



Buddhist Art in Asia

A. S. Bhalla

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Buddhism, which originated in India in the sixth century BC, faded into near oblivion by the thirteenth century. However, it spread to other countries in Asia, and along with it, Buddhist art. Like many other religions, Buddhism found expression in the art and architecture of the various cultures it touched. Tracing the Indian influence on Buddhist art in Asia is a central theme of this book.

Dr A.S. Bhalla investigates how representations of Buddha, Buddhism and Buddhist art evolved between regions and between epochs. From India to Thailand and Burma and eventually to China the religion grew in influence only to die and thrive again in different forms. With it grew different forms of Buddhist art (architecture, sculpture and painting) from Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka in South Asia to Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand in Southeast Asia, and China, Japan and South Korea in East Asia. How could the monks, normally mendicants surviving on alms, afford to build impressive monasteries and cave temples? Did royal patronage promote Buddhist art? Why did the Tantric branch emerge? How did Buddhism survive Islam and co-exist with Hinduism? How and why was human form of Buddha depicted even though Buddhism did not believe in idol worship? Bhalla investigates these and other questions in the shadows of the architecture, the murals, and sculptures of Buddha.

The book contains rich illustrations of temples, monasteries and stupas as well as paintings and sculptures from a number of holy Buddhist sites including Ajanta, Amaravati, Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Ellora, Karle, Sanchi and Sarnath in India, Sirigiya in Sri Lanka, Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom and Banteay Srei in Cambodia, Ayutthaya and Bangkok in Thailand, Dali in China and Kamakura and Nikko Toshugo in Japan.

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