

# THE JOURNAL OF THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM

VOL. 73, 2018



# THE JOURNAL OF THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM

VOL. 73, 2018

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## FOREWORD

ELEANOR HUGHES *Deputy Director for Art & Program*

This seventy-third volume of *The Journal of the Walters Art Museum* marks a transitional moment for a venerable publication with a long history. The *Journal* is the oldest continuously published scholarly art museum journal in the United States. The first volume “of what the Trustees hope will be a continuing series of publications devoted to scholarly discussions of objects in the Walters Art Gallery,” appeared in 1938, only four years after the museum opened as a public institution. Its preface noted that Henry Walters had “left to scholars the task and the adventure of seeking out the full significance of these things, so that the public may benefit by the knowledge and enjoyment of its heritage.” Over the eighty years following, the *Journal* has continued to publish research on or related to the Walters’ collections, written by distinguished scholars on staff and from around the world.

Technological advances have already enhanced the *Journal* appearance and circulation in recent years. As a printed publication, the *Journal* has had a print run limited to several hundred copies per issue and was circulated through subscription, primarily to libraries. In 2006, however, the museum partnered with JSTOR, the online database of digitized books and articles, to make the entire run of the *Journal* available online for scholars, researchers, and students. Through JSTOR, subscribers have logged 98,000 views and 64,000 downloaded pdfs of *Journal* articles. Such figures suggest the wisdom of devoting resources to publishing the *Journal* entirely in digital form, and eventually to take advantage of the digital medium to enhance the “knowledge and enjoyment” available to readers, for example, by employing animation, sound, and linked content.

By moving to an online format that is freely accessible on the Walters’ website, we hope to give wider and more diverse audiences new ways of encountering the fascinating stories behind works of art in the collection. The *Journal* will continue to reflect the museum’s commitment to scholarship

and research, welcoming submissions from contributors worldwide and at every career stage. At the same time, we expand our definition of research to include work done by educators and registrars as well as curators and conservators, reflecting the innovative ways that Walters staff collaborate in their work to offer new perspectives on the collections. We also expand the focus of that research to include the historic buildings that house the Walters’ collections and the personal and institutional histories associated with them.

The current issue features essays on Asian art that highlight objects from the extraordinary gift to the Walters of works from the Doris Duke Collection of Southeast Asian Art, a collection that has delighted visitors and attracted keen scholarly interest since its arrival at the museum in 2001. Short notes consider a wide array of objects, from Giovanni della Robbia’s *Adam and Eve* to a hat from ancient Peru; from Ethiopian manuscript leaves to a Tibetan ritual dagger; and from the fantastical beasts in paintings from Renaissance Italy to the dog in an eighteenth-century French portrait. Wherever possible, works of art are linked to the Walters’ online collections (look for highlighted titles and accession numbers). In future issues, the *Journal* will be further enhanced by all that the digital format has to offer. The very next volume will take full advantage of a new website and branding to present a refreshed look for the *Journal* and will focus on the conservation, reinstallation, and reinterpretation of a spectacular series of fifteenth-century Venetian panel paintings. Future special issues will include a volume on ceramics in the collection, prompted by the inaugural installation at One West Mount Vernon Place, reopening in June 2018.

Whether you are conducting research, studying a particular field, or simply interested in art, we invite you to join us as we continue to make new discoveries about the Walters’ art collection.

## INTRODUCTION

### LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK: RESEARCH AT THE WALTERS

AMY LANDAU *Director of Curatorial Affairs, Curator of Islamic and South & Southeast Asian Art*

As we near the eightieth anniversary of the *Journal of the Walters Art Museum*, this issue looks both backward and forward. A cherished and admired vehicle for publishing research on the Walters' collection, the *Journal* builds on a long tradition that so far has yielded 72 individual volumes, comprising more than 6,600 pages. Recognizing the *Journal's* importance to the museum's mission of bringing art and people together for enjoyment, discovery, and learning, we aspire to offer its investigations to as broad an audience as possible. In that spirit, this digital edition is an open-access publication. While the means of disseminating its research findings, made possible by technological advances, have changed, the *Journal* remains committed to scholarly excellence achieved through object-based study and interdisciplinary approaches. That commitment has been advanced for many years through generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Fund for Scholarly Research and Publications, the Sara Finnegan Lycett Publishing Endowment, and the Francis D. Murnaghan, Jr., Fund for Scholarly Publications.

A renewed attention to the Walters' collections informs this issue as well as the newly revitalized research program at the Walters. The collection has grown substantially since Henry Walters' bequest in 1931, from approximately 22,000 to 36,000 objects, produced by diverse cultures around the globe, from antiquity to the twenty-first century. This volume has been inspired by major bequests from such individuals and foundations as Alexander Brown Griswold (1907–91), the Doris Duke Foundation, and John and Berthe Ford, and by the recent reinstallation of their gifts. The artistic quality of these works, their impressive number, and their temporal range—from the third millennium BCE to the twentieth century—have established the Walters as a major resource for the study of Himalayan and South and Southeast Asian art.

The three essays in this volume follow from a workshop organized by Rebecca S. Hall, Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Southeast Asian Art from 2011 to 2013. The workshop, which took place at the museum in 2012, highlighted a selection of museum's Southeast Asian art, including gifts from the Doris Duke Foundation and from Alexander Brown Griswold, both directly and through his Breezewood Foundation. The workshop sought to frame the impetus for the creation of these paintings, sculptures, and manuscripts; examine classes of objects related to a central theme or technique; and highlight individual works of art. It brought together experts at different career stages from diverse fields: art history, religious studies, textual analysis, and conservation.

Each of the essays focuses on nineteenth-century art from Southeast Asia. Sylvia Fraser-Lu examines a highly informative Burmese (present-day Myanmar) manuscript pertaining to sumptuary laws, while Melody Rod-ari and Rebecca S. Hall explore how the visual arts emerged as expressions of modernity in Siam (present-day Thailand), drawing on objects generously gifted to the Walters in 2002 by the Doris Duke Foundation. Dubbed the "richest girl in the world" Doris Duke (1913–1993) inherited her father's tobacco fortune at the age of 12. Although her fortune made her an object of public scrutiny, Miss Duke (as she preferred to be known) sought to avoid the public eye, devoting her time and wealth to collecting Southeast Asian and Islamic art and to philanthropy in the service of medical research, child and animal welfare, and historic preservation. As Nancy Tingley has noted in her study of the collection, Miss Duke's collecting was profoundly informed by her personality.<sup>1</sup> She flouted convention, concentrating her purchases on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Thai and Burmese works of art at a time when most collectors favored ancient and medieval Southeast Asian material, as did her contemporary, Alexander

Griswold. Where other collectors—like Griswold—valued the restricted elegance of ancient bronzes and works in stone, she relished the exuberance and florid decoration of nineteenth-century sculptures sheathed in gold and adorned with lacquer, glass, and leather.

Drawn to the stilt houses and flamboyant architectural forms of Thailand, Miss Duke resolved to recreate a Thai village in Hawaii, establishing the Foundation for Southeast Asian Art and Culture to assist in the endeavor. By the early 1970s, she had amassed 2,000 works of art, primarily from Thailand and Burma. Her collection also included a large wooden pavilion and 14 houses from Thailand. Sadly for Miss Duke, her decade-long search for a site for the Thai village never came to fruition. She shipped the Southeast Asian collection to her family estate, Duke Farms, in Hillsborough, New Jersey, where it was exhibited to the public in a 19,000-square-foot barn adapted to the purpose.<sup>2</sup> Following her death, a large portion of Miss Duke's collection was generously gifted by her foundation in 2001 to the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, and to the Walters Art Museum. At the Walters, conservation of the bequeathed objects and paintings, discussed in two of the research notes in this issue, was made possible through the support of the Institute for Museum and Library Services and the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.

While the essays in this volume concentrate on acquisitions from the collections of Doris Duke, the Walters' Southeast Asian collection is arguably better known in scholarly circles for the hundreds of Thai sculptures acquired by Alexander Brown Griswold and generously given to the Walters following his death in 1991. An additional 120 works (primarily painted banners and manuscripts) were gifted to the Walters in 1992 and 1993 by Griswold's partner, Yoshie Shinomoto. Griswold's legacy is defined by his collection, the foundation he established for Thai studies, his extensive publications, and the students he mentored. One of them, Hiram W. Woodward, went on to serve as a curator at the Walters from 1986 until 2003 and became an internationally acclaimed scholar of Thailand's art and culture. The bequest was undoubtedly the result of years of friendship and collegiality between collector and curator.<sup>3</sup>

The Walters' recently reinstalled galleries dedicated to South Asian, Himalayan, and Southeast Asian art feature

the Duke and Griswold collections, together with gifts and promised gifts from John and Berthe Ford (in the art of India, Nepal, and Tibet), Walter Hauser (Tibetan art), and Betsy and Robert Feinberg (in contemporary Japanese art). This installation is the first iteration of a series that will highlight different aspects of the Walters' renowned holdings of Asian art. Following from a strength in the Ford, Duke, and Griswold collections, this installation explores religious objects and devotional practices, with an emphasis on the relationship between the viewer-devotee and the physical representation of the sacred being. The display of the Betsy and Robert Feinberg collection of contemporary Japanese ceramics allows different narratives to emerge: materiality, tradition, and the training of contemporary artists. The provocative ceramic works in that installation both affirm and challenge centuries-old approaches to mixing, forming, glazing, and firing clay.

It is an exciting time at the Walters, when we look toward our future while honoring our past. This issue of the *Journal* includes a variety of notes on recent scientific and scholarly research into the collections, along with presentations on recent acquisitions. These notes, some of which were written by the newest members of curatorial and conservation staff, foreshadow the collaborative research to come.

Research at the Walters is led by object-based investigations carried out by curators, conservators, and educators, through the multiple lenses of art history, technical analysis, and pedagogy. We endeavor to make this research relevant and accessible online and in our galleries, and to ensure that the presentation of our collections is informed by the diverse interests of our visitors and readers. Such interpretation is continuously assessed through evaluative studies; in future issues of the *Journal*, we aim to publish this collected data in order to shine light on interpretive museological practices and experimentation at the Walters.

The nexus of art, scholarship, and access has defined the Walters experience since the days of the Museum's founder Henry Walters (1848–1931). He opened his collections to lay people and scholars alike to enjoy, study, and publish the artworks he ventured to acquire. As a public museum, the Walters' desire to disseminate information about the collection for a broad public drove—and continues to drive—a major effort to digitize and catalogue all works of art in the

museum's care. In the last decade, a major push was made to conserve, catalogue and digitize the Walters' internationally celebrated manuscript collection of more than nine hundred manuscripts, dating from the eighth to the twentieth century. The prizewinning manuscript digitization project was initially supported by three matching grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the first of which was awarded in 2007, in addition to a generous gift from an anonymous donor. Meticulously cataloguing the details of every single page in each work—including the flyleaves, annotated margins, and the bindings, as well as providing translations of principle colophons in, for example, the Islamic and Armenian codices—the Walters team, working with scholars from around the globe, has become recognized in the field of manuscript studies, freely providing images and scholarly data to the public at [manuscripts.thewalters.org](http://manuscripts.thewalters.org).<sup>4</sup>

This important scholarly cataloguing continues as part of the museum's everyday operations, moving beyond manuscripts to other parts of the collection: ceramics, paintings, and bronze sculptures, for example. Our cataloguing initiatives have begun to reveal some of the Walters' hidden treasures, such as its textile holdings, which, while on par with celebrated international collections, have yet to be researched and published. Through research and publication, we also have the opportunity to explore the newest collection to form at the Walters: namely, the art of the Americas. The Americas collection includes over 700 objects from across North, Central, and South America, ranging chronologically from ca. 1500 BCE to a few colonial and modern works dating to as late as the nineteenth century. While the collection is particularly strong in Mesoamerican material from Mexico and Guatemala, it also has works representing most of the major cultures of Central and South America. Generous endowments from William B. Ziff, Jr., and John Bourne will allow for the creation of a broader program of research, display, teaching, and publication of the collection.

Cataloguing projects correlate with our program of installations and exhibitions. A recent example is the cataloguing by Katherine Kasdorf, former Wieler-Mellon Fellow in Islamic and South Asian Art, carried out between 2014 and 2017, on the art of India, Nepal, and Tibet. Her research served as a platform for the reinstallation of the Ford Gallery. The entire collection given by John and Berthe Ford appears

with updated information and images at [art.thewalters.org](http://art.thewalters.org). Fellows play a key role in researching the Walters collections and the Walters maintains a robust fellowship and internship program, offering mentorship and training in a range of fields, including curatorial, conservation, and education

While the Walters is a civic museum with a mission to serve as broad an audience as possible, it has always had a strong commitment to academic scholarship. In addition to mentoring fellows and interns at the Museum, Walters staff members have maintained an active profile teaching at such institutions as Johns Hopkins University and the Maryland Institute College of Art. Most recently, our strategic partnership with Morgan State University has opened up new possibilities, and a course on Islam and Islamic history has been co-taught with Morgan staff through the study of objects.

The academic nature of our work at the Walters has been demonstrated previously by the scholarly yet engaging publications that have accompanied our exhibitions, such as *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe* (2012–2013), *Pearls on a String: Artists, Patrons and Poets at the Great Islamic Courts* (2015–2016), and *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe* (2016–2017). The museum's intellectual resources were for decades directed primarily toward temporary exhibitions, but today our scholarly activities are balanced between those endeavors and rediscovering our permanent collections. While there remains a firm commitment to pioneering international loan exhibitions and their publications, we are equally focused on creating new experiences for our visitors in our galleries and publishing on recently discovered parts of our collection.

Without doubt one of the most intriguing aspects of researching the Walters' collection is the rich histories of the objects that may be found in our archives.<sup>5</sup> The institution's archives support tantalizing narratives about the networks of dealers, collectors, and scholars associated with William T. and Henry Walters. Research to come will draw with renewed vigor on archival treasure troves that relate to the activities of key collectors and dealers in Henry's orbit, such as George A. Lucas (1824–1909) and Dikran G. Kelekian (1868–1951).<sup>6</sup> There is also much to explore in the documents left by the first generations of Walters curators, highly respected art historians who uncovered information about the collections. These curators include Dorothy Kent Hill (1907–1986), first



curator of classical art at the Walters (1934–1973); Marvin Chauncey Ross (1905–1977), first curator of Byzantine, medieval, and subsequent decorative arts, from 1934 to 1952; and the indefatigable Dorothy Miner (1904–1973), first medievalist curator of manuscripts, who also oversaw the Islamic and Near Eastern collections. In 1938 Miner initiated the publication of this very journal, then the *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, the first scholarly periodical produced by an American museum. She served as its editor until 1969.

Today's curatorial team recognizes the unique value of the Walters archives and is committed to provenance research. Their work supports expanded conversations surrounding cultural property that are occurring across the globe and affect the museum on a philosophical level, as well as shaping our key activities. Thus research on our objects no longer focuses narrowly on the historical context in which the object was made, but is more broadly applied to uncovering the object's history through time, from its date of production to the present day, tracing its travels through collections and, if applicable, the art market, all on the basis of primary sources, many of which are emerging from our own archives. Given that cultural property is perhaps the most important issue facing museums today, the Walters' curators enter a timely and complex field that is evolving and changing even as this volume is published. While complicated, cultural patrimony is of vital interest to immediate stakeholders as well as to the public at large.

We are aware that our visitors are drawn to “challenging histories” — including cultural heritage, race, religion, climate change, and gender — told through art objects. As we build upon our distinguished research and publication histories, we turn with new vigor to our collections, and we explore them through multiple approaches that allow us to reveal the traces of people and places left upon these works of art entrusted to the Walters.

## NOTES

1. Nancy Tingley, *Doris Duke: The Southeast Asian Art Collection* (New York: Foundation for Southeast Asian Art and Culture, 2003), 10–15.
2. Tingley, *Doris Duke*, 19.
3. Woodward's decades of acclaimed scholarship, on which the authors in this volume draw, as well as his contribution to significantly expanding the Walters' holdings of Southeast Asian art through the Griswold and Duke bequests, were honored and celebrated in H. Ginsburg and W. Noel, eds., *A Curator's Choice: Essays in Honor of Hiram Woodward*, *Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 63/64 (2006–2007): a festschrift that brought together an esteemed group of scholars.
4. Additionally, the Walters' Ex Libris website won the 2017 gold Applications and APIs MUSE award from the American Alliance of Museums.
5. William R. Johnston's *William and Henry Walters, The Reticent Collectors* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) is a masterful survey, derived from Johnston's profound knowledge of the museum's collection and its archives. Research in these and related archives by other scholars has recently yielded important information about the museum's history. See Stanley Mazaroff, “Henry Walters' ‘Catalogue of Paintings’ Reconsidered,” *Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 66/67 (2008–2009): 87–100; Stanley Mazaroff, *Henry Walters and Bernard Berenson: Collector and Connoisseur* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Elissa O'Loughlin, “Our Mr. Anderson,” *Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 70–71 (2012–2013): 137–42; J. Russell Sale, “New Documentation for the Walters' Collection: The Seligmann Archives,” *Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 72 (2014): 79–100; Stanley Mazaroff, *A Paris Life, a Baltimore Treasure* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018).
6. See Marianna Shreve Simpson, “‘A Gallant Era’: Henry Walters, Islamic Art, and the Kelekian Connection,” *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000): 91–112.

## THE WALTERS' *PARABAİK* ON BURMESE SUMPTUARY LAWS

SYLVIA FRASER-LU

The Walters Art Museum is fortunate to have in its holdings an illustrated folded manuscript (*parabaik*) pertaining to sumptuary laws in the Burmese language comprising twenty-nine folios made of thick mulberry paper. The title on the cover may be translated as *Regulations and Protocols for Designated Conveyances and Accoutrements of Office for Princes and Princesses, Royal Relatives, Ministers, Counselors, Their Wives, Lesser Queens and Personal Attendants of the King and Queen*.<sup>1</sup> The preface (p. 1a) notes that the manuscript was presented in *Tagu* [March–April] 1868 to Mindon (r. 1853–78), the penultimate king of the Kon-baung dynasty (1752–1885). It was compiled under the supervision of a senior official, Maha Mingaung Thihathu, colonel of the North Tavoy Regiment.<sup>2</sup> The illustrator, Nga Hmon, was probably a senior artist of the royal atelier, responsible for supervising the detailed illustrations accompanying the text, which were first sketched out in pencil and then colored in gouache by anonymous artists of the royal atelier. The seal authenticating the work was made by Nga Lok.

In keeping with precedents governing treatises on sumptuary laws, the preface also states that the *parabaik* did not claim to be new or revolutionary, but rather a broad and thorough revision directed toward standardizing material taken from older texts, some of which was from palm-leaf manuscripts that with the passage of time had become damaged and difficult to read. It also aimed to synthesize and incorporate the earlier information with more recently decreed variations in styles, so that the treatise might serve as a standard reference work for future generations. This *parabaik* appears to be one of a number pertaining to Kon-baung sumptuary laws that survived the looting of the palace and its environs following the British conquest of Mandalay in 1885. It deals primarily with palanquins, official clothing, and

personal paraphernalia accorded various queens, princesses, and wives of important ministers.

Concepts of kingship and governmental authority in Burma, as in much of Southeast Asia, were derived from Indian cosmology and the Code of Manu, which through various practices and precedents conferred a semi-divine status on the ruler. Although the deification of an earthly sovereign is not a tenet of orthodox Buddhism, the demonstration of exceptional *kamma* in attaining such an exalted position led many subjects to regard the ruler as a possible future *bodhisatta*. As such, he was worthy of unlimited deference and respect, particularly if in addition to discharging his secular responsibilities, he was shown to be pious and prodigious in his religious works of merit on behalf of the nation.

In the interests of enhancing legitimacy and projecting an aura of mystery and majesty to those over whom they ruled, Burmese kings also devised genealogical links to early notable Indian rulers and bestowed upon themselves numerous titles lauding their glory, piety, and right to rule. Their courts were arranged as an earthly microcosm of the Buddhist Tavatimsa heaven as ruled by Sakka (formerly Indra), co-opted from the Hindu pantheon to serve as the guardian god of Buddhism. Known as Thagyamin in Burma, he is believed to be the deity most involved in human affairs and, according to the *Chronicles*, was known on occasion to offer assistance in the cause of a righteous king.<sup>3</sup> Brahmin priests from India (and later Manipur and Arakan) also played a prominent role in formal court procedures by preparing almanacs, providing auspicious astrological calculations, and directing elaborate court rituals in accordance with time-hallowed procedures.

With a semi-deified king at the helm, Burman precolonial society was deeply imbued with a strong sense of order and “place.” The population was divided into four major



Fig. 1. Buddha depicted as a universal monarch in Kon-baung-period court dress. Burma (Shan), 19th century. Wood, gilding, glass inlay, and dry lacquer,  $72 \frac{1}{4} \times 49 \frac{1}{16} \times 30 \frac{5}{16}$  in. ( $183.5 \times 126.9 \times 77$  cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection, 2002, [acc. no. 25.232](#)

groups: rulers, officials, the wealthy, and commoners. These were further subdivided into various grades and occupations, reinforced by customary law where the punishments for transgressions reflected not only the nature of the offence or dispute but also the status of the perpetrator in relation to the victim. Social distinctions were clearly visible and maintained by the promulgation and rigid enforcement of a slew of sumptuary laws pertaining to dress, jewelry, and other ornaments, personal utensils (such as betel boxes, spittoons and water bottles), conveyances, houses, funeral ceremonies, and various trappings of office. Gradations of official rank were strictly observed, and harsh punishment was meted out

on anyone who took upon himself any pretensions above his station.

Since Pagan times, royal figures in Burmese painting and sculpture in many instances have been depicted wearing identical costumes to those of celestials, subtly implying a positive connection and identification of the earthly ruler with the denizens of the Hindu-Buddhist universe. This affinity is further alluded to from the seventeenth century onward in the popularity of crowned images (*jambupati*) in which the Buddha is portrayed as a universal king (*dhammaraja*) in raiment identical to that worn by the Burmese monarch (fig. 1).

The most distinctive marker separating the rulers from the ruled was the contrast between formal court dress and everyday wear; in the latter case, distinctions in wealth were evident only in the quality and costliness of the fabrics used. With respect to styles, materials, and embellishment applied, court robes were an imaginative and flamboyant combination of both local and foreign elements. Largely fashioned from imported velvets, satins, and brocades to which Indian-derived *zardozi*-style embroidery was added, the costumes were heavy, cumbersome, and ill designed for ease of movement (fig. 2). Given Burma's tropical humid climate, they must have been exceedingly hot and uncomfortable to wear, in marked contrast to the comfort and versatility of everyday clothing.<sup>4</sup>

Responsibility for creating court costumes lay with the palace tailoring department (*a-kyok-taik*), which in turn answered to the treasury, which, supplied the necessary cloth, gems, and metal for the manufacture of gold thread, sequins, and other spangles. Here a contingent of around forty Indian, Shan, and Burman artisans consulted illustrated folding books (*parabaiks*) on current sumptuary laws pertaining to dress before measuring, cutting, assembling, and sewing a ceremonial costume appropriate in color, style, materials, and decoration to the designated rank of the wearer. Such artisans were kept very busy, for in many instances costumes changed with the seasons.<sup>5</sup>

The palace grading system for royal women was complex. At the top of the pyramid was the chief queen (*Nanmadaw Mibaya*), given her full title in the manuscript—Thiri Pawara Mahazeinda Mingala Yadana Devi—who was also one of four senior consorts of the first grade (*Nanya Mibaya*) so named for the directions (South, North, Central, and West) in which their individual palaces were located. They were followed by a further four queens of the second rank (*A-hsaung Mibaya*), who were allocated impressive apartments. Below them were another four queens of the third rank (*Shwe-yi Hsaung-ya Mibaya*), who were permitted to live in gilded chambers. Following in order of precedence came the royal princesses: half-sisters, the offspring of the king, minor queens, and royal concubines. The daughters usually became brides of male kinsmen. Half-sisters and nieces of the king as well as daughters offered by tributary princes, rulers of neighboring states, and local elites were also



Fig. 2. A young lady in Kon-baung court dress befitting a princess, ca. early 20th century. Such a costume was worn over regular clothing, in this case a silk *hta-mein* sarong and *eingyi* blouse. Author's collection

taken into the royal harem, which was further subdivided into minor queens and concubines. Mindon is reported as having around fifty queens.<sup>6</sup>

When a young woman was presented to the king, her horoscope would have first been consulted as a guide to selecting gems for her robes and jewelry. She then would have been given a lofty Indian-derived title by the monarch and allocated the taxes from a particular town for her benefit. She would often become known by the name of the town from which she derived her revenue. Foreign princesses such as those of Chinese or Thai origin were often referred to by the province or country of their birth. Royal women were also assigned housing according to their rank. Higher-ranking queens and princesses were given their own palaces or apartments, while lower-grade concubines would be assigned to



dormitory-like conditions. All were expected to stand ready to serve the “Celestial Weapon” of the king upon selection to the royal bedchamber.<sup>7</sup>

Although very much under the control of the chief and senior queens, various women who piqued the interest of the king due to their physical charms, literary abilities, or piety could ascend rapidly through the ranks to become quite influential, greatly benefiting their families and others associated with them. Conversely, others could soon “flame out” and be quickly consigned to oblivion with very little recourse, often due to the machinations of ambitious rivals eager to replace them in the king’s affection.

Since the contents of the Walters’ manuscript are primarily concerned with sumptuary laws pertaining to a fairly wide range of female royalty and wives of officials, the costumes depicted do not generally appear to be as elaborate as those seen in the *Parabaik: Designs of Things in Daily Use in the Golden Palace*, dating to around 1880 (British Library, Burmese Ms. 199), which suggests that the costumes described in the Walters’ manuscript might well be largely for lesser female royalty. However, one of the king’s palanquins is illustrated, followed by details of a costume, paraphernalia, and palanquin for the chief queen as well as another for a senior consort, the Northern Queen, followed by various senior princesses (fig. 3).

FORMAL ROYAL COSTUME (A-SIN-TAN-SA-DAW)

Costume components were carefully drawn, colored, and labeled in the manuscript so that differences in rank would have been immediately evident to those well versed in court sumptuary laws. In many cases there is some text with further explanation of details not always evident from the illustrations.

Formal female dress as depicted in the manuscript consisted of the following:

1. A long-sleeved gold-colored jacket generally referred to as a *du-yin thin-daing* made from either imported Indian gold brocade fabric (*khinkhab*) from famous textile centers such as Murshidabad, Madras, Calcutta, Hyerabad, or Benares, or from a specially woven cloth of local manufacture in imitation of *khinkhab* known as *pa-zun-zi* with a warp of orange cotton and a tinsel weft. Such fabrics were embellished with gems or glass-studded embroidery at the neck and in bands around

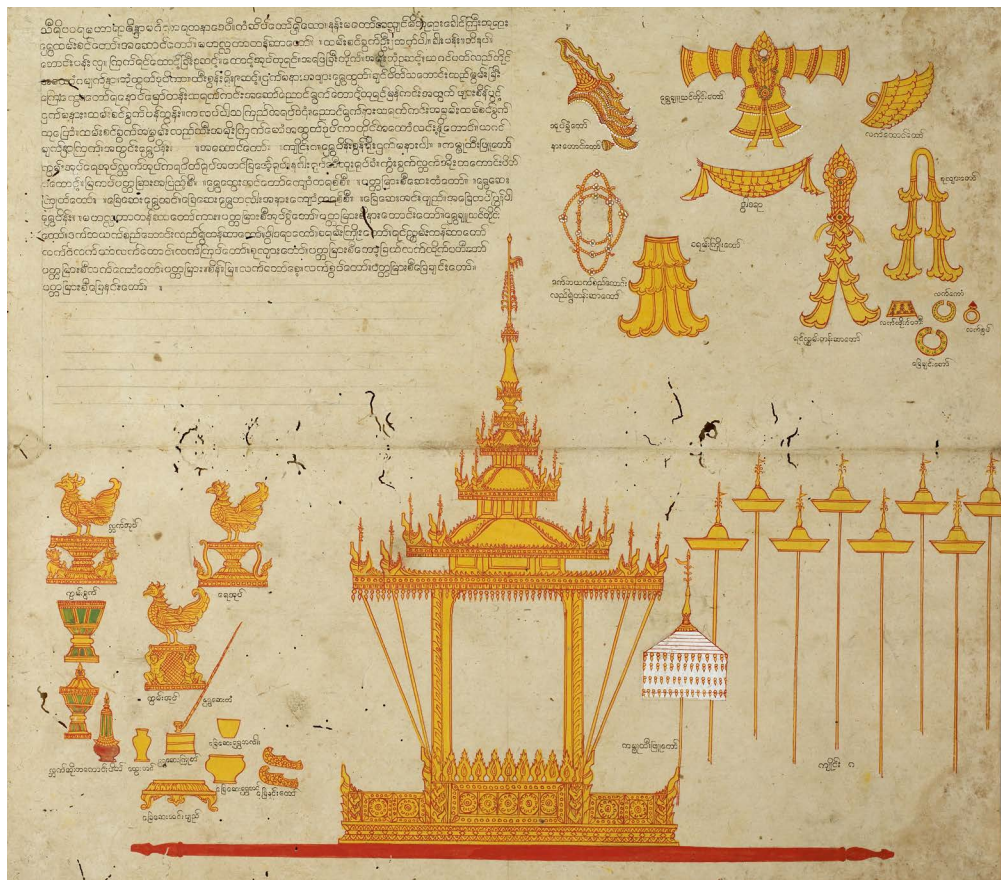


Fig. 3. The dress, accoutrements, and palanquin allowed the chief queen. *Parabaik of Sumptuary Laws*, Burma, 1868. Pigments on mulberry paper, closed book: 9 1/16 x 21 5/8 in (24.3 x 55 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Mr. George R. Wagner, 1986, W.813, pp. 4a–3b



the sleeves and below the waist, the amount of which and designs applied varying according to the rank of the wearer.

2. For those of superior status, the *du-yin thin-daing* resembled a jacket with small winglike appendages around the edges, while for the lower echelons it was simply tailored to be more like a blouse or a tunic in style — not unlike what some minority groups such as the Karen wear in Burma today.
3. Below the waist was worn an apron or “skirt” of triple frills (*kha-yan kyo*) in a lighter cotton velvet material, the color, length, and arrangement of which varied with rank.
4. To this was added a frilled girdle (*dwa-daya*), which could be in yellow, green and/or red.
5. A long shawl/sash of silk (*su-laya*) that was finished at the ends with a scalloped embroidered “fish-tail” ornament in a heavier material was tied around the waist with only the embroidered sections visible when worn.
6. A long frontal piece (*yin-hlwan-tan-sa*) consisting of a scalloped, cloudlike collar (*lair-cha*) inspired by Chinese royal costume, lapels, and long triple-layered central waistcloth often with side flanges. The head was placed through the upper portion, which was tailored so as to sit on the shoulders and spread over the chest before extending down the central axis of the body. Instead of hanging down in front, the side flanges that emerged from the central panel could also be drawn under the arms to reappear at the back of the costume in winglike form.
7. Costume parts were secured to the torso with ties. Some of the appendages were stiffened on the underside with cane strips of rattan to keep them upright. Those that were heavily embroidered with couched metallic threads, colored stones, and sequins could be cumbersome to wear. Altogether, such a costume could weigh anywhere from twelve to twenty pounds.

The chief queen in this manuscript was permitted to wear the *mahal-lat-ta*, a costume of the highest status allowed a female. According to Burmese mythology, such a garment

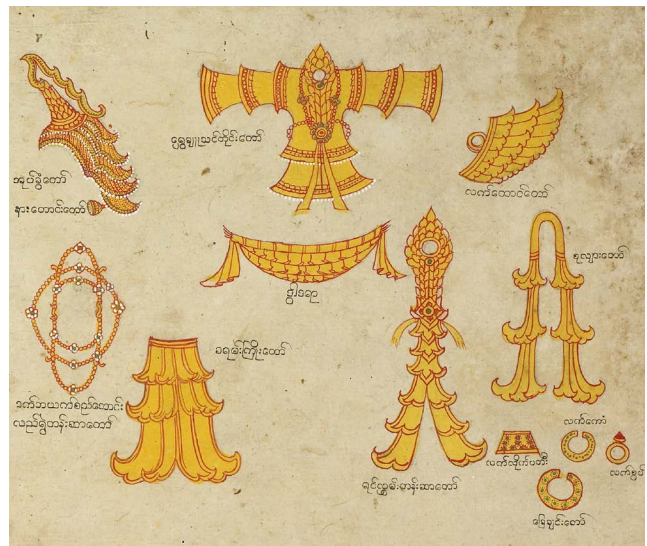


Fig. 4. The parts of a *maha-lat-ta* costume for the Chief Queen. W.813, p. 4a (detail)

dated back to the time of the Buddha.<sup>8</sup> Stylistically, however, the costume does not appear to predate the Kon-baung dynasty. It consisted of the *shwe chu du-yin-daing*, a layered jacket with upturned edges and flaring sleeves embellished with masses of gold-thread embroidery studded with numerous cabochon gems; rows of tiny bells as well as small metal and gilt banyan leaves gently tinkled as the wearer moved. As the highest-ranking female, the chief queen was also entitled to attach a pair of winglike projections (*let-daung-daw*) on the shoulders. Around the stomach was worn a frilled girdle (*dwa-daya*) that was secured by ties at the back, below which was worn a triple tiered skirtlike *kha-yan-kyo* that almost covered the *hta-mein* silk wrap-around sarong worn underneath. The outfit was cinched together at the waist with a triple-tiered fish-tailed *su-laya* sash. The placing of the head through the opening *yin-hlwan-tan-sa* and its arrangement over the front of the body completed the costume (fig. 4).

According to this manuscript, senior queens and princesses were granted permission to wear the *gana-mat-taka* — a garment very similar to (but less prestigious than) the *mahal-lat-ta*. It consisted of a *du-yin* jacket with flaring three-paneled upturned sleeves, minus the *let-daung-daw* winglike projections. The triple-frilled *dwa-daya* girdle was joined to the *kha-yan-kyo*, with its three panels ending in a flaring scalloped hemline. It was cinched at the waist by a plain band of material. All costume wearers were accorded the use of some

form of the frontal *yin-blwan tan-sa* along with the *su-laya* sash, which was finished with a pair of flaring panels (fig. 5).

Lesser queens and high-ranking ministers' wives were granted the wearing of some form of the *mallika*, a prestige garment, which in this manuscript appears to be a more simple tailored *du-yin-thin-daing* with gently flaring sleeves edged with embroidery around the openings. A short *kha-yan-kyo* of red, green, and yellow frills, resembling the *dwa-daya* of the higher-grade costumes, was cinched at the waist by a plain belt, which would have been hidden by the *su-laya* sash that terminated in a single fish-tail flare obscured by the frontal placement of the *yin-blwan-tan-sa*. The underlying silk *hta-mein* hip-wrapper, usually patterned with wavy *acheik* designs, would have been clearly visible under such an embroidered costume (fig. 6).

JEWELRY AND HEADDRESSES

Jewels, a number of which were thought to be imbued with malevolent and benevolent powers, have always been highly prized in Burma. Precious stones came into the treasury as tribute from notable local mining areas, and as gifts from

foreign envoys as well as from merchants hoping to gain access to lucrative trading deals. The most valued stone was the ruby (*ba-da-mya*), mined in abundant quantities in Mogok, Upper Burma. It was believed to procure power for its owner. Sapphires (*nila*), mined in the same area, were thought to attract affection; amethysts (*thiho nila*) promoted good health; and pearls (*pala*) conferred dignity upon the wearer, while the emerald could shield one from illness but in the wrong hands could also bring misfortune. Coral (*thanda*) could increase the status of the owner, but changes in its color could predict future illness and even death. Cats' eyes too were ambivalent: they could bestow invincibility or, conversely, contribute to the destruction of those less favored. Diamonds were not particularly prized by the Burmese; many were probably *intans* from Borneo, which were widely used in jewelry throughout Southeast Asia. Jade too, found in abundance in the Myitkyina area, was not greatly appreciated.<sup>9</sup> Instead, it was traded with China for silk, satin, metals, and household items. Until the mid-nineteenth century, most jewels were polished in cabochon form. With the introduction of advanced cutting technology in Burma, faceted gems became popular.

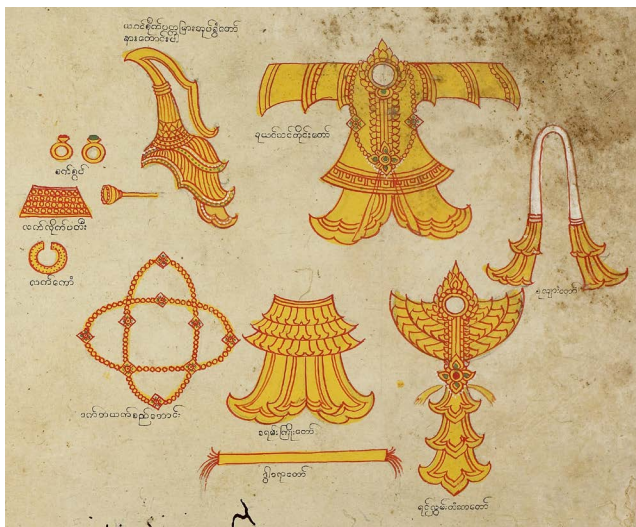


Fig. 5. Details of a *gana-mat-taka* costume for possibly a third-ranked queen or a princess, which is similar in style to that of the chief queen, but has less embroidery on the *du-yin thin-daing* jacket. The *dwa-daya* girdle and *hka-yan-gyo* have been joined together, and the *su-laya* sash is finished with only two “fishtail” flares instead of the three accorded the chief queen. W.813, p. 8b (detail)



Fig. 6. Details of dress for a minor queen which has a modestly embellished simply tailored *du-yin thin-daing* tunic, a truncated *kha-yan-kyo*, plain *dwa-daya* belt, and a *su-laya* sash with only one flare at the ends. She was accorded the wearing of a *ya-gin meik* headdress. W. 813, p. 19b (detail)

Jewelry for the majority of royal women could be of gold, silver, gems, and/or ivory. Most queens were allocated a pair of gold tubular earrings (*nga-daung*) embellished with precious stones, a gem-studded bracelet or armband (*le-kauk*), and a similarly decorated wristband (*le-laik-pu-ti*). Although not shown in the *parabaik's* illustrations, many such bracelets were said to terminate in zoomorphic molded clasps. All queens and princesses were allowed a special double-stranded pearl necklace interrupted at regular intervals with finely crafted gem-studded rosettes (*ne-ba-ye-se*). Most royal women were also permitted at least one ruby or emerald ring (*le-sut*), while those of higher status were allowed an example of each stone. Only the chief queen was granted a pair of gold anklets (*kyei-kyin*).

Her formal headdress (*magaik tok-hkwan*) was also the most elaborate and resembled a petaled helmet that completely covered the hair. The “petals” appeared as if edged with pearls. The helmet was surmounted by a “scale”-covered cone from which trailed a wavelike volute, said to resemble the feathers of the crane (*karaweik*), a symbol of longevity. A similar, less elaborate example worn by a queen of senior status was also crowned with a flowing protrusion emanating from a cone. Such protrusions might well have been survivals of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ava-period styles of royal female adornment, which incorporated both the natural and additional tresses of the wearer into spectacular architecturally engineered coiffeured headgear. Other queens were accorded millinery creations on a much more modest scale in the form of a smaller cone-shaped, gem-studded embroidered headdress: the *se-bon*, which resembled a cap that did not completely cover the hair. It tapered to a two- to three-inch-high stylized volute embellished with a peacock “eye” or *naga* finial at its highest point. A fringe of seed pearls or other gems encircled the base. The more junior royal women were granted the use of the *ya-gin meik*, a gold-colored embroidered and gem-edged caplike headdress that rose to a peak which the wearer’s tresses might have at one time been pulled through so as to cascade in luxuriant abundance down the back, the sight of which was considered irresistibly attractive. By late Kon-baung times, the finial of the cap was in outline an imitation of an earlier seventeenth-century royal hairstyle.

## OTHER ACCOUTREMENTS OF RANK

Since royal women in Konbaung times did not hold any administrative positions in government, they were not permitted to wear the *sal-we*, a multi-stranded golden chain worn by royal princes and ministers of state. However, they were accorded the use of various personal accoutrements such as betel, *la-hpet* (pickled tea) and tobacco boxes (*hsei-leik taung*), spittoons, tobacco pipes, water bottles, and drinking cups as well as footstools and bowls for washing the feet—all traditional items of hospitality found in a Burmese home.

Guests visiting a Burmese house were generally expected to remove their footwear and wash their feet, using a cup of water taken from a large jar placed near the entranceway. On entering the communal area, visitors were greeted warmly and invited to sit down to have a drink of water or tea and to partake of some light refreshments including pickled tea: chopped-up tea leaves soaked in brine and mixed with sesame oil that was served with slices of fried garlic, roasted beans, nuts, sesame seeds, and dried shrimp, stored in a special compartmentalized circular wooden lacquer container known as a *la-hpet-ok*. Even more prevalent than the *la-hpet-ok* was the cylindrical betel-box (*kun-it*), fitted inside with one or more trays to hold the essential items of a betel chew: chopped areca nut, dried orange peel, spices, and lime paste, as well as the heart-shaped leaves from the betel vine used to wrap the desired ingredients into a quid for chewing. Since betel, a mild stimulant, was not ingested, a spittoon (*twei-tin*) was never far away. Similarly shaped lacquer tobacco and cheroot-boxes (*hsei-leik-taung*) were also typical items of hospitality in a Burmese home. Like the betel box, the interior was subdivided into compartments to hold all the ingredients necessary to roll a cheroot according to individual taste: shredded tobacco leaves, slivers of tamarind pulp-infused wood, corn husks for filters, and dried leaves from the *thanat* tree, which served as wrappers. A long-stemmed metal or clay pipe might also be included.

In a Burmese home the pickled tea, betel, and tobacco boxes were usually made of wood and/or woven basketry covered with red and/or black lacquer. The application of gold-leaf and gold paint, limited to royal and religious objects, was expressly forbidden on everyday objects for commoners. Such



objects might instead be embellished with colorful incised or raised lacquer designs featuring popular motifs such as the Burmese days of the week (*gyo-hsit-lon*), the zodiac (*ya-thi*), and episodes from popular *Jataka* tales of the previous lives of the Buddha. Bowls and spittoons were usually of nonprecious metals or ceramics.

The offering of such refreshments also served a wider social sphere. A condemned prisoner knew that the end was near when he was offered a cup of water and a quid of betel as a last meal. Pickled tea was often laced with lime juice or chili powder to keep awake exhausted gamblers and students cramming for examinations. *La-hpet* could be eaten at the conclusion of a trial by both the plaintiff and defendant to signify the acceptance of the judge's decision. The acceptance of small packets of pickled tea accompanying an invitation meant that the recipient was duty-bound to attend.

Royalty and their retainers also used similar personal objects for many of the same reasons. However, their possessions were conceived on a much grander scale, for the number, size, shape, material, type, and amount of ornamentation allowed depended upon the user's rank at court. Receptacles could be of "red," "yellow," or "white" gold, determined by metal content and/or external coloration. They could also be of gilded and/or plain silver, or of *mo-gyo* (a gold alloy), red and gold lacquer, or of ceramic. Inlays of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds were permitted to beautify the surfaces of some receptacles granted to senior queens and princesses. A retinue of obsequious servants was responsible for keeping the utensils clean and polished as well as regularly replenishing them with fresh ingredients.<sup>10</sup> Such objects might also accompany the owner in grand procession when being conveyed to an important state occasion. They might also be neatly arrayed on the floor before them when granting a formal audience, as a reminder to those being received that they were in the presence of an important personage.

The chief queen was entitled to the most impressive array of utensils, which included pedestaled bowls and zoomorphic stands, spittoons, a covered water vessel (*ta-gaung*), drinking cup, pipe, a low carved table/stand, and slippers with upturned toes. The *parabaik* illustrates a trio of avian (*hintha* and *karaweik*) boxes, two of which are mounted on hour-glass stands decorated with a pair of outward-facing lions (*chinthé*) on one for *la-hpet* and a pair of *naga* on the



Fig. 7. Details of fig. 5 showing that the accoutrements accorded the chief queen were by far the most lavish. She appears to be the only female granted the use of zoomorphic receptacles for pickled tea, betel, and water, along with utensils to wash the feet. She also appears to be the only one with specially designated footwear. W.813, p. 4a (detail)

other designated for water. The third bird is perched on the flat lid of a cylindrical betel box enlivened by a pair of lively loin cloth-clad figures identified as ogres in the captions, but without the fierce visage usually associated with depictions of such figures. Stationed around the base, they appear as if supporting the bird. The chief queen also had the use of two waisted gold- and diamond-encrusted metal bowls with faceted sides, one of which was designated to hold the leaves of the betel vine, while the other, a covered example, was for tea leaves. Next to it is a matching goblet filled with water for making tea, covered by a cylindrical metal lid of similar gold and gem decoration. She was also accorded a tall vase-shaped gold-painted spittoon and a long smoking pipe inlaid with rubies resting atop a similarly decorated tobacco box. She was granted the use of a gilded carved footstool (*kyei-sei-in*) on which she could rest her feet when being washed

with water taken from a wide-mouthed gilded jar (*kyei-sei-shwei-tin*) and poured on with a small gold bowl inlaid with rubies, diamonds, and emeralds (*kyei-sei-shwei-ta-la*). Her Middle Eastern–style slippers with upturned toes in a gold embroidered fabric were also reserved for royalty (fig. 7).

With the exception of the zoomorphic boxes, most senior queens and princesses were accorded accoutrements of rank similar to those of the chief queen. All were permitted a pair of covered faceted betel and *la-hpet* pedestal bowls, a covered water goblet, a spittoon, carved wooden foot stool, water jar, and small metal bowl for washing the feet. The type of metal varied with respect to the bowls, as did the selection of gems used in the decorative inlays. Not all royal women were granted the use of a pipe and tobacco box. Royal women of junior status were largely limited to covered betel and *la-hpet* sets, a water goblet, and spittoon in varying materials. The wives of senior ministers do not appear to have been granted the use of such items of rank.

#### PALANQUINS

In this manuscript, palanquins take center stage. Each is carefully described and illustrated, making clear distinctions in rank. Unlike mere mortals, the “heaven born” could not be expected to walk or ride in ox carts to important royal ceremonies. In keeping with their exalted status, royalty, high officials, and their consorts were transported to major events in palanquins borne aloft on the shoulders of uniformed retainers in a grand procession carefully ordered according to rank. They were usually preceded by attendants bearing ceremonial umbrellas or staffs (*kyaing*) of office, the size, color, and number of which were also subject to rank. Such a spectacle, accompanied by Burmese music, was carefully orchestrated to invoke a sense of awe and wonder in the onlookers, most of whom had spent their lives in rustic simplicity—a world away from the royal splendor that was sustained by their own taxes and labor.

One of the king’s palanquins (*shwe-htan-sin-daw*)—a vision in gold in the towering *pyathat waw* style—is the first conveyance to be illustrated and sets the standard against which others might be measured (fig. 8). Mounted on a pair of long red horizontal poles for ease of carrying, the sides of the rectangular base are shown to have been carved

in gilded relief with panels of floral work edged with vegetal scrolling inlaid with precious stones—rubies, emeralds, and diamonds—and finished along the periphery with a band of small saw-tooth decoration interrupted at the corners by *du-yin* volutes. Surmounting the base is an open-sided pavilion where the king would sit on a cushioned platform, sheltered from the elements by a triple-tiered roof (*pyathat*) reinforced on two sides by pairs of struts. The edges of the roof are finished with carved fascia boards that terminate in stylized *hamsa* (*hintha*) bird volutes, while the intervening necks of two of the tiered roofs are embellished with similar floral carving to that of the base. Below the lowest fascia board is a textile band of netlike trellis decoration edged with sprigs of *pipul* leaf decoration. Like the *pyathat* of the palace and pagodas, the superstructure is finished with a soaring *dhubika* surmounted by an umbrella-like form out of which emerges a winged vane terminating in a small orb. The number of retainers allocated to carry the king’s palanquin is not noted.

Rivaling the palanquin of the king in splendor is that of the chief queen. Apart from the absence of carved decoration on the paneling between the triple roofs and a smaller band of *pipul* leaf embellishment along the base of the lowest fascia board, the superstructure of her palanquin is



Fig. 8. The *Shwe-tan-sin-daw* palanquin for King Mindon. Crowned by a *pyathat*, it is the most lavishly decorated of all the palanquins depicted. W. 813, pp. 2b–3a



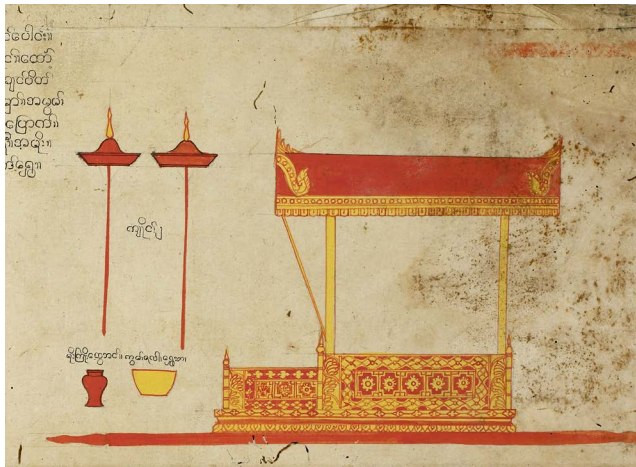


Fig. 9. Palanquin and accoutrements accorded a minor queen or princess. The seating area and roof have been modestly decorated with gilding and red lacquer, suggesting that the occupant did hold some recognizable rank. Her accoutrements—a pair of staves, a spittoon and betel bowl—however, indicate that her position in the royal hierarchy was relatively modest. W. 813, p. 24b.

remarkably similar to that of the king. The base, too, is similar in structure but is differentiated by a band of carved upright diamond-shaped ornamentation (*a-saw sein-daung*) along the seating area. She was the only queen permitted the use of a single royal white umbrella (*hti-byu-daw*) replete with four tiers of gilded *pipul* leaf decoration, seen here attached to the front finial of her palanquin. She was also permitted to have eight uniformed retainers identified in the *parabaik* by staffs (*kyaing*)

The gilded palanquins of two senior princesses are supported by two-tiered roofs devoid of pointed *a-saw* decoration. However, there is some “butterfly wing” (*leik pya*) ornamentation in the upper right-angle corners of the supporting pillars of the superstructure, as well as some pointed *a-saw* embellishment along the lower perimeter. Six retainers were permitted to carry umbrellas/staffs heralding the approach of the palanquin.

Similar in form are a series of conveyances for queens and princesses of the middle ranks (fig. 9). In some, the seating area and superstructure are placed at one end of the palanquin rather than in the center, with a corresponding reduction in the number of supporting struts on some examples. The double-tiered domelike roofs are painted red and embellished with scattered floral tondos, while the fascia boards

continued to be edged with gilded carving. Three are finished with *dhubika* forms, while two terminate in gilded lotus-bud finials. The majority were permitted four retainers. The more junior female members of royalty were accorded palanquins with carved and gilded bases with two-tiered roofs devoid of the gilded tondo decoration permitted the more senior women. However, some carving and gilding was allowed on the paneling between the roofs, along the fascia boards, and at the corners.

The lowest ranks of female royalty were transported to ceremonial events in red single-roofed palanquins with minimally carved gabled roofs that sheltered the gilded and carved seating area. The most junior had to make do with more modest, predominantly red, palanquins with minimal gilding set on shallow bases and sheltered by superstructures that were little more than canopies. Most were permitted only two staff bearers.

Consorts of senior ministers were permitted to ride in sedan chairs, the style and amount of decoration and gilding of which was contingent upon the rank of the husband. The chair was divided into two sections: a larger seating area that was finished with an elaborately carved backboard, preceded by a smaller space in which accoutrements of office and other personal items could be placed. Chairs accorded the more senior consorts were distinguished by their elaborate carving and plethora of gilding. Wives of lesser ministers rode in red sedan chairs with carved sides. However, most did not have a backboard or a division for personal utensils. Some ministers were permitted two to four retainers, while a few were permitted the use of a red umbrella. There is also an example in the manuscript of a stretcher-like conveyance being accorded a person of ministerial rank.

## CONCLUSION

Although not as grand and detailed as some Burmese *parabaiks* on sumptuary laws in the British Library’s collection, the Walters’ manuscript offers some useful insights into the application of such rules for a range of royal women with respect to dress, jewelry, accoutrements, and palanquins during the twilight years of the Kon-baung dynasty. Costumes and accoutrements depicted include those of the chief queen and other senior queens, senior princesses, to



Fig. 10. A devotee depicted in Kon-baung royal dress. Burma, early 20th century, wood, leather, gilt, glass inlay, 24 × 11 ¼ × 13 ¾ in. (61 × 28.5 × 33.5 cm). The Walters Art Museum, 2002, Gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection, [acc. no. 25.240](#)

middle- and lower-ranking queens, concubines, and consorts of ministers. The nature of the ceremonies which the royal women were expected to attend, resplendent in such finery, is not described in the manuscript. The prevalence of palanquins perhaps suggests that some travel might have been involved to locations other than the Mandalay Palace. Mindon, a very pious monarch, took his religious obligations very seriously and expended much money and effort to transform his new capital into a “citadel” honoring Buddhism. *Parabaiks* record a number of such grand events in which the king and members of his court played leading roles in the dedication of pagodas and monasteries to the religion. They

were known to proceed in grand, merit-making processions to participate in such joyous noteworthy events.<sup>11</sup>

#### POSTSCRIPT

In addition to a *parabaik* on royal sumptuary laws, the Walters Art Museum also has a number of Burmese objects with connotations of royalty in its collection. They include a crowned Buddha of dry lacquer, wood, gilding, glass, and metal in the Ava style dating to the eighteenth or nineteenth century (see fig. 1). The *Buddha*, possibly from the Shan State in eastern Burma, is depicted wearing a royal costume with a scalloped collar and upturned epaulettes as well as winglike appendages. The diagonal stone-encrusted bands across the chest represent the *sa-lwe*, an important decoration of high office in precolonial Burma.

There is also a kneeling image of wood, gilt, glass, and leather or metal of a celestial (*nat*) or royal devotee (fig. 10), which would have originally been placed in front or at the side of a Buddhist altar as part of a tableau featuring royal-style accoutrements such as vases of flowers; hourglass-shaped lacquer stands for food, robes, and religious manuscript offerings; covered boxes; and effigies of monks, along with celestial and lay adorants paying homage to the Buddha. The devotee's costume, inlaid with scallops of green glass, has the typical large cloud collar and upturned edges as well as the long waistcloth and side flanges of a Burmese royal costume. A Thai-inspired crown with leaflike appendages, earrings, bracelets, and a double-stranded necklace not unlike those illustrated in the Burmese *parabaik* completes the costume.

A nineteenth-century wooden scripture chest (*sadaik*, [acc. no. 65.142](#)) embellished with gilded, relief-molded lacquer (*thayo*), depicts a Buddhist story in the panoramic mode.

A cloth painting ([acc. no. 2010.12.25](#)) is likely a depiction of the Three Worlds of the Buddhist universe. Some of the celestials depicted have been portrayed in Kon-baung court dress. Such paintings often served as protective canopies above the Buddha image.

A *hamsalbintha* betel box on a stand (*bintha kun-ok*, [acc. no. 61.344](#)), made of wood, metal, gilded glass inlay, and leather, is a replica of one of the former royal accoutrements of office. Originally of gold inlaid with precious stones, such replicas today are used in re-enactments of the Life of Prince

Siddhattha—the Great Departure. Prior to a Burmese boy's novitiation, the youngster dressed as a Kon-baung prince and rode through town accompanied by his proud relatives in their Sunday best, a raucous band, and a bevy of local beauties in the guise of Mara's daughters, who carry royal accoutrements of office. The prettiest girl is usually the bearer of the *hintha* betel box.

Two pagoda-shaped receptacles (*hsun-ok*, acc. nos. 67.662, 67.663) made of coiled bamboo and gilded lacquer were designed to carry a meal to the monastery. Rice was placed in the large bowl-shaped base, above which was a tray that held small bowls of curry, vegetables, and condiments. A spired cover kept the contents fresh. In precolonial Burma, the use of such gilded receptacles was limited to royalty and the religion.

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## GLOSSARY

*P* = Pali, *S* = Sanskrit, *B* = Burmese, *Pers.* = Persian

***a-kyok-taik*** Palace tailoring department in Kon-baung times.

***A-hsaung Mibaya*** Queens of the second rank who have been granted palace apartments

***a-saw*** A repetitive pointed flame-like leaf decoration in woodcarving and stucco, as seen along the upper periphery of railing, doorways, gables, and tiered roofing

***a-saw sein-daung*** A repetitive pointed diamond-shaped decoration

***ba-da-mya*** Ruby, Burma's most highly prized gemstone

**betel** The heart-shaped leaf of a vine (*Piper betle*) used to wrap slivers of areca nut (*Areca catechu*), slaked lime, and various spices into a quid for a mildly stimulating chew. The Indian custom became popular throughout Southeast Asia.

***Bodhisatta* (P)** A being ultimately destined for Buddhahood; one who may serve as a guide to others along the path to Enlightenment

***chinthe*** A Burmese lion

**Code of Manu** Ancient Hindu code of conduct for domestic, social, and religious life

***daw*** When used as a suffix often pertains to royalty; an honorific for an older woman

***devi* (P)** Goddess (see also *nat*); also a popular inclusion in various titles for female royalty

***Dhammaraja* (P)** Defender of the faith

***dhubika* (S, P, B)** A tapering, cone-shaped masonry finial that surmounts the towering tiered roofs of a royal or religious establishment

***du-yin*** Prow-shaped roof ornament

***du-yin thin-daing*** A jacket or coatlike garment designed for royalty. Variations in design and decoration indicate differences in rank.

***dwa-daya*** A triple-frilled girdle or cloth belt worn around the waist as part of a female royal costume

***gana-mat-taka*** An official robe worn by senior princes and queens of intermediate rank

***gyo-hsit-lon*** A popular decorative motif on silver and lacquer based on Burmese astrology, which centers on the "Eight Planets," represented by an animal for each day of the week. Burmese names are based upon syllables according to the days of the week.

***hamsa* (S)** See *hintha*

***hintha*** The brahmani duck/goose or swan (*hamsa*) of Indian literature, a semidivine bird resident in various paradises

***hintha kun-ok*** A betel box in the shape of *hintha* bird

***hsei-leik-taung*** A cheroot box with all the necessary ingredients to make a cheroot according to taste

***hsun-ok*** A votive lacquer receptacle with a tapering lid

***hta-mein*** Burmese women's wraparound skirt, which traditionally opened at the side; today the term is also used for a woman's tubular skirt (*longyi*).

***hti-byu daw*** White umbrella, a symbol of royalty

***intan*** Diamonds from river sands and other alluvial deposits in Kalimantan Borneo

**Jambupati (P)** Crowned Buddha image representing the Buddha as a universal monarch

**Jatakas (P, S)** A collection of five hundred and forty-seven stories of the previous lives of the Buddha. The stories highlight certain virtues as demonstrated by the Buddha in his various reincarnations to serve as a model to others.

**kamma (P)** The course of personal destiny as determined by the results of actions and deeds

**karaweik** Crane, symbol of longevity

**Karen** A minority group comprising approximately seven percent of the total Burmese population. They reside primarily in Kayin State, south and southeast Burma.

**kha-yan-kyo** “Skirt” panels of a female royal costume

**khinkhab (Pers.)** Brocaded fabrics from India with a large amount of interwoven gold and silver wire

**kyaing** A long narrow stave or staff carried by a retainer as an emblem of rank

**kyei-kyin** Gold anklet

**kyei-sei-in** A footstool

**kyei-sei-shwe-tin** A jar or pot with water for foot washing

**kyei-sei-shwe-ta-la** A small bejeweled bowl used for pouring water on the feet

**la-hpet** Pickled tea made from tea leaves soaked in brine, chopped, then mixed with sesame oil and served along with nuts, fried garlic, and dried shrimp

**la-hpet-ok** Receptacle for pickled tea and other ingredients

**lair-cha** A cloud-like collar of an official costume

**leik pya** Butterfly; ornament for a right-angle corner

**let-kauk** Bracelet

**le-sut** Finger ring

**let-taik-pu-ti** A wrist band of fabric studded with gems

**let-daung-daw** A winged decoration for the shoulder section of a royal costume

**magaik-tok-bkwan** A royal headdress

**mahal-lat-ta** A official embroidered robe reserved for senior queens

**Mallika (P, B)** An official robe in Kon-baung times worn by junior queens, princesses, and maids of honor with appanages

**Mandalay** Burmese capital (1857–85). Mandalay derives from *mandala* (S) = center. Also known as Yadanabon (B) or Ratanapura (P) (city of gems) in Kon-baung times

**Mingala (B), mangala (P)** Prosperity, blessings, auspicious; may also form part of a title

**mibaya** queen

**mo-gyo** A gold alloy that may be amalgamated with another metal such as silver or brass

**naga (S)** A serpent or dragon

**Nanmadaw Mibaya** Southern Queen; chief queen

**nat, deva, devi (S, P)** A nature or biological spirit derived from pre-Buddhist animistic beliefs; a term for a celestial deva or angel

**ne-ba-ye-se** Double-string necklace of pearls interspersed with gem rosettes worn by royalty

**Nga** Prefix for men widely used in Kon-baung times. Now tends to be derogatory

**nga-daung** Ear plug; large heavy earring

**nila** Sapphire

**pala** Pearl

**parabaik** A book of mulberry paper folded accordion-style into pages used for writing and illustrations

**pa-zun-zi** A locally produced metallic fabric with an orange cotton warp interlaced with a weft of flat metallic thread or tinsel that was used for royal clothing and for wall hangings known as *kalaga*

**pipul, banyan tree (Ficus religiosa)** The heart-shaped leaves of which are a popular motif in Burmese decoration.

**pyathat** A spire, associated with royalty or the religion that is composed of a series of roofs diminishing in size with ascent. Originally from *prasat/prasada* (S, P): multiroofed pavilion

**pyathat waw** Roofed palanquin

**sadaik** Scripture chest for religious manuscripts, many of which have been beautifully embellished with gold leaf and embossed lacquer decoration

**Sakka (P), Thagyamin (B)** Lord of the Tavatimsa Heaven. Burmese Buddhists believe that Sakka is much more involved in human affairs than other deities. A host of legends have evolved concerning his participation in human affairs.

**sa-lwe** Chest ornament of rank worn by male royalty and high officials in precolonial times. Inspired by the *upavita*, the Hindu sacred thread

**se-bon** A cone-shaped headdress for royal women

**shwe chu du-yin-daing-daw** A royal jacket decorated with minute metal bells

**Shwe-yi hsaung-ya Mibaya** Queens of the third rank with gilded chambers in the palace

**Shwe-tan-sin-daw** The name given to a particular covered palanquin reserved for the exclusive use of the king

**ta-gaung** A water pot or bottle

**thanat (*Cordia myxa*)** A tree cultivated mainly for its leaves, which are used as wrappers for Burmese cheroots

**thanda**, coral Originally from *santa* (S)

**thayo** A pliable substance composed of lacquer mixed with finely sifted bone ash used to make relief-molded decoration

**thiho nila** Amethyst

**thiri (B), siri (P)** Splendor, often part of a title

**Thura (P, B)** Brave, gallant, often included as part of a military title

**yadana (B) ratana (P)** An abundance of gems, treasure

**ya-gin meik** Headdress for junior female royalty

**ya-thi** Burmese zodiac

**yin-blwan-tan-sa** An apronlike front piece of a royal costume

**zardozi (Pers, H.)** Gold thread embroidery; originally from Persia

## NOTES

The author is most grateful to Daw April Tin Tin Aye, who visited the Walters Art Museum in December 2004 and translated a synopsis of the manuscript's content. U Zaw Win of Washington, D.C., has also very kindly assisted the author by reviewing and explaining the finer points of the Burmese text.

1. With respect to Burmese titles for royalty in precolonial times, the upper echelons of the military, and senior monks were usually a combination of Pali, Sanskrit, and Burmese. The title for this "colonel" of the North Tavoy Regiment, Maha Mingaung Thihathu, is a case in point. *Maha* from Pali/Sanskrit = great, mighty and strong; *Mingaung* in Burmese can mean a lord or leader, and it is also a place name, which could be an appanage that supported such an official. *Thihathu* is from the Pali/Sanskrit *siha* or lion, a term sometimes used in civil and military titles. This gentleman could also have served in a civil capacity. In precolonial Burma, ministers of the government were also tasked with assuming control of regiments in times of war.
2. The supervisor of such projects is usually the only person publicly acknowledged in such credits.
3. The best-known Burmese Chronicle is the *Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*. There is an English translation by Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce (Rangoon University Press, 1923 and 1960). For an example of the use of a magical sword and lance given to Burmese kings by Sakka, see the 1960 edition at 62–63. A Burmese pagoda legend has him in a union with Melamu, a local maiden, and they become the parents of King Okkalapa, the founder of the Shwedagon, Burma's most sacred shrine. It is rumored that if things are not going well on earth, his seat in the Tavatimsa becomes very warm, prompting him to descend to earth to rectify the situation. See Khin Myo Chit, "A Pagoda Where Fairytale Characters Come to Life," *The Asia Magazine*, August 30, 1981, 18–20; and Khin Myo Chit, *A Wonderland of Burmese Legends* (Bangkok: Tamarind Press, 1982), 27.
4. F. Franklin and D. Swallow, "Identifying with the Gods," *The 1994 Hali Annual* (London), 41–61 at 61.
5. N. F. Singer, "The Last Diva of Mandalay," *Arts of Asia* 37, no. 3 (2007): 78–93 at 83–84.
6. U Tin, *The Royal Administration of Burma*, trans. Euan Bagshawe (Bangkok: Ava House, 2001), 446.
7. N. F. Singer, "Royal Women: Power Dressing at the Nineteenth-Century Myanmar Court," *Arts of Asia* 41, no. 1 (2011): 136–45 at 139.
8. The Burmese like to associate the *mahal-lat-ta* with Visakha, a pious widow of an extremely generous disposition, in donating robes and monasteries to the Buddha. According to Burmese



mythology, she was awarded such a robe as a reward for her devotion and largesse. In the Buddhist scriptures, however, there is no mention of the presentation of a *mahal-lat-ta* to the widow Visakha. See Singer, "Royal Women, 143–44. For the story of Visakha's generosity, see Jean Kennedy and Henry S. Gelman, trans., *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon*, part 4: *Vimala Vatthu (Stories of the Mansions)* (London: Luzac, 1942), at 76.

9. Singer "Royal Women," at 142.
10. See photograph in Paul Strachan, *Burmah: A Photographic Journey, 1855–1925* (Stirling, Gargmore: Kiscadale, 1993), 99. A princess and her younger sister are being offered a betel box by a young servant seated on the floor.
11. Charles Duroiselle, "Pageant of King Mindon Leaving His Palace on a Visit to the Kyauktawgyi Buddha Image at Mandalay (1865): Reproduced from a Contemporary and Rare Document," *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, no. 27 (1925): 1–16.

## A SEATED BUDDHA IN THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM

MELODY ROD-ARI

The Walters Art Museum's collection of Thai Buddhist sculpture is both materially rich and important in its academic scope. Its significance is due largely to the scholarship of the collector Alexander B. Griswold (1909–1991) and of the Walters' curator of Asian art from 1986 to 2003, Hiram W. Woodward, Jr. Additional important gifts from Griswold's estate and, more recently, the Doris Duke Collection considerably expanded the temporal range of the museum's holdings. Among the most intriguing is a Thai mid-nineteenth-century Seated Buddha wearing patterned robes, a gift of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection. This unusual gilded image of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni demonstrates Siamese artists' and patrons' evolving tastes and the changing interpretation and representation of the Buddha over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The Walters' Seated Buddha (fig. 1) is approximately 23 inches (58 cm) tall, comprising a fourteen-inch figure seated on a three-tiered lotus throne. The Buddha's legs are in *virasana* (hero pose) while the hands are in *bhumisparsa mudra* (calling the earth to witness); together, these postures depict the narrative of the Buddha's victory over Mara (*maravijaya*) during which the demon tried to break the Buddha-to-be's concentration while he meditated under the *bodhi* tree prior to reaching enlightenment. The sculpture depicts the moment that he touches the ground, calling the Earth Goddess, or Mae Thorani as she is known in Thailand, to witness his previous good deeds and come to his assistance against Mara. Mae Thorani is depicted at the center of the base, wringing from her hair water collected from the Buddha-to-be's libations and the earth's oceans, which creates a torrential flood that washes away Mara and his army, allowing the great teacher to reach enlightenment. Mae Thorani and a pair of elephants with seated adorants flanking her are

all modeled three dimensionally, creating a dynamic scene.

The sculpture is hollow-cast brass that has been lacquered and gilded. The figure of the seated Buddha, the throne, and the *maravijaya* narrative depicted along the base were cast together. Cast separately are a flame finial that would have been inseted in the figure's *ushnisha* (cranial protuberance) and a *mandorla* (now lost) that would have been inserted in an opening on the back of the throne's top tier (fig. 2). With the mandorla in place, the Walters' Seated Buddha would likely have resembled a fifteenth-century example housed in the Grand Palace Collection in Bangkok that may have inspired later images such as this. Indeed, its relatively small stature suggests that it was made for a royal chapel rather than to serve as the main icon of a temple or *wat*, such as that of the Emerald Buddha enshrined in Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha).

The Walters' Seated Buddha is not dated, but the figure's patterned robe, reflecting the taste among members of the court for imported Indian fabrics such as chintz, situates its date of production in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> An uninscribed donor plaque on the top tier of the throne, just below the Buddha's left ankle, also suggests that this sculpture might have been associated with royalty. Such inscribed plaques are commonly found on royally commissioned Buddha sculptures dating to the Rattanakosin period (1782–present).<sup>3</sup> The artistic quality of the sculpture makes it likely that the sculpture was a royal commission.

Sculptures of the Buddha wearing robes with patterned designs were first introduced during the reign of King Nangklao (Rama III; r. 1824–51).<sup>4</sup> The development of this type of image may be related to a sculpture known as the "Chai Wat" Buddha, dating to the First Reign (1782–1809); the figure's robe was later hand painted with floral designs by King Nangklao.<sup>5</sup> The act of painting the robes might

have been an opportunity for the king to pay homage and to establish a haptic connection to the Buddha through its decoration, but the introduction of such images, I argue here, also reflected the king's interest in supporting the Buddhist faith through his patronage of the arts as well as creating an intimate relationship between the Buddha and Siamese kingship in the nineteenth century. Political, religious, and cultural circumstances precipitated the development of such patterned Buddha images during the Third Reign and informed their decline by the Fifth Reign under King Chulalongkorn (Rama V; r. 1868–1910).<sup>6</sup> The invention of Buddha images with patterned robes coincides with the beginning of the royally led Buddhist reform movements in Siam during the nineteenth century.

King Mongkut (Rama IV; r. 1851–1868) is most often cited in scholarly literature as reforming Thai Buddhism from what he had come to regard as a religion based on superstitious practices and beliefs to one more in keeping with “true” Buddhist doctrine.<sup>7</sup> The interest of his predecessor, King Nangklao, in historicizing the Buddha through the

*Pathama Sambodhi* text, rather than through his previous life stories as told in the *Jatakas*, however, marked an early movement toward modernizing Buddhism. The *Pathama Sambodhi* text describes the Buddha's first enlightenment, recounting his final incarnation from Prince Vessantara into Prince Siddhartha and his journey of renouncing lay life, his temptation by Mara, and his attainment of enlightenment and preaching of the *dharmā*.<sup>8</sup> This is in contrast to narratives presented in the *Jatakas*, which recount the Buddha's many previous life stories and are more mythological in character. The *Pathama Sambodhi* had become a popular text in the nineteenth century, particularly a version composed by the king's uncle, Prince Paramanuchit Chinorot, who was a Buddhist monk.<sup>9</sup>

By contextualizing the Buddha as a historical figure, King Nangklao sought to locate contemporary Buddhism within the Siamese cultural orbit. This was in keeping with the current European studies of Buddhism, which emphasized the Buddha's historical biography.<sup>10</sup> King Nangklao's efforts were so successful that by the Fifth Reign, growing interest



Fig. 1. Seated Buddha. Thailand, Rattanakosin Period, mid-19th century. Brass with lacquer and gilding, 27 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 23 <sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 19 <sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub> in. (70 × 60.5 × 50 cm). The Walters Art Museum, 2002, gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection, [acc. no. 54.2987](#)



Fig. 2. Seated Buddha: back

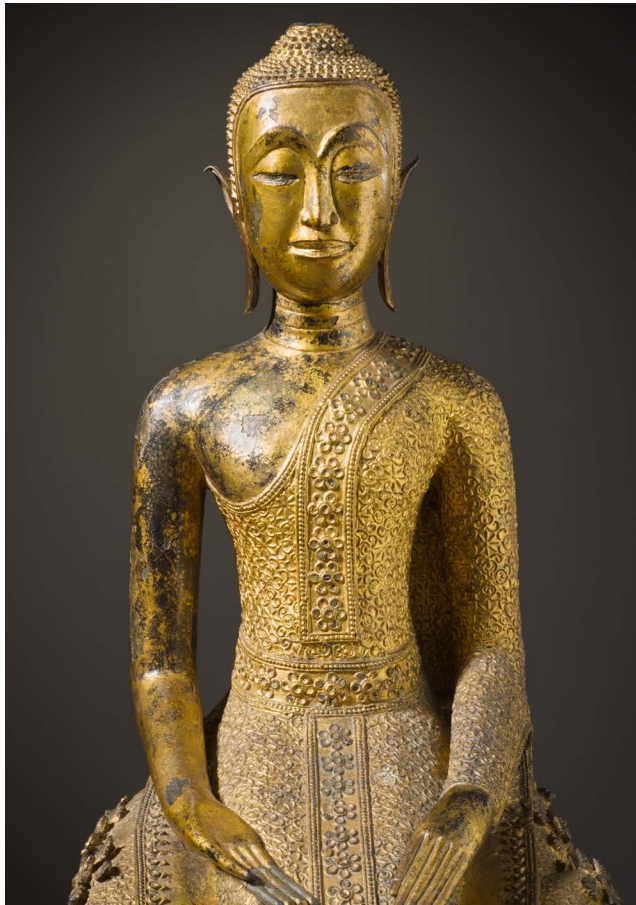


Fig. 3. Buddha Shakyamuni in the Parileyaka Forest Attended by Animals (detail). Thailand, Thonburi, late 19th century. Gilded copper alloy with lacquer, 45 ½ × 20 ¼ × 28 ¾ in. (115.57 × 51.44 × 73.03 cm). Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Mrs. James E. Bentley Bequest, acc. no. AC1993.53.1a-b.

in artistic realism, coupled with religious reform under King Mongkut, resulted in the near extinction of Buddha images with patterned robes in favor of portrait-like sculptures, wearing unembellished robes that were more realistically rendered, thus reflecting actual Buddhist monks in Siam at the time of their production. Similarly, the use of patterned cloth from India was no longer considered fashionable among members of the court.<sup>11</sup>

#### CROWNED BUDDHAS AND EMBELLISHED ROBES

One of the most striking features of the Seated Buddha is the patterned robe that adorns his body, decorated with floral designs (*pha lai*) and, at the hems, with a pearl motif and large

floral scrolls. Floral patterns are the most common designs on nineteenth-century patterned robes, owing to their association with royalty, as floral patterns on articles of clothing were reserved for use among royalty and members of the court.<sup>12</sup> It was, therefore, suitable for exalted figures such as Prince Siddhartha and the Buddha to be depicted in similar motifs. A contemporaneous seated Buddha in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is shown wearing a similar floral patterned robe with pearls along the hems (fig. 3). Other motifs such as patterns of small seated Buddhas or geometric shapes can also be found on robes of mid-nineteenth-century sculptures (figs. 4, 5); they are, however, not as common.

The Seated Buddha's robe contrasts with the unpatterned robes typically seen in early Southeast Asian sculptures of the Buddha. The diaphanous robe of a seventh- to eighth-century Dvaravati period Standing Buddha, also from the Walters' collection (fig. 6), for example, is clearly unembellished. The only suggestion of the three equally proportioned swaths of fabric required to assemble a complete robe is indicated along the waistline, where the inner robe (*antaravasaka*) is delineated.<sup>13</sup> Images of the Buddha in plain robes were customary in Southeast Asia until the eleventh century, when the Buddha in princely attire inclusive of jewelry (such as necklaces) and textile adorned along the hems was introduced, eventually developing into an iconic type in the region. Embellishment of the Buddha's robe coincided with the introduction of crowned Buddha images in mainland Southeast Asia. Within the modern borders of Thailand, crowned and embellished Buddha images make their first appearance at the Temple of Phimai in the twelfth century.<sup>14</sup> Crowned and embellished Buddhas continued to be produced in Lan Na in the fifteenth century and in Ayutthaya in the sixteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

Crowned Buddha sculptures represent the Buddha as both a worldly and a spiritual sovereign. Dorothy H. Fickle and Woodward have suggested that such images can be interpreted as depicting the Buddha, having just vanquished Mara, as the supreme king in the palace of nirvana.<sup>16</sup> This type can also be interpreted as representing a legend in the *Jambupati Sutta*, according to which the Buddha converts the heretic king Jambupati by transforming himself into a king of a magical city in order to demonstrate his supremacy.<sup>17</sup> In both narratives, the Buddha demonstrates his worldly and spiritual





Fig. 4. Buddha Muchalinda. Thailand, Rattanakosin Period, 19th century. Brass with lacquer and gilding. Private Collection

Fig. 5. Detail of fig. 4

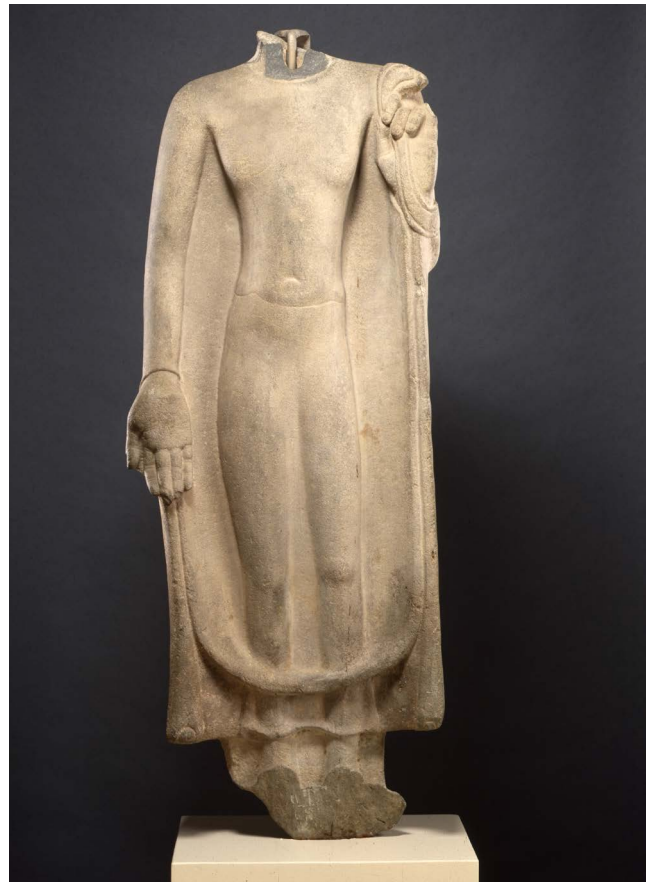


Fig. 6. Standing Buddha. Thailand, Dvaravatti Period, 7–8th century. Sandstone, 45 × 17 × 6 ½ in. (114.3 × 43.18 × 16.51 cm). The Walters Art Museum, 1992, bequest of A.B. Griswold, acc. no. 25.149

sovereignty. The patterned robes adorning Buddha images of the mid-nineteenth century might have evolved from this tradition. However, instead of portraying the Buddha as a universal political sovereign, or *chakkavatti*, as artists had done in the past, later patrons such as King Nangklao might have chosen to clothe the Buddha in textiles after their own tastes and fashions in order to make clear that the Buddha is a sacred Siamese king of their time.

Although images of the crowned and embellished Buddha had become a part of the visual lexicon in mainland Southeast Asia by the twelfth century, this type did not become the commonly depicted form of the Buddha. Instead, sculptures and paintings of the Buddha wearing plain robes had been, and continue to be, the standard in Southeast Asia. Much of this reflects how Buddhist monks have dressed for centuries in the region, in the traditional plain saffron- or ochre-colored

robe.<sup>18</sup> Although the color of a Buddhist monk's robe may vary according to region, available materials, and Buddhist order, the robe is almost always made of unprinted, unembroidered, and unembellished cloth. This is especially true of Buddhist monks in Southeast Asia, who are primarily of the Theravada tradition. Theravada Buddhism is considered the oldest surviving branch of Buddhism and is reputed by its adherents to be closer to the original teachings of the Buddha than other traditions. This orthodoxy may explain why plain robes are worn by monks; the *Vinayapitaka Mahavagga* (Book of Disciplines: the Great Chapter) is explicit in its description of what types of material and colors can be used to make robes.<sup>19</sup> The text is not explicit, however, on whether patterned cloth can be used for monk's robes. This lack of specificity, coupled with the expense of patterned cloth and proscriptions on the use of certain motifs, may explain why monks of the Theravada tradition in Southeast Asia have foregone printed or brocaded material.

According to the *Vinayapitaka Mahavagga*, robes may be made of linen, cotton, silk, wool, hemp, or canvas. They may be of any color as long as it is not a pure color such as "all dark green" or "all yellow." In the *Vinayapitaka Mahavagga*, the Buddha explains to a group of monks that:

Monks, I allow six [kinds of] robe-materials: linen, cotton, silk, wool, coarse hempen cloth, canvas.<sup>20</sup>

...

I allow you, monks, six [kinds of] dyes: dyes from roots, dye from stems, dye from bark, dye from leaves, dye from flowers, dyes from fruits.<sup>21</sup>

...

Monks, robes that are all dark green are not to be worn, robes that are all yellow are not to be worn... a jacket is not to be worn, [a garment made from] the Tirita tree is not to be worn. Whoever should wear one, there is an offense of wrong-doing.<sup>22</sup>

For the most part, Buddhist monks of all traditions typically wear unembellished robes; however, within East and Central Asian Buddhist traditions, and in particular among Tibetan Buddhists, monks can be seen wearing embellished robes on special occasions. An image of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet during his final Geshe

Lharampa examinations in Lhasa is one such example.<sup>23</sup> This contrasts with a photograph of King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX; r. 1946–2016), who wore plain saffron-colored robes on entering into the monkhood in 1956.<sup>24</sup> Embellished robes can also be seen on Tibetan sculptures of the Buddha. Moreover, this mode of depicting the Buddha in Tibet is more common than images of him in plain robes, which are typical of Southeast Asian images of the Buddha.

Images of crowned and embellished Buddhas contrast with the patterned-robe type of the mid-nineteenth century in Siamese art. Decoration on examples predating the nineteenth century is seen primarily along the hems of the robe, on the lower portion of the robe, or through the addition of jewelry. By contrast, the robes seen on mid-nineteenth-century Buddha images of this type are entirely covered with motifs, both on the hems and on the body of the garment. The question, then, is, why and under what circumstances was the Buddha with patterned robes invented during the reign of King Nangklao? And what did such images represent to those who commissioned them and those who had access to them? In order to answer these questions, one must consider the role of King Nangklao as a patron of the arts.

### THE PATRONAGE OF KING RAMA III

Prince Phra Nangklao was the eldest son of King Phutthaloetla Naphalai (Rama II; r. 1809–24), but his claim to the throne was complicated by his illegitimacy (he was the son of one of his father's consorts). The legitimate heir, Prince Mongkut (King Rama IV), was considered too young and inexperienced to claim the throne after his father's death. King Phutthaloetla Naphalai had fallen into a coma for more than a week before his death, and no provision had been made to appoint an heir apparent; Nangklao's accession was ultimately decided by a court. Scholars including Griswold, David Wyatt, and Prince Chula Chakrabongse have argued that King Nangklao's political conservatism stemmed from his sensitivity toward assuming the throne in place of his brother.<sup>25</sup> This conservatism was also reflected in the king's patronage of the arts, which were almost entirely related to the Buddhist faith. King Phutthaloetla Naphalai had been criticized for his lavish patronage of the secular arts, motivating the new king to focus on patronage of the sacred



arts. More temples were commissioned and restored by King Nangklao than by any other king during much of the Chakri dynasty. During his reign, he built nine temples and conserved and restored sixty.<sup>26</sup> Yet another factor contributing to King Nangklao's interest in Buddhist art patronage was the cultural and social climate of nineteenth-century Siam.

Siam and the Southeast Asian region in general were on the cusp of social and cultural change during the nineteenth century as a result of increased European colonization.<sup>27</sup> The presence of Christian missionaries from Europe was no doubt seen by some as a threat to Buddhism and Buddhist art and architecture, as Westerners had begun building their own churches in Bangkok.<sup>28</sup> The expansion of royal patronage of monastic architecture during the Third Reign can be interpreted as the king's desire to preserve the religious arts of Siam. However, his patronage should also be seen as a proactive agenda to modernize Siamese Buddhism and its arts in the post-Enlightenment and Industrial Age.

One of King Nangklao's most interesting contributions to the history of Buddhist art was the commissioning of Buddha images with thirty-three *pang* or postures not before seen in Siamese art.<sup>29</sup> In learning from the *Annals of Ayutthaya* that King Trailok (Borommatrailokkanat; r. 1448–1488) had cast five hundred images to illustrate the *Jataka* narratives, King Rama III asked his uncle Prince Paramanuchit Chinorot to select significant events in the Buddha's historical life from which new attitudes of the Buddha could be depicted in art, as he believed that images of the Buddha represented as animals or as hybrid forms, as told in the *Jataka* narratives, were unsuitable for worship.<sup>30</sup> He commissioned sets of sculptures depicting the Buddha's historical life and encouraged the creation of new postures in an effort to make the Buddha and Buddhism less mythological and more true to life. The new postures included the Buddha bathing, contemplating a corpse, making a gift of the hair relic, and setting the dish afloat. Some of the postures continue to be used today, while others never became popular. In an effort to promote the Buddha as a historical figure, King Nangklao also commissioned mural paintings of the Buddha's biography in addition to framed paintings of seventy-two postures conceived by Prince Paramanuchit Chinorot, which hang on the walls inside the *ubosoth* (ordination hall) of Wat Phra Kaew, the chapel most significant to the Chakri kings.

King Nangklao looked to the Ayutthaya period (1351–1767) for inspiration, but not as a model to be copied. This can be seen in his sponsorship of sculptures depicting the Buddha's thirty-three postures, which were intended to be a modern interpretation of King Trailok's commission of five hundred *Jataka* sculptures. Similarly, the invention of the Buddha with patterned robes should also be seen as reference to Ayutthaya. Like the invention of the thirty-three *pang*, this new Buddha type was intended to reflect the king's interest in reforming how people, specifically members of the court, saw and understood the Buddha.

### THE BUDDHA AS SACRED SIAMESE KING

While the Ayutthaya Kingdom was defeated by Burmese forces in 1767, it was still remembered in the nineteenth century as a period of great prestige, wealth, and culture for the Siamese. King Nangklao often looked to Ayutthaya for inspiration. The invention of the Buddha with patterned robes can be linked to King Nangklao's awareness of earlier crowned and embellished models dating to the Ayutthaya period. The crowned and embellished Buddhas of Ayutthaya, like their precursors, adorn the Buddha's body with jewelry and robes with decorated hems. Their costumes reflect the taste and fashions of the Ayutthaya court, much as the Buddhas with patterned robes reflect those of the Third Reign. The floral motifs typically chosen for the robes of nineteenth-century Buddha images allude to the pattern's use by royalty and members of the court. This association not only links the Buddha with the Siamese court of this period, but also fashions him as an image of a sacred Siamese king. While one can argue that earlier examples of crowned and embellished Buddhas were used to the same effect, the Buddha with patterned robes of the Third Reign was invented for the express purpose of situating the Buddha in nineteenth-century Siam, allowing the devotee to imagine his more human and contemporary qualities. This is further demonstrated by the three-dimensional *maravijaya* narrative along the base of the Seated Buddha. During the Ayutthaya period, examples of sculptures with narrative scenes from the Buddha's historical biography were also modeled; however, they were depicted in low or high relief. This contrasts with the Third Reign, during which narrative scenes were modeled in the round such as the Walter's Seated Buddha and Buddha

Shakyamuni in the Parileyaka Forest Attended by Animals in the LACMA collection (see fig. 3). The decision to do so gave equal prominence to the Buddha's biography and the image of the Buddha himself. Elevating the status of the Buddha's biography in this way might have been an attempt to make the Buddha more physically present in space, and in the devotee's life, through the retelling of the Buddha's life story.<sup>31</sup> The king's interest in visualizing and promoting the Buddha as a Siamese king is further elaborated by Buddha images with patterned robes, wearing exclusive motifs fit for a king. That such images of the Buddha were not intended for the public at large is suggested by their small scale and by their absence from the public temple setting. Like the king, who was shielded from the general public at this time, the Buddha with patterned robes may have been intended to be seen exclusively by members of the court.

The small stature of the Walters' Seated Buddha suggests that the sculpture was not originally intended as the main icon for a public temple or *wat*. This is true of other well-known Buddha sculptures, which are equally small in scale. Such sculptures were intended to be enshrined in a royal chapel or a personal home shrine. Their small scale suggests that they were used by devotees in intimate gatherings rather than in a large image hall (*wiharn*) open to the public. The Emerald Buddha (Phra Kaew Morokot), the most sacred of all Buddha icons in Thailand, is an example of a sculpture that was likely crafted for such an intimate royal space (fig. 7). Like the Walters' Seated Buddha, the Emerald Buddha is small in stature, measuring approximately 24 inches (62 cm) tall. Today the Emerald Buddha is enshrined in the ordination hall of Wat Phra Kaew, the royal chapel of the Chakri kings.<sup>32</sup> Prior to its enshrinement at Wat Phra Kaew, the icon was housed in the royal chapels of the Lan Na, Vientiane, Luang Phrabang, and Thonburi palaces. The Emerald Buddha, I have argued, as have Woodward, Frank E. Reynolds, and Robert L. Brown, has always been a royal icon that was kept in the king's palace.<sup>33</sup> Buddha images with patterned robes of the Third Reign served a similar purpose; principally, as icons to be used by the court and other elites in their own private spaces. Further linking the Emerald Buddha to such Buddhas of this period are the icon's seasonal costumes, specifically its rainy season and winter robes, resembling patterned cloth. Commissioned by King Nangklao, the robes, like his painting of the "Chai Wat" image, allowed him

an opportunity to make merit through its offering but also an opportunity to make visual his intimate relationship with the icon through the ritual changing of its robes.<sup>34</sup> Like the patterned robe of the Seated Buddha, the Emerald Buddha's rainy season and winter robes are fashioned of hammered and woven gold, studded with gems, in a floral design. It is appropriate that images with patterned cloth were commissioned by members of the court, as it was this class of layperson who had the resources and access to such refined cloth. It was also these patrons who were able to donate patterned robes to monks. Such donated cloth was not used for monk's robes, but could be used for other purposes such as the wrapping of Buddhist texts. Furthermore, it is not surprising that Buddha images of this kind were used primarily by the court, as the practice of owning one's own Buddha icon did not become customary among this class until the Fourth Reign (1851–1868).<sup>35</sup> As M. L. Pattaratorn Chirapravati has argued, the custom of collecting and displaying icons of the Buddha at home likely began during the first half of the Fourth Reign, and coincided with the rise of antique collecting among the elite class, who were exposed to such pastimes by foreigners:

King Mongkut was fascinated by modern ideas and many were adopted by the courts. One new practice relevant to the spread of the cult of amulets was the popularity of antique collecting. Antique objects were apparently popular among the royal family and high-ranking generals.<sup>36</sup>

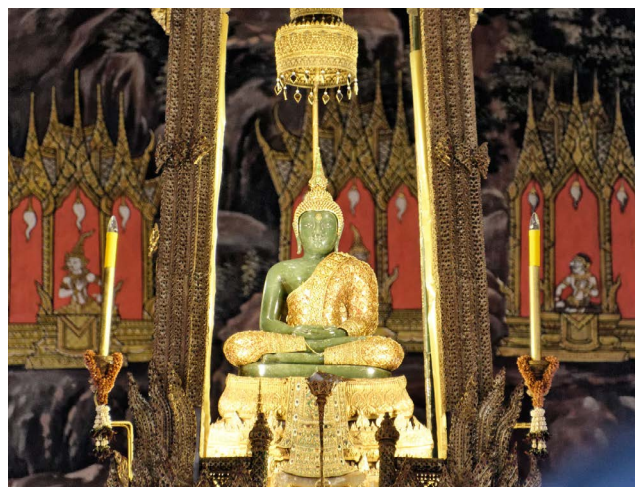


Fig. 7. Emerald Buddha. Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Bangkok. Photo Jan S. Peterson

The continued production of Buddha images with patterned robes into the Fourth and Fifth Reigns was likely driven by wealthy patrons who emulated royal tastes by commissioning similar statues for their personal use. Toward the end of the Fourth Reign and certainly by the Fifth Reign, images of the Buddha with patterned robes were no longer in vogue among the courtly class. Instead, artistic tastes among the royals veered toward realism, resulting in images of the Buddha with portrait-like features wearing naturally rendered plain robes. This was due, in part, to the wider use of cameras, photography and the general artistic trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The decline of patterned robes on Buddha statuary may also have been the result of King Chulalongkorn's adoption of European style uniforms at court, which resulted in the disuse of uniforms made of Indian textiles.<sup>37</sup>

The introduction of the Buddha with patterned robes during the Third Reign can be seen as both a reflection of and a reaction to earlier models of the Buddha in Siam. Building upon the tradition of crowned and embellished sculptures, the patterned type depicts the Buddha as both a worldly and a spiritual sovereign but one that is specifically situated in the visual world of nineteenth-century Siam. Moreover, wearing fashionable motifs from the time period and surrounded by his biography, the Buddha was conceived as a sacred Siamese sovereign and thus a reflection of the Siamese king's own status as a sacred king among men. Although King Nangklao did not commission sculptures fashioning himself as a Buddha on earth, he did commission two monumental crowned and embellished Buddha sculptures at Wat Phra Kaew, which he dedicated to and named after his predecessor kings Phutthayotfa Chulalok (Rama I; r. 1782–1809) and Phutthaloetla Naphalai.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, his successor, King Mongkut, dedicated thirty-three images of the Buddha, now housed in Wiharn Ratchakoramanusorn at Wat Phra Kaew, to the kings of Ayutthaya, King Thaksin of the Thonburi period (1767–1782) and to his immediate predecessors.<sup>39</sup>

While King Nangklao is thought of as a conservative ruler, we should also remember him for his innovation in the devotional arts. If it were not for him, the Buddha might not be seen as a sacred figure that once walked among us, and the Thai king might not be seen as a sacred man among men.

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## NOTES

I wish to thank Rebecca S. Hall, former Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Walters Art Museum, who organized the Southeast Asian Research Forum during her tenure, which led to the research and writing of this essay. The anonymous reviewer who helped to make this essay more readable and substantive also has my deepest appreciation. Any errors that remain are my own.

1. Before 1939, Thailand was referred to as the country of Siam and its peoples the Siamese. The new name was intended to reflect the perceived ethnic majority living in the country at that time, the Thai. The adoption of the title "Thailand" was, from the onset, exclusionary, as it did not include ethnic minorities living in the country. Recently, there has been a movement among Thai academics to revert to the old name of Siam, which they contend is non-exclusionary and reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the country. For simplicity, I will use the terms "Siam" or "Siamese" throughout this essay when referring to events dating prior to 1939, and the terms "Thai" and "Thailand" for events or references that postdate 1939.
2. John Guy, *Woven Cargoes: Indian Textiles in the East* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998); M. L. P. Chirapravati and G. M. Kim-Ju "Refashioning the Identity of Siamese Monarchs: Hybridized Siamese and Indian Dress Styles," in *India-Thailand Cultural Interactions*, ed. L. Ghosh (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2017).
3. The Rattanakosin period is associated with the founding of the Chakri dynasty and Bangkok as the capital of Siam.
4. Somkiart Lopetcharat, *Phraphuttharup samai Rattanakosin* [Buddha Images from the Rattanakosin Period] (Bangkok: Antik Books, 1997), 98–108.
5. *Khumu nithatsakan phiset chaloem phrakiat 200 pi Phrabat Somdet Phra Nangklaochaoyuhua* [Catalogue of the special exhibition, the 200th anniversary of the birth of His Majesty King Rama III, May 7–June 7, 1987] (Bangkok: Krom Silapakon, 1987), 17, 110. John Hoskin, *Buddha Images in the Grand Palace* (Bangkok: The Office of His Majesty's Principal Private, 1994). I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer of this essay for making the connection between the "Chai Wat" image and Buddha sculptures with patterned robes.
6. Patronage of Buddha sculptures with patterned robes declined after the Third Reign, owing to changes in personal tastes among royal

- patrons. This may have been precipitated by the use of cameras among those at the court, leading to greater realism in art, which is also seen in the depiction of historical figures and of the Buddha in mural paintings.
7. Kenneth E. Wells, *Thai Buddhism: Its Rites and Activities* (Bangkok: Suriyabun Publishers, 1975); David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984); Donald K. Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995).
  8. Donald K. Swearer, "Creating and Disseminating the Sacred," in *The Life of Buddhism*, ed. Frank E. Reynolds and Jason A. Carbine (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 39–41.
  9. H. R. H. Paramanuchit Chinorot, trans., *Pathamasambodhi: The Life of the Lord Buddha* (Bangkok: Wat Phrachatuphon, 2016).
  10. See, for example, Eugène Bournouf, *Introduction à l'Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1876); Rhys David, "Buddhism," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ed. Thomas Spencer Baynes (Edinburgh: A & C Black, 1876).
  11. Chirapravati and Kim-ju, "Refashioning the Identity of Siamese Monarchs: Hybridized Siamese and Indian Dress Styles," 88.
  12. Chirapravati and Kim-ju, "Refashioning the Identity of Siamese Monarchs," 94.
  13. Three pieces of cloth or robes (*tivicvara*) compose a complete monk's robe: *sanghati* (outer cloak), *uttarasanga* (upper robe), and *antaravasaka* (inner robe).
  14. Woodward argues that Phimai is a Tantric Buddhist temple that was under the cultural influences of the Khmers. See *The Arts and Architecture of Thailand: From Pre-historic Times through the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003).
  15. H. W. Woodward, "The Buddha Images of Ayutthaya," in *The Kingdom of Siam: The Art of Central Thailand, 1350–1800*, ed. Forrest McGill and M. L. Pattaratorn Chirapravati (Ghent: Snoeck Publishers, 2004), 55–56.
  16. Dorothy H. Fickle, *Images of the Buddha in Thailand* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989), 40. Woodward, *The Arts and Architecture of Thailand*, 150–52.
  17. Woodward, "The Buddha Images of Ayutthaya," 55.
  18. According to the *Vinayapitaka Mahavagga*, the Buddha explains that monks' robes should be "kasaya" in color. It is not clear what color *kasaya* refers to specifically. See I. B. Horner's *Vinaya-Pitaka Volume IV, Mahavagga* (London: Pali Text Society, 1951).
  19. According to the *Vinayapitaka Mahavagga*, monks may accept cloth donated by the lay community; it is silent about the monk's obligation to decline a donation of printed or brocade cloth. See I. B. Horner's *Vinaya-Pitaka 4: Mahavagga*.
  20. Horner, *Vinaya-Pitaka 4: Mahavagga*, 398.
  21. Horner, *Vinaya-Pitaka 4: Mahavagga*, 405.
  22. Horner's *Vinaya-Pitaka 4: Mahavagga*, 438.
  23. *The Fourteenth Dalai Lama's Geshe Examinations*, documentary film (New York: Office of Tibet, 1958)
  24. The king entered the monkhood for a fifteen-day period after his grandmother's death.
  25. Alexander B. Griswold, *The Arts of Thailand: A handbook of the Architecture, Sculpture and Painting of Thailand* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961); H. R. H. Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand* (London: Alvin Redman, 1967); David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984; repr. Silksworm Books, 1998).
  26. H. R. H. Chula Chakrabongse, *Lords of Life*, 154.
  27. Maurizio Peleggi, *The Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy's Modern Image* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002).
  28. Thanet Aphornsuvan, "The West and Siam's Quest for Modernity: Siamese Responses to Nineteenth-century American Missionaries," *South East Asia Research* 17, no. 3, Special Issue: "Siamese Modernities and the Colonial West" (November 2009), 401–31.
  29. Sanguan Rotbun, *Phutthasin Rattanakosin* [Buddhist Art of the Rattanakosin Period] (Krungthēp: Phim thī Rōngphim Rung Watthanā, 1983), 58–61.
  30. H. R. H. Damrong Rajanubhab, trans. Sulak Sivaraksa and A. B. Griswold, *Monuments of the Buddha in Siam* (Bangkok: Siam Society, 1982), 34–35.
  31. Robert L. Brown has written on the subject of the Buddha's biographical narratives as a means of bringing the Buddha back to life in his essay "The Jataka Stories in Ancient Indian and Southeast Asian Architecture," in *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Tradition of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Juliane Schober (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997).
  32. Although the Emerald Buddha is on view for the public to worship, this was not always the case. Prior to the public opening of the Grand Palace grounds in the 1960s, the Emerald Buddha was only made available to the public during ceremonies in which it was paraded in the streets of Bangkok.
  33. Hiram W. Woodward, "The Emerald Buddha and Sihing Buddhas: Interpretations of Their Significance," in *Living in Accord with the*



*Dhamma*, eds. Natasha Eilenberg, M. C. Subhadradis Diskul and Robert L. Brown (Bangkok: Silpakorn University, 1997): 335–42. Frank E. Reynolds, “The Holy Emerald Jewel: Some Aspects of Buddhist Symbolism and Political Legitimation in Thailand and Laos,” in *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand, Laos and Burma*, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Chambersburg: Anima Books, 1978): 175–94. Robert L. Brown, “The Miraculous Buddha Image: Portrait, God, or Object?” in *Images, Miracles, and Authority in Asian Religious Traditions*, ed. Richard H. Davis (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998). Melody Rod-ari, “Visualizing Merit: An Art Historical Study of the Emerald Buddha and Wat Phra Kaew” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2010).

34. The Emerald Buddha has three seasonal robes (rainy, hot, and winter), which have traditionally been changed only by the king; however, in recent years King Bhumipol’s children have been charged with the responsibility.
35. Pattaratorn Chirapravati, *Votive Tablets in Thailand: Origins, Styles, and Uses* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1997), 67. The custom of owning a Buddha icon became common among the general population in the Sixth Reign (King Vajiravudh; r. 1910–1925).
36. Pattaratorn Chirapravati, *Votive Tablets in Thailand*, 67.
37. Chirapravati and Kim-Ju, “Refashioning the Identity of Siamese Monarchs,” 88.
38. The tradition of dedicatory royal Buddha images did not begin during the Third Reign. Instead, an earlier set of dedicatory images were commissioned by King Rama I and dedicated to the king’s father and to himself. See Woodward, “The Buddha Images of Ayutthaya,” 56. King Nangklao chose not to commission a dedicatory image to himself, following tradition, as by this time there was anxiety within the court that the three images would come to represent the beginning, middle, and end of the Chakri kings.
39. Subhadradis Diskul, *History of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha* (Bangkok: Bureau of the Royal Household), 29. The suite of sculptures was commissioned by King Rama III; however, it was under Mongkut that they were given titles associated with specific kings. I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer of this essay for pointing out that Prince Paramnuchit Chinorot’s list of *pang* later came to be associated with the rulers of Ayutthaya.

## PAINTING HISTORY

# REPRESENTING CHRONICLES IN NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY SIAM

REBECCA S. HALL

Two Thai paintings at the Walters Art Museum diverge from the devotional themes that dominate the museum's Southeast Asian holdings.<sup>1</sup> The style of the paintings recalls that favored by artists trained in European traditions, and both works depict historical events important to the construction of the modern nation of Siam, as Thailand was known until 1939.<sup>2</sup> This brief study explores their subject matter, style, and connection to cultural and political developments (in particular, the Chakri Reformation) in late nineteenth-century Siam.<sup>3</sup>

The first of the two paintings (fig. 1) is a battle scene, with Siamese and Burmese officers and soldiers mounted on elephants while soldiers standing on the ground fire rifles. The composition is lively and energetic; the elephant at center right lifts its front feet off the ground in a display of attacking force. The high status of the men riding the elephants is signaled by the tiered white umbrellas, the peacock feathers,

and ornate headgear. The man at the center of the painting wearing an elaborate helmet may be a prince or a general; the figure opposite him wearing a pointed black hat and seated under an umbrella with nine tiers is probably the highest-ranking officer of his army. An imaginary representation of a battle from several centuries earlier, the painting, which dates from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, incorporates historical aspects of the practice of warfare during the Ayutthaya period (1351–1767).<sup>4</sup> Although few paintings or textiles survive from the period, the clothing worn at court and by soldiers was described by European visitors and in regional historical chronicles. Representations of Ayutthaya-period clothing in nineteenth- and twentieth-century paintings, including those discussed here, are probably based on later clothing. The painter carefully depicted details of the soldiers' uniforms, and he gave the men individualized



Fig. 1 (left). Battle Scene. Thailand, early 20th century. Paint on canvas, 36 × 42 15/16 in. (91.5 × 109 cm) with frame. The Walters Art Museum, gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection, 2002, [acc. no. 35.229](#)



Fig. 2 (right). Detail of fig. 1



Fig. 3 (left). A Surrender. Thailand, early 20th century. Paint on canvas, 35  $\frac{7}{16}$  x 42  $\frac{5}{16}$  in. (90 x 107.5 cm) The Walters Art Museum, gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection, 2002, [acc. no. 35.228](#)

Fig. 4 (top right). Detail of fig. 3

Fig. 5 (right). Signature in 35.228



expressions (fig. 2). The churning disorder of the scene favors neither side, but its Siamese origin suggests that the painting is intended to glorify Siamese power. The Burmese were enemies of the Siamese for centuries, and the two kingdoms battled on many occasions. Because the scenes record Siamese victory over a Burmese army, the paintings are both narrative and symbolic, commemorating an important moment in Siamese history and emphasizing Siamese national identity: “Siamese-ness.”<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to the frenzied activity of the battle scene, the other painting (fig. 3) is a scene of relative calm. Two groups of soldiers face one another; a delegation from the army on the right kneels submissively, surrendering to the army on the left. Each army is led by a man on horseback, and both of the riders are accompanied by attendants holding red parasols. The man on the left wears the same black pointed hat as the general in the other painting, indicating that this is either the same officer or an individual of equal status. Formally, the landscape is rendered in a manner that suggests depth through linear perspective. The diminution of the trees and figures as they recede into the picture space

defines an illusionistic context for the narrative. The soldiers’ dress emphasizes national differences between the two sides (fig. 4). Both paintings bear the same signature in the lower right corner: ไทยจิราณ (Thai Wicharn; fig. 5). At least one other history painting in the National Museum of Thailand in Bangkok is similarly signed, suggesting that these compositions might constitute a series by a single artist.<sup>6</sup> Without further documentation, however, it is not clear who the artist was. “Thai Wicharn” may be a pseudonym of a better-known artist active in the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century.

That the armies in both paintings are Siamese and Burmese can be inferred by examining the soldiers’ clothing. The Siamese soldiers wear red cotton shirts with apotropaic faces painted across their shoulders and striped *chong kraben*, a wrapped cloth, on the lower half of their bodies. One Siamese soldier is depicted tumbling on the ground, exposing his tattooed thighs. The higher-ranking officers wear brocaded jackets and elaborate black and gold helmets.<sup>7</sup> On the opposing side, the Burmese troops wear checked or single-colored *longyi*, simple buttoned shirts, white cloths

around their waists, and white cloth headgear typical of Burmese dress.

The combination of illusionistic space, linear perspective, and historical narrative makes these images a life-like record of a specific historical moment important to the identity of the Siamese nation. The Walters' history paintings are grounded in the emerging nationalism of late nineteenth-century Siam. They reflect the shaping of a national identity at a time when Bangkok was defining its boundaries and representing itself as an equal of European powers.

The two paintings are products of a particular historical moment. The colonial powers of Great Britain and France were threatening Siam's borders, and rather than see his palace overtaken by European armies, as happened in Burma, King Rama V (also known as King Chulalongkorn [r. 1868–1910]) desired to be viewed by Europeans as an equal.<sup>8</sup> One of the ways to achieve this was by using a visual language associated with Europe. These paintings depict Siamese history but adopt a new style and approach to painting. Instead of the flat planes and idealized faces characteristic of classical Siamese painting, the artist uses linear perspective to create pictorial depth. A clear attempt has also been made to represent the participants as individuals. Finally, rather than religious narratives, these images present historical events recorded in written chronicles.

These paintings are part of a visual program developed in the late nineteenth century that asserted a national character at a time when the creation of a modern, unified nation was of great concern to Siam's leaders. The paintings, and the larger agenda of which they were a part, highlight an aspect of Siamese identity that was particularly appealing to the royal family who were the patrons of works commemorating Siam's history rendered in the European style. The employment of this new painting style together with a focus on historical events represents a larger overall shift in Siamese art and culture that continues to resonate today.

### THE 1887 HISTORY PAINTINGS

History painting never reached the level of popularity in Siam that it did in nineteenth-century Europe, Japan, or China, but its importance should be considered in an understanding of modern Thai art. A significant moment in the

development of history painting in Siam can be traced to Rama V in the year 1887. Rama V is well known for his efforts toward defining a national Siamese identity.<sup>9</sup> He was interested in European art, culture, and civic ideas with a view to creating a modern state. These paintings speak to that historical moment.

In 1887, Rama V held a painting competition that invited artists to produce paintings that chronicled Siamese history.<sup>10</sup> Each painting was accompanied by a multistanza poem known as a *khlóng* (โคลง).<sup>11</sup> The poems were commissioned after the completion of the compositions and give insight into their subject matter. A total of ninety-two paintings resulted from this competition. The paintings are broad in their range of subjects and diverse in their stylistic approach. Many record episodes from the history of the Ayutthaya kingdom, alluding to the kingdom's status as the foundation of Siamese identity. Some depict historical events from the early years of the urban centers of Thonburi and Bangkok, while others treat the Ayutthaya kingdom's and the Rattanakosin (1782–present) kingdom's relationships with their neighbors: Lanna, Laos, Burma, and Cambodia. Each offers a glimpse into the history that served to promote the formation of Rama V's Bangkok-centered kingdom.

Once the 1887 competition ended, the series of ninety-two paintings was used to decorate the royal cremation grounds. The paintings were then hung in the throne hall at the Grand Palace in Bangkok and at Bang Pa-In, the summer palace near Ayutthaya. Sometime in the twentieth century, the paintings were distributed among a number of royal households, and several entered the collections of the National Museum and the National Gallery in Bangkok. Forty-one of the paintings have been located by the Thai Department of Fine Arts; the others remain unaccounted for.<sup>12</sup>

Many of the artists who contributed to the 1887 competition were members of the extended royal family. As elite members of Bangkok society, they had privileged access to resources not available to other artists, including art and objects from Europe and China. Among the artists participating in the 1887 competition, Prince Naris (1863–1947; full name: Naritsaranuwattiwong; in Thai: นริศรานุวัดติวงศ์), a cousin of Rama V, is perhaps the most famous. Prince Naris was a perceptive and compelling artist, writer, and architect. He designed Wat Benchamabophit, known as the Marble



Temple, in Bangkok, as well as the city's seal. He entered several works in the competition, winning first place with a painting entitled *Phra Maha Uparacha Riding His Elephant to Attack King Phumintharacha's Elephant*.<sup>13</sup> This dark and atmospheric painting, apparently set at dusk, depicts an Ayutthaya-period king surviving his brother's attempt to take control of the kingdom. It was one of several paintings displayed at the Bang Pa-In Palace after the competition ended.<sup>14</sup>

The stylistic and thematic departure of the 1887 chronicle paintings from traditional Siamese paintings of the period is significant, though changes in murals and paintings on cloth had already been underway. Thai painting typically used flat planes of color and undifferentiated figures to create an idealized space for depicting religious narratives.<sup>15</sup> Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, painters incorporated historical references and European-style treatment of buildings, people, and landscapes into Siamese mural painting. King Mongkut, also known as King Rama IV (r. 1851–1868) and the father of Rama V, was a patron of the artist Khrua In Khong, a monk active in the 1850s and 1860s whose Buddhist-themed *wat* (monastery) murals in Bangkok incorporated Western-style landscapes and perspectives.<sup>16</sup> Although Khrua In Khong never traveled outside of Siam, he would have become familiar with European art through prints and photographs sent to Siam from abroad.<sup>17</sup> Rama IV encouraged Khrua In Khong to experiment with European-style painting, and the artist painted wall murals in several *wats* in Bangkok, of which



Fig. 6. Detail of mural from Wat Bowoniwet, Bangkok, painted by Khrua In Khong, mid-19th century (Photo Rebecca S. Hall)

the best known is Wat Bowoniwet (fig. 6). He incorporated historical subject matter into his murals, and his innovative approach informed later developments in Thai painting, including, in all likelihood, the 1887 series. Glass paintings imported from China were another important source of inspiration for nineteenth-century Thai painting. These paintings, which typically used European artistic conventions of perspective, shading, and three-dimensionality, were popular in elites circles in Bangkok and can still be seen hanging in *wats* around Bangkok today.<sup>18</sup>

The tradition of recording civic and religious history, however, is rooted in the long, elaborate chronicles cherished by Siamese society. Chronicles were used by the Siamese to justify rulership, establish religious and royal lineage, and elevate history to mythic status; the tradition continues in the present day. The Ayutthaya- and Bangkok-period chronicles, written before the mid-nineteenth century, were a point of departure for many of the paintings entered in the 1887 competition and the accompanying poems. These paintings are a continuation or even a new interpretation of the chronicle tradition. Thus, while these paintings are accurately characterized as “history paintings,” the Thai language-equivalent term ภาพพระราชพงศาวดาร (phap phratchaphongsawadan) or “royal chronicle paintings” is more informative about the Siamese context and understanding of history.

Rama V's commission of paintings depicting Siamese history was intended to validate or emphasize Siamese identity. Similar concerns inform contemporary Thai discourse and have recently emerged quite publicly, manifested in the regionalism that inspired the protests across Thailand in the twenty-first century, notably following a coup in September 2006, again in 2008, and continuing until the coup in May 2014.

## RAMA V AND THE NATION OF SIAM

Rama V is known as Siam's great modernizer, building upon the policies begun by his father, King Mongkut. Facing European encroachment into his kingdom, Rama V looked to secure the borders that previously had been on the kingdom of Siam's periphery, employing a variety of strategies to incorporate peoples on the fringes of his kingdom into a single nation. Laws regulating language and religious practice

were one aspect of Rama V's program to forge a national identity. The effects of these changes continue today in such policies as the mandatory teaching of the Central Thai language and the regulation of Buddhist texts and practices.

Scholars describe Rama V as a key player in maintaining Siam's independence from Britain and France as neighboring countries in Southeast Asia were colonized; at the same time his intellectual interests in European culture cannot be disputed.<sup>19</sup> His preference for European modes in state-sponsored architecture, for example, is demonstrated throughout Bangkok.<sup>20</sup> He traveled to Europe many times during his reign, amassing a collection of European art that undoubtedly influenced the artists who contributed to the 1887 competition. Rama V sought to synthesize aspects of Siamese culture with European traditions. Court dress was Westernized, and new buildings used for government and palace affairs, including the Dusit throne hall, combined European and Siamese features.<sup>21</sup> One strategy for creating and maintaining a national identity was to establish a unifying past that emphasized the king as the center of Siamese political and military power, but also one that could become accessible to all members of the nation. The 1887 paintings were part of that much larger cultural shift. The paintings commissioned by Rama V looked to Europe in form and execution, but the tradition of recording royal and religious history is deeply rooted in Siamese society. These paintings are the visual continuation of this textual tradition.

Royal portraits were a new phenomenon when Rama V took the throne, as the tradition of displaying images of the king in public spaces had only recently been adopted by his father. It functioned as another form of nationalism, because spaces that contained the king's portrait were clearly being marked as "Siamese." This assertion of state authority continues today: portraits of the royal family are commonly hung in Thai homes, businesses, and on the street.

Scholars studying Rama V's reign have proposed that one of the terms best used to understand the changes transpiring during that period is *siwilai*, a transliteration of the English adjective "civilized," that refers both to manners and to etiquette. *Siwilai* applied principally to Bangkok's elite, and the word reflected a desire to project the superiority of Siamese power and culture.<sup>22</sup> As a word and a phenomenon, *siwilai* is a combination of the local and the foreign;

a simultaneous display of Siamese expression and European influence. *Siwilai* was about civilization, but the term more specifically alluded to cultural strategies to ensure the survival of the Siamese nation. Indeed, it became a rallying cry for nationalism. One aspect of creating and maintaining that newfound sense of nation was the establishment of a unifying past—both a reminder that Siam's civic and military power was concentrated in the king and an allusion to a past in which all members of the nation could take pride.

Rama V's interest in the West found expression in a variety of visual projects that displayed *siwilai* throughout the capital. The king commissioned European architects to build government buildings and palaces, and he hired European artists to paint portraits of the royal family. Photography was another visual medium used by Rama V to project a modern image of the nation, and of the monarchy in particular. Scholars have recently explored Rama V's artistic and architectural programs, relating them specifically to the goals of maintaining Siam's independent status and elevating Siam as a modern nation.<sup>23</sup> The 1887 history paintings were part of that artistic program. In other words, architecture, photography, portraits, and history paintings are each a visual manifestation of Rama V's *siwilai* agenda. The king was adept at using the arts to support his visions of a unified nation, and his legacy continues in national displays throughout Thailand.

#### FOLLOWING 1887: THE WALTERS' PAINTINGS

The Walters' paintings are clearly related to the series of paintings from 1887, but they are not part of the original set of ninety-two. The rules of the competition limited the entries to three sizes, with which all the documented paintings from the 1887 series are consistent: small (14 5/8 by 23 5/8 in. [37 × 60 cm]), medium (17 3/8 by 30 in. [44 × 76 cm]), and large (37 by 53 1/2 in [94 × 136 cm]); large paintings ultimately constituted the exception.<sup>24</sup> The dimensions of the Walters' paintings match none of these three sizes, although their style resembles that of the works from the competition, as do their theme. A closer examination of the Walters' paintings and a selection of those from the 1887 series reveals their relationship.

The posture of the elephant on the right in the Walters'



Fig. 7. Mural of King Naresuan, Wat Suwandararam, Ayutthaya, 1931 (Photo courtesy the author)

battle painting resembles that of an elephant in a painting from the 1887 series that depicts the sixteenth-century queen Suriyothai fighting the Burmese army.<sup>25</sup> Suriyothai is a national hero in Thailand because of her efforts to defeat the Burmese (she ultimately gave her life to save the king). A second painting from the 1887 series that depicts the popular king Naresuan (1555–1605) in battle also has some important similarities to the battle painting in the Walters' collection, especially in the massing of troops on the ground and their use of guns.<sup>26</sup> Neither painting is a close enough match to conclude that one artist was copying another, but the similarities suggest that the artist of the Walters' paintings was at the very least emulating the historical themes and artistic styles of the 1887 series.

Elephant battle scenes are described in Siamese chronicles and are central components in representing historical conflicts in Thailand, especially battles between the Siamese and the Burmese. Several of the history paintings from

1887 depict elephant battle scenes, and they likely influenced not only the Walters' battle painting but also other works of art. One well-known example is the series of murals depicting the life and victories of King Naresuan at Wat Suwandararam in Ayutthaya, painted in 1930–31 by Phraya Anusarn Chitrakorn.<sup>27</sup> A large elephant battle scene on the wall facing the main Buddha image (fig. 7) is clearly derived from the original chronicle paintings, and is a further demonstration of their influence on modern Thai art and the formation of Thai nationalist ideals.

The painting of the surrender in the Walters' collection can also be traced to a lost painting from the 1887 series, which depicts a meeting between then-general Chakri (who reigned as Rama I [1782–1809]) and a defeated Burmese general.<sup>28</sup> The meeting is described in the book *Lords of Life*, written by a grandson of Rama V:

An important incident occurred in 1776 when General Chakri was sent to meet a strong Burmese army encamped to the west of Phitsanulok, and more than one pitched battle took place. Although the Burmese army, under the aged commander—Maha Thihathura—was heavily defeated in the field, it was always able to regain its well-fortified camp, which General Chakri lacked sufficient forces to take by assault. One day Maha Thihathura asked for a personal meeting with the much younger Thai general, then 39. A truce was arranged and the two opposing armies were drawn up facing one another with the two commanders on horseback. After an exchange of presents, they approached each other halfway across the gap in the field. Maha Thihathura said that the days were over when the Burmese could conquer the Thais. After lauding the generalship of his opponent, the Burmese general prophesized that General Chakri had high qualities that would one day lead him to become king.<sup>29</sup>

The account aligns with the themes of the two paintings. The Walters' painting, then, appears to be a version of this subject and helps to fill in some of the gaps from the 1887 series. The two Walters' paintings are significant because they assert a national identity—a shift away from religious subjects and a move toward modernism.

Jean Boisselier, an influential French historian of Thai art, saw the history paintings and works that were inspired



by them as an unfortunate “triumph of Western painting over the classical style” and maintained that the king’s influence “undoubtedly helped to introduce and disseminate the Western aesthetic and Western techniques, to the detriment of Thai classicism.”<sup>30</sup> This is too narrow a view of the paintings and their cultural significance, however. The competition was stimulating for many Siamese artists, and the presence of the paintings in the Walters’ collection is evidence of a new aesthetic, which gave rise to the production of *siwilai* paintings for decades following the 1887 competition.

The style, execution, and materials of the Walters’ paintings suggest a wider audience for the paintings than the chronicle paintings commissioned by Rama V in 1887. Therefore it can be concluded that the style and subject matter of chronicle paintings spread outside of the royal family into Bangkok’s larger cultural circles. As Siamese national identity took hold, especially among the elite members of the capital, painted representations of Siamese history increased in popularity and found an audience outside of the royal family.

As painters worked through similar themes of depicting and displaying history in a naturalistic manner, they created a more ambiguous depiction of history. The Walters’ battle painting might in fact represent any number of actual battles from the Ayutthaya period, but its larger intent is to show the power of the Ayutthaya kings and the Siamese people. One might fault the painting’s historical accuracy or relationship to historical texts, but accuracy might not have been the artist’s principal concern.

The artists also, intentionally or not, helped to further disseminate the centralized ideas of Siamese history embraced by Rama V. In other words, the later generations of paintings embody concepts of *siwilai* and a general program of promoting nationalism consistent with the development of Siam as a modern nation. They were instrumental in developing a sense of Siamese identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but we regularly see reinterpretations of these same historical themes in a variety of popular arts in Thailand today. As Thailand continues to define itself and face the challenges of new modernisms, the same historical moments are re-envisioned for the twenty-first century much as they were over one hundred years ago.

The paintings in the Walters’ collection occupy an important place in the history of Thai art. While they likely date

to the early twentieth century, the Walters’ paintings bear a striking resemblance to paintings from the 1887 series commissioned by Rama V. In fact, the Walters paintings help fill an important gap in our understanding of Siamese painting at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth and document Siamese nationalism as it successfully took hold of the visual world of the court’s seat during the modern era.

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## NOTES

I am grateful for the assistance of many people in formulating this essay. I would especially like to thank Hiram Woodward, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Quincy Scott Curator of Asian Art at the Walters Art Museum from 1986 to 2004, for his enthusiasm, support, and unsurpassed ability to locate resources that helped to shed light on these paintings. I would also like to thank Dr. Woodward’s successor, Robert Mintz, for his encouragement and input. Other people without whom this essay could not have come to fruition include Pattaratorn Chirapravati, Professor of Asian Art History and Curatorial Studies at California State University, Sacramento; Pirasri Povatong, Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture at Chulalongkorn University; and Rebecca M. Brown, Associate Professor in the Department of the History of Art at Johns Hopkins University.

1. The paintings were gifted to the Walters Art Museum in 2002 by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation’s Southeast Asian Art Collection. Their prior provenance is unrecorded.
2. The renaming of Siam in 1939 reflected a desire for national unity. “Siam” historically referred to the kingdoms and people of what is now central Thailand—Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and Bangkok—but the name excluded inhabitants of other parts of the country. Because people in those regions did not perceive themselves as Siamese, it was believed that the best way to incorporate them into the national framework was to devise a more inclusive name. “Thailand” refers to the “Tai” ethnolinguistic group that includes the majority of Thailand’s population, Laos, the Shan of Burma, and other neighboring regions.
3. D. K. Wyatt, *The Politics of Reform in Thailand: Education in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn* (New Haven, 1969), 200. “Chakri Reformation” describes political reforms that Rama V initiated to centralize, modernize, or Westernize his government, but it applies more broadly to the widespread cultural changes that he inspired from the 1880s on.
4. See M. Gittinger and L. Lefferts, *Textiles and the Tai Experience*



- in Southeast Asia* (Washington, D.C., 1994), 143–60. An essential reference for understanding all aspects of the Ayutthaya period is C. Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Ayutthaya, Siam in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2017).
5. I use the term “Siamese-ness” in relation to the more common and contemporary term “Thainess” or “*khwan pen Thai*,” which has frequently been used to refer to the state of “being Thai” and distinguishing the Thai people from their neighbors. One of the early and important explorations of this term is Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu, 1994). A more recent discussion of Thai identity and “Thainess” can be found in several essays in *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*, ed. R. V. Harrison and P. A. Jackson (Hong Kong, 2010).
  6. There are likely more paintings in the museum’s holdings than the one I mention here, but I was unable to verify that or see the collection on my short visit in January 2012. The one I saw in a gallery of the museum depicts King Rama I turning back from Cambodia.
  7. For a discussion and examples of the types of elaborate brocades worn by members of the elite, see Gittinger and Lefferts, *Textiles and the Tai Experience in Southeast Asia*, 143–76.
  8. The revision of Siamese nationhood under the rule of King Rama V has been treated exhaustively. Two of the books I most often return to for understanding the way that changes made in response to colonization during the Fifth Reign affected all aspect of Siamese culture—court life in particular—are Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu, 1994) and M. Peleggi, *Lords of Things: The Fashioning of the Siamese Monarchy’s Modern Image* (Honolulu, 2002).
  9. Contemporary scholars are revisiting the mythology surrounding Rama V to gain a better understanding of his role in the creation of modern Thailand. His policies had a great impact on Siamese politics and culture and, importantly for this essay, sparked the interest in history painting in late nineteenth-century Siam.
  10. Apinan Poshyananda, *Chittrakam lae pratimakam baep tawantok nai ratchasammak* [Western-style Painting and Sculpture in the Thai Royal Court] (Bangkok, 1994), 8–33; *Khlongphap Phraratchaphongsawadan Phrombot Khayaikhwam lae Botwikhroh* [Royal Chronicle Poetry and Paintings] (Bangkok, 2007).
  11. *Khlong* are believed to be one of the oldest forms of Thai poetry. The poems have a strict construction and are based on specific tone marks and syllables of the words used. Several types of *khlong* exist. Each *khlong* has a specific number of lines and syllables, depending on the type.
  12. *Khlongphap Phraratchaphongsawadan*, 1–9.
  13. Apinan Poshyananda, *Chittrakam lae pratimakam*, 8.
  14. Apinan Poshyananda, *Chittrakam lae pratimakam*, 10.
  15. The Walters Art Museum has one of the largest collections of Thai paintings in the United States. See H. Ginsburg, “[Thai Painting in the Walters Art Museum](#),” *The Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 64–65 (2006–2007): 99–148, and esp. p. 133 for a brief analysis of the two chronicle paintings.
  16. J. Clark, “The Southeast Asian Modern: Three Artists,” in *Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art*, ed. Nora A. Taylor and Boreth Ly (Ithaca, N.Y., 2012), 15–32 at 18–19.
  17. Clark, “The Southeast Asia Modern,” 20–21; S. Van Beek, *The Arts of Thailand* (Hong Kong, 1998), 189.
  18. J. Patterson, “Chinese Glass Paintings in Bangkok Monasteries,” *Archives of Asian Art* 66, no. 2 (2016): 153–85.
  19. The employment of the arts by Rama V to create the sense of a modern nation is well documented and explored in Peleggi, *Lords of Things*.
  20. Pirasri Povatong, “Building *Siwilai*: Transformation of Architecture and Architectural Practice in Siam during the Reign of Rama V, 1868–1910,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2011.
  21. For a comprehensive discussion of the development of a new architectural style synthesizing European and Siamese styles, see Pirasri Povatong, “Building *Siwilai*.”
  22. Thongchai Winichakul, “The Quest for ‘Siwilai’: A Geographical Discourse of Civilizational Thinking in the Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Siam,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 3 (2000): 548–29.
  23. Peleggi, *Lords of Things*.
  24. Sizes are included with the color plates in *Chittrakam lae pratimakam*.
  25. *Khlongphap Phraratchaphongsawadan*, 43.
  26. See *Khlongphap Phraratchaphongsawadan*, 89–90.
  27. *Wat Suwandararam* (Bangkok, 2002).
  28. See *Khlongphap Phraratchaphongsawadan* for the title and poem that accompanied the painting.
  29. Prince Chulachakkrong, *Lords of Life: The Paternal Monarchy of Bangkok, 1782–1932*, (New York, 1960), 75.
  30. J. Boisselier, *Thai Painting* (Tokyo and New York, 1976), 29–32

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

## INSIGHTS INTO METHODS OF PRODUCTION AND DECORATION ON IVORY FROM NIMRUD AT THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM

JULIE LAUFFENBURGER, LISA ANDERSON-ZHU, AND GLENN GATES

The thousands of ivories found during the excavation of Nimrud (ancient Kalhu) from 1949 to 1963 by the British School of Archaeology in Iraq constitute the most important and exquisite group of ivory artifacts from the ancient world.<sup>1</sup> The source of most of the ivories is the building complex dating from the ninth to seventh centuries BCE known as Fort Shalmaneser, an *ekal mašarti*, that is, a location for staging equipment, horses, and chariots, and for the storage of spoils taken in conquest.<sup>2</sup> The thousands of carved ivory artifacts excavated from this single site reflect multiple styles and the workmanship and materials of Syrian and Phoenician craftsman.<sup>3</sup> Because most of them were used as decorative inlays for wooden furniture, many were enhanced with gold leaf or inlays to create a colorful, luxurious appearance. Very little of this original ornamentation remains intact, but recent discoveries have revealed tantalizing glimpses of how such ornamentation once decorated Nimrud ivory.

In 1983, the Walters acquired four ivories from Nimrud through exchange with the British School of Archaeology in Iraq.<sup>4</sup> The acquisition of the ivories at this late date was an exceptional opportunity for the Walters. The two best-preserved pieces and the main topics of this note, a trapezoidal plaque with a griffin and an inlay with a cow and calf, were included in a catalogue of ivories in the Walters Art Museum published soon after their acquisition, and they have been on display in the permanent galleries almost continuously since then, leaving little opportunity for thorough examination in the museum's conservation department.<sup>5</sup> A recent opportunity to examine the ivories in more detail revealed details of production and decoration previously undocumented on the Walters ivories.



Fig. 1a-b. Winged griffin nibbling on a sacred tree. Nimrud (Levantine), 9th–8th century BCE. Ivory,  $2 \frac{3}{16} \times 2 \frac{3}{8} \times \frac{3}{8}$  in. (5.5 × 6.1 × 1 cm). The Walters Art Museum, museum acquisition by exchange with the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1983, [acc. no. 71.1171](#)

The inlay and the plaque were excavated in adjacent storerooms of the southwest quadrant at Fort Shalmaneser.<sup>6</sup> Both are carved of elephant ivory but are otherwise quite distinct from one another. The trapezoidal plaque (fig. 1), carved in shallow relief on a convex surface, depicts a winged griffin nibbling a sacred tree.<sup>7</sup> The width varies from  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  in. (3.9 cm) at the top to  $2 \frac{3}{8}$  in. (6.0 cm) at the base. It is  $2 \frac{1}{8}$  in.

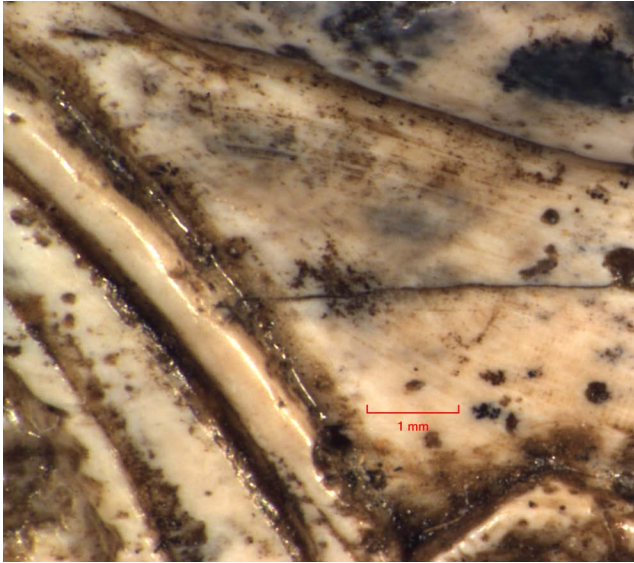


Fig. 2. Winged griffin, acc. no. 71.1171: Detail of marks left by flat chisel used to work ivory surfaces.



Fig. 3a-b. Inlay of cow suckling a calf. Nimrud (Levantine), 9th–8th century BCE. Ivory,  $2 \frac{1}{16} \times 4 \frac{1}{16} \times 1 \frac{1}{16}$  in. (5.3 × 10.3 × 1.7 cm). The Walters Art Museum, museum acquisition by exchange with the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 1983, acc. no. 71.1170

(5.4 cm) high with a maximum thickness of  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (0.7 cm) at the center, and the plaque's thickness tapers slightly toward the outer edges. The long sides of the plaque bevel toward the reverse, likely to facilitate positioning adjacent to similar plaques arranged to form a circular stand, perhaps for a goblet.<sup>8</sup>

Although possibly elaborately decorated, this plaque retains no documented evidence of its original decorative materials. This is not surprising given the shallowness of the carving and the deterioration of the surface, which includes loss due to a boring insect and a black-stained pattern.

Microscopic examination provides clues about the tools used to carve this plaque. A microphotograph taken of the lower left corner (fig. 2) clearly shows the repeated use of a fine, flat carving tool or chisel that measures  $\frac{3}{16}$  in. (0.5 mm) across. The toolmark left behind is bifurcated into two fairly equal sections.<sup>9</sup> The unfinished quality of the marks from this tool can be seen several times in this area and may have originally been covered by gilding or paint, although no direct evidence to date supports the idea that all the surfaces on the ivories were painted.<sup>10</sup> Examination under short-wave UV-light shows a pinkish fluorescence that may be associated with the black staining, but an explanation of this observation requires further research.<sup>11</sup>

The second ivory (fig. 3) is a furniture inlay in the form of a cow suckling a calf, a frequent motif in the corpus of Nimrud ivories.<sup>12</sup> Carved from a  $\frac{9}{16}$  in. (1.4 cm) thick slab of ivory, the cow and calf are in deep relief against a thin background and framed by an upper and lower register of ivory that measure slightly more than 2.0 mm in thickness. These borders retain the original thickness of the ivory section from which the scene was carved and indicate the original shape of the inlay. Although broken at left and right, the full height of the inlay is preserved and measures  $2 \frac{1}{8}$  in (5.3 cm); the length of the fragment is  $4 \frac{1}{8}$  in (10.4 cm). When viewed from the side, the panel is slightly convex, reflecting the natural curvature of the tusk from which it was taken.

The ivory surface preserves evidence of the many tools and techniques used for its production and decoration. Roughly parallel, undulating lines extend the length of the reverse of the panel (fig. 3b). The peaks and valleys of these lines were created by a carving or cutting tool with a multi-toothed end, approximately 0.03 in (0.75 mm) between teeth,



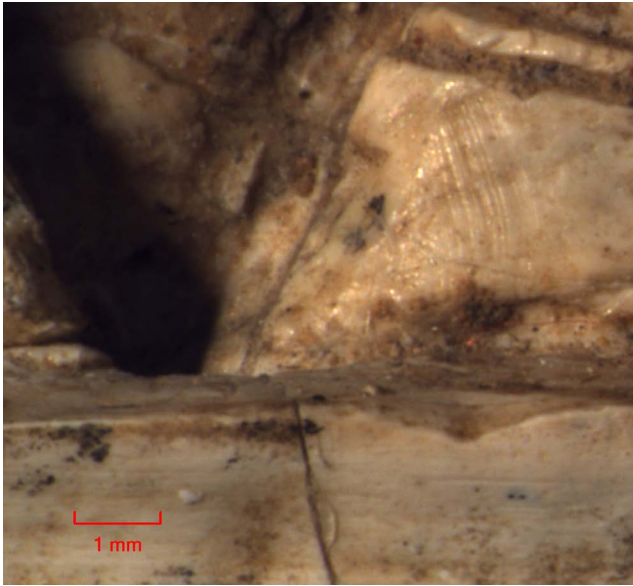


Fig. 4 (above). Cow suckling a calf, acc. no. 71.1170: Detail of marks left by chisel used to flatten surface on back hoof of cow; this tool has a slightly rounded edge and is 0.25 mm wide.

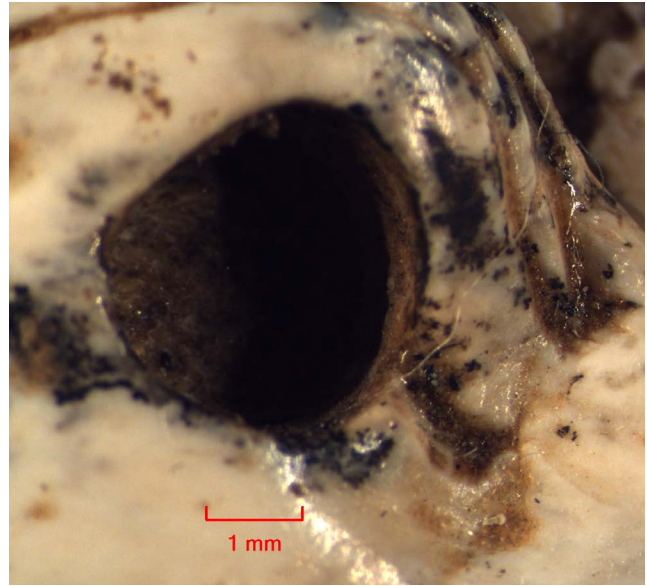
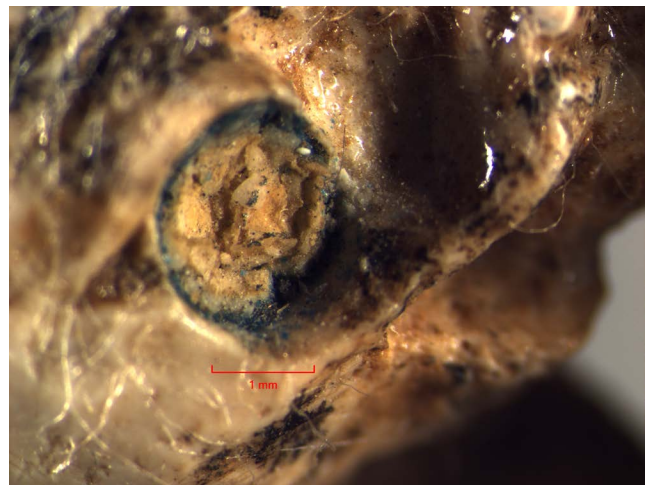


Fig. 5a–b (right). Cow suckling a calf, acc. no. 71.1170: top right: recess created for cow's eye; Right: remaining inlay in calf's eye

yet it is difficult to establish the overall width of the tool. There are areas on the back where the marks appear to intersect as the tool cut across the ivory surface. The marks may also be the result of the use of a saw to cut the ivory panel, and the resulting texture may have been used to help fix the inlay in place.<sup>13</sup> Although it has sustained considerable loss of original surface, the front of the inlay retains some evidence of manufacture that is apparent under close examination.<sup>14</sup> Broad- and pointed-end chisels were used to create the details of the cow's neck and the eyebrows. A broad, approximately 1/32-inch-wide (1 mm) tool with a V-shaped profile was used to carve out details of the cow's neck; a much narrower 0.1-inch tool (0.25 mm) was used to create the fine lines of its eyebrows. Fine, flat-profiled chisels were used to smooth and plane surfaces like the hooves as seen in the detail (fig. 4). The bulk of ivory around the sculptural forms of the cow and calf was likely removed using a combination of hand-powered drills, such as a bow-drill, and chisels. A similar combination may also have been used to create the deep recesses for the eyes of cow and calf. Originally, the eyes of both the cow and calf, shown in profile, would have been inlaid with a



decorative material (fig. 5). The cow's eye retains no visible evidence of the original inlay. The opening of the recess measures almost 1/8 in (3 mm) across and was carved to a depth of 0.1 in (2.0 mm) with flat sides and back. Comparatively, the width of the calf's eye is approximately 1/16 in (1.5 mm).

Fortunately, the inlay material in the eye of the calf is partially preserved. Examination under the microscope shows a ring of blue circling an opaque inlay colored white at the outer edge and yellow at its center (fig. 5). The blue material consists of discrete crystalline particles amassed into a paste that has been described in the literature as bedding for the central inlay.<sup>15</sup> The non-destructive multispectral imaging technique of visible-induced infrared luminescence using a Kinamax infrared camera equipped with an 87C infrared pass



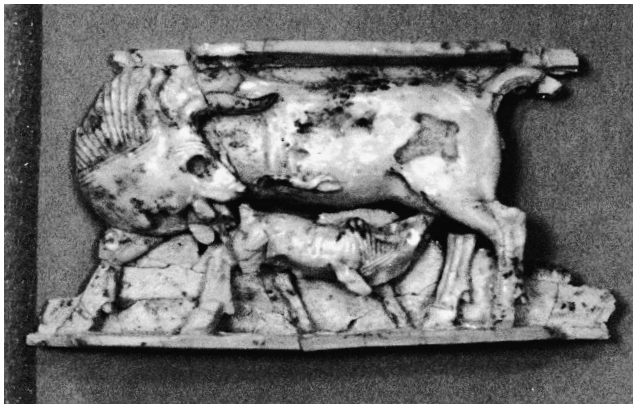


Fig. 6a-b. Cow suckling a calf, acc. no. 71.1170: Left: in infrared light; Right: showing fluorescence of Egyptian blue with visible-induced infrared fluorescence

filter enabled us to identify this material as Egyptian blue, the first known synthetic pigment. Egyptian blue is a synthetic form of the rare mineral cuprorivate: calcium copper tetrasilicate:  $\text{CaCuSi}_4\text{O}_{10}$ , first produced perhaps as early as the fourth millennium BCE in Egypt.<sup>16</sup> It has been observed to have unique luminescent properties in the near infrared when exposed to energies in the green-blue region of visible light.<sup>17</sup> No other area on the relief carving fluoresced when examined using this technique, whereas the eye fluoresced brightly (fig. 6). The use of Egyptian blue is well documented at Nimrud but had not been identified on the Walters ivory plaque prior to this study.<sup>18</sup> It might have been mixed with an adhesive to create a paste within which the central inlay was adhered to the ivory. It is remarkable this small remnant of original Egyptian blue decoration has survived burial, wars, flooding, fires, and exposure to modern chemicals. Its function as both a bedding material and perhaps visual element is unusual and notable.<sup>19</sup>

The material that remains within the ring of blue within the calf's eye is perhaps more interesting still. Although the literature regarding the ivories frequently mentions that eyes are excised for inlay, survival of the actual inlays in situ is rare.<sup>20</sup> Circled by a ring of Egyptian blue, a small opaque, multicolored, deteriorated inlay is still extant. Its surface now eroded, it clearly shows two colors: white on the outside and yellow on the inside. The eye of one other bovine ivory, this time depicting a bull, was also noted to have remains of "a yellow 'pupil' encircled with blue,"<sup>21</sup> perhaps creating the same visual effect as on the Walters calf. The use of both stone and glass inlay at Nimrud is mentioned in the literature, and in this case, the opaque nature of the inlay and the fractured quality implied that the inlay was glass rather than stone.<sup>22</sup>

Nondestructive x-ray fluorescence analysis was also conducted to identify elements present in the surviving decoration in order to characterize the materials used. The presence of calcium, silicon, and copper in the blue part of the eye is consistent with the identification of Egyptian blue. Within this blue ring, antimony was detected. How the antimony relates to the white ring and the yellow color observed within the blue part of the eye is the subject of continuing research, since antimony can be used as a yellow colorant and as a white opacifier in glass.<sup>23</sup>

The use of antimony in ancient glass as both an opacifier and colorant has been documented in the literature. More specifically, the use of antimony as a colorant for yellow glass inlay has been identified on an ivory from Nimrud in a publication by Robert H. Brill.<sup>24</sup> Initial analysis at the Walters associates the yellow color with elevated levels of antimony and iron but does not clearly show elevated levels of lead commonly associated with the yellow colored opaque glass from antiquity.<sup>25</sup>

The Nimrud ivories continue to reveal their stories. Since their discovery, scholars have discovered much about this storehouse of ivory, known to be one of the richest in the world. Continued study of ivories from Nimrud and related locations in collections around the world will further elucidate our understanding of the materials and methods of production of the vast collection of excavated ivories, which will continue to help answer questions of workshop practices and exchange of materials throughout the empires of the ancient Mediterranean in the first BCE millennium BCE.<sup>26</sup>

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## NOTES

1. See Max E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains* (London, 1966), for the final report on the site. The ivories are published in the series *Ivories from Nimrud* (London, 1967–2013): J. J. Orchard, I: *Equestrian Bridle-Harness Ornaments* (1967); Max E. L. Mallowan and Leri Glynne Davies, II: *Ivories in the Assyrian Style* (1970); Max E. L. Mallowan and Georgina Herrmann, III: *Furniture from SW 7, Fort Shalmaneser* (1974); G. Herrmann, IV.1–2: *Ivories from Room SW 37, Fort Shalmaneser* (1986); Georgina Herrmann, V: *The Small Collections from Fort Shalmaneser* (1992); Georgina Herrmann, Stuart Laidlaw, and Helena Coffey, VI: *Ivories from the North West Palace (1845–1992)* (2009); and Georgina Herrmann and Stuart Laidlaw, VII.1–2: *Ivories from Room SW 11/12 and T10, Fort Shalmaneser* (2013). Related ivories are known from finds at Arslan Tash, Samaria, and other locations in Mesopotamia; for an overview of these sites and finds, see *Ivories from Nimrud*, IV.1 (1986), 27–36.
2. For a summary of Fort Shalmaneser and its excavation, see Joan Oates and David Oates, “Fort Shalmaneser: The *Ekel Mašarti*” in Oates and Oates, *Nimrud: An Assyrian Imperial City Revealed* (London, 2001), 144–94.
3. In addition to various topics on regional styles discussed in the *Ivories from Nimrud* series, see also Irene J. Winter, *On Art in the Ancient Near East, 1: Of the First Millennium B.C.E.* (Leiden, 2010); and Marian H. Feldman, *Communities of Style: Portable Luxury Arts, Identity, and Collective Memory in the Iron Age Levant* (Chicago, 2014).
4. Acc. no. 71.1170, ND 1216I, ninth to eighth century BCE, excavated at Fort Shalmaneser, Room SW 11/12, and published in *IN VII.2* (2013) no. 562, acc. no. 71.1171, ND 10650, eighth to seventh century BCE, excavated at Fort Shalmaneser, Room SW 37, and published in *IN IV.1* (1986), 94, no. 152, pl. 36. Acc. no. 71.1172–1173, no ND number, ninth to seventh century BCE, published in Appendix 10 of *IN VII.1* (2013), 338, as probably from Room NW 21 at Fort Shalmaneser. While current global laws restrict the movement of ivory artifacts in particular, these pieces left Iraq legally as partage granted to the excavators. A memorandum included with the acquisition papers dated September 21, 1983, states that “[t]hese antiquities were excavated by the British School of Archaeology in Iraq in 1961–63, allocated to the expedition by the Iraq Government and brought to England under an export license. They have since been kept in the Institute of Archaeology in London until their exchange with the Walters Art Museum.”
5. R. H. Randall, Jr., *Masterpieces of Ivory from the Walters Art Gallery* (New York, 1985), 37, figs. 14–15.
6. See above note 4. Rooms SW 11/12 and 37 share a wall but do not have direct access to each other; see *IN VII.1* (2013), I, fig. 1b.
7. This piece is attributed to a Phoenician carving tradition; see *IN VII.1* (2013), 69–71 and 76.
8. For further details about the function and iconography of these plaques and stands, see *IN IV.1* (1986), 9–10, figs. 1–2, nos. 1–242; and *IN VII.1* (2013), 64–65 and 69–71.
9. *IN IV.1*, chap. 7, “Tools and Techniques,” 56, for reference to the use of sandstone to sharpen chisels used to carve ivory that left notches in the flat chisels. This may explain the bifurcated appearance left by the tool in this region; see also P. R. S. Moorey, “Elephant Ivory: Methods of Manufacture,” in Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries: The Archaeological Evidence* (Oxford, 1994), 126–27.
10. See *IN IV.1* (1986), 12 for the theory that gilding would have been on elements of clothing, wigs, manes, and wing cloisons, as well as on floral elements and decorative frames. “In fact it seems possible that the only areas where the ivory was left visible may have been bare flesh and the background.”
11. Bright pink fluorescence under short-wave ultraviolet light (180–240 nm) appears to be loosely associated with patterns of deterioration and staining due to microbiological attack. This pink color can also be associated with a lake pigments, but there is no indication of color in these areas.
12. For a discussion of this iconography, see *IN IV.1* (1986), 17–18, particularly with reference to the “excised eye” group; *IN V* (1992), 38–39; and *IN VII.1* (2013), 66–67 and 91.
13. For a discussion of the use of saws and the methods of affixing the panels to wooden furniture, see *IN IV.1* (1986), 13 and 56–57. See also *IN IV.1* (1986), chap. 4, p. 43; *IN IV.1* (1986), 56: “The simplest method of fixing ivory to its backing was to roughen its back and use an adhesive, and nearly all plaques and some panels had roughened backs. The adhesive used is not known. Barnett suggested a ‘colloid gum’, Mallowan proposed the use of bitumen because of the blackish stain found on many ivories, while Blümner in 1878 suggested fish glue.”
14. Acc. no. 71.1170 has extensive damage to the surface and branched black staining that appear to be from microbiological attack similar to staining found on acc. no. 71.1171.

15. Blue and red beddings for inlays are recorded in the *IN* volumes where they survive on Nimrud ivories; see esp. *IN VII.1* (2013), 47–48; and P. R. S. Moorey, “Working with Egyptian Blue,” in *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 186–89. Richard Barnett notes cases of blue glass over backings of Egyptian blue, as well as inlays of lapis lazuli and carnelian, all identified by x-ray diffraction, in *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories with Other Examples of Ancient Near Eastern Ivories in the British Museum* (London, 1975), 240.
16. See Moorey, “Working with Egyptian Blue,” 186–89; and Lorelei H. Corcoran, “The Color Blue as an ‘Animator’ in Ancient Egyptian Art,” in Rachael B. Goldman, ed., *Essays in Global Color History: Interpreting the Ancient Spectrum* (Piscataway, N.J., 2017), 41–63, esp. 49–51.
17. Giovanni Verri, “The Spatially Resolved Characterisation of Egyptian Blue, Han Blue and Han Purple by Photo-Induced Luminescence Digital Imaging,” *Analytical and Bioanalytical Chemistry* 394.4 (2009): 1011–21.
18. Excavations conducted between 1949 and 1963 recovered “lumps” of Egyptian blue in multiple locations; see Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 180 and 408. Italian excavations in the 1980s recovered glass inlays of various colors and some Egyptian blue from Fort Shalmaneser; see *IN VII.1* (2013), 24 and 47–48. See also Joan Aruz, Sarah B. Graff, and Yelena Rakic, eds., *Assyria to Iberia at the Dawn of the Classical Age* (New York, 2014), 150.
19. For another instance where the body of an inlay contrasted with the bedding, in that case, Egyptian blue bordered by red, see Aruz, Graff, and Rakic, *Assyria to Iberia*, 150.
20. E.g., *INV* (1992), 69, no. 126; and 116, no. 390.
21. ND 11050, from Room SW12 at Fort Shalmaneser, currently missing from the Iraq Museum (IM 65515); *IN VII.1* (2013), 321.
22. For a discussion of inlay and decoration, see *IN VII.1* (2013), 47–48. *IN IV.1* (1986), 266–67, provides a list of separated inlays found in Room SW 37, including lapis lazuli, black stone, shell, blue glass, green glass, white paste, and yellow quartz frit, as well as objects made of green and mauve glass, shell, blue quartz frit, and carnelian.
23. XRF analyses were performed by conservation scientist Glenn A. Gates, using the Bruker AXS Artax spectrometer equipped with a polycapillary x-ray tube powered at 50kv and 560microAmp for 120sec under a helium flush, and capable of detecting aluminum (at 1wt%) and heavier elements.
24. “The Scientific Investigation of Ancient Glass,” in *Proceedings from the 8th International Congress on Glass* (Sheffield, 1968), 47–68. In Table 7: *Colorant-Opacifiers in some Ancient Glasses*, Brill refers to sample Pb-429 from “Nimrud, 7th c. BCE; yellow glass inlay from ivory plaque (ND 10,240). Yellow is identified as Pb<sub>2</sub>Sb<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub>.”
25. Jennifer L. Mass, Richard E. Stone, and Mark T. Wypyski, “An Investigation of the Antimony-Containing Minerals Used by the Romans to Prepare Opaque Colored Glasses,” *MRS Proceedings*, 462. DOI:10.1/557/Proc-462-193. In this publication, the authors cite antimonial litharge (Pb<sub>2</sub>Sb<sub>2</sub>O<sub>7</sub>) as the source for the opaque yellow
26. See Aruz, Graff, and Rakic, *Assyria to Iberia*, 141–56, for recent art historical and technical studies by researchers at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Musée du Louvre on ivories from Nimrud and Arslan Tash.

## TWO SNAKE-THREAD GLASS VESSELS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM

NICOLE BERLIN

Beginning with the purchase of the Massarenti Collection in 1902 and continuing through the 1920s and 1930s until his death in 1931, Henry Walters acquired more than three hundred examples of ancient glass from the Mediterranean basin. Within this collection, two of the Roman-era vessels exhibit a technique known as “snake-thread” glass. Anton Kisa, a pioneering German scholar of ancient glass, first used

this term to describe a specific type of Roman glass vessel that is decorated with serpentine trails.<sup>1</sup> The two Walters snake-thread vessels are opaque white blown-glass bottles decorated with colored glass trails that wind around the body, giving them their designation as “snake” threads.<sup>2</sup>

The first vessel, fig. 1a–b, is decorated with thick bands of yellow and aqua-blue glass “snake” threads that wind vertically



Fig. 1a–b. Vase with appliqué of green and yellow ribbons. Roman-era Cologne, late 2nd–3rd century CE. Glass, height 7 1/16 in. (18 cm). The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, [acc. no. 47.54](#)



along the pear-shaped body. The second vessel (fig. 2a–b) is the same shape and color as the first but with markedly different decoration. Two of its four panels are ornamented with a column of two U-shaped loops that intertwine red and blue trailing, while the other two panels contain a stylized blue tree formed from glass trailing. Walters purchased both vessels in the late 1920s from the prominent antiquities dealers Dikran Kelekian (47.54) and Joseph Brummer (47.57); their prior provenance is unrecorded.

Snake-thread glass developed relatively late in Mediterranean glass production. Although the beginning of glass production dates back nearly four thousand years to ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, the technology of glass blowing was not introduced until the first century BCE, during the Roman period. Inflating and shaping molten glass with an iron rod proved to be a faster and more flexible method to produce glass vessels than earlier techniques. Around the same time Emperor Augustus (r. 27 BCE–14 CE), Julius Caesar's nephew and heir, consolidated Roman authority throughout the Mediterranean. These circumstances proved favorable for the production and export of glass throughout the Roman

world. According to the Greek historian Strabo, by the first century CE one could buy a glass vessel for “a copper coin,” and they became standard household items.<sup>3</sup>

Glassblowers often used new decorative techniques to create visual interest on expensive and luxurious vessels. One example is trailing, in which they added a thin line of molten glass to the surface. Snake-thread design is a special type of trailing where glassblowers tooled these molten trails to produce textured, geometric patterns or, more rarely, figural ones. The snake-thread technique originated in the eastern Mediterranean in the second century CE, and early examples have been found in Syria, Cyprus, and Greece.<sup>4</sup> Vessels from this region are, for the most part, monochrome, in that the trailing is the same color as the container itself. Donald Harden argues that itinerant glass workers brought the snake-thread technique westward across the Mediterranean.<sup>5</sup> Though Harden's theory is a tentative reconstruction of the technique's evolution that originated in the 1930s, it is still widely accepted today.<sup>6</sup> In western Europe the production of snake-thread glass occurred from the late second century CE through the fourth century CE and was concentrated around



Fig. 2a–b. Vase decorated with blue plants and loops of red and white twisted rope. Roman-era Cologne, late 2nd–3rd century CE. Glass and gold leaf, height 5 ¼ in. (13.3 cm). The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, acc. no. 47.57



Fig. 3 (left). Beaker with appliqué of white and gold trailing. Roman-era Cologne, late 2nd–3rd century CE. Glass, height 4 ¼ in. (10.8 cm). Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Cologne, inv. no. 670

Fig. 4 (right). Flask with appliqué of red, white, blue, and gold trailing (the “Masterpiece” flask). Roman-era Cologne, late 2nd–3rd century CE. Glass, height 8 ⅞ in. (22.5 cm) Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Cologne, inv. no. 541

the city of Cologne, where nearly sixty examples have been found.<sup>7</sup> Glass workers in Cologne used brightly colored glass trails to decorate their vessels, which suggests that consumers desired an aesthetic different than the monochrome vessels of the east.

Cologne was the epicenter for luxury glass production in western Europe when the city was a Roman provincial capital. The area around the city contains an abundance of natural resources necessary for glassmaking, such as quartz sand and firewood.<sup>8</sup> In addition, under Emperor Augustus it hosted many of Rome’s legions to ensure control of the western Roman provinces. During the reign of Claudius (r. 41–54 CE) the emperor designated the city a Roman colony, as it was the birthplace of his wife Agrippina the Younger. Because of its preeminent position in the Roman west, the city was home to many high-ranking political and military officials who had the financial resources to commission and purchase snake-thread glass vessels like those in the Walters collection.

Examples from Cologne directly comparable to those from the Walters collection have been found in datable

funerary contexts. The design of the two Walters vessels, an ovoid flask on a stemmed foot, indicates their date. Clasina Isings identifies this design as a specific type of flask or bottle that appeared in the late second to early third century CE in the western provinces of the Roman Empire, often embellished with snake-thread decoration. Two of the examples came from early third-century graves outside of Cologne.<sup>9</sup> Just a few years later, Fritz Fremersdorf, who wrote the first comprehensive study of snake-thread vessels found in Cologne, further defined the attributes of this group of vessels. He designated them “Birnenförmige Stücke auf Stengelfuss” or “pear-shaped vessels on a stem foot,” of which eleven examples from Cologne survive to this day.<sup>10</sup>

The vessels most closely resembling 47.54 in both technique and color were discovered in sealed graves on Luxemburger Strasse, one of the main roads leading out of ancient Cologne. Two of these vessels were buried with second century CE Roman coins, which allows for a fairly accurate dating of the grave contents.<sup>11</sup> The first grave contained two coins featuring the Emperors Hadrian (r. 117 to 138 CE) and Antoninus Pius (r. 138 to 161 CE) respectively. In the other grave one coin depicts the Emperor Hadrian and another the Empress Bruttia Crispina (r. 178–191). While all of the coins date to the second century CE, that which features the Empress Crispina provides a *terminus post quem* of the last quarter of the second century.

The second Walters vessel (47.57) is more unusual due to its figural patterns and gilding, which are exceedingly rare on snake-thread vessels. In fact, only two other known snake-thread vessels have both figural *and* gilded décor—a green stemmed beaker (fig. 3)<sup>12</sup> and an opaque white flask known as the “Masterpiece” (fig. 4).<sup>13</sup> Both vessels were excavated in the 1890s in Roman tombs along Luxemburger Strasse outside of Cologne. Like the ovoid bottles discussed above, they date to the late second or third century CE. Harden offers a more precise date for the “Masterpiece” flask in the second half of the third century.<sup>14</sup> It shares a number of characteristics with the Walters vessel, including the rare use of three colors for the trailing (gold, red and blue) as well as naturalistic motifs such as leaves and garlands. The most striking comparison, however, comes from the gilded bows that decorate the ends of the garlands on the “Masterpiece” flask. The Walters vessel preserves almost identical bows,

which are visible at the ends of the “U-shaped” trails and on the tops of the two blue trees. Harden notes that this “superlative” technique of snake-thread decoration went out of style at the end of the third century, perhaps because of the Frankish invasion of Cologne in 270–280.<sup>15</sup>

Based on this comparative evidence it is very likely that both of the Walters snake-thread glass vessels were commissioned by a high-ranking military or political figure in the late second to mid-third century who was living either in or near modern-day Cologne. Moreover, their excellent state of preservation suggests that both were buried with their owner in a funerary context similar to the examples we have discussed.<sup>16</sup> Although they were created nearly 2,000 years ago, the two snake-thread glass vessels at the Walters give us insight into the tastes and preferences of those living on the edge of the Roman Empire.

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## NOTES

- Anton Kisa, *Das Glass im Altertume* (Rome, 1968), 444–475. The term is translated from the German *Schlangenfadengläser*.
- Dikran Kelekian, New York and Paris; Henry Walters, Baltimore, by purchase, 1929; Walters Art Museum, 1931, by bequest (47.54); acquired by Henry Walters, 1927 from the collection of Joseph Brummer, Walters Art Museum, 1931, by bequest (47.57). Both vessels appeared in *Three Thousand Years in Glass: Treasures from the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1982) 47–54 on p. 7, no. 10, checklist no. 54 and 47.57 as checklist no. 55.
- Strabo, *Geography*, XVI, 2.25.
- See, for example, two early examples that were excavated from a grave at Thermopylae, Greece, in Gladys Weinberg and Murray McClellan, *Glass Vessels in Ancient Greece: Their History Illustrated from the Collection of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens* (Athens, 1992) 131–32, nos. 105 and 106.
- Donald Harden, “Snake-thread Glasses Found in the East,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 24 (1934): 55.
- For the most recent discussion of the chronology of snake-thread glass, see David Whitehouse, *Roman Glass in the Corning Museum of Glass 2* (New York, 2001), 217.
- Fritz Fremersdorf, *Römische Gläser mit Fadenauflage in Köln: (Schlangenfadengläser und Verwandtes)* (Cologne, 1959), 23–24.
- Laurilla Sunt, “Roman Snake-Thread Glass from Cologne” (M.A. thesis, University of Iowa, 1988), 22.
- Clasina Isings, *Roman Glass from Dated Finds* (Groningen, 1957), 110–11. Isings gives three snake-thread examples in total, one of which comes from Stein in the Netherlands (see H. J. Beckers, *Kort verslag van het opgraven eener Romeinsche begraafplaats te Stein (L.)* [Leiden, 1926], 12) and the other two from graves outside Cologne (see Josef Hagen, “Ausgewählte römische Gräber aus Köln,” *Bonner Jahrbücher* 114–15 [1906]: grave 35, p. 406 for the first and grave 38, p. 409, for the second.
- Fremersdorf, *Römische Gläser mit Fadenauflage*, 45–48, nos. 30–41.
- Fremersdorf, *Römische Gläser mit Fadenauflage*, 45, nos. 31 and 46, no. 32/33.
- The green beaker was excavated in 1896 from a grave in the Roman cemetery along the Luxemburger Strasse outside of Cologne as discussed in Donald Harden, *Glass of the Caesars* (Milan, 1987), 123, no. 55. The excavation was not published, and the beaker appears for the first time in Kisa, *Das Glass im Altertume* 447, no. XI. It later appears in Fremersdorf, *Römische Gläser mit Fadenauflage*, 55, no. 67.
- The “Masterpiece” was excavated in 1893 in a limestone sarcophagus along Luxemburger Strasse outside of Cologne (Harden, *Glass of the Caesars*, 125, no. 56). It was first published by Anton Kisa in “Römische Ausgrabungen an der Luxemburger Strasse in Köln,” *Bonner Jahrbücher* 99 (1896): 53, pl. II.5. It was later published in Fremersdorf, *Römische Gläser mit Fadenauflage*, 56–58, no. 70.
- Harden, *Glass of the Caesars*, 126.
- Harden, *Glass of the Caesars*, 126.
- Both vessels preserve dirt on their interiors, further suggesting a burial context.

## IDENTITY WOVEN INTO A FOUR-CORNERED WARI HAT FROM ANCIENT PERU

ELLEN HOUBLER

The pre-Columbian gold and stone objects that Henry Walters acquired during his lifetime, though rarely exhibited, have nonetheless prompted the donation of a substantial number of works of art of the ancient Americas over the last two decades. At present, the Walters' ancient American collection comprises about six hundred objects. It includes objects bequeathed or given by individuals, as well as larger gifts, including John Bourne's donation, largely received after 2011, of about three hundred works, mainly from Mexico and Central America. A recent gift by Georgia and Michael de Havenon complements and expands the existing collection in an important way, adding seventeen textiles and a wooden *keru* cup, from cultures spanning present-day Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru, and dating from approximately 100 BCE to the nineteenth century.

The de Havenons, particularly Georgia, have been engaged with ancient Andean art for many years. Georgia has described becoming interested in ancient textiles while accompanying her son on a high school trip to Peru. She completed an M.A. in art history at Columbia University, focusing on ancient Andean art, and has been a research associate at the Brooklyn Museum's Department of the Arts of the Americas for more than a decade. She has written widely about the ancient Andes and its historiography, contributing to *The New World's Old World: Photographic Views of Ancient America* (Albuquerque, 2003), and editing *Unity of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt and the Americas* (New York, 2014), the latter a catalogue of the corresponding exhibition that she curated at the Americas Society museum in New York.

While the Walters' ancient American collection encompasses a broad range chronologically, geographically, and in terms of media, from ceramics to a few wood pieces, and metalwork to carved stone, a weakness of the collection had been its dearth of Andean textile works.<sup>1</sup> Yet cloth was by far

the most important medium for the region over millennia. While the Inca, for example, worked with and appreciated *spondylus* shell, hardstones, and gold and silver—even astonishing the Spanish conquistadors with an entire garden filled with plants and animals wrought at life size out of gold and silver—the crown for their ruler was the *mascaipacha*, a red wool fringe, complemented by feathers, that hung down over the forehead.<sup>2</sup>

Textiles were much more than mere finery; they were also a communicative system. While no glyphic or alphabetic writing system was developed in the Andes, record keeping was possible through the use of *khipu* (sometimes also spelled *quipu*), a series of knotted cord structures.<sup>3</sup> Even everyday textiles, particularly garments such as tunics and hats, were capable of conveying complex and important messages of status, ethnic identity, and religious affiliation. One such case is the exquisitely worked four-cornered hat made by the Wari (Huari) people a work included in the de Havenon gift.

The Wari culture flourished from about 600 BCE to 1000 CE (a period known in the Andes as the Middle Horizon) in central and southern Peru (fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> Their main capital, also known as Wari, was located in the Ayacucho Valley but was only one of many sites that attest to the culture's ingenuity and influence.<sup>5</sup> The Wari made military conquests and built extensive trade networks across hundreds of miles of territory—without any draft animals. Yet among their greatest legacies in the Andes were the very sophisticated weaving techniques that they apparently developed or refined from a textile tradition in the region that dated back millennia. The two characteristic markers of Wari domination or influence on archaeological sites in the region are very finely woven textiles, executed in the tapestry weave technique, and the four-cornered hats.<sup>6</sup> Both tunics and headgear were essential to the regalia of the culture's rulers. Both products





Fig. 1. Wari capital and areas of influence, 600–900 CE. Map: Jennifer Paulson

were created with very complex and sophisticated patterning, and, with other markers of high status, such as ear ornaments and facial painting, created “layers of geometries [that] made the wearer into a walking pattern.”<sup>7</sup> Lordship was thus conceived of as transcending that which was merely human and becoming a part of a geometrized cosmos.

Elaborate headgear has deep roots in the ancient Andes; mummified remains have been found of individuals wearing complex wrapped yarn “turbans” from as far back as perhaps 3000 BCE.<sup>8</sup> On the evidence of human remains in tombs in which these four-cornered hats have been found, as well as their representations on ceramics, these hats were worn solely by men; they may have been associated with military prowess as well as with high status.<sup>9</sup> While they seem curiously small to have been worn (the Walters’ example [fig. 2] is only  $5 \frac{3}{4}$  in. [14.6 cm] across), there is clear evidence, in the form of broken chin straps, signs of mending, and traces

of hair oil on the interiors, that these were in fact used as head coverings at some point.<sup>10</sup> They are frequently found in tombs and may have been interred with their owners after their death—some of them seem to have been used to adorn mummy bundles.<sup>11</sup>

The process and materials required to make a four-cornered hat were extremely labor-intensive. Camelids, such as llamas, alpacas, and vicuñas, had to be pastured and tended carefully. At the time of the Spanish conquest at least, they were usually sheared only every four to five years, each animal yielding at most three to six kilograms of wool.<sup>12</sup> Once the fiber itself was obtained, it had to be carefully and skillfully dyed in a range of colors.<sup>13</sup> The dark blue of the Walters hat was likely produced with indigo dye, which is particularly complex and difficult to work with, while the red may have been produced by dye derived from crushed cochineal insects. In total, the Walters hat includes wool dyed in seven distinct colors: red, yellow, green, dark blue, turquoise, brown, and white. Once dyed, the spun fiber could be plied and then woven or knotted.

Four-cornered hats were made using the larkshead knot technique, a variant of a square knot sometimes also known as a cow’s hitch.<sup>14</sup> The tops, including four corner peaks, were made separately from the rest of the hat, and then attached. To create the furred or feathery surface texture known as pile, the Wari used additional dyed yarns, laid into the knots before they were tightened, then cut this external fringe to the desired length.<sup>15</sup> The Walters hat seems to show variation in how the fringe was trimmed, with the portions showing snakes held in the mouths of the birds on two of the sides (with blue birds on yellow backgrounds and green birds on a red field) trimmed more closely, while other birds hold snakes with pile the same length as the rest of the hat. It is unclear what meaning, if any, this had.

The imagery of the four-cornered hats varies greatly, with some examples showing abstract geometric designs such as interlocking diamonds, and others with figural imagery, from animals, composite animals, and staff-bearing humans. However, by far the most common iconography is that of birds, or bird-composite creatures. In the Walters hat, birds are shown with wings divided into three separate sections, as though outstretched in flight. The tail feathers also are shown divided into three portions. Most of the birds are



Fig. 2a-b. Four-cornered man's hat. Peru (Wari), 600–900 CE. Camelid fibers; with corners:  $3\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{15}{16} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$  in. ( $9.5 \times 15.1 \times 14.6$  cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Georgia and Michael de Havenon, 2016, [acc. no. 2011.20.13](#)

shown with snakes in their mouths, and with two differently colored concentric squares on their bellies, perhaps conveying an ideal of material plenty.<sup>16</sup> The birds might also represent hunting and martial values, the tripartite wingspan a reference to the broad reach of the condor. Alternatively, the bright and alternating colors might reference parrots, whose bright plumage might have been suggested by the pile surface. Plumage and the birds themselves were brought to many areas of the Wari empire, for use in textiles (including some four-cornered hats) and perhaps as pets or power animals.<sup>17</sup>

In their tunics, the Wari ideal was to geometricize, simplify, and even disguise imagery. It is at times difficult even to identify iconography, which is often mirrored across a central axis, flipped horizontally or vertically, or greatly stretched or compressed.<sup>18</sup> A simpler but similar echoing of colors across the checkerboard structure of the hat is present in this example. The colors of the birds (figures) on one side of the hat are mirrored by those of the backgrounds (grounds) on the other, but it is not an exact mirroring, for red birds are shown on a turquoise ground on one side, with deeper green birds on a red ground on the other. Many theories have

been proposed for this conceptual play, but the meaning is not clear in this hat.<sup>19</sup>

The four-cornered hats are so named for the four protrusions at their corners. These may be of the same plain knotted fabric as the rest of the hat, like the Walters example, while others sport “exuberant” tassels of wool at the end of these points. On the evidence of other headdresses of rulers and high-status individuals wearing animal headdresses, it is thought that the four points may represent vestigial animal ears.<sup>20</sup> As with other known examples, the Walters hat has two protrusions in one color and two in a different one, in this case navy and turquoise.

This changing of colors in a checkerboard pattern, as well as the geometricization and simplification of images within those squares, recalls the Inca tunics known as *unku*, with patterned squares at their waists known as *tocapu*. These were described by Spanish sources as being akin to coats-of-arms different provinces of the Inca empire.<sup>21</sup> Some of the more abstract patterns of Wari tunics — or even hats — may have functioned in the same way. If so, the status and ethnic identity, or perhaps other individual characteristics, of the original owner of the Walters hat would have been instantly

identifiable at a glance by others of his culture. While we do not now have the facility to read its deeper messages, we can delight in its exquisite craftsmanship and visual exuberance.

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## NOTES

1. Prior to this donation, there were a few textile works in the collection—single textiles from Mr. and Mrs. James O. Anderson (acc. no. 83.705) and Jean and Sidney Silber (acc. no. 83.769)—as well as a handful of Andean works in wood that incorporate textiles, from other donors.
2. Murúa and Zuidema, cited in Thomas Cummins, *Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Quero Vessels* (Ann Arbor, 2002), 74.
3. Gary Urton of Harvard University maintains the Khipu Database Project, dedicated to better understanding or deciphering these structures: <http://khipukamayuq.fas.harvard.edu/>
4. Susan E. Bergh and Justin Jennings, “The History of Inquiry into the Wari and Their Arts,” in *Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes*, exh. cat., Cleveland Museum of Art; Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art; Kimbell Art Museum, ed. Susan E. Bergh (Cleveland, 2012), 5–30, at 5–6.
5. Katharina Schreiber, “The Rise of an Andean Empire,” in Bergh, *Wari*, 31–47.
6. Rebecca Stone-Miller, “Creative Abstractions: Middle Horizon Textiles in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,” in *To Weave for the Sun: Andean Textiles in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, ed. Rebecca Stone-Miller (Boston, 1992), 34–42; Bergh, *Wari*, 160–61; Justin Jennings, Tiffany A. Tung, Willy J. Yépez Álvarez, Gladys Cecilia Quequezana Lucano, and Marko Alfredo López Hurtado, “Shifting Local, Regional, and Interregional Relations in Middle Horizon Peru: Evidence from La Real,” *Latin American Antiquity* 26, no. 3 (2015): 382–400.
7. Stone-Miller, “Creative Abstractions,” 36.
8. Ann H. Peters, “Dressing the Leader, Dressing the Ancestor: The *Longue Durée* in the South Central Andes,” *Textile Society of America 2014 Biennial Symposium Proceedings: New Directions: Examining the Past, Creating the Future*, Paper 945 (Los Angeles, 2014), 4.
9. Mary Frame, “Andean Four-Cornered Hats: Ancient Volumes,” in *Andean Four-Cornered Hats: Ancient Volumes*, ed. Julie Jones (New York 1990), 8.
10. Frame, “Andean Four-Cornered Hats,” 6. The Walters hat was recently mounted on a stiff gauze to stabilize and protect it, although it is in remarkably good condition considering that it is more than fourteen hundred years old. Consequently the interior has not been carefully inspected for evidence of use.
11. Peters, “Dressing the Leader,” 13–14.
12. Rebecca Stone-Miller, “Camelids and Chaos in Huari and Tiwanaku Textiles,” in *The Ancient Americas: Art from Sacred Landscapes*, exh. cat., Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, ed. Richard Townsend (Chicago, 1992), 335–46 at 338.
13. Stone-Miller, “Camelids and Chaos,” 338.
14. Frame, “Andean Four-Cornered Hats,” 16; Ann Pollard Rowe, “Huari Mantles and Four-Cornered Hats,” in *Andean Art at Dumbarton Oaks 2*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone (Washington, D.C., 1996), 399–412 at 407.
15. Rowe, “Huari Mantles,” 407.
16. Frame, “Andean Four-Cornered Hats,” 12.
17. Jennings et al. “Shifting Local, Regional, and Interregional Relations,” 391; <https://brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/51469>
18. Bergh, *Wari*, 181–88.
19. Bergh, *Wari*, 181–88.
20. Frame, “Andean Four-Cornered Hats,” 6.
21. Christiane Clados, *The Tocado Drawings Database Project (TDDP)*, <http://tocapu.org/index.php>, accessed June 2, 2017; Anita G. Cook, “The Emperor’s New Clothes: Symbols of Royalty, Hierarchy and Identity,” *Journal of the Steward Anthropological Society* 24, no. 1 (1996): 85–120 at 88; Thomas B. Cummins, “Silver Threads and Golden Needles: The Inca, the Spanish, and the Sacred World of Humanity,” in *The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530–1830*, exh. cat., New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, ed. Elena Phipps, Johanna Hecht, and Cristina Esteras Martín (New York, 2004), 2–15 at 9.

## A GIFT OF FIVE TIBETAN BUDDHIST RITUAL OBJECTS

KATHERINE E. KASDORF

The Walters Art Museum is home to an important collection of Tibetan art, largely comprising works donated or promised to the museum by the Baltimore collectors John and Berthe Ford.<sup>1</sup> In 2016, these holdings were enhanced by a donation of five Tibetan works of art from Walter Hauser, professor emeritus of history at the University of Virginia. Hauser, whose scholarship has focused on the history of modern India, spent the years 1963–65 conducting research in northern India, and it was during this time that he acquired the five objects recently donated to the Walters. The gift includes two gilded metal sculptures, two painted *tangkas* (Tibetan hanging scrolls), and a silver *repoussé* grain mandala set, made for a Buddhist ritual known as the mandala offering. All five objects were made for Buddhist ritual use, and until their entrance onto the art market—almost certainly during the wave of Tibetan emigration that followed the Dalai Lama's departure from Tibet in 1959—they functioned as foci of devotion, images of contemplation, and objects supporting the performance of specific rituals.<sup>2</sup> In the Hauser home, these objects were deeply appreciated for their aesthetic qualities and their connection to Tibetan Buddhist culture. As part of the Walters' collection, they are now available to the wider public, and visitors and researchers will bring new perspectives to the experience of viewing and engaging with them.

One of the two sculptures in the Hauser gift, dated stylistically to the late fourteenth to fifteenth century, depicts the Buddhist meditational deity Hevajra and his female partner, Nairatmya, in ecstatic embrace (fig. 1). As a semi-wrathful deity, Hevajra assumes a frightening appearance, for he must be even more terrifying than the dangerous forces he destroys.<sup>3</sup> With hair painted the fiery orange of wrathful deities, Hevajra's eight heads look in all directions. In his eight right hands he holds skull cups containing animals; in his eight left hands, deities representing worldly elements: earth,



Fig. 1. Hevajra and Nairatmya. Tibet, late 14th–15th century. Gilded copper alloy with pigments or paint and semiprecious stones, 10  $\frac{1}{16}$  × 8  $\frac{5}{16}$  × 4  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (25.5 × 21.1 × 10.5 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Walter Hauser, 2016, acc. no. 54.3101

water, air, fire, the moon, the sun, and the gods of death and wealth. He raises two of his four legs in a position of dance, while the other two are in a stable lunge. Nairatmya clings to Hevajra with her right leg and left arm, holding in her two hands a skull cup and a curved flaying knife. Hevajra wears a garland of frowning severed heads strung by the hair, while Nairatmya wears one of skulls, and both deities wear crowns made of skulls and ornaments made of bone, which in the sculpture have been embellished with semiprecious stones.<sup>4</sup>

In the tantric Buddhist context to which this sculpture belongs, the imagery of a male and female deity in sexual union (called *yab-yum*, or “father-mother,” in Tibetan) expresses the ideal of complete enlightenment and Buddhahood. In Buddhist thought, male deities embody compassionate action and intention, while female deities embody wisdom; enlightenment arises through the union of these qualities. As the supreme knowledge that leads to spiritual liberation, enlightenment is the ultimate Buddhist aspiration, but psychological barriers such as hatred, greed, ignorance, and ego prevent most people from reaching that



aim. Wrathful and semi-wrathful deities such as Hevajra and Nairatmya destroy such obstacles, and they help their devotees do the same. The skulls in their crowns symbolize the transformation of these spiritual impediments into the subtle types of wisdom that enlightenment requires. The severed heads and skulls of their garlands—in addition to contributing to the deities' powerfully frightening appearance—symbolically correspond to the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet and allude to purified speech. The skull cups held by both deities symbolize emptiness, which in Buddhist thought is described as the true nature of reality. The curved flaying knife held by Nairatmya symbolically peels away the layers of delusion that characterize common perception, revealing a greater truth.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding the full symbolic meaning of this sculpture's imagery is traditionally restricted to individuals who have been initiated into Hevajra's ritual system by a teacher (*guru* or *lama*). As a tantric Buddhist meditational deity (*yi dam* in Tibetan), Hevajra is regarded as a fully enlightened being and serves as a focus of worship and meditation. In one mode of worship, devotees make offerings and recite words of praise to Hevajra through the medium of a consecrated image—such as this sculpture—in which the god is believed to be present. Another mode of ritual practice involves the visualization of oneself as Hevajra (or another meditational deity), in order to achieve the same state of enlightenment and Buddhahood that the deity embodies.<sup>6</sup> This sculpture was likely installed in a shrine along with other sacred images (including both sculptures and *tangkas*) depicting various deities and other revered figures. Alternatively, it could have served as a personal object of devotion for a monk or lay-devotee of Hevajra. The quality of the work and the materials used to create it (including gold and semiprecious stones) indicate a high level of patronage, suggesting that its owner or donor was a member of the late fourteenth- to fifteenth-century Tibetan elite.

The materials and quality of the second sculpture in the Hauser gift—a gilded metal image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, stylistically datable to the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, with painted details and inlaid semiprecious stones—also point to a patron of elite status (fig. 2). The sculpture depicts a four-armed form of Avalokiteshvara commonly called *Shadakshari Lokeshvara* (“Six-Syllable

Lord of the World”), after his six-syllable mantra, *om mani padme hum* (“Om, Jewel-Lotus One”).<sup>7</sup> As a bodhisattva, Avalokiteshvara has resolved to attain the fully enlightened state of a Buddha, and he strives to help all beings progress toward spiritual liberation. His mantra—the sacred syllables recited or contemplated by devotees in order to invoke him—pays homage to the bodhisattva using his epithet *Mani-padma*, “Jewel-Lotus One.” Seated on a double-lotus throne, he joins the palms of his two front hands in the gesture of respect and greeting, while holding a lotus in his upper left hand. In accordance with the iconography of Shadakshari Lokeshvara, his upper right hand once would have held a rosary. The head of the Buddha Amitabha emerges from the top of his piled-up hair, a variation from this Buddha's usual placement in Avalokiteshvara's crown. The bodhisattva wears a deerskin draped over his left shoulder, robes with a border



Fig. 2. Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Tibet, 16th–early 17th century. Gilded copper alloy with pigments or paint and semiprecious stones, 7  $\frac{5}{16}$  × 4  $\frac{3}{16}$  × 3  $\frac{1}{16}$  in. (18.6 × 11 × 9 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Walter Hauser, 2016, [acc. no. 54.3100](#)

of incised floral designs, and a crown and jewelry inlaid with semiprecious stones, primarily turquoise. Blue pigment has been applied to his hair, a common Tibetan convention for sculptures depicting peaceful Buddhist deities.

On the bottom of the sculpture's lotus base is a copper plate, punch-marked with a crossed *vajra* design. The *vajra*, a double-ended, multipronged ritual scepter, is a widespread tantric Buddhist symbol that symbolizes clarity and indestructibility, two qualities of the enlightened mind; the image of two crossed *vajras* represents absolute stability and is often found on the bases of metal sculptures.<sup>8</sup> When a Tibetan Buddhist sculpture is consecrated for ritual worship, sacred items are often placed within the hollow figure and base; these might include scrolls inscribed with prayers, seeds and other organic materials, earth from a holy site, or other sacred objects or substances.<sup>9</sup> The wax that now holds this sculpture's copper plate in place indicates that it was removed and replaced at some point, presumably after the sculpture had ceased to function ritually. Whether it still contains its sacred deposits is unknown; perhaps future research will shed light on this question.

Like sculptures, *tangkas* are ritual objects that serve as foci of devotion and contemplation. Usually painted, the main image of a *tangka* is framed by textiles and protected by a curtain when not on view; rods inserted into the upper and lower ends of the textile frame both support the *tangka's* capacity to hang and facilitate rolling for transport or storage. Both *tangkas* in the Hauser gift are framed by finely produced brocades and retain the silk curtains and ties that may either cover the painting or, when arranged for the painting's viewing, enhance its presentation. Both are also datable to the eighteenth century, though it is possible that some components of their textile frameworks are later.

One *tangka* (which was presented to Professor Hauser in 1964 by a lama in Darjeeling, India, who was a painter of *tankas* himself) features the portrait of a lama surrounded by other figures, including monks, divinized teachers, celestial beings, enlightened deities, and a Buddha (figs. 3–5).<sup>10</sup> As keepers and teachers of the sacred knowledge that leads to enlightenment, lamas are highly revered individuals, and their portraits are objects of veneration. Seated on a throne before an altar, this lama wears a rich yellow brocade robe with phoenix and cloud motifs, and a dark blue ceremonial



Fig. 3. Portrait of a Lama. Tibet, 18th century. Opaque watercolor and gold on cotton mounted on silk brocade, overall 50  $\frac{3}{16}$  × 23  $\frac{13}{16}$  × 1 in. (127.5 × 60.5 × 2.5 cm), image 23  $\frac{13}{16}$  × 15  $\frac{3}{16}$  in. (60.5 × 38.5 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Walter Hauser, 2016, acc. no. 35.321

hat with a *vajra* finial—garments that point to his identity as a Karmapa lama, associated with the Karma Kagyu order.<sup>11</sup> He holds the stems of two lotuses, the blossoms of which support a bell and a *vajra*, ritual implements that in Tibetan Buddhist traditions symbolize wisdom and compassionate action and intention, and thus together form the essence of enlightenment.

The lower portion of the painting, with its backdrop of buildings and trees, depicts the earthly realm, populated by monks who would be among those to venerate the lama and





Fig. 4. Portrait of a Lama, acc. no. 35.321, detail

receive his teachings. Below the altar in front of the central figure, three seated monks engage in activities of monastic life: one sits with a rosary, while two others discuss a document, which appears to bear legible text; one monk writes as the other stamps it with a seal in red ink. In the painting's lower right is a worldly protector god sitting in front of a building with parapets lined in human skulls; he is likely the protector of the monastery to which the central lama belongs. The figure in the lower left, the area of a *tangka* where the patron is often depicted, wears a hat similar to that of the central figure, suggesting that he is the lama's disciple and possibly successor as leader of their monastic

lineage. Flanking the central lama's throne, monks engage in discussion with both monastic and lay figures; the group on the right also includes a bearded ascetic.

The middle and upper portions of the painting, moving from mountain landscapes to a rich blue sky, progress into the heavenly realms. Here, figures are marked by halos, an indication of their divinized status. Individualized lamas and monks surround the central figure, while the Buddha directly above him, making the gesture of instruction, indicates the source of the teachings that the lama would have propagated. Minuscule inscriptions beneath most of these figures almost certainly identify them. Longer inscriptions



Fig. 5. Portrait of a Lama, acc. no. 35.321, reverse

in the two central cartouches of the gold and blue pedestal beneath the central lama may also identify the main subject of the portrait.<sup>12</sup> Celestial beings seated on clouds in the upper corners hold ropes supporting the canopy above the crowned and bejeweled Buddha Vairochana at the apex of the composition; between them are the sun and the moon, each containing a delicately drawn representation of its associated animal: the rooster and rabbit, respectively.

The reverse of the *tangka* (fig. 5) is marked by handprints and footprints, each of which is embellished with leaf and lotus motifs painted in gold. The appearance of such prints on a *tangka* renders visible the touch of a holy person who came into contact with it, preserving the sacred presence of that

individual. When prints appear on the reverse of a *tangka*, as they do here, they endow the scroll with the permanent blessings of the lama who consecrated it.<sup>13</sup>

The second *tangka* in the Hauser gift bears sacred handprints on its front, enhanced by gold and framed by vivid red halos (figs. 6, 7). The painting features the wrathful meditative deity Vajrabhairava, conqueror of death, with his female partner, Vajravetali. Like Hevajra and Nairatmya, they embody the ideal of enlightenment, uniting wisdom with compassionate action and intention. Vajrabhairava, also known as Yamantaka, has nine heads, thirty-four arms, and sixteen legs. His central face is that of a buffalo, the animal associated with his enemy, the god of death (Yama). Three additional faces appear on each side of the central one, with the final two stacked above it. The uppermost face, filled in with gold paint, is that of Manjushri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, with whom Vajrabhairava is identified. Each of Vajrabhairava's thirty-four hands holds a weapon or another threatening object; his primary arms, with which he holds a curved knife and skull cup, also embrace Vajravetali. With his sixteen legs, Vajrabhairava tramples birds, animals, and Hindu gods that personify the worldly attachments and delusions that one must overcome on the path to enlightenment, breaking down barriers to spiritual liberation.<sup>14</sup>

This *tangka* is painted in a distinctive black-ground style called *nag tang* in Tibetan. Typically used to depict wrathful deities, the imagery of black-ground painting consists primarily of fine lines drawn in gold paint, with selected elements (especially facial features, skulls, and headdresses) articulated with additional pigments.<sup>15</sup> Here, two more wrathful deities flank the central pair: on the right (proper left) is six-armed Mahakala, and on the left (proper right) is a wrathful form of the bodhisattva Vajrapani. Between the handprints below are the protector deity Yama Dharmaraja and his female partner, Chamunda, and along the top of the painting, between the sun and the moon in the upper corners, are three lamas wearing hats associated with the Karma Kagyu monastic tradition—the same affiliation as the lama whose portrait we see in figure 3.

The final object in the Hauser gift, a nineteenth- to twentieth-century grain mandala set (fig. 8), consists of five silver *repoussé* components, which when stacked together with quantities of a small, valued particle—such as rice, barley, or





other grains or pulses; powdered medicinal herbs or pills; or gemstones, pearls, or coins—collectively symbolize the offering of the entire universe, in the Buddhist ritual known as the “mandala offering.” Together, the imagery of the base, three rings, and finial represents Mount Meru—the *axis mundi* in Buddhist cosmology—and its surrounding universe, filled with the auspicious items being ritually offered.<sup>16</sup>

On the base, which has a solid top, are the four continents and their associated eight subcontinents, represented in four groups of three according to their respective shapes: square, semicircular, triangular, and circular. Here, they are filled with images of windows. They sit in the waves of the great ocean, which is surrounded by the iron mountain ring. Between the groups of continents and subcontinents are the



Fig. 6. Vajrabhairava and Vajravetali, Tibet, 18th century, opaque watercolor and gold on cotton mounted on silk brocade, overall  $50 \frac{3}{8} \times 27 \frac{3}{8} \times 1$  in. (128 × 69.5 × 2.5 cm), image  $23 \frac{3}{8} \times 15 \frac{1}{16}$  in. (60 × 40.5 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Walter Hauser, 2016, [acc. no. 35.322](#)

Fig. 7. Vajrabhairava and Vajravetali, detail

four sources of endless wealth: the jewel mountain, the wish-granting tree, the wish-fulfilling cow, and the uncultivated harvest, which regenerates itself.

The first open ring features the seven emblems of royalty, along with the vase of endless treasure. The emblems of royalty, also described as the seven precious possessions of the universal monarch (*chakravartin*), are the precious wheel, jewel, queen, minister, elephant, horse, and general. The next ring depicts the eight offering goddesses, many of whom hold items associated with their respective identities. Symbolizing items that feature in devotional practice, they are the goddesses of beauty, garlands, song, dance, flowers, incense, light, and perfume. The smallest ring bears images of the sun (marked by a rooster), moon (marked by a rabbit),



Fig. 8. Grain mandala set. Tibet, 19th–20th century. Silver with gilding; when fully assembled approx. height 7  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (19.7 cm); diam. of largest ring 5  $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (14.76 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Walter Hauser, 2016, acc. no. 57.2334

precious parasol, and victory banner. The finial, which symbolizes Mount Meru, features auspicious symbols, including the endless knot, the pair of golden fish, the wheel of the Buddhist teachings (*dharmachakra*), and the parasol.

The mandala offering is an important practice in the tantric Buddhist traditions that prevail in Tibet. As a symbolic offering of the entire universe, it represents the ultimate act of giving and generates great merit. One may make the mandala offering to one's chosen deity—a Buddha or a bodhisattva—as part of daily practice, or to one's teacher (*lama* or *guru*), when requesting teachings or initiation. In a Buddhist context, the Sanskrit word *mandala* usually denotes a cosmic diagram, and mandalas can be composed of a variety of mediums. When performing the mandala offering, the practitioner lays out heaps of grain in a specific formation, symbolizing the offering of each element of the universe depicted in the levels of the mandala set, while reciting mantras that

identify each: Mount Meru, the four continents and eight subcontinents, the four sources of endless wealth, the seven royal emblems and vase of endless treasure, the eight offering goddesses, and the sun, moon, parasol, and victory banner. As grain fills each ring, it forms the base for the next level. After the mandala has been offered, the practitioner dismantles it, pouring the grain toward oneself to accumulate blessings, or away from oneself to remove obstacles. Alternatively, the multi-tiered mandala offering may be preserved and kept in a shrine along with other ritual objects.

While all the works in the Hauser gift were created for ritual purposes (as is the case for Tibetan Buddhist art more broadly), the very form of the grain mandala set depends on the performance of ritual: Through the offering of grain, the set's five separate components are transformed into a unified whole. The ways in which ritual transforms sculptures and *tankas* may be less visibly apparent, but they are no less powerful. Through consecration, for instance, the presence of the deity enters the sculpted or painted image.<sup>17</sup> The *tankas* in the Hauser gift were both further transformed through the touch of revered individuals. While the sacred power these objects contain is their *raison d'être*, their visual power has the potential to reach Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. At the Walters, we hope they will reach many.

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## NOTES

1. The Ford Collection has been published in Pratapaditya Pal, *Desire and Devotion: Art from India, Nepal, and Tibet in the John and Berthe Ford Collection* (Baltimore and London, 2001).
2. For a brief overview of the impact that the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the subsequent Tibetan exodus had on the market for Tibetan objects, see Clare Harris, *In the Image of Tibet: Tibetan Painting after 1959* (London, 1999), 35–37.
3. For an extended discussion of wrathful and semi-wrathful deities, see Rob Linrothe and Jeff Watt, *Demonic Divine: Himalayan Art and Beyond* (New York and Chicago, 2004).



4. The iconography of Hevajra and Nairatmya is described in further detail in Himalayan Art Resources, “Hevajra Main Page,” [www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=168](http://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=168) (accessed May 1, 2017).
5. The symbolic meanings of these and other attributes are discussed in Robert Beer, *The Encyclopaedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs* (Boston, 1999).
6. For a summary of such ritual practices, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr.’s discussion in his Introduction to *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, 1997), 16–18.
7. For a discussion of this mantra and its interpretations, see Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West* (Chicago, 1998), chap. 4 (“The Spell”). The iconography of Shadakshari Lokeshvara is described in Himalayan Art Resources, “Avalokiteshvara, Chaturbhuja—Four Hands—Main Page,” [www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=1285](http://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=1285) (accessed 1 May 2017).
8. Beer, *Encyclopaedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 233–43. A crossed *vajra* also crowns the topmost head of Hevajra in figure 1 above, and a single *vajra*-scepter rests on the lotus to the left (i.e., proper right) of the central lama in figure 4.
9. Yael Bentor, “The Content of Stūpas and Images and the Indo-Tibetan Concept of Relics,” *Tibet Journal* 28, nos. 1/2 (2003): 21–48. For a fuller discussion, see Yael Bentor, *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism* (New York, 1996).
10. Information about this *tangka*’s provenance provided by Walter Hauser on the Walters Art Museum Donor Provenance Questionnaire for *Portrait of a Lama* (acc. no. 35.321).
11. Compare, for instance, the Karmapa lama portraits in Marilyn M. Rhie and Robert A. F. Thurman, *Worlds of Transformation: Tibetan Art of Wisdom and Compassion* (New York, 1999), 317–29, cat. nos. 104–9. Although Karmapa hats are usually represented as black, they may also be dark blue, like the one this lama wears; see Karl Debreczeny et al. *The Black Hat Eccentric: Artistic Visions of the Tenth Karmapa* (New York, 2012), 94, fig. 2.29.
12. At the time of this article’s preparation, these inscriptions have not yet been read. The *tangka* offers many opportunities for further research, the reading and translation of its inscriptions being just one.
13. Kathryn H. Selig Brown, *Eternal Presence: Handprints and Footprints in Buddhist Art* (Katonah, NY, 2004); for comments on prints appearing on the backs of *tangkas*, see 19, 26–27, 62.
14. For more on Vajrabhairava’s iconography, see Himalayan Art Resources, “Vajrabhairava (Buddhist Deity) — Solitary (Ekavira),” [www.himalayanart.org/items/295](http://www.himalayanart.org/items/295) (accessed May 1, 2017), and “Vajrabhairava (Buddhist Deity) — with consort,” [www.himalayanart.org/items/83490](http://www.himalayanart.org/items/83490) (accessed May 1, 2017).
15. Rob Linrothe discusses black-ground *tangkas* in his introductory essay, “Protection, Benefaction, and Transformation: Wrathful Deities in Himalayan Art,” in Linrothe and Watt, *Demonic Divine* 28–36.
16. Robert Beer discusses the mandala offering in *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*, 110–15. My discussion of the grain mandala set and its associated rituals is based primarily on this source.
17. See Bentor, *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism*.

## REVEALING VITTORE CRIVELLI'S FANTASTICAL CREATURES

PAMELA BETTS AND GLENN GATES

Two gold-ground panel paintings by Vittore Crivelli, *Saint Benedict* and *Saint John the Baptist* (fig. 1), were installed in 2016 to complement the Walters' exhibition *A Renaissance Original: Carlo Crivelli* (February 28–May 22, 2016).<sup>1</sup> These paintings were acquired by Henry Walters with the Massarenti Collection in 1902.<sup>2</sup> Historian Frederico Zeri suggested they were part of a larger polyptych that Vittore Crivelli painted for the high altar of the Church of San Giuliano at Fermo between 1487 and 1492.<sup>3</sup> Zeri identified three additional paintings that were likely part of this same altarpiece: a *Madonna and Child with Cherubs* and a *Pietà*, both now in the Church of Santa Lucia at Fermo, and *Saint Julian*, now in the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon. Careful examination of the Walters' paintings in preparation for their exhibition after decades in storage revealed a fascinating discovery: the now ostensibly plain gilded backgrounds surrounding the figures were once luxuriously ornamented by the artist.

Vittore Crivelli (1440–1501), like his better-known brother Carlo Crivelli (1435–1495), commonly enhanced areas of burnished gilding on his paintings with tooling. Designs, largely inspired by contemporary luxury textiles, were stamped or incised into the gold leaf with shaped metal tools, adding texture that sparkled with reflected light. The tooling on the Walters' paintings is confined to the saints' haloes, while the rest of the gilded backgrounds at first appear to be without any ornament. Upon closer observation, however, slight differences in surface gloss revealed faint indications of a repeating design throughout the gilded backgrounds (see fig. 2).

Fig. 1. Vittore Crivelli (Italian, ca. 1444–ca. 1501), *Saint Benedict and Saint John the Baptist*, 1487–1492. Tempera with gold leaf and traces of oil paint on panel; St. Benedict painted surface 48 ½ × 15 ½ in. (123.4 × 39.4 cm); St. John painted surface 48 ½ × 15 ⅝ in. (123.2 × 39.7 cm). The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, [acc. no. 37.709](#)

Microscopic examination revealed traces of a transparent red glaze on some of the designs, indicating that they were likely originally intended as repeating painted motifs over the gilding.

The colorant used in many paint glazes was historically created by chemically attaching, or mordanting, an organic dye to an inert, inorganic substrate such as chalk, clay, or hydrated alumina—a process called lake pigment manufacture. Lake pigments generally are transparent and allow







Fig. 2. Detail shows the barely discernible repeating designs on the gilded background of Saint John the Baptist; area analyzed with XRF indicated with arrows.

layers underneath to shine through, but they are notoriously susceptible to fading. Sometimes ultraviolet light, or black-light, can reveal a somewhat faded lake pigment because the organic dye fluoresces distinctly; examination of *Saint Benedict* and *Saint John the Baptist* using ultraviolet light, however, did not reveal any noticeable fluorescing design.

As we thought it unlikely that the artist intended to adorn the gilded backgrounds as they now appear with barely discernible patterns, we wanted to investigate whether he indeed

intended a much bolder, painted design, albeit now faded. To test this hypothesis, we analyzed the surfaces nondestructively using x-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) in order to better characterize the surface elemental composition and distribution, looking closely for more evidence of applied paint.<sup>4</sup>

The area analyzed, located to the left of Saint John's head, measured  $1\frac{3}{4}$  in. square (4.5 cm) and included both the faded design shapes and the undecorated, bare gilding (fig. 2). A digital tracing was made of this area of faded design and compared with the results from XRF elemental distribution analysis. The results showed a direct correlation between the presence of potassium and the faded design (fig. 3). The presence of potassium is a common indicator for the use of lake pigments, since potash alum or potassium alum sulfate— $KAl(SO_4)_2$ —is a common ingredient used to manufacture lake pigments, providing both  $Al^{+3}$  mordanting and a hydrated alumina inorganic substrate. The preponderance of evidence, both visual and spectroscopic, supports the hypothesis that the repeating designs were painted with a now extremely faded lake pigment—probably red, based on the presence of microscopic residues. The residual binding medium is all that exists today to indicate the once rich design.

By digitally enhancing a detail image of the background from one of the paintings, it became evident that the pattern featured a mythical winged creature (fig. 4). The creature, in profile, has the head of a bird with an eye and open beak, as well as what appear to be ears and talons. The creature does not have the typical lion's tail or hindquarters that usually appear in representations of griffins. Instead, it was tentatively identified by medieval scholar Asa Simon Mittman as a *simurgh*, a fantastical bird originating in Iran.<sup>5</sup> Near Eastern

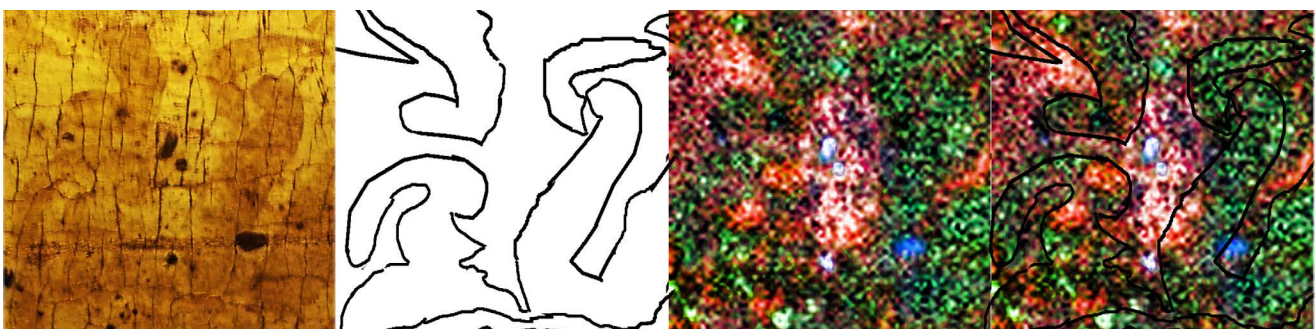


Fig. 3. XRF Elemental mapping of area shown in figure 2 showing potassium (green), gold (red), and calcium (blue)





Fig. 4. Detail of background of *Saint Benedict* digitally enhanced



Fig. 5. Detail of the tooled gilded background of the *Saint Elpidio* panel from the *Coronation of the Virgin Altarpiece*, Sant'Elpidio a Mare, Fermo

motifs such as the *simurgh* were largely introduced to Italy through imported decorative goods such as luxury silk textiles, and were often incorporated into Italian art. Indeed, historian Stephen J. Campbell notes that Carlo Crivelli used stock patterns from luxury silks in his paintings, and it is likely that Vittore may have done the same.<sup>6</sup> Carnation flowers, "Vittore's favourite floral symbol of divine love," according to historian Ronald Lightbown, and twisted rope arabesques continue the design.<sup>7</sup>

From photographs, it is evident these winged creatures appear in the same muted condition on the associated panel of *St. Julian* in Avignon, but it is difficult to tell whether they appear also on the associated panels of the *Madonna and Child with Cherubs* and the *Pietà* in Fermo, which may have been treated differently as central panels to the altarpiece. Interestingly, a strikingly similar motif tooled into the gilding with a stippling effect appears in the background of Vittore's *Coronation of the Virgin* altarpiece in the Pinacoteca Civica in Sant'Elpidio a Mare, Fermo (fig. 5).<sup>8</sup> On Vittore's altarpiece in Cupra Marittima, *Madonna and Child with Saints Basso*

and *Sebastian*, the forms adorn the cloth of honor behind the Madonna.<sup>9</sup> This motif of the winged creature is noted again, this time more prominently placed, in the robe of the Madonna in Vittore's *Madonna and Child with Two Angels* in the Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon. In this painting the gold design has been tooled with incised striations against a painted field of dark blue (fig. 6).

The design of the winged creature repeats and reverses in the Walters panels, as well as in the other paintings noted above. Although a generalized template might have been used to help position and scale the design, enough variation between the forms exist, at least on the Walters panels, that it does not seem likely a stencil was used. It is not surprising that the motifs were used in separate altarpieces, as was common workshop practice at the time. In comparison, this specific winged creature has not been noted in any paintings by Carlo Crivelli, but the artist often used birds of several forms. According to Lightbown, "birds play in (Carlo) Crivelli's art a stylistic and symbolic role unparalleled in fifteenth-century Italian painting elsewhere."<sup>10</sup>





Fig. 6. Vittore Crivelli, *The Virgin Mary Adoring the Child, with Two Angels*, ca. 1480–1490, Tempera with gold leaf on panel, 47 1/4 × 23 1/4 in. (120 × 59 cm). Musée du Petit Palais, Avignon, MI493. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY

The fantastical creatures and flowers, once vibrantly painted with a transparent red lake pigment, are now barely discernible on the backgrounds of the paintings of *Saint Benedict* and *Saint John the Baptist*. The discovery of the vanished creatures helps us to understand the intended richly decorated background and relates these paintings to others

of the artist's oeuvre. As the motif was repeated on unrelated paintings with various techniques, it appears that Vittore Crivelli might have offered different aesthetics and finishes for his altarpieces depending on the specific commission and its cost. The gilded backgrounds of the Walters paintings, with the repeating designs painted in red lake, would have been an economical decorative effect in comparison with the more labor-intensive tooled techniques found on the paintings in Fermo and Avignon.<sup>11</sup> Although we cannot see them clearly today, Vittore Crivelli's winged creatures in red against a gold ground continued a long tradition of borrowing and incorporating Near Eastern motifs into Italian paintings to evoke the rich textiles of the era.

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#### NOTES

1. Exhibition curated by Joaneath Spicer, James A. Murnaghan Curator of Renaissance and Baroque Art.
2. For Henry Walters' purchase of the Massarenti Collection, see William R. Johnston, *William and Henry Walters, the Reticent Collectors* (Baltimore, 1999), 153, 156–61, 162–63, 183–87
3. See Frederico Zeri, *Italian Paintings in the Walters Art Gallery*, 2 vols. (Baltimore, 1976), 1:243–244
4. XRF was undertaken with an Elio Spectrometer with elemental mapping capability, 50kV, 300microA, 1sec dwell.
5. Asa Simon Mittman is professor and chair of art and art history at California State University, Chico. Personal communication through Christine Sciacca, Associate Curator of European Art, 300–1400 CE, Walters Art Museum; email dated April 21, 2017.
6. *Ornament and Illusion: Carlo Crivelli of Venice*, ed. Stephen J. Campbell (London, 2015), 31.
7. Ronald Lightbown, *Carlo Crivelli* (New Haven, 2004), 494.
8. It is noteworthy that the figure of St. John the Baptist closely resembles the Baptist in the Walters painting.
9. Based on examination of available photographs, the forms appear to be painted on the gold cloth with blue and white paint.
10. Lightbown, *Carlo Crivelli*, 152. Lightbown also notes here that “[Carlo] Crivelli's use of symbolic bird motifs is unique to him,

and has no parallel in other Squarcionesque artists, or even in his brother's art," a finding that might stand in need of reevaluation.

- n. A cursory survey of his work does not reveal other examples of red lake motifs on gilded backgrounds; however, if they exist they may also have suffered fading or have been otherwise damaged over the centuries. If other examples have also faded, they may go unnoticed as they had in these paintings.



## THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY RECONSTRUCTION OF GIOVANNI DELLA ROBBIA'S *ADAM AND EVE*

GREGORY BAILEY

A large glazed terracotta relief in the Walters Art Museum depicting Adam and Eve in a scene of the biblical Temptation has long been attributed to the Florentine workshop of Giovanni della Robbia (1469–1529). The relief (fig. 1) has been dated to about 1515 and associated with the triumphal entry of the Medici pope Leo X into Florence on November 30 of that year.<sup>1</sup> It has been on continuous display in Baltimore since 1909. Prior to the current study, little was known of its history before that date.

In 2013, the relief was selected as the subject of a year-long treatment and research project by Gregory Bailey, Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Conservation. In preparing an initial examination report and treatment proposal, it became clear that many small fragments of glazed terracotta were loose or partly detached and at risk of loss. Surfaces had last been cleaned superficially ten years before; accumulated dirt and grime obscured the original glazed ceramic. Remnants of a discolored, nonoriginal wax coating remained in many areas, trapping dirt and contributing to the uneven appearance. Multiple campaigns of fill and restoration paint had been added to the surfaces over the years, and they no longer harmonized well with each other. Additionally, the large size, extreme complexity, and logistically challenging location of the relief on a shallow landing on the museum's main staircase had hindered prior documentation efforts and contributed to ongoing difficulties in assessing and responding to changes in condition over time.

In consultation with Joaneath Spicer, James A. Murnaghan Curator of Renaissance and Baroque Art at the Walters, the decision was made to embark on a thorough campaign to examine and document the condition of the relief through photographs and written reports. Once this initial documentation was completed, treatment was undertaken to clean surfaces of dirt and grime, remove traces of the uneven and

nonoriginal wax coating, and reduce excess restoration material covering original glazed terracotta surfaces.

As documentation and treatment progressed, it became clear that the central scene of the relief was assembled from many sections of severely damaged terracotta. The largest sections were previously repaired by pinning or stapling with iron rods; many appear to align along original joins. The center of the relief and the upper register consist of misaligned fragments with no clear join edges, and appear to be held in place with plaster alone; the gaps between these have been filled with additional plaster and painted to integrate them. Several small fragments of original glazed terracotta are clearly out of place and seem to have been inserted merely to fill gaps among the larger pieces. Similarly, the text on the base also contains gaps and dislocations that had previously been obscured by overpaint, indicating that it should be considered fragmentary and incomplete (fig. 2).<sup>2</sup>

Perplexingly, as layers of paint and plaster were removed, it became apparent that two different types of glazed terracotta were incorporated into the relief. The majority of the fragments consisted of buff-colored terracotta glazed with single, opaque layers of glaze. These, on the whole, are visually consistent with glazed terracotta produced in the della Robbia workshops.<sup>3</sup> A smaller but still substantial number of fragments are made of reddish terracotta and are glazed overall in a white ground, over which a second layer of separately fired semi-translucent glaze is applied in a brushy, impressionistic manner. This second set of glazed terracotta sections broadly corresponds to descriptions of nineteenth-century restorations of della Robbia works executed in glazed terracotta.<sup>4</sup>

Under the supervision of Walters conservation scientist Glenn Gates, x-ray fluorescence spectrometry was performed on glaze surfaces of the two different sets of glazed terracotta using portable instrumentation.<sup>5</sup> Analysis of similarly colored

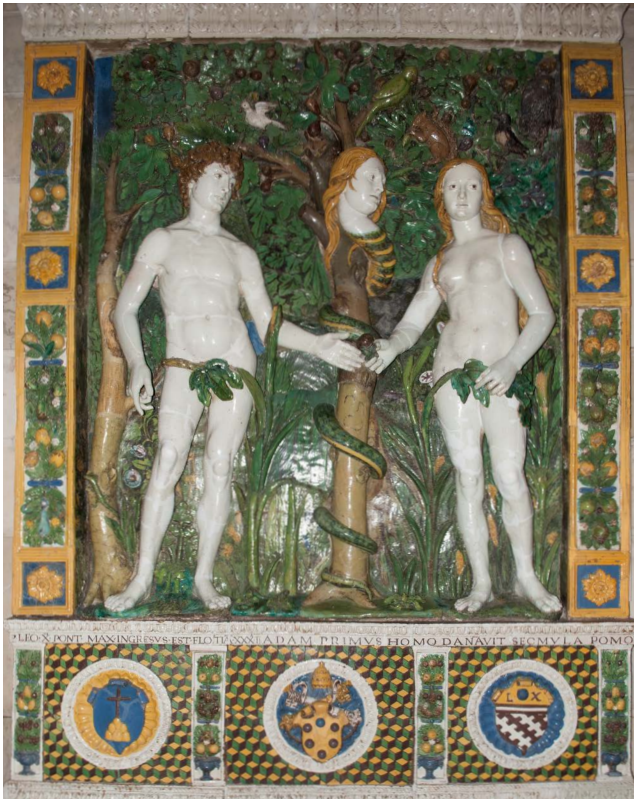


Fig. 1. Workshop of Giovanni della Robbia (attrib.), *Adam and Eve*, ca. 1515. Terracotta with glaze, 110  $\frac{1}{16}$  x 87  $\frac{7}{16}$  in. (279.5 x 212 cm). The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, acc. no. 27.219. Before treatment.

glazes on the two sets of terracotta identified consistent differences between the two. Glaze surfaces on the buff-colored terracotta fragments were found to have compositions and colorants consistent with published data on della Robbia glazes.<sup>6</sup> Glaze surfaces on the reddish-colored terracotta were found to have colorants more consistent with manufacture in the nineteenth century; in particular, the identification of chromium in green glazes argues strongly for the nineteenth-century origins of these fragments, as chromium is not known to have been used as a colorant for vitreous materials until after about 1800.<sup>7</sup>

Concurrent with documentation, treatment, and analysis of the relief, provenance research was pursued in an effort to unravel the unexpectedly complicated history of prior treatment.

In December of 1870, the relief was in the hands of one V. Cappelli, who shipped it to the South Kensington Museum



Fig. 2. *Adam and Eve*. Map of condition after cleaning. Breaks, losses, and fills are indicated in red; displaced original fragments are indicated in yellow; possible original joints are indicated in cyan; nineteenth-century glazed terracotta restorations are indicated in green.

in London with C. Ferrario acting as intermediary. The relief was offered for sale at the considerable price of £1,000 (approximately £103,000 in 2018).<sup>8</sup> No photographic records of its condition are known to survive, but it is described in detail in a technical report written for the South Kensington Museum by Matthew Digby Wyatt (Appendix A) as well as in the 1871 January and February issues of *The Art-Journal* (London), leaving no doubt as to the identity of the relief. The written descriptions of the appearance and condition of the object reveal that the glazed terracotta restorations were in place at that time, as well as the initial campaign of tinted plaster and paint.

Digby Wyatt had the benefit of examining the object in several pieces, with differences in the colors of the clay bodies as well as the extent of plaster and paint restoration quite visible on the reverse. He summed up his views thus:

I think a little of this is old and a great deal *quite modern*. I recommend the Department have nothing to do with this specimen—its price is very large and in my opinion its authenticity is questionable. . . . It is much made up with plaster and coloured (not fired) in many places. The various pieces are made with quite different, at any rate two different kinds of clay—and colour has been applied in many places to make new material appear old.<sup>9</sup>

The South Kensington Museum declined to purchase the relief, and it was returned to Florence in 1871 (Appendix B).



Fig. 3. The *Adam and Eve* as it appeared in 1902, when it was sold at auction. The inscription was installed differently at this time, with the rhyming couplet placed in the center of the text; many of the details in the background appear to be obscured by restoration material. Reproduced from *Catalogue des objets d'art de haute curiosité de l'antiquité, du moyen-âge et de la renaissance . . . dépendant des collections de Mme C. Lelong*, Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, December 8–10, 1902, lot no. 98.

The scholar Allen Marquand, writing in 1920, recalled seeing the relief in 1884 in the shop of an antiques dealer, Angelo Cappelli, in the Borgo Ognissanti, in Florence.<sup>10</sup> In 1886, the relief was sold to a Parisian art collector, Camille Lelong, by a woman from Valdarno named Adele Ristori and was shipped to Paris despite efforts by Italian authorities to bar its export.<sup>11</sup>

Henry Walters purchased the relief in 1902 at auction in Paris from the estate of the widow of Camille Lelong.<sup>12</sup> The catalogue for the sale includes an image of the relief, which appears damaged and visibly grimy (fig. 3); the text of the inscription is presented in a different configuration, and the entry notes that it is incomplete.<sup>13</sup>

Based on this accumulated evidence, it seems very likely that the relief was reconstructed in the nineteenth century, probably in Italy in 1870 or slightly before, from an incomplete collection of fragments of a larger sixteenth-century monument. Working from the largest to the smallest sections, and then completing the assemblage with newly made pieces of glazed terracotta, the restorers created a reduced version of the original that strongly privileged the sculptural qualities of the two figures.

Several of the restorations on the relief appear somewhat questionable in terms of their interpolated forms, which suggests that the restorers were unaware of the original appearance of the relief. For example, the Adam's right arm awkwardly invades the trunk of an adjacent tree; the restoration to Eve's right arm has positioned her hand above the original location, in which it was glazed to the trunk of the central tree; and the indistinct ears of yellow grain painted in the glaze elsewhere on the relief have been clearly articulated as an ear of corn in one inserted section.<sup>14</sup> The fig leaves around the waists of the figures are also nineteenth-century restorations, but there is reason to believe that they replace original leaves in similar positions, one of which may be observed on Eve's left side.

The pictorial source for this relief has long been thought to be a 1504 print by Albrecht Dürer, copied by Marcantonio Raimondi in 1510 or 1512 and widely distributed in Italy,<sup>15</sup> though the image's relationship to the entry of Leo X is obscure, and the Old Testament subject matter is unusual for the della Robbia workshop. It is worth noting that the central scene of the relief also bears some striking similarities

to Paolo Uccello's fresco of the Temptation from the Chiostro Verde of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, which was the endpoint of the triumphal entry and served as the pope's residence for several weeks.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the fresco survives only in very damaged condition, making direct comparisons difficult.

These considerations aside, the nineteenth-century restorers succeeded in salvaging a severely damaged monument and creating an attractive, aesthetically integrated work of art. The very high price and the proposed sale to the South Kensington Museum, which was actively building a collection of Renaissance glazed terracotta sculpture, suggest some mercenary intent on the part of the dealer Cappelli, and raise the possibility that the relief was purposely reconstructed in order to appeal to late nineteenth-century English taste in majolica and "Della Robbia ware."

By 1870, the South Kensington Museum had amassed a collection of forty-nine Renaissance glazed terracotta objects attributed to members of the della Robbia family, largely due to the work of curator John Charles Robinson. Robinson pursued the acquisition of these objects with zeal, arguing that they exemplified the newly defined category of "decorative art" partaking equally of the "craft" aspects of ceramics and the "art" aspects of sculpture.<sup>17</sup>

In his influential publication, *Italian Sculpture of the Middle Ages and Period of the Revival of Art* (1862), Robinson positions his discussion of Luca della Robbia and glazed terracotta in between discussions of marble sculpture and painted maiolica vessels. Influenced in part by the theory of the "artist craftsman" advocated by his friend and colleague John Ruskin, Robinson's conception of glazed terracotta as midway between marble sculpture and maiolica, and somehow directly in conversation with modern majolica wares, extended to the installation of the museum itself, in which della Robbia reliefs were positioned between galleries of ceramics and marble, and intermingled with occasional contemporary products of the Minton manufactory.<sup>18</sup> The stark white figures produced by the della Robbia workshops were particularly prized, as they could easily be presented as surrogates for white marble sculpture, and were thus agreeable to the general taste for monochromatic forms established by Johann Joachim Winckelmann in the mid-eighteenth century and upheld by Ruskin a century later, who judged, "the truest grandeur of sculpture to be in

the white form."<sup>19</sup> Robinson himself termed the polychrome glazed terracotta reliefs to be a "degradation."<sup>20</sup>

In material, technique, and execution, the reconstruction and restoration of the *Adam and Eve* mirrors this understanding of glazed terracotta as intermediate between the "craft" of polychromatic maiolica vessels and the "art" of pure white marble sculpture. The low relief, polychromatic vegetation and animals of the background are treated as subordinate, decorative elements, which are neither assembled in a coherent manner nor restored to complete the missing forms, thus minimizing their presence. The high relief of the classicizing, pure white figures, however, is completed in all their details, adding limbs, digits, and attributes where necessary, emphasizing their presence within the relief.

The nineteenth-century restorations in glazed terracotta are remarkably well fitted to the break edges of the original fragments. This suggests they were modeled on the original surfaces and separated for firing and glazing before returning them to the relief. Nineteenth-century restorers employed similar methods for completing fragmentary ceramic vessels by throwing or building a section of new clay directly on the original, then firing it separately. On the fragments added to the relief, the application of colored glazes over a white ground approximates the look of the original della Robbia glazes, but the painted two-layered technique is borrowed from painted maiolica vessels, and represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the techniques of the della Robbia.<sup>21</sup>

Italian restorers of marble sculpture in the nineteenth century also modeled clay *in situ* to complete missing fragments before detaching them and using pointing machines to carve precisely fitted pieces of marble.<sup>22</sup> The iron staples and pins used to secure terracotta restorations on the relief are very similar to those used to join restorations to marble sculpture; likewise, the overall covering of wax was a common restorer's technique for disguising repairs and additions to marble sculpture.<sup>23</sup>

A close examination of the restorations thus suggests that not only is the overall effect calculated to appeal to Victorian tastes in collecting as exemplified by the South Kensington Museum, but the materials and techniques themselves are predicated upon an understanding of glazed terracotta as partaking of both the craft of maiolica and the art of marble sculpture.



The rapid formation of the South Kensington collection of glazed terracotta during the 1850s and 1860s, together with a growing interest among French collectors at the same time, informed not only the taste for such artworks, but also their potential market values. In the introduction to *Italian Sculpture*, Robinson asserts that the South Kensington Museum had acquired virtually every known work of quality available on the market, meaning that though “the courtyards and porticos of palaces and villas may still yield interesting fragments or minor works of a moveable nature, the formation of any systematic collection . . . will henceforth be very difficult.”<sup>24</sup>

At the time that Robinson was writing, Florentine laws, as well as more recent Italian national laws, had forbidden “the sale or destruction of any works of Della Robbia ware that had been heretofore visible.”<sup>25</sup> Italian authorities seem to have applied this prohibition primarily to well-known works in complete condition, which may go some way to explaining why the authorities permitted the *Adam and Eve*, previously known (if at all) only as fragments, to exit the country in 1870 but intervened to halt the export of the relief in 1886, by which time it had been known as a complete object for sixteen years. Given the increased demand and restricted supply of major works of glazed terracotta, this seeming legal loophole for “fragments” appears to have created a strong incentive to locate, assemble, restore, and sell damaged works in the second half of the nineteenth century.

It is hoped that further provenance research, in combination with the examination and analysis of similar restorations and nineteenth-century reproductions, may yield additional information relevant to identifying when, where, and by whom the *Adam and Eve* was reconstructed and restored.

The examination, analysis, and conservation treatment of the Walters's *Adam and Eve* have achieved the immediate aims of documenting condition, stabilizing loose fragments, and improving the appearance of prior restorations. But they have also yielded significant information about the past history of the relief, revealing it to be a hybrid object combining sixteenth-century fragments with nineteenth-century restorations to create a unified work calculated to appeal to Victorian tastes in collecting “della Robbia” works (fig. 4).

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Fig. 4. *Adam and Eve*, after treatment. Breaks, losses, and previous plaster fills have been retouched to present a unified appearance when viewed from a distance. Limited additional filling was undertaken, meaning that damages and restorations in glazed terracotta and other materials are visible on close inspection.

## NOTES

1. See Allan Marquand, “A Memorial of the Entry of Leo X into Florence,” *The Burlington Magazine* 20, no. 103 (1911): 36–38; Marquand, *Della Robbias in America* (Princeton, 1912), III–16 (no. 39); Marquand, *Giovanni Della Robbia* (Princeton 1920), 90–91; Giancarlo Gentilini, *A Parigi “in un carico di vino”: Furti di Robbiane nel Valdarno*, Città di Figline Valdarno: Assessorato all Cultura Microstudi 26 (Florence, 2012). While nothing certain is known of the origins of the *Adam and Eve*, it has been noted that the presence of the cipher “LX” on the Salviati crest indicates a date after 1515, suggesting that the relief was created as a commemorative monument after the triumphal entry of Leo X. Marquand, *Giovanni Della Robbia*, 92 note. None of the surviving accounts of the temporary apparata created for the entry appear to describe the relief; the very durable material from which it is constructed may also argue in favor of its role as a permanent commemorative monument created after the fact. John Shearman, “The Florentine Entrata of Leo X, 1515,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 38 (1975): 136–54 at 148n36; Ilaria Ciseri, “Con tanto

- grandissimo e trionfante onore': Immagini dall'ingresso fiorentino di papa Leone X nel 1515," *Nello speldore mediceo: Papa Leone X e Firenze*, ed. Nicoletta Baldini and Monica Bietti, 237–49 at 238–39 (Florence, 2013). One other glazed terracotta relief attributed to Giovanni della Robbia also bears the crests of the Buondelmonti and Salviati families: a *Madonna della Cintola with Saints* in the Oratorio della Madonna della Grazie in San Giovanni, Valdarno. The relief is dated to about 1514 and is believed to have been a joint commission by the two families. The Oratorio in which it is installed was at the time a beneficence of Leo X; it is tempting to think that the *Adam and Eve* may have been a similar joint commission for a public or sacred space associated with one of the myriad beneficences of Leo X or his powerful Medici relatives. Marquand, *Giovanni Della Robbia*, 85–86.
2. The inscription, cleaned of excess paint and fill material, shows evidence of five discontinuities indicative of missing or transposed text (here shown with the symbol /), meaning it should be read with caution. It currently reads “/leo xvs pont max ingr/esus est flo/tia xxxa d(?)/ adam primus homo danavit secmla pomo/.” Allan Marquand has interpreted this inscription as “Leo [decimus] pont[ifex] max[imus] ingresus est flo[ren]tia[m] [tricesimus] d[iem] Adam primus homo damnavit secula pomo,” meaning, “Pope Leo tenth enters into Florence on the thirtieth day [of November, 1515], Adam the first man damned by the apple.” Marquand, “A Memorial of the Entry of Leo X into Florence,” 37, 39.
  3. Abigail Hykin, “Materials and Techniques,” in *Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence*, ed. Marietta Cambarelli, 129–43 (Boston, 2016).
  4. Catherine Lepeltier and Laurence Labbe, “Étude du retable de l'Ascension d'Andrea et Giovanni della Robbia,” in *Della Robbia: Dieci anni di studi*, ed. Anne Bouquillon, Marc Bormand, and Alessandro Zucchiatti, 90–95 (Genoa, 2011).
  5. Loaned by Bruker Scientific and Elio XRF. The Bruker Tracer III-V and Elio XRF units were both used for x-ray fluorescence spectrometry (XRF) of glaze surfaces. Using the Bruker Tracer III-V, twenty-four sites of similarly colored glazes on the two sets of terracotta were analyzed with 120-second acquisition time at 40 kV and 4.75  $\mu$ A with no filter, in contact with the surface and under vacuum, average counts per second  $\sim$ 2.5k. Spot analysis on the same set of sites was performed with the Elio XRF unit as well, under varying parameters.
  6. Mariana Sendova et al., “Della Robbia Blue Glaze: Micro-Raman Temperature Study and X-ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy Characterization,” *Journal of Raman Spectroscopy* 41 (2009): 469–72; Alessandro Zucchiatti and Anne Bouquillon, “Les glaçures: Atout maître des Della Robbia,” and Adrian Durán et al., “Les pigments jaunes des glaçures de l'atelier des Della Robbia,” in *Della Robbia: Dieci anni di studi*, 32–43 and 44–49.
  7. Monica Hornig-Sutter, “Meißener Porzellane des 18. Jahrhunderts im Visier von Kuntgeschichte und Naturwissenschaft, Teil I,” *Welkunst* 54 [23] (1984): 3654–3658; Mark Wypyski, “Identification of Nineteenth-Century Limoges Painted Enamels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Characterization of Enamel Compositions,” in *Neue Forschungen zum Maleremal aus Limoges: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on New Research on Limoges Painted Enamels, Braunschweig, April 18–20, 2002* (Braunschweig, 2004): 123–31.
  8. Victoria & Albert Archives RP/1870/48677 1870/12/20.
  9. Victoria & Albert Archives MA/3/35 RP/1870/49059: Technical Report on the object written by Matthew Digby Wyatt.
  10. Marquand, *Giovanni della Robbia*, 90.
  11. Gentilini, *A Parigi “in un carico di vino,”* 17.
  12. “Chronique des ventes: Collections de Mme Lelong, Première vente,” *Bulletin de l'art ancien et modern*, no. 158 (December 13, 1902).
  13. *Catalogue des objets d'art de haute curiosité de l'antiquité, du moyen-âge et de la renaissance . . . dépendant des collections de Mme C. Lelong*, Paris: Galerie Georges Petit, December 8–10, 1902, lot no. 98.
  14. Modern scholars, including Lia Markey (*Imagining the Americas in Medici Florence* [University Park, Pa., 2016], 14), have identified the yellow grain as a representation of corn or maize, New World species not native to Europe. However, there may be reason for caution in making this identification: the three-dimensional ear of grain at Adam's proper left forearm has been assembled from disparate fragments of original terracotta and completed with plaster and paint; the raised ear of corn to the proper left of Eve is a nineteenth-century addition. The yellow ears of grain painted in the glaze on original sixteenth-century fragments are executed very loosely and vary in size and shape, making it difficult to identify the species they represent with any degree of confidence. Problematically, each stalk is represented as having a single, terminal ear of grain, as is the case with plants such as barley, millet, or sorghum, while corn and maize have multiple, brachial ears.
  15. *Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence*, ed. Marietta Cambarelli, 82, 87 (Boston, 2016).
  16. See Shearman, “The Florentine Entrata of Leo X,” 143, 148n36.
  17. Charlotte Drew, “[Displaying Italian Sculpture: Exploring Hierarchies at the South Kensington Museum, 1852–1862](#)” (Ph.D. thesis, University of York, 2014), 107–8, 204.

18. Drew, "Displaying Italian Sculpture," 164, 186, 303.
19. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 5 vols. (London, 1906), 2:301.
20. J. C. Robinson, *Italian Sculpture of the Middle Ages and the Period of the Revival of Art: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Works Forming the Above Section of the [South Kensington] Museum, with Additional Illustrative Notices* (London, 1862), 50.
21. Cipriano Piccolpasso, *I tre libri dell'arte del vasaio*, ed. and trans. Ronald Lightbrown and Alan Caiger-Smith (London, 1980)
22. Francesco Carradori, *Istruzione elementare per gli studiosi della scultura* (Florence, 1802), 27–30.
23. Brigitte Bourgeois, "Secure for Eternity? Assembly Techniques for Large Statuary in the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Century," in *History of Restoration of Ancient Stone Sculptures*, ed. Janet Burnett Grossman, Jerry Podany, and Marian True, 149–62 (Los Angeles, 2003).
24. Robinson, *Italian Sculpture*, vii.
25. Robinson, *Italian Sculpture*, 64.



APPENDIX A

681

March 1869. No. 653.

SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT  
OF THE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL ON EDUCATION,  
SOUTH KENSINGTON.

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCE PAPER.

1. Subject of Reference. *a large "della Robbia" (Adam & Eve)*

2. Received from. *Signor Cappelli. per Ferrario.*

3. Price. *£1000.* (Registered No. of document *49.686*)

4. Reference to similar objects in the Museum.

Year of acquisition . Registered No. . Price. £

*A.R.R. holo P*

No 49059  
23 DEC  
1870

*A.D. 24 Dec.*

Italian REPORT.

*I think a little of this is old, and a great deal quite modern.*

~~Verdugo's report is different from the others~~

I recommend the Department to have nothing to do with this specimen - Its price is very large and in my opinion its authenticity very questionable.

A large specimen of della Robbia of such importance commemorating an historical entry of Leo X into Florence and bearing his arms would be almost sure to have been well known and cared for.

Moreover there are several points of style in the work which do not hand well together - viz - the head of the Serpent and the archaic form of the shields - It is much made up with plaster and coloured (not fired) in many places - The various pieces are made with quite different, at any rate two different kinds, of clay - and colour has been applied in many places to make new material look old. Not recommended.

*Don't take*

*W 2/87*

*Decline*

*73/12*

*Noted*

*See letter Book*

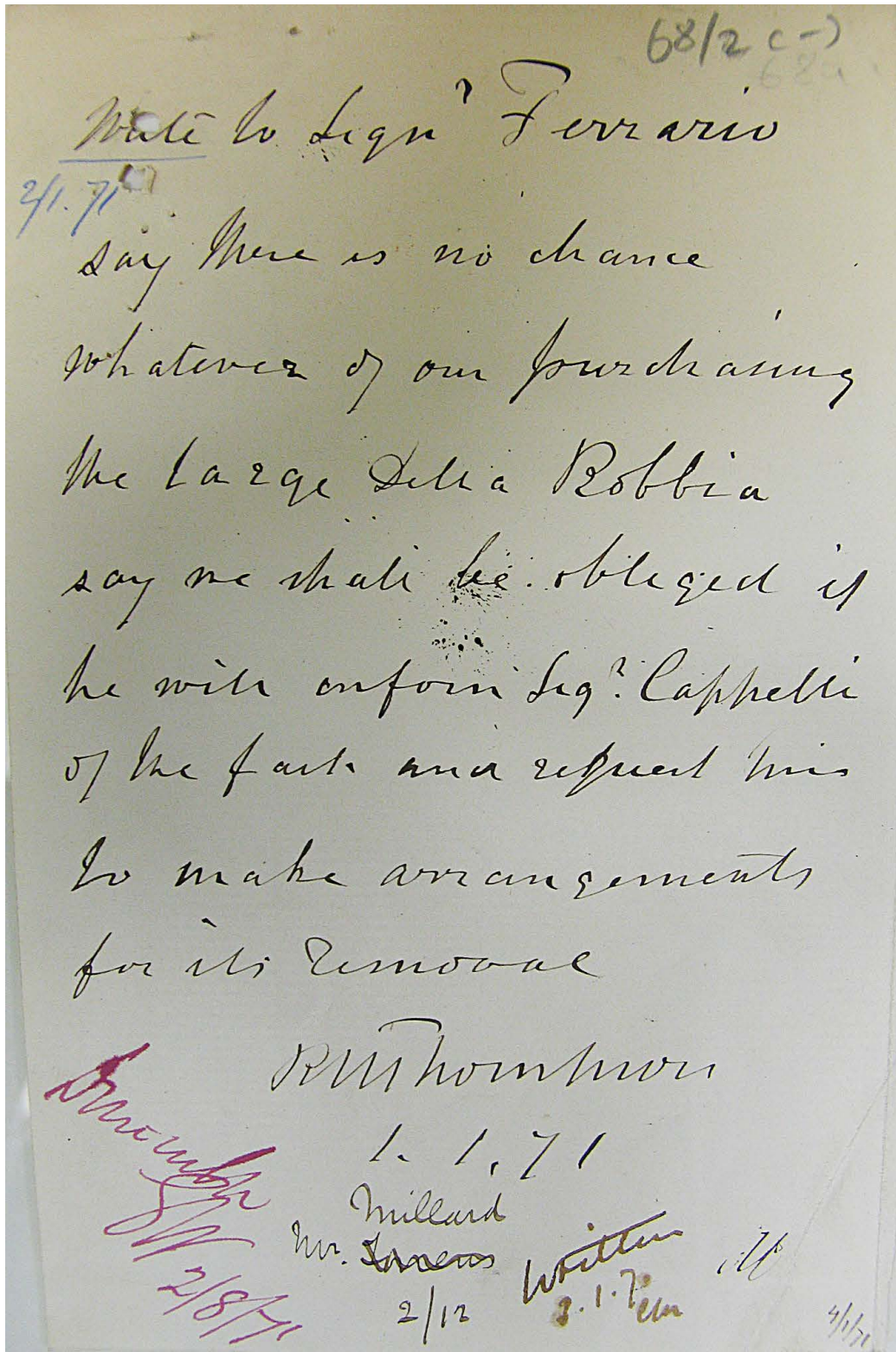
*3.1.70*

*M. Digby Wyatt*

Examination report of Matthew Digby Wyatt, dated December 24, 1870. Photo V&A archive ref: MA/3/35 RP/1870/49059



APPENDIX A



Draft of a letter to C. Ferrario from the South Kensington Museum, declining to purchase the relief, dated January 1, 1871. Photo V&A archive ref. RP/1871/12407 1871/03/13

## MINIATURE MYSTERIES

### NEW PROPOSALS ON THE HANDLING, CREATION, AND AUTHENTICATION OF LATE MEDIEVAL PRAYER NUTS

JOANEATH SPICER

Among the most spectacular objects that came into being to foster piety among the laity in the late 1400s are spherical boxwood “prayer nuts,” popular in the Netherlands around 1500 to 1530.<sup>1</sup> Their unusual complexities prompt many questions, three of which I address here. Typically decorated

with delicate, pierced tracery on the exterior, their shape was apparently adapted from the spherical, perforated metal pomanders (from the French for “apple of ambergris,” literally: apple of perfume) that many kept on their persons to dispel evil smells and that often did double service within a rosary or string of prayer beads as a paternoster bead, the larger bead marking the prayer beginning “Our Father” that concluded a set of ten beads for the prayers beginning with “Hail Mary.”<sup>2</sup> Prayer nuts open to reveal minutely carved scenes from the lives of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints, often accompanied by texts from devotional or liturgical sources, as illustrated by an open *Paternoster Pendant Bead in the Form of a Prayer Nut* (figs. 1, 2), one of five examples



Fig. 1. Adam Dirksz. and Workshop (Netherlandish, active ca. 1500–1540). *Paternoster Pendant Bead in the Form of a Prayer Nut*, open to reveal the Crucifixion (below) and the Resurrection (above), ca. 1530. Boxwood, hinge to clasp:  $1\frac{7}{8} \times 1\frac{15}{16} \times 2$  in. (hinge to clasp  $4.8 \times 4.9 \times 5.1$  cm); length when opened:  $3\frac{7}{8}$  in. (9.8 cm). The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, acc. no. 61.132. The lower half is actually the top, to which a suspension loop was attached.

Fig. 2. Adam Dirksz. and Workshop. *Pendant Bead in the Form of a Prayer Nut*: Exterior of bead in figure 1.



in the Walters Art Museum.<sup>3</sup> Early references to them not only as “apples” but as “nuts” presumably stemmed from their perceived similarity to the walnuts that often appear, closed or open, in European art in the 1500s. Indeed, the exterior of at least one extant prayer nut is explicitly carved to resemble a walnut.<sup>4</sup>

It is generally assumed that prayer nuts were initially intended to serve chiefly, though not exclusively, as paternoster pendants of rosaries, especially ones consisting of a single set of ten Hail Marys, thus a “decade” rosary, illustrated by an example (fig. 3), probably made to be worn suspended from a belt by Margaretha van Glymes, Countess of Buren (1481–1551), and consisting of an initial ring, a crucifix, ten Hail Mary beads and finishing with a larger paternoster bead, which in this case is a prayer nut.<sup>5</sup> This is one of two complete decade rosaries including a prayer nut known today.<sup>6</sup> Except for exceptionally expensive rosaries, it was the paternoster bead(s) that distinguished and personalized the rosary; their character could range from a simple tassel to subtly carved beads in precious materials such as ivory, jet, or boxwood. An intriguing and possibly unique image of basic rosaries available

for personalization is found in the margins of the Walters’ *Hours of Duke Adolph of Cleves* (fig. 4) from the 1480s (W.439).<sup>7</sup> I suspect that some of the stringed beads on display in the goldsmith shop are “off the shelf” rosaries, for example, the two decade rosaries at the left, one of coral, a favored luxury material for this purpose. Since an inscription in the volume implies that it was commissioned by Anne, the Duchess of Cleves, as a gift for her husband, it is possible that the adult woman at the right is the duchess, selecting a rosary.

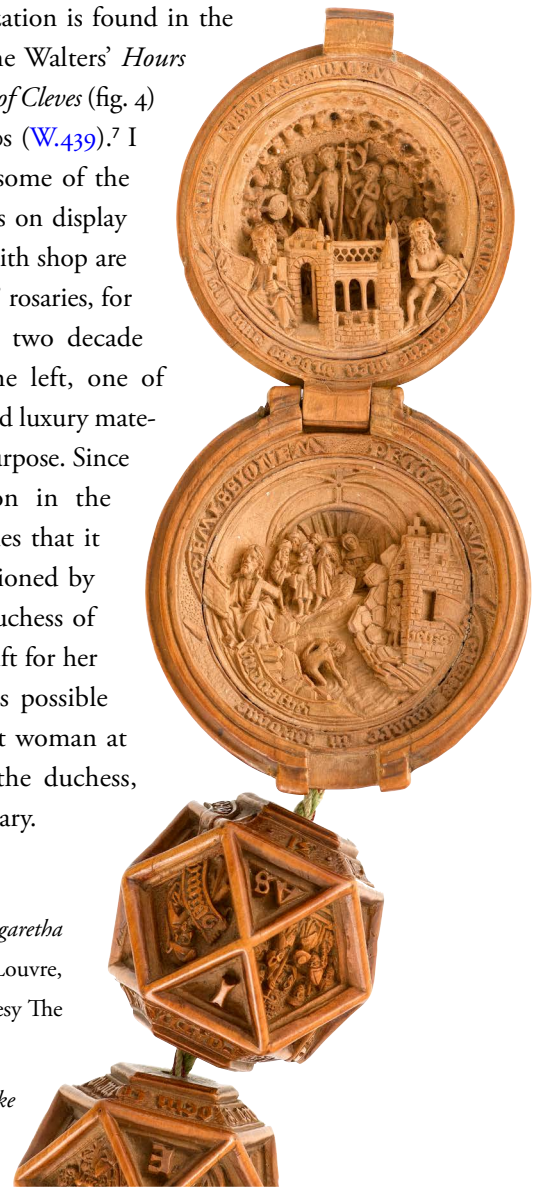


Fig. 3 (right). Adam Dirksz. and Workshop. *Decade Rosary for Floris von Egmond and Margaretha van Glymes* (detail), ca. 1510–1539. Boxwood, length 18 ½ in. (47 cm). Paris: Musée du Louvre, Département des Objets d’art, inv. no. OA 5610. Photo © Paris: Musée du Louvre, courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 4 (below). Flemish (Ghent). *Visiting a Jeweler*. Marginal detail from *The Hours of Duke Adolph of Cleves*, 1480s. Ink and paint on parchment, page 6 5/8 × 4 5/8 in (16.9 × 11.7 cm). The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, W.439, fol. 64r





This category of luxury devotional objects has recently been the subject of extended scholarly discussion, most especially in connection with the fruitful, multifaceted research generated by the exhibition *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Micro-Carvings from the Low Countries* (Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum); the catalogue of the same name edited by [Frits Scholten \(2016\)](#); an accompanying publication, *Small Wonders, Gothic Boxwood Miniatures* by Alexandra Suda and Lisa Elis; online essays focused on technical analysis chiefly by Pete Dandridge and Lisa Elis; and a database, most of which found within the online [Boxwood Project](#). While a range of compelling insights are brought together here, including on the predominance of Adam Dircksz.'s workshop, the biggest revelation was the extended exposition and analysis of how prayer nuts and other micro-carvings in boxwood were constructed, taking advantage of available imaging techniques.

It is sign of the richness of the material that there remain many questions. Characteristics of examples belonging to the Walters Art Museum prompt various queries, for example: How were they actually handled? How were the complex interior scenes designed? Is there evidence for assessing the Walters' *Prayer Nut in the Shape of the Head of the Virgin* as a work from the 1800s rather than the 1500s?

## HANDLING AND HOLDING

A prayer nut, whether attached to a rosary or as a stand-alone devotional aid, cannot function without being handled or held. Their operation requires opening. Nevertheless, little attention has been given to how they “operated” — perhaps because it may seem obvious. Holding a prayer nut such as the Walters' *Paternoster Pendant Bead in the Form of a Prayer Nut* (see figs. 1, 2) involves it resting in the cavity of the palm, securing the object.<sup>8</sup> Prayer nuts were most probably held in the palm of one hand to be opened by the fingers of the other. A counterpoint is provided by the nearly contemporaneous development in Nuremberg of the spherical, gilded brass pocket watch, as that by Peter Henlein and dated 1530 in the Walters ([acc. no. 58.17](#)). Indeed, the design may have drawn on the prayer nut. The watch is heavier, but it has the same dimensions and format as the prayer nut — the

owner-operator opens the sphere by lifting the perforated, semispherical lid with the tips of the fingers to reveal the dial.

An aspect of handling and holding prayer nuts that has recently intrigued me is the discovery that individual examples open with different orientations, specifically how they open relative to the suspension mount, thus to the “top.” Some would have opened right-side up for easy viewing but others open upside down. The *Decade Rosary* (see fig. 3) with a prayer nut paternoster pendant presumably made by Adam Dircksz. to be worn by Margaretha van Glymes opens with the interior scenes upside down, as can be discerned in the illustration. The orientation of the scenes in the “open” position in prayer nuts that in their current state are separate objects — such as the Walters *Paternoster Pendant Bead in the Form of a Prayer Nut*, also by Dircksz. — can be assessed by identifying which half is home to the suspension loop (or to the larger hole for it when the loop is lost). The mount for the Walters prayer nut by Adam Dircksz. is missing but a comparison of the mount holes (the smaller, bottom one for a simple rosette) and the shields on the exterior confirms that as suspended the view would have been in reverse of how it is illustrated in figure 1, thus apparently “upside down.” While some prayer nuts were not to be suspended, for those that were, could the different built-in definitions of “up” relate to different ways they were to be handled and viewed?<sup>9</sup>

The standard organization of a decade rosary is for all components to be oriented in alignment with the top of each component (if there is a “top”) toward the initial ring. In some prayer nuts it is possible that the interior scenes have become dislodged from their original orientation,<sup>10</sup> but that did not happen to Walters 61.132. The view in fig. 1 includes the lower portion of Christ's Resurrection. The integrated tab at the lower edge of the interior shell fits snugly into a gap in the surrounding border, as does a parallel tab at the lower edge of the Crucifixion. I propose that the function of the tab is to secure the orientation of the scene as the maker wished, not only here but in some other prayer nuts by Adam Dircksz., for example the one signed by the artist in [Copenhagen](#) and another by him in [Amsterdam](#).<sup>11</sup>

Let us suppose then that the Walters upside-down prayer nut was suspended from a decade rosary, which in turn was to hang from a belt or girdle, probably (given the character of the prayer nut) that of a woman of refined tastes. To judge

from extant representations of individuals with rosaries, it appears to have been women and clerical figures who actually wore them from belts, while men in secular life did not. The prayer nut paternoster pendant of the elaborate, surprisingly bulky *Decade Rosary* that apparently was made for the use of Henry VIII ([Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection](#)), opens right-side up, as I expect of a rosary that was not intended to be worn but to be picked up, presumably by larger hands.<sup>12</sup> Henry would then be facing it and the prayer nut on his rosary would in consequence open “correctly.” If, however, the rosary, as that for Margaret of Glymes (see fig. 3), is suspended from a belt and the pious user works her way down the beads, moving away from the body, then the prayer nut will come to rest in the left hand (if she is right handed) and now [opens right-side up](#) and perfectly positioned for contemplation.

Therefore, I propose for discussion that prayer nuts appearing to open “upside down” relative to their suspension loop were to hang from a woman’s belt.

## THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The recent, coordinated application of a range of imaging techniques to significant numbers of prayer nuts in many collections with the goal of better understanding their structure and stages of execution has been extremely productive, especially as regards the interior scenes of the more complex pieces.<sup>13</sup> With remarkable virtuosity, carvers created not only spatial depth, in some instances through separately carved planes, but also narrative coherence integrating large numbers of figures. The deconstruction of selected examples and the use of macro imaging answers certain questions but their complexity prompts a new one: how were the scenes composed in the first place, both to work out the intricate arrangements and to fit them into given, constricted spaces? As the semi-spherical shell framing the scene and the figural relief(s) staged in it appear to be normally from the scoop of wood carefully removed at an earlier point in the process, there is little room for error.<sup>14</sup>

I propose that beeswax—the traditional medium goldsmiths and medalists used for modeling tiny figures and other details—would be the most likely material for creating a model, especially as it can be easily altered.<sup>15</sup> Metalpoint

drawings may have played some role in the process, such as adapting motifs from larger-scale sources such as engravings, but playing with a composition this small is not practical using metalpoint as the lines cannot be altered and within a 1–1 1/4 in. (2.5–3 cm) field would be fuzzy. The specific prompt for my proposal is a little-studied pair of circular relief compositions in beeswax mounted under rock crystal into the exterior of a *Locket with Scenes of Christ’s Passion* (fig. 5). The simple reliefs (only one plane) of the Pietà (illustrated) and Ecce Homo with some indicated architecture have about the same diameter as prayer nut interior scenes, and the metalwork and enamel are datable to around 1490–1500. The color of beeswax is variable—here curiously but probably coincidentally similar to that of boxwood—and depends on many factors including the plant material with which the bees came in contact and the passage of time. Research to identify comparable examples has not been successful. So whether these reliefs could conceivably have been made initially as models for boxwood micro-carving and then reused for this



Fig. 5. French or Netherlandish. *Locket with Scenes of Christ’s Passion*, ca. 1480–1500. Basse-taille enamel on silver, beeswax, pigment, rock crystal, gilded silver mount. Height without chain: 1 1/16 × 1 1/16 × 1 1/16 in. (4 × 3.9 × 1.8 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Mrs. John Russell Pope, 1943, [acc. no. 44.590](#)

locket or they were made specifically for inclusion in this locket, their similarities with boxwood micro-reliefs call the question: What would the initial design stage for creating the interior narratives of prayer nuts look like?

#### VARIATIONS AND AUTHENTICITY: HEAD OF THE VIRGIN

As this essay was being completed, a publication appeared describing the Walters *Prayer Nut in the Shape of the Virgin's Head* (fig. 6, left), as most likely a nineteenth-century reproduction based on a similar, larger example now assigned to the years 1520–26 in the [Schnütgen Museum, Cologne](#) (fig. 6, right).<sup>16</sup> For this writer, the basic question is: in the absence of any specific independent evidence that would tie either example to a time period other than the 1500s, do the two pieces demonstrate similarities or differences that

would be inconsistent with their being produced in the same workshop and in the same timeframe? Before outlining their characteristics, a synopsis of the attribution history of the Walters piece is in order. In brief, from the first mention of the piece in museum records in 1944 to 2015, when I made a fresh assessment in response to a loan request for *Small Wonders*, it was considered vaguely suspect as a sixteenth-century object and possibly or probably nineteenth century. Unsigned, undated curatorial file notes, probably by Philippe Verdier (curator from 1953 to 1965), propose that it was based on the Schnütgen *Head* and suggest a dating to the 1800s but without citing reasons. The Schnütgen *Head* itself was doubted and assigned a date ca. 1900 in the first book-length study of boxwood micro-carving (1992), apparently because the author knew no other examples.<sup>17</sup> My assessment in 2015 did not turn up any evidence inconsistent with the *Head* being exactly what it presented as being, from the 1500s.<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 6. German. Two prayer nuts in the shape of the Virgin's head. *Left*: ca. 1510–1526. Fruitwood (pear?), metal hook and eye fastener (broken off), metal hinge pin (replacement?),  $2 \frac{5}{16} \times 1 \frac{3}{4} \times 1 \frac{15}{16}$  in. (5.8 × 4.5 × 5 cm). The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, [acc. no. 61.123](#). *Right*: 1510–before 1526. Fruitwood (pear?),  $2 \frac{7}{8} \times 2 \frac{1}{16} \times 2 \frac{1}{16}$  in. (6.7 × 5.2 × 5.2 cm). Cologne: Museum Schnütgen (inv. no. A 997). Photo: Art Gallery of Ontario



These *Virgin's Heads* are from a subset of the general category of prayer nuts that take the shape of heads and have only recently come into focus. Of those identified today, four are in the shape of skulls and these two of the Virgin's head. In the literature, this type has been considered German, possibly from Nuremberg.<sup>19</sup> As a group, they may derive not only from prayer nuts but also from the tradition of ivory paternoster beads with a similar external appearance, to be explored below. With the expansion of the Ottoman Empire throughout the period in question, ivory became harder to obtain in Europe, and it is not impossible that in some degree the growing taste for micro-carving in locally obtained wood is a response to that shortage. Two of those in the shape of skulls, including one made for Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg and dated 1515 (Thomson collection, Art Gallery of Ontario), are sophisticated carvings and have a mechanism for suspension.<sup>20</sup> The other four—the Walters and Cologne *Virgin's Heads* as well as two *Skulls* in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels, and Kestner Museum, Hanover (both known to me only in photographs)—have similarly structured exteriors, including a substantial wooden hinge at the top, no means of suspension, and interiors featuring micro-carvings.<sup>21</sup> Having stable bases, they were surely intended as autonomous devotional objects.

The *Heads of the Mourning Virgin* take as their subject the ultimate exemplar of Christian compassion, Mary sorrowing for her son, as the framework for personal meditation. In terms of style, the *Heads* share obvious stylistic similarities but also small differences. Observation of the two together clarifies that they are made of the same wood, which is not the boxwood used for the conventional prayer nuts but has been provisionally identified as a fruitwood, possibly pear, as are the two *Skulls* in the Thomson collection. Fruitwoods were used more often in German areas than in the Netherlands. In the same vein I suggest that the general type of the Virgin's face in both pieces, exhibiting distinctive high, flat cheekbones and a long thin nose, is closer to austere facial types found in German sculpture, for example those favored by Tilman Riemenschneider (ca. 1460–1531), a possible area of further research.<sup>22</sup> The carving of the two *Heads* is very similar but exhibits variations. The profile of the Walters piece is slightly less filled out and the folds of cloth drape differently and more fluidly around the larger

example. Does this indicate the work of a clever counterfeiter more than three hundred years later (of whom no identified work remains) or, more likely, the more hasty completion of a version for the market?

The general exterior appearance of the *Virgin's Heads* appears less unusual if seen in relation to paternosters in a different medium, ivory, by which they may have been inspired. A comparison can be made to a *Paternoster Bead with a Tripartite Head of Christ, Death and a Young Woman* (fig. 7). The composition of the *Virgin's Head*, including the framing of the face, drapery at the base, and even the insistence on the open mouth to allow admiration for the detailing of the teeth, is comparable, as is the scale.

The interiors are different. While none of the four heads with the same hinge exhibits an inscription, it is only inside the Walters *Head* that the Passion scenes extend into the whole interior rather than a hemisphere. The carvings of the Carrying of the Cross and the Crucifixion in the two pieces are characterized by lively detail but even with the difficulties



Fig. 7. French or Netherlandish. *Paternoster Bead with the Faces of a Young Woman, Death, and Christ*. Ivory, H. 2 × diam. 1 13/16 (5.2 × 4.6 cm). The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, acc. no. 71.326

of assessing style at this scale they appear to be by different hands, as could be so within a workshop. While tracery fills the space outside the circular openings on the interior of the larger head, it is introduced within the upper narrative space in the Walters example, as it was in the 1515 *Skull* made for Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg, noted above. A CT scan of the Walters piece illustrating a horizontal plane through the foreground figures in which the alignment of the growth rings runs consistently through the figures and the outer shell demonstrates that both figural compositions were carved in place. This would surely be an unnecessary difficulty if one were cranking out a reproduction.

The bases of both are carved with related tracery patterns. A rim ensuring that the piece stands securely and high enough to protect the hook-and-eye closure mechanism encircles each base. This mechanism is intact on the Schnütgen example and broken off on that in the Walters. The shield on the base of the Schnütgen *Head* bears the carved device of the Nuremberg merchant Hans Imhoff (1488–1526). It has been asserted that the shield on the Walters piece bears the same device.<sup>23</sup> It is blank.<sup>24</sup> Were the assertion true, repetition of the device would be a factor in assessing the Walters *Head* as nineteenth century: I know of no instance of a family commissioning two similar pieces, and nineteenth-century collectors prized objects with status.

In sum, in the absence of evidence that ties the Baltimore *Head* to objects or techniques from the 1800s, the Baltimore and Cologne *Heads* may be considered German and both from the years 1520 to 1526. I suggest that the unusually large Cologne *Head* was made for Hans Imhoff as something special and the Walters *Head* can be understood as a regular-sized version made with an empty shield for the market while the primary version remained in the shop. The more we know about prayer nuts, the more we are aware of myriad small variations in quality and design as well as patterns of similarities within the larger category.<sup>25</sup>

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## NOTES

The thoughtful comments by Meg Craft, Eleanor Hughes, Amy Landau, Charles Dibble, and Frits Scholten on earlier drafts of this essay were greatly appreciated

1. For prayer nuts in general, see my introduction [Prayer Nuts](#) within the [Walters Chamber of Wonders micro-site](#) (with bibliography) and the extended and varied discussions in Frits Scholten, ed. *Small Wonders: Late Gothic Boxwood Micro-Carvings from the Low Countries* (Amsterdam 2016, [published online](#)), along with related essays and a database published together as an online [Boxwood Project](#) hosted by the Art Gallery of Ontario, as discussed below.
2. For the rosary as a context for prayer nuts, see Reindert Falkenburg, “Toys for the Soul, Prayer-nuts and Pomanders in Late Medieval Devotion,” in Frits Scholten and Reindert Falkenburg, *A Sense of Heaven: Sixteenth-Century Boxwood Carvings for Private Devotion* (exh. cat., Leeds, Henry Moore Institute, 1999), 32–47, and “Prayer Nuts Seen through the Eyes of the Heart,” [Scholten 2016, 106–41](#). For pomanders used as paternoster beads, see the depiction of a rosary in the *Hours of Duke Adolf of Cleves* from the 1480s (Walters [W.439](#)) on [fol. 40r](#).
3. The individual Walters prayer nuts, exhibiting a range of features, are referenced on the [Prayer Nuts](#) page, with links to their separate pages: 61.132, Adam Dircksz., Paternoster Pendant Bead in the Form of a Prayer Nut (discussed below); 61.131, Netherlandish, Prayer Nut Pendant with Christ Carrying of the Cross; 61.8, Netherlandish, Prayer Nut with the Conversion of Paul; 61.20, Netherlandish, Prayer Nut Pendant with the Holy Kinship; and 61.123, German, Prayer Nut in the Shape of the Virgin’s Head (discussed below).
4. [Scholten 2016, 52, fig. 48](#).
5. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Objets d’art, inv. no. OA 5610; [Scholten 2016, cat. no. 36](#), with bibliography. The depicted arms have been established as those of Floris van Egmond and Margaretha van Glymes; however, rosaries were personal, not shared items. While I cannot find this issue addressed in the literature, I propose that when there is evidence that an expensive rosary was meant to hang from a woman’s belt (to be argued in this case) and there are two coats of arms, then it was probably a gift for the wife from the husband. In contrast, see the discussion of the Chatsworth *Decade Rosary* below.
6. [Scholten 2016, catalogue nos. 35 \(Chatsworth\) and 36 \(Louvre\)](#).
7. An extended rosary of coral beads is illustrated in the margins of Walters [W.439, fol. 40r](#).
8. While my research on tactility goes back several years, issues addressed here were outlined in a talk “Opening the Netherlandish

- Prayer Nut (1500–1530) in the Hand” in a session on *Devotional Objects*, at the annual Sixteenth-century Studies Conference (Bruges, 2016), and in an entry “Prayer Nut Pendant,” for *A Feast for the Senses: Medieval Art and Experience*, ed. Martina Bagnoli, exh. cat., Baltimore: Walters Art Museum; Sarasota, Fla.: John and Mabel Ringling Museum of Art (Baltimore: Walters Art Museum, 2016), no. 58.
9. For an autonomous prayer nut, see Walters acc. no. 61.8.
  10. For a prayer nut with interior scenes that appear to have shifted, see [Walters acc. no. 61.131](#).
  11. For the relevant details for these two works, see [Scholten 2016](#), catalogue nos. 14, Copenhagen, and 15, Amsterdam. For another example exhibiting this tab, see the Boxwood Project: [private collection](#). For a discussion of tiny wooden pins to secure scenes in place, see Pete Dandridge and Lisa Ellis, “The Interior Carvings of Gothic Boxwood Prayer Beads.”
  12. See the thoughtful discussion of the likely source of this wedding gift bearing the arms of both Henry and his bride Catherine of Aragon—probably her Habsburg relatives—by Alexandra Suda and Barbara Boehm in “Handpicked: Collecting Boxwood Carvings from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-first Centuries,” 347, in [Scholten 2016](#). I suggest that this *Decade Rosary* for a great king would then exemplify one intended for the use of the husband even though the initials of both are included.
  13. See for example the essays by Pete Dandridge and Lisa Elis within the [Boxwood Project](#).
  14. Dandridge, [Boxwood Project](#).
  15. Scholten in [Scholten 2016](#), 21, briefly calls attention to the stylistic affinities of the micro-carver’s art with that of the silversmith.
  16. See further the page *Prayer Nut in the Shape of the Head of the Mourning Virgin* on the Walters Chamber of Wonders micro-site. The authenticity of the Walters *Head* is most recently questioned in Alexandra Suda, “Sixteenth-Century Micro-Carving and exceptions to the Norm: Three Case Studies,” in *Prayer Nuts, Private Devotion, and Early Modern Art Collecting*, ed. by Evelin Wetter and Frits Scholten (Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2017), 186–207, in the section “Two Prayer Beads in the Shape of a Woman’s Head: Original and Reproduction?” 204–7. Suda asserts that this *Virgin’s Head* was “undocumented within the Walters Collection.” This is puzzling. Acquired by Henry Walters in 1908 and part of his 1931 bequest, it was thereafter documented and tracked in the ordinary way. Nevertheless little attention was paid to it, for which see the references in the text. I had myself never focused on it prior to Suda’s visit in January 2013 in search of prayer nuts when, in my absence, objects conservator Meg Craft along with Martina Bagnoli, then the Walters’ Curator of European Art, 300 to 1400, drew it to Suda’s attention.
  17. Susan Jean Romanelli, *South Netherlandish Boxwood Devotional Sculpture, 1475–1530* (Ph.D. diss. New York, Columbia University, 1997), no. 68.
  18. The Walters *Head* was loaned to *Small Wonders* as ca. 1510–1530. In the exhibition, the two pieces were concisely labeled without dates, but in the catalogue the Walters *Head* was dated ca. 1510–1530 and that from Cologne as ca. 1500–before 1526.
  19. Most recently, Suda, “Three Case Studies,” 2017; however, a fruitwood *Skull* in the Art Gallery of Ontario’s Thomson collection (AGOID.29282) is listed in Scholten’s catalogue (no. 62) as made in Germany (Nuremberg?) but in the Boxwood Project database as Netherlandish.
  20. See note 19.
  21. J. Destrée, “Noix de chapelet,” in *Bulletin des Musées royaux d’art et d’histoire, Bruxelles* II/1(1930) 20–22, at 22, places this type chronologically at the later end of the prayer nut development and compares them to an existing tradition in ivory, as will the present author. Suda references the Belgian example but not the Hannover example, published in K. Dingelstedt, “Betnuss,” *Reallexikon zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte* 2 (1949): cols. 371–77.
  22. See, for example, the head of St. Anne in *St. Anne, the Virgin, and the Christ Child* (ca. 1505–1510, linden wood (39 3/8 × 13 × 8 in. [100 × 33 × 20.5 cm]), The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, [acc. no. 27.294](#)) The figures of the Virgin and the Christ Child are not well carved and are by an assistant; only St. Anne herself has a claim to the master’s hand, as Justus Bier proposed in 1944 (“An Anna Selbdritt by Riemenschneider,” *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 7/8 [1944/1945]: 10–37).
  23. Suda, “Three Case Studies,” 206.
  24. See fig. 2 for another example of the inclusion of an empty shield, available for the insertion of the purchaser’s arms.
  25. Many objects within the Renaissance collections at the Walters have been re-dated as partially or entirely nineteenth century when it could be demonstrated that technical or stylistic qualities were consistent with the later period. See a 2005 study by Terry Drayman-Weisser and Mark T. Wypyski on re-dating of some Renaissance jewelry: “Fabulous, Fantasy, or Fake? An Examination of the Renaissance Jewelry Collection of the Walters Art Museum,” *Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 63 (2005): 81–102.



## REVERSE ENGINEERING A TIBETAN RITUAL DAGGER

GLENN GATES AND MEG LOEW CRAFT

A sixteenth-century Tibetan ritual dagger, or *phur-bu*, in the Walters collection (fig. 1) presents a wonderfully menacing fantastical beast executed in a symphony of gold, silver, and copper set atop an equally frightening triangular iron blade. In preparation for the opening of the Arts of Asia installation in October 2017, the *phur-bu* was examined by Walters conservators; the dagger had received no previous conservation treatment at the Walters. While the object's accession records noted that red pigment had been applied to the surface of the dagger, conservators questioned whether the material was, in fact, remains of jeweler's rouge from prior restoration. The microscopic, x-radiographic, and x-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectroscopic analyses involved in addressing this question raised additional intriguing discoveries that relate to the appreciation of the masterful metallurgical craftsmanship practiced in Tibet during the early modern era and evidenced by the Walters *phur-bu*.

The dagger comprises three distinct structural parts: a triangular blade, a central grip or hilt, and a pommel depicting the three-headed deity Vajrakilaya. These elements are attached to an internal iron tang, with beaded wire covering the separate joins. The iron blade has two entwined silver metal snakes trailing downward on each of its three sides. The blade is capped by the head of a fierce *makara*, or polymorphic sea creature, that appears to have a gold surface, with silver teeth and irises, and copper sclera, or white-of-the-eyes. The central grip is formed by three silver elements: a central sphere is flanked by two representations of thunderbolts containing sixteen prongs each, with two eternal knots terminating either side. The pommel is a three-faced gold deity,

Fig. 1. Ritual Dagger. Tibet, 16th century. Copper alloy, silver, gold, and iron, 13 × 2 5/16 × 2 5/16 inches (33 × 5.8 × 5.8 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of John and Berthe Ford, 2002, [acc. no. 52.311](#)





Fig. 2. [Acc. no. 52.311](#): One deity face at the top of the handle before treatment (left) and after treatment (right).



Fig. 3. [Acc. no. 52.311](#): Rust on the iron blade caused by residual silver-polishing products.

ornamented with copper sclera and silver tongues, irises, and teeth; all these decorative elements are secured over the tang by a capping silver rivet. The dagger was used only ceremonially and never as a weapon: the cutting edges and the point have never been sharpened, confirming its exclusively ritual use. Its triangular blade shape is derived from the shape of a tent stake, rather than from weaponry.<sup>1</sup>

Initial microscopic examination of the dagger revealed several issues related to the object's preparation for exhibition. The silver snakes entwined on the iron blade and the silver eternal knots and thunderbolts on the hilt were darkened unevenly and tarnished (fig. 2). Recessed areas were filled with reddish gray wax-like particulate residues that obscured details and features of the gold makara and the three-faced deity. Most significantly, residues adjacent to the silver snakes had migrated onto the iron blade and caused rust to form (fig. 3). Upon observation, this caked material accretion was thought to be remnants of polishes used during cleaning prior to acquisition. Residual abrasives from use of commercial silver polishes retain moisture that promotes corrosion, to which iron is particularly susceptible. Removing polish residues follows a well-established conservation protocol, in which swabs, soft brushes, or plastic or wood sticks are used to carefully dislodge and remove the residues, sometimes

facilitated with solvents; but would this be this an appropriate treatment for the ritual dagger?

When the dagger was given to the Walters in 2002, the reddish gray particulate residues on the object were interpreted as intentional pigmentation, perhaps resulting from ritual use, an interpretation that would argue for the retention and preservation of the residues. In fact, many Tibetan Buddhist images and objects are venerated by the application of pigments, whether at the time of manufacture, during consecration, or in later refurbishing.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the Walters collection contains many such Himalayan objects with faces and features such as hair, lips, crowns, ears and attributes deliberately painted. Since traces of pigmentation are significant to the use and history of these objects, they are important to preserve, but was this the case for the ritual dagger?

These questions led to the careful inspection of the dagger's surface with Mellon Fellow Katherine Kasdorf, a specialist in the arts of in Southeast Asia, and discussions with Conservation Scientist Glenn Gates regarding which scientific analyses might help distinguish intentional coloration from unintentional polish residues. Ultimately, it was decided that XRF might prove useful to help answer these questions.<sup>3</sup> XRF analysis of the reddish build-up caked in one of the three deity heads' mouth showed that it contained

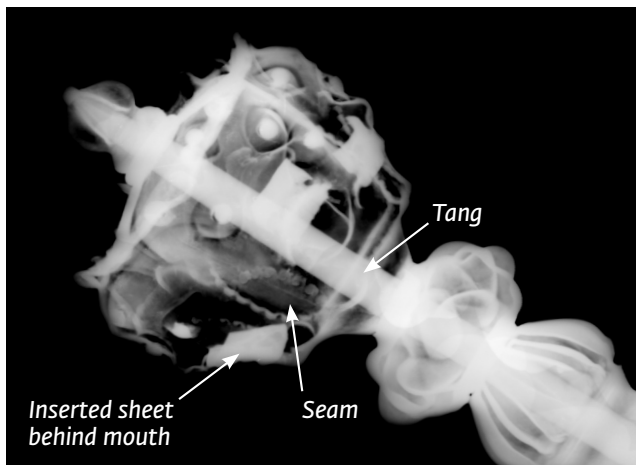


Fig. 4. Acc. no. 52.311: The tang securing the sections of the handle, the seam in the gold cladding and the inserts behind the mouths are visible in the x-radiograph.

calcium and silicon with a little iron. This elemental profile is entirely consistent with jeweler's rouge, an abrasive cleaning material made from calcium and silicon compounds, colored red by iron oxides. Intentional red coloration in other Tibetan objects at the Walters is usually suggested by the presence of either mercury or lead, indicating the pigments vermilion (cinnabar, HgS) or minium (Pb<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub>), respectively, but no evidence of intentional pigmentation was suggested by XRF analyses of the ritual dagger. Kasdorf concurred that the pigmentation did not appear to be originally intended. Given the lack of evidence of traditionally used pigments, it was decided to carefully clean the handle and the entwined snakes on the blade, but to leave the blade unpolished.

Before cleaning, an x-radiograph was taken of the dagger to ensure that the central tang securing the blade to the five sections of the handle was structurally stable and not corroded or compromised.<sup>4</sup> The x-ray revealed that the assembly of the dagger was sound, but it also revealed more about the object's manufacture. All five sections were confirmed as hollow lost-wax cast—the only method of casting practiced in historical Tibet—with cores removed after casting.<sup>5</sup> The knots and thunderbolt sections appear more radio-opaque or dense, being cast of thicker metal, sensibly, to tolerate the handling expected for the dagger hilt. The makara head capping the blade and the three-headed deity are more thinly cast with larger internal cores. The handle elements are made by lost-wax casting.<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 5a-b. Acc. no. 52.311: Details of the makara and the three-faced deity showing seams in the gold cladding indicating application of the gold as a foil rather than as an amalgam paste.

Two unexpected features were revealed by the x-radiograph (fig. 4). First, the silver teeth of the three-headed deity are not part of the cast head—a surprising finding, since casting the teeth with the head in a single step would presumably have been easier than the two-step process observed. The teeth are part of larger rectangular sheets of metal made separately and inserted, then attached, behind the mouth on each face. Second, seams in the gold surface are visible on both the makara and deity finial. These seams roughly align: the seam on the makara head is located just off center on the rear, and on the deity finial, the seam is between two of the heads (fig. 5). The seams in the gold so clearly revealed in the x-radiograph might suggest that gold sheet or foil was applied to the heads, as opposed to the expected gilding technique of applying an amalgam of gold mixed into mercury and rubbed or brushed on—a process that would not result in any seams. So why were there seams in the gold?

The surprising revelations provided by the x-radiograph were studied further using XRF to fully understand the object's manufacture and to identify the materials used to make this complex ritual dagger in order to make informed decisions regarding the object's display, storage, handling, and conservation. A preexisting damage in the cheek of the Vajrakilaya exposed a metal support; analysis showed that the support was almost pure copper; no common impurities such as iron, arsenic, lead, zinc or tin were detected. The purity of the copper was so high as to raise suspicious that it might have



been purified using electrochemical processes only developed during the mid-1800s. The use of relatively pure copper, however, is well documented in historical Tibetan sculpture, especially on objects intended to be mercury gilded.<sup>7</sup> Similar XRF data were obtained from analyses of the copper metal of the sclera. This evidence suggests that a pure copper metal was used to cast the head of the Vajrakilaya, and that decorative layers of silver and gold were subsequently applied on top.

XRF analyses of the white metal used to make the eyes revealed that it was indeed silver, but always with a little mercury, and the usual traces of copper and gold. The consistency of mercury detection in areas of silver was, again, surprising. It is common to find mercury and gold together, since the two metals can be used to achieve a gold surface, with liquid mercury metal dissolving gold to form an amalgam paste that can be applied by brush and heated to drive away the mercury, leaving a gold surface.<sup>8</sup> In the instance of the ritual dagger it seems that a silver amalgam was used to apply silver on a copper metal support. Similar results were obtained from analyses of the teeth, which were presumably silvered with amalgam when the rest of the head was silvered. Analyses of the lost-wax cast three pairs of entwined snakes, two knots, and the sixteen-prong thunderbolt detected silver with a minor amount of copper to harden the alloy and a trace impurity of gold, but no mercury was detected in these areas. The finding of the practice of silver amalgam gilding is exciting, since there exists little information about its use to decorate copper alloys in Tibet; research is ongoing at the Walters to better characterize the time, place, and general nature of this practice.

Finally, the use of amalgam silvering might account for the presence of seams in the gold surface on both the makara and the three-headed deity. The gold does not seem to have been applied as an amalgam, but rather as a sheet, with residual mercury from the silver amalgamation providing metallurgical attachment of the gold. Thin gold sheet or foil was probably burnished over the preexisting silver amalgam using either heat alone or heat with additional mercury; the gold shows the characteristic signs of burnishing on the highpoints and smooth surfaces. The silvered snakes and the dagger hilt have no mercury, because no gold was applied to these areas; perhaps with use such a thin gold surface would have worn off the hilt too easily.

By reverse engineering the Tibetan ritual dagger, the following manufacturing details have been discovered. The makara and the three-headed deity are lost-wax cast using nearly pure copper. With the exception of wagging tongues, the whites of eyes and small details, portions of the makara and three-headed deity were coated with a silver-mercury amalgam, which was then heated to drive off most of the mercury, leaving a silver-rich surface coating. Thin gold sheets were selectively applied to the flesh, crown, and hair using burnishing and heat. It is still unknown if additional mercury was brushed onto the surface or if the silver amalgam was sufficient to aid in bonding. While mercury amalgam gilding is well documented and widely used, the use of silver amalgam is not well documented nor identified on related Tibetan religious sculpture. Collaboration between scientist, curator, and conservator to reverse engineer this Tibetan ritual dagger has expanded our understanding and appreciation of this wonderful object.

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Fig. 6. Acc. no. 52.311: XRF sampling sites on the three-faced deity.

## NOTES

1. For further information, see Georgette Meredith, "The 'Phurbu': The Use and Symbolism of the Tibetan Magic Dagger," *History of Religions* 6, no. 3 (1967): 236–53.
2. Chandra L. Reedy and Terry J. Reedy, "Relating Visual and Technological Styles in Tibetan Sculpture Analysis," *World Archaeology* 25, no. 3 (1994): 304–20.
3. XRF analyses were run on an Artax X-ray Fluorescence Spectrograph with settings at 50kV, 350microA, He, no filter and 0.25mm collimation. XRF is a nondestructive surface technique that identifies elements in a sample site.
4. The x-radiograph was taken using the Phillips unit with GE Rhythm Review software at an exposure of 140 kV, 2 ma, 55 secs, small focal spot, and lead filter below the digital X-ray phosphor plate.
5. E. Lo Bue, "Casting of Devotional Images in the Himalayas: History, Tradition and Modern Techniques," in *Aspects of Tibetan Metallurgy*, ed. W. A. Oddy and W. Zwalf (London, 1981), 69–86.
6. In lost-wax casting, a model is created in wax. The model can be solid wax resulting in a solid cast object. Alternatively the wax can be formed around a core to economize the amount of metal used, resulting in a hollow object. A system of wax channels or gates for pouring in molten metal is attached to the model. The wax model is then packed in a fire-resistant shell, such as clay. The invested model is heated, allowing the wax to flow out and burn off leaving a void for the metal. The mold is inverted and molten metal is poured into the void. After the metal has cooled, the shell is broken off and discarded. The newly cast metal surface carries all the detail from the wax model along with the channels or gates, details from casting. These are removed and the surface polished. If hollow cast, the core may be removed or left in place. Additional detail and decoration can be added after casting by engraving, gilding, or cold painting.
7. E. Lo Bue, "Statuary Metals in Tibet and the Himalayas: History, Tradition and Modern Techniques," in Oddy and Zwalf, *Aspects of Tibetan Metallurgy*, 33–68.
8. Tami Lasseter Clare and Andrew Lins, "Mercury gilding/silvering, Metal Finishing Techniques: An Introduction to the History and Methods of Decorating Metal," Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2017. [http://www.philamuseum.org/booklets/7\\_42\\_77\\_1.html](http://www.philamuseum.org/booklets/7_42_77_1.html). Accessed 5/23/2017. Applying gold to the surface of copper alloy images is a prevalent practice on Tibetan Buddhist images. Three methods of application were practiced. One method is to dissolve gold powder into liquid mercury to form a paste. The paste is rubbed or brushed over the clean copper alloy surface. The sculpture is then heated to at least 357° C to vaporize the mercury, leaving a gold surface behind. The second method is to apply mercury directly to the copper alloy surface and then to burnish gold leaf or foil onto the surface, again using heat. The procedure can be repeated to increase the thickness of the gold deposited on the surface. Either method can also be used to apply silver to copper alloy surfaces, but this is not as well documented on Tibetan images. The third option is to burnish gold foil directly onto the copper alloy surface without mercury. Heat may be used.



## A "PAINTED LITANY"

### THREE ETHIOPIAN SENSUL LEAVES FROM GUNDA GUNDE

CHRISTINE SCIACCA

The Walters Art Museum is home to the largest collection of Ethiopian art outside the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.<sup>1</sup> The holdings represent all media of traditional art production from the region, including icons, wall paintings, processional crosses, wooden and metalwork hand crosses, metalwork pectoral crosses, illuminated manuscripts, healing scrolls, and coins.<sup>2</sup> In 2014, a group of three illuminated leaves joined this stellar collection as a gift from Rev. R. K. La Fleur. Each one displays miniatures on both sides depicting saints and apostles within a rectangular frame. No text accompanies the images, apart from identifying inscriptions in Ge'ez, the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, written just above the figures' heads. The iconography is as follows: Saint Theodore the Martyr on horseback (fig. 1), Saints James (Jacob) and Matthias (W.927, Side B); Saints Philip and Nathaniel (fig. 2), Saints James and John, Sons of Zebedee (W.928, Side B); an unidentified saint and Saint Thaddaeus (W.929, Side A), and the Virgin and Child with

the Archangels Michael and Gabriel (fig. 3).<sup>3</sup> The full-page format of the illustrations would suggest that they represent a series of miniatures from a prefatory image cycle of a codex, or bound book, as is typical in Ethiopian Gospel books and other liturgical and paraliturgical texts.<sup>4</sup> Examining the parchment lacing that runs vertically along one side of each leaf, Abigail Quandt, Head of Book and Paper Conservation at the Walters, proposed instead that these leaves were parts of a sensul, or chained manuscript.<sup>5</sup> This identification has significant implications for the use, origin, and meaning of

Fig. 1 (left). *Saint Theodore*. Ethiopia, early 16th century. Parchment with ink and paint, 5 1/2 × 4 5/16 in. (14 × 11 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Rev. R. K. Le Fleur, 2014, [acc. no. W.927](#), side A

Fig. 2 (center). *Saints Philip and Nathaniel*. Ethiopia, early 16th century. Parchment with ink and paint, 5 3/8 × 4 5/16 in. (13.7 × 11 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Rev. R. K. Le Fleur, 2014, [acc. no. W.928](#), side A

Fig. 3 (right). *The Virgin and Child with the Archangels Michael and Gabriel*. Ethiopia, early 16th century. Parchment with ink and paint, 5 5/16 × 4 5/16 in. (13.5 × 11 cm). The Walters Art Museum, gift of Rev. R. K. Le Fleur, 2014, [acc. no. W.929](#), side B

The title of this note derives from Ewa Balicka-Witakowska's reference to images of saints depicted in series on these manuscripts as a "painted litany." See her "Sənsul," in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (Wiesbaden, 2003–2010), 625.



these important and heretofore uncatalogued additions to the Walters' collection.

The first sensuls—hybrid objects that use the materials and painting techniques of illuminated manuscripts but that function much like painted icons on wood panel—began to be produced in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in the Christian highlands of Ethiopia.<sup>6</sup> They experienced a second wave of popularity in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, produced in such centers as Lasta and Gondar.<sup>7</sup> These chained manuscripts are books composed of one or more pieces of parchment stitched together to create a long strip, which is in turn folded like an accordion and sandwiched between two thin boards of wood or hide to bind it.<sup>8</sup> The number of panels created by folding can range widely from four to at least forty-eight, based on the surviving examples known to this author. Therefore, the three Walters leaves were probably supplemented by at least one more leaf, and likely several more. The types of painted imagery used to decorate sensuls include saints, prophets, apostles, archangels, and later in the seventeenth century, scenes from the Life of Christ and the Virgin Mary. The selection of scenes would be tailored to the owner's preferences, and some examples are further personalized with the patron's name or their desires and intentions.<sup>9</sup> The book might be opened completely to view the entire series of saintly icons, or leafed through like a codex, so as to create small diptychs of images.<sup>10</sup> In the case of a late seventeenth-century sensul in the Walters collection (acc. no. 36.10), opening the manuscript at its center presents the paired images of Saint George with the Virgin and Child (fig. 4). This diminutive example fits in the palm of the hand and was surely designed for personal rather than liturgical use. It may even have been worn or suspended

over the owner's bed while he or she slept.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, most sensuls are much smaller in scale than Gospel books, and therefore are more suited to use in individual, private devotion. Most sensuls are only illustrated on one side, but in unusual cases, like those under discussion here and another sensul in the collection of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa (no. 5965–5966), they were painted on both sides, thereby doubling the number of scenes depicted and potential diptychs created.<sup>12</sup>

Upon their acquisition, Martina Bagnoli (the Walters' curator of medieval art at the time) proposed that W.927–929 displayed a stylistic affinity with a manuscript copy of the lives of Estifanos and Abakerazun in the New York Public Library (Spencer Collection, Ethiopic MS 7).<sup>13</sup> Estifanos (d. about 1450) founded a monastic reform movement at Gunda Gunde in the Christian highlands of Ethiopia that was deemed heretical by the emperor Zar'a Ya'eqob, and Abakerazun (d. between 1475 and 1479) was the Gunda Gunde monastery's first abbot. These saints were venerated by the followers of Estifanos, known as Stefanites, and the manuscript was probably produced in Gunda Gunde after 1480.<sup>14</sup> Despite the Stefanites' purported refusal to venerate the cross and icons of the Virgin, which Zar'a Ya'eqob required of his followers, Gunda Gunde had a prolific artistic workshop that was responsible for producing powerful Marian imagery in manuscripts illuminated at their scriptorium and beautiful sculpted crosses.

Beyond the New York Public Library manuscript, the Walters sensul illuminations are even closer in style and composition to those in several other Gunda Gunde manuscripts. The artist uses the same limited palette of yellow, green, and orange (with the addition of blue for Virgin and



Fig. 4. *Sensul*. Ethiopia, late 17th century. Parchment with ink and paint, hide covers, unfolded 3 × 23 in. (7.6 × 58.4 cm); each panel 3 5/8 × 3 1/8 in. (9.2 × 9 cm). The Walters Art Museum, museum purchase with funds provided by the W. Alton Jones Foundation Acquisition Fund, 1996, acc. no. 36.10



Fig. 5. *Equestrian Saints; The Virgin and Child with the Archangels Michael and Gabriel*. Ethiopia, early 16th century. Parchment with ink and paint, 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  × 19  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. (29.7 × 48.5 cm). Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, inv. no. 86-307 643

Child miniature) as a Gunda Gunde Gospel book from about 1504–5 from the J. Paul Getty Museum (Ms. 102).<sup>15</sup> The sensul figures display the same simply drawn, almond-shaped eyes as the saints portrayed on a processional icon from Gunda Gunde in the Walters collection (acc. no. 36.9). Many of the figures in the parchment icon display robes that fall in distinctive V-shaped folds down the center of their bodies, as in the figure of Saint James in W.928. Similar in composition and construction to W.927–929, this rare object also displays a series of standing saints painted on five sheets of parchment stitched together. Accordion folds in between each figure, allow, in this case, for the ends to be held together, creating a fan-shaped icon.<sup>16</sup>

The most striking comparison for the Walters leaf, however, is a series of Gunda Gunde leaves from around 1500–1520 in the Museum Fünf Kontinente in Munich.<sup>17</sup> These examples display various scenes from Christ's life, as well as assemblies of saints and apostles, and a miniature of the Virgin and Child with the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The distinctive portrayal of Saint Theodore in W.929 (fig. 1) with his twisted headband, the particular arrangement of his drapery, the cowrie-like decoration of the horse's bridle, and even the exact position of the horse's legs is repeated in the depiction of the same saint in the upper right corner of the Munich image of equestrian saints (fig. 5). The facing leaf of this Munich bifolium displays a Virgin and Child that is a near-exact copy of the same image in the Walters leaf (fig. 3) with all of its

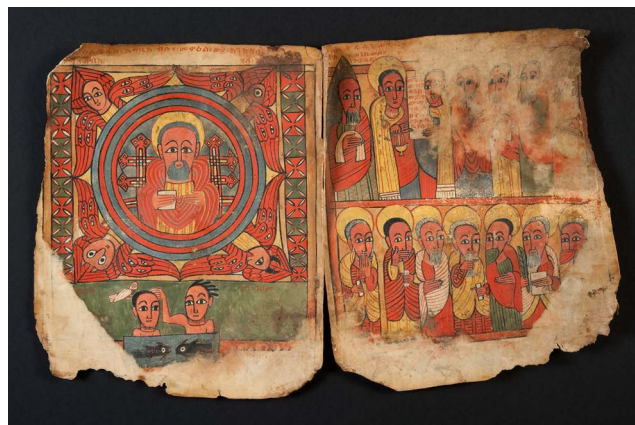


Fig. 6. *The Ancient of Days, and the Baptism of Christ; Saints and Apostles*. Ethiopia, early 16th century. Parchment with ink and paint, 11  $\frac{7}{8}$  × 19  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (30.2 × 49.2 cm). Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich, inv. no. 86-307 645

distinctive features, including the Archangels' horizontally striped yellow and orange wings, and Mary's embrace of her son with her right hand wrapped around his shoulder and her left laid across his knees. Standing figures of various saints appear in both the Munich and Walters examples, each distinguished by his pose or an attribute that he holds. A figure similar to Saint Matthew holding a horseshoe-shaped cloth over his wrist in the Walters leaf (W.929, Side A) appears in the upper register of one of the Munich leaves (fig. 6), and a figure similar to Saint Nathaniel covering his mouth with his robe in the Walters leaf (shown in figure 2) appears in the middle of the lower register of the same Munich leaf. Due to the verbatim nature of these repetitions, I conclude that the same artist was responsible for both W.927–929 and the Munich leaves. Although the Munich leaves are much larger than the Walters sensul leaves (approximately 11  $\frac{1}{2}$  by 9  $\frac{7}{8}$  in. [29 × 25 cm] versus approximately 5  $\frac{1}{4}$  by 4  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. [13.5 × 11 cm]), one wonders whether these disbound bifolia were once attached together and used as a sensul. Indeed, Ewa Balicka-Witakowska has noted that such manuscripts can range in height from six to forty centimeters, which would encompass both manuscripts.<sup>18</sup> First-hand observation of the Munich leaves reveals that several of the outer edges of the parchment bifolia are folded over, and sewing holes are apparent in the creases (the remaining edges are damaged, so their original appearance is unknown). In addition, one bifolium displays a large grouping of threads attached through

one of its sewing holes (86-307 643). This suggests that the leaves were originally arranged in a sensul format, with each bifolium sewn to the next in an accordion folding pattern.

If the Walters leaves are indeed from a sensul, then they represent one of the earliest examples of this type of book. Their strong stylistic connections with the manuscript production of Gunda Gunde around the year 1500 and their execution by an artist who illuminated other surviving manuscripts from the monastery place them within one of the richest traditions of Ethiopian manuscript illumination, joining other stunning examples from this region in the Walters' collection.

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## NOTES

1. Kelly M. Holbert, "The Ethiopian Collection of the Walters Art Museum," in *Ethiopian Art: The Walters Art Museum* (Baltimore and Lingfield Surrey, 2001), 11.
2. For an overview of the Walters' collection of Ethiopian art, see *Ethiopian Art*.
3. I am most grateful to Getatchew Haile for having identified the figures in correspondence with Lynley Herbert in 2013 and 2014, and with me in 2017.
4. For example, a Gospel book from Gunda Gunde dating from around 1480–1520 (Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. 105) begins with a series of nine miniatures before the text proper begins. The acquisition report for the Walters leaves identified them as "Leaves from a Hagiographical Manuscript."
5. Conversation with the author, May 23, 2017. W.928 also displays some thread lacing in addition to the parchment lacing, however Quandt has stated that this could be a later addition to the leaf.
6. Some examples include Salem, Peabody Essex Museum (Langmuir 368); Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies (no. 5965-5966); Mäqälä, *ase* Yohannäs IV's palace museum; Tegräy, Dabra Zayt (DZ-005); and Rome, Pontificia Università Gregoriana (Biblioteca), Fondo Vedovato inv. n. 136.
7. Ewa Balicka-Witakowska "Sənsul," in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (Wiesbaden, 2003–2010), 625. Some of these later examples include Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies (no. 3554); Baltimore, Walters Art Museum (36.10); Lasta, Church of Mary at Ashatan; Lalibela, Church of Saint Gabriel; Rome, Pontificia Università Gregoriana (Biblioteca), Fondo Vedovato inv. n. 137; and an example from Lasta, provenance unknown, cited in Marilyn Heldman with Stuart C. Munro-Hay, eds., *African Zion: The Sacred Art of Ethiopia* (New Haven and London, 1993), 247–48, no. 109. Balicka-Witakowska cites four additional examples from Lasta in the Juel-Jensen (United Kingdom) and the Schweisthal (Germany) collections, and in the churches of Betä Giyorgis and ʿĪsatan Maryam in Lalibela.
8. On the construction of sensuls, see Alessandro Bausi, ed., *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction* (Hamburg, 2015), 155, 158. I thank Abigail Quandt for informing me about this invaluable resource.
9. For example, Walters Art Museum 36.10 displays an inscription on its first page threatening excommunication to any individual who might steal or erase the manuscript. <http://art.thewalters.org/detail/663/gondarine-sensul/>
10. Balicka-Witakowska "Sənsul," 625.
11. *Ethiopian Art*, 116 (entry by C. Griffith Mann).
12. Balicka-Witakowska "Sənsul," 625.
13. See Martina Bagnoli's report for the Walters' Collections Committee Meeting, May 29, 2014.
14. Heldman and Munro-Hay, *African Zion*, 190, no. 91 (entry by Marilyn Heldman).
15. [www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/242418/unknown-maker-gospel-book-ethiopian-about-1504-1505/](http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/242418/unknown-maker-gospel-book-ethiopian-about-1504-1505/)
16. *Ethiopian Art*, 114 (entry by C. Griffith Mann).
17. Inv. no. 86-307 643-645. See Béatrice Riottot El-Habib and Jacques Mercier, eds., *L'arche éthiopienne: Art chrétien d'Éthiopie*, exh. cat., Paris: Pavillon des arts; Girona: Fundació Caixa de Girona, 2000–2001 (Paris, 2000), 87–91.
18. Balicka-Witakowska "Sənsul," 625.



## A NOTE ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOG IN JEAN-MARC NATTIER'S *LA MARQUISE D'ARGENSON*

JOANNA M. GOHMANN

Many aristocratic women in eighteenth-century France kept companion animals, especially small breeds of dogs, and chose to have themselves immortalized in paint alongside their little charges.<sup>1</sup> Beyond simply adoring their pets, why did individuals commission co-portraits with their animals? What did these creatures tell eighteenth-century viewers about the human sitter? And, what cultural work did these animals accomplish in the arena of portraiture? Jean-Marc



Fig. 1. Jean-Marc Nattier (French, 1685–1766). *La Marquise d'Argenson* (Suzanne-Marguerite Fyot de la Marche), 1750. Oil on canvas, 39 7/8 × 31 5/8 in. (101.5 × 80.5 cm). The Walters Art Museum, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, [acc. no. 37.895](#)

Nattier's (1685–1766) *La Marquise d'Argenson* (fig. 1), which depicts the sitter in the act of tying a pink ribbon strung with two silver bells around her *levrier de la petite espèce*, or what we know today as an Italian greyhound, serves as a perfect case study through which one can begin to unpack these complex questions.<sup>2</sup>

Having one's portrait painted by Nattier, an academician whose portraits of aristocrats made him a popular and desirable artist, was no small investment.<sup>3</sup> His portraits were meant to be celebrated and shown off; undoubtedly the contents of a Nattier commission were not taken lightly. In *La Marquise d'Argenson* Nattier captures the uniqueness of this dog, meticulously rendering the animal's stretching neck, belly spots, fur pattern along the throat, and musculature; this is a specific Italian greyhound. Rather than simply an iconographic trope symbolizing fidelity, the little dog must be understood as an individual who was meaningful to the Marquise d'Argenson and her vision of selfhood. Like many of Nattier's paintings, *La Marquise d'Argenson* recalls the composition and contents of his other works—especially *La Comtesse d'Argenson* (fig. 2), in which the sitter's dog rests on her lap—with the insertion of the specific face of the marquise and her dog.<sup>4</sup> If this were a generic, fictional creature, why would Nattier bother to replace the elegantly rendered spaniel in *La Comtesse d'Argenson* with an entirely new creature in *La Marquise d'Argenson*?

In her portrait, the fashionably rouged marquise is lost in thought and gazes beyond the picture plane. She wears an ermine-lined velvet robe on top of a loose white satin dress, securely pinned with a brooch of diamonds and pearls at her bust and bound to her arms and waist by ropes of pearls. She sits upon a blue upholstered day bed and rests her left arm upon its ornate, gilded back. Her small black and white Italian greyhound, comfortably nestled in the sumptuous



Fig. 2. Jean-Marc Nattier. *La Comtesse d'Argenson*, 1743. Oil on canvas, 54 3/4 × 41 3/8 in. (139 × 105 cm). Private collection

fabric of her garments, sits calmly in her lap and turns its head in the opposite direction, as if suddenly hearing a noise in the distance. The dog, though, does not stir or raise her ears; rather, she stays with her mistress, delicately resting a paw upon her arm and stretching a leg forward across the luxurious velvet cape draped across the Marquise's lap. The pink ribbon that the Marquise bestows upon her little companion stands out from the other colors in the portrait and draws the viewer's eye to the animal's face. The ribbon acts as a frame, highlighting the creature and suggesting its importance to the overall composition. Furthermore, the ribbon binds the two figures in a compositional circle and encourages the viewer to see the woman and her dog as a unit.

Eighteenth-century viewers would have recognized this particular breed of dog as indicative of the Marquise's social standing and wealth. The "Chien" entry in *L'Encyclopédie* indicates that small greyhounds are the "most rare and expensive of all dogs," and they serve no other purpose than "amusement." Unlike small spaniels and poodles, which were valued for their

elegant bodies and beautiful faces, Italian greyhounds were sought after simply because they were uncommon.<sup>5</sup> They were living signs of an owner's financial and personal access to rare goods. Such a creature distinguished the Marquise not only from the majority of the French population who kept dogs to assist with hunting or protecting their lands and families, but also from other aristocrats who did not—or could not—acquire such a rare species.

Italian greyhounds were also known for being loyal to their masters.<sup>6</sup> Beyond being a devoted little animal, the dog rendered in Nattier's *La Marquise d'Argenson* has been impeccably trained, presumably by the Marquise herself, as this was a commendable pastime for refined, aristocratic women.<sup>7</sup> Untethered, the animal does not bark at or chase after whatever has caught its attention. The creature remains composed and faithful to its mistress. For eighteenth-century viewers, these traits were likely understood as a reflection of the Marquise's own character and were revelatory of the sitter's restraint and civility. The century's leading natural historian, Georges-Louis Leclerc, the Comte de Buffon (1707–1788), described this notion best when he explained that the pet dog "like other servants . . . is haughty with the great and rustic with the peasant," suggesting that the companion animal naturally embodies characteristics of its owner.<sup>8</sup> In his initial discussion of dogs, Buffon explains that "dogs are not corrupted with ambition, by interested views, or by a desire of revenge."<sup>9</sup> He reports that dogs' actions are entirely honest and trustworthy; dogs do not lie. Their behavior and character traits, which they inherit from their human masters, provided candid glimpses into the real personality of the dogs' owners. Viewers of human-animal portraiture should therefore look to the companion dogs for clues about the human sitter's character.

These little dogs are like children who not only behave like their "mothers" but they also resemble their "mothers" in appearance. While the Marquise and her Italian greyhound do not overtly look like one another, as the human and animal sitters do in Joseph-Stiffred Duplessis's (1725–1802) *Madame Freret Déricour* (fig. 3), their posture, costume, and expression undeniably resonate. The Marquise and dog each extend one arm, while gracefully lifting their respective hand and paw, concluding in a delicately curved finger or softly arched pointed toenail. In fact, Nattier renders the lifted paw and hand upon the same visual axis and bathes these

extremities in the same warm light, as if inviting the viewer to recognize the similarities. Their expressions and rosy complexions also resonate, as they gaze in opposite directions. The dog's soft pink skin peeks through its facial hair, giving the animal rouged cheeks, just like the Marquise. Perhaps most obviously, the coloring of the dog's hair—dark on its back and a glistening white on its chest—echoes the Marquise's own fashion choices and the arrangement of her garments. These formal parallels connect both human and animal sitter and present them as a unified pair, visualizing Buffon's notion that pet dogs are reflections of their owners and encouraging the viewer to interpret one in relation to the other.

Yet, eighteenth-century viewers would never have fully accepted the dog and human owner as one and the same, as during the period the distinction between the two categories of being—human and animal—was hotly debated, both philosophically and scientifically. It was common and



Fig. 3. Joseph-Siffred Duplessis (French, 1725–1802). *Madame Freret Déricour*, 1769. Oil on canvas, 32 × 25 1/2 in. (81.3 × 64.8 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 53-80

widely accepted knowledge that people were a type of animal. In fact, the physician and philosopher Julien Offray de la Mettrie (1709–1751) declared that “nature has only used one dough, merely changing the yeast” when humans and animals were first formed.<sup>10</sup> Conclusions like la Mettrie's blurred the boundary between human and animal, thereby threatening the supremacy of humanity. If both were made of the same “dough,” were animals actually man's equal? Intellectuals like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), the Comte de Buffon, and Guillaume Hyacinthe Bougeant (1690–1743), to only name a few, penned thousands of pages that attempted to differentiate between humans and animals, cautiously maintaining humanity's distinction.<sup>11</sup> The majority of intellectuals simply declared man's superiority over brutes, suggesting different types of souls, thinking abilities, and community structures as distinguishing features.

The French elite further supported the rigid distinction between people and animals through an intense commitment to control of one's biological body, which was enacted through highly scripted protocols, manners, and artful displays. In his monumental text on the development of civility in Western Europe, *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias traces how and when cultures began to practice “polite” behaviors. He contends that manners worked to place “animalic human activities . . . behind the scenes of men's communal social life.”<sup>12</sup> Over time, these behaviors became increasingly invested with “feelings of shame” because they are acts that violate self discipline and betray humanity's animal condition. Elias argues that people who did not control their natural, physical impulses were seen as coming close to being animals.<sup>13</sup> People had the ability to be modest, conquer their instincts, and control their natural state; animals, without training or human intervention, remained slaves to their instincts and bodies. These conclusions certainly align with eighteenth-century French philosophies of sociability, which called for elites to precisely execute challenging behaviors, such as walking in large panniers or suppressing hunger, in an effortless manner. These rehearsed behaviors transformed natural human bodies into art forms that were entirely different from nature, its animal inhabitants, and those of the lower classes who were seen as more closely related to the natural world.

While Nattier's viewers would be inclined to see the dog in *La Marquise d'Argenson* as an embodiment of the woman's



character, the proliferation of ideas relating to the distinction between human and animal would have likely conditioned them to also see the little creature as entirely distinct from its mistress. Indeed, the dog plays a supporting role in the portrait, as it is the smaller being and it is relegated to a lower portion of the composition. The creature is also nude, covered only in hair with its genitals and nipples uncovered, a condition the Marquise herself highlights as she begins to tie a ribbon around the dog's neck. While this element highlights the distinction between human and animal, it also sheds further light on the Marquise's personality; the animal's immodesty directs attention to the Marquise's modesty and the garments with which she covers her body. The simple ribbon strung with silver bells resonates with the pearl ropes tied around the Marquise's waist and arms, but unlike the elegant pieces of jewelry, the Italian greyhound's ribbon holds nothing on and leaves the animal exposed. The silver bells strung on the ribbon, however, do work to mask the dog's animality, as the gentle sound of bells will cover the jarring sound of toenails clattering against the floor and more politely announce the creature's presence. Simultaneously, though, the jingling of bells calls attention to the Italian greyhound's animal state, as it highlights its inability to speak and gracefully make itself known.

Nattier's brushwork draws further attention to the animal's difference, as he employs the same loose, visible brush strokes in rendering the dog and the ermine fur that lines the Marquise's robe. Additionally, its tail (black with a white tip) echoes the ermine tails (white with black tips) from inside the cloak. These formal qualities emphasize the dog's similarity to the creatures that perished in the garment's creation and remind the viewer of the dog's animal state; indeed, this little creature luxuriating upon ermine carcasses is not so different from the ermine.

Certainly the visual relationship between the Marquise and her Italian greyhound is rather complex, as the animal informs the sitter's identity through its shared qualities and its difference. The dog foregrounds the Marquise's social standing, self-control, modesty, and refinement. More than adorable additions or indications of human sitters' adoration for their pets, animals in eighteenth-century portraiture are informative and important elements that perform cultural work in support of their owners' identity. Through this role,

animals occupy a rather strange position, suspended between the categories of human and animal; they simultaneously concretize and evoke elements of their human's character while living as their biological, immodest, un-human selves. In this capacity, pets in portraiture have paws in two worlds: that of the natural animal and that of the refined, cultured human. Consequently, these animals become something fundamentally strange and fascinating that warrant, further analysis.

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## NOTES

1. In the eighteenth century, pet keeping accelerated and became a definable practice. Keith Thomas, one of the earliest historians of human-animal relationships in Europe, identified three traits that differentiate companion animals from the broader world of animals that have continued to serve as the basis for defining pets: (1) these animals are allowed in the house, (2) they have "individual, personal names," and (3) these creatures were never eaten. By 1700, pets were envisioned as part of families, included in family portraits, and even treated better than servants. See: Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York, 1983), 112–17.
2. The sitter's identity has not been securely identified. The painting entered the Walters Art Museum as *La Comtesse d'Argenson*; however, for unknown reasons during the 1930s, the painting was renamed *La Marquise d'Argenson*. Thus, the sitter might be Anne Larcher, the Comtesse d'Argenson or Suzanne-Marguerite Fyot de la Marche, the Marquise d'Argenson and the Comtesse d'Argenson's niece by marriage. Alternatively, the sitter might be Henriette Nicole, Duchesse de Luynes. In 2010 Christie's of New York sold a painting attributed to the Studio of Jean-Marc Nattier titled *Henriette Nicole, Duchess de Luynes* that bears an almost identical resemblance to the painting in the Walters Art Museum's collection.
3. For a discussion of Nattier's popularity, see Xavier Salmon, *Jean-Marc Nattier: 1685–1766*, exh. cat., Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon (Paris, 1999), 24–28, and Philippe Renard, *Jean-Marc Nattier (1685–1766): Un artiste parisien à la cour de Louis XV* (Saint-Rémy-en-l'Eau, 1999), 55–95.
4. Salmon, *Jean-Marc Nattier*, 26.

5. “Chien” in *L'Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* . . . , 17 vols. eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Almbert (Paris, 1751–77), 3:4.
6. Ibid.
7. For an account of the many aristocratic and royal women who pursued such activities, see Nicolas Milovanovich, *La Princesse Palatine: Protectrice des animaux* (Paris, 2012), chapters 2 and 3. For satirists and moralists, elite, female pet owners became something to critique. See: Kimberly Chrisman Campbell, “Beauty and the Beast: Animals in the Visual and Material Culture of the Toilette” in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 42 (2003): 147–70 at 164.
8. Comte de Buffon, *Natural History, General and Particular by the Count de Buffon, Translated into English*, 9 vols, 2nd ed., ed. William Smellie (London, 1785), 3:4.
9. Comte de Buffon, *Natural History*, 1:3.
10. Julien Offray de la Mettrie, “Machine Man” in *Machine Man and Other Writings*, trans. Ann Thomson (New York, 1996), 19.
11. For example, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (New York, 2004), 9–10; Guillaume Hyacinthe Bougeant, *A Philosophical Amusement upon the Language of Beasts* (London, 1739); and Comte de Buffon, *Natural History*, vols. 1–8. For an account of how eighteenth-century individuals perceived animals, see Hester Hastings, *Man and Beast in French Thought of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, 1936).
12. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, vol. 2: *Power and Civility*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1982), 230.
13. Ibid.

## JOHN SCARLETT DAVIS'S *INTERIOR OF THE PAINTED HALL, GREENWICH HOSPITAL*

ELEANOR HUGHES

John Scarlett Davis's (1804–1845) *Interior of the Painted Hall, Greenwich Hospital* (fig. 1) provides a remarkable record of one of maritime Britain's most significant sites and a summation of the period during which Britain's ascendancy on the seas was established through trade and naval warfare with its main rivals, Holland, Spain, and France. It shows, installed in the Painted Hall at Greenwich, the Naval Gallery: an assemblage of paintings and sculpture depicting naval engagements, officers who fought in them, and figures associated with exploration such as Admiral Lord George Anson and Captain James Cook. Acquired by Henry Walters, the painting appears never to have been displayed at the museum, probably due to what William Johnston referred to as its "unfortunate condition."<sup>1</sup> However, its subject provided the perfect coda for the first major survey of British marine painting, *Spreading Canvas: Eighteenth-Century British Marine Painting*, mounted at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut, in the fall of 2016.<sup>2</sup> The exhibition narrative began with Greenwich, where the arrival in 1672/73 of the Dutch marine painters Willem van de Velde the Elder (1611–1693) and his son, also Willem (1633–1707), marked the inception of a distinctively British school of marine painting in the eighteenth century. Because of the historical significance of the painting and the opportunity to showcase it in an international loan exhibition, the

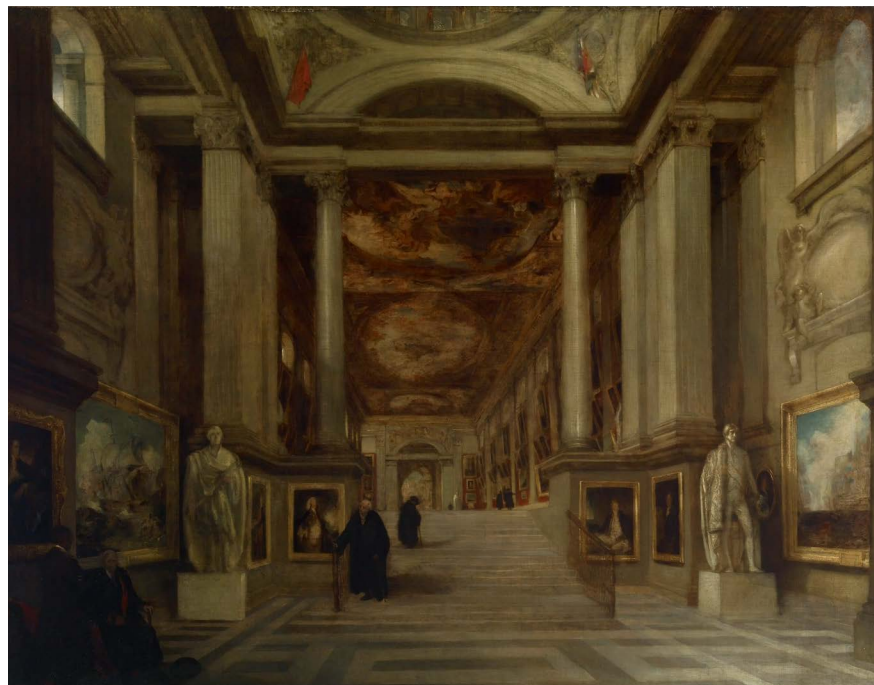


Fig. 1. John Scarlett Davis (English, 1804–1845), *Interior of the Painted Hall, Greenwich Hospital*, 1830. Oil on canvas, 44  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 56  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (112.7 × 143.5 cm). The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, bequest of Henry Walters, 1931, [acc. no. 37.761](#)

decision was taken to restore it to a state in which it could be exhibited.

The Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich was founded by William III in the late seventeenth century to provide residential accommodation to retired sailors who had served in the Royal Navy. In 1824, the National Gallery of Naval Art, housed in the Hospital's Painted Hall, designed by Christopher Wren (1632–1723) and adorned with murals by James Thornhill (1675–1734), who also painted the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, opened to the public. The Naval Gallery, as it was known, was the vision of Captain William Locker, lieutenant-governor of the hospital, as realized by his son, Edward Hawke Locker: "an admirable Gallery for Pictures,



Sculptures and other objects commemorative of the distinguished Exploits of the British Navy.”<sup>3</sup>

While depictions of the Naval Gallery appeared in printed periodicals from the time of its opening, this work is the first known painting of the subject and, on the basis of contemporary guides, appears to be largely accurate in its depiction of an early installation.<sup>4</sup> Davis specialized in gallery views, a genre originating in the sixteenth century, and painted this example on speculation based on the drawing he made in situ (fig. 2).<sup>5</sup> While Johnston dates this painting to around 1831, Catherine Roach's research for *Spreading Canvas* led to a letter from Charles Long, Lord Farnborough (1760–1838), to Locker, dated 1830, that establishes that year as the date of its completion:

I saw Mr. Davis this morning and liked his Picture much—he asked me whether I would recommend it to any body—of course I asked him what he expected for it he said his utmost expectation was 100 G. but he would take less in short any thing I pleased, but if he did not sell at last he must put it into the hand of a dealer and take what he could get—for he had lately sustained some losses by prints he had published—so I gave him his hundred Guineas and sent him away very happy—he seems to be very modest as to his own merits—it is really a very clever work of Art and he is ill paid for his time and labour in the sum he has received for it.<sup>6</sup>

Long, a high-ranking politician and member of parliament who served in cabinet positions, was above all a connoisseur of the arts. In addition to serving as George IV's “unofficial art advisor” he was one of the Hospital's directors; his purchase of *Interior of the Painted Hall, Greenwich Hospital* from Davis's studio no doubt reflects his interest and influence

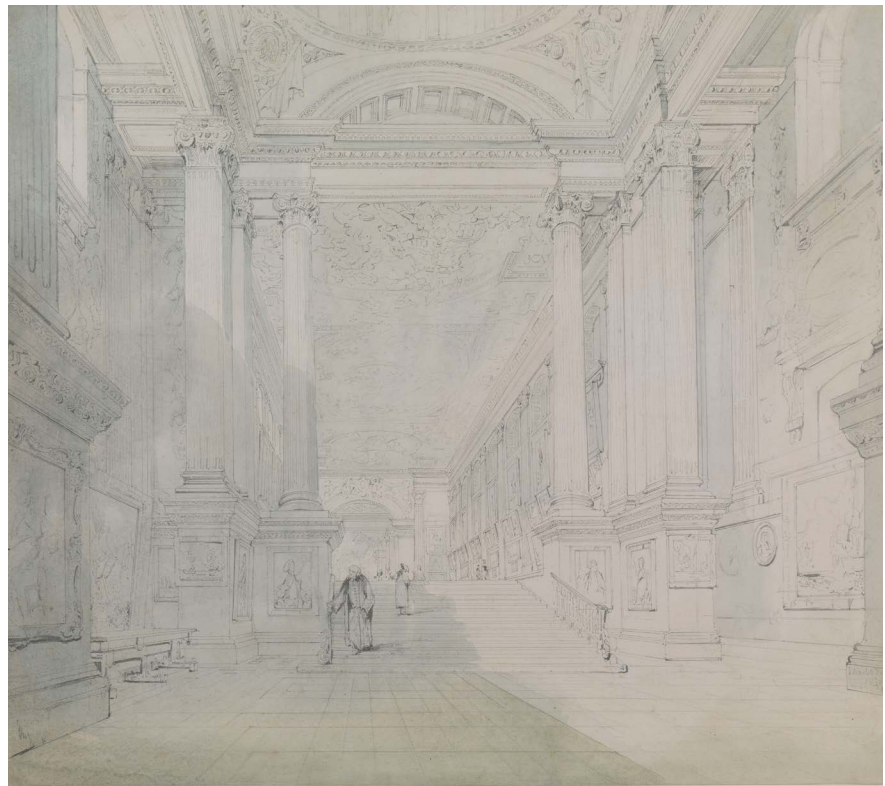


Fig. 2. John Scarlett Davis, *The Painted Hall of Greenwich Hospital from the Vestibule*. Graphite with gray-blue wash on paper, 25  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 25  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (65.2 × 65.4 cm). National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, acc. no. ZBA 5005

in the project as well as in the works of art represented in the painting.<sup>7</sup> More research is needed to ascertain the provenance of the painting following its purchase by Long; we do not know where or when Henry Walters acquired it, but we can guess that the reasons why he purchased it were similar to Long's. An inveterate collector of collections and provenances—from the Massarenti collection to objects once owned by Mme de Pompadour and Catherine the Great—Walters must have been attracted to a painting that offered by proxy a collection with its own masterpieces, elite provenances, and associations. For example, in the foreground, facing one another, are a pair of paintings commemorating the first and last naval battles of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: on the left, Philippe de Loutherbourg's (1740–1812) enormous *Earl Howe's Victory over the French Fleet*, of 1795, and on the right, J.M.W. Turner's (1775–1851) *Battle of Trafalgar* (both National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London). Both were given to the Gallery by George IV, who commissioned the Turner as a pendant to the Loutherbourg,

along with no fewer than thirty-five portraits from the Royal Collection.<sup>8</sup> The sculptures that flank the two paintings are plaster casts after monuments in St. Paul's Cathedral: Admiral Lord Nelson by John Flaxman (1755–1826), on the right, and Admiral Adam Duncan by Richard Westmacott (1775–1856), on the left.

The condition of the painting was so unfortunate that conservators were initially reluctant to treat it; previous restorations and the artist's use of unstable materials had resulted in wide cracks, abrasions, and a prevalent darkened varnish. Eric Gordon, Head of Paintings Conservation at the Walters, employed solvents to thin the varnish, leaving a thin barrier protecting the vulnerable paint layer. The treatment, including application of mastic to the wide cracks and extensive retouching to unify the image, brought into focus features of the image that had previously been obscured, including the inscriptions that appear on the memorials in the upper right and left foreground, and the play of light emanating from the clerestory windows. It also revealed in much greater detail, on the left side of the painting, a figure of African descent: a resident of the hospital, or pensioner, as they were known, who may be identifiable as John Denman, who served with Nelson in the West Indies. The pensioners depicted in the gallery, in juxtaposition to the naval heroes represented within the painting, stand as reminders of the labors and sacrifice that underpinned naval victories.<sup>9</sup> Davis's painting, brought to an exhibitable state, was hung in a prime location in the exhibition, bringing the narrative of the project back to its point of inception.

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## NOTES

1. William R. Johnston, *The Nineteenth Century Paintings in the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore, 1982), 201.
2. Eleanor Hughes, ed. *Spreading Canvas: Eighteenth-Century British Marine Painting* (New Haven and London, 2016).
3. Edward Hawke Locker, "Memorandum," September 20, 1823. The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office, Kew, 30/26/27, 19, quoted in Hughes, *Spreading Canvas*, 278, no. 140 (entry by Catherine Roach). See also in the same

4. Hughes, *Spreading Canvas*, 280.
5. For John Scarlett Davis's gallery views, see Catherine Roach, *Pictures-within-Pictures in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2016), chap. 1.
6. Charles Long, Baron Farnborough, to Edward Hawke Locker, August 20, 1830. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, LR 250. Long's purchase was publicized the following year: "British Gallery," *The Literary Gazette*, April 16, 1831, 251, quoted in Hughes, *Spreading Canvas*, 279–80.
7. Pieter van der Merwe, "A Proud Moment of the Glory of England': The Greenwich Hospital Collection," in Geoff Quilley, ed. *Art for the Nation: The Oil Paintings Collection of the National Maritime Museum* (London, 2006), 25.
8. Van der Merwe, "A Proud Moment," 25.
9. Hughes, *Spreading Canvas*, 281.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE OR NOT? IDENTIFICATION OF THE “DUKE GOO”

GLENN GATES, BRADLEY SCATES, AND STEPHANIE HULMAN

The Doris Duke Collection of Southeast Asian Art, generously given by Doris Duke’s charitable foundation to the Walters Art Museum and the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, in 2002, contains many three-dimensional gilded and lacquered objects thought to have been created in or before the nineteenth century, acquired by Doris Duke in Thailand and Burma (present-day Myanmar) in the middle of the twentieth century. Many objects were observed in 2012 to have a coating, an unidentified substance that had the tacky texture and viscosity of cold molasses and consequently retained dirt, dust, and grime, possibly damaging the underlying gold leaf and lacquer surfaces. The coating is so extensive, occurring on many of the 150 Duke objects now in the Walters collection, that it is affectionately called the Duke “Goo.”

The coating appears to be viscous and affected by gravity; puddles of the material provided ample material for sampling and analysis. Material characterization of the Duke Goo was requested by Stephanie Hulman, assistant objects conservator, to identify its composition in order to help address the question of its cultural significance—that is, ought it to be preserved or removed? If scientific analysis revealed the Duke Goo to be part of ritual or cultural use, then that would argue for at least the partial retention of the substance as part of the objects’ cultural history; absent such evidence of cultural use, the coating could be removed completely without compromising the historical integrity of the objects.

Doris Duke had an on-site restoration studio at the Duke Farms in Hillsborough, New Jersey and employed a Southeast Asian artisan to maintain her collection.<sup>1</sup> Materials traditionally used for restoration in Southeast Asia may not have been available in the United States, so it is reasonable to suppose that substituted materials would have been used. The substituted materials may have not cured or interacted

improperly with the original, resulting in a tacky, sometimes runny surface coating (fig. 1). Furthermore, the Duke Goo may now be accelerating other deterioration issues, such as unstable or lifting surfaces.

For this study, the Duke Goo on six objects was analyzed using solubility tests, conducted by Stephanie Hulman, followed by sampling for Fourier transform infrared analysis and analysis by gas chromatography coupled with mass spectrometry, conducted by Glenn Gates and Bradley Scates. The coating was examined on six objects of varied media:

1. Monk Devotee. Thailand, 19th century. Bronze, lacquer, and gilding. [Acc. no. 54.2990](#)
2. Monk Devotee. Thailand, 19th century. Bronze, lacquer, and gilding. [Acc. no. 54.2991](#)
3. Seated Buddha. Thailand, mid-19th century. Brass, lacquer, and gilding. [Acc. no. 54.2987](#)

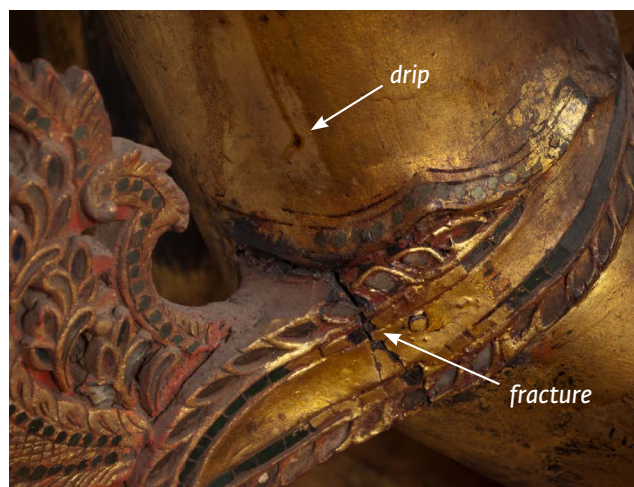


Fig. 1. A detail of 25.232 in the area of the neck of the Seated Buddha, showing Duke Goo drips, and the possible use of the Duke Goo to consolidate a fracture; detail photograph by Gregory Bailey



4. Standing Buddha. Thailand, mid-19th century. Brass, lacquer, gilding, and glass inlay. [Acc. no. 54.3000](#)
5. Manuscript chest. Burma, early 19th century. Wood, lacquer, raised lacquer, gilding, and metal hardware. [Acc. no. 65.142](#)
6. Seated Buddha. Burma, 18th–19th century. Dry lacquer, wood, gilding, and glass inlay. [Acc. no. 25.232](#)

Preliminary analysis of the Duke Goo was conducted by Hulman using swab-solubility tests on the surface of the six objects. The results of these solubility tests suggested that the surface coatings fall into two groups. Two objects, 54.2990 and 54.2991, had a surface that was not highly susceptible to polar or nonpolar solvent; however, the surface was expectedly dirty and grimy. Four objects, 54.2987, 54.3000, 65.142 and 25.232, had surfaces that were susceptible to both polar and nonpolar solvent, with expected dirt and grime apparently embedded in a tacky coating.

Following the solubility tests, the surface coatings were sampled using a scalpel, and again, the surface coatings were differentiated by two distinct mechanical properties that correlated to the results from the solubility tests: Two objects, 54.2990 and 54.2991, had brittle surface coatings that fractured during sampling; four objects, 54.2987, 54.3000, 65.142, and 25.232, all had viscous surface coatings; the sample flowed on the glass well-slides that were used to hold the samples.

Fourier transform infrared analysis (FTIR) was used initially to try to identify the coatings.<sup>2</sup> This analytical technique uses infrared radiation (or heat, akin to the red heat lamps commonly encountered in diners that keep food warm) transmitted through a specimen to create a spectrum unique to the molecular structure. Again, the coatings were differentiated into two groups. The soluble, viscous surface coatings from 54.3000, 65.142, 25.2987, and 25.232 all yielded similar results. A representative spectrum from 25.232 is shown in blue, and a matching FTIR standard spectrum is shown in red for an “aged tung oil coating” (fig. 2).

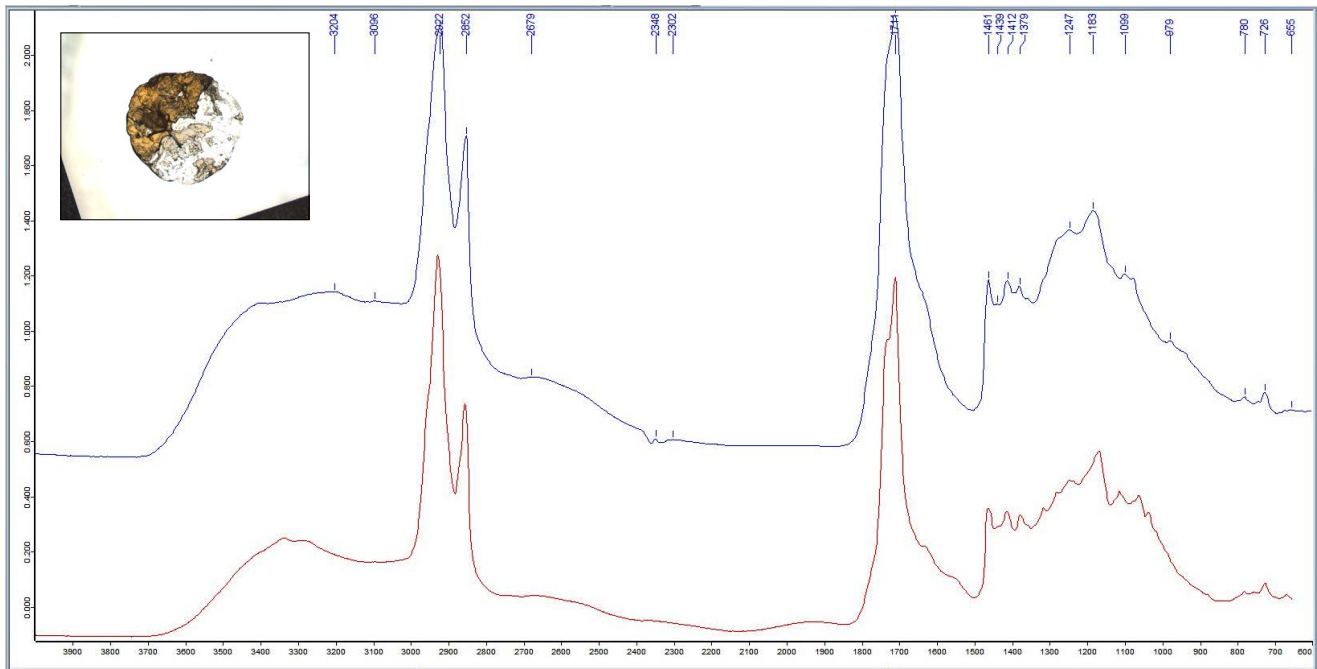


Fig. 2. The FTIR spectrum for the Duke Goo from 25.232 is presented above in blue, and the FTIR spectrum of a known standard [IRUG #IOF00070] for “tung oil coating aged 97+ years” is shown in red, supplied by the American Museum of Natural History (#70/10163). At left, the sample of the Duke Goo from 25.232 is shown mounted on a 2 mm-square diamond cell, after compression for FTIR analysis; note the rounded form of the substance, which suggests a viscous material.

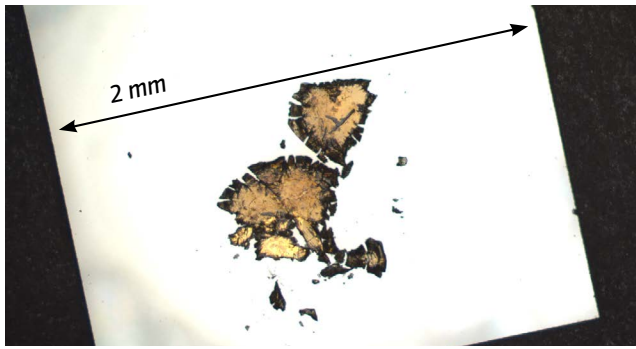


Fig. 3. The sample of the Duke Goo from 54.2990 is shown mounted on a 2 mm-square diamond cell, after compression for FTIR analysis; note the angular edges and corners of the substance—characteristics of brittle fracture.

The identification of a tung oil coating is consistent with the Asian origin of these objects. Tung oil, or Chinese wood oil, is a drying oil obtained by pressing the nut from the tung tree (*Vernicia fordii*); its use is thought to have originated in ancient China. However, the FTIR results do not explain why the oil has not hardened or cured, nor do the results address the question whether these tacky, viscous coatings resulted from cultural or ritual use. The FTIR spectra from the brittle surface coatings on 54.2990 (fig. 3) and 54.2991 did not clearly match any known spectra, but the spectra are similar to FTIR spectra from aged drying oil with a resinous component.

To clarify the FTIR results, the coatings were analyzed using gas chromatography coupled with mass spectrometry

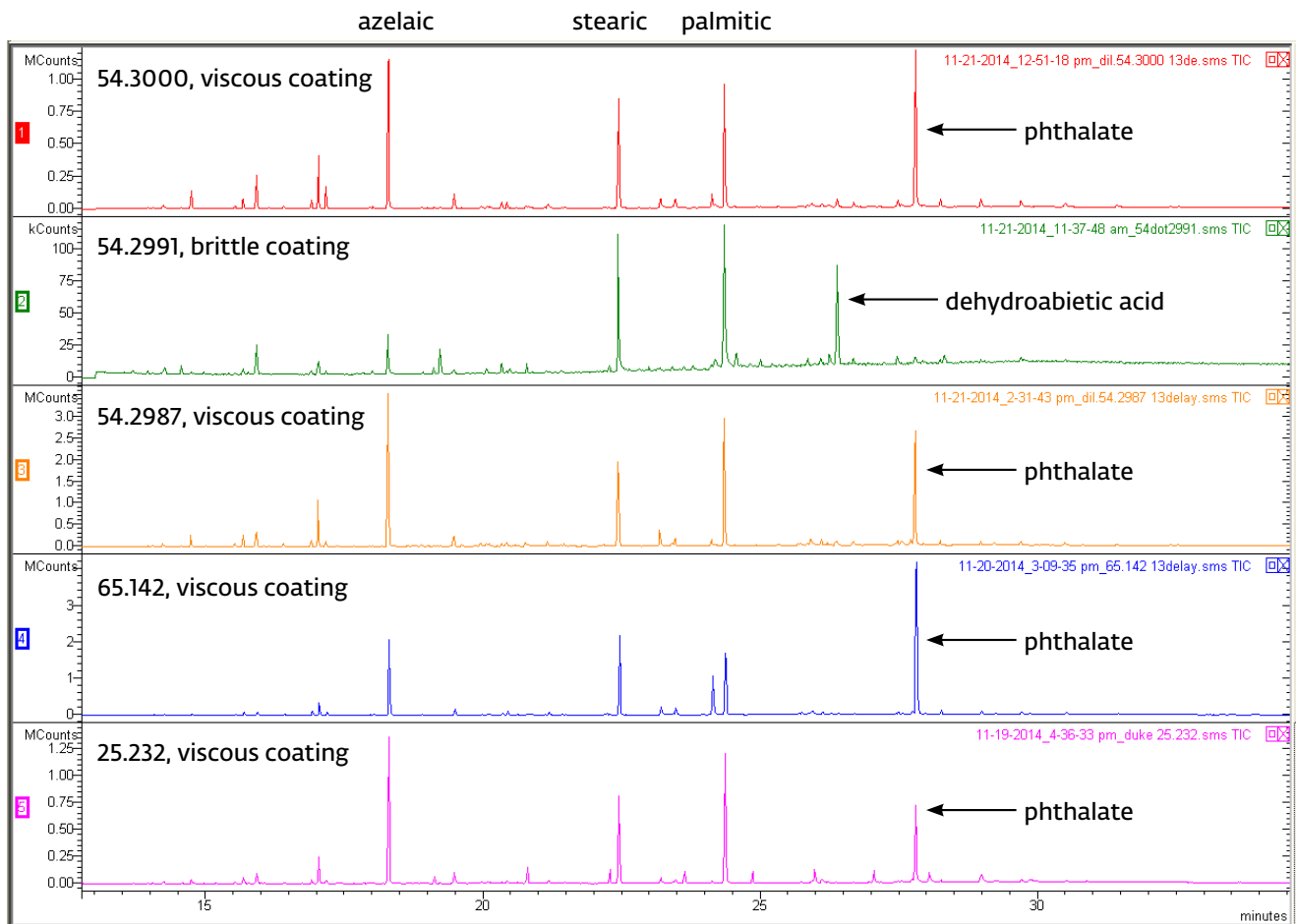


Fig. 4. The results from the GCMS analyses of the Duke Goo are presented for five samples from objects 54.3000, 54.2991, 54.2987, 65.142 and 25.232. The viscous coatings are distinguished by the presence of a phthalate. 1,2 benzenedicarboxylic acid diisooctyl ester matched the mass spectral data best, but the derivatization procedure employed prohibits specific identification of the alkyl chain length on the phthalate. The presence of dehydroabiatic acid in the brittle surface coatings on 54.2991 and 54.2990 suggests a resinous component, substantiated by the additional detection of 7-oxo-dehydroabiatic acid and 15-hydroxy-7-oxo-dehydroabiatic acid in the samples of the coatings on these two objects.

(GCMS) (fig. 4). Gas chromatography separates individual molecules on the basis of size and polarity; the separated molecules can then be identified using mass spectrometry, a technique that fragments and ionizes molecules, enabling their identification. This complex analysis yielded the most helpful information regarding the nature of the Duke Goo coating. All samples contained indicators for drying oils, including azelaic, stearic, and palmitic fatty acids. Most important, phthalates were detected in the tacky, viscous coatings, but not in the brittle surface coatings. Phthalate chemistry and production burgeoned with the development of the plastics industry in the mid-twentieth century, and there is virtually no evidence that suggests phthalates in surface coatings result from traditional cultural practices in Asia. Indeed, the presence of phthalates suggests with high probability that the tacky, viscous Duke Goo coatings are the result of modern interventions. This was the evidence needed to conclude that the tacky coatings that were collecting dust and grime ought to be removed to ensure the longevity of the objects.

No chemicals were detected in the analysis of the Duke Goo that might relate to historical use in Southeast Asia, such as terpenoid residues of incense or sacred resins, similar to the frankincense and myrrh that are used in sacred western traditions.<sup>3</sup> The analysis provided justification for the complete removal of the tacky coating, since all indications are that it is a modern restoration material and not part of the creator's intention nor part of the ritual use of the objects in nineteenth-century Southeast Asia.

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## NOTES

1. During the course of this scientific investigation, the following information was shared by Greg Bailey, Assistant Objects Conservator: in October 1963, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation hired Somnuk Phemthongkum, a Thai "decorator" whose "duties included not only decorating the buildings, but also restoring artworks that had arrived in need of repair

(DDCF Archives, SEAAC.8: General File 1963, 8/23/63 and 10/25/63)." See Nancy Tingley, *Doris Duke: The Southeast Asian Art Collection* (New York, 2003), 16. After shipping the collection to Duke Farms New Jersey in 1972, Doris Duke "inquired of the Benjamin Moore Paint Company whether there was a preservative that would protect the lacquer and gold paint from the harsher New Jersey climate. The firm responded that it did not have a product to adequately protect it (DDCF Archives, SEAAC.8: SEAAC 8.1, Letter from Benjamin Moore & Co., 1/14/77)." See Tingley, *Doris Duke*, 19.

2. For initial FTIR analysis, samples were analyzed in the transmission mode through a diamond compression cell on a Bruker Optics Tensor 27 spectrometer coupled to a Hyperion 2000 microscope (4000 to 600  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  range, 4  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  resolution, 256 scans, 15x objective). For subsequent GCMS analyses, samples were first derivatized using MethPrepII following the Schilling method, then analyzed on a Varian CP-3800GC and a Saturn 2200 mass spectrometer: Agilent VF-5ms column with 0.25 micron thick stationary phase, 30m x 0.25mmID, 1.2ml/min constant flow of helium, with the method starting at a 45°C hold for 5min then a ramp at 10°C/min to 290°C held for 30min, a 13min mass spectrometer delay, and 1microliter sample injection using a CombiPal and 1177 injector at 250°C.
3. Md. Nazrul Islam Bhuiyan, Jaripa Begum and Md. Nurul Huda Bhuiyan "Analysis of Essential Oil of Eaglewood Tree (*Aquilaria agallocha* Roxb.) by Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry," *Journal of the Bangladesh Pharmacological Society* 4 (2009): 24–28.



## PRESERVING THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN PAINTINGS AT THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM

KAREN FRENCH AND MEAGHAN MONAGHAN

Since the 1970s, the Walters Art Museum has become one of the largest Western resources for the study of Thai art. The development of the collection was fostered by Hiram W. Woodward, Jr., the museum's curator of Asian art from 1986 to 2003, who guided the Walters toward acquiring Southeast Asian sculpture and paintings from the collections of Alexander Griswold and Doris Duke.<sup>1</sup> Following a substantial donation, by James Bogle, of Southeast Asian paintings in 2010, the Walters now houses approximately one hundred eighteenth- to twentieth-century Southeast Asian paintings, mostly from Thailand, with some examples from Cambodia and Burma (present-day Myanmar). Twenty of the Walters' paintings are on wooden panel; the remainder are painted on cloth supports.

Known as *phra bot* in Thai, whether painted on wood or cloth, these paintings are more generally referred to as "banner paintings." Wood panel paintings may have substituted for murals in temples, or as decorative backs to personal altars, whereas the majority of the more common paintings on cloth had a more temporary use. Cloth paintings were hung both inside and outside temples, carried and paraded on specific festival days, then stored rolled. This repeated use and storage in a tropical climate caused accelerated degradation of the cloth paintings; basically considered ephemeral, the paintings would be replaced when worn and generally disposed of ceremonially. The commission and donation of a new painting to a Thai temple brought spiritual merit to the donor and his or her family; with new commissions further merit was gained.

Banner paintings were used as visual aids to the recitation of stories of the Buddha's lives—moral tales representing the ten virtues of Buddhism, such as loving-kindness and tolerance. The Walters' cloth paintings range from large-scale banners with narrative scenes concerning the lives of the

Buddha, a standing Buddha, and scenes and postures of the Buddha, to small-scale paintings of the life of the Buddha, parts of Vessantara Jataka sets, and two historical scenes.<sup>2</sup> The Vessantara Jataka narrative tells of the final incarnation of the Buddha. Composed of thirteen chapters, each full set consists of thirteen paintings; the Walters' largest set consists of eleven of these scenes. Centuries of retelling and illustration have enriched the Jatakas—initially moralizing tales encouraging generosity—with humor and artistic appeal.

Many of the paintings arrived at the Walters tightly rolled, folded, or in frames that provided inadequate support, causing structural stress. Most had been in long-term storage under less than ideal conditions. Due to their delicate nature, it would be preferable to store the pictures flat, but since they range in length from two feet to almost seventeen feet, their housing is constrained by the museum's limited storage space. Taking into account these constraints, unframing and re-housing the collection on rolls, in boxes, and in new frames is a challenge for both conservation and collections care.

The Walters has been addressing the preservation of this important yet understudied part of the collection. Before scholars and the public have access to the paintings, they require labor-intensive stabilization and documentation. The paintings are extremely fragile and present complex challenges for preservation and care (figs. 1 and 2). The majority of the paintings have actively flaking paint layers, often resulting in areas of complete paint loss. Tightly rolled or folded storage has caused wrinkles and creases in the cloth supports, leading to further paint loss in associated areas. Many paintings bear evidence of repeated rolling through their extensive linear crack patterns. The paints are moisture-sensitive and prone to staining and migration or loss of pigment. Some paintings exhibit large structural losses from pest damage,



Fig. 1 (above). *Scenes from the Life of the Buddha* (detail), Thailand, 1850–1870: detail of damage to bottom edge. Paint on cotton, 97  $\frac{5}{8}$  × 36  $\frac{5}{8}$  in. (248 × 93 cm). Bequest of A. B. Griswold, 1992, [acc. no. 35.299](#).

Fig. 2 (right) *The Buddha Attains Parinirvana* (detail). Thailand, ca. 1880–1900: loss of paint and ground. Paint on cloth, gilding, 25 × 19 in. (63.5 × 48 cm) Gift from the Doris Duke Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection, [acc. no. 35.285](#)



and many have tears and holes near their outer edges or torn rod pockets, where they would most frequently have been handled. Several paintings have a problematic green or blue paint that has severely weakened the cloth support, causing staining and shattering of the textile, and in some cases complete localized loss of both paint and support. Scientific analysis of one of these greens and a blue has shown that the deterioration may be from an interaction with the binding medium,<sup>3</sup> or the toxic nature of the pigment emerald green, which can decompose in the presence of acids and warm alkalis and darkens in the presence of sulfur.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly,

in both cases, these problems have arisen with use of newer pigments adopted since the seventeenth century.

Conservation of this collection began with condition surveys, starting with the former Griswold pieces, which included some of the largest paintings. The survey has been vital to identifying the collection's needs and provides information to formulate curatorial and conservation treatment priorities for long-range planning.

In 2012, an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant enabled Walters staff to continue surveying Southeast Asian objects from the Duke Collection, which included



sixty-two Southeast Asian paintings. A photography protocol was established alongside the written documentation to produce online images for more open access. A two-year Andrew W. Mellon Conservation Fellowship project in 2015 permitted further surveying of the remaining Southeast Asian paintings on cloth, along with research on treatment methodologies.

Southeast Asian paintings are rarely displayed in Western museum collections; their sensitivity to light requires that they be exhibited in rotation, exposing each work for a limited period followed by rest in storage. The Walters has mounted temporary exhibitions for which some paintings received conservation treatment, but the majority of the collection is currently too unstable for safe or sustainable display.

The importance of preserving this collection of paintings for future viewing and study is reinforced by the decline in production of traditional cloth paintings in Thailand since the late nineteenth century. This collection has been designated the highest priority for stabilization and treatment by the museum's painting conservation department.

A group of paintings on cloth supports has been selected for display in the next few years, their treatment funded by the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation. Additionally, as part of this treatment focus, a partnership was established with the Winterthur University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation for researching and treating a large and very damaged Thai panel painting, *The Buddha's Descent from Tavatimsa* (figs. 3 and 4).



Fig. 3 (above). *The Buddha's Descent from Tavatimsa*, Thailand, 1850–1900: front before treatment. Pigments on wood, 48 1/16 × 80 1/2 in. (122 × 204.5 cm). Gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection, 2002, acc. no. 35.263. Photo courtesy the University of Delaware

Fig. 4 (right). *The Buddha's Descent from Tavatimsa*: raking-light detail of flaking paint before treatment. Gift from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection, 2002, acc. no. 35.263. Photo courtesy the University of Delaware





Unlike Southeast Asian mural paintings and manuscripts, paintings on cloth and panel, composed of water-soluble, generally under-bound powdery paint with little binding medium, have not been widely studied and published, and scant historical documentation survives. In a rare article exploring the function of Thai Buddhist cloth painting, Buddhism scholar Peter Skilling stated: "It is surprising, and regrettable, that little has been written about the artistically and iconographically rich tradition of Southeast Asian cloth painting, which deserves to take its place next to the Thangkas of Tibetan and Himalayan cultures and the scrolls of China, Korea and Japan."<sup>5</sup> As a consequence, the Walters conservation department has gathered an extensive collection of references and technical studies. Understanding more about the materials used in the production of the paintings is vital in aiding their treatment.

The majority of painting supports are plain weave white cloth, likely cotton. In addition, there are examples in the Walters, and other Western museum collections, painted on patterned woven cloth that is probably Indian in origin. The choice of one type of cloth over another is an area that needs further study but might be related to the practice of gifting textiles to monasteries for merit.

One study of pigments used in Thai murals and manuscripts from the seventeenth to the twentieth century examined seven Thai paintings on cloth from the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.<sup>6</sup> In 2007, Walters conservation scientist Jennifer Giaccai analyzed materials found in two nineteenth-century Thai cloth paintings from the Walters' collection,<sup>7</sup> and more recently, Ellen Nigro, a Winterthur student, presented information on the Walters Thai panel painting project.<sup>8</sup> Results from these studies indicate a similarity in materials across all types of Thai paintings: the pigments identified on cloth paintings follow the general trends observed on Thai murals and manuscripts. The white preparation ground layers consist of calcium carbonate, and up through to the nineteenth century, several pigments remained in consistent use: vermilion, red lead, and iron oxide reds; gamboge and orpiment yellows; lead white and kaolin for white; and carbon-based blacks. Green and blue pigment choice changed after the seventeenth century: copper citrate and malachite were replaced by emerald green, and indigo by prussian blue, then by synthetic ultramarine. It has been

suggested this is likely an indication of the transition from local to imported pigments in Thailand during the nineteenth century. Gold is used extensively in Southeast Asian painting, and on the examples studied in the Walters' collection Giaccai found gold leaf applied over red paint, composed of a mixture of vermilion, iron oxide earths, and possibly red lead. An additional upper mordant layer, so far unanalyzed, has also been observed.

Little is yet known about the paint binding media, which have been difficult to analyze and identify since the majority may be derived from a variety of plant gums, and identifying specific organic compounds is difficult.<sup>9</sup> At least three native plant gums are identified in references written in Thai: tamarind, noted by researchers at Silpakorn University in Bangkok as difficult to prepare and preserve, as a glue binder for Thai murals;<sup>10</sup> Ma-dua (Mah dua) likely a tropical ficus, explaining other references to "fig-rubber" glue; and Ma-kwit (Mah khwit), which so far has proved to be more difficult to identify.<sup>11</sup> It is likely that artists used locally available plant gums using traditional preparation techniques. As more paintings in the collection are surveyed, treated, and studied, the Walters will continue to add to the body of technical knowledge on Southeast Asian painting.

In conjunction with the condition survey, re-housing, and technical and treatment research, the conservation department established a small international network of professionals dealing with the challenges posed by Southeast Asian painting collections. In 2016 the Walters hosted a research forum of conservators from related disciplines who work with matte friable paint, over-sized artworks, and degraded textiles in order to solicit ideas for treatment of the long horizontal cloth paintings from the Duke Collection. Much of the ensuing discussion from this forum related to the Southeast Asian painting collection as a whole, with regard to both treatment and storage. As we move forward with conservation of the Southeast Asian paintings, this professional network will be an important resource for those charged with the preservation of these paintings worldwide.

There is still limited information on Thai banner paintings from both an art historical and conservation perspective. The accessibility of the Walters' Southeast Asian paintings, which have been stabilized, documented, and better housed, is improved for future study and enjoyment. While

unfamiliar and even exotic, the Walters' paintings provide multiple opportunities to research and expand the knowledge of the cultural arts of Southeast Asia.

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## NOTES

- Several donations were made by Alexander B. Griswold to the Walters in 1977 and 1979; the majority of the collection of works of South Asian and Southeast Asian art, mostly from Thailand, followed after his death in 1991 through the Breezewood Foundation. A further bequest of former Griswold pieces was received in 1992 through Yoshie Shinomoto. The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation donation came to the Walters Art Museum in 2002. Further information about the formation of the Walters' Thai painting collection can be found in Henry Ginsburg, "Thai Painting in the Walters Art Museum," *Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 64/65 (2006–2007): 99–148.
- See Ginsburg, "Thai Painting."
- Personal communication with Glenn Gates, Conservation Scientist, the Walters Art Museum.
- Shiho Sasaki, "Gelatin and Carrageenan Mixtures: Use of Proteinaceous and Carbohydrate Adhesive Combinations for Consolidating Southeast Asian Paintings," *Western Association for Art Conservation Newsletter* 37 (January 2105): see p. 15 note 2, referencing personal communication with Charlotte Eng, Conservation Scientist, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
- Peter Skilling, "Pata (Phra Bot): Buddhist Cloth Painting of Thailand," in *Buddhist Legacies in Mainland Southeast Asia: Mentalities, Interpretations, and Practices*, ed. François Lagirarde and Paritta Cjaleempow Koanantakool, 223–75 (Paris, 2006).
- Katherine Eremin et al., "Materials and Techniques of Thai Painting," in *Material Issues in Art and Archaeology* 8 (Materials Research Society Symposium Proceedings 1047), ed. Pamela B. Vandiver et al. (2007): 31–38.
- Jennifer Giaccai, "Pigment Analysis of Two Thai Banner Paintings," in *Material Issues in Art and Archaeology* 8 (Materials Research Society Symposium Proceedings 1047), ed. Pamela B. Vandiver et al. (2007): 45–53.
- Ellen Nigro, "Technical Study and Treatment of a Nineteenth-Century Thai Panel Painting," unpublished conservation talk for the Association of North American Graduate Programs in Conservation, 2017. Winterthur University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation.
- Katherine Eremin et al., "Examination of Pigments on Thai Manuscripts: The First Identification of Copper Citrate," *Journal of Raman Spectroscopy* 39, no. 8 (2008): 1057–1065.
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- Elizabeth Lyons, *Thai Traditional Painting*, 3d ed., Thai Culture, n.s. 20 (Bangkok, 1963), 7.

## A FEMALE ARTIST DRAWS HER SWORD

LYNLEY ANNE HERBERT

One of the greatest challenges facing every curator is determining how a collection should grow. The Walters Art Museum's library of rare books and manuscripts, which was amassed primarily by Henry Walters before his death in 1931, reflects his learned and eclectic tastes as a bibliophile, with



Fig. 1. Colophon with self-portrait. From Clothilde Coulaux (French, 1878–1931), *Missal*, 1906. Ink, watercolor, gold, and silver on parchment, 4  $\frac{7}{8}$  × 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (12.4 × 8.7 cm). Museum purchase with funds provided by the W. Alton Jones Foundation Acquisition Fund, 2016, [acc. no. W.934, p. 173](#)

approximately 4,500 works ranging from ancient Egyptian papyri, through medieval manuscripts and incunabula, up to twentieth-century printed books. Ideally, we seek out works that add something truly new while also complementing the existing collection. In 2016, the Walters acquired a fascinating manuscript that meets both of those goals. Known today as the Clothilde Missal after its scribe and artist, Clothilde Coulaux, the manuscript, accessioned as W.934, contains the text of the Catholic mass in alternating French and Latin.<sup>1</sup> Although small in scale at only 4  $\frac{7}{8}$  by 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (12.4 × 8.7 cm), the book is illustrated with illuminations on all of its 174 pages, each carefully executed in delicate opaque watercolors on parchment folios.<sup>2</sup> Remarkably, this manuscript is not, as might be expected, a medieval creation, but rather the product of a renewed fervor for manuscript art that developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>3</sup> This charming, jewel-like book therefore belongs to a modern manuscript tradition, and as such adds something truly unique to the Walters collection.

The Missal's creator, Clothilde Coulaux (1878–1931), was at the time of its making a young French woman living in German-occupied Alsace, France. In the colophon of her book, she provides the reader with a sensitive self-portrait, as well as details about the book's production (fig. 1). It reads in translation:

This Roman missal was completed in honor of our Lord Jesus Christ on the twenty-ninth of June in the year of grace 1906, the feast day of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, by Clothilde Coulaux, resident of the city of Molsheim, on the street of Notre Dame facing the parish church.

Such specificity, which is rarely found in medieval manuscripts, reflects Clothilde's modern sensibilities and personal



artistic pride. What is more, these details provide us with the opportunity to imaginatively stroll down her street, and to know what she could see from her window while working on her book. While incorporating the standard Missal text, Clothilde crafted her manuscript as a highly personal work of art through which she invites us into her world. It is at once a fantasy of Neo-Gothic medievalism and a clear-eyed tribute to her family and homeland, presented in a rich tapestry of imagery including devotional subjects, intimate scenes of everyday life, regional architecture, music, feasting, courtship, child rearing, death, and warfare.

The key to understanding Clothilde's unusual book is the context in which she created it. She was born in 1878 to parents from two of the most important families of industrialists in France. On her mother's side, she was descended from Jean-Baptiste Müller, a major textile manufacturer. Her father's legacy was that of the Coulaux Frères arms and armor company, founded by Clothilde's great-grandfather, Julien Couleaux, and his brother Jacques; the company had supplied arms to French troops since the early 1800s.<sup>4</sup> However, the world into which Clothilde was born had been recently shattered by the Franco-Prussian War. In 1870, her homeland came under German rule, creating a palpable tension between the previously French inhabitants and the new government. The German presence was for many a source of internal conflict and resentment, and the rosy, dreamlike world that Clothilde's medieval figures inhabit was far from her reality.<sup>5</sup>

The book seems to conjure her idea of a lost past, an homage to her home and the way things might once have been. An abundance of architectural detail—images of quaint timber houses, city gates, clock towers, bridges, and castles—evokes the distinctive architecture found in the city of Molsheim and nearby towns that constituted her world. A sense of civic and regional pride permeates the book. Numerous scenes of wine being served and imbibed seem to refer to the famed vineyards of the Alsace region. Figures in white robes recall the Chartreuse monks who once took refuge within the town walls. Her civic pride takes on a more personal note in the surprisingly persistent presence of armor, swords, and firearms—imagery that has no place within the prayers of the Mass and that recalls the glory of the Coulaux family's contribution to French history. Intricately detailed garments throughout that suggest embroidered fabrics and

lace similarly recall the contribution of her mother's family, the Müllers. Yet ultimately a sense of reality invades her dreamlike world, standing in sharp and jarring contrast to the warmth of the other images. The jagged and menacing eagles of the Prussians and Habsburgs periodically intrude upon the usual tranquility of her scenes, while repeated inscriptions plead for peace and protection. Clothilde's book is therefore more than just a charming confection. Undercurrents in her art carry deep cultural implications, capturing a sense of the tension and vulnerability felt by those living in an uneasy peace.

In many ways, the Clothilde Missal fits seamlessly with both the Walters collection and the life and legacy of the museum's founder, Henry Walters. Clothilde and Henry were contemporaries, dying within six months of each other in 1931. Henry was a true Francophile, spending four years of his impressionable youth in France during the Civil War, and visiting regularly throughout the next six decades of his life.<sup>6</sup> The Franco-Prussian War—which deeply affected Clothilde's family and shaped her life and art—occurred only five years after Henry returned to America, and his family had regular contact with their friend and art buyer George Lucas, who lived through the turmoil of the war and its aftermath as a resident of Paris.<sup>7</sup> The Franco-Prussian War was the subject of a number of paintings acquired later by Henry, such as Puvis de Chavannes' powerful painting *Hope* (acc. no. 37.156), which not only contextualize Clothilde's experience, but also suggest that her art would have resonated with Henry. This possibility is further supported by his collection of French literature and book arts, which account for a large portion of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century volumes that graced his personal bookshelves.<sup>8</sup> Clothilde's Missal complements, aesthetically and stylistically, many of these printed books of poetry, literature, and fairy tales, which when illustrated often depict similarly whimsical images in soft watercolor tones.<sup>9</sup> Yet while the most magnificent of Henry's books of this era are limited-edition works with hand-tinted images and bespoke bindings, none are handmade. Clothilde's manuscript can take pride of place among works akin to those that inspired it, while also remaining a unique work of art that Henry would doubtless have appreciated given his passion for manuscripts. Medieval manuscripts and objects, much like those that he collected, clearly also served as models for



Fig. 2 (top). Albrecht Dürer's drummers, from a marginal design created for the prayer book of Maximilian I. Reproduced from Rudolf Ackermann, *Albert Durers [sic] Designs of the Prayer Book [of Maximilian I]* (London, 1817). The Walters Art Museum, 92.1316, p. 35 detail

Fig. 3 (bottom). Clothilde's re-imagined drummer scene. From Clothilde Coulaux, *Missal*, 1906. [W. 934](#), p. 8, detail

many aspects of Clothilde's illumination and imagery, and the Walters' vast holdings in those areas provide endless points of intersection with her book.<sup>10</sup>

Clothilde's reliance on early prints for source material further associates her missal with works in the Walters collection. For instance, the Walters owns fifteen prints after Hans Holbein's 1538 *Danse Macabre* series of woodcuts, and Clothilde must have had access to similar copies, for these images appear unchanged in appearance and scale in her Office of the Dead.<sup>11</sup> Many other prints by early Renaissance artists can be clearly recognized throughout the Missal, and Clothilde seems to have had a particularly strong penchant for works by Albrecht Dürer. This creates a rich avenue for

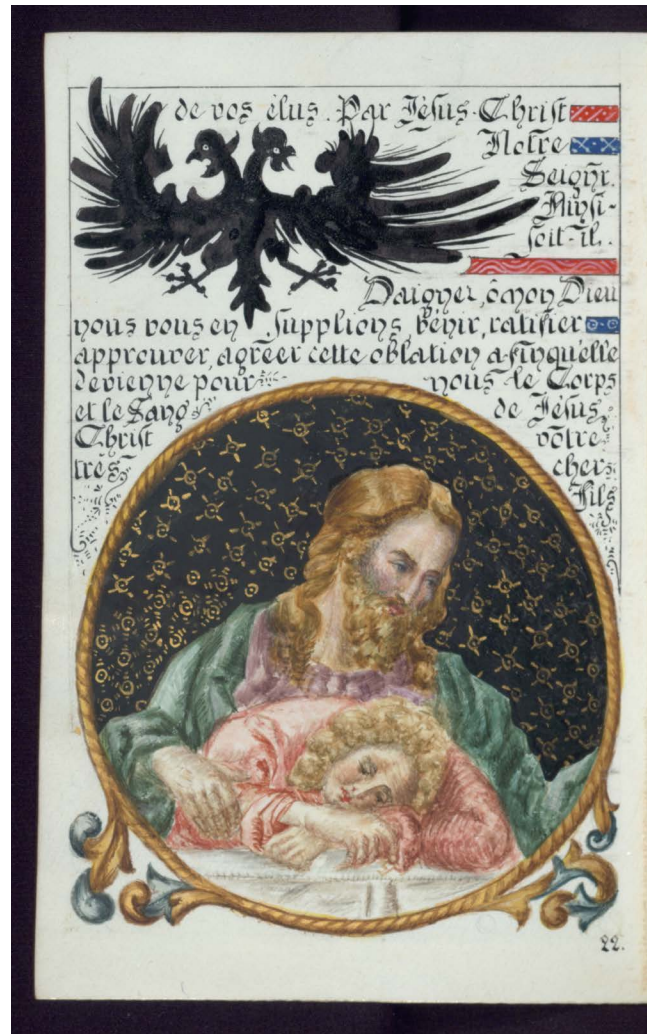


Fig. 4. Clothilde's Last Supper scene. From Clothilde Coulaux, *Missal*, 1906. [W.934](#), p. 22

comparison, as the Walters' holdings of Dürer prints are strong, and imagery from his series on the life of the Virgin and from his large Crucifixion cycle was clearly mined by Clothilde for her book.<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that even when seemingly copying directly from earlier works, she often re-imagined them in ways that reflected her worldview or personal experience. In one instance, she faithfully copied the Virgin and Gabriel from Dürer's print of the Annunciation, but elaborated and transformed the background into an Alsatian landscape. On other occasions, her changes seem to reflect pure whimsy, such as when she plucked one of Dürer's stern drummers from a marginal design created for the prayer book of Maximilian I, and playfully replaced his companions





Fig. 5. Joan of Arc and woman warrior. From Clothilde Coulox, Missal, 1906. W.934, pp. 94–95

with a cat (her cat?) peering out of a window (figs. 2 and 3).<sup>13</sup> Clothilde deftly appropriated elements of existing works of art, at times with humor and charm, and at other moments with a more sobering effect. In one instance, a jagged and menacing Habsburg eagle in shiny, pitch-black ink hovers ominously over two figures who are borrowed from Dürer's print of the Last Supper, but here Christ provides protection from the threat overhead (fig. 4).

In addition to these synergies, Clothilde's missal mitigates a critical deficit in the collection. Of approximately 4,500 rare books and manuscripts at the Walters, only four have been securely attributed to female scribes or artists.<sup>14</sup> Handmade books created entirely by women are rare, and Clothilde's art expresses both femininity and a nascent feminism. She has agency, presenting herself as a scribe in her self-portrait,

and proudly signing her work. Her art is markedly focused on women, with an unusually rich variety of imagery specific to a woman's life and concerns, in addition to twenty-seven images of the Virgin Mary. One lengthy pictorial cycle includes imagery of courtship, marriage, domestic activities, and child rearing—themes rarely present in a collection that reflects Henry Walters' conventionally male perspective.<sup>15</sup> Although many of these images convey traditional roles expected of women, such as nursing infants and embroidering, Clothilde also displays a bold and even rebellious streak. In a book created under German rule, she included an image of Joan of Arc (fig. 5), who at the time of her manuscript's creation had become a symbol of French nationalism and resistance against the German presence in Alsace.<sup>16</sup> On the facing page, a second woman warrior wields an open book



that closely resembles the very book in which the image appears. This is likely Clothilde herself, clad in the armor of her heritage, and modeling herself after the courageous and steadfast heroine who resisted tyranny. Her book preserves the imagination, anxieties, and hopes of a complex and sophisticated woman navigating an uncertain time, and the Walters can now preserve her book for the world.

Lynley Anne Herbert ([lherbert@thewalters.org](mailto:lherbert@thewalters.org)) is the Robert and Nancy Hall Assistant Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts at the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

## NOTES

- The manuscript has been fully digitized and is available on Walters Ex Libris: <http://manuscripts.thewalters.org/viewer.php?id=W.934#page/1/mode/2up>.
- Abigail Quandt, Head of Book and Paper Conservation at the Walters, discovered after the purchase that these stiff modern parchment pages are coated in a heavy layer of lead white, which provided an aesthetically appealing but highly toxic surface on which to paint.
- For further reading on the subject of modern manuscripts, see Thomas Coomans and Jan De Maeyer, eds. *The Revival of Medieval Illumination: Nineteenth-Century Belgian Manuscripts and Illuminations from a European Perspective / Renaissance de l'enluminure médiévale: Manuscrits et enluminures belges du XIXe siècle et leur contexte européen* (Leuven, 2007), which illustrates the Clothilde Missal on p. 61, fig. 3.25. See also Sandra Hindman and Laura Light, *Neo-Gothic: Book Production and Medievalism* (New York, 2015).
- For the Coulaux Frères business, see *Rapport du Jury Central sur les produits de l'agriculture et de l'industrie exposés en 1849*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1850), 2:389–90. In 2015, the Metropolitan Museum of Art purchased a magnificent etched and gilded cuirass produced about 1825 by Coulaux Frères for François Marie Louis Victor, baron de Latour-Foissac (1784–1851), no. 2015.295a, b
- The Coulaux arms manufacturing company had been run by Clothilde's grandfather, Charles Louis Coulaux, since 1840, and he was a beloved pillar of the Alsatian community. All of this came crashing down with the Prussian invasion. Charles Coulaux seems to have been faced with an impossible choice: shut down his family business and put 800 people out of work, or keep the factories running, protect the livelihoods of his employees, and risk the Germans using the arms he was producing against those who had previously been their French brethren. He chose the latter, and it was viewed as a betrayal. In a book written in 1874 about the Prussian invasion of Alsace, the author brands Charles Coulaux a traitor. By the time Clothilde created her book, the the staff of the Coulaux company had fallen from 800 to 100 employees, and the company had been forced out of producing arms by German companies, surviving mainly by creating farm tools and coffee grinders. For views of her family after the war, see Édouard Siebeker, *Les Prussiens en Alsace: Récits et faits recueillis par Un Patriote Alsacien* (Paris, 1874), 366–68.
- On Henry Walters' life, see William R. Johnston, *William and Henry Walters, the Reluctant Collectors* (Baltimore, 1999). See especially pp. 22–40 for Henry's time abroad living in Paris.
- Johnston, *William and Henry Walters*, 58–65.
- The Walters' rare book library houses approximately six hundred books belonging to Henry Walters personally, and easily half connect to France in language or subject matter.
- See, for instance, shelf mark 92.1067: *Voyage autour de sa chambre*, 1897, and shelf mark 92.808: *Isée, princesse de Tripole*, illustrated by Alphonse Mucha, 1897.
- In manuscripts, for instance, see the courtly ladies in conical hats and veils in [W.269](#), fol. 16r, which Clothilde echoes throughout her book. A monstrance in the Walters collection, acc. no. 53.53, is similar to one she paints on [p. 165](#), and her rendering of an aquamanile on [p. 145](#) (playfully used to pour wine rather than water!), resembles Walters [acc. nos. 53.25](#) and [54.2434](#).
- Acc. no. [W.934](#), pp. 105–14. The Walters has fifteen woodcuts by the Basel engraver Hans Lützelberger, after designs by Hans Holbein the Younger (ca. 1497–1543), from the 1549 Italian edition of Holbein's *Danse Macabre* (shelf mark 92.96.1-8). Many of these are reproduced by Clothilde, and the scale is identical, so a one-to-one relationship can be demonstrated between the prints and her watercolors. Her family was wealthy and well connected, so it is possible she had access to original prints, although she may have worked from reproductions, as Holbein's images were published in the nineteenth century.
- Walters shelf marks 92.1319 and 92.1317
- Albert Durer's Designs of the Prayer Book* (London, 1817), shelf mark 92.1316.
- The others are [acc. no. W.26](#), the Claricia Psalter, which was produced by nuns in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century; acc. no. [W.342](#), a copy of Catherine of Bologna's treatise *Le Armi Spirituale* created in 1466 by Illuminata Bembo; [W.801](#), a Victorian-style illuminated prayerbook dated 1881; and [92.677](#), a printed book made by the Guild of Women Bookbinders in 1901, with a binding attributed to Florence de Rheims. It is of course highly likely there are other books in the collection that

were made by women, but the names of scribes and artists were often unrecorded.

15. This is found in the marriage mass, [acc. no. W.934](#), pp. 115–32. Clothilde herself never married.
16. Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (Oxford, 2013), xiii.

## ACQUISITIONS 2014–2017

### GIFTS

Jonathan J. G. Alexander, 2015

*Initial C with David Playing Guitar*. Italy, ca. 1500 (?). Tempera on parchment (?). Acc. no. W.413.C

Leaf from the Ghistelles Hours. Flanders, ca. 1300. Ink and pigments on parchment. Acc. no. W.851.B

Horace Wood Brock in memory of his grandparents

John and Elizabeth Distler, 2017

*Wine cooler*. England, 1795–1850. Wood (mahogany), gilded bronze, brass, lead. Acc. no. 65.146

Betsy and Robert Feinberg, 2015

Fujikasa Satoko (Japanese, b. 1980). *Seraphim*, 2015. Stoneware with white slip glaze. Acc. no. 49.2831

John and Berthe Ford, 2014

*Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara*. Tibet, ca. 1400. Gilded copper with traces of paint and semiprecious stones. Acc. no. 54.3098

*Buddha Akshobhya*. Tibet, ca. 1200. Copper alloy with traces of paint and turquoise. Acc. no. 54.3094

*Buddha Vajrasattva*. Tibet, 13th century. Brass with copper inlay. Acc. no. 54.3097

*Pair of votive plaques*. Tibet, 18th century. Clay with pigments. Acc. nos. 25.268.1, 25.268.2

*The Teacher Jampa Karma Dargyay*. Tibet, ca. 16th century. Bronze with silver and copper inlay. Acc. no. 54.3095

*The Teacher Namgyal Dragpa Zangpo*. Tibet, 15th century. Gilded copper alloy with traces of resin. Acc. no. 54.3096

*Worldly Protector Achi Chokyi Drolma*, Tibet, 1800–1899. Opaque watercolor and gold on cotton. Acc. no. 35.314

John and Berthe Ford, 2015

*Chakrasamvara Embracing Vajravarahi*. Tibet, 11th century. Phyllite with gilding. Acc. no. 25.269

*Mahakala*. Tibet, 15th century. Gilded copper alloy with paint and semiprecious stones. Acc. no. 54.3099

*Mahasiddhas Shavaripa and Dharikapa*. Tibet, ca. 1600. Opaque watercolor on cotton. Acc. no. 35.319

*Mandala of a Goddess*. Tibet, 18th century. Opaque watercolor on cotton. Acc. no. 35.318

*Protector Deity Begtse*. Tibet, 18th century. Opaque watercolor and gold on cotton. Acc. no. 35.316

*A Tibetan Monk*. Tibet, 12th century. Opaque watercolor on cotton. Acc. no. 35.320

*Vajrabhairava with Vajravetali*. Tibet, ca. 1800. Appliqué fabrics. Acc. no. 35.317

John and Berthe Ford, 2016

*Curved Ritual Knife*. Tibet, 17th–18th century, gilded copper alloy and iron. Acc. no. 54.3106

*Kalachakra and Vishvamata*, Tibet, ca. 1500, gilded copper alloy with traces of paint. Acc. no. 54.3103

*Mahasiddha Jalandharapa*. Tibet, 15th century, gilded copper alloy with paint and semiprecious stones. Acc. no. 54.3102

*Prajnaparamita Manuscript*. Tibet, 13th century, gold ink on blue-dyed paper, wooden boards with traces of gilding on upper board. Acc. no. W.856

*Raga Gandhara*. India, 1650–75, opaque watercolor and gold on paper. Acc. no. W.935



*Ritual Bell*. Tibet, 17th–18th century, copper alloy, iron, leather, silk, and glass. [Acc. no. 54.3105](#)

*Ritual Diadem with Five Buddhas*, China, 17th–18th century, embroidered silk, gold and silver leaf on paper, internal support. [Acc. no. 86.39](#)

*Vajra*. Tibet. 17th–18th century, copper alloy and iron. [Acc. no. 54.3104](#)

*Vessel in the Form of a Skull Cup*, Nepal, 1404, copper alloy. [Acc. no. 54.3107](#)

*Wild Boar Hunt*. India, ca. 1675, opaque watercolor on paper. [Acc. no. W.936](#)

#### Giraud and Carolyn Foster, 2014

*Fragment of a pediment with a goddess*. South Arabia, 2nd century CE. Calcite-alabaster. [Acc. no. 21.74](#)

#### David T. Frank and Kazukuni Sugiyama, 2014

Minol Araki (Japanese, 1928–2010), *Grotto with Two Boats*, 1987. Ink and color on paper. [Acc. no. 35.315](#)

#### Walter Hauser, 2016

*Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara*. Tibet, 16th–early 17th century. Gilded copper alloy with paint and semiprecious stones. [Acc. no. 54.3100](#)

*Grain Mandala Set*. Tibet, 19th–20th century. Silver with gilding. [Acc. no. 57.2334](#)

*Hevajra and Nairatmya*. Tibet, late 14th–15th century. Gilded copper alloy with paint and semiprecious stones. [Acc. no. 54.3101](#)

*Lama*. Tibet, 18th century. Opaque watercolor and gold on cotton. [Acc. no. 35.321](#)

*Vajrabhairava and Vajravetali*. Tibet, 18th century. Opaque watercolor and gold on cotton. [Acc. no. 35.322](#)

#### Georgia and Michael de Havenon, 2016

*Band*. Peru (Wari), 500–850. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.15](#)

*Carrying bag*. Peru (Sihuas), 100 BCE–300 CE. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.3](#)

*Ch'uspa* (coca leaf bag). Bolivia or Peru (Colonial) 19th century. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.17](#)

*Ch'uspa* (coca leaf bag). Bolivia or Peru (Colonial), late 16th–17th century. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.16](#)

*Four-cornered hat*. Peru (Wari), 600–900. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.13](#)

*Kero* (libation cup). Peru, Chile, or Ecuador (Inca), ca. 1600. Wood (escallonia) and pigmented resin inlay. [Acc. no. 2011.20.18](#)

*Lliclla* (woman's wrap). Bolivia (Colonial) 18th century. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.11](#)

*Panel*. Peru (Sihuas) 100 BCE–300 CE. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.9](#)

*Tunic*. Peru (Nazca). 400–600, Camelid fibers, cotton. [Acc. no. 2011.20.1](#)

*Tunic border piece*. Peru (Nazca), 100–200. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.5](#)

*Tunic border*. Peru, 400–700 (?). Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.12](#)

*Tunic fragment*. Peru (Wari), 600–900. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.4](#)

*Tunic or panel fragment*. Peru (Wari), 600–900. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.2](#)

*Tunic panel*. Bolivia, 400–800. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.8](#)

*Tunic panel*. Peru (Wari), 600–900. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.10](#)

*Tunic panel*. Peru (Wari), 600–900. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.7](#)

*Tunic panel*. Peru, 600–900. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.6](#)

*Uncu* (tunic). Peru (Inca), 1438–1534. Camelid fibers. [Acc. no. 2011.20.14](#)

#### Michael and Georgia de Havenon

in honor of Hiram W. Woodward, 2016

*Vishnu*. Cambodia, late 12th century. Bronze. [Acc. no. 2004.17.1](#)

#### Michael and Georgia de Havenon

in memory of Henry Ginsburg, 2016

Divination manuscript. Cambodia, 19th century. Ink and pigments on paper. [Acc. no. W.921](#)

**William R. Johnston, 2016**

William H. Bartlett (English, 1809–1854). *View of the Susquehannah, at Liverpool*, ca. 1839. Ink and watercolor on thick wove paper (hand-colored etching). Acc. no. 93.170

**Women's Committee of the Walters Art Museum on the occasion of their 50th Anniversary; museum purchase with funds provided by the Alton T. Jones Fund, 2014**

*Jug with Knights*. England, late 13th–early 14th century, with later restorations. Glazed low-fire ceramic. [Acc. no. 48.2876](#)

**PURCHASES**

**Museum purchase with funds provided through the bequest of Alexander B. Griswold by exchange, 2014**

*Abhidhamma Manuscript*. Thailand, 1791. Ink and color on paper. Acc. no. W.933

**Museum purchase with funds provided through the gift of the Estate of Mrs. Rudolph T. Mayer and the bequest of William and Henry Walters by exchange, 2014**

*Rectangular fragment with a saint or Evangelist*. France, early 13th century. Gilded copper and champlevé enamel. Acc. no. 44.995

*Rectangular fragment with a saint or Evangelist*. France, early 13th century. Gilded copper and champlevé enamel. Acc. no. 44.996

**Museum purchase with funds provided through the bequest of Laura Delano Eastman by exchange, 2015**

D. F. Haynes and Co. *Severn Ware Jug*, 1885–87. Stoneware with transparent glaze and blue–green overglaze, partly gilded and partly silvered (with platinum?). [Acc. no. 48.2877](#)

**Museum purchase with funds provided through the bequest of Laura Delano Eastman by exchange, 2016**

Pietro Calvi (Italian, 1833–1884). *Othello*, ca. 1873. Marble and bronze. [Acc. no. 27.609](#)

Gustave Doré (French, 1832–1884). *The Departure of the Guardsman*, 1870–71. Pencil on paper. Acc. no. 37.2935

Eduardo Zamacois y Zabala (Spanish, ca. 1841–1871). *Bufón del siglo XVI*, 1867. Watercolor over traces of pencil on paper. Acc. no. 37.2934

**Museum purchase with funds provided by the W. Alton Jones Foundation Acquisition Fund, 2016**

Syby Grant. *Autograph Letter to Her Master, John Hanson Thomas*, 1861. Ink on paper. Acc. nos. 15.34.1

Copy of Syby Grant's *Autograph Letter to Her Master, John Hanson Thomas*, after 1861. Ink on paper. Acc. no. 15.34.2

Clothilde Coulaux. *Missal*, 1906. Ink and pigments on parchment covered with leather with silk and gilding. [Acc. no. W.934](#)

## STAFF RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES, 2014–2017

Danielle Bennett, *Associate Registrar for Collection Management*

### *Invited Lectures*

With Jennifer Harr, Joan Elisabeth Reid, and Chris Kunkel. “The Art of Fine Art Risk Management.” The Risk Insurance Management Society, Chesapeake Chapter, Baltimore, 2017.

“Registration 101.” Small Museum Association, College Park, February 20, 2017.

“Using an iPad for Condition Reporting.” Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, Washington, DC, October 22, 2014.

Jo Briggs, *Associate Curator, 18th- and 19th-Century Art*

### *Publications*

“Landscape with Flowers: Léon Bonvin’s Watercolors and Sèvres Porcelain.” *Master Drawing* 55, no. 2 (2017): 195–98.

“Condemned to Sparkle: The Reception, Presentation and Production of Léon Bonvin’s Floral Still Lifes.” *Oxford Art Journal* 38, no. 2 (2015): 247–63.

“*Flâneurs*, Commodities, and the Working Body in Louis Huart’s *Physiologie du Flâneur* and Albert Smith’s *Natural History of the Idler upon Town*. In *The Flâneur Abroad*, ed. Richard Wrigley, 117–41. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

Review of Janice Carlisle, *Picturing Reform in Victorian Britain*. *Victorian Studies* 56, no. 4 (2014): 699–700.

### *Invited Lectures*

“Frozen with Desire: Victorian Photography, Nature, and Drowned Men.” Annual Conference, North American Victorian Studies Association, Arizona State University, Phoenix, 2016.

*The Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 73 (2018)

“Missed Connections: Leon Bonvin’s Floral Still Lifes” Virginia Commonwealth University, Keynote for Graduate Symposium of Virginia Commonwealth University, Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, 2015.

Karen French, *Senior Conservator, Paintings*

### *Publications*

With Meaghan Monaghan. “A Disaster in the Making: Preserving Southeast Asian Paintings at the Walters Art Museum.” Postprints, American Institute for Conservation, (AIC) 44th Annual Meeting, Montreal, Canada.

### *Invited Lectures*

With Meaghan Monaghan. “A Disaster in the Making: Preserving Southeast Asian Paintings at the Walters Art Museum.” American Institute for Conservation, (AIC) 44th Annual Meeting, Montreal, Canada, 2016.

With Glenn Gates. “Revealing the Walters *Madonna and Child with Saints* by Pacino di Bonaguida through Scientific Analysis.” New College Conference on Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Florida, 2016.

Glenn Gates, *Conservation Scientist*

### *Publications*

J. Lauffenburger, D. Strahan, and G. Gates. “Two Bayon-Period Khmer Bronzes in the Walters Art Museum: Technical Study Revisited.” *Metal 2016*, Proceedings of the interim meeting of the ICOM-CC Metals Working Group, September 26–30, 2016, New Delhi, India, R. Menon, C. Chemello and A. Pandya (eds), ICOM-CC & Indira Gandhi National Centre of the arts: 30–39.

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Z. E. Voras, K. deGhetaldi, B. Baade, E. Gordon, G. Gates and T. P. Beebe. “Comparison of Oil and Egg Tempera Paint Systems Using Time-of-Flight Secondary Ion Mass Spectrometry,” *Studies in Conservation* 61, no. 4 (2016): 222–35.

A. Marquardt, E. Breitung, T. Drayman-Weisser, G. Gates, and R. Phaneuf. “Protecting Silver Cultural Heritage Objects with Atomic Layer Deposited Corrosion Barriers.” *Heritage Science*, vol. 3, no. 37 (2015).

G. Gates, S. La Niece, and T. Drayman-Weisser. “A Shrine Reunited? The Collaborative, Scientific Study of Two Reliquary Panels from the Walters Art Museum and the British Museum.” In *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period*, edited by James Robinson and Lloyd de Beer with Anna Harnden. British Museum Research Publication 195, 116–25. London 2014.

G. A. Gates. “Discovering the Material Secrets of Art: Tools of Cultural Heritage Science.” *American Ceramic Society Bulletin* 93, no. 7 (2014): 20–27.

A. E. Marquardt, E. M. Breitung, T. Drayman-Weisser, G. Gates, G. W. Rubloff, E. Vicenzi, and R. J. Phaneuf. “Investigation of Atomic Layer Deposited Metal Oxide Layers for Conservation of Metal Cultural Heritage Objects.” *Microscopy and Microanalysis* 20 (Supp. 3) (2014): 2002–3.

#### Invited Lectures

Keynote Address and Outstanding Alumni Award, 30th Annual Scholarship and Alumni Celebration, Department of Chemistry, University of South Florida, Tampa FL, 2017.

“Scientific Explorations of Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Appreciation and Technological Discovery.” Keynote at the Maryland Section of the American Chemical Society 2017 Student Awards Luncheon. Baltimore, MD, 2017.

“Recent Research and Discoveries Concerning the Walters Mummy (Faiyum) Portraits.” Ancient Panel Paintings: Examination, Analysis and Research (APPEAR). Mid-point Meeting Hosted by the British Museum, London, 2016.

“Materials Science in the Service of Cultural Heritage: Preservation, Appreciation and Technological Discovery.” Special Joint Seminar Hosted by the Departments of Materials Science & Engineering, Art, Art History, and Anthropology;

and The College of Innovation and Design at Boise State University. Boise, ID, 2015.

“Material Science of Cultural Heritage at the Walters Art Museum.” University of Florida Materials Science and Engineering Department, Spring 2015 Seminar Series, Gainesville, FL, 2015.

“Materials Science to Support the Conservation of Art Collections.” Johns Hopkins University Materials Science & Engineering, Spring 2014 Seminar Series, Baltimore, MD, 2014.

#### Conference Presentation

With Karen French. “Revealing the Walters *Madonna and Child with Saints* by Pacino di Bonaguida through Scientific Analysis.” 2016 New College Conference on Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Sarasota, FL, 2016.

#### Eric Gordon, Head of Painting Conservation

##### Publications

“The Enigmatic Ideal City: A Renaissance Panel Reveals Its Secrets.” In *Painting Techniques, History, Materials and Studio Practice*, 5th International Symposium, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam” edited by A. Wallert, 2016.

With Zachary E. Voras, Kristin deGhetaldi, Brian Baade, Glenn Gates, and Thomas P. Beebe. “Comparison of Oil and Egg Tempera Paint Systems Using Time-of-Flight Secondary Ion Mass Spectrometry.” *Studies in Conservation* 2014/15, 222–35.

“Richard Caton Woodville: In Palette and Process.” Post-prints, American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, Paintings Group, 2014.

#### Jennifer Harr, Associate Registrar for Loans and Exhibitions

##### Invited Lecture

With Joan Elisabeth Reid, Danielle Bennett, and Chris Kunkel. “The Art of Fine Art Risk Management.” The Risk Insurance Management Society, Chesapeake Chapter, Baltimore, 2017.

**Lynley Anne Herbert, Robert and Nancy Hall Assistant Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts**

*Publications*

“Le toucher de l’Evêque: Tracer les actes de dévotion dans les Evangiles de Sainte-Croix de Poitiers.” *Les cinq sens au Moyen Age*, ed. Éric Palazzo. Paris: les Éditions du Cerf, 2016.

“It’s All Fun and Games . . . Play and Valor in the Liber Amicorum of Joannes Carolus Erlenwein.” *Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 72 (2014): 109–24.

“Boys Will Be Boys: Playing Around in a 17th-Century Friendship Book.” *Public Domain Review. Curator’s Choice* 17 (December 2, 2014).

Catalogue entries (nos. 27, 29, 30, 37, 38, 39, 72, and 73) in *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe*, edited by Martina Bagnoli. Baltimore: The Walters Art Museum, 2017.

*Invited Presentations*

“The Clothilde Missal: A Medieval Reverie in War-torn France.” 52nd International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 2017.

“Smoke, Spores, and Soy: Our Olfactory Obsession with Old Books.” Symposium: The Senses in Medieval Culture, Walters Art Museum, 2016.

“Patronage, Censorship, and Digital Repatriation: Excavating Layers of History in the Carrow Psalter.” 51st International Congress on Medieval Studies. Kalamazoo, Michigan, 2016.

“It’s All Fun and Games . . . Play and Valor in the Liber Amicorum of Joannes Carolus Erlenwein.” 41st Annual St. Louis Conference on Manuscript Studies St. Louis University, 2014.

**Ellen Hoobler, William B. Ziff, Jr., Associate Curator of Art of the Americas, 1200 BCE–1500 CE**

*Publications*

Preface. In *Visual Culture of the Ancient Americas: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Andrew Finegold and Ellen Hoobler. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017.

“An ‘Artistic Discovery’ of Antiquity: Alfonso Caso, the Archaeologist as Curator at the New York World’s Fair and MoMA’s *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, 1939–1940.” In

*Visual Culture of the Ancient Americas: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Andrew Finegold and Ellen Hoobler. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017.

**Eleanor Hughes, Deputy Director for Art & Program**

*Publications*

“Smoke and Marble: Thomas Banks’s Monument to Captain George Blagdon Westcott.” In *The British School of Sculpture, c. 1760–1832*, ed. Jason Edwards and Sarah Burnage, Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017.

*Spreading Canvas: Eighteenth-century British Marine Painting*, ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016 (Historians of British Art Book Award for an Exemplary Multi-authored Book).

Ed. with Ian Collins. *Modernism and Memory: Rhoda Pritzker and the Art of Collecting*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

“Sanguinary Engagements: Exhibiting the Naval Battles of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.” in *Exhibiting the Empire: Cultures of Display and the British Empire*, edited by John Macaleer and John M. Mackenzie. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2015.

*Invited Lecture*

“Brave Tars and Glorious Commanders: Painting and Performance in Eighteenth-Century Britain.” Opening lecture for *Spreading Canvas: Eighteenth-century British Marine Painting*, Yale Center for British Art, September 14, 2016.

**Chris Kunkel, Head of Safety and Security**

*Invited Lecture*

With Danielle Bennett, Jennifer Harr, and Joan Elisabeth Reid. “The Art of Fine Art Risk Management.” The Risk Insurance Management Society, Chesapeake Chapter, Baltimore, 2017.

**Amy Landau, Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs and Curator of Islamic and South & Southeast Asian Art**

*Publications*

“The Seventeenth-Century Merchant-Artist Minas and the Mediation of Notions of ‘Like-likeness.’” In *The Mercantile Effect: On Art and Exchange in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth*

*Centuries*, ed. Sussan Babaie and Melanie Gibson. University of Chicago Press (Distributed for the Ginkco Library).

“Invoking Biography in Museum Presentations of Islamic Art: Successes and Challenges,” In *Fostering Empathy through Museums*, 181–99. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

*Pearls on a String: Artists, Patrons, and Poets at the Great Islamic Courts*. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, in association with University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 2015.

With Theo Maarten Van Lint. “Armenian Merchant Patronage of New Julfa’s Sacred Spaces.” In M. Gharipour, ed. *Sacred Precincts: Non-Muslim Sites in Islamic Territories*, 308–33. Brill, 2015.

“Reconfiguring the Northern European Print to Depict Sacred History at the Persian Court.” In Thomas D. C Kaufmann and Michael North, eds. *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia*, 66–82. Amsterdam University Press, 2014.

#### Invited Lectures

“The Seventeenth-Century Merchant-Artist Minas and the Mediation of Notions of ‘Life-likeness.’” In *The Mercantile Effect: On Art and Exchange in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Berlin, October 2017.

“Islamic Art in the Museum Today: A Controversy.” Paper given in absentia) at Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, March 2017.

“The Theater of Martyrdom: Vision and Emotion in Late Safavid Painting,” Courtauld Institute of Art, May 2017.

*Religious Pluralism in the 21st-Century Museum*, in *Encounters among Faiths: The Morris W. Offit Symposium on Muslims, Jews, and Christians in the Medieval Mediterranean*, Friday, February 2016.

*The Traveller’s Gift: Italian Red Velvet and Other European Luxuries in Seventeenth-Century Persia*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, December 2014.

*Muhammad Zaman ibn-Haji Yusuf: Man, Mode, and Myth*. Aga Khan Museum, Symposium on the Artist’s Signature, November 2014.

*Readings of Martyrdom in a Seventeenth-Century Shahnama Painting by Muhammad Zaman ibn Haji Yusuf*, Aga Khan Museum, Biennial of Historians of Islamic Art, October 2014.

*Authorship in Seventeenth-Century Persian Painting: Man, Mode and Myth*, University of Maryland, College Park, Roshan Institute, October 2014.

*Librarians, Patrons and Poets: The Personal Dimension of Persian Manuscripts*, University of Maryland, College Park, July 2014.

Panel participant for the opening of “The Persian Book,” panel entitled *Illustrating the Persian Book*, sponsored by Roshan Institute for Persian Studies, Library of Congress, March 2014.

Safavid Views of Christian Images: An Initial Look at the Written and Visual Record. Wellesley College Workshop *Text, Image and Form*, February 2014.

#### Julie Lauffenburger, Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director of Conservation and Technical Research

##### Publications

J. Lauffenburger, D. Strahan, and G. Gates. “Two Bayon-Period Khmer Bronzes in the Walters Art Museum: Technical Study Revisited.” *Metal 2016*, Proceedings of the Interim Meeting of the ICOM-CC Metals Working Group, September 26–30, 2016. New Delhi, India, R. Menon, C. Chemello and A. Pandya (eds), ICOM-CC & Indira Gandhi National Centre of the arts: 30–39.

Elisabetta Polidori, Associate Conservator, *Book and Paper* “Caring for Works on Paper.” Talk delivered at the Baltimore Museum of Art as part of the evening program “Collecting Now.” April 16, 2016.

#### Christine Sciacca, Associate Curator of European Art, 300–1400 CE

##### Publications

*Illuminating Women in the Medieval World*. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017.



With Asa Simon Mittman. “Robed in Martyrdom: The Flaying of Saint Bartholomew in the Laudario of Sant’Agnese.” In *Flaying in the Premodern World: Practice and Representation*, edited by Larissa Tracy. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2017.

#### Invited Lectures

“A Visionary Artist and a Benedictine World View: The San Sisto Choir Books.” Symposium. *Beyond Words: Illuminated Manuscripts in Boston Collections*, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA.

“The Bread of Life: Culinary Evidence in Biblical Manuscript Illumination.” Food in the Bible and Augustine, International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds.

#### Joaneath Spicer, James A. Murnaghan Curator of Renaissance and Baroque Art

#### Publications

“The Adaptation of Arias Montano’s Emblem Book *David* . . . (1575) for an Extraordinary Table-cabinet by Peter Opel in the Walters Art Museum.” *Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 72 (2014): 55–78.

“The Personification of Africa with an Elephant-Head Crest in Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* (1603).” In *Personification, Embodying Meaning and Emotion* ed. by W. Melion and B. Ramakers (Leiden: 2016): 677–715.

Catalogue entries (“Prayer Nut” and “Pendant with a Crucifixion”) in *A Feast for the Senses: Art and Experience in Medieval Europe*. Edited by Martina Bagnoli. Baltimore: The Walters Art Museum, 2016.

#### Invited Lectures

“Brunelleschi’s Lost Painting of the Florentine Baptistery as a Prototype of the ‘Ideal City’ Paintings.” Renaissance Society of America, Berlin, 2015.

“Teasing Out a Reading of the Baltimore *Ideal City*.” Max Planck Institut für Kunstgeschichte- Bibliotheca Herziana, Rome, 2015.

“Hannibal (247–182 BCE) in the Renaissance Imagination.” Renaissance Society of America: Session on Europe and North Africa in the Renaissance, 2016.

“Black Veil or Blackface in Early Modern Masquing: Baldini’s ‘Sons of Atlas’ and Jonson’s ‘Daughters of Niger’.” Conference: *Staging Africans*, Columbia University, 2015.

“Opening the Netherlandish Prayer Nut (1500–1530) in the Hand.” Session on *Devotional Objects*, Sixteenth-Century Studies Conference, Bruges, August 2016.

“Exploring the Role of Tactility in Early Modern Collecting . . . in a Twenty-first Century Museum.” Art and Science: Exploring Empirical Methods in Art History and Visual Studies, Conference, Vienna 2016.

“Tuscan *Trattati d’abaco* and Mercantile Education in the Making of the Renaissance,” Session on Merchants and Their Manuscripts, Renaissance Society of America, March 2017.

“Europe and Ethiopia, 1300–1500: Shifts in Perspective. Conference. *The Middle Ages in the Wider World*, University of California at Berkeley, March 2017.