

Chinese Religious Art. By PATRICIA EICHENBAUM KARETZKY. Lanham, Md.: LEXINGTON BOOKS, 2014. Pp. vi + 387, 218 figs. \$110 (cloth); \$44.99 (paper).

Written for an audience of students and general readers, Patricia Karetzky's survey of Chinese religious art provides brief introductions to a large number of objects and sites, roughly half of which are illustrated in the text. Following a short introduction explaining and justifying her approach to presenting separately the arts of contemporaneous religious traditions, the book is divided into four main sections, each containing three or four chapters that are organized chronologically. Part one, "The Beginnings of Chinese Religious Art," treats funerary art from the Neolithic era through the Qin dynasty, which the author considers "fundamental to the formation of a religious ideology and the world view that follows" (p. 2). Parts two, three, and four are devoted to the arts and architecture associated with Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, respectively. Each of these three parts begins in the Han and ends in the Qing, summarizing historical and sectarian milestones for each period before introducing a selection of artworks, and concluding with a chapter on temple architecture. In a brief conclusion to the volume, Karetzky enumerates some common themes and elements in the arts that have been discussed under the separate religion headings. Her bibliography is subdivided to correspond to the four major sections of the book.

A major purpose of this publication is to bring together what Karetzky characterizes as previously separate traditions of scholarship on Buddhist and Daoist art and architecture, adding the more recent exploration of Confucian art to the mix. While acknowledging that Confucianism differed in being an official cult rather than a devotional religion, she suggests that similarities in its visual and material forms justify presenting it together with Daoism and Buddhism. In her introduction and conclusion she briefly identifies common features of their respective religious-art practices, such as constructing temples modeled after imperial palaces, with tiled-roof buildings inside walled enclosures organized according to principles of axial symmetry and hierarchy. She stresses the importance of filial piety from the earliest times, first as a motivation for grave offerings from the Neolithic period onward, subsequently becoming a core value in Confucianism, and eventually requiring accommodation by Daoism and Buddhism. Her descriptions of specific examples of art and architecture in the separate sections on each religion occasionally refer to such shared features and values, but in general these chapters keep a tight focus on the religion being discussed. As she notes at the outset, the immense scope of her project required her to rely on the research and writings of many other scholars, and this reliance is particularly evident in the sections on Confucianism and Daoism. Her survey of Buddhist art and architecture makes frequent reference to her own publications, and this section also includes the largest number of lesser-known monuments, for which the descriptions and photographs are based on her site visits. The sheer number and diversity of objects and architectural structures presented in the book ensure that even experts will learn something new from it.

Despite its wide-ranging coverage and the author's extensive provision of her own photographs of important sites, including some that will be new to specialists, this book falls short of her stated ambition to present "a broad survey of the origins and development of the various forms of artistic expression of Chinese religions." Without a definition of "religious art" to guide and focus the discussion, there is little to distinguish many of her choices from those for a general survey of Chinese art. She describes her examples one by one, without making connections between them, much less a larger argument about "development." Her brief characterizations suggest the audio portion of a slide talk, one that might be more useful and interesting if the reader could actually see what she is describing; however, only some of the works are reproduced (but without textual references to their figure numbers), and the illustrations themselves are uniformly too small, dark, and murky to reveal significant features. The background information she provides on the successive historical periods (repeated three times) and references to ritual or doctrinal issues are superficial and often based on outdated generalizations, despite her citations of recent scholarship in the text and bibliographies. Her understanding of "religion" seems to be based on a Judeo-Christian model that stresses faith and belief rather than practice and ritual, and her assumption of a dichotomy between the religious and the secular does not fit the Chinese situation very well. It is jarring, for example, to be told that bronze vessels of the Zhou

dynasty, as opposed to those of the Shang, were “secular” (pp. 42–43), although it is well established that these ritual utensils continued to be used for offerings to the spirits of deceased ancestors, as well as gaining additional social functions. She also repeats the thoroughly discredited view that Buddhism declined after the Tang dynasty (pp. 110, 302) and seems not to recognize that rulers and other individuals might engage in significant interactions with more than one “religion.” Frequently she resorts to statements that suggest a timeless China, with continuous traditions originating in the Neolithic era, rather than acknowledging changes and contingencies over the several millennia covered in her book.

While it is understandable that Karetzky may not have fully absorbed the latest research findings in Chinese history and religious studies, an art historian should be better informed about current scholarship on Chinese art. Plenty of recent articles and books examine artistic production in light of the interaction of the Buddhist and Daoist establishments with various kinds of patrons, such as members of the imperial clan, officials, commoners, community groups, and monastics, as well as considering the roles of artists, artisans, and workshops. But instead of presenting objects and architectural structures in the social contexts of their creation, ritual functions, and later reception, Karetzky offers just superficial visual descriptions. She also seems unaware that scholars have moved away from the naïve understanding of literati painting as the pure self-expression of a learned amateur (pp. 120–23), and of Chan painting as “images spontaneously executed, without preconception or plan” (p. 314), just two of the areas in which her characterizations are outdated. Some of her descriptions are idiosyncratic, such as her reading of a well-known scene in the British Museum’s painting *Admonitions of the Instructress* as depicting a grandfather with his family (p. 102, not reproduced). Others are simply incorrect, such as the misidentification of Confucius in his meeting with Laozi, from an album of hagiographical paintings that are not copies of murals (p. 125); Confucius is the unassuming figure in plain, dark robes, seated behind the nobleman with whom he had traveled to the capital. The reader’s confidence is also diminished by clearly erroneous assertions such as that Gu Kaizhi was “a prominent artist at the Qin court” (p. 175).

Although Karetzky’s subject makes her study a timely contribution to a rapidly developing area of scholarship, it is not clear to whom this book is addressed. The general reader will find its discussions tedious and obscure, while the specialist will note many obvious errors concerning well-known material, leading him or her to wonder whether to trust statements about unfamiliar works and sites. The text is very poorly edited, with innumerable mistakes not only in *pinyin* romanization, but also with many misspelled names of modern Western scholars as well as Chinese artists, emperors, gods, and places. Finally, no book on art and architecture should have illustrations of such abysmal quality.

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The Hunter, the Stag, and the Mother of Animals: Image, Monument, and Landscape in Ancient North Asia. By ESTHER JACOBSON-TEPPER. Oxford: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015. Pp. xxxiii + 413. \$85.

Rock art began to appear in South Siberia sometime in the third or early second millennium B.C.E., initially in the form of pecked-out images on cliffs, and later pecked or engraved into boulders and freestanding monoliths or slabs. Although organized religion did not exist in North Asia prior to the end of the Bronze Age, traces of ancient beliefs shared across a broad geographical area and timespan can be detected in these ancient artworks. In *The Hunter, the Stag, and the Mother of Animals*, Esther Jacobson-Tepfer unearths those early layers of belief—focusing particularly on the roles of women and animals—and examines how they were shaped by the harsh physical environment in which they were produced.

The systematic study of rock art has historically been hindered by a variety of factors, chief among them the fact that it is rarely associated with datable burials. Fortunately, as the author reveals in her helpful appendix, “The Dating of Rock Art,” much can be inferred about dates and chronology by