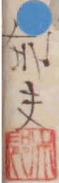


H I R A Y A M A



敦煌莫高窟
胡文



on the Silk Road

HIRAYAMA

on the Silk Road

June 27 - July 12
(Monday - Friday 9:30 - 16:30)

JAPAN INFORMATION AND CULTURE CENTER

EMBASSY OF JAPAN

1195 21st STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20036

Message

It is my great pleasure to sponsor the opening of Mr. Ikuo Hirayama's Silk Road Exhibition here at the Embassy of Japan's newly opened Information and Culture Center.

My hometown, Kyōto, is generally considered to be the heart of Japanese Traditional Culture, and in my youth I was able to visit a great many historical landmarks there; I was also privileged enough to see and experience a great variety of fine arts. I was also able to visit Kyōto's elder city, Nara, at that time, and enjoyed many similar sights and sounds.

The Imperial Treasures of Shōsōin at Nara are said to be the foundation of Japanese Culture; seeing these priceless masterworks, it becomes very clear that Japanese Culture has enjoyed a surprising level of cultural exchange not just with East Asia but also with the Mediterranean region, West Asia, Central Asia, Subcontinental India, Southeast Asia. This influence is also clearly evidenced in the temples of Kyōto.

Japanese Culture is often said to be highly unique and relatively isolated, but that view undervalues the degree to which this cultural exchange has been mutually influential for the East and West, and also minimizes Japan's membership in world civilization. No culture can thrive in a vacuum; invariably, the opposite is true, and cultural ideas often have a tendency to travel surprisingly long distances in surprisingly short periods of time.

For over 20 years, Mr. Hirayama pursued the path these ideas took, travelling the Silk Road of Eurasia literally dozens of times; he drew landscapes and portraits that gave a clear and tangible shape to the cultural exchange between the East and West. Japanese are often moved by the serenity and beauty of his work, and find themselves identifying with the commonality between their culture and those along the Silk Road.

I too am among those who are drawn not just to the form of Mr. Hirayama's work, but to the decent, gentle nature of the artist as it is manifested in his craft. At my official residence, "Jōruri-ji", one of his exquisite studies of Japanese temples, hangs on the wall. His 30 or more works depicting the Silk Road are now being shown publicly for the first time in the United States. Like all art lovers, I am genuinely looking forward to seeing them.

This exhibition was a great success in Paris, and will no doubt get a similar reception this fall in Beijing; in the meantime, its appearance here heralds this Center as one of the key points of international cultural exchange. I am confident that this exhibition, which captures so well the essence of thousands of years of East-West cultural exchange, will contribute greatly to the flourishing of further exchange. The Embassy of Japan's Information and Culture Center opened this spring with the *express purpose* of building a cultural bridge, over which such knowledge could flow freely between Japan and America.

Ryōhei Murata
Ambassador of Japan
to the United States of America

Preface

Few people have travelled as extensively along the routes known as the Silk Road, or been as perceptive on their journeys, as Ikkuo Hirayama. Among the most esteemed and important artists in Japan, Mr. Hirayama has developed unusual awareness of and sensitivity to the cultural interactions which brought (and still bring) distinct regions of Asia into close contact. Throughout his travels, he has tirelessly documented the people, the monuments, and the landscapes which he has seen. His paintings, in turn, provide vivid and immediate encounters with areas of the world too little known and understood.

Ikkuo Hirayama leads an extraordinary and immensely productive life. A witness to the bombing of Hiroshima, his time has since then been devoted to education and the arts. His interest in the Silk Road is evidence of a greater interest in the ways whereby different peoples and cultural systems seek to understand each other. He has been concerned too with the conservation of cultural heritage, and with physical preservation of the great artistic and architectural achievements of the world. His interest in and support for these activities will enrich the lives of future generations.

Ikkuo Hirayama on the Silk Road was recently exhibited at the Musée Guimet in Paris, and—as an activity organized by the Embassy of Japan—is being shown in Washington at the Japan Information and Culture Center. It is thus a truly international exhibition. Now, more than ever before, it is imperative that we develop greater understanding worldwide of the universal—as well as the unique—aspects of Asian cultures, and of the richness of their histories. These remarkable paintings by Ikkuo Hirayama manage to unite East and West, as well as the past and present, with skill and clarity.

Milo C. Beach
Director
Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery,
Smithsonian Institution

On This Exhibition

For some thirty years, my paintings have featured the route by which Buddhism was transmitted eastward and the Silk Road along which cultural exchange between Asia and Europe took place. Together, these are the sources of Japanese culture.

About 2,500 years ago, Buddhist culture emerged in India and was influenced by the Western culture of Hellenism, with which it mingled and spread to the east. As a result, a cultural mixture from the east and west regions of the Eurasian continent flowed through China and the Korean Peninsula and finally reached Japan. I have journeyed over eighty times along the route taken by that cultural exchange between East and West.

One outcome of this is that I am now working on some fifty meters of murals for the pavilion called the Genjo-Sanzo-in of Yakushi-ji Temple in Nara, and this work will occupy me until the end of this century. One part of my materials is being shown in this exhibition at the Japan Information and Culture Center of the Embassy of Japan in Washington, D.C. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the many people who helped make this exhibition a reality, and I will be extremely happy if it contributes to cultural exchange between the United States and Japan.

Ikkuo Hirayama

IKUO HIRAYAMA

Art in Search of Buddhist Truth

Terukazu Akiyama

Professor Emeritus of the University of Tokyo
Associate Member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres of the Institute of France

Ikuo Hirayama was born in 1930 on a small island in the Inland Sea of the Japanese archipelago.

The stretches of sun-drenched sea and the peaceful vegetation that surrounded Hirayama undoubtedly contributed to awakening his vocation as a painter. Moreover, this environment, which might be called "Mediterranean," had, it seems to me, a very special significance, which was only revealed with the great artistic pilgrimage that led him to traverse the whole Eurasian continent from the Middle East to Japan. However, I will return to this later. To allow you to follow my thoughts better, I would like to quote here some beautiful passages written by René Grousset, who was a member of the Académie Française and who, just after World War II, was appointed director of the Guimet Museum, where he played an extremely important role. In 1951, in the magazine *Revue des Deux Mondes*, René Grousset described his impressions in a short but most perceptive article titled *Au Japon* (In Japan): "The Inland Sea is another Aegean Sea, where amid the smiles of peaceful wavelets are scattered the islands of another archipelago." He continues: "From island to island, as in Greece, the coast is always within view." And this similarity in natural scenery also evokes, in the eyes of this eminent orientalist, an essential affinity between these two cultures. He concludes his essays by writing: "Similarly, in Japan we will rediscover the Hellenic ideal. . . . Just like the Greek genius, . . . the Japanese genius knew how to reduce nature to a human scale. It knew how to humanize nature."

However, let us return to Ikuo Hirayama. This young boy was not destined to enjoy these calm and happy surroundings for long. World War II broke out before he entered high school in Hiroshima, the city that faced his island. All the schoolboys were drafted by the army and ordered to work in munitions or other factories. On that fatal morning of August 6, 1945, just when Hirayama had entered a small wooden storehouse in search of materials for his work that day, the atomic bomb exploded above him, lighting up the sky with a raw and devastating flash. The shelter provided by the storehouse allowed him miraculously to escape death. He was able to flee from the city, which had become like a hell, and managed to return to his native island the next day. The experience so traumatized the sensitive spirit of this young fifteen-year-old that he kept silent about it for a very long time. He could neither talk about it, nor could he describe the vision of horror, his dead friends, the city in flames, the ashes, the ruins. He was driven to find spiritual comfort through pictorial expression.

Deeply convinced of his vocation, in 1947 he set out for Tokyo and there entered the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. While he was still a student at this school, the system of teaching was completely reorganized and it became the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. One of the greatest contemporary painters,

Seison Maeda (1885-1977), became the professor of the department of so-called traditional painting, or *Nihon-ga*. Quickly recognizing young Ikuo Hirayama's talent and zeal, Seison Maeda named him as his assistant. Initiated into the basic techniques of *Nihon-ga*, Hirayama also learned the necessity of making as many sketches from life as possible, using either brush or pencil. At the same time, his teacher entrusted him with making copies of ancient masterpieces, particularly *e-maki*, or medieval illustrated scrolls, so that he would realize the expressive power of brushstrokes and movement in composition.

It may be necessary here to define the meaning of the term *Nihon-ga*, literally, Japanese-style painting, to which genre Hirayama's art belongs.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, and above all after the Meiji Restoration (1868), Western painting began to be taught systematically in Japan. The young Japanese artists of this generation were greatly infatuated with the style and technique of oil painting, which was called *sei-yō-ga* or *yō-ga*, literally, Western-style painting. To distinguish Japanese-style painting from it, the word "*Nihon-ga*" was created. Under this label were grouped all the traditional schools of Tosa, Kanō, Kōrin, and Maruyama Shijō in Kyoto. The artists of these different schools had, in the course of the Edo period (17th to 19th century), ensured the continued tradition of the style and technique of authentic Japanese painting, such as the large folding-screen paintings with gold-leaf backgrounds. Thanks to the prophetic concepts of the great theoretician Kakuzō Okakura (Tenshin) (1862-1913), who led the artistic world at that time, the young artists of *Nihon-ga* such as Taikan Yokoyama (1868-1958) and Shunsō Hishida (1874-1911) put all their energy into modernizing the style and techniques of traditional Japanese painting. To better achieve this, in 1898 they founded the famed Nihon Bijutsuin, or Japan Art Institute, whose annual Inten exhibition even now attracts large numbers of artists and art lovers.

While still using traditional painting materials, supple and absorbent brushes, India ink, and mineral pigments fixed on paper or silk with glue, these painters succeeded in adopting the methods of expression that characterized Western painting and modifying them in their own way. They knew how, with great skill, to use chiaroscuro and perspective—the essential elements of Western painting—to give greater depth to their works.

Seison Maeda was one of the representatives of this new movement at the Japan Art Institute, and it was thus completely natural for the young Hirayama to exhibit his works in the Inten exhibition every autumn from 1953. After several hard years of hesitation and groping—while in the throes of constant worry about his leukemia, caused by the aftereffects of the atomic bomb—he managed to find the pictorial theme that henceforth became the source of his own physical and, above all, psychic rebirth and was to determine the course of his life: the origins of Buddhism and its propagation to the East. Through it, his work was suddenly transformed.

Encouraged and supported by his wife, Michiko, a talented painter whom he had met in Seison Maeda's class, he made his first composition in this genre in 1959. The painting was called *The Transmission of Buddhism*, and it showed two pilgrims on horses whose whiteness stands out against green foliage symbolizing a central Asian oasis. His

subsequent works, inspired, but with great freedom, by the life of the Buddha or by the courageous journeys of the first great Chinese pilgrims on the Silk Road, particularly Xuanzang (ca. 602–64), were highly acclaimed by art critics and won several prizes.

Moreover, he was lucky enough to have more opportunities for first-hand study on the masterpieces and the monuments of the East and the West. As the first recipient of a new UNESCO scholarship in 1962, he spent six months in Europe, mostly in Italy. He took advantage of this stay to make a comparative study of the religious painting of the West and of the Far East. In 1966, he made copies of the cave paintings of Cappadocia. In 1967, with a group of other artists, he participated in the reconstruction of the murals in Hōryū-ji Temple, which had been seriously damaged by fire in 1949. Finally, some years later, in 1972, he similarly participated in copying the murals in the Takamatsuzuka Tumulus, which had just been discovered in Japan. These last two important projects, undertaken with his teacher Seison Maeda, gave him a unique opportunity to examine closely the techniques and spirit governing Japanese paintings executed in the late seventh century. We should remember that it was exactly at this period when Japan began to play a role as “The Silk Road Terminus,” to use the remarkable phrase of René Grousset.

During all these years, Hirayama was traveling in the countries that had witnessed the spread of Buddhism. He visited India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Soviet Turkistan, Xinjiang, Dunhuang, Central China, and Korea.

Finally, some fifteen years ago, the abbot of Yakushi-ji Temple, which was founded in the seventh century, asked him to decorate the whole interior of a new pavilion dedicated to the priest Xuanzang, the founder of the Hossō sect, a sect to which this temple belongs and which derives from the Indian Vijnānavādā School (an idealistic “mind-only” school). This huge project should be finished at the end of this century.

In order to show all the important scenes from Xuanzang’s journey to India between 629 and 645 on these walls, which are 2.2 meters high and 50 meters long, Hirayama decided to follow in the pilgrim’s footsteps and imbue himself with the feeling of the sites he visited as well as to make brush sketches of the monuments and ruins in their present state.

The twenty-five watercolors—it would be more accurate to talk of brush sketches highlighted with color washes—which we can admire in the Guimet Museum, and then in the Japan Information and Culture Center in Washington, D.C. and in the China National Art Gallery in Beijing, on the occasion of the exhibition devoted to them, only represent a fraction of the fruits of more than fifty successive long journeys along the Silk Road. These sketches show us a completely new technique. Hirayama uses a traditional brush, which has a fine point of very hard hair, and this slides over the absorbent paper to achieve a dry graphic effect. After letting the India ink dry a little—and this is the crucial moment—he then uses Western watercolor, which he lets blur. Then with great technical virtuosity, he either intentionally chooses to leave a little haziness or he uses India ink lines to outline the colored areas.

Both the Guimet Museum and the artist himself would have liked to have been able to show the large paintings exhibited in the Inten exhibi-

tions to the French public. Unfortunately, because of numerous difficulties, this could not be. For this reason, Hirayama decided to make five large panels especially for this exhibition. They allow us to appreciate the new *Nihon-ga* technique brought to its height by Hirayama.

Having covered the surface of his picture with a very thick layer of mineral pigments, he chisels rather draws all the outlines sketched in India ink on the colored surface. Lit from the side, the chiseling shows up the original lines and creates shadows. It is not an exaggeration, it seems to me, to describe this as the touch of genius. The exceptional mastery of the artist endows his many paintings with a feeling of volume. Moreover, he gives special importance to space and plays with the effects of using the very traditional gold powder. The painters of the Kanō or Tosa schools also used golden mists to achieve a feeling of space on their folding screens.

The essence of *Nihon-ga*, in my opinion, lies in its graphic quality, in its lines. And Ikuo Hirayama has been able to create a new graphic quality, in this way reviving the linear strength of classical Japanese painting and the art of his predecessors at the Japan Art Institute. Tradition cannot survive without creation. Hirayama has succeeded in bringing to life the spirit of the lines and forms he inherited from his teacher Seison Maeda, who was himself a spiritual descendant of the great masters of Japanese-style painting.

Ikuo Hirayama on the Silk Road

Makoto Ōoka, poet

A civilization like Japan's, which took its form in houses of wood and paper—in other words, relying on vegetative matter—can scarcely produce imposing ruins. The heat and moisture of summer, the winds and cold of winter, earthquakes, fires, and wars damaged buildings so easily that it has always been difficult to find remains that have lasted any length of time.

On the other hand, the history of civilizations built with stone is, from one viewpoint, the history of grandiose ruins. In North and Central China, the Great Wall, the caves, the stone pagodas of ruined monasteries; the remains of the city of Babylon; Palmyra in Syria; Luxor in Egypt; the temples in Crete and Athens; the Forum in Rome; Angkor Wat in Cambodia . . .

These are those civilizations' imposing memories, a sort of fossilization, and the centuries bathe them in the rays of their suns or expose them to the assault of their rains. Subjected to a healthy desiccation, washed by time, which penetrates to the very heart of the civilizations that created each of them, all these monuments stand serenely before us, rendered in soft-colored stone.

The disappearance of a civilization is naturally a tumultuous tragedy at first, a huge unhappiness, but thereafter the ruins, pure objects of marvel and veneration, are sunk in a long cataleptic silence while they await future generations of pilgrims.

Innumerable ruins are scattered along the Silk Road, and the countries that it traverses and their peoples are at present arousing great curiosity internationally. Each of the particular questions that they pose has worldwide repercussions, for events are occurring here that may mark an important turning point in the history of the twentieth century.

It has come to pass that the ruins along the Silk Road are deservedly stirring new interest and are being slowly revived. One of the best manifestations of this is the fact that Hirayama has devoted his paintings and drawings to the Silk Road, using the pictorial technique that belongs to Japan, where it is called *Nihon-ga*.

One only has to mention China, Tibet, West Asia, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Greece, and Egypt to realize that these are exactly the countries that lie along the ancient Silk Road, which, through their newly revealed strengths, have enough vitality to claim our attention, even as we approach the twenty-first century. With its historical character refurbished, the Silk Road is coming to life again.

Hirayama has been such an assiduous traveler it is as though he has been bewitched. He has never lost his enthusiasm for this dream that has been nurtured in the hearts of many Japanese intellectuals for a long time, an old recurring dream of wanting to return to the roots of civilization.

The determination of this painter, whose brilliant career began in 1959 with the work entitled *The Transmission of Buddhism*, depends on his total conviction of his mission. This painting depicts the celebrated journey that allowed the Chinese monk Xuanzang (ca.602–64), with extraordinary tenacity and after long, difficult wanderings, to bring from India a whole set of Buddhist texts.

The pose of the two monks on horseback in this picture and the morphology of their horses are reminiscent of the groups of equestrian figures in battle scenes by the Italian painter Uccello. Hirayama's work is simi-

larly interesting for its perfect assimilation of Western elements.

This painting was a homage to the achievement represented by the great journey of the propagator of Buddhism in China. It also sparked off the creative journey by which Hirayama, while searching for the original sites of Buddhist thought and turning toward the sources of many civilizations, would tread a path that would link the continents of Europe and Asia.

Since his first trip in 1966, up to 1990, Hirayama has visited the areas crossed by the Silk Road more than eighty times. These expeditions, although undertaken with the modern advantages of communications and other facilities, did not spare him either dangers or difficulties. On each journey he never failed to make innumerable pictures and drawings, inspired by the people and the sites he encountered. His painting was greatly nourished by a multitude of enriching human contacts and by his observation of the diverse customs of local cultures. Even though the sketches of the people living along the Silk Road were hastily executed, they nevertheless capture faces full of charm, showing Hirayama's underlying competence in matters of cultural anthropology. Each journey put him in touch with the daily life of these peoples who, amid the ruins of the past, are turning to the future: from them the painter has gained more than an education. Such is the direction of Hirayama's experience on the Silk Road.

How did this long, constant fascination with the countries of the Silk Road evolve in Hirayama? This seems to require an explanation, for, to my way of thinking, it is inconceivable that outside Japan such a work would be attempted by a painter, even a European one, rather than a historian or an ethnologist or a writer-explorer. I am tempted to believe that an enterprise of this size has something particularly Japanese about it.

Naturally, first and foremost, it is the unique achievement of Hirayama. However, one may conjecture that if he had not been a Japanese painter born in 1930, and if as a student in 1945 he had not been exposed to the atomic bomb in Hiroshima, and if he had not suffered the aftereffects of the radioactive fallout, this enterprise—a personal one but one fraught with historical significance—would have been impossible. It was an individual effort, which somehow resulted in a journey whose concept had been the dream of Japanese intellectuals since ancient times.

To put it briefly, it is a manifestation of the romantic idealism of the Japanese, who have been attracted by the roots of the great civilizations of mankind and have longed to rediscover them. This idea would bear one of its most wonderful fruits in the work of Hirayama. This artist, I am convinced, may be considered a worthy follower in the footsteps of the brilliant aesthete Kakuzō Okakura (Tenshin), the founder of the Japan Art Institute (that school of Japanese painting to which Hirayama belongs). Tenshin was the author of such works as *The Book of Tea* and *The Ideals of the East*, which early this century threw a universal light on the Japanese philosophy of beauty and its artistic expression.

Tenshin observed that Japan, situated at the extreme edge of the area of civilization that includes the great sources of India and China, became, through its isolation, a sort of museum where the civilizations of Asia are preserved, thereby bestowing an invaluable role on Japan. By

means of what might be called "distillation," it has safeguarded the highest cultural achievements of the continent of Asia and its arts.

As one important task in the history of Japanese art, Tenshin saw the necessity of going back to the origins of Asian civilizations. Subsequently, it was with this perspective that he carried out his duties as the head of the Far Eastern department of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, where he was responsible for the Chinese and Japanese collections. Despite his early death at the age of fifty, his great accomplishments in this area have not been equaled and are evidence that he was inspired by these ideas.

Regarding the art of Japan, in *The Ideals of the East*, Tenshin goes back to the propagation of Buddhism in China, and beyond that to India. Then, from Indian Buddhism he delves into the complex and fascinating imagery of the world of Hinduism. This journey through ideas that touched on the search for origins allowed him to show the unity of Asian thought across the cultures and arts of each country, as well as in each era.

The zeal with which Tenshin sought the general in the particular is a manifestation of the particular "ideals" of the isolated archipelago lying at the farthest edge of the Asian continent.

If it had been the Chinese or the Indians, the Greeks or the Romans, or even the premodern French, these "ideals" would not have seen the light of day, for it is generally true that those peoples who are the proud possessors of the sources of their own civilizations or cultures rarely feel any great eagerness to rediscover them.

The Silk Road journeys that engaged Hirayama for so many years are evidence to what extent the work of the poet and thinker Tenshin was espoused and developed by a painter rather than a scholar or a critic, and it was a momentous connection.

It is fitting to add that, for Hirayama, the continual fear of death through having experienced the atomic bomb resulted in a long struggle. His difficult creative quest, added to this despair and worry, led him to the great theme of Buddhism, which was essential for his spiritual and physical health. Moreover, this marked a decisive stage in the history of Japanese-style painting, called *Nihon-ga* to distinguish it from Western-style painting in its conception, materials, and technique.

Hirayama's Buddhist paintings surpass religious paintings that piously represent the absolute being of the Buddha as an object of faith or a cult, and they spring from a continuous intellectual quest as the artist sought the original currents of Japanese civilization: it was an artistic and philosophic achievement very remote from the "exoticism" of Japanese painting that often impresses foreigners.

During his more than eighty visits to the Silk Road, Hirayama made detailed studies of the daily life of the diverse peoples there and never ceased making them the subjects of his sketches and paintings. It was a monumental task that no painter, either Japanese-style or Western-style, could have accomplished in the past. Furthermore, it is probably an achievement for which it would be difficult to find a precedent anywhere in the world.

This enterprise lasting so many years has undoubtedly benefited from the support and collaboration of numerous organizations and people, but

here I would like to mention the importance of the contribution of Mrs. Michiko Hirayama. A fellow student with her future husband at the National University of Fine Arts and Music in Tokyo, her talent for painting was so excellent that it was rumored that she was even ahead of her husband. The wife that she became knew how to bring to Hirayama's vast projects an excellent understanding as well as a critical sense. On the artist's travels along the Silk Road, so often fraught with difficulties, she almost always accompanied him and served as an assistant whose abilities were invaluable. As brave and wise as she is discreet, for Hirayama, this woman was a precious secretary, a fastidious documenter. Moreover, she is the author of a fascinating book recounting her extraordinary experiences.

To return to my theme, it is significant that Hirayama was born in 1930. Those who belong to this generation have a rather strong characteristic. For them, the long period of war—the sudden rise of militarism, the spread of colonial conflicts, World War II, and the defeat of 1945—were the inevitable experiences of their early and middle childhood. Basically, theirs was a generation that received a nationalistic and bellicose education in a climate that was, in one sense, spiritually pure, but at the same time was completely shut off from the outside world.

When Japan was defeated, at one stroke the cultural circles controlled by the policy of isolationism were liberated, dealing an unforgettable cultural shock to this generation. Western lifestyles and ways of thought, so different from the indoctrination of the nationalistic ideology, spread out before them, bringing to these young men in their late teens a broader vision and a change in values, the harbingers of a lasting influence that still affects artists and writers in this age group. The attitude consisted of regarding Japanese culture with "cosmopolitan" eyes, and starting from them this became the trend of a whole generation. Immediately after *The Transmission of Buddhism*—a painting which showed Hirayama the principal theme he would henceforth adopt—he had the chance to go to Europe as one of the very few students at that time studying abroad. As he toured the religious buildings of Italy and France, he became absorbed in the comparative study of religious painting in the West and in the East. His feet then led him to central Turkey, where he studied the murals in the cave chapels of the Anatolian plain. Through these studies, the vital contacts and influences existing between Western and Eastern concepts of the plastic arts became for him the subject of detailed study that was accompanied by continual wonder. Thereafter, he became interested in the different influences Japan had profited by, and explored ways to reveal the original elements of Japanese creativity.

Fortunately, thanks to his travels in Europe and the Orient, from that early time he came to regard Japanese culture with a balanced outlook, which remained with him always. In brief, by avoiding any self-satisfaction about Japanese values (which *Nihon-ga* painters are often susceptible to) and by always being conscious of the deep bonds between Japanese painting and the plastic arts of the Asian and European continents, he discovered the approach he would adopt in his work.

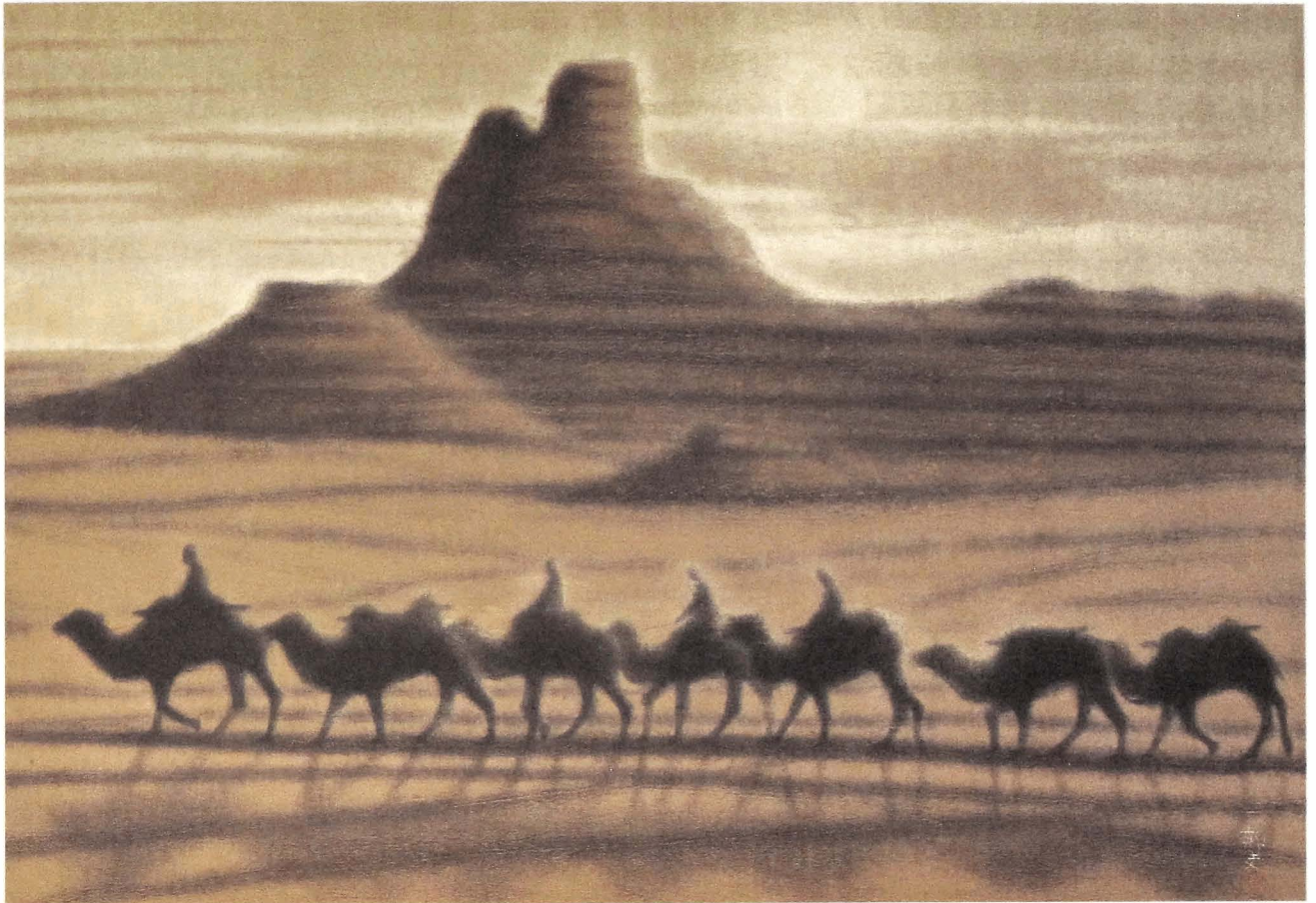
In this way, he became, we might say, a painter capable of making the most positive use of the characteristics of his generation, which I discussed above. For my part, as his contemporary, I am very aware

of the fact that this painter's spiritual resilience is not his alone, but is common to people of our age. Because of this, the artists of this generation feel a mission; in other words, they are conscious that they must bridge the culture of Japan and that of other countries, but in a completely different way from Japan's former nationalistic ambitions.

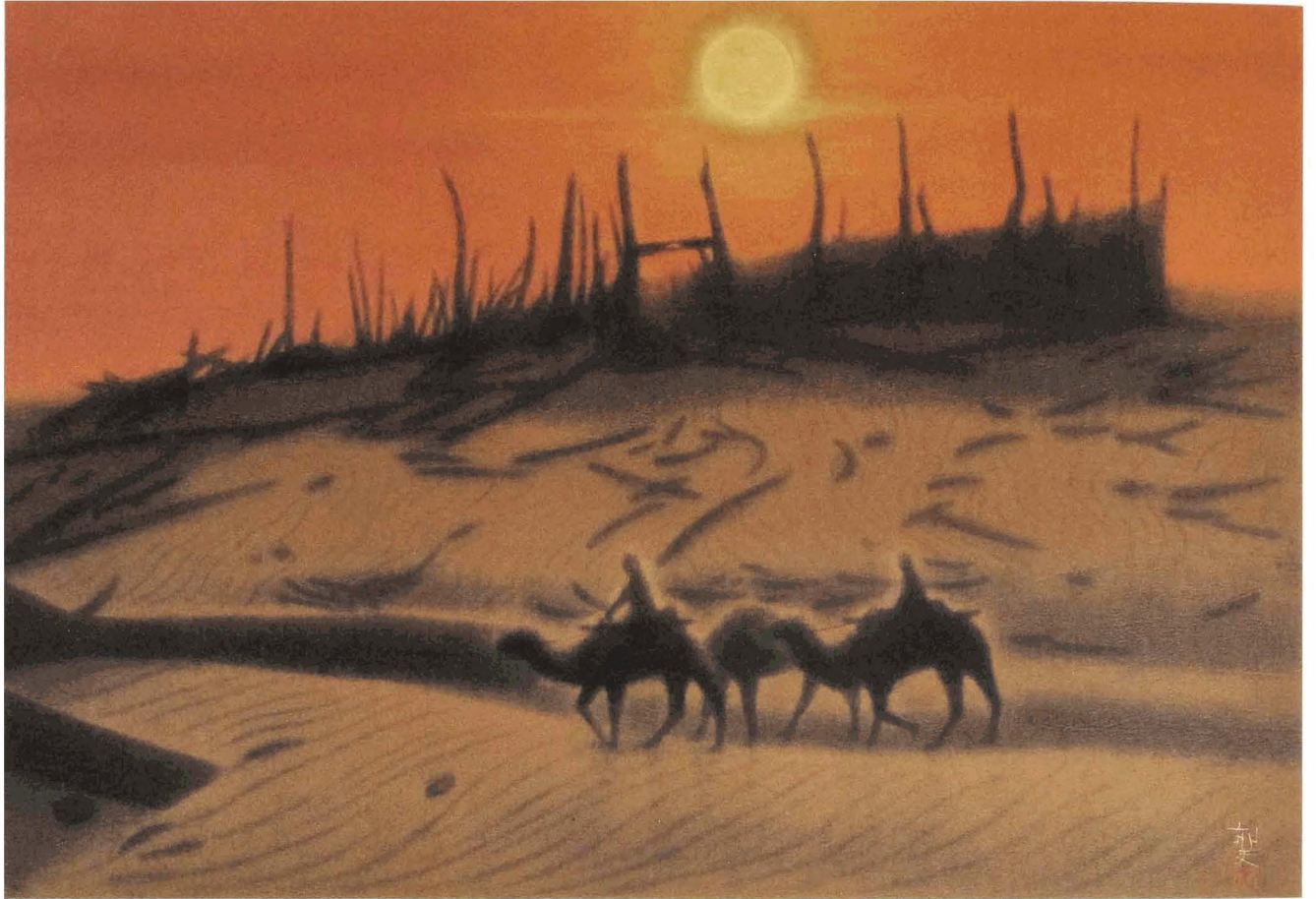
Taking all the above into account, the works in the exhibition "Hirayama on the Silk Road" must not, I insist, be regarded as exotic. They are representations, as interesting for the Japanese as for Europeans, of customs that vary according to peoples and countries, and these are depicted with the healthy freshness of a wind blowing across a high plateau. In the wonderful miragelike charm of their blue tones and the extremely lucid delicacy of their forms, Hirayama's paintings are marvelous examples of the attractiveness of the arabesque so important in the art of *Nihon-ga*, and they are evidence of resources that belong to a great master.

His canvases have a supernatural lightness, a hazy subtlety that achieves a powerful sensation of spirituality. This feature startlingly heightens the effect of his drawings and watercolors. With the same felicitousness, the painter captures both the expansive landscapes of the high plateaus and the small familiar scenes of daily life.

What we are shown is not the lightness of ingenuity; it is the lightness that comes from the transparency and limpidity of the painter's soul. When we encounter this lightness, we have the impression of being introduced, in the most natural way, into an intimate world, one that is very different from the artist's majestic paintings with strong compositions, and we feel we are traveling with him on the Silk Road.



Morning over Loulan (China): One of a series of three paintings.



Evening over Loulan (China): One of a series of three paintings.



The moon over Loulan (China): One of a series of three paintings.



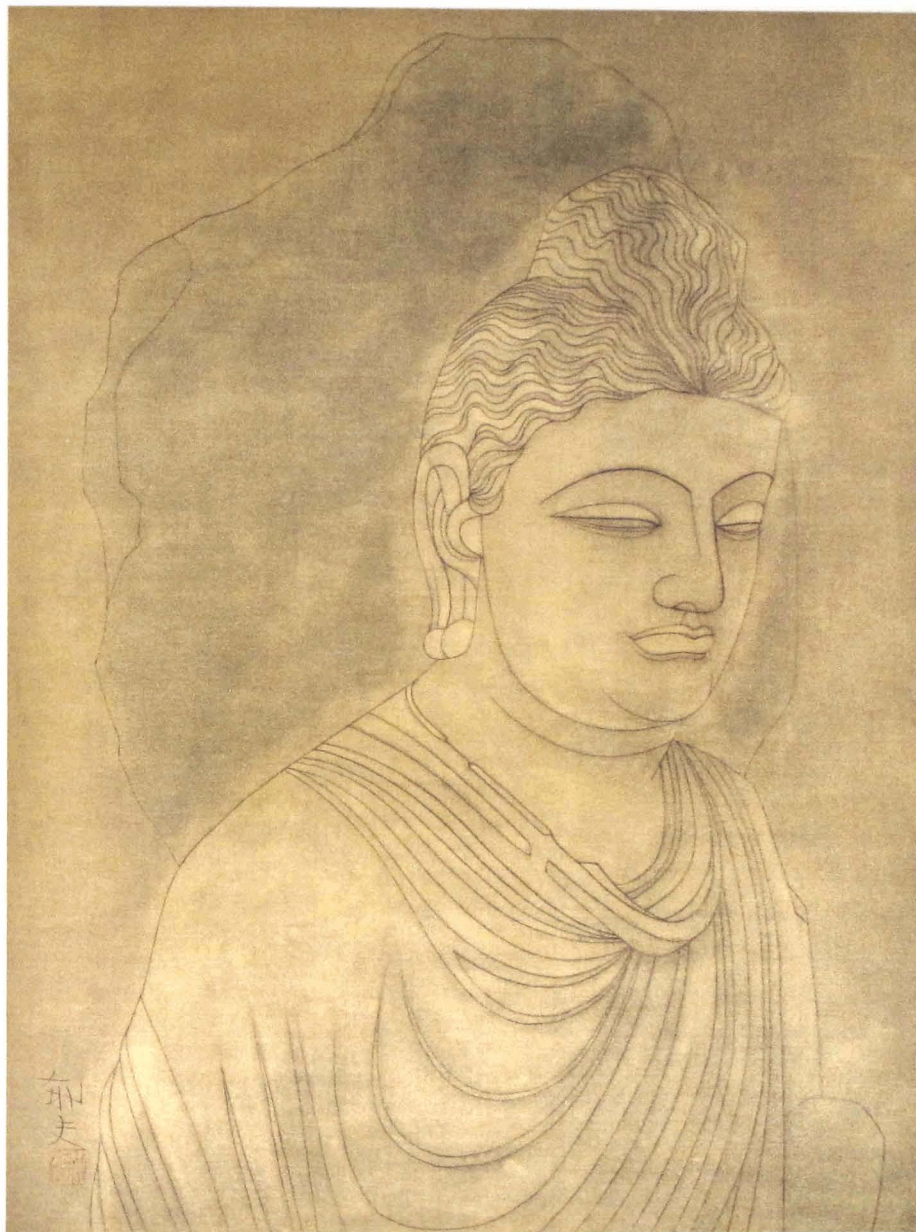
Mogaoku (Thousand Buddha Caves) at Dunhuang (China)



Hōryū-ji Temple (Japan)



Buddha, Gandhāra art (Pakistan)



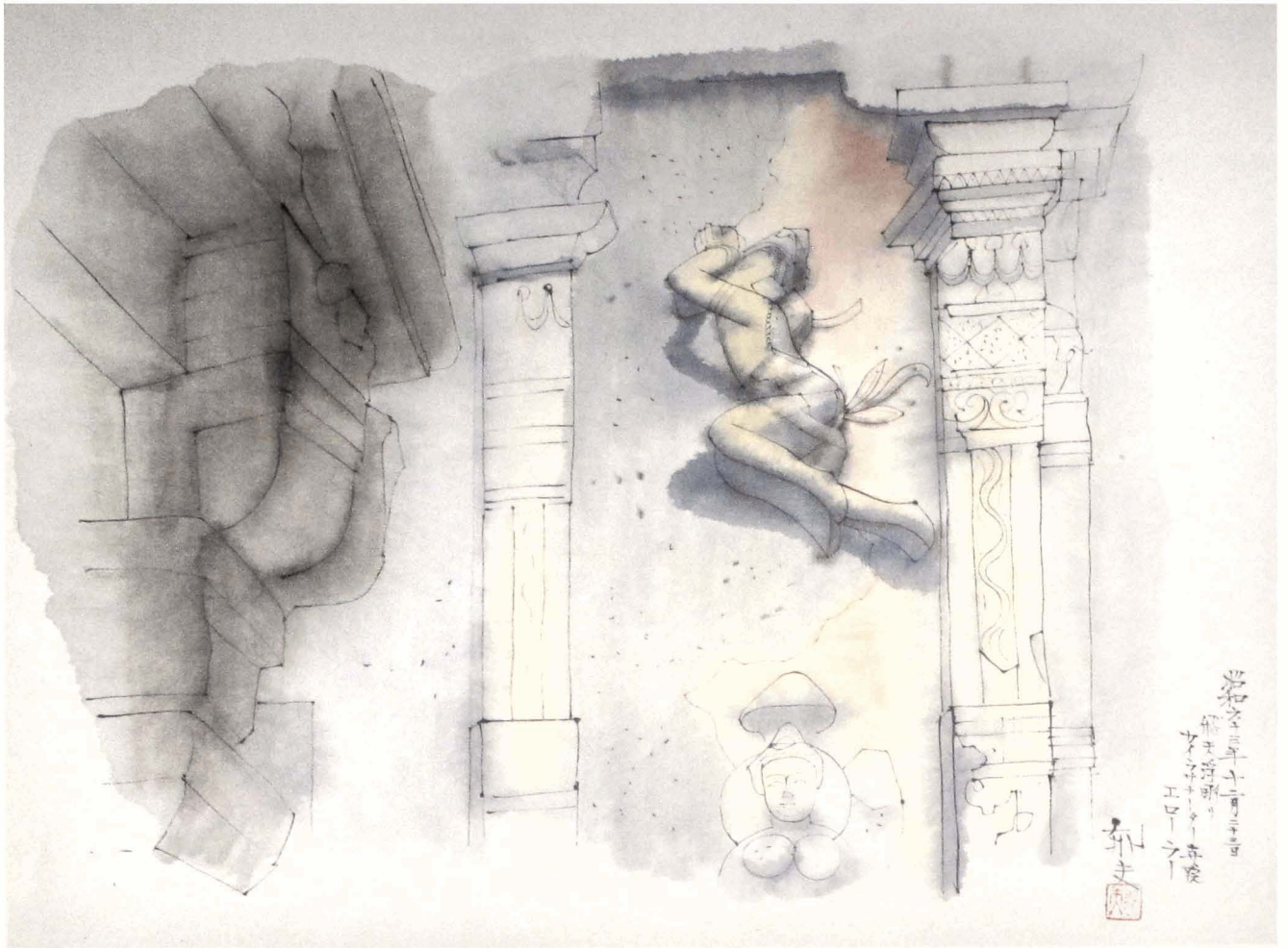
Buddha, Gandhāra art (Pakistan)



Standing Buddha, from Jamalpur, Mathurā (Official Residence of the President in New Delhi, India)



The First Sermon of the Buddha, at Sārnāth (India)



Relief of heavenly beings at the temple of Kailāsa at Ellorā (India)



Great Stūpa, at Nālandā (India)



The Taj Mahal seen from Āgrā (India)



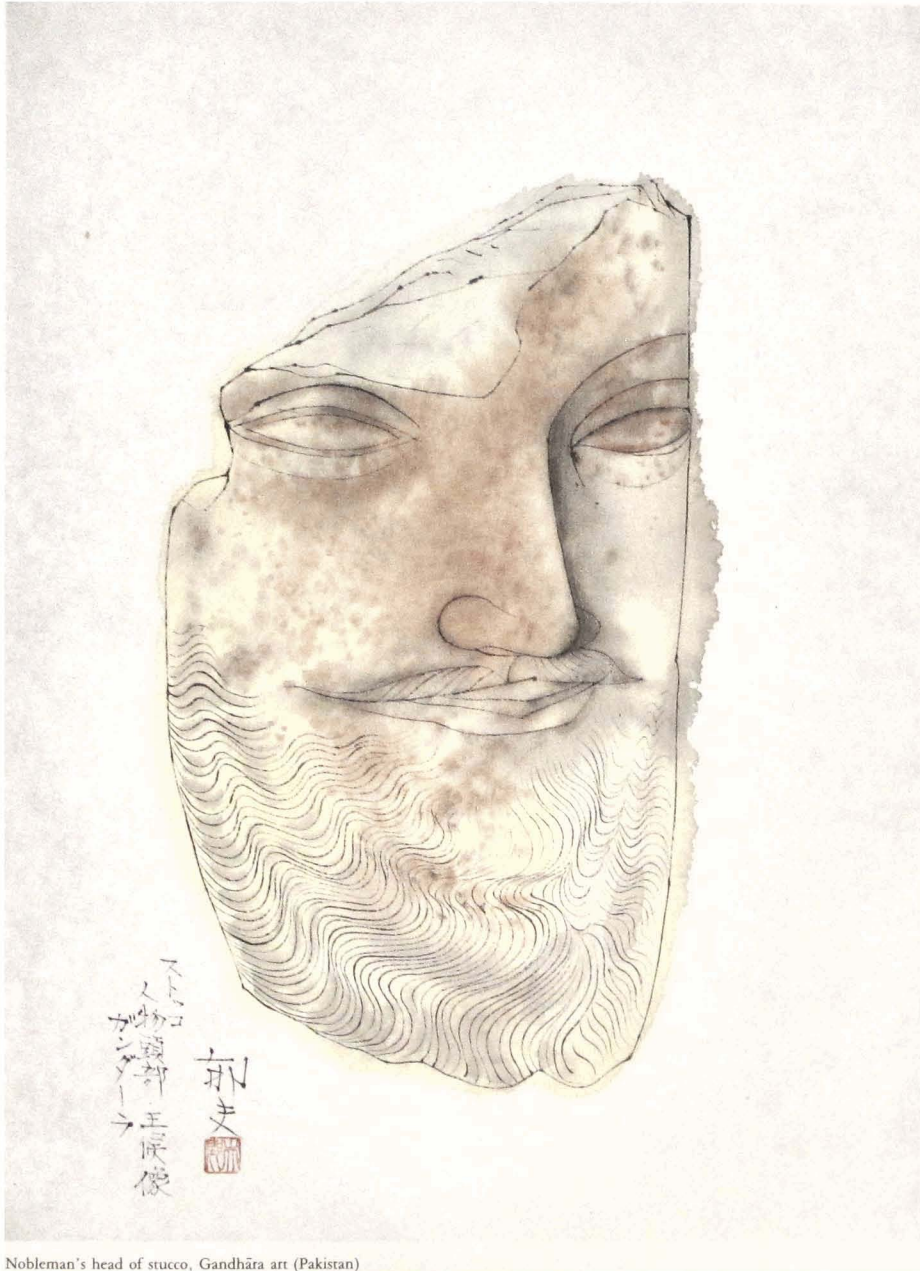
An Indian woman at Nālandā (India)



Seated Bodhisattva, Gandhāra art, 3rd century (Pakistan)



Seated Buddha, Gandhāra art, 3rd century (Pakistan)

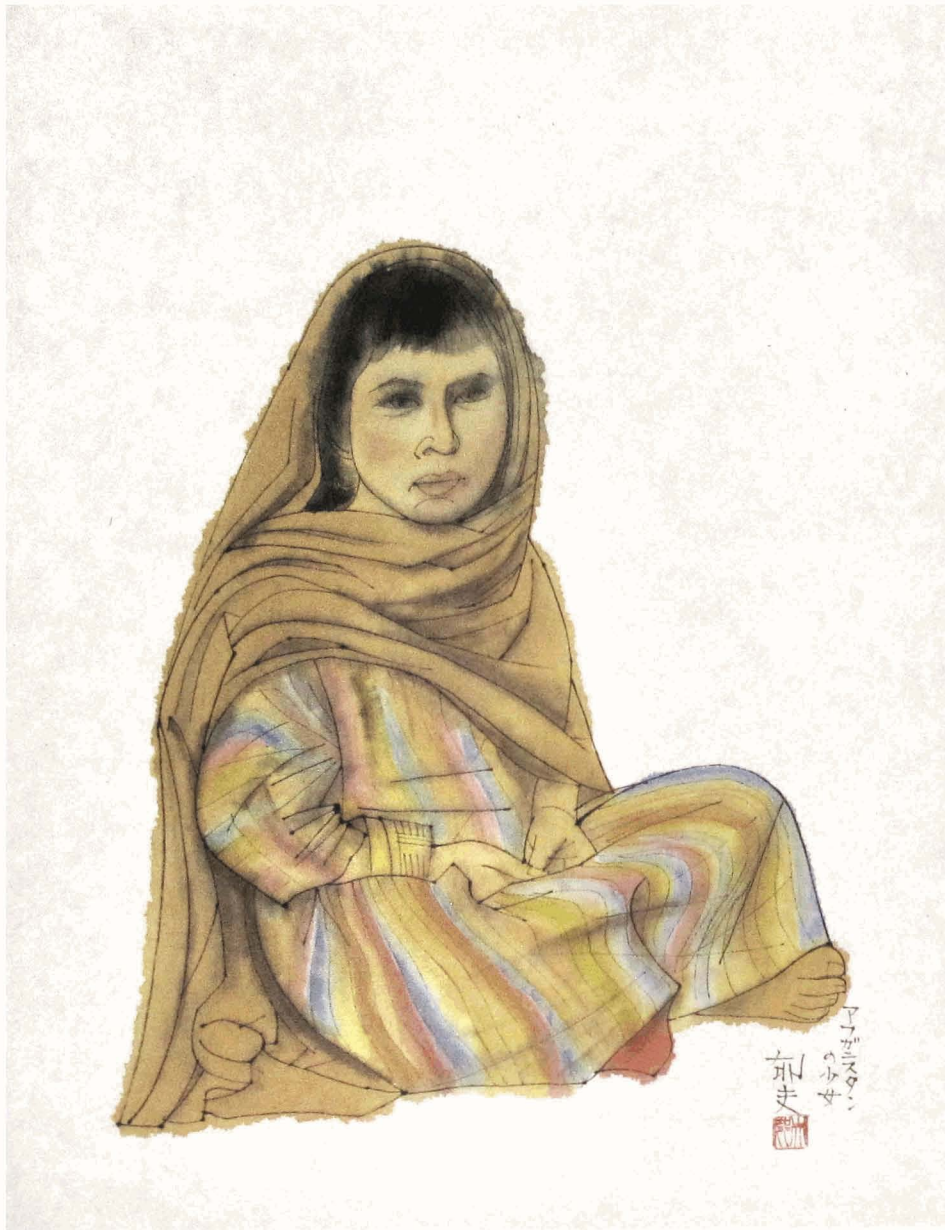


メトロ
人物資料 王侯像
カシヤ
→
叔文
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Nobleman's head of stucco, Gandhāra art (Pakistan)



Buddha head of stucco, Gandhāra art (Pakistan)



Young Afghan girl (Afghanistan)



Mohra-Moradu, a Taxila site (Pakistan)



Old Uzbek man in Central Asia (U.S.S.R.)



Great Buddha of stone in Cave No. 20 at Yungang (China)



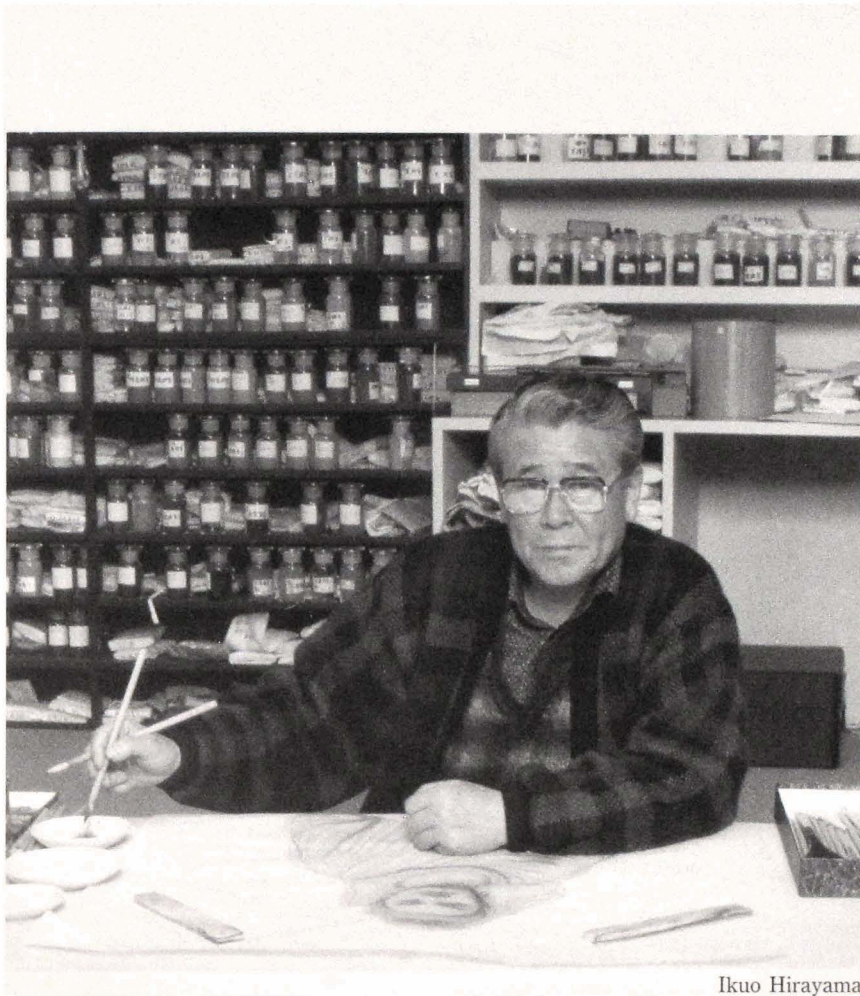
Stūpa in the ruins of Loulan, Xinjiang (China)



Dayan ta (Large Pagoda of the Wild Geese) of the temple of Ci'en si at Xi'an (China)



Mogaoku at Dunhuang (China)



Ikuo Hirayama

Brief Biography of Ikuo Hirayama

- 1930 Born in Hiroshima Prefecture, the third of eight children.
- 1945 In the third year of high school, he was drafted to work in Hiroshima City when the atomic bomb was dropped. He was not directly hit but was exposed to radiation.
- 1947 After completing high school, he entered the Japanese painting department of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts.
- 1952 After graduating, he became a deputy assistant in the department of Japanese painting at the same university, which had now become the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music.
- 1953 He became an assistant at that university and he exhibited at the Japan Art Institute exhibition (Inten).
- 1955 He married Michiko Matsuyama, a fellow student who had entered the Tokyo School of Fine Arts at the same time.
- 1959 The effects of the radiation worsened and he felt on the verge of death; he also seemed to be at an impasse in his work. It was at this time that he encountered Buddhism. One of his paintings exhibited in the Inten, *The Transmission of Buddhism*, was favorably received. Henceforth, Buddhism would be the basic theme of Hirayama's work, and would soon lead him to the Silk Road.
- 1962 He studied in Europe at the invitation of UNESCO. For six months he traveled in Italy, visiting museums and religious buildings and gathering material for comparative studies on the religious arts of the West and the East.
- 1964 He became a member of Inten.
- 1965 He held his first exhibition of his works on Buddhism and those from his sojourn in Europe.
- 1966 He took part in the first research group from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music studying medieval Oriental remains. The purpose of this expedition was to study the murals in the caves of Cappadocia, and Hirayama made copies of these. This was his first contact with the Silk Road.
- 1967 He held a second exhibition, titled "Images of Turkey," consisting of more than 30 works done in that country.
- 1968 He traveled from Afghanistan toward Central Asia in order to find the roots of Buddhism. This was when he realized that the Silk Road would be the theme of his work. He held his third exhibition, titled "Images of the Silk Road."
- 1969 He visited holy Buddhist sites in India, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia. He was appointed assistant professor at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music.
- 1970 He made study tours of Iran and Iraq.
- 1971 He was sent to Korea to study the royal tombs of the Moo-Young site. On his return to Japan, he left immediately for Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq.
- 1972 An exhibition was held in his home city of Hiroshima, titled "From the West to the East: Japanese-style Paintings of Ikuo Hirayama."
- 1973 The Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music sent him to France, England and Italy to make a preliminary study of early Renaissance frescoes. He was appointed professor at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. As a member of an expedition researching the conquests of Alexander the Great in Asia, he traveled along the Silk Road from Kabul to Istanbul. On his return to Japan he left again with the group studying early Renaissance frescoes and copied the murals in San Francesco, Assisi.
- 1974 He made a study tour of Afghanistan and Pakistan. He presented *Buddhist Missionaries to the Ancient East* to the collections of religious art in the Vatican, and he received the Order of St. Gregory. On his way back he sketched holy Buddhist sites in India.
- 1975 At the invitation of the Foreign Friendship Association of the People of China, he visited China as a member of the Japanese artists delegation. He went again to China in charge of an archaeological group.
- 1976 "The Silk Road of Ikuo Hirayama" exhibition was held, consisting of more than 100 works. He made a study tour of Korea. From December to the following year, an exhibition of his works on the Silk Road traveled to Tehran, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, and Istanbul.
- 1977 He traveled from Rome to Turkey, and thereafter in Beijing he rejoined a group from the *Nihon to Chūgoku* newspaper of the Japan-China Friendship Association and visited Tibet. He held an exhibition titled "Sketches of Tibet."
- 1978 The exhibition "Painting in China" was held, a collection of over 50 works. As a representative of the *Nihon to Chūgoku* newspaper, he visited

the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in China.

- 1979 An exhibition held in the National Museum of Modern Art in Athens included 39 Japanese-style paintings and 33 sketches. He held an exhibition of 86 works in the Palace of Workers' Culture in Beijing. He visited Dunhuang for the first time. He made a study tour of Pakistan and Syria.
- 1980 He visited the temples of Borobudur with a group studying Buddhist art. He held an exhibition titled "100,000 kilometers on the Silk Road," which included 75 paintings and 200 sketches. He made a study tour of India.
- 1981 He made a study tour of Kashmir and Ladakh. He visited the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region for the second time. He made a study tour in the Himalayas.
- 1982 He went to China with a party from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music studying Chinese art. He visited Dunhuang. He made a study tour of Kashmir and Ladakh.
- 1983 He held an exhibition titled "The Road to India," consisting of 26 Japanese-style paintings and 120 sketches. He made a study tour of Ladakh. He made his first trip to Dunhuang as the leader of a study group from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. He visited China at the invitation of the Japan-China Friendship Association.
- 1984 He made a study tour of Java. He visited China as a member of the "Delegation for the Promotion of Cultural Exchange between China and Japan" from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 1985 He held an exhibition on the propagation of Buddhism, titled "The Road to Nara," with 50 Japanese-style paintings and 12 sketches. He made a study tour of Rajasthan in India. He made his second trip to Dunhuang as the leader of the study group from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music.
- 1986 He visited China to accompany an NHK (Japan's public broadcasting channel) exhibition on the Yellow River. He visited the ruins of Loulan in the Taklamakan Desert in China. He made a study tour of holy Buddhist sites in India.
- 1987 He made a study tour of Thailand and Singapore.

He made his third trip to Dunhuang as the leader of the study group.

- 1988 He was appointed dean of the Fine Arts Department of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music. As a member of the study group on the Dunhuang caves, he again visited the Buddhist sites of Gansu in China. He was appointed a goodwill ambassador to UNESCO. He made a study tour of India.
- 1989 He held the exhibition titled "The Heart of the Silk Road," with 80 Japanese-style paintings and 30 sketches. He made a study tour of China. He traveled to Singapore, Germany, Turkey, and France. He made a study tour of Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and France. He made a study tour of India. He was appointed president of the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music.
- 1990 He visited the U.S.S.R. to inaugurate an exhibition for "Japan Week." He traveled in Indonesia.
- 1991 His exhibition "Ikuro Hirayama on the Silk Road" is held at the Guimet National Museum, Paris; the Japan Information and Culture Center, Washington, D.C.; and also in Beijing and Tokyo.

< Washington.D.C. > Japan Information And Culture Center

organizer : Embassy of Japan in the U.S.A.
supporter : Unesco
The Japan Foundation
NHK
Asahi Shimbun
translator : R. Jules Young
collaborator : Ogawa Museum

< Paris > Guimet National Museum of Asiatic Art

organizer : Guimet National Museum of Asiatic Art
commissioner-general : Jean-François Jarrige (Director)
commissioners : Jacques Giés, Keiko Omoto
translation supervisor : Claude Peronny
supporter : Embassy of Japan in France
Unesco
The Japan Foundation
NHK
Asahi Shimbun
collaborator : Ogawa Museum

< Beijing > China National Art Gallery

organizer : The Ministry of Culture, the People's Republic of China
supporter : Unesco
The Japan Foundation
NHK
Asahi Shimbun
translator : Liu Yue
collaborator : Ogawa Museum

< Tokyo > Ogawa Museum

organizer : Asahi Shimbun
supporter : Unesco
The Japan Foundation
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