a mountain,  
 Ten days too to paint a rock?  
 The true artist works slowly,  
 And Wang Wei is a great master.  
 Here are the King-lun mountains,  
 Here too the village of Pa Ling:  
 I seem to hear the very noises  
 Of the little crooked village streets.  
 Here is the Lung-ting Lake,  
 And here the silver thread of a rivulet.

The wind sighs in the tree tops,  
 And the clouds pile up in masses:  
 Will that lonely fisherman  
 Rowing there so desperately  
 Find shelter before they break?

Wonderful is a landscape scroll!  
 Ten inches of paper  
 And a thousand lively scenes;  
 Would that I might snip off an inch  
 Of this tremendous landscape—  
 The kingdom of Wu and the province of Sung  
 Would be enough to satisfy my needs.

(*b*) *Separation*

(The theme, says Arthur Waley, of half the poems of China.)

We had not met for a generation,  
 Moving like stars in opposite hemispheres ;  
 When will this night return for another night?  
 All this is like the light of lamps or torches;  
 Lit for a moment—how long can they last?  
 The hair on my temples is already grey ;  
 I visit old friends, and half of them have become spirits ;  
 Startled, I cry from the pain at my heart :  
 How could I know that in these twenty years  
 My worthy friend's children would fill the hall?  
 When I left, he had not yet married ;  
 Now his boys and girls are before me in a row—  
 Joyous, yet in awe of their father's old friend.  
 They ask whence I have come,  
 And ere the questions are answered,  
 His boys and girls have laid out wine and sauce.  
 'Tis night, and raining, and we slice the spring garlic,  
 And fresh yellow millet slowly steams.  
 My host acknowledges it will be hard to meet again;  
 So we pledge in many cups,  
 Yet with many cups we are not drunk.  
 I am a sentimental fellow, and so affection lasts long.  
 The next day hills and mountains separate us,  
 And the affairs of the world carry us far apart.

(Tr. by H. W. Houlding.)

## THE SPLENDOUR OF T'ANG

## C. Other Poets

(a) *Business Men*

(Chen Tse-ang, A.D. 656-98)

These business men to vaunt their skill are wont,  
 Yet they are children in philosophy.  
 They boast of cunning in chicanery,  
 To the end of life itself they give no thought.  
 What should they know of that Master of Mystery  
 Who saw the world reflected in a bowl,  
 Till, soaring clear of earth and sky, his soul  
 On wings of change passed on to Changelessness?

(b) *The Red Parrot*

(Po-chüi)

A parrot, gift from far-off Annam sent  
 Scarlet as peach-bloom, imitates man-speech:  
 Can he escape the cage in which he's pent—  
 Like all the learned and the eloquent?

(c) *A Blanket for the Poor*

(Po Chu-i)

What can I do to help the cold and poor?  
 No use to warm a single shivering wretch.  
 Would I'd a rug ten thousand feet or more  
 To cover all the city at a stretch.

(d) *Yen Li-Pen to his Son*

'In my youth I was a devoted student of letters: yet I am known only for my painting—as if I were a servant. I therefore advise you to refrain from practising this art.'

(e) *Wang Wei*

Pushing aside the floating lotus leaves glides the prow of the fisher's little boat.

(f) *The Cost of War*

(Chien Tun, A.D. 879)

The hills and riverbanks of this fair land  
 You soldiers turn into a battle-field.  
 How shall the villagers beneath your hand  
 Make them grow hay or even fuel yield?

Let me not hear one vain ambitious word  
 Of titles or promotion to be got.  
 To make a reputation for a single lord  
 Ten thousand poor men die and rot.

#### IV. T'ANG CONTROVERSY

##### *A Petition of Han Yü against the Buddhists*

Addressed to Hsien-tsung (A.D. 820)

The religion of Buddha is barbarous and unknown to antiquity. It was brought in in an age of decadence, and when the T'ang Dynasty was founded by Kao-tsu he considered exterminating it. Alas! His ministers, unskilled in the wisdom of the ancients, dissuaded him. I am furious when I think that this salutary step was not taken. And you, Sire, a clearsighted, wise, and scholarly ruler the like of whom we have not seen for long—you at your accession forbade the building of new temples or the making of novices. Alas! Your orders were not carried out. And now, what do we hear? Can it be that you have ordered that a bone-relic of Buddha be brought in state? Maybe you do it—not yourself believing—to make a show for the people. But they in their ignorance will think you believe. Their rustics will say 'See the Son of Heaven, how he honours Buddha—and shall not we?' They will burn camphor on their scalps, and scorch their fingers with incense. They'll throng the temples, and cart their goods to the monks to get redemption and salvation from dangers to come! . . . These things ruin our morals and make us ridiculous in the eyes of strangers. For after all it is a barbarian we honour, who could not speak our tongue; who knew nothing of the Sages; who disregarded filial piety. And you allow a dry bone, a dirty bit of his corpse, to be presented to your Majesty! . . .

Ah, have it sent, I beg, to the headman that he may throw it into the fire, and get rid of this root of calamity. So will you preserve your people from seduction and error. And if the Buddha learns of it and can act—well—I take the responsibility—let him take vengeance on me.

#### V. T'ANG RELIGION

##### (a) *The Essence of Buddhism*

There are things deep, hard to realize and to understand, but leading to calm and joy: subtleties not to be grasped by logic, but only to be known by the wise.



These things the Realizer, who has seen them, has set forth.

PALI NIKAYA.

The true Bodhi is deep, hard to realize and to understand.

LOTUS SCRIPTURE.

The Buddha is within you: enlightenment must come from within.

HUI-NENG.

(b) *The Nestorian Account of Creation*

(CH'ANG-AN, A.D. 731)

Behold the Changeless, true and invisible,  
Existing through all eternity, uncreated:  
Far-seeing, perfect Intelligence,  
Whose mysterious Being is everlasting.  
From primaeval substance He made the world,  
He more excellent than all holy intelligence,  
For He is Source of all things honourable.  
He is Aloha, eternal, triune, and mysterious.  
He traced a cross to fix the four directions,  
And moved the primaeval spirit to produce the two principles (of  
Nature).

The dark void was changéd,  
Heaven and earth were spread out.  
Sun and Moon were set in motion,  
Day and Night came into being.  
Having perfected all lesser things He created man:  
And bestowed on him a good nature,  
Making him ruler over all creatures:  
Pure and simple was he, obeying his own true nature:  
His mind unsullied and growing, was free from inordinate affection.

## XII

### THE SUNG ERA

(A.D. 960—1279)

'Without meditation no illumination.' BUDDHIST SAYING.

'We have the men and the resources too.' WANG AN-SHIH.

'Before heaven and earth was Li—Order—which set matter in motion.' CHU-HSI.

#### I

ON the collapse of the House of T'ang China fell into the hands of Turkoman and other invaders known as the Five Dynasties. For half a century chaos prevailed, and provincial governors had a free hand to plunder a diminishing and overburdened people till T'ai-tsu, a northerner of strong and virile character, appeared to restore order, to subdue all rivals, and to repel invaders.

With him dawns another great era, the Augustan age of Chinese literature and philosophy—an age of experiment and of freedom, of revolt against the trammels of tradition, of romanticism rather than of classicism; but also of scientific materialism, and naturalism. This is the Sung era, and while the Mongols are always at the gates, Chinese culture thrives under rulers of taste, many of whom are connoisseurs and collectors, and some of whom are ready for experiments in government as well as in art and letters. A glance at some of them will suffice. The founder, who reigned from 960 to 976, was wise and humane as well as strong, treating his lieutenants well and his people with kindly consideration. He revived the cult of K'ung Fu-tse, collected a library, and issued a new criminal code.

Shen-tsung (1068—84) encouraged a vast experiment in State socialism—largely to meet the ever-growing expenditure upon the army, and to give hope to the discouraged farmers. The Dowager Empress Kao (1084—93) ruled so well that the people called her the 'Yao and Shun' of her age. Hui-tsung (1101—25) was a notable collector and

critic, and to him the world owes a great debt for conserving treasures of painting, which were scattered when the Mongols sacked his capital, but which without him would probably have perished altogether.

For the rest it is an age notable rather for scholars and artists than for rulers. In spite of an army which reached the colossal figure of one and a half millions the northern capital fell before the Niüchi in 1126, and Nanking and Hangchou were both sacked and looted within the next four years. So priceless collections either perished or were scattered, and great pictures, now recovered, have gone through many vicissitudes. Some of them bear the seal of Hui-tsung, who was then taken captive, and many claim to be from his own brush, especially pictures of hawks and eagles; but these were probably done by his court painters. Fortunately the great books were now in print, and could not be demolished. For under the Five Dynasties printing from wood-blocks had been invented (in A.D. 932), and the Sung era owes its great achievements in scholarship in great part to this device—to this and to the spirit of inquiry and of freedom of thought and speech which in China as in the Europe of five centuries later accompanied—perhaps stimulated it.

And as the roots of the European renaissance were hidden in the dark ages, and those of the Hindu renaissance in the chaos of pre-Guptan times, so in China the dark age of the Five Dynasties was a period of preparation for the enlightenment of Sung.

Encyclopaedias, catalogues, and Se-ma Kuang's great history—the fruit of nineteen years' work—were printed, as well as collections of Confucian and Buddhist works; and as early as 978 a library was built to house 80,000 volumes. A college adjoined it, and academies became possible in many cities as books multiplied—schools of philosophy and sometimes of wisdom. Printing made popular works—novels and dramas—accessible to the masses, and greatly stimulated authorship. It also made paper money available: the first note being printed in

A.D. 970. The clash of intellectual swords is heard throughout this age: 'pig' and 'dog' are names for opponents, and as the entry to public service was by the gate of scholarship the discussions were often practical as well as heated. When Wang An-shih as prime minister under Shen-tsung began his reforms, he supported them by quotations from the classics, and his opponents drew their bitter attacks from the same source.

The new freedom and individualism of the age are well illustrated in this great man, who came first into prominence as an exponent of political science, and was appointed to a teaching position in the Han-lin Academy. Maintaining that everything belongs to the emperor, people as well as land, he insisted also that the Son of Heaven is the father of his subjects, and must cherish and help them. Paying special attention to the peasants and farmers, he found them paralysed by the demands of statute labour, and by the intolerable exactions of the tax-gatherer. His State socialism was aimed both at alleviating their lot, and at getting better results from them and their fields. Criticized by conservatives as a visionary, he yet set new standards and actually accomplished so much that the emperor supported him for eighteen years in his reforms; and it was in large part the corruption and ineptitude of the official class, his main critics, which defeated him. Complaining of their lassitude and inertia as well as of their chicanery he worked resolutely on. His first reform was a survey of all lands, and a reduction of the land-tax. A tax in kind was substituted, and the burden shifted to the backs of the wealthy by an income-tax. This, as always, was resented by the rich, and was too often evaded. Government loans of seed and tools were inaugurated, to be paid for by an interest of two per cent. a month on the crops. The surplus, bought at a fair price by the government, was sold at a fair profit; and transport was nationalized to make this possible and to prevent famine. Military service was also nationalized, and government made federal rather than local. These measures naturally met with opposition from the upper classes, and

from local governors, and the attack was launched by the scholar Cheng Hsiang and his son, who argued that Confucian teachings were being disregarded, and who saw in the unkempt appearance of the reformer proof that he was no gentleman. The emperor allowed the critics to 'retire' into exile; but the historian Se-ma Kuang was on their side. His great history, completed in 1084, marked him as an eminent authority, and he continued his attack upon the reforms, playing upon local irritation at the centralization of government, and aiding and abetting the wealthy who, then as now, saw in State socialism an enemy of all thrift and individual effort, as well as of private property. They could indeed point to the breakdown of government machinery, and when drought came they argued that it was a punishment for these breaks with tradition. 'Natural causes,' replied Wang An-shih, 'are the explanation of such phenomena: they do not spring from moral causes.' But the moment the emperor did away with the reforms, the rain came down in a deluge, and Wang An-shih went into exile. Se-ma Kuang succeeded him as prime minister. Though many of them disbelieved in it, Heaven had vindicated the conservatives.

This vast experiment in socialism lasted nearly twenty years, and stirred China socially and intellectually to its depths. To it is due the emergence of the great philosopher and commentator Chu Hsi in the next century, who edited Se-ma Kuang's new history and the old Confucian classics so skilfully that for seven centuries his text-books have been classical models, and have further crystallized and standardized Chinese life. An honest and fearless official, Chu Hsi was also an honest and bold thinker; a pupil of Li Tsung, he passed from Buddhism to Confucianism, and claiming to seize the essential points in the masters of Chinese thought and to bring out a central unity, he gave to China a much less religious philosophy than she had hitherto enjoyed. He is in fact a dynamic materialist—like all his school everywhere, naively positing the power of matter to move, but unlike most of them accepting men

too as free beings. Eternal energy or force is for him a more intelligible concept than Shang Ti or the Heavenly Ruler: and he expounds K'ung Fu-tse more negatively than is just, as Wang An-shih goes beyond Mo-tse in his socialism. Chu Hsi's dogmas that man is by nature good, and has for his guidance a system of infallible classical teaching consistent with itself, are no more 'reasonable' in themselves than Mo-tse's acceptance of a loving God and of man's salvation through universal altruism. Ch'i or 'universal energy' may seem best conceived as impersonal, but personality is a higher and better category.

Between these poles China, like the West, has swung, and is still swinging: and at the moment Wang An-shih's reforms are being carefully studied and found to be consistent with sound Confucian teaching, while Mo-tse's theism and altruism are also being revived. It seems clear that Chu Hsi was influenced by the Indian Sankhya system in his distinction between Sing, spirit which is good, and Ch'i, matter which clouds it, at once its necessary vehicle and its enemy. Certain tendencies of Sung philosophy such as the pantheism of Chang Tsai and the atheism of Chen Tuan must be reckoned as elements in the system of Chu Hsi, and they too were influenced by Indian philosophy. Some idea of these rival teachers may be gathered from our illustrative readings; and something also of the philosophy of their great contemporary, the artist and critic Kuo Hsi.

In him is revealed the artistic ideal of the age. Here too a new breath of freedom is blowing, and a new suavity and romanticism is expressed in such great painters as Li Lung-mien (Li Kung-lin), who died in 1106 after a very active and brilliant career as a painter of landscape as well as Buddhist subjects. If his work is not as strong as that of Wu Tao-tse it is notable for mastery of delicate line and colour, and his Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are serene and lovely creations. Still more famous are his Lohan—some gnarled and rugged as an old oak, some smooth and polished as Confucian scholars—two types of saintliness

which China acknowledges. For the saint may retreat from the world and despise its conventions, or he may follow the nobler and more humane course of mingling with it and co-operating with its best efforts. Such is the Sung ideal, and Kuo Hsi voices it for the scholars of his age.

In cities like K'ai-feng and Hangchou life was good as well as pleasant, and Marco Polo, who knew Venice in its glory, exhausts his epithets in praising Hangchou, its gardens and lakes, its palaces and restaurants, as well as the friendliness and culture of its people. He seems to have seen nothing of its great artists or philosophers, to have taken back to Venice no printed book or picture. What a sensation these would have made in Venice; and how the sailors of Genoa would have crowded about a specimen of the compass then being used in China! As it was, Europe had to wait three centuries for its 'discovery' of printing, and Marco Polo's own journal is known in many manuscript editions, while it was not till 1492 that Columbus, kindled maybe by the keen interest of 'Marco Millioni' in the wealth of Zipangu or Japan, and in the splendours of Khambaluk or Peking, set out on his momentous voyage.

## II

What are the great and formative elements in this age? We have mentioned the spirit of freedom and inquiry. We may place next the quietism of the Ch'an school—a Chinese development of meditative Buddhism associated with the names of such 'patriarchs' as Bodhidharma and Hui Neng.

The earliest documents which tell the strange story of these masters belong to the Sung era, but there are much earlier biographies of monks who practised these meditations, and they are of the very essence of Buddhism. 'Without meditation no insight' is one of its axioms, and meditation is indeed the main task of the Buddhist monk as almsgiving is of the Buddhist layman in this religion of enlightenment and compassion. So Buddhism enhanced and systematized the Chinese tendency to quietism already

articulate in Taoism: and if Taoism laid stress on the spiritual reality of all nature as an embodiment of the Tao, Buddhism emphasized its transiency. Nature was a dream, but a beautiful one; and men could see in it an embodiment of the Buddha—real so long as men had to be incarnate in bodily form. The Sankhya school had imbued a Buddhist philosophy with its insistence on this transient yet real union of spirits with bodies, and it was this aspect of Hindu thought which, with its emphasis on meditation as the way of escape, influenced China in this era. Moreover, both Taoism and Buddhism held out the lure of obtaining magic or transcendental powers, and this long search played a great part in the history of a people whom an excess of rationalism has continually driven beyond the borders of mysticism into the realm of magic.

Such men as Tao An, who died in A.D. 385, and his pupil Hui Yüan (d. A.D. 416) had indeed sought to reinterpret Buddhist meditation or dhyana in terms of Taoist thought. How readily wu-wei or non-activity fits in with Buddhist ideas, and Nibbanism with the eternalism of Lao-tse! How easily both degenerate into magic practices! The practical Chinese wanted proofs of this mystical technique, and their scholars sought a simplification of the essential content of the Indian religion now overloaded with metaphysics. They saw in Buddhism a method of sudden enlightenment, and in the pursuit of this they invented the Dark Sayings, or Koan, which aim at snubbing the discursive intellect and at giving intuition free play. They sought to kick away all crutches and artificiality and to take man back to nature, and to experience. Body and mind were to be freed from all bonds, and by the ninth century this new gymnosophy had developed into a potent influence. Chinese reason had taken Indian mysticism and made it at once simple and austere. This led to beauty in the simple open spaces of Buddhist monasteries, to austerity of line in their architecture, to 'cleanliness' and good taste as opposed to the florid and the over-decorated.



It led to elimination of the non-essential: this was its own origin and essence.

And if its influence was great upon the artists and thinkers of this age in China it was even greater in Japan, where the element of austerity and of the bizarre strikes a congenial note, and where Zen came as a timely reaction from effeminacy and over-refinement. The tea-ceremony, the quiet meditation-hall, the simple beauty of a garden which is itself the result of much pruning and elimination, the lines of a picture reduced to the bare bones of the subject, these and above all the quiet enjoyment of nature and the art of meditation are the fruits of Ch'an or Zen Buddhism. Whatever intensifies and beautifies life, whatever reveals the beauties and grandeur of nature, whatever brings chosen souls together in mystical union will make for great art and great thinking. The Sung era enjoyed the rich by-products of two centuries of such contemplation. They had reunited man to nature, and had sent him back to read her profound lessons. They had linked Lao-tse and Sakyamuni in a new and very fruitful friendship.

If T'ang is the era of the interpenetration of Taoism and Buddhism, Sung is that of the fusion of Buddhist philosophy with Confucian social theory and politics.

Some Chinese critics see in this process a victory for Buddhist quietism and the paralysis of Chinese activism: others claim it as a revival of Confucian rationalism which now adopts the technique of mysticism in order to defeat it. The truth is surely that China yielded to a better metaphysic, but reaffirmed her native social theory, adopting a technique which she needed: and if we must use the metaphors of conflict for this cross-fertilization of cultures it was a victory for K'ung Fu-tse rather than for Sakyamuni. It was the culmination of a long process of canonization of the typical Chinese. If there was sterilization as well as fertilization that is equally true of the analogous influence of Aristotle in the West. The surest way of turning a benefactor into a curse is to canonize him and his works till there is no freedom left.

We have seen the mandarins 'veiling their faces', as Wang An-shih dares to think for himself and to interpret nature differently from their orthodox cosmism; earthquakes and other calamities, he dares to teach, are due not to sin but to natural causes. His great opponent Chu Hsi (1129-1200) is seen, when China is overrun with Tartars, solemnly telling the emperor that the cause of all this misery is in his own mind.

This may be Buddhist idealism misapplied, but it is also orthodox Sinism, and Chu Hsi went for his authority to the Book of Changes and to the pamphlet *Ta Hsieh* ('Great Learning') discovered by his predecessors Cheng Hao (1032-85) and Cheng Yi (1033-1108). It is an anonymous work belonging to the Li-chi and in it they discovered a logical method: 'when things are thoroughly studied knowledge will be increased to the limit. Then ideas will be rectified, minds clarified and character improved. So families will be well ordered and States well governed.'

This is the old Sinism, but by re-emphasis a method of reasoning is developed, and to investigate into things becomes the essence of philosophy.

But just as in the West the age-long battle rages between the discursive reason and intuition, so in China were the Sung philosophers challenged in the fifteenth century by Wang Yang Ming (1472-1529) whose intuitionism became a great force in Japan also.

'The ruler of the body is the mind,' says Wang Yang Ming; and it might be Plotinus or a Cambridge Platonist speaking. For the mind is for Wang Yang Ming that intuitive process, without which no investigation will avail. And here is a teaching which combines the pragmatic and the poetic and is well suited to the genius of the Far East.

Many scholars regard Chu Hsi as a liberator of the Chinese spirit—who resolved the old Confucianism 'from a series of frozen formulae into a living stream'.

But others—very brilliant Chinese thinkers such as Hu Shih—condemn him as the chief agent in freezing the stream of Chinese thought.

In the clash of opinion his real work is often neglected. He is in effect the subtlest metaphysical mind of China, the architect of the only system of philosophy she has produced—a synthesis of Indian quietism and Chinese rationalism. His aim is to account for the world and man; and he begins with non-being, Wu-ki, a potential cosmos, and with the absolute Tai-ki—pure being—‘nearer to the transcendental God of Saint Thomas than to the Brahman of the Vedantist’. It is in effect spirit—‘everywhere, most exalted, most excellent . . . conscious soul, self-conscious, conscious of its workings’.

Li—Law—moulds matter—Ki: ‘it is as it were the master of the house, the host who abides while the guests come and go’.

It liberates energy-in-matter: it is thus the creative power imminent in this Cosmos, which is ‘a reflex and an emanation of the Absolute’.

It is like the moon which lights up the night: one with the sky it spreads its gentle radiance on waves and lakes, and is reflected in their surface—yet it is one indivisible, and keeps its own identity.

So the Tai-ki is at once the Source of all, the Soul of all—akin to the Wisdom of the Hebrew, and the Logos of the Greek.

And if it is akin to the Dharma of India, it is also akin to the Tao of China. Like both it leads on to sound morality: and Chu Hsi does not hesitate to bid his emperor meet a great drought (1179) by putting the army to work at agriculture: ‘You will then have more harvest and fewer mercenaries.’ Nor did the philosopher hesitate to attack court intrigues; and for his boldness was exiled by Kuang-tsung. This was the fate too of the great statesman, poet, and artist Su Tung-po (1036–1101), who used his exile to good purpose—draining the marshes and widening the canals of Hang-chou, and saving the people in a flood at Soo-chou.

The old activism of Yu and the early rulers revives in the men of Sung: even those who took opposite sides—





COURT LADIES ATTRIBUTED TO THE EMPEROR HUI TSUNG 11th C.  
(*B r M, m i l, 4r*)



LANDSCAPE BY TUNG YUAN (SOUTHERN SONG, TENTH CENTURY)  
(*B r M, m i l, 4r*)  
SONG PAINTINGS

Wang An-shih who persecuted Su Tung-po, Sse-ma Kuang who attacked Wang An-shih—are in their way men who believe that the country must be ruled in the interests of the people, and that man can control the forces of nature.

And in its intellectual activity the Sung Age is one of intense vigour, when Zen concentration contributes to worldly success, and stimulates artist and poet to a new insight and a new love of nature.

Yet Chinese critics of great insight and ability see in the Neo-Confucianism of Sung a victory for Buddhism in paralysing the real mind of China—rationalist and humanist—with its other-worldly mysticism.

### III

Let us look at some of the great painters who inherited this spirit—and we shall see how the sentiment of man's oneness with nature animated them. The rhythm of nature pulses through their work, but it is with a romantic sense of its kinship and sympathy with man.

Of the earlier Sung painters we may mention Li Cheng, a descendant of the House of T'ang, whose unique picture 'Studying the Tablet' is still preserved in Peking—a lovely landscape with a scholar and his boy studying an ancient writing. He loved wintry scenes, one of which, 'Winter Magpies', is in the Metropolitan Museum. It is one of those masterpieces which make one feel as well as see the chill of winter, with its bareness and snowy hills. These artists could indeed 'paint the north wind'. Others depicted dragons, or horses, which were said, like those of the great Greeks, to come to life and leave the picture. But unlike the Greek Zeuxis they made no great attempt at realism.

The Sung emperors had a great and notable collection known as the Hsuan-ho from the name of the palace where it was lodged, and the catalogue of it may be the work of the great Mi Fei. It classes pictures as religious works, human figures, palaces, dragons and fishes, landscapes, animals, birds and flowers, bamboos and vegetables, and contains the names of painters as early as the third century

A.D. and the titles of their works. There are also records of Mi Fei's own great collection. With Kuo Hsi and Chao Ling-jang he is one of the great landscape artists of the northern Sung.

A few notes on each must suffice. Kuo Hsi is perhaps the greatest. Two works attributed to him are in the Metropolitan Museum, and illustrate his maxim that 'landscape must be viewed from a distance in order to be appreciated'. As so often in Chinese landscape the eye is placed at a height above the subject, and a bird's-eye perspective is obtained. These pictures of travellers in mountain ranges with their distant and near peaks and their suggestion of great spaces are the very poetry of art, and Mi Fei and Chao Ling-jang are great exponents of it. The former comments upon a work of the latter that in a small compass he has shown a wonderful breadth of scene, and his famous paintings of wild geese suggest the same wonderful spaciousness.

Mi Fei was a great man of letters and a calligraphist as well as a painter who 'piled ink on as if he was working in oil'.<sup>1</sup> Painting on paper he has left a few specimens of his work such as 'Mist on the Hills' which might be better called 'A Mountain Peak in Mist', and illustrates the Chinese passion for Shan-shui or Shan-chuan ('hills and water'), the usual names for landscape; for in spite of the maxims of Kuo Hsi many continued to rejoice in the solitude and grandeur of the mountains.

Between the maps of early China and those grand interpretations and impressions of her modern age how great is the development, not only in technique but in the poetry and philosophy of art. Never topographic or meticulous, these Sung workers produce an impression of the grandeur of an idealized scenery. Full of subtlety and mystery and charm, they allure the eye and mind as no other painting can do, and are full too of religious and solemn feeling. The 'numinous' is present as in some great cathedral, and man is attuned to harmony with the eternal Tao.

<sup>1</sup> John Ferguson, *Chinese Painting*, p. 100.

'Landscapes are an inexhaustible source of life,' says Kuo Hsi, and the Sung Age in particular developed this religious sense of nature's mysteries. Nor has any age surpassed it in the portrayal of divine beings. The great Kwan-yin of Mu Chi is flanked by apes and cranes, symbols of lonely and beautiful scenes, and the saints and Buddhas of Li Lung-mien are visions of majesty and sublimity, as great as those of his mountain peaks. Heaven, Nature, and Man are the three-in-one of this great art; and men like Li Lung-mien and Mi Fei and Su Shih would gather in the famous Western Garden for aesthetic enjoyment and inspiration. A scroll of Li Lung-mien shows them gathered in this lovely spot. He has also left us a vigorous portrait of Wang An-shih entitled 'Meditations'. The great man is seen passing under an avenue of old trees; and a further glimpse into his character is given us in his poems, one so typical of the sensitive spirit of his time that we may well quote it here:

'Tis midnight, all within the house is still:  
The water-clock has stopped—no sound of any kind;  
Yet sleep is banished by the moon, whose skill  
Throws ever-changing shadows on the blind.

With Zen monks and Japanese literati this delicate spiritual discernment and this almost morbid sensitiveness to beauty passed to Japan, where it may be studied in the Ashikaga era, and seen at work inspiring Sesshu and his school. It spreads westward too to Persia, and so to India; and China is once more a centre of great and sublime inspiration.

Treasured in Japan for example are the exquisite black and white studies of Mu Chi or Mokkei, whose son became a Japanese and founded a school. These Zennists deepened that natural love of beauty and of cleanliness and order which make Japan unique in Asia. In Persia the miniaturist found new inspiration in the exquisite forms of plant and insect, as in the romantic loves of heroes and heroines. For man and nature are one; and nature is felt to be in sympathy with man's life, as man attunes himself to hers.

The pantheism of the Sung philosophers now deepens



the old Taoism, and their humanism corrects the monastic tendency of both Buddhist and Taoist thinkers. This new delight in beauty reveals itself also in the minor arts—in porcelains of exquisite surface and tint, and in the patina of lovely bronzes and lacquers.

As the men of Sung refused to turn their back on society, but loved life and enjoyed its luxury in great cities, so they found in matter itself a living pulse. Beauty is all about us, and Kuo Hsi bids the artist cultivate a catholic taste, and observe comprehensively and widely, noting the essential features of a scene and ignoring the non-essentials. Such is the philosophy of the day—strong in its objectivity but also in its subjective interpretation, and artists under great patrons like Hui-tsung were sure of a critical yet appreciative public, and of a reasonable livelihood. Their grand landscapes are notable for spaciousness and quiet beauty, and they were critical of the existing works of an earlier day. Even Ku K'ai-chih comes in for scathing comment so far as he attempted landscape; and only Wang Wei is acknowledged as really great by the critic Su Tung-po. With a few bold strokes these masters, especially of the Southern school, suggest great spaces, and there is no trivial detail to disturb the eye or mind, as some gnarled fir-tree leans over a chasm, while a poet at its foot contemplates eternity.

In two albums, one belonging to Marquis Kuroda and entitled *The Garden of Brush-culture* and another to Mr. Strehlneek of Shanghai, from which a painting is here reproduced, miniature-drawings of these great masters are preserved, and here their vigour and poetic imagination can be very conveniently studied. Here Taoist teachings of the value of emptiness and Buddhist practices of contemplation are revealed in the use of space and in the spirit of ecstatic calm. A great example of figure and landscape painting with these qualities is in the 'Sakyamuni coming down from the Mountains', treasured in Japan. Our illustration of a typical Sung sculpture reveals a certain weakening and softening when compared with its T'ang prototypes.



CHINESE LANDSCAPE WITH PALACES  
(MING (?), P'IPING)



KWANYIN IN POSE OF PRINCELY EASE



A FAN BY MA YUAN

SUNG ART

## IV

As to the poetry of this era, it too is largely imitative of the T'ang masters: 'Wan Yu-chang,' says the caustic Father Wieger, 'was accurate and limpid, and went into ecstasies over peonies—that was all.' But he saw in the peony what Tennyson saw in the 'flower in the crannied wall,' or Wordsworth in the daffodils; and there is something of real pathos in his lines quoted in our reading.<sup>1</sup> Where is a too typical Chinese scene more poignantly depicted? Side by side go the luxury of the court and the bitter poverty of the people now as ever, and as ever it is a poet who voices the cry of the destitute. What need of originality when nothing changes?

But originality and a very 'modern' spirit are not wanting in such poems as those of the disillusioned statesman Su Tung-po.<sup>2</sup> Among the enemies of Wang An-shih such a spirit would mock at any official: it is a classical Chinese type.

As to medical and astronomical science they seem to have made little progress. Hysteria was regarded as demon-possession, and treated with acupuncture to let out the devils, or to drive them from more vital to less vital spots. Drugs were used with some skill, though Father Wieger (forgetting what was done in contemporary Europe) makes fun of the treatment of gastric complaints with a powder of ginger and olibanum. The burning of moxa and other gums and the repetition of Buddhist and Taoist texts went on—as it still does in modern Japan; and modern America spends untold millions in astrology and quackery of every description. No nation has yet been truly scientific, or truly religious.

Taking it all in all, this was a great era, and its fruits are in the museums of the world, and in the living tradition of Japanese drama and painting. Let us seek further light there, and leave China with Marco Polo, seeking to get his story of her grandeur accepted, and Kublai Khan upon

<sup>1</sup> Illustrative Reading, IV (a).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., IV (b).

the throne of Peking and casting covetous eyes on Japan. For the Sung gave place to the Mongol; and already old China had died as new China was reborn in the new spirit of romanticism and of philosophic idealism of this age. Her history has been that of many dynasties and their degeneracy, of the coming of new vigour with hardy northerners, and of their gradual weakening. When the Manchus came to the throne a wise but cynical philosopher said, 'Give them all they ask, and they'll be finished in three hundred years.' And this was foresight based on a score of such tragedies during two thousand years, and was fulfilled almost to the letter.

Before we leave this great nation and look at its pupils in Japan and Korea we must look also at the barbarians. Huns, Uigurs, Mongols, Tungusians, Scythians, Turks, Kitans—who are all these peoples who have played so great a part in history?

Of kindred blood the Huns or Hiung-nu are the inveterate scourge of the Chinese: 'If the Chinese are settled Tartars the Tartars are nomad Chinese,' says Okakura Kakuzo, and China was long occupied with the double task of repelling their invasions and of assimilating them when they got a foothold. During the Sung era Kitans and Tungusians waged continuous war on China, and she was humiliated by having to recognize them and to pay what was virtually tribute: her very name in Europe, Cathay, is a corruption of the word Kitan, and it was under such Mongol conquerors as the Great Khan that Europe first knew China by anything less vague than rumour or an occasional embassy.

What Attila was to Europe the Mongol Khans were to China seven centuries later; but they were also to do for China what their cousins the great Moguls did for India, and they must on the whole be reckoned not only 'Scourges of God' but also vivifiers and builders.

'They begin by savage and senseless destruction. They end, not only by leaving everywhere—in Persia, in India, in Asia Minor, in Constantinople—marvellous monuments

of their greatness and the most beautiful tombs in the world, but by developing to the highest point of which it is capable the genius of the peoples whom they have conquered, and, as it were, quickened to intenser life,'<sup>1</sup> says an acute observer.

We have seen how much Han China owed to the Huns, and how the Wei Tartars were the carriers of Greek sculpture and Buddhist thought to China; these are but two examples which show that harassing as were the constant invasions of her frontier they were no unmixed evil.

In the T'ang era Kitans and Turks were driven back only to swarm to the attack of the dying dynasty. And in 936 the former—a Tungusian tribe—established themselves as the Liao or 'Iron' rulers of Liao-tung. When a Chinese sovereign killed their people in his territory, these warlike hordes swarmed all over China, looting and ravaging. They sent the royal house into exile in Tartary; and all through the Sung era we find them playing an aggressive role.

But a branch of the Tungusians threw off their yoke and set up the Kin or 'Golden' Dynasty. With them Hui-tsung made an alliance against the Kitans, and when they won and grew arrogant he turned to the Kitans to help him against the Niüchi. Defeating this alliance the latter ravaged his land, looted his capital, and carried off his person and his family. When the Mongols in turn arose, Niüchi and Sung went down in a common destruction.

But Niüchi, Turks, and Mongols all in turn become Chinese, teach Chinese letters and literature, and bring in new energies to throne and people. It was Kublai Khan who planned and built Khanbaluk or Peking, most splendid of capitals, and who from this centre looked out for fresh lands to conquer. As ruler of all China and grand Khan of the Mongols he had become the greatest emperor of his time, and Marco Polo was not wrong in his high estimate of his patron.

<sup>1</sup> Émile Hovelacque, *China*, E.T., pp. 95-6.

## THE SPIRIT OF SUNG

## I. SUNG CRITICISM

A. Kuo Hsi (*d. A.D. 1088*) on Landscape*(a) The Lure of Landscape Painting*

Why do good men love landscapes? They are an inexhaustible fount of life. . . .

By his very nature man loves the greenery of gardens, the play of water on rocks, the cries of monkeys and the flight of cranes voicing their love of nature. . . .

Nothing is so odious as the noise and dust and bondage of human habitations, and men naturally envy the lot of hermits living amidst the beauties of nature.

But in these days of peace when emperor and people are in accord and work together for the common weal it were wrong to leave society and retire to the mountains. This is no time to abandon the life of the busy world . . . and most of us cannot indulge in the joys of nature. . . .

How delightful for the lover of woods and waters, of haze and mist, to find them in the work of a master. Here is the abiding vision of mountain peak and river, the abiding call of apes and the song of birds.

*(b) The Moods of the Painter*

If a painter forces himself to work, his painting will be spiritless and weak: for he cannot put his full energies into it. If he feels worried or anxious when he paints, his form will be vague and his line uncertain. This comes from lack of serious purpose. If he work hurriedly or feverishly his composition will be rough and arbitrary, lacking unity. This comes from a lack of reverent toil.

B. *Su Tung-po on Wu Tao-tse*

Wu Tao-tse's figures might have been drawn as shadows on a wall. They seem to walk out of the picture and into it again. They are solid, and can as it were be seen from both sides. The flat planes and the angles fit into each other as by a natural law of mathematics.

C. *Tung Yu on the same*

(12th century)

They are like sculpture: when he paints a face the cheek bones project, the nose is solid, the eyes hollow, the cheeks dimpled. But

these effects are not got by heavy shading: they seem to be spontaneous and inevitable.

#### D. *Others on Painting*

Painting and writing are one and the same art. Who ever knew a good calligraphist begin by making a sketch? Chou Shun.

The artist must place himself in communion with his subject.  
Chao Chang.

### II. SUNG REALISM

#### *Use Your Resources*

Wang An-shih (*d. A.D. 1086*)

The Empire lacks neither resources nor men. But people lack intelligence or energy in using these resources—these men. In old days it was not so. Rulers made inquiry, got information, turned to good account the resources and men available. To cite but one example: Nan Yü for long owed its supremacy to the care bestowed on making arrows of the best wood tipped with the best metals, and winged with the best feathers. So made they pierced men at a thousand paces. . . . One must use wise selection to get the best results. But those in office are apt to content themselves with sighing and complaints of men and mankind. It's a good excuse: but you can't make me accept it. No, we have the men and the resources too.

### III. SUNG PHILOSOPHY

Chu Hsi (1130-1200)

Chu Hsi is called by Father Wieger 'a tiresome preacher, always without flair or tact, prolix and nil'. It is strange that he should have dominated the mind of China for so many centuries. The following are typical passages.

There is but one nature in the world: the nature of man is one with that of heaven and earth, with that of birds and beasts.

We need not talk of vain, far-off things; if we would know Reality we must seek it within.

Each has within him the principle of right. This we call Tao. It is the road along which we must walk.

Virtue is the practice of this moral law.

The Buddhists keep talking of controlling the heart. Let us see what this means. . . . Truly the heart governs man's being. It is not



only lodged in the body, it is its master. It commands and is not commanded. It judges of external things and decides issues. Neutral, it can be influenced . . . so it is necessary to be on guard. But this is not to sit motionless and abstracted—as the Buddhists use. To control the sentiments and correct actions we need no ecstasy leading to unconsciousness. . . .

Wrongly interpreted, men read the text of the Shu-ching to mean that man has two hearts—one reasonable and one human. They are wrong. Man has one heart subject to two influences. Another error is to distinguish heart and body. The heart is one with the body. . . . Abstraction of one from the other, abstraction of the heart from the world about us, is contrary to nature and leads to annihilation.

#### IV. SUNG POEMS

##### (a) *A Famine*

Wang Yu-chang

No food anywhere:  
 No smoke rises from the huts.  
 But the sun has pity on the poor,  
 And a slight warmth is in the air.  
 On the road some beggars pass,  
 An old man and his old sick wife:  
 Three children follow crying—  
 A bushel of wheat and a string of cash.  
 Driven by famine they have left Chang-an,  
 The children lost their mother on the way;  
 They buried her alone in foreign soil,  
 And pushed on, hungry, pale and wan.  
 Seeking for work their bitter way they wend.  
 But in some valley on a snowy day  
 I fear they'll leave their bones to rot,  
 I, a degraded officer, am poor, God wot,  
 But they are poorer, without house or friend.

##### (b) *On the Birth of a Son*

Su Tung-po (1036-1101)

When a child is born the family  
 Devoutly hope 'twill be intelligent.  
 I through intelligence am spent

And hope my little son will be  
 Blest with such crass stupidity  
 That he will crown a life secure  
 With cabinet-rank—a sinecure.

Su Tung-po succeeded Sse-ma Kuang as prime minister, only to be exiled in 1094. He had three sons, one of whom was the great artist-scholar Su Kuo, landscapist and calligraphist. We do not know whether his prayer was answered in the respectable dullness of another.

(c) *On Middle Age*

Ou-Yang Hsuin (1007-72)

The water from the pools is vanishing ;  
 The mellow sunshine floods the lattices,  
 The wind of autumn fans us pleasantly.  
 Acacias glow with gold and vivid green,  
 And o'er the lintel of his summer gone  
 There falls the shadow of a lonely man.

Sung poetry is largely imitative of T'ang, but has both a pathos and an irony of its own—here illustrated. Yet even these qualities are in part imitated from Po Chui and other T'ang masters.

V. POST-SUNG CHINA

*Marco Polo on Hangchou*

The inhabitants of the city are idolaters, and they use paper money as currency. The men as well as the women have fair complexions, and are handsome. The greater part of them are always clothed in silk, in consequence of the vast quantity of that material produced in the territory of Kin-sai, exclusive of what the merchants import from other provinces. Amongst the handicraft trades exercised in the place, there are twelve considered to be superior to the rest, as being more generally useful; for each of which there are a thousand workshops, and each shop furnishes employment for ten, fifteen, or twenty workmen, and in a few instances as many as forty, under their respective masters. The opulent principals in these manufactories do not labour with their own hands, but, on the contrary, assume airs of gentility and affect parade. Their wives equally abstain from work. They have much beauty as has been remarked, and are brought up with delicate and languid manners. The costliness of their dresses, in silks and jewelry, can scarcely be imagined. Although the laws of their ancient kings ordained that each citizen should exercise the profession of his father, yet they were allowed,

when they acquired wealth, to discontinue the manual labour, provided they kept up the establishment, and employed persons to work at their paternal trades. Their houses are well built, and richly adorned with carved work. So much do they delight in ornaments of this kind, in paintings, and fancy buildings, that the sums they lavish on such ornaments are enormous. The natural disposition of the native inhabitants of Kin-sai is pacific, and by the example of their former kings, who were themselves unwarlike, they have been accustomed to habits of tranquillity. The management of arms is unknown to them, nor do they keep any in their houses. Contentious broils are never heard among them. They conduct their mercantile and manufacturing concerns with perfect candour and probity.

#### VI. LATER CHINESE PRAGMATISM

Wang Yang Ming (1472-1529)

There are no crises and problems beyond those of passion and change. Are not pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy passions of men? Seeing, hearing, talking, working, wealth and honour, poverty and lowliness, sorrow and difficulty, death and life, all are vicissitudes of life. All are included in the passions and feelings of men. These need only to be in a state of perfect equilibrium and harmony, which, in turn, depends upon being watchful over one's self.

Pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are in their natural condition in the state of equilibrium and harmony. As soon as the individual adds a little of his own ideas, he oversteps and fails to maintain the state of equilibrium and harmony. This implies selfishness. In subduing one's self, one must clear out selfish desire completely, so that not a bit is left. If a little is left, all sorts of evil will be induced to make their entrance.

If a person unceasingly applies himself truly and earnestly, he will daily better comprehend the subtle essence of the moral principles of the mind, as well as the subtlety of selfish desires. If he does not use his efforts in controlling himself, he will continually talk and yet never comprehend the meaning of moral principles or of selfish desire.

(Tr. F. G. HENKE, *Open Court*.)

#### VII. THE TRUE CHINESE

*Meng-tse*

Man's impulse is to do good, for his nature is good. That he does not do good is not the fault of his natural faculty. A feeling of sympathy everybody has; a feeling of shame everybody has; a feeling of

deference everybody has; a sense of discrimination everybody has. The feeling of sympathy is humaneness (jen); the feeling of shame is justice (i); the feeling of deference is propriety (li); and the sense of discrimination is intelligence (chi). Humaneness, sense of justice, propriety, and intelligence are not what is moulded into us from without. They are inherent in us, only men are not conscious of them.

Therefore, a man without a feeling of sympathy is not human; a man without a feeling of shame is not human; a man without a feeling of deference is not human; a man without a sense of discrimination is not human. The feeling of sympathy is the starting-point of humaneness; the feeling of shame is the starting-point of justice; the feeling of deference is the starting-point of propriety; and the sense of discrimination is the starting-point of intelligence. A man has these four starting-points as he has four limbs; and those who, having these four starting-points, plead incapability, are mutilating themselves.



PART III

JAPAN



### XIII

## THE BEGINNINGS OF JAPANESE HISTORY AND THE FOUNDATION OF JAPANESE CULTURE

There lies to the East a fair land girdled by blue mountains: let us make it our home. JIMMU TENNO.

### I

THE Japanese Islands, first called Nihon or Nippon<sup>1</sup> about the seventh century of our era, cover an area of some 150,000 square miles, and are largely mountainous. These facts help to explain both the complexity of the origin of the Japanese people and the unity which they early achieved in language and culture, and in their strong national spirit. For though but few of them belong to an autochthonous race, and there have been many waves of invaders, these could only come in small ships, a few at a time, and as they penetrated the mountains or spread through the valleys they were absorbed into the nation.

Their origins are even more baffling a problem than those of the Chinese. For while there are two chief types—one short and thickset with flat and broad faces, and the other taller and more slender with long, often aquiline faces—both seem to be immigrants. Before them the Ainu of Proto-Caucasian or Polynesian stock were in the field, and philological, archaeological, and other evidence suggests that they were once undisputed masters of all the Islands.

That they were driven slowly northward to their present home in Yezo is clear, for in the shell-mounds their skulls are often found side by side with those of Mongoloid type, while in caverns and elsewhere are found stone implements which improve as we follow the course of the Ainu northwards. This suggests that the invaders improved in

<sup>1</sup> These names, and the modern 'Japan', are variants of the Chinese Jih-pen—Source of the Sun: i.e. 'Land of the Rising Sun'.



their tool-making as they advanced. The so-called Yayoi remains—pottery, crude clay images, and weapons of stone—are of the neolithic type found in Korea and North Manchuria, while early Japanese religion had close affinity with the Shamanism of those countries.

The dominant type is certainly Mongolian,<sup>1</sup> the household habits are Malay;<sup>2</sup> and the summary of a modern lay-anthropologist of Japan, 'northern mother, southern father', while it is too schematic, is suggestive. For the language of the Japanese seems to be a blend of Polynesian and mainland tongues, their habits of tool-making and building are those of the Islanders, adopted and modified, and in their dolmens or burial-mounds are found not only clay models of huts of Malayan type and of men in the curious beetle-shard armour characteristic of Japan, but also metal swords, highly wrought bronze mirrors, ornaments of mainland provenance, and frescoes akin to those of Korea. Here, then, southern waves of immigrants are to be detected meeting others from the mainland, from among whom the islanders must have obtained wives. Coming in outrigger ships from great distances they cannot have brought women with them, and they would not intermarry freely with the Ainu. If we date the shell-mounds as lasting to about the first millennium B.C. and the dolmens as beginning about the fifth century B.C., we shall be approximately correct.

Their earliest history, vague as it is, is told in baffling picture-form in the old sagas of the Japanese. We read of Jimmu Tenno, the first ruler, prototype of the Tenson or dominant race, and of Susano-o, 'Lord of Violence, expelled from heaven', leader perhaps of an immigration from the mainland. But the official records belong to the eighth century A.D., and were edited and rewritten with a didactic purpose, the Kojiki—Record of Ancient Things—to establish the divine origin of the royal house, the Nihongi—Chronicle of Nihon—to adapt this early history

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the eyelid has the 'Mongolian fold', the skull is broad and prognathic, the hair straight.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. diet, clothing, architecture.

to Chinese models. 'The Chronicles begin with a cosmogonic myth which is clearly of Chinese origin. There follows a theogonic myth which bears a striking resemblance to Polynesian legends of the creation.<sup>1</sup> In a word linguistic, literary, ethnologic, and archaeological studies all point to their mixed mainland and Polynesian origin.

To find the kernel of truth in all this myth and saga is very difficult; but we can at least learn something of the beliefs and rituals of these early peoples, and can watch their cult of tree-, animal-, and stone-worship blending with that of gods and ancestors. The national cult Shin-to, or Kami-no-michi, 'way of the gods', is here seen in the making, and out of this matrix the worship of the Imperial House is seen in process of crystallization. Their aesthetic appreciation of their new home is also seen in the names of this mythology—'land of fresh rice ears', 'land of lush plains', are their tribute to the fertility of the soil: 'princess blooming as a flowering-tree', is a name for a goddess. And their Kami, or Lords, are nature gods whose presence they find in the beautiful as well as in the useful, in the dreaded as well as in the beloved. The ruler must be related to these gods, and to whom better than the heaven-shining-august-sun-goddess? Even when he was not useful he was never allowed to be uncolourful—and his 'seed of the sun' are called hiko, sun prince, and hike, sun-princess, shining in the splendour of the unbroken succession of a natural yet divine order. Next in importance to the divine ruler is the soil of Japan, personified as the 'great earth-spirit'.

'Because the Great God heaven-shining who dwells at Ise . . . has bestowed on him the land of the Four Regions . . . therefore will the first-fruits of the soil be piled up for the god, and he, the Ruler, will enjoy the rest in peace,' says an early Harvest Ritual.

These twin-stars then of Yamato Damashii, the Soul of Japan, are seen rising in the dim dawn of her history—a passionate devotion to the Land of the Gods, as she was later to be called, and a worshipful loyalty to the living

<sup>1</sup> Sansom, *Japan*, p. 21.

god who sits on the Imperial Throne possessing it and enjoying its fruits.

The myths begin with Izanagi and Izanami who, 'standing on the floating bridge of heaven' (perhaps the rainbow), thrust down the 'jewel thunderbolt'. This is a fertility symbol, and the whole story is a kind of Adam and Eve saga. This pair may well be the prototypes of an autochthonous or very early immigrant race. They come to earth, build a house supported on a central pillar, walk ceremonially about it, and in due course give birth to islands and to gods, youngest of whom is Fire, 'the Evil Child' whose birth costs Izanami her life. She goes to the land of Yomi or Darkness. Like Orpheus, Izanagi follows her, discovers the grim realities of death and decay, and after strange adventures comes back and takes a ceremonial bath. From the tears of his left eye is born Amaterasu the sun-goddess, and from those of his right the Moon.

Here clearly is a strange farrago—but not of nonsense, as is sometimes said. It is rather a stratified account of beginnings, of early marriage-rituals, of fertility-cults, of historic migrations, of an eclipse, of meditation upon death. These pictures of the desolate sky-god and the 'evil child' may be symbols of a famine, when Mother Earth no longer yielded good offspring to the Sky-Father, and was herself burnt up in the drought.

When Izanagi seizes his great sword and kills the child, we read:

Then the blood at the sword-point gushed, and clung to many rocks, and three gods were born. . . .

The blood from the blade of the sword also gushed, and clung to many rocks, and other three gods were born. . . .

And the blood from the hilt of the sword oozed from his fingers, and other three gods were born. . . .

Three gods from each part of the great 'ten-hands' breadth sword'—what can this mean? The first three are Dark Rain, Dark Water, and Dark Mountain: the second, Swift Fire, Fire-God, Thunder-God: the third, Rock-heaver, Rock-splitter, Rock-wielder.

The 'great sword' is in a word a vivid symbol-picture of a thunder-storm: after drought comes this creative blast from heaven, and new creatures spring into being. Here, then, is the oldest and in some ways the grandest of Japanese poem-pictures, her characteristic way of expressing ideas in puzzles of profound beauty, albeit often with a touch of the macabre and the bizarre, and the 'Soul of Japan' stands revealed. The Yamato race, however mixed to-day, are descendants of the groups here symbolized. Coming through the dread experience of a devastating famine and of fierce heat they carry with them an awful picture of Earth swooning and dying, and of Heaven itself coming at last to their rescue—after perhaps an eclipse of the sun—in the crashings and torrential rains of a tropical thunder-storm.

If this is the meaning of the myth, then it is a close parallel to the search of Ishtar for Tammuz in Babylonian lore; and in an early ritual the goddess is made to return and teach her lord that 'the Evil Child' Fire can be tamed by the God of Water, and by 'river leaves', which suggest such vegetation-gods as Attis, child of the river-god. The gourd is also mentioned—symbol in early rituals of water—and 'clay-mountain Goddess', who when married to 'the Evil Child' gives birth to the 'Young Growth God', father of the five cereals.

It is noteworthy that the first history, the first rituals and drama, the first poems of the Japanese are concerned with food, and it has ever since been the most pressing concern of a people with so small a cultivable area—depending on rain to irrigate their terraced rice-fields, desperately afraid of fire in their flimsy thatched houses, continually shaken by earthquakes. Children of Earth and Sky, of Izanagi and Izanami, the people of Yamato retain folk-tales of a great calamity which drove them to these islands: they perhaps preserve in Amaterasu a memory of some early priestess, and in that of Susano-o her brother that of the leader of an early migration.

It is possible, however, that these two are the protagonists

in a Light and Darkness myth, for she hides from him in the Rock Cave of Heaven, and is only enticed forth by a stratagem of the gods. Early ritual practised at times of an eclipse no doubt explains some of this myth: the Shinto priestess is called out from the inner shrine by the singing and dancing of the priests; and the Mirror of the Imperial Dynasty is the emblem of this early cult of the sun.

The pantomimic dances of Japanese ritual are derived from the dance of Ame-no Uzume, the Dread Woman who kindled a fire and performed a sex-dance to tempt the sun-goddess to come forth; and her song is the beginning of Japanese enumeration—from one to ten.

With Jimmu Tenno we come more obviously to actual history, the conquest of Central Japan by a leader from the southern island of Kyushu. 'I have heard', he says in the Kojiki, 'from the sun-father of old, that in the east there is a fair land girdled by blue mountains: let us make our home there.' He sails to a point near what is now Osaka, so long to be a great centre of Japanese civilization, and meeting opposition from the islanders and from storms, he jumps into the sea and becomes a god—the Blade-Holder, Sabimochi. The other gods fight against the invaders, belching forth smoke and poisonous fumes, and so the story goes on till 'in winter on the first day of the tenth month they tasted the food of Azube, and marched on in battle array'.

Is this the memory of a festival to eat the new rice now safely harvested? All the objects and persons connected with it have the prefix *Idzu*, 'sacred', and again we seem clearly in the presence of ritual embodying history, in which the Ruler is organizing priest. His house of the Tenson, or aristocratic group, was to assume great honours—its members owning the land and the property of its subjects, and wielding power of life and death. While many emperors have been actually powerless, they have never ceased to be regarded as gods, and it is not only impious but also rebellious to question even the genuine antiquity of the

Royal Emblems; though it is clear that the mirror came from China during Han times.

## II

Gradually from among the vague and shadowy forms of these early divine rulers, types rather than individuals, there stands forth an empress, Jingu, and her son, Ojin, who are personalities, idealized no doubt yet historic. They appear at the time of the fall of the House of Han in China, and it is noteworthy that there are many grave-objects of this period in Japan, and that our first account of the Japanese is from a Chinese historian of this date. This is Fan Kua, who, writing at the beginning of the third century of our era, records the arrival of a Japanese envoy in the first century, and says, 'The land of the Dwarfs (Wa) lies to the south-east of Korea, mountainous islands in the sea. It consists of more than a hundred states, and of these thirty or more have paid homage to the Han, since King Wu-ti conquered Chao-hsien, or North Korea.<sup>1</sup> Each has an unbroken dynasty. . . . The men are tattooed on face and body according to their rank. . . . Their clothes, similar to our summer garments, are made of strips of cloth with a hole for inserting the head. . . .' He goes on to say that they understand writing, sit in a squatting posture, use fingers to eat from wooden plates, go barefoot, and are given to intoxicating drink: that the women are faithful, greatly exceeding the men in number, and that while polygamy is practised jealousy is unknown. The men are good sailors, and practise human sacrifice to induce the gods to prosper their voyages.

China evidently regarded her island-neighbours as rather primitive savages; and the famous novel *San Kuo Chih* tells us that a queen, Pimiko, who had subdued the people by witchcraft, sent an embassy to pay homage to the emperor of China, and received in reply the imperial commission and seal as Queen of Jih-pen, and gifts of dragon-embroideries

<sup>1</sup> i.e. in 108 B.C. Chao-hsien is Chosen—now used for Korea.

'in return for your tribute'. Pimiko is evidently Himeko, 'sun-daughter' or princess, and Korean chronicles tell us that she sent asking for help against her enemies. As to the Chinese claim that she sent tribute it embodies the stock official reply to all foreign embassies, from the Han to the end of the Manchu eras, two thousand years, and we may be sure that Himeko and her successors took it very much more seriously than did George III.

Himeko can be identified with Jingo, widow of the Emperor Chuai, who is credited with the invasion of Silla, South Korea; but who more probably sought alliances with its ruler as she did with the Chinese. She reigned from about A.D. 201 to 270, when her son Ojin succeeded her.<sup>1</sup>

A man of peace, he carried on her policy of alliances with the mainland, imported Korean scholars to teach his sons, and encouraged others to settle and impart their civilization to the islanders. His castle near Osaka on the Inland Sea stood where is now the Shrine of Hachiman, the God of War with whom he is identified: and while he remains one of the types of early ruler he is sufficiently clear-cut as an historic personage to mark a distinct era, that of the spread of Chinese and Korean civilization to Japan. Beginning with the Han it went on for another five or six hundred years, for the soul of Japan turned to China as to a lodestar—'as the birds migrate', says a Japanese historian. The Han era was indeed a pattern for much of Asia. Japanese alliances with Paikche—one of the three Korean kingdoms, brought scholars to their help: Akichi, Wani, and others whose coming marks an era in history. Now records after the Chinese style were kept, and the throne was strengthened to fit Chinese ideas, and the emperors sometimes imitated Chinese ideals.

Ojin's son and successor Nintoku (A.D. 313-99) was a friend of the common people: he is credited with saying 'Their poverty is our poverty, their well-being is our well-being', and with neglecting his own palaces till his people

<sup>1</sup> These traditional dates are being critically studied. Prof. Kume puts Jingo about A.D. 350.

had rethatched their cottages, and he saw the smoke rising from a prosperous countryside. This looks suspiciously like an imitation of the Shun-Ideal of China; and these early rulers like those of China are credited with such long reigns—seventeen of them covering a thousand years—that we cannot accept the records without suspicion.

Whatever claims they make, these early rulers seldom behaved as Sons of Heaven should. Like many of the Han, they were weak, licentious, and cruel. Yuryaku during his short reign (457–9) turned the Court into a shambles, and the divine seed was almost exterminated in this dark period. Buretsu (499–507) was a despot, and the clans rose against him, in their turn oppressing the people. Sujun was murdered in 593 by Soga-no Umako, a devout Buddhist who had previously killed two of the princes. The Sogas and other great families emerge at this time, destined to play a great role in history, and an early picture of Takanouchi Soga, Prime Minister of the Empress Jingu, holding in his arms her infant son, is prophetic. The Nakatomi and Imabe clans who had taken part in early rituals for the sun-goddess both claimed descent from gods, and the former were almost as powerful from early days as the emperors. It was the rivalry of these proud families which ensured the success of Buddhism, for the Soga used it to score off the other clans and guilds, as in later days the Shoguns were to foster Christianity to keep the Buddhists in check. We can also see at this early date the tendency of great clan-chiefs to control the Royal Family by intermarriage and intrigue, to make puppets of the 'descendants of the gods', and serfs of the common people, till 'slavery formed the backbone of the social structure', and at last a dictator ruled as regent of a puppet Shogun, himself the regent of a puppet-emperor.

Society consisted in these early days of *uji* or clans, claiming the same ancestor and worshipping him as Kami or lord. Attached to each clan was a guild or *be*, hereditary craftsmen under an hereditary chief. Next came slaves, and these two groups were both under control of the



clan-chief—though not related to him. Here as in India we can trace a conquering group, the Yamato, at work organizing the rest to suit their convenience. From such clan-chiefs came the emperor and the great lords through whom in theory he exercised his powers, and gradually a hierarchical society emerges, emperors and great lords, O-omi, his ministers, territorial officials, O-muraji, local chiefs and guild heads, then the 'good people' ryomin, and lastly the serfs, or 'base people'. 'In short', says Sansom, 'the social and political organizations were one, since the administrative hierarchy corresponded, at least ideally, with the gradations of nobility.'<sup>1</sup>

But great barons seldom behave as they should: there were early rivalries in which the throne itself was threatened, and even emperors were murdered if they stood in the way of an ambitious family.

The picture of early society in Japan is, in fact, a dark one: morality is largely a matter of tabus, and religion of ritual cleanness. The people groan under arrogant chiefs, and many are serfs: justice is a farce, and strangers are regarded as unclean.

Confucian ideals, slowly seeping in with teachers and immigrant families, are not constraining enough to reform society. On the other hand women seem to play a leading role: some Chinese speak of Jih-pen as the 'Queen Country', others note the devotion of women to their polygamous husbands, and the great respect paid by the Semmin to their lords, and say that litigation is rare and theft unknown.

Early rituals of purification make much of sins such as murder and incest, but also of the defilement of the sex-act and of childbirth.

The national cult is that of nature-gods and national heroes. It is called Kami-no-michi—The Way of the Lords—and this was later translated into Chinese Shin-to (Shen-tao). This cult is one of gratitude to ancestors who are gods, and to gods who are ancestors; it is a cult not of

<sup>1</sup> *Japan*, p. 37.

fear but of confidence. Japan is 'the land of the gods': they will help and protect their people. This cult called for an awareness of unseen presences, but not for any philosophical concept of the One behind the Many, and it helped to develop the imaginative rather than the rational powers of the people; and to feed their patriotism as well as their native aestheticism.

At the heart of it was sun-worship; for Amaterasu, the ancestress of the royal house, is a sun-goddess; and the imperial regalia represent mirror, jewel, and sword—sun, moon, and lightning. For the rest we may trace the growth of fertility rituals and of oracles, and the emergence of a clan of 'abstainers'—the Imabe, who guarded the ritual and insisted on purity among the worshippers, and of another clan of liturgists, the Nakatomi, who were soon to become all-powerful.

It was these families which, as we have seen, objected to the introduction of foreign gods. The Soga clan on the other hand was opposed to the powerful alliance of the conservatives, and advocated giving Buddhism a trial. Its head Soga Iname was appointed Chief-Chieftain, O-omi, in 536; and he had vast power, marrying his daughter to a prince of the blood-royal, and beginning a long process of feudal dominance.

To him the emperor handed over a Korean image of the Buddha, and when an epidemic followed, the rival clans insisted that it be thrown into a canal. But Umako Soga, the son of Iname, was convinced that these rivals were getting out of hand, insisted that Japan needed the new religion and culture, and took orderly steps to introduce it, till, towards the end of the sixth century, it was rooted in Japanese soil—the Korean kingdoms vying with one another to foster its growth.

The other clans continued their opposition and even persecuted the religious, but Yomei was at once Buddhist and Shintoist, and after the murder of his successor Sujun by Umako, a devout empress, Suiko, came to the throne and Yomei's young son, Umayado (572–621), ruled as

Regent. To this great man, known to history by his posthumous title Shotoku—Sage Virtue—Japan looks as the Father of her civilization. He is the true founder of Japanese Buddhism, and the patron of those rich arts and crafts which have made her a land of artificial as well as of natural beauty.

If she is Greek in her hills and bays, her mountains and woods, she is Greek also in her love of beauty, and in her genius in choosing and adapting what she has needed from the mainland peoples. Her spirit is at once strong and delicate, the influence perhaps of Malay and Korean blood respectively, and at the heart of her culture are the ideals of purification, of physical cleanness and ritual rightness, and of the importance of fertility and virility.

This blend of the aesthetic and the procreative is perhaps the key to the understanding of the Japanese. Utilitarian in all things, they have seldom ignored the claims of beauty. And if Japan has never risen to the clarity and balance of Greece she has shown real genius in selection and simplification.

In marked contrast to the primitive conditions of fifth-century Japan are the advanced cultures of Wei and Sui China and of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, and there was much to adopt and adapt.

We need only mention such paintings as those of Ku K'ai-chih and the philosophy, poetry, and sculpture of Han and Wei to remind ourselves how much China had to teach her neighbours. There was, too, the whole classical culture of Chou and of Buddhism.

These had civilized Korea, whose tomb-paintings, vivid and harmonious in colour and graceful in design, are followed by great bronze bells of intricate workmanship, and by such masterpieces of sculpture as those of the cloistered cave of Sokulan—strong and rugged Lohan, gracious Bodhisattvas; and the bronze figure of Miroku or Maitreya in the Museum of Seoul. Archaic in its simplicity it reveals mastery of technique and spiritual genius.

Architecture too had reached a great height—palaces

with tiled roofs and wooden pillars with heavy brackets supporting them: whereas in Japan even the great families lived in wooden huts with thatched roofs and projecting cross beams, of which the great shrines at Ise are perhaps a glorified modification, and the little clay models in the tombs exact copies.

These arts Korea was now to send to Japan with her Buddhist missions, and Japan was prepared by slow infusion of Korean culture to seize her gifts with eager hands and to develop her own native genius. In both adoption and adaptation Shotoku showed true genius.

But with this great man one era ends and another begins. A nation which can produce such a leader is no longer primitive; and Japanese history after the primitive period (600 B.C.—A.D. 400) falls into the following epochs:

1. An epoch of the transition, as the mainland cultures are introduced and slowly naturalized: *c.* 400—640.
2. The Nara epoch—a golden age of Buddhist culture, and of the transformation of the mainland civilization to suit the Japanese: 7th to 9th centuries.
3. The Heian epoch—marked by domination of aristocratic families; the classical age of Japanese literature with Kyoto as capital: 9th to 13th centuries.
4. The Kamakura epoch—marked by the rise of feudalism in the warrior classes, the coming of Zen Buddhism, and a new virility.
5. The Muromachi epoch—15th to 17th centuries—Dark Ages, with alleviations in cultural life.
6. The Tokugawa epoch—an era of strong central rule and of the spread of culture among the masses: 17th century to mid-19th.

The history of Japan has many affinities and parallels with that of England. The two island peoples were built up by many invading groups: their position at once isolated them politically from the mainland, and made them culturally dependent upon it: and their characteristic

national institutions emerge as this influence comes to its full strength.

In both lands feudalism plays a long and leading role with its sacrifice of 'lower' to 'higher' classes, its military organization, its twin pillars of great churchmen and great overlords, its contrasts of splendour and sordid poverty, its blend of barbarism and culture.

Nor is there much truth in the old distinction between a static orient and a dynamic occident, at any rate so far as Japan is concerned. Trevelyan's description of mediaeval England is largely true of the Japan of the same era—from about the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries. It is a scene of progress through much suffering and many vicissitudes, of life intense, if often brutal: 'out of uniformity into variety; out of feudal cosmopolitanism into national monarchy; out of a hegemony of the priesthood into lay emancipation; out of the rule of the knight into the world of the craftsman, the capitalist and the yeoman'. So the modern era comes to each island people—after incredible victory over redoubtable foes. The armadas of Kublai Khan and of Philip are scattered by bravery and by 'an act of God'; 'God blew and the enemy was scattered', was the paean of both nations; and a new era dawns, ushering in a new world, a strange blend of piracy and patriotism, and a great efflorescence prepares each nation to play its part on the international stage, and to give back mainland cultures assimilated and incredibly changed. Their relation to the sea, at first 'passive and receptive', becomes 'active and acquisitive'. If the spirit of the island-peoples is akin in their hatred of tyranny or dictation from abroad it is also akin in discipline at home, and the differences are largely to be found in those between Buddhist and Christian institutions. For while both peoples make a religion of nationalism both often recognize a larger loyalty—and this is simpler for Japan than for England: Buddhism, though an international religion, making no ultramontane claims, and no attempt to interfere with emperor-worship.

The Japanese, cleaving to the myth of their 'divine

seed', like the English cleaving to that of a king who is divinely appointed head of the Church, have known at once how to reverence and to rule their rulers, and if Japan very slowly learns parliamentary methods of doing this she too discovers the other technique of doing it through great ministers of state. These become constitutional rulers in the seventeenth century after a period in many things reminding us of Tudor England. The rich pageant of the Middle Ages passes—baron and abbot, monk and friar, henchman and outlaw, castle and abbey and hovel, scholar and man of war despising scholarship, artist and strolling minstrel—ruthless deeds and their expiation in pilgrimage and mass and endowment—all this gives place to another scene while preserving many of the old landmarks and conserving much of the old spirit. As the Tudors guide England from one age to the next with crafty conservatism and daring innovation, so the Shoguns lead Japan.

In both the invention of cannon shatters the power of feudal castles, that of printing the authority of clerical or official prestige; and a new and cultured middle class pushes its way through—between lord and serf, as between exploiting cleric and gaping peasantry.

If Henry VIII smashed the wonder-working relics and shrines, Hideyoshi, more temperate, made new images out of the weapons of the people—telling them with irony that he was securing their welfare in both worlds. Neither Tudors nor Shoguns were irreligious: but they knew how to use religion to foster national growth, and if we find Henry VIII coquetting with Protestantism while he burns Protestants, we find Hideyoshi coquetting with Catholicism and burning Catholics, and Nobunaga playing off Catholics against Buddhists in a similar burst of anti-clericalism. The Japanese are like the English, at once religious and impatient of priestcraft, respecting religion and using it. They are too, at once utilitarian and aesthetic, and their museums, like ours, are full of ugly things of historic interest and lovely things treasured for their beauty. So the visitor may learn much of their rich and colourful

history in places like Nara, their Canterbury, and Tokyo, their London, as well as in their remoter shrines on Koya and Hiei, or their country villas like the Phoenix Hall and the Golden Pavilion of Kyoto: and in museums the printed book and the wood-block tell of a growing mass-education side by side with Buddhist manuscripts and great scrolls of historic and almost epic interest. Here, too, is the stirrup of the giant monk Benkei and there the tea cup of a Fujiwara or the fan of a Tokiyori: here the edict of a Shogun condemning Christians to the cross, and side by side with it the crucifix on which they were bidden to trample, and the cannon which the Protestant skippers taught Japan to make in preparation for the fleets of Spain and Portugal. It is interesting to remember that Ieyasu and Shakespeare died in the same year. The saying: 'Nobunaga made the fire: Hideyoshi cooked the meal: Tokugawa ate it' may be aptly applied to the Tudor Henrys and Elizabeth.

## THE SPIRIT OF EARLY JAPAN

### I. FROM AN EARLY RITUAL

Give ear, all ye Imperial Princes, Ministers of State, and high functionaries, who are here assembled, and hearken to the great purification by which at this interlune of the sixth month are purged and washed away all sins which may have been committed by Imperial officials and attendants—whether they wear the scarf (women) or the shoulder strap (stewards); whether they bear on their back the bow, or gird on them the sword.

Of yore, our Imperial ancestors who dwell in the plain of high heaven, summoned to an assembly the eight hundred myriads of deities, and held divine counsel with them. And they gave command, saying, 'Let our August Grandchild hold serene rule over the land of fair rice-ears—the fertile reed-plain'. But in the land thus delivered to him there were savage deities. These they chastised with a divine chastisement, and expelled with a divine expulsion. Moreover, the rocks, trees, and leaves of grass which had the power of speech, were silenced. Then they dispatched him downward from his celestial, everlasting throne, cleaving as he went with an awful way-cleaving the many-piled clouds of heaven. Here at the middle point of the

land entrusted to him, in Yamato, the High Sun Land, the August Grandchild established his peaceful rule and built a fair palace, basing deep on the nethermost rock the massy pillars, and upraising to high heaven the timbers of the roof wherewithal to shelter him from sun and sky.

## II. A PRE-BUDDHIST CODE

If there be any of our number who are unkind to parents, or neglectful or disobedient, we will not conceal it or condone it, but will report it. . . .

We shall require children to respect their parents, servants to obey their masters, husbands and wives and brothers and sisters to live together in harmony, and the younger people to revere and to cherish their elders. . . . Each kumi (group of five households) shall carefully watch over the conduct of its members, so as to prevent wrongdoing.

If any member of a kumi, whether farmer, merchant, or artisan, is lazy, and does not attend properly to his business, the ban-gashira (chief officer) will advise him, warn him, and lead him into better ways. If the person does not listen to this advice, and becomes angry and obstinate, he is to be reported to the toshiyori (village elder). . . .

When men who are quarrelsome and who like to indulge in late hours away from home will not listen to admonition, we will report them. If any other kumi neglects to do this, it will be part of our duty to do it for them. . . .

All those who quarrel with their relatives, and refuse to listen to their good advice, or disobey their parents, or are unkind to their fellow-villagers, shall be reported (to the village officers). . . .

Dancing, wrestling, and other public shows shall be forbidden. Singing- and dancing-girls and prostitutes shall not be allowed to remain a single night in the mura (village).

Quarrels among the people shall be forbidden. In case of dispute the matter shall be reported. If this is not done, all parties shall be indiscriminately punished. . . .

Speaking disgraceful things of another man, or publicly posting him as a bad man, even if he is so, is forbidden.

Filial piety and faithful service to a master should be a matter of course; but when there is any one who is especially faithful and diligent in these things, we promise to report him . . . for recommendation to the government. . . .

As members of a kumi we will cultivate friendly feeling even more than with our relatives, and will promote each other's



happiness, as well as share each other's griefs. If there is an unprincipled or lawless person in a kumi, we will all share the responsibility for him.

The above are samples of the moral regulations only: there were even more minute regulations about other duties—for instance:

When a fire occurs, the people shall immediately hasten to the spot, each bringing a bucketful of water, and shall endeavour, under direction of the officers, to put the fire out. . . . Those who absent themselves shall be deemed culpable.

When a stranger comes to reside here, enquiries shall be made as to the mura whence he came, and a surety shall be furnished by him. . . . No traveller shall lodge, even for a single night, in a house other than a public inn.

News of robberies and night attacks shall be given by the ringing of bells or otherwise; and all who hear shall join in pursuit, until the offender is taken. Any one wilfully refraining, shall, on investigation, be punished.

### III. LETTER FROM THE KING OF KUDARA

*(one of the provinces of Korea) to the emperor Kimmei in A.D. 552.*

This teaching (dharma) is the most excellent of all teachings. It is hard to understand and very hard to master: even K'ung Fu-tse could not grasp it. But it brings infinite and immeasurable fruits to the believer, even to final enlightenment (bodhi). Just as the chin-tamani jewel is said to give inexhaustible wealth to its possessor, so the treasure of this glorious law never ceases to give assurance to those who seek for it. Moreover, it has come to Korea from far-off India, and the peoples of the countries lying between these two are now all its supporters.

## XIV

### THE ASUKA AND NARA AGES— AN ERA OF ADAPTATION

The Ruler is master of the people—the officials he appoints are his vassals.

SHOTOKU.

#### I

THE Nara epoch should be studied with that of Suiko or Asuka (593–645) if the transformation of Japan under mainland influences is to be understood. This transformation becomes articulate with Umayado—the Prince Regent known to history by his posthumous title Shotoku—Sage Virtue—and continues to the end of the Nara Age. He was born in A.D. 552, and became a Buddhist at sixteen—as ardent a convert as Asoka, with whom he is often compared. Like Asoka he was a wise and far-sighted statesman as well as the father of a civilization and the prophet of a religious reformation. He wisely gauged the tendencies of his time, and encouraged the already active process of sinification. But he had the genius to see that the mainland cultures must be naturalized, and to choose with unerring judgement those Buddhist books and Confucian ideals which could be best used to weld the State together, and to foster a spirit of service. Like Asoka he also encouraged the older religion of his people, and gave to them a code of moral maxims which were of universal application.

Shotoku stands, in fact, midway between the old Japan and the new—at once product and creator of a great movement.

Let us look first at his Code of Seventeen Articles—‘a useful key to contemporary sentiment’. First is struck the note of harmony—those above must be well ordered, those below well disposed. The second article teaches reverence for the Three Jewels of Buddhism. Here, then, Confucian and Buddhist ideals are put side by side and related to one another: Confucian harmony is to be achieved by Buddhist

devotion. The third article sets forth the Chinese theory of kingship, and the fourth the complementary view of the duties of the governed. Li—decorum—is the key-word. Then come warnings against the temptations which beset officials: gluttony, venality, flattery, nepotism, idleness, bad faith, bad temper, pride, laxity, extortion—these are attacked, and their opposite virtues enjoined. For the rest officials are reminded that they are not necessarily right nor others wrong; that they should consult one another, and that they are only to exact forced labour at certain seasons. 'Hidden within these apparently harmless exhortations . . . is a new view of the state . . . a centralized state in which the ultimate power resides in the Emperor, and is exercised through his functionaries.'<sup>1</sup>

These articles reveal Shotoku as a shrewd ruler as well as a wise synthetist. But the lot of the peasantry was still hard, and even his own special creation—the College of Horiuji—was built like its successors at great cost to the masses, and for centuries to come owned large bodies of slaves. This is but one of his ambitious foundations which aimed at spreading the gospel of Buddhism, and of epitomizing its culture. That of Shi-tenno-ji—the Four Heavenly Guardians—can still be traced in the great industrial city of Osaka on the Inland Sea. It was at once a temple, an orphanage, an art-school, and a hostelry for the stranger and the aged.

But the genius of Shotoku is best seen in Horiuji, which after thirteen centuries stands serene and perfect in its setting of low hills and dark trees—the most venerable wooden building in existence. As one enters by a tiled gateway, guarded by the grim figures of armed titans, and finds oneself in a sanded courtyard, one gets a strong and vivid impression of an immemorial peace. Here are the exquisite little gardens and villas of abbot and teachers, and beyond rises the Kondo, or Golden Hall, with its massive Korean roof and its low wooden pillars, silver-grey with age. This and the storied pagoda remain to tell us

<sup>1</sup> Sansom, *Japan*, p. 72.

of the original group,<sup>1</sup> and within are treasured Korean, Chinese, and primitive Japanese statues and paintings which make this the most interesting museum in Asia. It is indeed a Museum of all Asia; for on the walls of the Hondo are frescoes which speak of Ajanta but also of Turkistan, and on the altars are images which tell of Wei Tartar influences upon Chinese and Korean art, and even of Greek and Sasanian prototypes. The great bronze triad on the main altar with its stylized drapery is akin to the Wei statuery of Lung-men; the little clay figures in the Pagoda are of T'ang provenance: the exquisite tall Kwannon in Shotoku's octagonal 'Hall of Dreams', the Yumedono, is Korean, and the painting of Shotoku as a child is early Japanese, but influenced by the great Wu Tao-tse of China. Here too is preserved a robe of Shotoku, and a ewer, both of Sasanian design; and a manuscript of his on the Lotus Scripture is amongst the imperial treasures, as is a portrait of the Regent and his sons—attributed to the Korean prince, Asa.

As a scholar Shotoku achieved great distinction—revealing a real understanding of Chinese and Indian thought; himself a disciple of Nagarjuna he showed great insight in choosing the 'Lotus' as the best expression of the new evangel. For it is universal in its appeal, and easy to understand; and its parables and apocalypses are popular and picturesque. The Shoman-kyo, which tells of the ideal Buddhist queen, Srimala, and the Yuima-kyo which tells of a great Buddhist layman, are the other works he popularized, himself preaching and expounding these themes to devout audiences. The arcana of the faith he seems wisely to have left to priests of the Hosso Sect, which lives on fitfully at Horiuji, and still expounds with subtle commentary the eight scrolls of the Lotus.

Shotoku is not only the father of Japanese Buddhism: he is worshipped as an incarnation of the compassionate Kwannon whose lovely image in the little nunnery of Chuguji (once his mother's home) is attributed to him—

<sup>1</sup> Probably destroyed by fire in 670 and rebuilt in the same style in 708.

a vision of other-worldly calm and detachment. It is more likely a later image of Miroku—the coming Buddha. Shotoku is also regarded as the patron saint of art, and the founder of the Japanese Constitution. ‘The Sovereign’, he says, ‘is Lord of the people, and the officials whom he appoints are his vassals.’ Shotoku, in short, is the Father of Japan. He found anarchy and darkness, and he left order and light. He found a people just emerging from barbarism, and he led them with consummate wisdom and industry into ways of high culture, and into the paths of peace. He began a process of centralization which came to its fruition a century later; and an adaptation of things Chinese and Korean which flowered in the classical age of Heian. When Shotoku died in A.D. 621, his main tasks unfinished, ‘sun and moon were darkened’, and a grateful nation mourned its greatest benefactor.

Before the foundation of Nara in 710 Shotoku’s reforms were carried farther by several rulers, coins were minted from copper discovered in 708, trade with Korea and China thrived, and the Fujiwara began to assert their power over the State. A dictatorship was indeed needed: for the Uji or clan-chiefs were turbulent, and dynastic succession was often decided by war.

## II

The Nara Age is one of triumph for Buddhism and for the Fujiwara clan, and also one of a growing scholarship. A Confucian university thrived side by side with a great Buddhist cathedral, both foci of a city copied from Chang-an, both enjoying imperial patronage. It is an age of Japanese poetry, and of growing mastery of Chinese arts. But lack of a Japanese script and inadequate understanding of Chinese hamper the processes of growth. The Nara Age is known to the Japanese as ‘the age of gold and poetry’. But it began with a period of blood and iron—of dynastic intrigues, abdications forced and voluntary, the malign influence of monks and barons, even murder of royal persons.



MAITREYA BODHISATTVA  
AT CHUGUJI  
(Seventh Century)



The myth of the divine emperor and of the unbroken dynasty is not supported by the facts. Made implicitly by Shotoku this arrogant claim becomes explicit in the proclamation put into the mouth of the boy-emperor Mommu at his accession in 697. 'In performing the task of the Exalted Throne and in succession to the Sun in Heaven' he is 'God manifest in the flesh, to rule over The Land of Many Islands—that there may be an unending succession of august rulers, beginning in the High Plain of Heaven'.

Such is the prototype of all such proclamations, and the emperor of Japan still reports all important policies to his divine ancestors. As Sansom points out, here is a theory of sovereignty quite at variance with that of China—and, we may add, with the lives of many emperors.

Nor have the feudal lords of Japan hesitated for a thousand years to overshadow their liege. For six reigns Fujiwara Fuhito—prototype of Japan's 'elder statesman' and son of Kamatari (d. 669) who founded the potent Fujiwara house—dominated the rulers 'by marriage, remarriage, and inter-marriage'. Father-in-law of two emperors, he was in due course grandfather of a third: yet he kept judiciously in the background, and worked through the women of the Court, advising abdication, setting up a minor, and intriguing with the genius of a Chinese eunuch. These tactics his family kept up for several centuries—yet they did Japan good service in many ways, and balanced the growing power of Buddhist abbots, whom many empresses favoured, and whose monastic houses grew rich on gifts of land exempt from taxation, and of slaves whom they began to turn into armed retainers. One monk, Doko, became the paramour of the Empress Koken, and even aimed at seizing the throne, playing upon her infatuation and superstition. Yet the age saw great advances in art and in political theory; it is one of the slow naturalization of Chinese and Korean culture on Japanese soil. 'If the Japanese mastered somewhat painfully and slowly the elements of Chinese culture their hearts leaped to welcome all its beauty.'



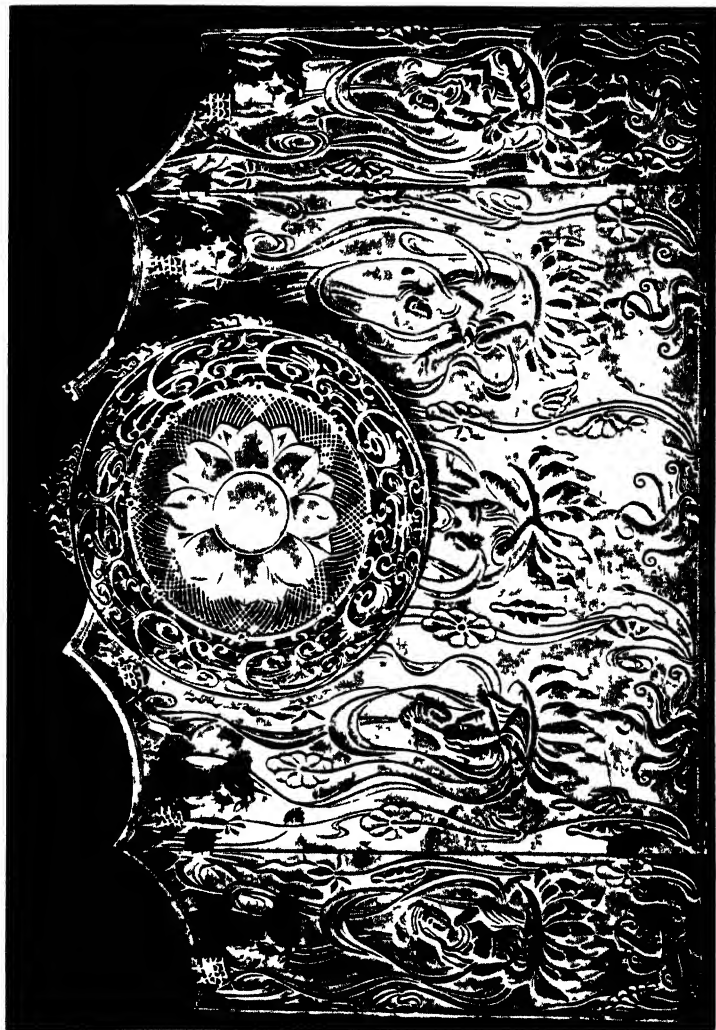
This culture came in three great waves—that of the Wei Tartars and the Sui Dynasty of China (A.D. 386–551) and of their contemporaries in Korea; that of the efflorescence of T'ang (618–906); and that of the renaissance of Sung (twelfth century). It is with the two former that we are now concerned.

At first the Japanese took with eager hands, and soon naturalized this Tartar art, making it more delicate and at the same time more robust. But the second wave, that of the consummate art of T'ang, set in before they had completed the task, and they cannot be said to have improved upon their teachers, who are indeed supreme artists.

If we now consider in detail the masterpieces of Horiuji we shall see that the architecture of the Kondo is Korean, but already has a Japanese touch in the entasis of the columns and the curves of the soaring roofs. The great triad by Tori the sculptor that stands upon its main altar is Wei Tartar in inspiration, but has a peculiarly architectonic quality in its pyramidal form—and the archaic wooden figure of Maitreya at the little nunnery of Chuguji is an exquisite expression of Japanese devotion, timeless and universal in its appeal, at once remote from the world, and full of compassion for men. How well the sculptor has understood the inner spirit of Buddhism, and with what consummate art he has combined realism with idealism. With what a delicate touch the architect has set his buildings into the landscape of low hills and dark woods. These—Kondo, pagoda, and statues—are usually accepted as works of the Akusa or Suiko era. For comparison with them we may choose from the early Nara Age the Yakushiji pagoda—built in 680, but removed to Nara in 718: the bronze image of Yakushi, Buddha of Healing, on its altar, and the murals of Horiuji.<sup>1</sup>

The pagoda is marked by greater grace and freedom than its prototype, and towers up to a lovely finial of bronze angels and heavenly musicians, whose flowing garments and scarves form a flaming nimbus.

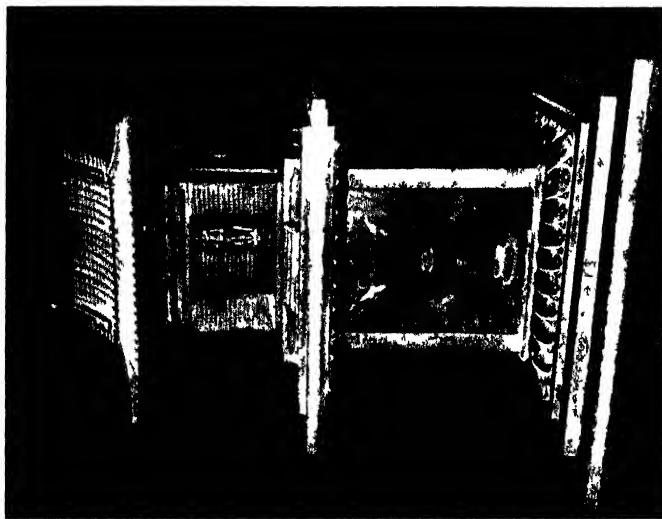
<sup>1</sup> The Musée Guimet has good copies.



BRONZE SCREEN (HORIU'I)



TORI BUSSHI TRIAD



TAMAMUSHI SHRINE

HORIU II

The Yakushi triad is also an immense advance upon that of Horiuji—made of a deep black bronze and ‘perfect in the flow of its curved surfaces and the justness of its proportions’. The frescoes are also by a master hand, and are closely related to those alike of Ajanta and of Tun-huang, outlined in flowing red line upon the walls of the Kondo. Here are the other-worldly reverie and grace of India, the rich jewellery of Sanchi and Barhut, the straight Aryan nose, but here also the double arch of the Turkic mouth and moustache—the more stylized grouping and modelling of Khotan. If these great figures are by a Japanese hand it is that of an apt pupil who is also a master.

During the Nara period then it was T'ang China—the China of T'ai-tsung and Ming-huang—which dominated the mind and spirit of Japan. If the triad of Horiuji is of Wei Tartar provenance, and the Yumedono Kwannon is Korean, that of Yakushiji, made about a century later, is essentially T'ang. Yet it is a Japanese masterpiece, and the sculptor has made amazing progress not only in the splendid black patina of his figures, but also in their calm and serene beauty, and in the grace of their clinging robes. Here too Guptan elegance is seen in the long straight limbs and in the jewelled necklace and girdle, while below are dwarfs or goblins, or aboriginal negritos. ‘From these varied elements, Greek, Indian, Chinese—there soon emerges a truly Japanese sculpture which in its expression of grace, of moral beauty and of strength, attained classic form almost at a bound.’<sup>1</sup>

During the first half of the era relations with China were much closer than we should expect, when we remember the dangers and difficulties of the sea-passage. Not only political embassies but cultural missions continued; and such scholars as Kibi-no Makibi, who left for China in 717, were careful students of her civilization. He returned in 734, and was made President of the University of Nara, where he lectured on the Chinese classics. Many Buddhist monks too—we have records of over seventy—went to

<sup>1</sup> R. Grousset, *Histoire de l'Asie*, iii. 347.

China as the Chinese of an earlier day to India, to study under the Masters of the Law who carried on the work of Fa Hian and Hiuen Chang, and many remained in China for long periods, mastering much besides Buddhist lore. By the eighth century, then, Chinese civilization was understood and intelligently imitated in Japan, in spite of the barriers of sea and of language, by a growing number of leaders, and Chinese ideals of kingship and of scholarship, of family life and of guild organization, of art and craftsmanship, were being blent with the more primitive ways of Japan, or were replacing them.

The Chinese love of classification, too, was making itself felt, and vague ideals of morality were made articulate and codified. Chinese learning, in a word, was introduced. But 'the Japanese failed in borrowing the greatest of all Chinese institutions, to take over its essence, which was a respect for learning coupled with a desire for its spread'.<sup>1</sup> The old feudalism persisted, and no village boy could become prime minister as in China.

Yet much of Chinese culture fitted well into that of the Japanese. We need only instance the ideals of the Throne as representing Heaven, and of the family as the unit of society. And if Japan could assimilate much of the Confucian pattern, she grasped even more eagerly at the ideals of Buddhism and at its aesthetic expressions. In Japan as in China we find a new sense of the importance of the individual, a new other-worldliness, new visions of Buddhas and their Paradises, new ideals of compassion.

When the capital—modelled on Ch'ang-an—was built at Nara, its chief structure was a vast Buddhist cathedral, Todaiji, which took seven years to complete (745-52), and stood in a great park two square miles in area.

This is the age of Tempyo (725-94); and between it and the Suiko Age comes that of Haku-ho (645-725), also an age of borrowing and adaptation.

If Yakushiji is its masterpiece, that of Tempyo was the Todaiji and its vast Buddha Vairochana—the Sun Buddha

<sup>1</sup> Sansom, *Japan*, p. 109.





FIERCE AND GENTLE POWFRS ON BUDDHIST  
ALTARS AT NARA

of the 'Lotus' and other fully-developed Mahayana texts. On its Lotus-throne and vast halo are incised the fair forms of Bodhisattvas of whom two are here illustrated, and the whole vast cathedral was planned as a microcosm with the sun at its centre, symbol of the indwelling Buddha—source of light and life. It was the work of Gyogi, and a later Japanese artist has admirably reconstructed the gorgeous scene of its dedication when the eyes were painted in the 'life-giving' ritual, three years after the emperor Shomu had gone into a monastery. He has come back to his court for the great occasion and is standing in T'ang costume before the vast Lotus-throne: behind him, rank upon rank, are the courtiers and officials with their insignia, and on a level with him are seated the great monks Gyogi and Bodhisena with shaven heads and rich brocades from the looms of the mainland and India. Behind them are ordered lines of monks chanting the slokas of Buddhist devotion—new forms of old sun-worship very well suited to Japanese ideas. They have passed down long avenues of giant trees, and between the decorated screens now preserved in the treasury of Nara. Before them the slow posturing of solemn dance and the other-worldly notes of pipe and lute tell of the long journey of Buddhism, and of the synthesis of many cultures, and masked actors solemnly pacing, remind all, courtier and monk and emperor, of the transiency of human pomp.

Many of these masks and instruments are preserved in the Shosoin—a simple log-cabin to house such treasures. On a lovely black lute inlaid with silver and gold are three musicians seated under a tree, and the very Confucian inscription:

Notes of the lute purify the mind,  
As the calm of uprightness comes o'er it.  
Peace prevails, vulgarity flees, lewdness departs,  
Joy and harmony are in right and moderation.

But luxury prevailed at a Court eagerly imitating the splendours of Ch'ang-an as Nara imitated its general plan and its massive architecture. Here to-day one may see not only



drugs, which tell a long story of Egyptian medicine, coming first to Greece and then to India and the Far East, but also the choice celadons of China and the bird-like goblets of Persia.

These works of art belong to the middle of the eighth century. They are the possessions of Shomu, collected as a memorial by his widow, and preserved ever since with loving care. The visitor may see them when they are given their yearly airing,<sup>1</sup> and they are indeed a veritable epitome of a cultivated age, numbering three thousand pieces, and worthy of a large museum. Of Tempyo works we may mention not only the majestic cathedral, but such classical figures as the Brahma of our illustration which stands in the Lotus Hall, Greek in its long severe lines, Indian in its attitude of worship, Chinese in head-dress and shoes—but an authentic work of Japanese genius in its blending of idealism and realism. The same qualities are found in great portrait statues of the powerful monks of Nara: nowhere except in ancient Egypt is there such a vivid impression of calm authoritative power, and we can easily understand the conflict which arose between these lords spiritual and the great secular barons. Both were patrons of art and learning. The best picture of this age belongs to Yakushiji; it is a rendering of the Goddess of Beauty, Kichi-joten, wonderful in colour and harmony of line. The Japanese love of nature is revealed in the animals, birds, and landscapes which are used to decorate mirrors and musical instruments, and here in a word is the fountain-head of Japanese civilization. On a sixfold screen of this time are fine paintings of women under trees, and here too, realism is at work. They are strangely different from the tall, slim, hieratic goddesses of Korea and Asuka, and resemble T'ang court ladies in their flowing draperies such as are found in the frescoes of Turkistan. They are very interesting to the student of the rich life of this age—an age of luxury and elegance, when Japan tries to outshine the splendours of Ch'ang-an, and it is fashionable to write Chinese lyrics and to play Chinese music.

<sup>1</sup> In November—a relatively dry month in Japan.



BRAHMA IN ANJALI POSE  
(HORIUII)



EARLY JAPANESE PAINTING  
OF AN INDIAN GOD IN  
CHINESE ROBE (NARA)

In 751 was published the *Kaifuso*—an anthology of poems in Chinese style, which gradually give place to the shorter lyric epigrams of Japan, notes of a passing mood or impression in five or three lines each. Other anthologies begin to vie in quantity but not in quality with those of China. The *Manyoshu*, 'bundle of ten thousand leaves', is the most famous, and Hitomaru, who died in 737, may be compared with Lipo in his love of nature and his praise of court beauties. But his poems and those of his age have their own qualities—extreme brevity and vivid impressionism, and though poetry is at present a hobby of scholar and court lady, it is before many centuries to become a national pastime. To trace the spread of such arts among the masses is one of the most interesting tasks of the historian. This is a typical poem by Hito-maru:

The sky is a sea, where the clouds move shiplike,  
The moon is a galleon, sailing to the stars.

Akahito is another nature-lover, in whom a poignant sense of the transiency of the world, which is essentially Buddhist, plays delicately upon the native Japanese delight in Nature:

A fine spring day—no frost nor wind;  
But thou, fair flower, fadest fast in death.

These are typical poems chosen by Monsieur Grousset from the tenth-century *Kokinshu*, whose editor Tsurayuki says, 'the song of the nightingale, the croaking of the frog, are themselves poems: all that lives breathes poetry and sings its song'.

### III

Nor is this age less remarkable for its political achievements and social readjustments. The process of centralization begun by Shotoku was carried on by the Emperors Tenchi (662-71), Shomu (724-49), and others, and a series of reforms and codes reveals Japan in the throes of adapting Chinese legislation to fit her national needs, and her different social structure. Here too the

Japanese are emerging from apprenticeship. In 646 the Taikwa Reform instituted a new system of land tenure and of taxation. Both involved in theory the transfer to the central authority of ownership and jurisdiction which had been held by the territorial gentry. It was an application to Japan of the system then in operation in the T'ang Empire. But despite various revisions Chinese institutions could not be made to fit the very different social theory of the Japanese, whose strong feudal sense was behind the clans. These were still largely independent, even if in theory they held their lands in 'fief' from the emperor. Nor could 'officials' of the Chinese type replace these feudal lords. Chinese education might be imitated, might even in theory provide an official career for a village boy: it did not in reality change the hierarchical structure of Japan. What the Reform really accomplished was a redistribution of economic power, and a more uniform system of taxation. The land was now in theory the property of the emperor, but it was redistributed amongst the cultivators according to the number of their households, and for this purpose a census was taken. Rent was paid in rice, and there was also a corvée and a produce-tax on commodities other than rice. Certain official and temple lands were exempt, and thus began a long process of enrichment which made both monastic houses and clans unduly powerful. For them the masses toiled, and military service as well as forced labour bore heavily upon them.

In 702 the Taiho (Great Treasure) was formulated, a code which, though based on Chinese models, actually gave all the high offices, not to successful candidates in examinations, but to the existing feudal lords. So old abuses were perpetrated, and for a thousand years great families overshadowed the throne. To build up the growing national sentiment the Kojiki—or Records of Ancient Things—was compiled in 712. Dealing largely with mythology, these records read back into early days the conditions of Nara, and attempt to reconcile conflicting traditions, and to edit all in consonance with Chinese ideas. Written

in archaic Japanese mixed with Chinese, they embody ancient poems and seek to make 'edifying history' out of them, to support imperial claims, to connect the two cults of emperor and of nature, and to make all this fit into a framework of Chinese cosmogony. This work was completed in 712, but is the achievement of the era as a whole.

The Nihongi, completed a few years later, carries the process farther; it begins in Chinese fashion: 'Of old time, before Heaven and Earth were separated, before the Yin and the Yang parted', attributing to Heaven (Chinese T'ien) the conduct of affairs, and putting Chinese edicts and speeches into the mouths of Japanese rulers.

In other words, the long history of the Japanese imperial cult is now being rationalized, and the islands are playing the assiduous pupil to China, which under the Sui and T'ang is a worthy teacher—if not of morals yet of luxurious and elegant arts and learning.

Tenchi (662-71) established schools for the study of Chinese classics, history, mathematics, and law—a quadrivium akin to that of mediaeval Europe. Their aim was, as in China, to train officials, but in Japan only young nobles were admitted. Kwammu, before he became emperor in 782, was rector of the University of Nara, and he and other Confucians kept Buddhist studies out of the curriculum. The university at the new capital Kyoto was lodged in fine buildings near the palace, and a Confucian shrine was its nucleus—while the annual celebrations in honour of the sage were held in its spacious grounds.

The rise of the monastic houses and of the great feudal families are main features of Japanese history for several centuries, and both curtailed the power of the Throne, in spite of the theories of eminent domain and of divine sovereignty. The politico-religious nature of the State may be regarded as the product of that complex of Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism, which is the real faith of Japan. And in this it is Shinto which is the dominant factor. To it the imported religions and ethics were made to conform, and soon there emerges Ryobu-Shinto—or

'Two-way' Shinto, in which Amaterasu, the Sun-goddess, is identified with the Sun-Buddha worshipped at Nara, and a long process of synthesis is begun. And if Buddhist devotion has to accommodate itself by a well-wrought theory of hoben (paedagogic strategy) no less has the Confucian social ethic to be remade on Japanese lines.

The former soon developed from a mystical and other-worldly to a vigorous and world-affirming cult as the Middle Path of the Buddha was made not only the way for proud abbots, but also for doughty warriors; and the democratic ideal of Confucius had also to bow to the facts of the case, the feudal lord remaining at the head of society, and calling himself a scholar and an official.

The social life of Nara is still largely feudal, with a free rural population enjoying no political rights, and artisans in a condition of semi-slavery. Education and religion are also aristocratic, but some advance towards paternalism is seen in the encouragement of agriculture and in the reclaiming of waste lands. After the middle of the eighth century those who did such reclamation might own the land—which was still in theory the property of the Crown. Slaves and animals were also regarded as private property, and some organized effort to improve conditions was made by guilds and by associations of five households for mutual service. The household is still the unit of Japanese society.

Buddhism did not yet alleviate the life of the poor. Upon them the burden of the splendours of Court and Temple fell heavily. They continued to pay for the use of the land which now belonged to the Throne; and by the close of the ninth century the farmer was paying a tithe of the gross products of his land, and was forced to give a full month of labour annually.<sup>1</sup> There were also local taxes and 'gifts' to the monasteries; and the life of the masses was strenuous and simple to the point of severity. The food of the well-to-do was rice and millet: fish, seaweed, and certain meats enriched it, as to-day. The poor enjoyed none of these

<sup>1</sup> Taxation in more technical terms was of three kinds: (a) *so*—rice-tax; (b) *cho*—tribute; (c) *yo*—corvée.



PORTRAIT STATUE OF BUDDHIST ABBOT  
ENUMERATING MYSTIC FORMULAE  
(Eighth century A.D.)  
(NARA)





luxuries. 'A poem of the period shows that instead of fish, salt was their principal relish; instead of rice, barley or millet their staple article of diet; and instead of clear sake (rice-wine) they drank the lees of the brewer's vat diluted with water.' The artisans were almost serfs, and a large proportion of the workers were wholly so.

Our enthusiasm for a great age and a noble religion is damped by the knowledge that the temple foundation of Horiuji in the year 730 owned over five hundred slaves, and that pious Buddhists presented multitudes of slaves, besides vast estates, to the great cathedral of Nara. Our admiration is further chastened when we watch the growing hauteur and pomp of the monks of the day; great religious houses began to acquire so much land that the Taikwa Reforms themselves were undone.

But Buddhism has like Christianity the seeds of its own reformation always within it; and soon there were to appear pioneers of a new and more disciplined way, and of a more patriotic and useful church.

With the coming of the Heian era and of its great religious leaders Japan enters upon her classic age, an age of religious reformation, of the achievement of an indigenous church and of the full adaptation of the culture of the mainland.

## THE SPIRIT OF ASUKA AND NARA

### I. FROM THE LAWS OF KOTOKU (A.D. 645)

#### *Rules for Officials*

When you proceed to your posts, prepare registers of all free subjects of the State and of the people under control of others, whether great or small. Take account also of the acreage of cultivated land. As to the profit arising from the gardens and ponds, the water and land, deal with them in common with the people. Moreover, it is not competent for the provincial governors, while in their provinces, to decide criminal cases, nor are they permitted by accepting bribes to bring the people to poverty and misery. . . . On all, from the rank of Hangwan downward, who accept bribes, a fine shall be imposed

of double the amount, and they eventually be punished criminally according to the greater or less heinousness of the case.

Nine men are allowed as attendant on the chief governor, seven on an assistant, and five on a secretary. If this limit is exceeded, and they are accompanied by a greater number, both chief and followers shall be punished criminally.

## II. REGULATIONS ON BURIAL CUSTOMS

Let small stones be used for the tombs of all from the rank of Prince down to that of Shochi, and let white cloth be used for the hangings. . . .

When a man dies, there have been cases of people sacrificing themselves by strangulation, or of strangling others by way of sacrifice, or of compelling the dead man's horse to be sacrificed, or of burying valuables in the graves in honour of the dead, or of cutting the hair, and stabbing the thighs, and pronouncing a eulogy on the dead. Let all such old customs be entirely discontinued.

A certain book says: 'No gold or silver, no silk brocades, and no coloured stuffs are to be buried'. Again it is said: 'From the ministers of all ranks down to the common people, it is not allowed to use gold or silver'. Shall there be any cases of this decree being disregarded and these prohibitions infringed, the relatives shall surely receive punishment.

## III. AN EARLY COURT RECORD

The closing sentences of the thirtieth and last book of the Nihongi are typical of the rest, and run as follows:

11th year, Spring, 1st month, 7th day (11th year of the reign of Empress Jito, A.D. 697). An entertainment was given to the Ministers and Daibu.

11th day. Presents of rice in ear of various values were given to all widowers, widows, orphans, and childless persons, to those suffering from grave disease, and to those who from poverty were unable to support themselves, throughout the Empire.

166th day. An entertainment was given to the Ministers and public functionaries.

(It closes with the record of the abdication of Empress Jito on the first day of the eighth month, A.D. 697, in favour of the Prince Imperial.)

## IV. TANKA OF THIRTY-ONE SYLLABLES IN FIVE LINES

*(a) Seventh-century Poems*

TENCHI TENNO (668-71)

In autumn fields they toil,  
 My people, reaping grain:  
 In this poor hut I shelter sought in vain!  
 Through the thin thatch pours in the rain.

JITO TENNO (690-6)

Daughter of the kindly Tenchi, wife of Temmu, she herself became sovereign and patroness of the arts. Here she refers to the old story—retold in the famous No-drama—of the angel-robe hung on a pine where a fisherman found it.

Spring's gone and summer's nigh:  
 Far off my eyes descry  
 The mountain peak, where angels seek  
 Their dazzling robes to dry.

The Japanese sounds thus:

Haru sugi te  
 Natsu-ki ni kerashi  
 Shiro-taé no  
 Koromo hosi teu  
 Ama-no-kagu yama!

*(b) Eighth-century Poems*

PRINCE MOROE (8th century A.D.)

Fujiyama

Upon the frontier where Suruga's Land  
 Marches with Kahi see great Fuji stand.  
 The clouds in awe are still, and no bird flies  
 Where snow melts in thy flames, and flame in snowflake dies.

What words suffice to hymn thy god-like form?  
 Father of waters thou towerest in the storm.  
 Ah! let me gaze upon thee, gift of gods to man,  
 A god thyself, thou guardian of Japan.

(From the Manyoshu.)

## THE ASUKA AND NARA AGES

YAKAMOCHI

on

Nara

With all its hundred spires  
The Great City teems with men,  
But riding in my heart  
Is my beloved only.

AKAHITO

The brave gallants  
Are at the hunt to-day:  
The ladies trail  
Their red dresses  
Over clean sea-beaches.

HITOMARU

See on the Great Sea  
No Islands float;  
But white clouds settle  
Upon the tossing waves  
Of ocean's spreading plain.

## XV

### THE HEIAN ERA

(A.D. 794-1186)

#### THE CLASSICAL AGE OF JAPAN AND THE CULTURE OF ARISTOCRACY

The lover turns from the scriptures to his love-letter. SEI-SHONAGON.

## I

WITH this era Japan enters upon her classical age. It is marked by the emergence of a national culture and by the dominance of the great Fujiwara house. It is an age at once brilliant and sordid, and if the climax of its splendour comes with the last of the Fujiwara so does its valour become brutal and its chivalry predacious; and if it produces a great series of notable works of art and literature these degenerate into long epic novels glorifying the deeds of rival clans and praising the extravagances of feudal loyalty, when women counted their chastity cheap if they could further the cause of a feudal lord.

If again it is an age of scholarship, it is also one of gross superstition and its early Buddhist leaders of genius are succeeded by proud and warlike prelates. If some preached an easy Paradise others delighted in the Dantesque horrors of a well-merited Hell.

The era is known as that of peace and tranquillity, and begins with the removal of the capital first to Nagaoka and then to the foot of Mt. Hiei. The chief reason for this expensive and elaborate change seems to be that Kwammu was oppressed by the dominance of the powerful monks of Nara. He was a Confucian scholar, and his Fujiwara advisers were also opposed to any rival power. They were as hostile to ecclesiastics as to rival officials.

The building of the new capital had been going on for ten years when suddenly it was decided to move to Miyako or Kyoto, again at immense loss, and again for obscure

political and other reasons. Intrigues within the Fujiwara clan and the growing influence of Chinese astrological ideas may be mentioned as contributing causes. The new city, however, became a worthy capital and, like that of Nara, was modelled on Ch'ang-an. A rectangle stretched for about three miles in each direction, surrounded by a moat, and divided into squares. The running water which cooled it is still a notable feature of Kyoto. To the north were the palace enclosure and offices of state, and about these clustered other palaces and mansions, and the university, largely devoted to Chinese studies. Above the city was Mount Hiei, whose oldest temple was built to guard it against evil influences from the north-east.

As to-day, so in these early centuries the capital, disappointing at first sight, was full of interesting buildings, and the Heian period was in many things one of important beginnings as well as of the consummation of great Japanese arts.

The development of Chinese institutions went on apace during the first part of the period; but from the end of the ninth century intercourse with China was interrupted and there followed a period of adaptation and new growth. Now Japan produces a truly indigenous church and a culture expressive of her genius—yet in both keeps close to Chinese models.

## II

The outstanding political event was the growing domination of the Fujiwara clan; and the era is accordingly divided into pre-Fujiwara (794–851) and Fujiwara (851–1186). The Emperor Kwammu (781–806) owed his succession to a member of this clan who first insisted on his appointment as Crown-prince, and later as Emperor; and they now began their suppression of all rivals, and for some generations led the State with great skill and wisdom. Theirs was a theocratic bureaucracy with its roots in the hereditary priesthood of the Nakatomi, and in 866 the office of Kwampaku, Regent, was handed over to them. They now became







DEATH OF SAKYAMUNI  
(KOYASAN)

almost Brahmins, leaving to emperors the duties of nominal suzerainty, and to other clans such matters as wars against the Ainu. While Buddhist monks went to China to study, the Fujiwara encouraged Confucian learning, and Chinese art still provided classic models. But by the end of the ninth century civil wars in China and the decline and fall of the T'ang interrupted this intercourse, and Japan was left to assimilate and to develop what she had borrowed. Kyoto was now as for many centuries the artistic as well as the administrative capital, and Buddhism was the inspiration of the arts.

In the pre-Fujiwara period it was a Buddhism deliberately modelled on the great monastic systems of China which exerted the strongest influence, and the great names are those of Dengyo or Saicho (767-822) and of Kobo or Kukai (774-835), ecclesiastics of genius in adaptation who did much for Japan. Their shrines stand among giant trees on Mount Hiei above Kyoto, and on Mount Koya some eighty miles away, and from these centres religious and artistic impulses have continued to radiate. On the former is the ancient Kompon-chudo, typical of the Buddhist architecture of the age, and on the latter are famous Japanese primitives such as the strong and dramatic 'Red Fudo' and the magnificent and poignant 'Death of Sakyamuni'. These are by unnamed masters of the ninth century, and here too is the serene and sensuous 'Buddha and twenty-five Bodhisattvas', a seraphic choir radiant in the heavens. It is by Eshin Sozu, an early abbot of the Paradise Sect, who lived from 942 to 1017, and who is believed to have seen this vision of the Western Paradise where Amida welcomes the faithful. This master, and Kobo and Kanaoka, are the founders of a true Japanese school still influenced by the China of early Sung, but beginning to express itself in Japanese style, and Buddhist influence is still strong in the first part of the Heian Age.

The later Heian period is more secular, and is perhaps better epitomized by the lovely Phoenix Hall built as a villa in 1053 at Uji, a suburb of Kyoto, by Yorimichi

Fujiwara. It is the most graceful and symmetrical of wooden buildings, with a central hall or body, and wings, as of a great bird in flight; 'in delicacy of proportion and refinement of composition it marks the culmination of Japanese architecture'.<sup>1</sup> In the days of its splendour it glowed with rich colour—fresco and lacquer and inlay of mother-of-pearl and ivory. Turned later into a chapel, this sumptuous and elegant villa now houses one of the great Buddhist masterpieces of the eleventh century, the 'Amida' of the sculptor Jocho, who like Eshin Sozu, expressed the new pietism of the Paradise schools. Before him sculpture had reached its climax, and had then for a time declined, until this new and emotional cult called it into fresh activity, and kept a large body of artisans at work.

While, then, the Normans were building their great stone castles in France and England, the rulers of Japan were dreaming in wood and lacquer, and long before the first Gothic cathedrals Japan had built a Horiuji, a Yakushiji, and a Todaiji. But this splendour, religious and secular, cost the country dear; and the ambitious Fujiwara remained in the saddle long after their usefulness had ceased, and their virility had degenerated. The Court became a 'mere nest of lovemaking, versifying and feasting', and a passionate dilettantism craved novelty.

Like Fuhito in the early Nara Age the Fujiwara of the end of this era, nearly four hundred years later, were relatives and masters of their emperors. Michinaga (995–1018) was not only all-powerful as Regent, but supplied three empresses and several emperors from his immediate family. Compared with these proud barons the poor rulers cut a sorry figure—one dying in such poverty that there was none to bury him, and all glad if they could escape to some monastery and be left in peace. During these centuries eight of the fifteen abdicated, and if one ventured to assert himself he was put under the control of some lordly abbot, himself often a soldier, who saw to it that he occupied himself in piety or in harmless scholar-

<sup>1</sup> R. A. Cram, *Impressions of Japanese Architecture*, p. 41.

ship. A child was meantime put upon the throne, and a wife chosen for him at a tender age from the ranks of Fujiwara ladies.

The helplessness of such emperors is well illustrated by the oft-quoted saying of one who himself became a monk: 'Three things I cannot control: the river in spate, the monks of Hiei, and the fall of the dice'. The dice were indeed loaded against the royal house, and between Court and monastery their lives were spent in harmless scholarship and calligraphy—now almost a religion. For if the monk was a soldier and the emperor a puppet, the soldier of this age was a scholar, who made a careful study of Chinese classics. For tactics he went to the Book of Changes, and for strategy to the dualistic philosophy of the Yang and the Yin! While battles were a series of theatrical single-combats, swordsmanship became a passion, and played a great part in Japanese history. Among the arts and crafts of Japan the work of the swordsmith ranks high, and Japanese blades are unsurpassed even by those of Damascus or Persia. The sword is known as the 'Soul of the Samurai', and the names of great craftsmen like Masamune and Muramasi are handed down with veneration. In a land of craftsmen their craft is looked upon as the most honourable of all. Large shipments of such swords went to China in exchange for the masterpieces of Sung art, many of which are preserved in Japan. Japanese armourers now reached their zenith, and gold lacquer was perfected.

Now begins too the development of the masked dance, which was to play so great a part in Japanese life. From the early germ of ritual-dances at Shinto shrines this great art received a new impetus with the coming of Buddhism, whose Bugaku or Mysteries now blent with the native folk-dances known as 'rice-field music', such as the Dengaku, which celebrated harvest-home. As in India and China these folk-festivals of Japan were elaborated by the priests into miracle-plays, and we hear of a masked dance as early as 807, when a great earthquake shook Nara, and

it was performed to allay the wrath of the gods. Some of the masks preserved in the Shoso-in were perhaps used on this occasion—strong and dramatic works which are the prototypes of No-masks still used in Japan.

From these three ancient roots, Sarugaku or Shinto-ritual, Dengaku folk-dance, and Bugaku masked Buddhist dance, springs the No-drama so characteristic of Japanese genius. First known as Saru-gaku-no-No, it dates in its present form from the fourteenth century, and we may postpone a further study of it; but its roots are deeply and firmly planted in the Heian era. It owes much to Buddhism, and in its blending of awe and wonder and mystery with a high aesthetic appeal to eye and ear as well as to imagination, it is a characteristically Japanese achievement.

### III

We must now look more closely at the classical figures of Saicho, known to posterity as Dengyo, and of Kukai whose posthumous name is Kobo. They and their fellow monks made Japan free of the cultured world; they introduced philosophy and ethics, medicine and astronomy, and so helped to naturalize on Japanese soil the art and religion of the mainland.

Saicho was a deeply religious youth who became disgusted with the politics and pride of the monks of Nara. Leaving the capital, he built himself a hut on the slopes of Hiei, looking down upon Lake Biwa on one side and the valley of the Kamo River on the other. Here he passed into manhood, and in 788 built the first small Buddhist shrine which later under the name Enriakuji was to become the metropolitan temple of a great new sect. The Emperor Kwammu was meantime building his new capital at the foot of the mountain, and called Saicho to dedicate it. He encouraged the young monk also in preaching-tours to expound the Lotus Scripture, which was to become the philosophic basis of the new church, and the inspiration of a great art. In due course Kwammu sent him with his ambassador to Ch'ang-an, and he passed on to the great

Tien-tai range where he spent some years studying the systematic Buddhism of Chi-kai. This school takes the Lotus Scripture as its foundation, and arranges all Buddhist texts in a developing series: it insists that all men are potentially Buddhas, and is thus much more democratic than the exclusive monachism of Nara. Religion is to be a servant of man, and salvation is for all. Armed with this philosophy Saicho returned to build up a new church, which was to do much for Japan, and to become the parent of many of its most powerful sects.

Hiei has been compared to a lotus-pod shedding many seeds: Koyasan to a lotus turned sunwards. Here Kukai built his temple to the Sun-Buddha. A many-sided genius, he published a dialogue at the early age of twenty in which Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism are compared; and to prepare himself further for his great task he too went to Ch'ang-an and studied the True Word, or Chen-yan, which he brought back to Japan as Shingon. This is a highly ritualistic and symbolic expression of pantheistic philosophy, expressing itself in gesture and act, and often degenerating into magic. Choosing Koyasan with its cluster of hills and giant forests he built up a new church, introduced something of Sanskrit learning and of Indian iconography, and carried farther the amalgamation of Shinto with Buddhism. Himself a sculptor, a poet, and a famous calligraphist, he gave classical demonstration of the cultural values of Buddhism. A great painting attributed to him is treasured at the Toji Temple in Kyoto, 'The Seven Patriarchs of Shingon', strong and vivid figures boldly portrayed. Some of his disciples went to India for further study, and others to China, bringing back much besides Buddhism. They encouraged the culture of the silkworm, began schools for the common people, and made roads and bridges. Jitte, Jikaku, and Chisho are his Japanese successors, Amoghavajra and Vajrabodhi his Indian masters—mystics whose by-products were works of great practical value.

The great Kwammu, then, found in Buddhism a useful

ally, and the two new sects did much in these earlier days of the era to foster the work of civilization. The Japanese of to-day recognize perhaps more fully than their European contemporaries the debt that they owe to religion. Count Okuma, who has so generously expressed their gratitude to Christianity, is even more emphatic in attributing to Buddhism the leading place in the civilization of his country. He mentions among its gifts:

The carving of images, building of temples, painting and the manufacture of tiles, concrete, lacquered and earthen wares, woven goods, embroideries, paper, ink, and dyeing materials. It was also through Buddhism that calendars, music, and useful plants were brought into the country, and by means of their philanthropic work medical art was improved, schools and orphan asylums built, and hot springs discovered . . . From this array of facts we can safely conclude that the civilization peculiar to Japan and existing before the Restoration undoubtedly had its source in Buddhism.

Yet the historian cannot ignore the superstitions and intrigues, the jealousies and battles between Buddhist temples which darken this age. Nor must he neglect to note that it was a very superstitious Buddhism which appealed to the masses.

#### IV

But the early Heian era was one of great personalities in Church and State. Japan has no more revered figures than the scholar-statesman Michizane and the scholar-priest Kukai: both are worshipped by countless millions. She looks back to this age also as that of the flowering of her national art and literature.

Two new cursive and phonetic scripts were invented—one by Makibi, one by Kukai, and these set her genius free to express itself. Poetry, if not so good as that of Nara, abounded, and a new national school of painting and drama, as of architecture, landscape-gardening and decoration, is seen emerging.

In the latter part of the era the Samurai, 'servants of the overlord', set a new standard of Spartan simplicity and loyalty, and Zen masters from China provided a technique

of meditation to train soldiers and statesmen for action and endurance. The Fujiwara domination lasts till 1086, and is followed by a brief era of restored imperial authority lasting till 1167, while great families strive for the mastery, and prepare the way for the military rule of Kamakura, which a Japanese writer calls 'bushiocracy'—the rule of the knights. Pauperization of the masses and demoralization of the local officials are both due to complex causes, notably to civil wars and to usurpation of central authority. Might is right, though the emperor is in theory supreme, and is still a god. From various sources Bushido—the unwritten code of the knight—is being slowly formulated to meet the needs of this complex situation. In a word Japan is producing her own typical and strange culture.

The foundations of a truly indigenous school of painting—later to be known as Yamatoe—were well and truly laid by Kose-no-Kanaoka (850-90). A courtier and no doubt an intimate of scholars like Michizane, who were close students of things Chinese, Kanaoka was surely well acquainted with the masterpieces of Wu Tao-tse (or Godoshi), copies of whose works are treasured in Japan to this day, notably a great triad, Sakyamuni and Bodhisattvas.<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful if anything by Kanaoka himself remains, but we know that he was a skilled landscape-gardener, and that he painted delicate landscapes as well as altar-pieces for Buddhist temples in which the powerful brush strokes of Wu Tao-tse were imitated, but in which a new delicacy appeared. A fine portrait of Shotoku is probably a copy of one of his works; and that he was a brilliant and versatile artist—the father of Japanese painting—seems clear. If he was an imitator of Chinese masters he seems to have been no copyist, but to have gone to local scenes and national heroes for inspiration. Even if the works attributed to him are themselves copies or even copies of copies, yet the Japanese see in him a master of brush-work akin to Giotto in suavity and delicacy, yet vigorous as Michael Angelo. 'A picture without vigorous strokes is like a body

<sup>1</sup> See Frontispiece.



without a soul', says Mr. Sei-ichi Taki, editor of the great art journal, the *Kokka*, who goes on to explain that a true artistic triumph is to represent an object or scene with the least possible use of strokes, as well as with vigour and life.

This is the Japanese criterion also of a good poem. As in China, so here, the two are intimately related: 'if painting is voiceless poetry, poetry is vocal painting'. This has been the strength, at times the weakness, of both arts in Japan. The subjective is sometimes so emphasized that the meaning remains hidden from all but a very small coterie of the initiated. In the Nara Age poets such as Hitomaru and Yakamochi were the protégés of Shomu and his empress, and if the paintings of the Heian Age have perished, its lyrics have been preserved in the memories of the people as well as on the scrolls of anthologists, which towards the end of the era begin to give place to printed books, but are written for three centuries in the new phonetic scripts. But such poetry was not fashionable at Court. For some time indeed to write Japanese was to write 'like a woman'. The poetic tourneys of the Court were imitations in every way of their Chinese originals, and for the rest the men left literature to their women. But there are notable exceptions: and the 'bureau of poetry' continued to encourage the lyrist. The *Kokinshu*, or 'Anthology of old and new', was completed in 922 by Ki-no Tsurayuki (883-946), a critic as well as a poet of distinction. His introduction is the first masterpiece of true Japanese prose, and it is full of Chinese turns of speech and 'the trick of antithesis so dear to Chinese authors'. This and his *Tosa-nikki*, a diary of his journey between Tosa and the capital, entitle him to be called the father of Japanese prose: a master of clear and sensitive writing. The 'god of education' in Japan is Sugawara Michizane (845-903) a voluminous writer of history and a great teacher, who though himself an admirer of Chinese learning composed freely in Japanese, and suggested to the emperor that intercourse with China had gone far enough. He rose to very high office, aroused the suspicious jealousy of the Fujiwara, and

was banished to Kyushu, where he ate his heart out in exile, as a Viceroy who ought to have been President of the University.

Other classical scholars of the age were Kiyotsura (847-918), who wrote a memorial urging reforms, and the earlier Sadanushi (785-852) who inaugurated the making of a prose anthology of nearly a thousand volumes.

Others were specialists in a narrow sense, each devoting himself to one Chinese classic and its Han commentary, and these became family traditions. The favourite works were the 'Book of Rites', 'The Chronicles of Lu', and 'The Classic of Filial Piety', but next to calligraphy the great craze was Chinese poetry, and the inspiration of T'ang went on, though the Court preferred the earlier poets, and emperor and officials capped verses in the winding-water tours familiar in Chinese paintings and Japanese caricatures. Seated by a stream they caught little cups of wine as they floated by, drank and made a couplet, capping one another's sentiments, and drinking one another out. In such noble emulation and in stern wars with the Ainu, in Chinese scholarship and in experiments in Japanese, in intrigues and love-affairs, in compiling anthologies and histories, the early Heian Age passed. From the tenth century on there are signs of new vigour and freedom, and women are its pioneers.

## V

This process began during the Nara Age. Jito, herself a poetess, saw to the completion of the Kojiki, and gathered at Nara artists and men of letters. Her daughter Gensho inspired the Nihongi, and Gemmyo, consort of Shomu, was the patroness of the poets Hitomaru and Yakamoshi.

If the Nara era has been described as pre-eminently a woman's era, the Heian women were no less remarkable. Seven of the ten great literary figures of this era are women. They could watch with detached and humorous eye the elaborate ceremonies of the Court, the scholarly trivialities and amours of the nobles; and they developed the art of

story-telling to while away the tedium of their own secluded lives. Some of their lyrics show that they were by no means meek and gentle.

The greatest Japanese work of fiction, one of the great novels of all time, is the long romance *Genji Monogatari*, completed in 1003 by the Lady Murasaki Shikibu. As in China so in Japan while poems cannot be too short novels can hardly be too long. Here, too, China influenced Japan, and her great novel of *The Three Dynasties* must be remembered amongst the influences which made up Bushido, with its tales of loyalty and courage and adventure, and which served as a model in literature.

But the *Genji Monogatari* is unique, an authentic work of Japanese art. Written seven centuries before *Pamela*, with which it is often compared, this very modern novel was composed to beguile a young princess who had become a Shinto priestess, and found little to occupy her. It is a religion which leaves even the mind empty.

Murasaki was herself a humble member of the Fujiwara clan, who saw to it that all positions of authority and influence were parcelled out among them, and her fine apartments at Ishiyama, looking out on a lovely garden above Lake Biwa, are still kept intact. From this quiet retreat came her spirited account of the amours and adventures of Genji, the Prince Charming of the age, poet, connoisseur, and libertine. Like a gorgeous scroll the sixty-four chapters of this masterpiece unfold, a priceless document for studying the life of the nobility of the era, its elegant futility and polished licentiousness. It is indeed as a true historical record that the authoress offers her work to her readers: 'History,' she says, 'is usually a dull record, and biassed.' Is she thinking of the dynastic histories of China, or of *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*? 'Romances,' she goes on, 'are true history, vivid scenes of contemporary society. Their authors are free to choose what is best when that is their aim, what is most amusing when they wish to amuse.' Japanese genius has always shone brightest in this art of selection, and as her editor Mr.



SCENE FROM GENJI MONOGATARI



A BOY SHOGLUN



Waley says, Murasaki has 'a pre-eminent capacity for saying the most relevant things in the most effective order'.

The success of the novelist set a fashion, and Murasaki's daughter and other women of the Court began to write. Notable are the 'Pillow Sketches', *Makura-no-Soshi*, of Sei-shonogon, a diary of minute and sometimes amusing impressions of an acute mind, which have had a great vogue in Japan. The authoress, a lady-in-waiting, calls it 'A record of what I have seen and felt, jotted down to solace the loneliness of my life and home, not written for the eyes of others'. Like a picture by Botticelli (upon whom a Japanese has produced perhaps the best commentary yet written) the 'Pillow Sketches' are full of quaint details—the emperor's dog is being punished for fighting with his cat, and the foibles and vanities of the Court are not missed by her quick eye, which notes all the little telling details that less gifted artists ignore. Her lyric translated below reveals this keen humour. She tells much of the last decade of the tenth century, of Buddhist ceremonies and courts, of incantations and spirit possession, of picnics and pilgrimages, above all of her own whims and moods. These writers are distinguished by the quaint 'delicacy' of their minds, noted by all the Europeans who have studied them, from Xavier to Hearn. An Eshin among religious painters and a Murasaki among secular novelists—these reveal the true spirit of eleventh-century Japan, a spirit of refinement and charm in danger of effeminacy, of an eager search for novelty.

With the exception of wars against the Ainu there was nothing to distract the Court of this era from the task of imitating and assimilating the culture of the mainland; and when communication with China was interrupted they showed vitality and genius in adapting what they had borrowed. Thus side by side with frescoes of Indian provenance, with T'ang and Silla works of art, we see Japanese originality asserting itself in authentic and original sculpture and architecture. The straight tiled roofs now take

on a graceful sweeping curve, and a new elegance appears in every detail.

But there was still abundant strength. Especially characteristic are the vigorous wooden carved figures which guard the temple gateways. These Shi-Tenno are the four guardians or Devaraja of Indian mythology, which reflect the military enthusiasm of the early Heian era, and are masterpieces of titanic energy. Their close-fitting armour seems to derive from the Turkistan uplands, for that of the Japanese is a kind of shard or screen hung about the body, and it was perfected in this era, whereas exact prototypes of these cuirasses and plates for arms and thighs are found in the frescoes of the East Asian hinterland and of T'ang China.

The same vigour and power is to be seen in the famous 'Red Fudo' of Koyasan. It belongs to the ninth century according to Japanese critics, some of whom attribute it to Kukai himself. The artist has evidently watched a devastating fire, and if the main figure is primitive the halo is the work of an advanced art. Fudo is the Hindu god Achala, the Immovable, adopted into the Buddhist Pantheon, and adapted to Japanese ideas.

This process, begun by Gyogi and carried on by Kukai, was completed in the Fujiwara era, and though Nichiren called Kukai the 'prize liar of Japan' he was rather the exemplar of a process inevitable in a missionary religion, which gradually takes over existing deities, and adapts them to its uses. The pantheistic philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism made this process easy, for it taught that the Buddha-nature was in all things, and a Shinto god or a local hero easily became a Bodhisattva, or even a Buddha. The classical example of this process is the identification of the imperial ancestress Amaterasu with the Sun-Buddha Vairochana, and the worship of sun-gods like Apollo and Mithras may well have entered into the stream of Buddhism as it spread through Graeco-Indian kingdoms and Persian satrapies. To-day at Koyasan the cult of the all-pervading sun is celebrated with great pomp, and ancient Vedic practices such as the homa-sacrifice and the cult of fire live on in the



THE RED FUDO OF KOYASAN  
(Tenth Century)





shrines of Fudo, where priests in scarlet burn fragrant sandal-wood and pour libations, and with mystic gesture and Sanskrit mantras invoke the Fire-god.

Now Brahma, the Creator, and Sarasvati, goddess of learning, and many another Indian deity crowd into the pantheon of Ryobu (or mixed) Shinto.

On the altars of Sakyamuni himself tower titanic forms like Hachiman, god of war, once the Emperor Ojin, and of destructive forces of nature now tamed by the spirit of Buddhism. Never have these powers received such dramatic representation as in the sculptures of this period, and they make a splendid foil to the gentle and remote figure of Kwannon the Compassionate, and the allurements of Fugen, whose pious devices are examples of Buddhist strategy, Hoben, to win men to salvation. She may even play the geisha to lure them on to Nirvana.

Secular art also flourished at this time. The practice of painting on walls and doors, which came in with early Korean works like the Tamamushi shrine, was carried to great perfection in the palaces and villas as well as in the temples of Kyoto. The fair forms on the screens of the Todaiji and their trees of careful realism and minute detail seem to be the work of a Japanese master of the end of the Nara or the beginning of the Heian era, which, if it ended in over-refinement and effeminacy, began in strong and vigorous work like that of the gigantic Vairocana and the Shi-tenno. The Buddhism of this age is perhaps best summarized in these figures: for the secular cannot be separated from the sacred, for 'all nature is an embodiment of the Buddha', and is thus a sacrament.

The power of the Fujiwara culminated at the close of the tenth and the opening of the eleventh centuries with Michinaga and Yorimichi, who were as ostentatious as the Medici, while crime and misery grew apace, bandits and pirates made travel unsafe, and temples became nests of lawlessness. Even in the capital these monkish pests were to be seen engaged in drunken brawls. Michinaga openly boasted that all the world was made for his enjoyment, and

when he died (in 1019) ten thousand priests were diverted from their squabbles to the no less barren task of interceding for him, while a general amnesty was declared. It is no accident that two opponents of the Fujiwara—the Emperor Masakado and the statesman Michizane—are worshipped to-day as Shinto deities. Here gratitude is winged by dislike of both Fujiwara insolence and Buddhist arrogance. These are in many respects dark ages. Loyalties were intense but narrow, and the earlier reforms had failed to control feuds and civil wars.

The long-drawn-out rivalries of clan and clan came to a head in the bloody strife of Taira and Minamoto. If the luxury of the Fujiwara is told in the *Eigwa*—‘Tales of Glory and Splendour’—and the intrigues of the Court in the *Genji*, we have the whole drama of these wars in the *Gempei Monogatari*.

This is the true epic, as the Samurai, feudal servant, is the beau ideal of Japan. To the brave much is forgiven, and in the picturesque much is forgotten.

Some rulers such as Shirakawa (1073–86) tried to rule the clans. But Shirakawa was forced into a monastery, and set the bad precedent of rule from behind the scenes, seeking during the reigns of his three successors to dictate their policy. So these poor puppets had to put up with the ‘advice’ of their predecessor as well as with the ‘suggestions’ of the Fujiwara. Shirakawa’s counsel was largely the echo of that of the great abbots of Hiei, who attracted to their houses lawless men and vagabonds of every kind, till these became veritable castles and fortresses. In the next reign the Ainu and discontented Japanese made common cause, and were put down by a punitive expedition under the Minamoto leader Yoshiye, who also became a god, being named Hachiman Taro. He and his brother Yoritoshi were famous archers of whom many good stories are told.

These powerful families, invited by Shirakawa to the capital, stirred up trouble, and in their feuds the Fujiwara were ruined, and Japan entered on an era of military domination based on force. It is strange that it was the

power of the monks which led to the downfall of the Fujiwara: called in to help, the rival clans were their undoing.

It is a picturesque age, but the tales of fighting and adventure mean more to the Japanese than to the student of history. The deeds of Yoritomo and of the youthful Yoshitsune whom he foully did to death, of the giant monk Benkei and of the lovely peasant-girl Tokiwa, are they not portrayed in innumerable prints of the early eighteenth century; collected into albums, and recorded in the contemporary novels, as picturesque as the deeds of their contemporaries Robin Hood and Maid Marian?

It is as we have said a cruel as well as an heroic tale. Men cheerfully sacrificed their lives and women their honour to help the cause of their clan: and the victor had no mercy upon the vanquished. The Heike Monogatari, written in the thirteenth century, describes the rise of the Taira, and opens with a chapter on famous swords; and the whole country was for long a stage for dramatic single combats, till with the battle of Dannoura in 1185 the Taira went down, and a military dictatorship gave Japan a breathing space from famine, pestilence, and sudden death.

'If we go to sea our bodies shall rot in the water. If we turn to the hills the grass will cover them' is at once the warlike boast and the epitaph of countless Samurai.

## VI

So the 'Age of Heavenly Peace' comes to an end in the feuds of lawless barons, and a great classic civilization awaits its further development through some decades of strife. Of the life of the common people during this era we know that they used the rice of their growing for barter, that slavery continued, and that between the Court and the temple the peasants were heavily burdened. A land-tax was still levied, and a tax on products, and the farmer now had to serve three months in the year on imperial and Court work; he was in fact a serf. Reclaimed land was largely free of taxes, but this was monopolized by temples

or local gentry, and the small man had little time or opportunity to grow rich, and was always at the beck and call of feudal or spiritual lords. Many became rovers, Ronin, lawless men ready to serve in the armies of either, or to become vagabonds and free-lances.

But towards the end of this age the farmers began to band together, forming manors of their own, and so escaping the avaricious monk or baron. A 'manor' was a centre not only of agriculture but of trade in cloth and other commodities, and the great families of this age are supported by and rooted in the manor system. Within the manors arose a military class, the Bushi: bound by feudal ties to their lords, these soldiers were to play a picturesque role in subsequent ages.

The economic roots of the long struggle which now culminates must be examined. The Kuge or imperial family, and its branches, had, as we have seen, been in control of national revenues since the Taikwa Reformation; but feudal lords had usurped more and more power, and had enriched themselves, as had the great monastic houses, by amassing lands and serfs. Conflicts of an economic nature thus arose, for the tax-free manorial and temple-lands—some reclaimed by their owners, some given in reward for services to the Throne—accumulated, and the imperial revenues decreased. When the Minamoto under Yoritomo shamelessly usurped the collection of revenue for the whole country it was the climax of a long process of encroachment.

Robber barons vying with Buddhist abbots and lords of the manor all preyed upon the farmers and artisans, and all attracted to them armed retainers. It soon became a question of which could grab and hold most, and a true military feudalism emerges as the better disciplined armies impose their will on the country.

Our illustrative readings, if they tell of the lover and his beloved, of the craftsman and his craft, tell also of the sad disillusionment of a rough and turbulent close to an age of high achievement.

## THE SPIRIT OF HEIAN

## I. FROM THE DIARY OF SEI-SHONAGON

(a)

A scripture reciter should be handsome. Only if it is a pleasure to look at him all the time is there any chance of feeling religious. Ugliness may become a cause of sin: for then one's attention wanders.

(b)

An annoying experience is to hear fond parents praise and pet an ugly child, and to have to listen to their repetition and imitation of its sayings.

## II. TENTH-CENTURY POEMS

(a) *Sei-shonagon to her Lover*

In vain you pine and linger there:  
For though a cock you imitate  
'Twill not unlock the toll-bar gate:  
Await the dawn, my chanticleer!

(b) *Sei-shonagon in Old Age*

Ah! if to those who seek me, I  
Can scarcely bring myself to say  
'She is at home': don't wonder, pray!  
I scarcely know at times if I am I.

(c) *Mina-yu-ki Minamoto*

How solitary the mountain hamlet lies:  
When friends are gone, it fills my soul with dread;  
The mountain bare, the leaves all shed—  
It seems as if the world itself were dead.

(d) *Yoshinobu—a Priest*

The lady of my heart I'll ne'er forsake:  
As constant as the guards who make  
Each night their watch-fire till day break.

## III. LATER HEIAN POEMS

(a) *Sanso Minamoto (d. 1219)*

A son of Yoritomo, he was famous as a man of letters. On the day when a priest—his own nephew—murdered him in the

War-God's temple at Kamakura he wrote this haunting lyric, all the more meaningful as he was the last of his house.

When I am gone and masterless  
 This house may seem, yet not the less  
 Remember me, fair tree, I pray—  
 Again these eaves with blossoms spray.

(b) *Okura—a Court official*

*Sic transit.*

In this our world woe follows woe  
 As year succeeds to year and day to day,  
 Its changes and its chances endless flow;  
 Calamities o'ertake us as they may.

Fair ladies, as their wont is, play  
 With gems, embroidering their flowing sleeves:  
 And fain the springtime they would stay,  
 But blossoms yield in turn to falling leaves,  
 And white hairs show in raven tresses sleek,  
 And wrinkles willy-nilly mar the rosy cheek.

#### IV. SWORDSMANSHIP

Not only physical fitness, but something in addition by way of spiritual sway was necessary. The Yagiu style required the fencer's mind to be so concentrated on his sword that it became a part of the steel or the steel a part of the mind. A man with a sword is expected completely to cover himself against attacks from all quarters. Yagiu went a step farther and said one must conceal oneself in a sword. This sounds meaningless to those not initiated in Japanese fencing. But it has a great significance. An accomplished fencer, especially one with the so-called spiritual sway, poses himself in a certain attitude, and his opponent, while watching for an unguarded spot to attack, gradually feels lost in the labyrinth of feint attacks and foibles. Presently he feels that his antagonist has disappeared, the only visible thing being the point of his antagonist's blade. At this point he is attacked and defeated. The loser is apparently in a trance which is brought about by the spiritual aggression of the victor. A sort of mesmerism? In Japan the noted organizers of well-known schools of fencing resorted to this method. They all repaired to the mountain fastnesses and for years practised the art. In the absence of a better term, it was named *Kiai Jitsu*, or the art of spiritual swaying. . . . In books of military anecdotes, examples of flying

sparrows or rats infesting ceilings being either brought down or killed by *Kiai Jitsu* are mentioned *ad infinitum*; children's folklore also abounds in these episodes.<sup>1</sup>

#### V. JAPANESE CRITICISM

The Buddhist Archbishop, Henjo, is excellent in form, but the truth is not in him. If I may venture a comparison, it is as if you should vainly give your heart away to a woman drawn in a picture.

Arihara no Narihira has plenty of heart: but the words are deficient; as it were, withered flowers, that still keep their fragrance, though their colour is gone.

As for Bunya no Yasuhide, his words are fine, but not well fitted to the matter; even as though a man of the lowest class, a mere merchant, should clothe himself in fine silks.

The priest of Mount Uji, Kisen, is obscure; beginning and end lack connexion; as if we saw the Autumn moon, first bright, then hiding pale in clouds at dawn. However, but few of his poems are in circulation to judge by.

Ono-no-Komachi follows the style of the Empress Sotohori of ancient times. She has feeling but lacks vigour; like a woman fair but suffering from illness. Still, lack of vigour is only natural in a woman's poems.

Otono-no-Kuronushi is agreeable in substance, but his style is low; as though a mountain peasant with faggots on his back should stop to rest beneath the cherry-blossoms.

Of others . . . for the most part they yearn after poetry, rather than attain it.

*Japanese Poetry*, C. H. PAGE.

<sup>1</sup> *Kume-no-Heinai*, Tokyo Nichi Nichi (English ed.), 1924.



## XVI

# THE KAMAKURA AGE OF MILITARY RULE (1180-1392)

All sufferings that befall my fellow beings are my sufferings. NICHIREN.

New energies were at work on every side, and new inspirations were the need of the time. M. ANESAKI.

### I

THE degenerate Fujiwara were doomed long before they finally fell, and the new age is one of a new feudalism and a new vigour and initiative. It resembles in many things the Age of Chivalry in Europe. The Bushi are the knights, the Samurai their retainers, and Bushido is the code of the times; and there is a certain austerity, almost monastic, in their devotion to duty, and a passionate loyalty, almost religious, in their devotion to their daimyo or feudal lord.

The figures of Yoritomo, Yoshitsune, and Toshiyori are comparable to those of the knights of King Arthur, and with them manhood returns to Japan. It is an age of bards and of epic song, of heroic deeds and of religious expiation of violence. As in the Sung era in China men now begin to think for themselves, and activity is the role for which quietism is a preparation, not a substitute. The monastic spirit is in a word to fructify not to sterilize life; and the Zen masters are inspirers to something more virile than the dissipations of court life, or the repetition of hypnotic hymns to Amida. Like the Sung Age this era is one of transition from the ancient to the modern world, and its new feudalism is a stage in the long evolution to that centralized government which has made Japan strong. Its new individualism, too, is a preparation for that free discipline of reasoned obedience which is the keynote of her later development.

The military usurpation of the Taira (1159-85) came to an end when the Minamoto under the brilliant soldiers Yoshitsune and Yoritomo won the great sea-battle of

Dan-no-ura in 1185, and Japan passed to complete military feudalism.

Minamoto-no-Yoritomo (1147-99) is a remarkable figure; famous not only for military prowess but for the double revolution by which he set up 'camp-rule' at Kamakura, and brought into power with him men who had been serfs under the old barons. His dictatorship was the inevitable outcome of the incipient feudalism of Fujiwara times, and was to see its full fruition in the Shoguns of the seventeenth century, who redeemed it by great skill from being a tyranny, and gave Japan a constitution.

In 1180 Yoritomo set up the Bakufu or camp-rule at Kamakura some three hundred miles from the capital, and a system of dyarchy which was to have far-reaching effects, and to last in various modifications till the 'restoration' of the emperor in the nineteenth century.

The control of national finance was vested in the dictator, who set up his own judiciary, kept a large standing army, and appointed officials to both central and local posts. To all these reforms the emperor 'consented': they were in fact timely, for it was an age needing a strong hand.

The Shoen or land-grant system had been so abused that the whole country was divided among barons, monasteries, and manors, and Yoritomo and his retainers continued to think in such terms. But he could at least check the power of his lieutenants, and to this end he 'humbly petitioned' the emperor for the position of Shogun or Generalissimo. It was refused at first, but granted in 1192, and now a real military dictatorship began. Yoritomo's men held vast estates and controlled vast armies not only in the east but all over Japan, and by the end of the era some provinces had only a tithe of public lands—the rest belonging to great families and temples. But the Shoen, or tax-free land, was now controlled, and taxes collected by constables appointed by the Shogun, and many grants were made only for life and not in perpetuity. The Shinden system of grants of land to colonists was also a notable

reform, and new business centres such as Nagasaki grew up, while guilds or *za* were organized—which had almost a monopoly in such trades as the sale of wine and rice.

Foreign trade thrived, but so did piracy; and the threat of the Mongols begins about the fourteenth century to stimulate shipbuilding, already well developed.

In a word the dictatorship was justified by its fruits, and the Japanese are grateful to Yoritomo.

In 1192 he became *Sei-i-tai Shogun*, or Great Conqueror of the Barbarians, commander-in-chief and virtual dictator, but did not long enjoy his power. His death in 1195, when his son succeeded to the title of *Shogun*, was only to illustrate the Japanese saying: *Taisho ni tanega nashi*—‘to a military leader no seed’—and the commissioner Hojo Tokimasa became the wire-puller of this ‘puppet Regent of a puppet Emperor’.

The Japanese have named one of their insect pests Hojo, and have little but abuse for the old usurper. Yet the Hojo, though they did not call themselves *Shogun*, were able to quell the hostile clans and to repel the Mongols; and they gave Japan peace after long strife, and improved her economic and cultural life.

## II

The period is in fact marked by a new virility, and coincides with the coming of a new spiritual impulse in the contemplative school of Buddhism. Zen masters played a great part in influencing scholars and artists as well as soldiers and statesmen, and stimulated the growth of many things characteristic of Japanese genius. No-drama, tea-ceremony, flower-arrangement, landscape-gardening, and a new and simpler architecture—these, with the stern code of *Bushido*, are its fruits.

And if Zen Buddhism did this for the aristocrats a new tide of the spirit was also flowing among the masses in the pietistic Buddhism of the Western Paradise, of which the *Daibutsu Amida*, set up at Kamakura in 1252, is the best known expression. Great, not as a work of art, but in





other-worldly calm and compassion, this colossal figure welcomes the believer to his paradise, asking only faith.

Now too Japanese Buddhism produced its great pietists Honen (1113-1212) and Shinran (1173-1262) and its most rugged and interesting figure Nichiren (1222-82), fierce critic of the pietists and of a degenerate nobility, who in due course convinced his persecutors and won over the Commissioner himself to the teachings of the Lotus Scripture, and to the need for national unity.

A new interest in personality is seen in the lives of the saints now compiled and illustrated, which, with the biographies of great statesmen and soldiers, form a kind of national epic. During the degeneracy of the Fujiwara, art had become tame and pretty; during the early shogunate it awoke to new and astonishing power. The name Yamatoye 'Japanese' is now used to distinguish this art from that of the mainland and its imitations, and it is remarkable for its vigour and for the national spirit manifest in it. The artists of the Kasuga, Tosa, and Sumiyoshi schools vied with one another in developing the new art, and sought in heroic tales, biographies, and histories of great temple foundations themes of a patriotic nature. Their Yemakimono or scrolls are realistic and dramatic, in vivid contrast to the calm and still figures of Buddhas and saints, or of scholars in some pleasant garden. The true founder of this school is the monk Toba Sojo, caricaturist and allegorist. Just as the Lady Murasaki wrote the Genji to amuse her princess so this good monk began towards the close of the same century to amuse his Emperor, Toba, in his retirement. His panoramas of frogs and animals at play are satires of human life, and his famous 'Fighting Bulls', reminiscent of Ajanta, are full of strength and fury. That he often painted without didactic purpose, whether of satire or of allegory, is also clear, and he is a harbinger of the modern age. The new art spread very rapidly; even fans covered with texts from the Buddhist scriptures are decorated also at this time with scenes from common life, precursors of the Ukiyoye or

'Passing Scenes' of the wood-block prints. A woman at her washing, a driver urging on his bullocks, these are the themes of such monk-artists, and they are painted with immense relish and vigour.

Humour and movement expressed in lines of great power and flexibility—these are the keynotes of the revolution in painting. The great scrolls illustrating the history of the Shigi-zan temple attributed to Toba Sojo are indeed 'unapproachable by any master of the preceding periods' in the esteem of Japanese connoisseurs, and they are followed by many masterpieces. They are a purely Japanese product, and such a scroll as Tosa Mitsunaga's All-Year-Round-Activities is a priceless record of the life of the age. He lived from 1166 to 1198 and his school has many great painters. Mitsunaga, Nobuzane, and Keio are a great trio of this era; what the Genji did for the Court they did for the nation at large, and for its heroes. Keio's scrolls of the Heiji war are the grandest and most classical of all battle-paintings, and Nobuzane's biographical studies of the adventures of Michizane are at once the symbol and fruit of the new zest and interest in living. Amidst all its shocks and catastrophes life in this period was never dull—except for shut-in emperors—and instead of the still and classic posing of the saints we get the vigorous movement of men at war, or of animals in combat.

Scions of the Fujiwara were caught by the new spirit, and the portraits of Fujiwara Takanobu are precious documents of the age. A portrait of Yoritomo himself exists; he is shown in his dark robes of office and his strong and ruthless character is well portrayed—with a suggestion of the grim cruelty which caused him to slay his young brother in the hour of victory.

Perhaps it was such dark deeds that called men to dwell on the horrors of hell—now most vividly portrayed by such Japanese painters as Nobuzane, a contemporary of Dante. For if Medicis and Yoritomos make a paradise of earth they also let hell loose, and Nobuzane dwells with grim detail upon the flames and demon-torturers who

await the proud victor. He shows us with glee a Fujiwara meeting the reward of his persecution of a Michizane, and who can doubt a didactic purpose in this son of Takanobu, himself a Fujiwara, who had seen with his own eyes the horrors of the rise of Yoritomo?

Strong portraits and statues also mark this new vigour and interest: Unkei, Kwaikei, and Tankei are great sculptors of this era, and a school of anonymous monk artists has left many a noble portrait of abbots and Zen masters. The people too were deeply interested—moved to tears at the death of the boy Yoshitsune at the hands of Yoritomo, or at the exile of the great Michizane; moved to ecstatic fervour by some great landscape or some 'Buddha in the Mountains'. Kamakura served Japan well in this national awakening; and Kyoto continued the Chinese traditions of decorative and classic arts. But the new art could not be killed and the fifteenth century produced Japan's greatest painters, Sesshu (1420-1506) and the Kano school, who are in turn the forerunners of the popular and plebeian art of the Ukiyoye.

The literary output of Kamakura was colossal—and mediocre; more than a million poems are preserved in sixteen official anthologies—such as the Shin Kokinshu—'New Collection, Ancient and Modern', and Kinyoshu—'Golden Leaves Anthology'. Kamo Chomei is the best poet of the age, and Yoshida Kenko, another recluse, follows him. A new development was the Renga, a series of lyrics of such men as Tona and Mijyo Yoshimoto; and the naga-uta gave place to the imayo with alternating lines of seven and five syllables.

Military chronicles abound, such as the Gempei Seijuiki, 'Rise and Fall of the Clans', and the Taiheike or 'Records of Peace'. This literature reflects a virile age, still aristocratic, but much more Spartan than that of Heian. In novels, travel-diaries, and 'sentiments' this age follows its predecessor with feeble imitations. Japan is needing a new impetus from China. It came with Zen Buddhism and with the great landscapes of Sung. They saved the



age from effeminacy, and brought some of its most noteworthy achievements to fruition. If the blossoming season lasted on into the Ashikaga period the seed was planted and largely harvested within that of Kamakura.

### III

The chief Zen teacher of the era was Eisai (1141-1215), a monk of Hiei who visited China and mastered the technique of contemplation and of the 'dark sayings' which encourage intuition by baffling reason and logic. Chinese Zenists also found in Japan a peaceful refuge from China in unrest, and they helped to lead Japan into ways of transcendental and carefree mysticism. Coming at the moment when the military were asserting their authority, and had need of firmness and courage, Zen played a great part also in political life. It could be practised in camp, on the march, or even on the battle-field; for it scorns images and books and sends man to find truth within. In their difficult daily decisions as governors too, these soldiers found guidance in this mental discipline, and men like Tokiyori (who ruled from 1246 to 1256) and Tokimune (1268-84) found constant inspiration in their Zen masters. Proud and highhanded with others, they had to humble themselves as children to enter into the Kingdom of Zen.

It is a kingdom in which all things are one in the indwelling Buddha, and it inspired painters like Mu-shih or Mokkei, a Chinese of Hangchou, and his Japanese pupil Mokuan, and through them the great Sesshu and Sesson and the Kanos—to simplify and strengthen their art by omission. With a few powerful strokes these contemplators would draw in a mood of ecstasy some large and tranquillizing landscape, or a mighty upland, or a Zen master at some dramatic moment in his spiritual history. Zen has been well described by Dr. Anesaki as 'an adaptation of Hindu idealism to Chinese quietism and then to the intuitive insight and the practical nature of the Japanese people'. China had developed a peculiar technique which

gave strange new powers to her artists, and Japan intensified this by making it the discipline for the governing class. Combining a strong and austere ethic with keen sensitiveness to beauty it proclaimed a way of life, Bushido, which is Athenian in its search for the Good, the True and the Beautiful, and Spartan in its stern simplicity.

Seated in his bare yet lovely tea-room the nobleman looked out into a garden of perfect proportions, an abode of serenity, and here his idealism was quickened and his courage nerved to the tasks of the day; or, failing, sought here resignation and stoicism; and as he developed powers of intuition reached at rare moments Satori or enlightenment. For Zen—tutor of warrior and of aristocrat—is after all Buddhism; garden and tea-ceremony and zazen are but the technique 'for the dispersal of the clouds of ignorance and worldly care that the moon may shine undimmed'. So man awakes to the Inner Light. Satori as written in the Chinese chronicles means 'I' and 'Mind'; it is the symbol for the discovery of the true self—or core of one's own being and of all things. This leads to acquiescence and resignation as well as to peace, and another aspect of it is resolution to go forward, repenting of the evil or expiating the past.

Bushido means the Way of Knighthood, and it is Zen which called into articulate expression this code of the Samurai. Handed down orally, or accepted almost unconsciously, it is an organic growth with many roots. Some are in the old Shinto with its sense of unseen presences, 'a cloud of witnesses' calling on their descendants to be worthy; some are in Buddhism, such as resignation and the sense of the transiency of life. Thus when a great teacher of sword-play had done his part he could say 'Beyond this I leave you to Zen'. If then the Shinto root is loyalty and reverence to the Kami, the Buddhist root is in mystical experience: when all passes that abides. If Shinto inculcated loyalty to country, Buddhism taught loyalty to truth, and these as we know are often in conflict.

The clear and systematic ethic of K'ung Fu-tse helped at times of doubt and difficulty; with its insistence on right relationships it gave to the nobles many a clue, for it is a worldly-wise system for the statesman who has to take things as he finds them, and can only change them by slow orderly processes. The more democratic theories of Meng-tse, too, helped the usurpers by reminding them that the Son of Heaven is their Lord only so long as he fills the role worthily, and they could not take the poor puppets at Kyoto seriously. Thus loyalty to the empire became a convenient substitute for loyalty to the throne, and on the whole they did well by it.

The Hojo regents were competent rulers, and until 1333 nine of them carried on the government efficiently.

In 1232 they put out a new code of rules for judges—the Joie Shikimoku—to regulate military administration and to inculcate morality. 'I fear that the people of the capital will scoff at such maxims—the work of ignorant barbarians,' said Yasutoki its author. But it became the law of the land—its very simplicity being in its favour and winning the support of the people, who prefer a rough and ready justice to the slow machinery of law.

'The Kamakura rulers have it to their credit that they recognized in the cultivator the basis of the country's economy,' says Sansom, though he points out that the code favoured the feudal magnate at the expense of the peasant. Yet taxation was adjusted to the harvest, and water-rights protected, and from the earliest times until now the question of boundaries has occupied the attention of rulers in a land of small terraced fields.

To Kyoto Kamakura set an example of frugality and simplicity, and by sumptuary laws sought to curb the ostentation of the rich. When calamities such as the great earthquake of 1257 and the famine and plague of 1259 decimated the country the Hojo saved Japan from revolution and anarchy. In 1274 a vast Mongol fleet of Korean ships was put to flight, and in 1281 after fierce fighting another armada of 50,000 Mongols and Koreans and

100,000 Chinese, attacking in two great squadrons, was routed by the islanders, aided by a great storm. Of 4,000 ships only a tithe escaped, and of the army only a fifth.

Yet the Kyoto clans were dissatisfied and envious of Kamakura, which was losing its morale. Supporting a rival claimant to the throne the Bakufu was finally crushed by Daigo II, and Kamakura captured and destroyed in 1333. Kyoto was now once more the capital, and the regency was at an end. But feudal families were still potent, and the Minamoto came back to power in the person of Ashikaga Takauji, who had thrown in his lot with Daigo II, and by 1392 his family was again in the saddle, and the Ashikaga Shogunate began.

#### IV

But we must now turn back to the pietists who made salvation by faith their main teaching, and bade men rejoice in the grace of Amitabha and accept the Paradise prepared for them. Honen and his disciple Shinran were contemporaries of Bernard of Clairvaux and of Francis of Assisi, and they afford interesting parallels.

Coming after the futility and confusion of the Crusades these devotees of Christ brought new life to monastery and people. So Honen and Shinran, after the civil feuds of Taira and Minamoto, called weary men to other-worldly peace and joy. Denouncing luxury and degeneracy all four great figures held up a more excellent way of happiness, and, embracing the Lady Poverty, rebuked the wealthy and proud leaders of the Church. Of all mediaeval Christian saints Bernard and Francis made the deepest impression on their times, not by their intellect nor by their might, but rather by their childlike joy and their strong sense of the Divine Grace.

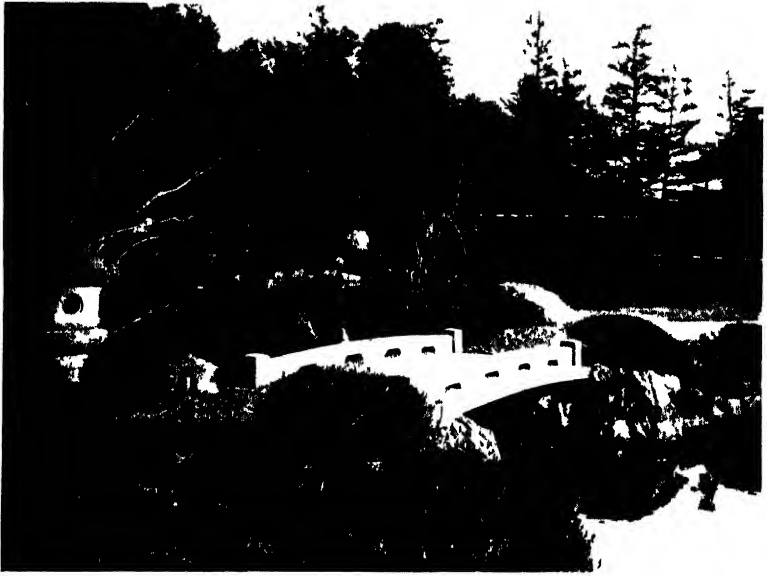
So was it in mediaeval Japan with Honen and Shinran. They compelled men by the contagion of their joy to sing the praises of Amitabha. Men of meekness thus became men of might, and pioneers of a new democracy in Church and State. Out of their 'other-worldliness' sprang a new

ethic for the affairs of this world; men were to love their 'little brethren', who are also pilgrims of the Eternal and sons of the Compassionate. By their loving example they incarnated the Divine anew among men; and if the Hymns of Bernard, and Francis' 'Canticle of the Sun' ring with this love for God and his creatures, so, though with less genius, do the Wasan or Psalms of Honen and Shinran. For the Sun of Eternal Love has illuminated their hearts and all things have become new.

As in Europe, so too in Japan a great impetus was given to art by these men who were not themselves artists, and the Kamakura and Ashikaga periods—with all their failings—produced sublime things such as the gorgeous kakemonos of Amitabha and the Bodhisattvas preserved in imperial museums. Many a vision of the saints was thus recorded: for men learned by a popular technique of meditation to see the Unseen, to look for Amida and the loving Kwannon seated in the spray of some waterfall, or to find Jizo, the friend of dead children, in the gloom of some forest cemetery.

To help in this process of popularization the drama was also called in and adapted to the No mysteries or miracle-plays of transcendental purport, which even if they are inspired by Zen owe many of their themes also to Amida Buddhism. They were, and are still, played in the court-yards of the temples of both sects.

To the genius of Kawanami Kiyotsugu (1333-84) and his son Seami Motokiyo (1363-1444) Japan owes the No in its present form. Developing the old Shinto masquerades and ritual dances, and blending them with Chinese dramas, Japan gradually produced and evolved this exquisite art. Yoshimitsu, towards the end of the Kamakura era, has the credit of recognizing in the actor Kawanami a man of genius, and he protected him and his little son, whom he petted and invited to his own table. Deeply imbued with the teachings of Zen these actors sought to lead their audiences 'below the surface of things' to their real meaning, from the transient to the abiding values.



JAPANESE GARDENS



But the Buddhism of Amitabha and of Kwannon—of Sukui, salvation, is not really separate from that of Satori, enlightenment. They are but aspects of the same thing, stages of the same journey, and Zen masters if they deny the Western Paradise in space find it in time, in the heart of man. In one well-known No play, Sotoba Komichi, we find Zen masters and the monks of Shingon arguing about their respective creeds; but Buddhism in its wider teachings—salvation from rebirth and sorrow, and the dread laws of Karma and Samsara, are the themes of many of the plays. Ghosts appear, to tell us of the dread land of shadows, or monks expiating in a lifelong penance some deed of violence or of treachery. The strifes of Taira and Minamoto naturally supply many a theme: and Kumagai, who slew the boy Atsumori, is seen in the play dedicated to his memory as the priest Rensei, meeting the ghost of his gallant young victim.

The play opens, as always, with an enigmatic couplet, the *jidai*:

Life is a nightmare; he alone awakes  
Who casts aside the world as dross.

It then states who is the chief speaker, and tells his story in brief:

Of Musashi am I, once known as Kumagai;  
Leaving home-life I am the Priest Rensei.  
From grief for Atsumori whom I slew  
I took the vows and robes of monkish life;  
To Ichinotani I go, to pray for Atsumori's soul.

This is followed by the slow and stately dance of the traveller; and his travel-song, with its dissolving pictures, floating glimpses of scenery which represent the phantasmagoria of the phenomenal world. All this is intended to attune the audience, to awaken intuition and imagination. There follows a dialogue between a young reaper (who is the ghost of Atsumori) and the priest, and a solemn dance and the wailing of the boy's pipe make vivid the inner meaning of the words, as he reveals his lineage to his slayer.



As the first scene closes we find the priest upon his knees making to Amida his own famous vow to enter no paradise till all the universe is saved; for he too was once a monk, and knows human needs. The deep voices of the chorus take up his words:

Ah! Turn me not from Paradise!  
 One vow enough; yet night and day  
 Let endless supplication rise  
 For me, whom, knowing not, thou sav'st  
 With prayers at dawn and at the twilight hour.

Then comes a recitative, telling how Kumagai slew the boy, and the audience is ready for the ghost, now dressed as a young soldier. Priest and victim are reconciled in the bonds of faith, and at last with solemn chant and slow dance the play ends with the wondering cry of Atsumori, who advances on the priest with drawn sword:

'Lo! My enemy!' he shouts, and is about to strike;  
 But the other has grown compassionate,  
 And calling upon the Buddha's name  
 Has won for his late foe deliverance.  
 So shall these twain be born again  
 And sit together on one lotus-throne.  
 'Nay, Rensei is no enemy of mine!  
 'Ah, pray for my salvation, pray again.'

Like the dying of a wind in a great storm the voice of the young soldier ends in a sigh, as he slowly passes from the scene.

The religious values—numinous and tragic—of this great drama must be felt to be appreciated. It was and is a mighty power for refining and chastening the soul of man in an age of conflict and difficulty, and to followers of the Minamoto or Taira or to devotees of Amida and disciples of Honen it had a specially poignant appeal. The very archaism of the language and gestures heightens the effect of its grandeur and mystery; and the gorgeous costumes, the impersonality of masked faces, the deep sepulchral voices and the wailing notes of the chorus—all

歌樂百番

道成寺 前



A NO ACTOR



this set in the simplest setting of plain wooden stage with one painted pine tree produces an indescribable effect.

We of the West cannot fathom its mysteries, but we can recognize a high and complex art in which the architectural perfection of the speeches and the harmonious blending of rhythm and tone are a truly great achievement.

The comic spirit of the old 'monkey-dances' lived on in Kyogen, light social comedies which charmed the crowd as the No allured the intelligentsia. While in No the other-worldly and superhuman is expressed, in Kyogen it is the human and everyday that delights the audience, and as in the drawings of the Yamatoye here is satire as well as comedy. 'Realism upon low levels finds free play . . . the moral weakness of degenerate priests, the buffoonery of country clowns, the plight of unsuspecting men, and the shrewdness of immoral women.'<sup>1</sup>

Yet it was often Buddhist monks who wrote such plays. We learn that in the year 1300 Engaku Shonin of the Paradise Sect introduced them to attract the crowd, and to give ethical precepts in humorous and palatable form. It is at the Festival of the Buddha's Birth that such plays—often a kind of pantomime—are given, as the Christian mysteries were given at the Christmas Festival in mediaeval Europe. Historical drama grew out of the novels through the dramatic chanting of such tales as the Heike Monogatari, and the adventures of Yoritomo; puppets and music were introduced to make the tale vivid, and these in the seventeenth century gave place to the actors of the Kabuki or popular stage.

The common people also—no less imbued with a deep love of the beautiful but less articulate and sophisticated—found great delight at this time in the haiku or popular lyrics, in which the life of the wayside and of the way-faring man finds gem-like expression. Some wandering monk or painter would be entertained at farm or cottage, and would pay for his entertainment by composing and singing for his hosts brief impressionist accounts of his

<sup>1</sup> F. A. Lombard, *The Japanese Theatre*.

journey. As with a vivid stroke or two the Zen artist made a picture, so these strolling minstrels would call up in a little lyric epigram of three lines a series of scenes which linger in the mind like the notes of a bell. 'Pregnancy and suggestiveness, brevity and ellipsis,' says Dr. Miyamori, are the qualities of haiku: 'symbolism, naturalism, and quietude their essence.'

Were it not for his thin cry,  
The heron sitting motionless  
Is but a drift of snow upon a log,

says one such haiku of the fifteenth century, and from now on this art became very popular.

A mountain shack,  
And by the well  
A flowering plum,

is one haiku:

A boat and a fishing net  
Fade into shadowy darkness;  
Falls the cool evening calm,

is another.

Such little landscapes are the inspiration of the haijin, and in the art of Sesshu and his school is found its counterpart in painting, learning the technique from China and adding original motifs, free from bonds of convention.

The decorative figure-paintings and gay colour schemes of the Ashikaga palaces were in part a reaction against this simplicity, and the fact that the common people preferred the scenes of everyday life to the gorgeous cloud palaces and Taoist paradises of China is to their credit. It is a revelation of the true spirit of Japan. Out of popular taste, too, grew the Ukiyoye or colour-prints, which for humour and vigour are unsurpassed. But these belong to a later age, as do great haijins like Basho: they may best be studied in their setting of the rising tide of democratic life during the later Shogunate.

If, then, the age of the earlier Shoguns was one of social darkness and chaos, with two rival thrones as well as a dictatorship, and with fears of invasion from the Mongols,

it was also an age of the maturing of Japanese civilization and of the flowering of a spirit which is unique and characteristic of the complex mentality of a very gifted race. Idealism and imagination are seen blending with realism: and the great arts of No, of the tea-ceremony, as of painting and calligraphy are an escape from the rigours of life, a compensation for toil and sad realities. So too might the soul escape from cold and poverty to the rich and splendid paradise of Amitabha, as one might behold in ecstasy the vision of the eternal Sakyamuni, seated on a heavenly mountain peak, welcoming his followers to Buddhahood.

Characteristic of this age is the rough prophet and seer Nichiren (1222-82). His life was set in difficult times, and he was a man of the people, his father being a humble fisherman. Poverty, earthquake, flood, famine, and the horrors of civil strife combined to convince him that the times were evil, and that he must call men to repentance and to 'establish righteousness'. Blaming the sentimental pietism of Amida and the subtle philosophy of Shingon as much as the corrupt courtiers and plotters, he bade all turn back to the eternal Sakyamuni. He warned the government of impending disaster, and when the fleets of Kublai Khan were actually on the sea, prayed to his Buddha and saw them scattered by a great typhoon.

Amidst great hardships, through exile and persecution, he continued to preach the saving power of the Lotus Scripture, in which he saw cosmic reality incarnate, as the remedy for the weakness of the times. Unsparing of himself he went on missionary tours throughout the empire, and with him Buddhism assumes a popular and virile form, filtering down to the poorest. If Shinran is Japan's Wesley or Francis, Nichiren is its Luther—a combative and bold reformer, ruthless in attack and iconoclastic in his zeal. All other Buddhist leaders were not only mistaken, they were traitors in his eyes, inculcating strange foreign ways, and leading men not to salvation, but to perdition.

There were fortunately others who, like Erasmus, went on with the work of a larger and more humane scholarship. Many of them were aristocrats of Fujiwara and Minamoto stock, patrons of the arts, and themselves amateurs of ability, such as Fujiwara Shunsei (1144-1204), Minamoto Hanetamo (1153-1216) and Fujiwara Tsoka (1182-1241). As men fled to Buddhist monasteries and to the other-worldly joys of Amidism or the transcendentalism of Zen, so those men of affairs found alleviation and solace in the arts, emperors among them. While the Shoguns lived in luxury and pomp the Imperial House languished in poverty. Of one emperor we read that as deserted and impoverished he had lived in seclusion so in death he lay forty days unburied, till his heir had to borrow from Buddhist monks to pay for the ceremonies of enthronement. His successor in turn took to selling his poems or copies of the classics in his own exquisite calligraphy. What was left to such men but scholarship?

Japan had fallen on evil days; the Ashikaga paid tribute to China, and Japan was in humiliation and in darkness when there arose a group of men who are rightly regarded as her saviours in the Dark Ages.

At this time Marco Polo had reported to Europe upon the wealth of Zipangu, and Columbus had sought the sea-route to India and had hoped to find the islands of Japan—soon now to be awakened by the emissaries of the Cross and by the captains of Spain and Portugal and of Protestant rulers who were founding upon the spoils of war a new imperialism. As in Mogul India so in Ming China and in the Japan of the Shoguns, the West was knocking at the door.

## THE SPIRIT OF MEDIAEVAL JAPAN

### I. HONEN'S BOYHOOD

After Sada-akira's flight, he went into a life of seclusion, and his mind gradually became subdued and penitent for his past sins. He grieved lest deserved suffering should befall him; so he did not neglect prayer to the Buddha, until he realized his fond hope of birth

into the Pure Land. Through the influence of Honen his posterity adopted the sole practice of the Jodo. Being no common boy, how could he hate an enemy? Such facts clearly illustrate the marvellous way in which the Buddhas overrule even the most untoward events for the carrying out of their saving purpose towards men. So let none who still wander in the mazes of illusion, entertain any doubt regarding these wonderful occurrences.

Now in this province there was a cloister known as Bodaiji, the abbot of which was Kwangaku, a priest who bore the honourable title of Tokugo. When he was a student in the Enriakuji Temple on Mount Hiei, he was much disappointed at not being able to obtain this coveted title, and so he removed to the southern capital (Nara), where he studied the doctrine of the Hosso sect, and at length realized his long cherished ambition. So people called him Hisashi no Tokugo (the long desiring Tokugo). As he was Hada's younger brother, he was the uncle of Seishi Maru, who, in harmony with his father's dying request, had been put under Kwangaku's care. The boy's natural aptitude for study was as quick as the swiftly flowing mountain stream. If you told him one thing he understood ten. He never forgot anything he was told.

As Kwangaku saw that the boy's talents were unusual, he thought it was too bad for such a genius to waste his time, covered up in the dust of an out-of-the-way country-side, and so, as was most fitting, he began to make preparations for sending him up to the cloud-land of Hiei, the sacred Mount of Tendai. As soon as the boy heard of his uncle's intention, he had no more heart for remaining in his native place, but thought only of hastening away to the capital.

Kwangaku gladly went with him to his mother to talk the matter over, when the boy spoke to her in the following strain, 'After many painful transmigrations, I have at length attained the glory of being born a man. In a world of illusion I have at length come face to face with the teaching of the Buddha which dispels it all. When one comes to see before one's very eyes the utter changeableness of all things, he cannot but reject the bloom-like glory of the visionary world. Above all my father's parting words keep ringing in my ears, and I cannot forget them. And so I must at once proceed up Mount Shimei, and enter upon the study of the one only Vehicle. Of course, mother, as long as you live, I shall fulfil my filial duty to you morning and evening to the utmost; but as one of the Sutras says, the best way for children to show their gratitude to their parents is by turning away from the temporal, and devoting themselves to the eternal.



Let not therefore your sorrow over a morning good-bye cast its gloom over the whole day.' With many such words did he comfort his mother's heart.

She was so thoroughly convinced of the reasonableness of all he said, that she gave consent to his request, and yet she was so overwhelmed with grief that the tears ran down her sleeve upon the boy's raven locks. It was hard for her, as it always is for flesh and blood, to bear up under such sorrows, and so easy to yield to the feelings of nature which are bound to arise at a time of separation from loved ones. Her grief found expression in the following memorable lines:

Alas for me! what shall I do when I must even part

With this my boy—his father's one last gift to cheer my heart!

But in spite of all her heart protests, she sent the boy by Kwangaku to a priest called Kihobo Genko, who was living in the northern part of the western section of the three groups of temples on Mount Hiei. In his letter of introduction to Genko, Kwangaku said, 'I send you herewith an image of the great and revered Monju', by which he meant to indicate the boy's extraordinary ability.

Thus in his fifteenth year, like one who leaves behind him the dense mists of the work-a-day world and ascends into the beautiful cloud-land, the boy bids farewell to his country home, and comes up to the capital, on the thirteenth day of the second month of the third year of Kyuan (1147) in the reign of the Emperor Konoe. As he was passing along the Toba road to Kyoto, he met the Regent, Tadamichi Fujiwara of the Hosshoji Temple. Dismounting from his horse, he made obeisance, when the Regent ordered his carriage to be stopped, and asked who that person was. A priest accompanying the boy told who he was, whereupon the Regent courteously saluted him and passed on. At this his attendants were quite surprised, but later he said to them, 'The boy we met by the way had a peculiar light in his eyes, and I am sure he is of no common mould. That is why I saluted him.' And when we come to think of it, may not the fact that his son Kanezane of Tsudinowa became an earnest believer in Honen, have been due to the deep impression left on his mind by hearing this story from his father. It is indeed quite possible.

(From the *Life of Honen*, tr. by Coates and Ishizuki.)

## II. A LETTER FROM NICHIREN TO TOKIMORI HOJO

I, Nichiren, am perhaps the most intractable man in Japan. I warned you that all manner of disasters would take place, because you worshipped Amita, Dainichi, and those Buddhas whom you

held dearer than your parents and more precious than your sovereign; and that you were destined, in this world, to ruin yourselves and cause the fall of the country, and in the future life, to sink to the nethermost hell. Because I gave these warnings incessantly, I am suffering from persecutions. . . . I am suffering from the perils heaped upon me by my adversaries, three in kind, simply because I am the one who lives the life of the Lotus of Truth. That you have become a follower of such a man is something beyond common expectation; there must be some significance in the fact. Be strenuous in your faith, and prepare yourself to partake in the communion of the Paradise of Vulture Peak!

You have sent one sword, with its mate, as your offering . . . to the Lotus of Truth. The swords were, while in your hands, weapons of malice; now, being offered to Buddha, they are weapons of good. . . . These swords will serve as staves in your journey beyond. Know that the Lotus of Truth is the staff for all Buddhas on their way to enlightenment! Especially rely on me, Nichiren, as the staff and pillar! . . . The Sacred Title will be your guidance and support on the journey after death. The Buddhas Prabhuta-ratna and Sakya-muni, as well as the four chief Bodhisattvas, will surely lead you by the hand. If I should be there before you, I, also, will not fail to welcome you . . . I cannot say all I have to say in this letter. Put your faith in all the deities (the guardians of the Truth)! March indefatigably on in the way of faith, and reach your final destiny! Tell your ladies also of all this! Sincerely in reverence.

(From M. Anesaki's *Nichiren*.)

### III. SHINRAN PRAISES SHOTOKU

That mighty compassionate Bodhisattva our Saviour was made manifest in the flesh as Lord Shotoku, who like a father forsakes us not, like a mother is ever with us.

From the beginning of time even until now hath the great Prince the compassionate dwelt amongst us like father and mother. He in his pity has urged us to claim the Divine Promise of the Light-bearer in his wondrous wisdom. Through this we are pressed to all the virtues, no more to birth and death. . . . Him must we praise evermore, having sought refuge in him with a single mind: Shotoku, Lord of Teaching, whose great mercy is beyond the expression of our hearts.

## XVII

### THE MUROMACHI ERA— AND ITS AFTERMATH (1392-1603)

To have mastered the five classics is no sure road to amiability.

GENJI MONAGATARI.

#### I

THE era takes its name from a section of the city of Kyoto in which the Ashikaga Shoguns lived much more magnificent and less ineffective lives than the emperors. 'Ostensibly a contest between two rival courts, essentially it was a phase of redistribution of feudal privilege. . . . For more than sixty years the whole country was wasted by struggles between feudal barons . . . striving to satisfy personal ambitions', says Sansom, who points out that the Ashikaga had to bargain with these 'war-lords' for support, and that the centralized government of Kamakura gave place to a shadowy authority, loyalties being narrow and local if they were intense and often chivalrous.

The first Shogun, Takauji, and the second, Yoshiakira, spent their time in ceaseless struggles with their nominal vassals, and from 1336, when they moved to Kyoto, to 1392, when the long dispute as to the royal succession ended, the Shogunate was a pale copy of that of Kamakura. The Ashikaga were no match for their vigorous predecessors, and theirs is an age not only of anarchy but of luxury, vice, and degeneration.

It is the fashion to sentimentalize about Bushido, largely because it was robust and austere in an age of effeminacy: it is hard to justify the lives of most of the Bushi by this or any other moral code; and the last century of Ashikaga rule, like the first, was made a farce by their lawlessness and greed rather than redeemed by their discipline and detachment. Yet the fourteenth century saw a growing cultural influence as these men of war came under Kyoto's spell, and were somewhat refined by Chinese studies and tamed by Zen. 'The successful warriors, while treating the

court nobles with contempt, aspired to their elegance', and the Ashikaga were better as connoisseurs than as rulers.

The third Shogun, Yoshimitsu, resembles Jahangir in his passionate dilletantism and love of display. The whole Court had a craze for novelty: to China they looked for this, for elegant models, and also for money. We find little of the professed horror of the Samurai for either luxury or sordid wealth: nor did they 'let national pride interfere with business', making trade-treaties with the Sung, and employing Zen monks as intermediaries.

Like our own Quakers and India's Jains here were pacific quietists engaged in the promotion of worldly enterprises.

Zen was becoming not only the official religion but the arbiter of taste and ethics and the promoter of commerce: yet Buddhist monks were soon to accuse their Christian rivals of mixing religion with trade and politics.

The situation is made even more piquant by the nature of their cargoes—swords and other weapons, copper and sulphur. The latter the Chinese used largely to make fireworks and ceremonial bowls; the former they collected, but seldom used. In return Japan received cash, pictures (often priceless), drugs, and printed books—the neo-Confucian classics and encyclopaedias in which Sung China delighted. The port-cities grew in importance, and a new class of wealthy middlemen grew up, who were useful to the military as money-lenders and contractors, and to Japan as collectors. The religious houses, both Shinto and Buddhist, patronized the guilds, and helped them to get just treatment: so money made in war went, as often elsewhere, to enrich the Church, which spent it largely in keeping up garrisons of armed retainers.

The parallels between mediaeval Japan and mediaeval Europe are many and interesting. The farmers and peasants as usual paid the bill, and often complained, even at times rioting and pillaging merchant and monastery; and piracy became a lucrative and safe alternative to unrequited toil.

After a long period of impotence the Ashikaga Shogunate came to an end in 1597—though the last Shogun had actually abdicated twenty-two years before and died in exile.

As we have seen in post-Mauryan India and in pre-T'ang China an age of war and violence may yet produce much of cultural value. During the whole Muromachi era the arts thrived, encouraged by rich patrons in Church and State, and made possible by the new prosperity. The influence of Sung China was, as we have seen, another important factor, and Kyoto, a copy of Ch'ang-an, became the successor of Hang-chou.

Following Zen masters like Mokkei, we find great portrait painters like Cho Densu (d. 1431) a typical painting by whom is the strong and realistic work here reproduced. The former was a Chinese who was followed by a school of painters in black and white, and the latter also worked in this medium. The visitor to Kyoto will be shown the wonderful triptych of Mokkei, a Kwannon flanked by cranes and monkeys, a masterpiece of skilful brushwork. But it was a Zen principle that 'real mastery is as it were unskilful', and there now begins a succession of Zen masters whose brushwork differs notably from that of earlier Japanese painters. The succession is from Josetsu, to Shubun, to Sesshu; and some critics place Shubun at the very pinnacle of Japanese art. Sesshu acknowledged him as his master and he was the Shoguns' official artist. Their palaces, in marked contrast to their rather gaudy successors, were decorated by such Zen masters, who went direct to Korea and China for inspiration. Shubun, who lived from 1397 to 1476, was the arbiter of taste in this aesthetic age, which relied upon understatement and impressionism for its effects. These men are far from being mere copyists of Sung China: their works are 'aglow with lustrous qualities of their own invention', says Mr. Taki, who exalts Sesshu above his teachers, because of this flame of genius in him. He lived from 1420 to 1506, and his virile and yet sensitive landscapes



PORTRAIT OF A ZEN ABBOT

(CHO DINSL)



are known everywhere. Here subtlety blends with strength, and simplicity of line with architectonic grandeur. If the rhythm is Taoist and the simplicity is Zen there is a peculiar Japanese blend of vigour and charm in these almost crystalline rocks to which gnarled pines or skeleton maples cling precariously. If the season be spring the artist simplifies a cliff into a few bold strokes, but paints every leaf of a ginko or a bamboo: or with a few strokes shows us some frail craft driven by a winter gale.

A new school arose from this new technique, that of the Kanos; and new vigour was put into the old Tosa school, which had specialized in historic scrolls, and which now began to intermarry with the Kanos.

And as in painting Japan begins to vie with her teachers so in domestic architecture. This period produces the Kinkaku, or Golden Pavilion, to remind us of the glories of Hang-chou. It is a three-story villa with graceful curving roofs, and blends several styles of architecture with studied simplicity, from the simple gilded prayer-room at the top to the decorated hall at the middle where the Shogun Yoshimitsu used to gather his friends for contests in poetry and calligraphy, or for some tea-ceremony or No play. Below are his living-quarters, set in a perfect garden of rock and water and stunted shrubs.

Vying with this refinement Yoshimasa, the Lorenzo Medici of Japan, built the Ginkaku, or Silver Pavilion some fifty years later; and to this lovely villa he retired to collect objects of art from China and Korea and from living Japanese masters, or gathered a select group to watch his company of No actors, for whom many able writers supplied plays.

Poetry of other kinds declined, but from now on many a hajjin excelled in the art of extemporization, and the novelette appears to prepare the way for the story-tellers of the next era. These writers and actors supplemented the work of the temple schools, which produced their own school-texts and story-books. They also encouraged the carving of images and of masks for No-drama. Compared



with the secular art of painters and architects they have little to show that is characteristically religious: for, through Zen, religion has done its work in inspiring the 'secular'.

## II

After the Ashikaga another era of war between great barons is accompanied by a growing demand for peace and for a strong hand: and by the beginning of the seventeenth century the great Tokugawa family was supreme. Fore-runners of this era of reconstruction and modernization are three remarkable leaders—Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu. Nobunaga (1534–82), son of a country gentleman and known in his youth as 'my Lord the Fool', made himself master of Kyoto, and deposed the Shogun in 1573, and though he could not assume the title—now hereditary in the Minamoto clan—he usurped the functions of the Shogunate.

After long struggles in which Hideyoshi, an ugly adventurer of amazing courage and ambition nicknamed 'Monkey-face', and Ieyasu, a very wise scion of the Minamoto, helped him, Nobunaga subdued his rivals, mastered the Buddhist abbots, flirted with the Jesuits, and finally broke the power of feudal lords, laying the foundations for a unified government. As he was burning monasteries and slaying monks on Hiei San a general protested, only to be told 'I must give peace to the empire and re-establish the throne. For these ends I go in daily peril.' And he comforted himself with the lines:

The fool alone fears death; the idler dreams life away.

Man dies but once; let death be swift and grand, I pray.

His prayer was heard, and at the height of his vigour this vivid figure, the last of the great mediaeval barons, met his end. Imprisoned in a Buddhist temple, he is said to have committed harakiri,<sup>1</sup> the last refuge of a Japanese gentleman from disgrace, and his body was burnt in the flames of this last of the many temples he had destroyed.

<sup>1</sup> Suicide by disembowelling.

So against a lurid background we catch a last glimpse of this rugged figure—one of Japan's great men, a brilliant empire-builder of undaunted courage and of constructive genius.

During the intervals of his stormy life Nobunaga showed wise statesmanship in strict control of his army and in curtailing customs and other taxes. He lent money to encourage trade, and began to improve roads and lanes, which had fallen into terrible disrepair, till they were 'only fit for birds and beasts'. He taxed the great temples heavily, and also, it must be said, bore heavily upon the country-folk to the benefit of the citizens of Kyoto. As he played off Christians against Buddhists so he did not scruple to play off the town against the country. The people of Kyoto were loud in his praises, while the missionaries believed he was about to ask for baptism. The only baptism he actually received was on the historic occasion when he jumped into a bath full of Buddhist priests, his enemies in the spiritual sphere, to escape the armed retainers of his rivals in the material.

He was a wise financier, minting gold coins for the first time in Japan, and using interest on government loans for public works. He laid sound foundations for fiscal and other reforms.

Hideyoshi (1536-98) is an even more arresting figure. A loyal lieutenant, he crowned an amazing youth by becoming Nobunaga's counsellor and friend, and his obvious successor. Building the massive castle of Osaka and a gay palace at Kyoto, he coveted the Shogunate but had to be content with the Regency. This office of Kwampaku was given him in 1571 and in 1586 he was made Taiko, or Great Merit. In wars with the Satsuma and the Hojo and in a great expedition against Korea he proved his genius as a general, and he even cast eyes on China, saying he could 'roll it up like a carpet'.

At home he showed a realistic grasp of affairs; he suppressed bandits, built roads and bridges, encouraged farming, employed his large army in constructive activities,

and kept a strong hand on the great nobles, protecting the people from exactions. He had the country surveyed between 1589 and 1595 and for the first time since the land-system of Taikwa had been disrupted by greedy barons and greedier monks, Japan had a unified and orderly system of laws and ordinances. Henceforth every farmer was to have one-third of the produce of the land he rented. Most of them then, as now, had very small farms; and Hideyoshi deserves credit for increasing, by about one-tenth, the land under cultivation.

He needed much money for the central government and for his own lavish expenditure, and he undoubtedly taxed the provinces too heavily to obtain it; yet his fiscal system ranks with his defeat of the Satsuma and the invasion of Korea as one of his greatest exploits. None of them is perfectly laudable; for he was after all a self-seeking adventurer. But he did Japan notable service, and is considered by many the greatest statesman of his age. A great soldier and administrator, Hideyoshi is remembered also as a master-builder, a genial and merry spirit, a man of the new Japan, who had given her unity and peace. Like Elizabeth of England he encouraged both piracy and trade, and like her had good reason to suspect Rome of mingling politics with religion.

The Japanese have two interesting epitomes of this era; one the very familiar proverb of the nightingale: 'If it won't sing I'll wring its neck', said Nobunaga; 'I'll coax it', said Hideyoshi; and 'I'll sit and wait', said Tokugawa Ieyasu. The other sets these three remarkable men together in relation to one another: 'Nobunaga made the fire, Hideyoshi cooked the meat, Ieyasu ate it.'

This aristocrat inherited a great task and great beginnings. Appointed president of a council of five by Hideyoshi he reorganized the new feudalism which goes by his family name of Tokugawa, and set up an intricate machinery of government with checks and counter-checks. But this belongs to modern history, and we may leave the great diplomat informing himself of the affairs of Europe,

and determining that Japan shall remain mistress in her own house. The unity and order which Hideyoshi and he gave her established a new era of discipline and obedience to central government which has served her well. Unique in so many other things, Japan is unique also among the nations of Asia in maintaining her integrity.

As she learned more of Europe she became cautious about admitting its envoys. 'Those were the days of the Inquisition, of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, of Alva's torture of the Netherlands, and of the merciless slave trade.' Hideyoshi and Ieyasu had no doubt 'sniffed the faintest perfume of all those flowers of the Renaissance', says Sansom. But they were rather the weeds of the Counter-Reformation; and Japan, while she welcomed the religion of Europe as akin to Buddhism, and had nothing but respect for Francis Xavier, the Spanish nobleman who came in humility and poverty in 1549, grew suspicious of the ethics of Europe, and of the intrigues of some of Xavier's successors. Will Adams, the stout Elizabethan sailor, taught the Shogun something beside ship-building and the making of maps and guns. Increasing suspicions of Spain and Portugal made Hideyoshi and Ieyasu put on the screws—dreadful enough, but mild compared with those of the Inquisition—alike on the Catholic Orders and the Protestant trading companies, both of which groups were making much headway. In 1612 after preliminary edicts and proscriptions, Ieyasu, crying 'A plague on both your houses', let loose the pent-up furies of persecution upon the Catholics, and narrowly limited the activities of the Dutchmen, who, true to the principles of Luther, were quite content to leave the heathen to God. Shut into their factory at Nagasaki from which they had exported many cargoes of bullion and of the art treasures now in Dutch museums, they were left to chew the cud of their own bitter invective against the Catholics.

The Samurai often showed mercy to the religious. So far as we can gather the Protestants egged them on to the task of crucifixion and holocaust.

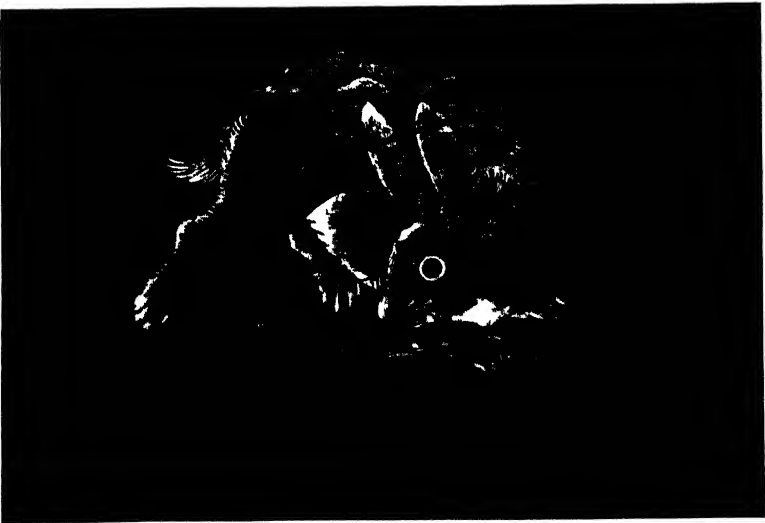
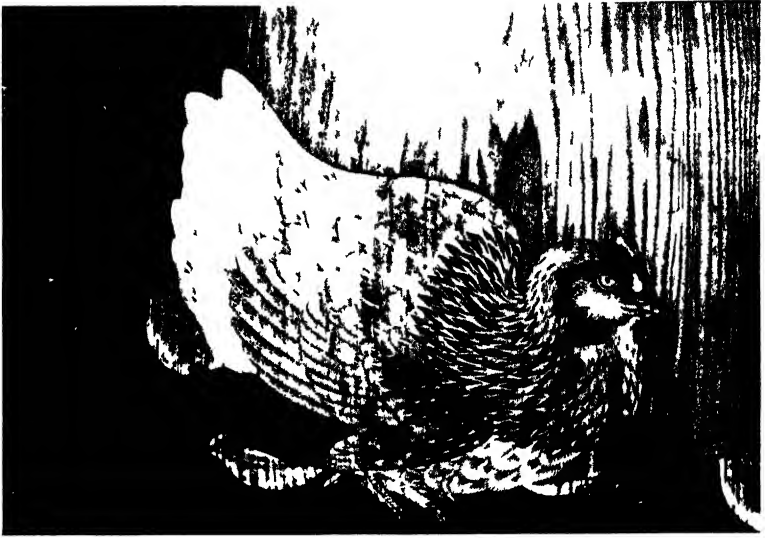
## III

But let us turn away from the disgusting spectacle of the followers of the Prince of Peace at internecine feuds and abetting the followers of the Middle Path in their defiance of moderation and Ahimsa, and visit the tombs of the Shoguns, a true epitome of this age.

Beside a mountain-stream at Nikko, whose banks are a flame of crimson maple in the autumn, and amidst a forest of cryptomerias two of the great pioneers lie, honoured by a grateful country with tombs which are also shrines. Resplendent in gaily painted and intricate carving, sombre with black lacquer, strong in massive roofs, with stone stairways, and avenues of lanterns, they are approached through tiers of silent courtyards. And here are gathered the pathetic memorials of the daily life of these great rulers, who gave Japan an ordered and disciplined life.

If they lack the chastity of Horiuji, the grace of the Phoenix Hall, and the sophisticated simplicity of the Kin-kaku and if they have no works of master-painters or sculptors, they are yet the fine flower of a splendid age, when craftsmen delighted in their craft, and when men breathed, as in Elizabethan England and in the India of Akbar, the invigorating breath of a new era. At the end of the seventeenth century the Dutch scientist Kaempfer was as much impressed with Japan as were the Frenchmen with the Court of the Moguls. 'Well and firmly governed, united and peaceful; schooled to give due worship to the gods, due obedience to the laws, due respect to their superiors, due love and consideration to their neighbours; civil, obliging, virtuous; in art and industry exceeding all other nations, they are possessed of an excellent country, enriched by mutual trade and commerce, courageous, and abundantly provided with all they need.' Here in fact was a Japan little influenced by any but Far Eastern models and in no urgent need of Europe. Yet there is a darker side to the picture, and the maxims of Hideyoshi must be compared with his private correspondence, as the





PAINTINGS ON SCREENS  
(Seventeenth Century)

code of Bushido must be read in the light of the conduct of the Bushi.

The civilization of this age while it is over-decorated and over-elaborate in architecture, and in such typical arts as the Satsuma pottery, is still characteristically Japanese: and it is this art, its popular and decorative prints, its porcelains and lacquers and brocades which the West knows to-day. The achievements of Japan's modern age are rooted in the distant past—the Meiji era is a 'Restoration'; and her arts whether of hand-block prints or of the popular stage are developments which can only be understood in the light of her long history.

Although the Ukiyoye or 'Pictures of the Passing Scene' are considered a vulgar achievement by her old scholars, they are rooted in such early masters as Toba Soja, and have a continuous ancestry through the Tosa and Kano schools, in themselves classical, but with an eye for the daily life of the people and the picturesqueness of the countryside. If Hiroshige and Kuniyoshi drew the mists and rains of Japan and her waterfalls and lakes so did the early Kanos, and they too painted characters of daily life as early as the fifteenth century, when Motonobu saw them in all their picturesqueness; and in the next century Matabei of the Tosa school carried on the tradition, while Kano Yetoku and Kano Senyaku painted dancing-girls for Hideyoshi's palaces.

A glance through the list of Hokusai's themes—actors, monkeys with a strolling showman, wrestlers and the gods of fishing and of prosperity, surveyors and carpenters, illustrations for fairy-tales and epics—will remind us that these were also the themes of such great painters as Itcho Hanabusa of the seventeenth century. Book-illustration in the secular field dates from about 1600, and is a natural development of an art already old in China. So the common people enter into their heritage in the modern period and in the hajjin from the fifteenth-century Sokai, down through Buson and Isshu to Basho in the last half of the seventeenth, they had their own beloved poets, whose lyrics are universally known and imitated.



Like her latest artists and her earliest singers they would hymn Fuji 'sudden in the autumn sky', or Nara, the sight of which makes them 'laugh in the rainstorm'; like Soba they saw the beauty of 'a frog by an old pond splash in the silence', and prayed 'friend sparrow to spare the bee busy at his harvesting'. They even recorded their tenderness for plant-life in such verses as these of the poetess Chiyo:

The morning glory to the well-rope clings:  
I go for water to the distant springs.<sup>1</sup>

So Basho (1644-94), greatest of the haijin, inscribed on the Chinese Zen temple at Uji, which looks out on to the famous tea-plantations:

Within Old China's peace,  
Without the tea-girls' song.

Popular painters like Buson belong also to their company, and his drawings at the Kinkakuji Pavilion are as swift and powerful as his haika:

The boat grounds in the sand.  
I leap out amidst the violets.

Famous too is the lament of the poetess for her child:

Ah! little hunter of dragon-flies,  
To what far land hast thou gone hunting?

These are known to every Japanese, while the Kabuki Theatre gives them in such old yet ever-new stories as the *Forty-seven Ronin* all the pageantry of their history, and they are as appreciative of the meaning of them as the aristocrats are of the subtle mystery of the No.

#### IV

The political reforms begun by Ieyasu and continued by his house may be described as complete centralization of power in the hands of the shogun, for the good of the country as a whole. Daimyos were set to watch one another, made to visit the new capital Yedo every two years, forbidden even to marry without the shogun's consent. But the sovereignty of the emperor was proclaimed, and the shogun acted as his servant in giving a lead to the

<sup>1</sup> *Lit.*: 'Well-bucket held by convolvulus—gift water.'

nation in education, founding universities and schools for Chinese, Japanese, and even Western learning, which through English, Dutch, and Portuguese merchants and sailors now begins to penetrate Japan. But a policy of isolation is maintained, and when the missionaries of Rome appear they are first welcomed with courtesy and interest, as in India and China, but later fiercely persecuted as catspaws of imperialism.

For about fifty years, 1675-1725, there was a renaissance of literature, and the whole era is marked by a growing popularization of culture.

In the ruling classes and among successful merchants the Neo-Confucianism of Sung has played a great part. First, under the patronage of Ieyasu, Fujiwara Teikwa (1560-1619) and his great pupil Hayashi Reizan (1583-1657) drew students to their lectures on Chu Hsi; and this rationalism was welcomed by all who disliked the other-worldliness of Buddhism, as well as by some who resented the intrigues of the monks.

But the intuitionism of Wang Yang Ming is better suited to the Japanese mind, and found many exponents—while others began to show that eclecticism for which Japanese are noted, and Confucian and Shinto ideas began to mingle and to be fused, often animated by contempt of Buddhism and by the desire to nationalize Chinese culture on Japanese soil. This is one great note of the age: a revived interest in everything Japanese, the old poetry, the old drama, the old national cult, led to commentaries on the *Kojiki* by Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), and treatises on such works as the *Manyoshu* and *Genji Monogatari* by Kamo Mabuchi (1697-1769) and his master Kada Azumamaro (1669-1736). The process was begun by a Buddhist monk, Keichiu, but soon developed on more secular lines, and was actuated by anti-religious as well as anti-foreign bias. Japanese culture for Japan was in effect its watchword.

The drama flourished as never before and Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724) produced thirty or more plays of modern life, and about seventy historic dramas. He had

many contemporaries and followers but few rivals. Fiction now begins to develop in abundance, Saikaku, Bakin, Sanma, and Ikku being famous names—the last two humorists, the first two serious historical novelists—one naturalistic and one romantic.

When Europe and America compelled Japan to enter the modern world she had a remarkable culture of her own and a disciplined people ready for the effort and sacrifice involved in the heroic task of modernization. If she has 'taken opportunities of falling into temptation'—the phrase is that of Dr. Nitobe—she has not been slow to prove that she has very good reasons for following bad examples. If she 'played the assiduous ape' to China she has done as well by the West. If she has imitated she has done it well, and has adapted what she has borrowed with amazing skill and tenacity.

## THE SPIRIT OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY JAPAN

### (a) *Hideyoshi's Maxims*

Life is like a long journey with a heavy pack. Let thy pace be slow and sure. Stumble not. Know that hardship is man's natural lot and there is no place for grumbling or despair. When vaulting ambition rears itself remember days of adversity. Forbearance is the root of quietness and steadfastness. Look on wrath as thine enemy. If thou knowest only victory—woe unto thee: ill fortune awaits thee. Blame thyself not others.

### (b) *His Morals*

(From a letter to his wife about his concubine Yodo.)

We have the enemy like birds in a cage, and are in no danger. Pray set your mind at rest.

I long for the Young Lord my son, but must not yield for the sake of the future. . . .

I am looking after my health, and even having moxa (cautery).

I am telling the Daimyos they may send for their wives . . . and I want Yodo. Please make arrangements for her journey, and tell her that next to you she is my favourite. . . . May, 1590.

### (c) *From a letter of Francis Xavier*

These people charm my heart. They are more delicately minded than we.

## CHRONOLOGY (3000—1500 B.C.)

<i>India.</i>	<i>China.</i>	<i>Date.</i> B.C.	<i>Korea.</i>	<i>Japan.</i>	<i>Western Events.</i>
<p>Indus Valley civilization at a high stage 2500 B.C. (Chalcolithic).</p>	<p>Ancestors of the Chinese reach the Yellow River Valley. Five emperors: already civilized, with fixed habitations, cultivated lands, systems of government.</p>	<p>3000</p>			<p>Early Minoan Period. Pyramids of Gizeh (Egypt).</p>
<p>Beginnings of religious poetry, early Rig Veda.</p>	<p>2356: Yao emperor, Shun emperor. 2205: Hsia Dynasty, Yu emperor. Strong political organization. 1765: Shang Dynasty. Neolithic remains found in Honan reveal stone and pottery arts—divination by inscribed bones.</p>	<p>2100</p>			<p>Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Mid-Minoan Period. First Theban Dynasties. Hammurabi makes Babylon supreme in Euphrates Valley. Late Minoan Period. Rise of Assyrian power. Second Theban Dynasties.</p>

## CHRONOLOGY (1500-300 B.C.)

<i>India.</i>	<i>China.</i>	<i>Date.</i>	<i>Korea.</i>	<i>Japan.</i>	<i>Western Events.</i>
Aryan tribes entered in waves, settling the Indus Valley; spread eastward into Ganges Valley.	Earliest bronzes.	1500			
Phoenician alphabet.	Chou Dynasty: China covered territory between Yang-tze and (later-built) Great Wall.	1122	Ki Tse Chou minister establishes the kingdom of Chosen and introduces Chinese culture. His descendants rule 900 years.		Exodus from Egypt.
Sanskrit.	Classical Age.				David. Solomon.
Brahmanism is developed: Caste and the Hindu <i>Dharma</i> emerge.	Finest bronzes produced.	1000			Founding of Rome.
The early Upanishads (about 800-600 B.C.).	Magnetism known (Ferrum sinicum).	750			
Darius invades Valley of the Indus.	Lao-tse.	c. 600		660. Jimmu Tenno, "first human ruler".	
Sakyamuni (Buddha), 563-483.	K'ung Fu-tse	b. 551		Beginning of Japanese history as recorded in the <i>Kojiki</i> and <i>Nihongi</i> .	Babylonian captivity.
Alexander (356): Greek influence in India.	Mo-tse.	c. 500			490. Marathon.
321. Chandragupta becomes ruler at Pataliputra (Mauryan Dynasty).	Silk exported to Europe.	b. 372			Peloponnesian War. Socrates (d. 399).

# CHRONOLOGY (300 B.C.—A.D. 300)

<i>Malaysia.</i>	<i>India.</i>	<i>China.</i>	<i>Date.</i>	<i>Korea.</i>	<i>Japan.</i>	<i>Important Western Events.</i>
Annam conquered by the Chinese.	Asoka ascends throne, 272. Buddhism established on a firm basis. Asoka's death, 232.	Rise of Chinese theatricals in marionettes. Ch'in Dynasty 246-209. Shih Huang Ti (first emperor). 212. Burning of the books. 204. Great Wall completed. 3,000 actors at Court. Han Dynasty restores classics. 140-86. Wu Ti. Contact with Japan and Rome. Stone sculpture. Literary civil-service examinations. Buddhism introduced. Paper invented: printing from wooden blocks. Three kingdoms. Arabs established regular trade at Canton.	300	193. Last descendant of Ki Tse driven from the throne. 108. Northern Korea conquered by China. Three kingdoms: Silla, Koguryu, Paekche.	Ainu and other immigrants enter from Europe, Malaysia, and Asia. Neolithic civilization.  Beginnings of Chinese influence.  Mainland civilization enters Yamato from Korea. Yamato greatly extended.	264. First Punic War. Rome and Carthage. 218-201. Second Punic War.  Scythian influence spreads East and West. 146. Third Punic War: destruction of Carthage.  Conquest of Greece by Rome. Julius Caesar. Jesus of Nazareth. Marcus Aurelius sends embassy to China. Constantine.
Annam incorporated into Chinese Empire.	Kanishka (c. 50 B.C.). Great Epics. Stone sculpture. Gita edited. Milinda Pathha. Manu.		200			
Five important Palava colonies had been established: Cambodia, Srivishaya, Southern Malaya, Central Java, Eastern Borneo.			100			
250. City of Panduranga founded in Champa (Annam).			A.D.			
			100			
			200			
			300			

# CHRONOLOGY (A. D. 400-800)

<i>Malaysia.</i>	<i>India.</i>	<i>China.</i>	<i>Date.</i>	<i>Korea.</i>	<i>Japan.</i>	<i>Important Western Events.</i>
<p>The Chinese writer Fa Hien mentions Pallava settlements in Sumatra.</p> <p>435. Cambodia founded.</p> <p>Sumatran States become Buddhist.</p> <p>Expansion of the empire of Sri Vishaya (Eastern Java remains Brahman).</p>	<p>Gupta era.</p> <p>Kalidasa.</p> <p>The Seven Jewels of Ujjain.</p> <p>Pallavas dominate Southern India.</p>	<p>Hui Sheng reaches Mexico (?).</p>	<p>400</p>		<p>495. Introduction of Chinese writing from Korea.</p>	<p>Europe invaded by the Huns from Asia.</p>
	<p>Arab (Mohammedan) invasion of Northern India.</p> <p>Hiven Chang in India.</p>	<p>T'ang Dynasty (618-907).</p> <p>Wu Tao-tse: Li Po, Tu Fu, Han Lin Academy.</p> <p>635. Nestorian Christianity introduced into China.</p> <p>Tai-tsung.</p>	<p>600</p>	<p>660. Chinese conquer Paikche.</p> <p>668. Chinese conquer Koguryu.</p>	<p>532. Buddhism introduced from Korea: finally becomes Court religion.</p> <p>593-621. Shotaku Taishi.</p> <p>Direct intercourse with China.</p>	<p>Fall of Rome.</p>
<p>Angkor begun by Jaya-Varman I.</p>	<p>Beginning of Palava decline.</p>		<p>700</p>		<p>645. Taikwa Reform.</p>	<p>622. Mohammed: the Hejira.</p>
<p>Great building period in Java.</p>		<p>751. Chinese teach paper-making to Arabs.</p> <p>762. Patron of Arts, founded College of Drama and purified the Stage.</p>		<p>Silkworm eggs carried to Constantinople.</p>	<p>710. Capital at Nara. People of Yamato begin to call their country Nippon, introducing art, literature, and political ideas from China.</p> <p>794. Capital at Kyoto.</p> <p>Tea introduced from China.</p>	<p>732. Battle of Tours.</p>

## CHRONOLOGY (A.D. 800-1300)

<i>Malaysia.</i>	<i>India.</i>	<i>China.</i>	<i>Date.</i>	<i>Korea.</i>	<i>Japan.</i>	<i>Important Western Events.</i>
800-1200 Great building period in Indo-China.		Gunpowder used. Rise of Kitan Tartars. First printed book (868). Sung Dynasty. 960. Wang An-shih. Movable type. Classic Renaissance. 'Cultural greatness, national weakness.'	800			Charlemagne becomes emperor.
968. Annam becomes independent.	Mahmud of Ghazni invades North India.	960. Wang An-shih. Classic Renaissance. 'Cultural greatness, national weakness.'	900	935. Wang Kien reunites Korea.	Fujiwara domination.	962. Otto the Great, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Norman Conquest of England.
1044. Anawrata becomes ruler of Burma. Empire of Sri-Vijaya at greatest height.	The Sultans of Ghazni rule North India.	Chu-hsi in philosophy. Landscape painting. Kin Tartars. Southern Sung. 1162. Genghis Khan born.	1000		'Cloistered Emperors.'	
Beginnings of Siam.	1186. Afghans gain control of India. 1206. Sultanate of Delhi. Mongol invasions.	1213. Mongols conquer China. 1260. Kublai Khan and Yuan Dynasty.	1100		Honen. Taira domination. Nichiren. 1192. Yoritomo Kamakura shogunate.	1096. The First Crusade. Paper made in Europe.
1275. Burma made tributary to China.			1200	Kublai Khan's armada against Japan.	First manufacture of fine pottery.	1215. Magna Carta. Mongols invade Russian Poland. 1295. Model Parliament in England.



## CHRONOLOGY (A.D. 1300-1600)

	<i>India.</i>	<i>China.</i>	<i>Date.</i>	<i>Korea.</i>	<i>Japan.</i>	<i>Important Western Events.</i>
<i>Malaysia.</i> Malacca founded, 1376. Annam reconquered by China, 1407.	Timur. Babur, 1525, founds Mogul Empire.	Marco Polo's travels.	1300			Rise of universities. 1337-1453. Hundred Years War.
Portuguese traders. Magellan reaches Philippines.	Portuguese missions.	Ming Dynasty continues Sung traditions (1368-1664). Portuguese in China, 1516. Macao founded.	1500		Francis Xavier. Nobunaga and Hideyoshi unite the Empire, 1534-98.	Columbus discovers America, 1492.
Dutch in Java. Dutch East Indian Co., 1602.	Akbar, 1556-1603. English East India Co., 1600.	Dutch in China. English reach China.	1600		Japan closed to foreigners. Ieyasu (1598-1616).	Reformation and Renaissance. Spanish Armada.

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