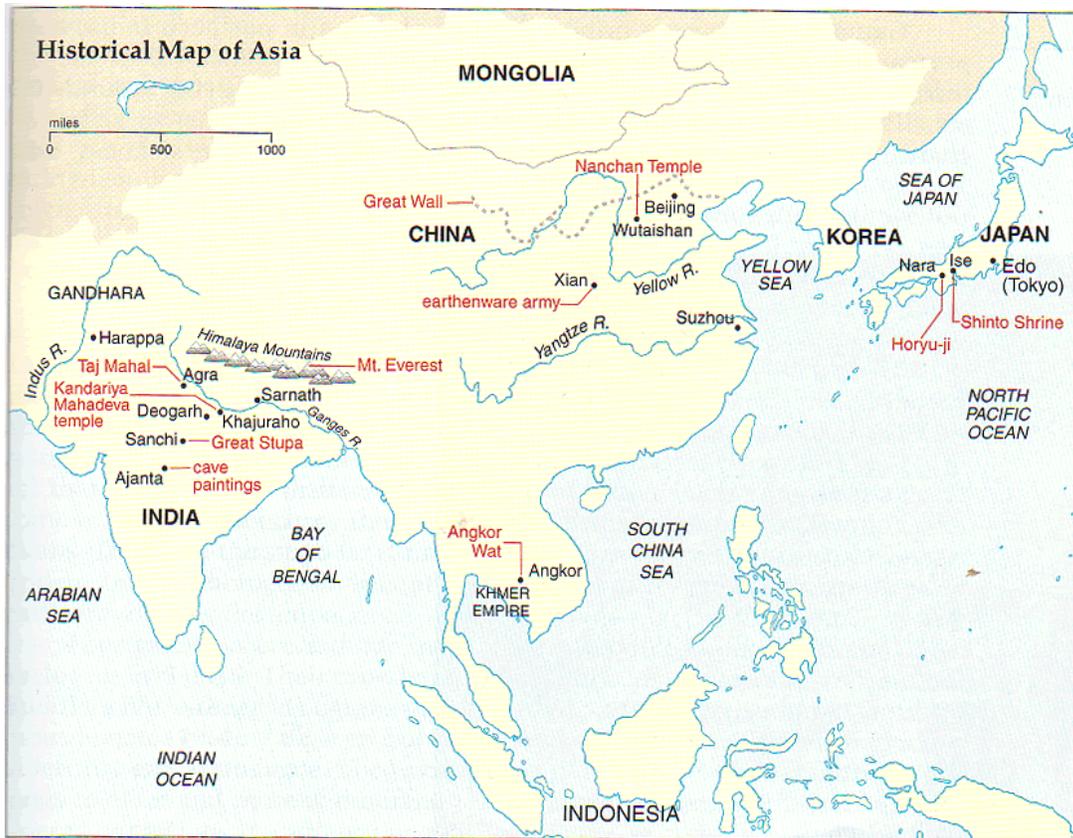


Art of Japan (c. 2500 BCE – 1335 CE)



Neolithic Jomon earthenware vessel 2500-1500 BCE

Japanese Neolithic vessels, like this one, are thought to have been used for cooking and storing food before they were buried with the owners.

This earthenware vessel looks quite different than Chinese vessels from the same time period. Notice the complexity of the asymmetrical form. You will also see that it is incised and has a decoration that looks like coils or cords on the unglazed surface.

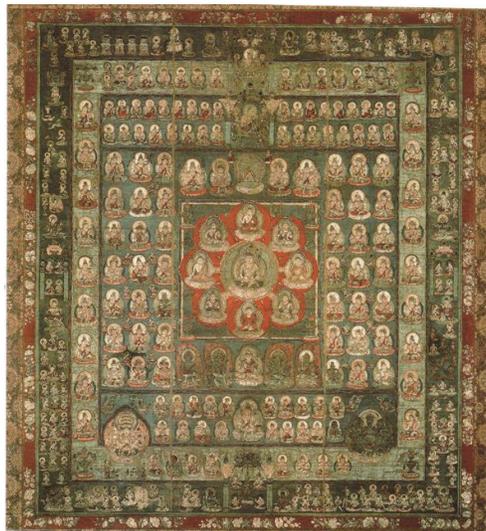


Haniwa from Kofun period, 6th century CE

This is a haniwa warrior figure. The word “haniwa” translates to “clay circle.” The first haniwa were simple clay cylinders that were placed over graves.

As time passed, haniwa forms became more complex. There are deer, bears, horses, monkeys, birds, and even, houses and boats. Haniwa may have been protectors of the pit tombs where they were found.

In this example, you can see that the figure's torso and legs retain the cylindrical form of the original style.



Womb World Mandala, To-ji Kyoto. Heian period, late 9th century CE

Mahayana Buddhism came from China to Japan in the early 6th century. Japanese Buddhists developed two new sects of Buddhism that included numerous Buddhas, bodhisattvas, guardian deities, and other gods.

Mandalas are visual representations of the cosmos. These symbolic diagrams are used in the performance of sacred rites and as instruments of meditation. They can be seen in sculpture, architecture as well as two-dimensional works.

The mandala shown above is a visual diagram of important Buddhist figures and their complex relationships. The universal Buddha is in the center and the other figures branch out from him in hierarchical scale.



Minamoto no Yoritomo (attributed to Fujiwara Takanobu), Kamakura Period, c. 1150-1199 CE

This typical portrait from the Kamakura period contrasts the naturalism and abstraction. The portrait contrasts the lifelike recording of the subject's personalized facial features with the formality of his abstracted ceremonial attire.



Kao Ninga Monk Sewing Kamakura period, early 1300s.

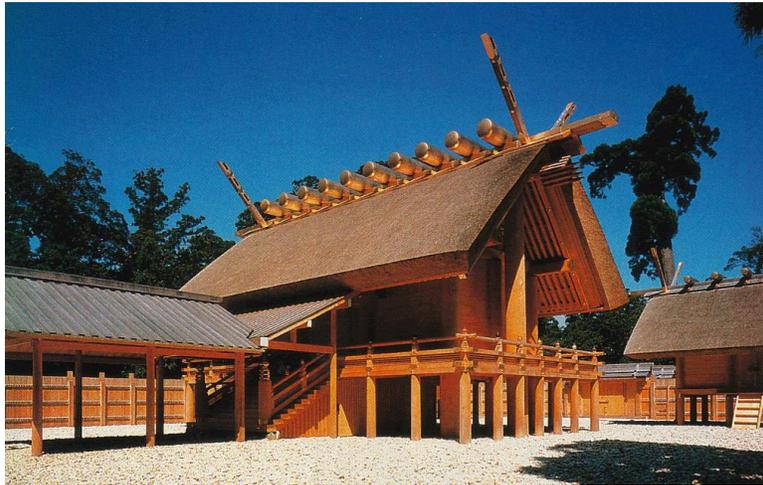
This image shows a monk mending his clothes. On the path to enlightenment, monks were expected to take care of their daily needs. They used ordinary activities, such as temple maintenance, gardening, food preparation and mending as opportunities to meditate and practice mindfulness.

This monk shown on this scroll focuses intently on the task at hand. This type of meditation practice is used to break through the illusions of reality. All that exists, all that is real, is right here right now.

We spend a great deal of time and energy replaying the past or envisioning future events and plans. In our high speed, multi-tasking world, we are rarely just doing what we are doing with full attention the moment at hand.

I heard a Buddhist teacher once call this *monkey mind*. The goal of this type of intent focus is to tame the monkey mind that is screeching, swinging from side to side, jumping all around, and possibly flinging poo!

This meditation practice disciplines the mind to focus on only what is real. The past is an illusion, a story we recreate and retell in our minds. The future is a fantasy, a work of fiction we dream up and forecast. All that exists is the now.



Ise Shrine dedicated to Amaterasu, established 4 BCE, built 3rd or 5th century CE

This structure is a divine palace dedicated to Amaterasu Ōmikami, the sun goddess and the ancestral kami (Shinto deity) of the Japanese Imperial family. It is part of a larger Shinto shrine complex that was first established in the year 4 BCE (according to tradition).

Every twenty years, a new divine palace with the same dimensions as the current one is constructed. Rather than swapping out or replacing damaged wood, they completely rebuild the structure using all new wood. Rebuilding involves about 30 rituals and ceremonies beginning with the ritual cutting of the first trees for the new divine palace. The rebuilding is an homage to the impermanence of all worldly things and the immortality of the spirit behind them

The building process is rooted in Shinto traditions for honoring and respecting nature. No nails or screws are used in the construction of the palace. Parts of the same tree are kept together, with the pieces joined together using a system known as mortise-and-tenon joinery. This is a strong joining system in which two pieces of wood connect at an angle of 90° with a tenon cut to fit the mortise hole a square or rectangular hole exactly.



Mortise-and-Tenon joinery = a joining system in which two pieces of wood connect at an angle of 90° with a tenon cut to fit the mortise hole a square or rectangular hole exactly.