

# THE ARTS IN EASTERN CENTRAL ASIA\*

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\* See Map 3.

## Part One

# THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF XINJIANG

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The Xinjiang region in the north-west of the People's Republic of China is, broadly speaking, an integral part of Central Asia, but the art of Xinjiang has developed its own specific characteristics as a direct result of its isolated geographic environment. The western sector and its mainly Islamic culture is contiguous with that of Central Asia; the southern districts neighbour the Indian subcontinent, the birthplace of Buddhist culture; the south-western corner bordering on Afghanistan and the north of modern-day Pakistan was the birthplace of Buddhist art; the south-eastern quarter and Tibet, whose traditional Tibetan Lamaism has had an immensely strong influence on the Mongol peoples of Xinjiang, has had a close relationship with the art of Lamaism; and, finally, the eastern region has long been understood to be part of the hinterland of China proper, and Chinese traditional art and modern art have had a profound impact on the modern art of Xinjiang. From 1850 to 1990 the Government of China underwent radical changes, which also influenced the development of the art of Xinjiang. The period can be divided into three stages: the late Qing dynasty (1850–1912); the Republic of China (1912–49); and the modern period (1949–90).

## The late Qing period (1850–1912)

The period from 1850 to 1912 was an exceptional time in the historical development of the art of Xinjiang. One reason was the long period of civil disturbance provoked by the invasion of Xinjiang<sup>1</sup> by the khan of Kokand, Agbor, which hindered any artistic development. Nevertheless, the popular folk art of Xinjiang managed to survive because of its inherent vitality; art from China proper also underwent a significant transformation with in Xinjiang. Another contributing factor was the great number of Western archaeologists and

<sup>1</sup> This refers to various Muslim–Han conflicts and revolts that took place largely between 1862 and 1873. In the 1830s the Qing had given the khanate of Kokand special privileges within the Xinjiang region following aggressive incursions into the territory. [*Trans.*]

explorers who excavated, purchased or stole Buddhist artefacts, claiming that they wished to promote a greater understanding of the ancient art of Xinjiang through its research and dissemination, when in fact they were causing irreparable harm to priceless art objects from over one thousand years of history.

From 1861 to 1878, influenced by peasant revolts and the invasion by one of Agbor's officials, Xinjiang was beset by internecine warfare, and this had a considerable impact on the lives of all its nationalities. Art was particularly affected because it expressed the major concerns of the lives and livelihoods of ordinary people. After the pacification of Xinjiang, society gradually stabilized, manufacturing developed and people's standard of living improved. This period of Xinjiang's artistic development was characterized not only by a resurgence but also a strengthening and development of its art.

The most important manifestations of Xinjiang's popular ethnic arts are the handicrafts and folk music and dances of its national minorities. After Islam became the dominant religion, sculpture representing the human form declined, and this tendency filtered through into each of the region's folk arts. The settlement of Xinjiang by a number of ethnic minorities meant that cultural influences from east and west were deeply felt, and it was thus natural that the folk art of Xinjiang should absorb many aspects of literary and artistic accomplishments to form its own unique style and rich and varied content.

## ARTS AND CRAFTS

The arts and crafts of Xinjiang are mainly reflected in its jade carvings, carpets and silks. Jade carvings are a traditional handicraft of the Uighur people. From classical times, Xinjiang has produced high-quality jade of which the Kunlun Shan<sup>2</sup> and Khotan (Hotan)<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 1) jades are the most highly valued. After the Qing dynasty had subdued Xinjiang, the scope of mining and carving in the region increased considerably, especially during the reigns of the Emperors Qianlong and Jiaqing; in Qianlong's reign, for example, a block of green jade weighing more than 5 imperial tons was extracted from Khotan and carved into the world's largest jade piece once it had arrived in Beijing. After this time, since official imperial Qing residences now all wished to acquire jade works, jade carvings from Xinjiang flooded into China proper. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, although jade carving in Xinjiang can still be regarded as an important business, being a superior-quality material it nevertheless required much time and effort to carve and polish and was expensive to produce, thus losing its competitive edge in the internal and

<sup>2</sup> The Kunlun mountains are contiguous with the Karakoram in the south-west and form the physical border between Xinjiang and the states to the south as well as with Tibet. [*Trans.*]

<sup>3</sup> Khotan is in the south of Xinjiang and on the southern edge of the Taklamakan desert. [*Trans.*]



FIG. 1. Khotan jade. (Photo: Courtesy of Xu Jianying.)

international market-place. Apart from exceptional circumstances, the Xinjiang jade carvers used basic techniques to process jade from the Kunlun mountains; their skill can be seen in the carving, polishing and adornment of rings, writing materials, cups, bowls (Fig. 2) and all manner of small, carved jade artefacts.

The most important carpet manufacture in Xinjiang was that of the Uighurs, with their woven *zai rong* style of rugs, and in particular the rugs of Khotan. The principal designs for the patterned rugs of Xinjiang were those based upon the ‘well’, ‘field’ and ‘rice’ frameworks, each of which provides a foundation for any added permutations. From the centres of these differing designs, lines, angles and different decorative patterns, both large and small, radiate outwards to form varied and richly layered frames. However, the central lines are the principal ones, the spaces in between being filled with various plants and flowers, using two or four segments to create a wealth of consecutive, wellknit patterns. Moreover, every area of Xinjiang has its own variation on each pattern, with decorated rugs from Khotan showing the widest variety, using fairly deep colours; rugs from Kashghar (Kashi) are well-knit with exquisitely fine and smooth decorative designs, the colours refined and elegant; rugs from Yarkand (Shache) are full of meticulously worked variations and are brightly coloured with shades of fiery red. These rugs usually employ about 15 colours but may include several dozen hues, mainly red, blue, blackish or dark green and yellow.



FIG. 2. Peach-shaped bowl. (Photo: Courtesy of Xu Jianying.)

Each brand of Xinjiang carpet can be classified according to its intended use, decorative content and place of manufacture. Uses include being spread on beds and *kangs*,<sup>4</sup> and as prayer mats, *itandays* (small rugs used on saddles, chairs, beds and *kangs*) and runners. Original styles include the Persian, *Xiamu*, *Bogu* and *Kuqa* brands. The pattern content of the rugs can be categorized as either that of the pomegranate flower, five-petal, scattered flower, fine art or sculpted *kun* variety (*kun* is a style of carpet from the Kunlun mountains).

Apart from rugs, Uighur patterned felt is very distinctive; its chief characteristics are lock-stitch embroidery, appliqué, rolling-design felt and printed felt. Patterned felt is mostly produced in Khotan, Kashghar, Kuqa (Kucha) and Yengi Hisar (Yengisar). Although the patterned felt from each location varies in style and colour, they all employ similar principal figures such as various flowers and planes, branches, leaves, buds and fruit. Virtually all are decorated with images of nature and the heads, horns, eyes, paws, hoofs and crests of birds and beasts as well as other everyday objects.

*Edlays* silk is the most famous woven silk of the Uighurs and is produced mainly in Khotan and Kashghar. Traditionally, its raw materials are all natural silk, and the colours are mineral- and plant-based. *Edlays* silk can be broadly divided into four main categories: black, red, yellow and synthetic. Black *edlays* silk is, as the name suggests, usually

<sup>4</sup> Heatable brick beds that can be used by the whole family. [Trans.]

black, and its decorative features include tassels, chains, ‘human head’ and ‘human heart’ designs, lattice-work, ram’s-horn designs, sickles, flowers and plants depicted in traditional Chinese style as well as multitudinous white patterns on a black background. Red *edlays* has either a yellow or a white background with red patterns superimposed; it usually features pears, orchids, apples, oranges, the Chinese *toon* (Tree of Heaven), plant leaves and vegetation, small flowers, pottery, musical instruments and apricot trees. Yellow *edlays* silk uses a red background with golden patterns superimposed, mostly representing apples, orchids and apricots. Synthetic *edlays* uses these same three patterns, but other traditional designs are simplified and laid out into six different composite sections; they are divided into upper, middle and lower motifs, forming many different shades within the coloured material. Original and traditional raw materials and techniques provide a basis upon which patterns such as these can be used in *edlays* silk, as well as in rugs and patterned felt.

Other national minorities in Xinjiang also have famous handicrafts, each rich in content and with its own particular characteristics, such as the saddles and padded jackets of the Kazakhs, the padded cotton jackets of the Kyrgyz, the embroidery, wood carvings, embroidered paintings and paper-cuts of the Hui Muslims and the folk paintings and embroidery of the Xibes.<sup>5</sup>

## ARCHITECTURE

Every nationality in Xinjiang has its own characteristic style of architecture. Among the traditional residential housing of the Muslim peoples there is a strong Islamic influence. The Uighurs constructed their buildings using the ancient and traditional skills they had inherited, which also had a strong Islamic flavour (Fig. 3). The architectural influences on town dwellings built by the Uzbeks and Tatars are analogous with those of the Uighurs. The Hui Muslims drew lessons from the techniques employed by the Han Chinese, Uighur, Kazakh and other Muslim nationalities when it came to building, extending and improving upon the living requirements and enhancing the aesthetic precepts of the indigenous peoples of the region. Architecture can be largely divided into two categories: religious sites and mausoleums, and ethnic dwellings. The following is by way of an introduction to the state of architecture in the latter stages of the Qing dynasty.

The principal Islamic buildings in late Qing Xinjiang were mosques, mausoleums (Fig. 4), domes and minarets. These buildings make use of glazed bricks to adorn their external walls, this being part of the special style of their external framework. Entering the rooms, one usually finds a large shrine or niche. The walls have stone bas-relief carvings

<sup>5</sup> Also known as the Sibos, distributed over Xinjiang and Liaoning. [Trans.]





FIG. 3. Ili. Traditional Uighur building. (Photo: Courtesy of Xu Jianying.)

of flowers, with geometric designs engraved on the pillars, beams, doorways and windows. The caisson<sup>6</sup> ceilings usually employ coloured patterns. New buildings and extensions dating from this period include many prayer halls and mausoleums, such as the extension in 1872 of the Idgah (Etnir) mosque in Kashghar (Figs. 5 and 6).

These are two basic styles of mosque architecture in Xinjiang. The first is the traditional Chinese wooden structure built in the Islamic style (termed simply the Chinese style) and the second resembles a more Central Asian or Persian construction (referred to simply as the Central Asian Xinjiang style). Both these styles, needless to say, developed and evolved during this period and became peculiar to Xinjiang.

Mosques built in the Chinese style were usually erected in areas where there were substantial Muslim populations of Huis and Hans. In its architecture and construction, this type of mosque reflected long-term developments in Islam within China proper; from its plane-level construction to its architectural design, every aspect was completely Chinese as if custom-made in the country. Examples of this style are the Great Sha'anxi mosque in

<sup>6</sup> A caisson is a sunken panel in a ceiling, vault or cupola. [Trans.]



FIG. 4. Kashgar. Apa Khoja mausoleum. (Photo: Courtesy of Xu Jianying.)

Urumqi,<sup>7</sup> the Great Sha'anxi mosque in Yining and the Earth Block mosque in Fukang. Special characteristics include a robust central axis, with no minaret rising from the centre, and usually a pavilion-style construction approximately three eaved storeys in height. In design, religious halls were typically modelled on a plane level with a raised platform, with the rolled canopy-style roof or peaked roof in the *xie* style (also called the *xieshan* style) and hexagonal or octagonal pavilion-style towers forming a diamond-shaped pinnacle; these three constituent parts together made up an interconnected pagoda-like structure. The courtyards on either side of the religious complex had porched reception rooms with rolled and canopied or *geng*-type roofs; these rooms house many commentaries and religious paraphernalia for handling official religious business such as weddings, funerals and other ceremonies.

Another aspect of this architecture was that the mosque entrance sported a high and imposing minaret, with the roofs of all the religious halls in the courtyard rising and falling behind it; the religious site's kiln, or 'back burner', came in the form of a lofty tower that

<sup>7</sup> The modern-day capital of Xinjiang Autonomous Province. [Trans.]





FIG. 5. Kashghar. Idgah mosque. (Photo: Courtesy of Xu Jianying.)

was modelled on the rest of the mosque complex's special architectural characteristics. The architectural space and overhead boundary lines within the complex give the appearance of an integral architectural unit that is aesthetically pleasing to the eye from every angle. Such architecture strikingly reflects the dissimilar artistic characteristics of mosques, temples and other religious sites.

Next we address the composition and style of Central Asian–Persian Islamic architecture. As a part of Central Asia, Xinjiang has its own distinct regional Islamic building styles. Their principal characteristics are briefly discussed below. First, the religious site is either open-plan or semi-open, with one perimeter wall. Second, the site is adapted to local conditions without any specified axis. Third, there is only one decorated religious prayer hall within the site, with the position of this decorated shrine pointing in the obligatory direction towards the Qa'ba at Mecca. Fourth, the crosswise layout of religious services was continued and developed from its original form in Western and Central Asia, becoming a semi-open layout using a series of wooden colonnades to make an external forum for religious worship; centrally, at the rear of the whole complex, an inner prayer hall open and crosswise in layout was built; in the style of a hall, it was well adapted to the peculiarities of the Xinjiang climate. Fifth, the temple gatehouse was also suited to local conditions, often lacking a dome; because the space within the gatehouse was large, it would have



FIG. 6. Kashghar. Hall in the Idgah mosque. (Photo: Courtesy of Xu Jianying.)

needed a vaulted ceiling to solve the problem. Although no drum towers with exposed and vaulted domes were built, there were, in place of such vaulted domes, sunken corridors or porches in the middle of each gatehouse building which were of extensive and rectangular parallelepiped design along the lines of arches found elsewhere in Islamic shrines; these sunken porches had columns at each end supporting small roofed pavilions. The latter sported vaulted ceilings, and thus avoided using the characteristically half-hidden and half-revealed domed ceilings of Central Asia. Sixth, large and medium-sized mosques, apart from being used for religious services, all followed Islamic teachings when it came to multiple and functional uses.

Seventh, within the gatehouse and on the large rectangular walls, great concave Islamic niches were centrally placed; furthermore, ‘hanging’ arches were suspended without need for support, and on the great niches and to the right and left were added between five and seven framed, rectangular minor niches. At both exposed corners of the rectangular walls, minor minarets stood atop columns, although the main minaret itself did not sport any decoration or bas-relief, nor did the mosque exteriors exhibit beautiful decorations. Eighth, the interiors of religious halls were the only focal point for decoration. Ninth, within the

halls of large and medium-sized religious sites, ponds and pools enclosed by trees were forbidden.

Mausoleums were another important component of Islamic architecture in Xinjiang. What are now called mausoleums were originally termed ‘holy sites’ or ‘bases for believers’. The most memorable aspects of their architecture are found in their tombs and basement rooms. Most of Xinjiang’s mausoleums are concentrated in southern Xinjiang on a line from the south of the Tarim basin to Tashkurgan in the eastern Pamirs; because of this geographic spread, the exteriors differ widely, with no one mausoleum representative of the others (though most of them are found in the Khotan district). Xinjiang’s mausoleums have had their own particular form since their inception in the fifteenth century, and the architectural layout of sixteenth-century complexes shows very little maturation.

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, Xinjiang’s architecture reveals major developments in style and form. By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Xinjiang’s mausoleums had assimilated every aspect of traditional Chinese architectural culture, just as previously every architectural influence from Central Asia and other areas had gradually been absorbed and transformed into a unique Xinjiang style. Mausoleums from this time used traditional Chinese and indigenous wooden structures (the ‘mixed’ style), while at the same time they continued to develop the techniques and art used for particular niches and domes in accordance with the required Islamic vaults and curves, thus creating the mature architectural style found in Xinjiang’s mausoleums.

As the economy developed and each of the nationalities increasingly travelled and intermingled, a relatively large number of religious buildings of different types were erected (Fig. 7). For example, 1889 saw the construction of the important lamasery (Fig. 8) at the Temple of Sacred Blessings in Zhaosu county near Ili.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, however, it was Islamic architecture that developed the fastest and yielded the richest variety of distinguishing features, such as in the Tatar mosque in Urumqi and the mosques in Yining, Tacheng<sup>9</sup> and other places. The plane level layout and architectural execution of these sites each have their own special characteristics. In northern Xinjiang, several settlements have numbers of extant buildings that were constructed by members of other religious faiths and movements such as the Buddhists, Daoists, Nestorians and Catholics, among others; in southern Xinjiang, on the other hand, Islamic buildings still account for the majority of religious sites (Fig. 9).

<sup>8</sup> This was the base for the Qing’s attempts to regain control over rebellious Xinjiang in the latter half of the nineteenth century and also served as its capital. [*Trans.*]

<sup>9</sup> Also known as Qoqek. [*Trans.*]



FIG. 7. Urumqi. Confucian temple. (Photo: Courtesy of Xu Jianying.)



FIG. 8. Zhaosu county. Main temple of lamasery. (Photo: Courtesy of Xu Jianying.)

Quite apart from this, the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Mongols and (to some extent) Tajiks constructed settlements in accordance with the demands of their natural geographic habitat, many living in nomadic felt tents, or yurts, whose design corresponds to the unhindered nomadic existence of these ethnic minorities on the great steppes. Other nationalities are Buddhist, Daoist or Eastern Orthodox or believers in shamanism (e.g. the Yibos, the Da'urs [Tahurs], the Mans, the Hans, the Eluosis [Russians]): their principal buildings are constructed mostly from brick or earth, all grouped around a courtyard with flat-roofed square or rectangular rooms.





FIG. 9. Modern mosque. (Photo: Courtesy of Xu Jianying.)

## FOLK SONGS AND DANCES

From classical times, Xinjiang has been extremely rich in folk music, so much so that in ancient times it was called the ‘Yanqi kingdom, entranced by music and besotted by dance’. In Khotan,<sup>10</sup> it was said, ‘The people perfect song and dance.’ Kuqa<sup>11</sup> was the main region of origin for these songs and dances, but the latter had also absorbed the music of the central Chinese plains, western Asia, India and other places to form the famous Kuqa musical tradition.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the ‘Twelve *Mukamas*’ came to represent the musical art of Xinjiang. These systematized and gathered together Xinjiang’s music, dance and poetry, and it was upon this basis of classical *Kuchah*, *Khoten*, *Su* (vernacular folk songs) and other ancient music from Xinjiang that Arab and other Islamic nations’ musical instruments and compositions were absorbed into, and fused with, the indigenous culture. Gradually this became a broad, popular canon of folk music. It commonly included

<sup>10</sup> The classical name for the ancient region of Xinjiang, roughly corresponding to what was known as Turkistan. [Trans.]

<sup>11</sup> This state in Chinese Turkistan was the cradle of music; being on the Silk Route, it assimilated many Turkish, Persian, Indian and Chinese influences. [Trans.]



12 suites of main melodies, each suite formed from the *Qionglakman*, the *Dosten* and the *Meshilaif*.<sup>12</sup> The words of the songs are taken largely from famous poems, ballads and folk-tales. In the course of their evolution, they had been rearranged many times. In 1879 a system was devised by the Kashghar artist ‘Ali Salim and the Yarkand artist Satwirdi, who added local folk interpretations of the *Dosten* and *Meshilaif*, thus greatly extending the scope of the Twelve *Mukamas*. This arrangement of the Twelve *Mukamas* constituted an important milestone in their historical development. (See more under ‘Music and dance’ below.)

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL HAN-STYLE PAINTING AND TEMPLES

Towards the end of the Qing dynasty, Han-style painting was chiefly embodied in the New Year paintings of the Yangliuqing tradition. At this time a large group of impoverished people moved from Yangliuqing to Urumqi and, having imported their New Year paintings into this environment, they established a ‘little Yangliuqing’ school of painting at Xiheba (the western river-bank). From here, these New Year paintings spread to every area of Xinjiang. Examples show that, while preserving the traditional content of Yangliuqing painting, they also reflect the lives of the local ethnic populations of Xinjiang as in depictions of pavilions, platforms, towers and palaces, contemporary ethnic customs as in the Ili school of painting, or whatever was dearest to each Muslim population.

At this time the classical art of Xinjiang suffered a serious setback at the hands of the imperialist forces, which obtained many pieces either by force or by deception. Many Western scientists, artists and officials used tourism, exploration, archaeology, missionary work and other ploys as a pretext for infiltrating Xinjiang, where they proceeded to plunder its culture and steal huge quantities of priceless historical artefacts of every historical period and style. According to statistics compiled by the Japanese author Shi Tiangan<sup>13</sup> in *The Experience of Exploration in Central Asia and its Results*, between 1856 and 1910 more than 70 expeditions of archaeologists and explorers from Germany, Russia, France, Japan, Switzerland, the United States and Hungary, among others, visited Xinjiang; through archaeological digs, purchases from the populace and other methods they succeeded in removing more than 10,000 ancient relics. These included wall-paintings and statues from Buddhist grottoes, classical Chinese paintings on silk from basement rooms and tombs, wooden carvings and figurines of Buddhist nuns, every variety of ancient woollen and silken artefact and popular folk art and craft items. The result was not only

<sup>12</sup> Suites of music, singing and dance. [Trans.]

<sup>13</sup> The Chinese transliteration of a Japanese name. [Trans.]

that huge quantities of ancient relics from Chinese Xinjiang were lost abroad, but also that numerous artistic skills were lost for ever.

From this brief overview it can be seen that, although there was no outstanding progress in the visual arts of Xinjiang during this era, nor were any prominent artists produced, yet folk art, and in particular music, did register some relatively strong development. There were also advances in architecture, especially in the field of religious buildings, and Chinese and Xinjiang architectural styles became increasingly fused with Islamic architecture. The characteristics of Xinjiang art may be summarized as follows: the emergence of a new-found originality in its artefacts; the standardization of the form and figure of art works and their execution, thus establishing firm guidelines while allowing for some flexibility of interpretation; and the mingling of various schools and trends in the fine arts of the Middle East and China proper to form a wide-ranging connection between the two.

## The Republican period (1912–49)

At the time of the Republic of China, the ‘New Territories’ of Xinjiang were either sealed off by the separatist regime, which ruled by force of arms, or were subject to the ravages of internecine warfare between rogue and army units. Art in Xinjiang could find no way of achieving significant development. This situation was particularly detrimental to the fine arts: neither modern art nor traditional Chinese silk painting had any scope for development within Xinjiang. However, resolute steps were taken to encourage music, dance and folk arts and crafts. Some aspects of this situation are discussed below.

At the time of Yang Zengxin, no new styles of literature or art were able to enter Xinjiang because of the vigorous separatist policies he implemented. In the early days of Sheng Shicai’s domination of Xinjiang, he allied himself with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and drew close to the Soviet Union (USSR) and for a time literati and artists from every region of China were able to visit Xinjiang. Mao Zhi, Zhao Dan and Wang Weiyi were instances of this trend. Some new styles of modern art therefore managed to spread through Xinjiang. In the period 1934–9, nine societies or associations for the promotion of culture were successfully established for the Khalkha, Hui, Uighur, Mongolian, Han, Tatar, Uzbek, Eluosi and Xibe nationalities. Many of these cultural associations subsequently established theatre companies; the Hans chiefly performed stage plays and Beijing (Peking) opera, while minority nationalities put on festivals of song and dance. In October 1939 Zhao Dan and others formed Xinjiang’s first professional theatre company and the Xinjiang Experimental Theatre Company.

At the onset of the War of Resistance against Japan, several cultural organizations simultaneously highlighted resistance to the Japanese and national salvation, thus encouraging the development of modern political art in Xinjiang – at this time, fine art, drama, opera, music and dance all underwent vigorous development. Cartoons were widely used to promote the so-called ‘Xinjiang Enlightenment’, and Xinjiang’s first cartoon publication called *The Times* appeared. Popular genres of drama originally included Sha’anxi opera, Beijing opera, Xinjiang melodies,<sup>14</sup> folk songs and dances; to these foundations were added new, spirited and versatile contemporary repertoires such as *Zhengzhou Successfully Resists the Japanese*, *The Taiwanese Youth Press On*, *Catching the Han Traitors* and so on. Moreover, new types of drama were driven forward by experimental theatre groups which gave successful performances of *Qu Yuan*, *Wu Zetian*, *The Germ of Fascism*, *Thunder and Rain*, *Raising a Tempest South of the Yangtze* and others. Soviet dramatic styles brought back by people returning from the Soviet Union were mixed with long romantic sagas of the Uighurs. Epic plays such as *Alif and Sana’im*, *Rabaya Saiding*, *Onegin* and *The Pedlar and the Young Lady* were performed throughout Xinjiang.

In 1946 the Nationalists<sup>15</sup> took control of Xinjiang. The following year, the Association for Furthering Culture in the North-West was moved to Xinjiang from its original base in Lanzhou. At the same time, experimental theatre groups were established, books and magazines were published and writers’ associations and three research groups for drama, fine art and music were set up. The Chinese artists Zhao Wangyun<sup>16</sup> and Mao Zhiyi, the musicians Ma Sihong, Yu Yixuan and Huang Yuanyin and others were invited to Xinjiang to hold exhibitions and give performances. In October 1947 the Xinjiang Youth Folk Music Touring Theatre performed a set of characteristic Xinjiang songs and dances in urban centres throughout the country. This promoted the fusion of Xinjiang’s traditional folk music and dance with modern styles.

At the same time as Chinese artists were settling in Xinjiang to work, the region produced its own indigenous artists who specialized in painting traditional Chinese landscapes and flora and fauna such as Wang Buduan and Li Zizhao; Zheng Lianpeng specialized in line drawings of landscapes using the traditional ink-and-brush style, while Wang Luzhen painted flowers and plants; the Hui Muslim artists Chen Shou and Yan Xin’an were both skilled at depicting flowers and birds in the traditional Chinese style. After the War of Resistance against Japan broke out, great numbers of artists arrived in Xinjiang, thus encouraging the development of fine art in the region. Some celebrated artists made

<sup>14</sup> A sung-verse form created in the Southern Song and Jin dynasties. [Trans.]

<sup>15</sup> The Guomindang (Kuomintang), established by Sun Yatsen and others, was China’s official government between its two revolutions (1912–49). [Trans.]

<sup>16</sup> For the paintings of Zhao Wangyun, see the website: [www.ieshu.com/dic\\_result\\_deaital.asp?id=666](http://www.ieshu.com/dic_result_deaital.asp?id=666).

important contributions to the development of Xinjiang's fine arts; these included Wang Wei, the cartoonists Dai Pengyin and Lu Shaofei, the traditional Chinese artists Hu Baihua, Shi Kun, Yu Helu, Lu Feng and Ding Xinong and the famous painters Si Tuqiao, Han Leran, Zhao Wangyun and Mao Zhiyi. These and other artists, who all visited northern and southern Xinjiang, produced a great range of excellent works reflecting the landscapes of the frontier regions which were exhibited in Urumqi, Ili and other places.

Although during the times when Yang Zengxin and Jin Shuren held sway over Xinjiang the region's culture was isolated from the mainstream and modern art was unable to enter Xinjiang, fine arts and music in the folk tradition nevertheless remained active and dynamic.

There were no great advances in architecture during this period and they were largely confined to the construction of the Great Southern mosque in Urumqi. This was built in 1929 and was situated on Liberation Street South. The buildings faced west and east and consisted of a great gatehouse with side rooms and a prayer hall, a bathhouse and other rooms. The prayer hall was built of brick and wood on the model of the Goulian pagoda, with an open-plan, raised platform typical of the Hui Muslims. A front porch was built before a ditch, and there were single-eaved roofs, a *xieshan* dome and sheet-iron roofing. The building used a system of brackets inserted between the top of a column and a cross-beam called a *dougong*<sup>17</sup> for holding in place the carved peach-wood cavity rather than using the modern *dougong* method, with a *xie* system of brackets placed between the columns in a wooden construction typical of the north-western region. The gables on either side of the front porch and its interior used carved green glazed bricks as an integral part of their design. The roof beams, supports and walls used brightly coloured blue, green, red, yellow, black and white multicoloured designs to create patterns of flowers and plants, clouds and curlicues, epigraphs, mountains and streams, forming a Chinese-style Hui Muslim brand of architecture.

From the beginning of the 1920s, the Xinjiang carpet industry underwent considerable development and a rug factory was built at Khotan; in the 1930s carpet factories at Khotan and Lop employed some 2,000 people. Although the scale of rug production increased dramatically during this period, changes in carpet style, design and decoration were not great.

<sup>17</sup> Each bracket was formed from a double bow-shaped arm called a *gong* which supported a block of wood called a *dou* on each side. [Trans.]

## The modern period (1949–90)

After October 1949, many changes occurred in the region which entered a new phase of development. The arts and crafts of every nationality in Xinjiang received substantial government support, and a new era of development began. Moreover, traditional folk art, fine art and musical modes were systematized, the valuable treasury of ethnic architecture was conserved and restored, and many different artistic forms from China as well as modern art were promulgated and developed rapidly within Xinjiang so that every national minority was soon able to produce a raft of famous artists. Art education was encouraged by the establishment of art colleges, painting schools and art departments, all of which contributed to Xinjiang's artistic progress.

### ARTS AND CRAFTS

During this period, Xinjiang's arts and crafts, especially jade carving and carpets, underwent vigorous development in both scale and technology. Jade carving was a traditional art and craft form and as such received considerable government support in improving its standards and range of styles: a corps of jade carvers was trained and their accomplishments were displayed, leading to the production of a large number of objects of relatively high artistic value.

In the 1950s the government rationalized the fragmented body of folk artisans, employed traditional arts and crafts, and refined every type of jade utensil and ornament. In 1964 it set up the Xinjiang Jade-carving Factory and started a second jade-engraving factory at Khotan. In 1978 the Xinjiang Bureau of Light Industry invested in a new factory building for jade carving. Apart from carving and polishing figures, birds and beasts, fish and insects, flowers and plants, bottles, stoves, scent bottles, cups and writing materials, the factory also carved and polished superior-quality jade goods suited to modern tastes such as in its objects entitled *Wandering Sheep*, *Dance* and *Picking Grapes*.

At the same time, Chinese jade-carving masters were engaged to improve the technological level of jade carving in Xinjiang, thus promoting a link between the jade carving of China proper and that of the autonomous region; this led to a clear Chinese influence on the jade carving of Xinjiang. The jade carver Wang Yunzhu is representative of this group. Wang Yunzhu usually makes use of his designs, carving and polishing to show off his skill in producing classical household utensils. His products are perfectly executed, use the raw material to its full potential and are outstanding in form; they appear bold and unconstrained, are pithy in content, and epitomize the magnificence of the northern style with a meticulous standard of chiselling. Chief among his works are *Green Jade*



*Bottle Continuously Engraved with a Phoenix, Jasper Ding*<sup>18</sup>; *in the Lei Style, Turquoise Lian*<sup>19</sup> *Bottle with Bird Decorations, White Jade-backed Flask Dipped in Quicksilver* and *Crystal Dragon and Phoenix Xian*<sup>20</sup> (along with the famous *Crystal Scent Bottle*). This last-mentioned work is scarcely more than 10 cm high; its design is novel and its craftsmanship audacious. The insides are carved with coiled dragons which are exquisitely and delicately picked out and are glittering and translucent, bright and clean, the engraved detail full and accurate. *Autumn Proclaims Beautiful Colours* is another representative piece of Wang Yunzhu's work. This is a jade carved ornament like a calabash with chrysanthemums chiselled on the inside and two *katydid*s<sup>21</sup> carved on the outside. The engraver ingeniously makes use of the stone's sugary qualities to carve the chrysanthemums, with one *katydid* on the mouth of the calabash and the other crawling across the vessel's exterior. The golden-yellow chrysanthemums are full of life; the grasshoppers rub their wings and it is as if one can hear their chirping, full of sound and colour, just as in real life.

## FOLK ARTS AND CRAFTS

The folk arts and crafts of Xinjiang have today reached their apogee. The production, technology, decorative designs and many other aspects of carpets, for example, have made hitherto unimaginable progress. In the 1950s the Xinjiang government brought together destitute, itinerant carpet weavers and employed them in the Number One Carpet Factory in Khotan. Over the next 30 years, more than 30 carpet factories were built in Khotan, Lop, Yarkand, Yecheng, Kashghar, Aksu, Bayingolung and other places. Innovative production techniques were introduced in the selection and processing of the fleeces. The threads and decorative designs used for the rugs were not only based on keeping alive Xinjiang's traditional concepts, but steps were also taken to assimilate national and international decorative patterns and lines. The resultant style was rich in ethnic overtones as well as modern decorative characteristics.

Xinjiang's handcrafted rugs have repeatedly won the national fine art and craft 'Hundred Flowers' prize. Beautiful examples can be found hanging in the Great Hall of the People and the Hall of Bestowing Kindness, both in Beijing, as well as in national and autonomous regional assembly halls; they are fully representative of the outstanding technique and rich artistic imagery of the felt rugs of Xinjiang.

<sup>18</sup> An ancient cooking vessel with two looped handles and three or four legs. [Trans.]

<sup>19</sup> A vessel used to hold grain at the imperial sacrifice. [Trans.]

<sup>20</sup> A vessel used to bathe the feet and clarify the spirits. [Trans.]

<sup>21</sup> Also known as long-horned grasshoppers. [Trans.]

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## ARCHITECTURE

There are two aspects to architecture in today's Xinjiang: the ongoing conservation and restoration of historically important Buddhist temples and grottoes and Muslim shrines; and the development of modern architecture. Xinjiang has a large number of Buddhist 'storehouses', wall-paintings and sculptures. Some famous Buddhist grottoes have been catalogued by national cultural preservation units so that they can be conserved and restored. Examples are the Thousand Buddha grottoes at Kizil and Kumtul. The Kizil grottoes, commonly referred to as an 'art treasure house', include 263 caverns within the complex, with Buddhist wall-paintings dating from around the third century to the end of the eighth. Nowadays 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> of wall-paintings are preserved here. The subject-matter of the wall-paintings is chiefly the Buddhist traditions, predestinations and stories based upon original lives; some concerns the sayings of Mile and deep meditative<sup>22</sup> exercises for believers. Other scenes show the cultivation of fields, hunting, business transactions, music and dance and other views of ethnic minority life. The layout of these richly decorated wall-paintings is novel. The portraits display a dizzy intermingling of many techniques with their bold outlines and use of disparate colours. Some use a stiff brush to portray the principal distinguishing features of the human physiognomy and form, afterwards emboldening the lines in colour, making the figures extremely realistic and vivid and giving them a three-dimensional feel.

These paintings have a distinctive local flavour and all show a very high standard of artistry. Because China's territory and borders were consolidated comparatively early and the Kizil grottoes are large, the subject-matter and artistic style of the statuary and murals provide an excellent reflection of the level of culture and art of the people of the ancient state of Kuqa (Chinese Turkistan). Furthermore the rich content of these wall-paintings reflects the real lives led by the people of that time. The Kizil grottoes occupy an important place in the classical art history of Xinjiang. They are also of great significance for research into the relationship between local social history in ancient times, Buddhist art and the art of Central Asia.

Equally famous are the caves at Kumtul, in Kuqa county: row upon row of Buddhist caves, 112 in all, with their backs to the mountains and facing the river. The Kumtul grottoes, which were excavated and created at the end of the fourth century, absorbed the Buddhist art of the musicians attendant upon the Buddha which had, by that time, already taken shape and spread throughout Xinjiang, but this art also took account of the art of

<sup>22</sup> This refers to the fact that in ancient China some musical instruments used silk in their manufacture, as with the stringed *qin*, or zither. [*Trans.*]

the central Chinese plains, thus forming a composite and contemporaneous artistic style with the ethnic forms of the time. Its technique of line drawings is referred to as ‘using a brush with force and concentration just as a melody is laid upon silk’.<sup>23</sup> It makes use of the pattern of hills to display the stories of original lives; the paintings are lively in style, rich in colour and interspersed with activity, sometimes featuring people and at other times displaying plant and animal life.

The Kizil and Kumtul grottoes were both designated as important cultural sites worthy of preservation by the central Chinese Government in 1961, and at the end of the 1980s the Xinjiang Regional Government set up a dedicated research programme. The ensuing research and conservation work has yielded some important results.

Xinjiang has a number of other important buildings of historical and architectural value that have been conserved and restored by the government. For example, the Temple of Sacred Blessings at Zhaosu in Ili was designated as an important cultural site of the autonomous region and has undergone restoration, after which it looks even more dazzling and resplendent. The Great Hui mosque at Yining, whose classical architecture is of historical as well as artistic value, has also been renovated.

During this time, Urumqi and other urban centres quickly developed as examples of modern suburban architecture. Modern city architecture has largely been inspired by Han architectural forms as well as fusing with contemporary Western styles; at the same time, it is informed by many ethnic styles from within Xinjiang, especially those of the Uighurs, forming a unique brand of modern architecture. For example, 1985 saw the construction of the Xinjiang Great Hall of the People: this mainly employed modern building styles, but the internal decoration of each room was designed to reflect the characteristics of each region and nationality within Xinjiang. The separate halls were all restored and decorated. This building is representative of architectural developments in Xinjiang during the 1980s.

## MODERN FINE ARTS

After the establishment of the New China, the fine arts in Xinjiang developed rapidly and a flourishing fine-art scene emerged, with publishing and education also making visible progress. Xinjiang has taken important steps towards the creation of a modern art scene. Traditional Chinese painting, oil painting, print-making, thumbnail sketches, cartoons, New Year paintings, watercolours, gouache and sculpture have all undergone a transformation, with major artists working in each field and the establishment of art education programmes.

<sup>23</sup> Dhyana. [*Trans.*]

The most well-known Xinjiang painter is Xu Shuzhi, a traditional Chinese artist who depicts landscapes, figures and animals (Fig. 10). Representative works include *Protecting the Livestock*, *Bumper Harvest Time*, *Yellow Sand and Red Willow Go Whistling* and *Early Morning*. Another traditional Chinese artist is Xie Jiadao, who depicts the picturesque mountain and river landscape of Xinjiang in his paintings. Wu Qifeng,<sup>24</sup> another traditional Chinese artist, paints figures and is expert at using fine brushwork with close attention to detail and realism;<sup>25</sup> representative of his work are the paintings *The Oasis Blossoms into a New Song*, *Welcoming the Spring Scenery*, *Village Teacher* and *Bright Snow*. The traditional artist Gong Jianxin depicts figures by expertly using ink in his portraits, of which *Yao Chihui* is an example. Li Lian paints figures, landscapes, flowers and birds in a Chinese style; examples of his work include *Guest Stops at Yurt*, *Refreshing Breeze* and *Travelling Sunbeams*.

Several dozen ethnic-minority artists also emerged at this time, especially fine artists from the Muslim tradition such as Ghazi Emet<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 11) and Abdukirim Nesirdin<sup>27</sup> (Fig. 12). They shook off the traditional fetters of Islam and unswervingly trod a new path of artistic creativity using differing styles. Their work depicts real-life situations and illustrates the progress towards modernity made by each nationality.<sup>28</sup> Their works portray Xinjiang's magnificent natural scenery; the rich human landscape and ethnic feelings of



FIG. 10. Xu Shuzhi: *On the Move*.

<sup>24</sup> For Wu Qifeng, see the website: [www.xj.cninfo.net/culture/drawer/wqf/zuopin.htm](http://www.xj.cninfo.net/culture/drawer/wqf/zuopin.htm).

<sup>25</sup> Known in Chinese as *gongbi* painting. [Trans.]

<sup>26</sup> See the website: [www.tilsimat.biz/ghazi\\_emet.htm](http://www.tilsimat.biz/ghazi_emet.htm).

<sup>27</sup> See the website: [www.tilsimat.biz/abdukirim-nesirdin.htm](http://www.tilsimat.biz/abdukirim-nesirdin.htm).

<sup>28</sup> They achieved spectacular results. For example, the Uighur oil painter Ghazi Emet painted *Evil Brought to Trial*, *Mahmoud Kaxgal* and *Mukma*. The Kazakh oil painter Ahman is represented by *The Artful Sheep*, *A New Road in Paradise* and *Gong Naise Goes on His Travels*. The Uighur oil painter Eni Ufur painted *Uighur Girl*, *Guest* and *Morning*, while another Uighur oil painter called Khalim Nasruddin is famous for his *Meshilajif*, *Hami Meshilajif* and *Berceuse*. *Fresh Milk Presented to the Newlyweds* and *Lake Saylim* are by the Mongolian oil painter Ba Gun. The Eluosi (Russian) oil painter Alexei is known for *Easter*, *Song of Reclaiming the Wasteland* and *Three-part Song of the Peasant-soldier Reclamation Household*. The Uighur traditional Chinese painter Jilail Abulliz painted *The Army and the People Unite* and *Expressing Sympathy and Solicitude*.



FIG. 11. Ghazi Emet: *Dance in Turfan*. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist.)

love towards their surroundings; many aspects of everyday life, work and construction; and great numbers of distinctive contemporary situations. All these portrayals act as a backdrop to modern times. Many of the artists working at a national or even international level have experienced life in Xinjiang at first hand for many years, as shown by their individual and richly evocative subject-matter. An example is the renowned painting of a donkey by the famous artist Huang Zhou.<sup>29</sup>

In 1952 Xinjiang College set up an art department and in 1958, on the foundations of the original art department, the Xinjiang School of Art was established; later, this became the Xinjiang College of Art. In the 1980s Xinjiang Normal University established a department of fine art. These art schools nurtured many artistic talents. At the same time, Chinese schools of fine art supported large numbers of ethnic-minority artists in Xinjiang, several dozen of whom gradually became established, forming the backbone of Xinjiang's fine-art scene. Specialist schools of drawing and painting were also founded, such as the Xinjiang School of Painting, which had a major influence on the development of fine art within the region. Amateur fine art associations continually expanded. New life was also breathed into popular art; Magaty county and other places, with their peasant paintings, attracted the attention of the art world.

Xinjiang published a major series of collections of ethnic-minority folk designs, some painstakingly gathered over several decades and some that had come to light as a result of recent research.<sup>30</sup> An extensive set of illustrated volumes covering numismatic art,

<sup>29</sup> For Huang Zhou paintings, see the website: <http://www.caoxh.com.cn/mjzt/efgh/huang-zhou.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Examples are *A Collection of Kazakh Folk Designs* and *A Compendium of Popular Uighur Patterns and Designs*, both published in 1980 by the Xinjiang People's Press. The National Minority Cooperative





FIG. 12. Abdukirim Nesirdin: *Dolam Mukam*. (Photo: Courtesy of the artist.)

Buddhist art and the art of wall-paintings was compiled, translated and published. Recent research was included in these.<sup>31</sup>

It could be argued that modern times have seen the first steps in new art forms, with perhaps photography making the greatest advances. Xinjiang's wide expanse of territory and its unique characteristics, not to mention the rich diversity of its human scene, have all provided ideal conditions for the development of the art of photography. The photographers of Xinjiang have produced a catalogue of influential works and have published many different collections of their art.

Publishing House brought out *A Collection of Uighur Architectural Designs*, and the Xinjiang Fine Art Photography Publishing Group produced *A Collection of Uighur Folk Designs* as well as a series of books reflecting popular ethnic art.

<sup>31</sup> Examples include the Cultural Society's *Ancient Ethnic Relics in Xinjiang*, the Xinjiang People's Publishing House's *Precious Items from the Classical Art of Gaochang-Turpan* and *Mural Art from the Grottoes of Bosklik at Turpan* and the Xinjiang Fine Art Photography Publishing Group's *A Complete Classified Collection of China's Fine Arts: The Wall-paintings of Xinjiang's Grottoes* (eight volumes), *Classical Art of Xinjiang, China* and *The Coinage of Xinjiang*.

## MUSIC AND DANCE

The large-scale suites of sung, instrumental and dance music known as the Twelve *Mukamas* initiated by the Uighurs, who thus take the title of 'Progenitor of Music', were on the brink of being lost for ever before the founding of the New China, largely because they were an oral tradition. In the 1950s the Xinjiang Regional Government laid particular emphasis on rescuing assorted art forms and organizing their collection and classification. Formal publication of the material took place in 1960. The foundations were laid for the standardization and widespread dissemination of the Twelve *Mukamas*. Scarcely half a century earlier there had been only two or three musicians who could perform the complete Twelve *Mukamas*; now *mukama* troupes and *mukama* research centres were established and widespread *mukama* performances were given.<sup>32</sup>

The origins of Xinjiang's folk songs go back a long way. With the help of practising musicians, Wang Lebing was able to collect, edit and transcribe a great number of these folk songs, turning them into something even more exquisite and making their lyrics more refined so that they quickly spread throughout China and even abroad.

During the period between 1850 and 1990, there was a very close relationship between art and government changes in Xinjiang, together with societal developments. On the one hand, the arts have assimilated many different artistic traditions and techniques while continually recreating traditional art with a local ethnic flavour. On the other hand, the art scene has shown itself to be both innovative and receptive, as countless new art forms from within China and abroad manage to form, take root and develop in Xinjiang.

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<sup>32</sup> See more on Uighur music (<http://www.amc.org.uk/education/articles/uyghurs.htm>).

## Part Two

# UIGHUR VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

(*R. G. Rozi*)

The Islamic ban on idolatry has had a great impact on the art of the Uighurs and other Turkic peoples in Xinjiang, with artistic works and architectural ornament tending to rely on geometric patterns or abstract plants or flowers.<sup>33</sup> However, the preference for bright colours and symmetrical arrangement of objects found in ancient Uighur art works is also noticeable in contemporary works of art and decoration.

Inherited from the Central Asian architectural stereotype in the protohistoric period, the layout of contemporary Uighur architecture can be characterized as compact and centripetal. Its typical features are the central *aywan*, with its arched cloisters, and the other parts of the building grouped centripetally around the *aywan* (Fig. 13). Through different historic periods, this type of layout has persisted in sacred and secular architecture.

Aslanapa points out that 'Uighur architecture resembles Buddhist and Manichaeian religious art in combining Indian and Persian forms.'<sup>34</sup> Many features of the architectural heritage of the proto-historical and medieval periods have persisted until the present day. For example, the characteristic centripetal layout of Uighur secular and sacred buildings is still popular, and murals are widely used in religious and domestic architecture. However, the motifs employed in decoration and mural paintings have become non-figurative because of the above-mentioned Islamic prohibition on idolatry. In government and commercial buildings constructed under the Chinese regime, murals with figurative themes are still displayed.

Apart from its historical influence, Xinjiang's geographic location, its oases and its bordering regions have also been key players in architectural style. Among the Uighurs, for example, diverse architectural forms are found in different parts of Xinjiang: the oases of Kashghar, Khotan, Turfan and Kuldja, in particular, all have their own distinct styles of

<sup>33</sup> Rozi, 1998.

<sup>34</sup> Aslanapa, 1971, p. 42.



FIG. 13. Kashghar. Plans and drawing of a Uighur house. (Adapted from Rozi, 1995, p. 166.)

vernacular architecture. As a historic city on the ancient Silk Route, Kashghar was the centre of the Karakhanid dynasty in the eleventh century. In Kashghar, houses have a central *aywan* (lit. ‘bright place’ in the Uighur language; the courtyard of a traditional Uighur house). Uighur vernacular houses in Kashghar are protected from the harsh dry climate by heavy earthen walls, perforated by small windows. In comparison to the colourfully decorated *aywan* and interior of the house, the external appearance is plain.

Located on the southern edge of the Taklamakan desert, Khotan was a Buddhist centre in the Kushan period (first–fourth century A.D.). Vernacular houses in Khotan are more secluded from the outside than in Kashghar. The *aywan* has a raised ceiling (*aksena*) about 60–120 cm above the roof for ventilation and lighting. The houses are built from earthen walls, woven wooden branches and a timber framework (Fig. 14). Located in the middle of Xinjiang with a rich cultural heritage, Turfan was the capital of the Uighur empire (744–840). Responding to the extreme hot weather in summer, the traditional Uighur houses in Turfan are built half underground and half above ground with a mud and timber framework. Compared to other Uighur houses in Xinjiang, the houses in Turfan are less

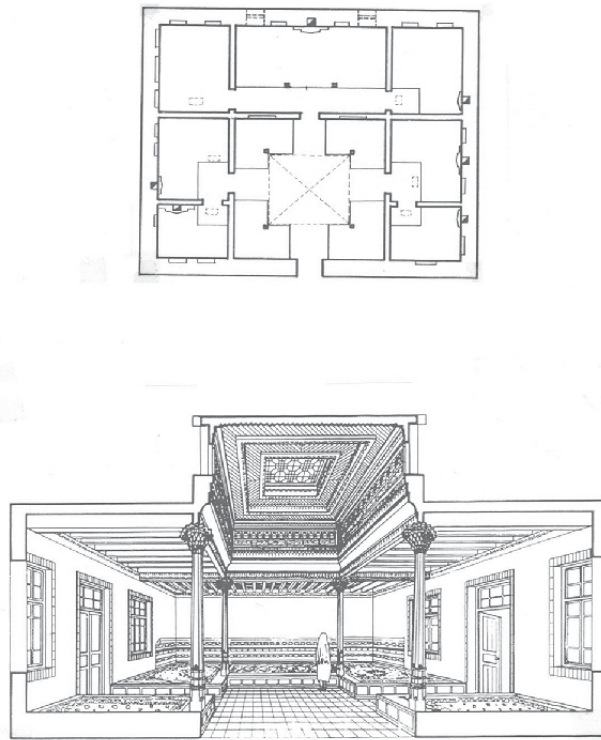


FIG. 14. Khotan. Plan and drawing of a vernacular house. (Adapted from Yan (ed.), 1995.)

colourful in decoration. Kuldja, near Xinjiang's northern border, is adjacent to Kazakhstan. Clearly influenced by Russian architecture, the traditional Uighur houses in Kuldja have an open layout with external yards (Fig. 15).

## The Uighur house

### SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

In the spatial organization of domestic architecture, the differentiated role of men and women in Uighur families is reflected in the spatial partitioning of Uighur houses. The women play the dominant role in family affairs while the men take charge of affairs outside the house. The reception room forms a men's area to entertain guests, especially male guests, while women prepare food for guests in the kitchen. The kitchen and courtyard are the women's domain in which women do the housework and nurture the children in traditional Uighur families.

In the proto-historical period, the most important feature of the house was the reception room, with benches running along the fully painted walls.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in contemporary

<sup>35</sup> Rozi, 1998.



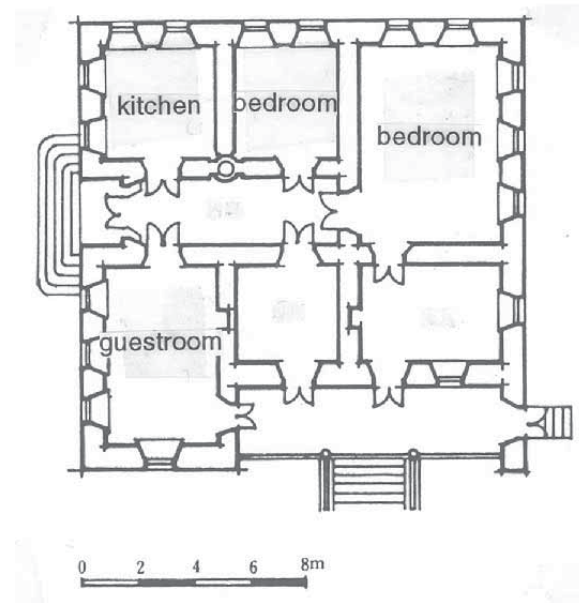


FIG. 15. Kuldja. Plan of a house. (Adapted from Yan (ed.), 1995.)

Uighur vernacular houses, the reception rooms are decorated with wall-hangings, wall-paintings and niches. The benches of proto-historical time become *heykandazs* (the long cushions placed on rugs laid over the adobe platform, or *supa*, for guests to sit on) (Fig. 16). Even in modern Uighur apartments, the reception room is furnished in a similar way, though the benches have become modern sofas (Fig. 17).



FIG. 16. Kashghar. *Heykandaz* in the interior of a Uighur house. (Photo: Courtesy of R. G. Rozi.)



FIG. 17. Kashghar. Reception room of a Uighur house. (Photo: Courtesy of R. G. Rozi.)

## BUILDING MATERIALS

The main walls of Xinjiang domestic buildings are composed of mud, mudbrick, and fired brick with a timber framework. Possessing good insulation properties, these materials protect against the scorching heat in the summer, the freezing wind during the winter, and dusty sandstorms throughout the year. Since earth is readily available and easy to use for construction, almost all traditional Uighur houses are built of pounded earth and mudbrick as the primary building material, often supplemented by a timber framing of post and beam construction. The absence of rain and the dry air make it possible to construct two- to three-storey houses in Xinjiang with structurally sound adobe walls. Soil is also used in the construction of a flat roof, a dominant feature throughout the region, which employs layers of straw-reinforced earth, reed, yellow soil and timber.

With advances in construction technology, walls are now being built in different ways. Half-brick, half-earth walls are used, combining the strength of brick with the insulation properties of earth. Brick-based earthen walls are also used in Xinjiang domestic architecture, in which the basement is made of brick, while the upper part is of earthen material.<sup>36</sup> Fired brick is gradually becoming the main wall-building material. However, due to the

<sup>36</sup> Rozi, 1998.



FIG. 18. Kashghar. Exterior view of Uighur houses. (Photo: Courtesy of R. G. Rozi.)

excellent insulation properties and affordability of earth, mud-brick is still widely used for walls, especially in rural areas.

The foundations of domestic buildings are usually constructed of pebble, gravel and sand-rammed material and brick. The floor is constructed of earth paved with brick. The roofs of vernacular houses in Xinjiang are of rammed earth (mixed and reinforced with wheat-straw) of about 200 mm thick, spread on densely covered timber ribs on a timber frame. The roof is usually flat with a slope of 2–3° down to the outer edges.

With local building materials used for heavy walls, solid foundations, thick roofs and high fences, the traditional Uighur house gives the impression of being a solid castle. The use of local materials on the plain, unadorned exterior is in perfect harmony with the loess oasis landscape of the natural environment (Fig. 18). By contrast, the interior (including the courtyard) is richly decorated and reveals a sophisticated spatial organization.

## ORNAMENT AND DECORATION

The Uighurs use plaster relief, coloured murals, timber carving, brick carving, brick laying, engraved windows, as well as glazed coloured tiles, to decorate their buildings. Plaster relief is mostly used for the interior walls. Lines of white plaster are carved on the light blue, yellow and green base (Fig. 19). Coloured decorative patterns, scenery or flowers are painted on the timber, mainly on the ceilings and on the bottom drawers of the *mihrap*



FIG. 19. Kashghar. Decoration of an interior wall. (Photo: Courtesy of R. G. Rozi.)

(a large niche to store bedding). Brick carving and brick-bond patterns are used to ornament the exterior walls of the courtyard, including staircases (Fig. 20).

The motifs of wall-paintings and wall decorations have changed over time, according to the dominant religion. In contemporary Xinjiang, with the Islamic ban on idolatry, the painting of human and animal figures of the Kushan and post-Kushan periods has changed to motifs such as plants, geometric patterns and calligraphy. Abstracted from the familiar objects of the Uighur surroundings in Xinjiang, the following elements are commonly found: motifs from popular traditional domestic plants, such as fig leaves, grapes and grapevines, almonds, pomegranates, etc; geometric patterns, such as the pentagon, hexagon, circle, triangle, rectangle and a mixture of these; domestic utensils, such as teapots, samovars, vases, flowerpots, musical instruments, traditional hats and knives, etc; and calligraphy, Qur'anic scriptures or Uighur poems and proverbs.

Delicate designs of abstract plant and floral motifs are used on windows, doors and the plaster relief on wall surfaces. Green, blue and white are the favourite colours of the Uighurs, though other colours are used in mosaics and glazed brick. These same patterns and colours are also found on Uighur clothing, carpets, tapestries, hats and other artefacts. Fireplaces and niches not only serve a practical function but are the artistic expression of



FIG. 20. Kashghar. Exterior wall and staircase in a courtyard. (Photo: Courtesy of R. G. Rozi.)

the owner. Fireplaces and the variety of niches in Uighur houses use similar decorative patterns to those found in religious building such as mosques and tombs.

#### WALL SCULPTURE, WALL-PAINTINGS AND 'SOFT' WALL DECORATIONS

Wall sculpture consists of a variety of niches on the interior walls for storing and displaying artistic tableware, vases, samovars, teapots, books, etc. Although the idea of these niches was once thought to be derived from a shrine in a mosque or a church, it is now believed that they come from the proto-historic period when Buddhism was widespread.<sup>37</sup> Wall-paintings, or frescoes, on the interior walls (with their plaster relief carvings) are also used as decoration in the Uighur secular and sacred architecture of Xinjiang. 'Soft' wall decorations include hangings such as rugs, tapestries, cloth dados and curtains. These hangings not only provide a warm, inviting ambience, but also keep the interior warm and display the richness of the regional cultural traditions.<sup>38</sup> The carpets, tapestries and dados also protect people from the dust of the mud and brick walls and the plaster reliefs. The wall hangings

<sup>37</sup> Rozi, 1998.

<sup>38</sup> Wang, Yang and Rozi, 1997.



and other 'soft decorations' found in contemporary Uighur vernacular houses are derived from the wall-paintings that originated in the Kushan period.<sup>39</sup>

### DECORATION OF CEILINGS, EAVES AND FLOORS

The traditional decoration of the ceilings of the rooms and the veranda includes small, densely laid structural timber beams laid in a pattern that is designed to show off their natural colours and the carved cross-beams. Although the decoration of the veranda ceilings is similar to that found on the ceilings of the rooms, the colours are not as bright.<sup>40</sup> The eaves of the houses and their verandas are decorated with layers of carved or sculptured brick and carved timber in an upside-down trapezoid pattern. The windows and doors are made of timber painted with different coloured patterns (Fig. 21). The floors are paved with different materials of varying thickness. Carpeting and brick paving are commonly used for the floor in Uighur houses. The wooden columns and posts of the veranda are decorated with coloured painting. The balustrades and balusters are made of timber carved in a variety of shapes and painted to match the colours of the columns and posts (Fig. 22). Steps and stairs are usually constructed of brick laid in a variety of patterns.

### COLOUR AND TEXTURE IN UIGHUR EXTERIORS AND INTERIORS

In general, plain colours that reflect those of the natural landscape are used for the exterior of domestic architecture, while bright colours are used for the courtyard and for interior decoration. As one moves from the exterior to the interior of the building, the plain colours and textured surfaces are gradually replaced by brighter colours and smoother surfaces. Thus the exterior walls and fences use the colours of the earth and bricks, while the gates of the houses are mostly in the original colour of the timber, or are painted a light tan or orange colour. (Exceptionally, Uighur houses in Kuldja frequently use a light sky-blue for both interior and exterior decorations.) The most popular colours used for interior decoration are blue, red, white, green, orange and black, while for the exterior decoration white, sky-blue and blackish green are the most popular colours used. Basically, the darker the room or space, the brighter the combination of colours used outside.

On the veranda, the eaves of the corridors, the timber columns, balusters, balustrades and ceilings are usually carved and painted in light green and blue and decorated with a variety of patterns. These colours not only harmonize with the soft light of the veranda, but also match the colours of the plants and flowers in the courtyard. The outdoor stairs, steps

<sup>39</sup> Rozi, 1998.

<sup>40</sup> Yan Da-Chun (ed.), 1995, p. 36.



FIG. 21. Kashghar. Door of a Uighur house. (Photo: Courtesy of R. G. Rozi.)

and exterior walls of the houses use plain colours such as those of the reddish brick and the timber, matching the colours of the natural loess oasis environment.

Among the Uighurs of Xinjiang, the popularly used colours blue, green and white have symbolic meanings. According to Yang,<sup>41</sup> blue has a sacred meaning in Turkish culture. The Turks called themselves ‘Kok Turk’; *kok* means blue, but it also means sky and heaven. Blue symbolizes water, heaven and sky in Uighur culture; these are mentioned frequently in Uighur songs, poetry and other literary works. Because of the aridity of the climate and the oasis environment of Xinjiang, water is vital in the life of the Uighurs. Settlements are often situated along canals and rivers or wherever water is available; alternatively, ponds and lakes are at the centre of Uighur settlements. Blue (symbolizing water) is of special significance in Uighur culture. The frequent use of green may be due to the Uighurs’ love of plants,<sup>42</sup> it may be derived from Shi‘ite Islam, which sees green as the colour of peace,<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Yang, 1994, p. 369.

<sup>42</sup> Yang, 1994, p. 370.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.



FIG. 22. Kashghar. Decorated balustrade. (Photo: Courtesy of R. G. Rozi.)

or it may mean ‘life’ in the Xinjiang oasis environment.<sup>44</sup> White symbolizes tranquillity and purity, black represents darkness, death and solemnity, while red symbolizes youth, vigour and property.

The active and passionate character of the Uighurs, who enjoy regular dancing and social gatherings, has been suggested as explaining their use of bright colours, both in architecture and clothing.<sup>45</sup> In the cognition of the Uighur people, *shoh* means ‘bright, active, easygoing’ and is a desirable attribute. According to Li, ‘When Uighurs evaluate works of art, the most important point is whether they are *shoh*.’<sup>46</sup> As Li asserts, the gloomy

<sup>44</sup> Rozi, 1998.

<sup>45</sup> Rozi, 1998.

<sup>46</sup> Li, 1985, p. 339.

indoor space of Uighur houses in arid areas inevitably results in the desire of the inhabitants for bright colours in the interior decoration for a visually pleasant sensation.<sup>47</sup>

## Part Three

# THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF MONGOLIA

(*C. Atwood*)

## Introduction

Despite the Mongols' traditionally nomadic, pastoralist lifestyle, they have nourished a surprisingly rich tradition of fine arts and architecture. Particularly in Mongolia proper ('Outer Mongolia', or the present-day independent state of Mongolia), the one-time monastery town and present-day national capital Ulaanbaatar has been a centre of art and architecture from the eighteenth century continuously to the present. Other monastic centres in Mongolia proper have also been centres of art. In Inner Mongolia, now an autonomous region in China, artistic and architectural traditions flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but did not make the transition to the modern era as successfully. The same can be said of the Buriats and Kalmuks, Mongol peoples living in Russia, where Buddhist temples were built in a peculiar mixture of Tibetan and European neo-classical styles. In all Mongol lands, Buddhist influenced monuments and art works were subject to violent communist inspired iconoclasm, under Stalin in the 1930s and 1940s and under Mao Zedong in the 1960s, from which only the most famous examples have survived.

Mongolia's history of fine arts and architecture can be divided into two basic periods. The first, spanning from roughly the late sixteenth up to the early twentieth century, was the period of the dominance of Buddhism and of Tibet and China as the main outside influences. For most of the twentieth century, Russian influences became dominant while communism and other secular European schools of thought prevailed. Today, this second period may be said to be continuing although with a more international cast and a pluralist ideology.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

The successive predominance of first Buddhist and then communist aesthetics and practice of representation within Mongolian fine arts, and the influence of Tibetan, Chinese and Russian canons on Mongolian monumental architecture, raises the question of whether Mongolia can indeed be said to have a single artistic tradition. In reality, however, there was significant continuity in style, media, social base and artists between Mongolia's early European-style art and the Buddhist iconographic tradition. Although more purely European-style art later gained predominance, neo-traditional revivals have maintained strong continuity with Mongolia's Buddhist and folk-art traditions, a continuity reinforced by strong nationalist and essentialist currents in the current pluralistic cultural atmosphere. Continuity is less visible in monumental architecture, although one finds the use of yurt-shaped forms as an icon of 'Mongolianness' in both Buddhist and communist artistic traditions.

## Fine arts from the 'second conversion' to 1900

The 'second conversion' of Mongolia to Buddhism began in 1576 in southwestern Inner Mongolia, spreading from there north to Khalkha Mongolia, east to central and eastern Inner Mongolia, and north-west to the Oirat Mongols. The spread of Buddhism involved the building of monasteries and assembly halls as well as the importation and domestic fashioning of Buddhas, both painted and sculpted. By the late seventeenth century, domestic schools of manufacture were well established, but in the nineteenth century commercial manufacture by Chinese and even Europeans took over virtually all the lowend market in cheap religious goods, as well as the construction of temples.

The earliest examples of Buddhist fine arts in Mongolia are the wall paintings at the Maidari Juu temple in south-western Inner Mongolia and in Erdeni Zuu in central Mongolia. Both appear to date from the late sixteenth or seventeenth century and show a number of similarities in composition, symbolism, and dress of the figures. Those of Erdeni Zuu have survived, however, only in copies.<sup>48</sup> The surviving wall-paintings of the Xiongbaodian hall in Maidari Juu picture the paintings against the Chinese-influenced naturalistic grassy, hilly background that had replaced the shrine-setting in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist art during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Pictures commissioned by Chinese officials of Mongolian princes such as Altan Khan (1508–82) presenting tribute<sup>49</sup> had undoubtedly already familiarized Mongol artists with the portrayal of the human figure and landscape. (See Volume V, Chapter 18, Part Three.)

<sup>48</sup> Tsultem, 1986b, Pls. 150–1; Charleux, 1999.

<sup>49</sup> Tsultem, 1986b, Preface.



Mongol assimilation of Tibetan Buddhist art traditions was assisted by the importation of Tibetan Buddhist art and the translation of iconographic manuals. A number of famous Tibetan Buddhas were presented to the Mongols during the process of conversion such as a Juu (from Tibetan *Jo-bo*) Shakyamuni Buddha held to have been made by the gods during the Buddha's own life and housed in Höhhot's Yekhe Juu temple.<sup>50</sup> Mongolian sources also mention Nepalese artisans sculpting Buddhas, ornaments and reliquaries for Mongol patrons.<sup>51</sup> Nepalese artists had been patronized by the Mongol khans as early as the thirteenth century. The movement of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist art into Mongolia was hastened both by the education of well-born Mongolian lamas in Tibet and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the identification of Mongolian incarnate lamas among children in Tibet. Both returning Mongolian lamas and Tibetan boys being escorted to take up their position as incarnate lamas carried with them vast amounts of religious articles, art works and sometimes entourages of artisans.

In Tibetan Buddhist iconography, the proportions and attributes of Buddha figures are determined by a system of relative proportions called 'fingers' (the width of a finger) and 'spans' (the distance from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the middle finger fully extended). Each span contains 12 fingers. The various figures are divided into classes, such as Buddha, peaceful Bodhisattva, female deity, tall wrathful deity, short wrathful deity and humans.<sup>52</sup> The details were found in Indian treatises augmented by the visions of Tibetan yogins. Eventually descriptions of iconographic prescriptions for large numbers of Buddhas were collected by scholars such as Ishi-Baljur (1704–88), the ethnic Mongol abbot of Sumpa temple in Kökenuur (Qinghai), and the '500 Buddhas' blockprint printed in Khüriye (Urga in Russian, today Ulaanbaatar) in 1811.<sup>53</sup> While those iconographic treatises contained in the *bsTan-'gyur*, or collection of canonical Indian treatises, were translated in the eighteenth century into Mongolian, Tibetan remained the universal language of Buddhist artists regardless of ethnicity. Indeed, books remained far less important in the transmission of these techniques than the ties between master and pupil.

Mongolian fine arts achieved an early peak of brilliance in the sculptures of the First Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu (*Qutughtu*) Lubsang-Dambi-Jaltsan-Balsangbu (1635–1723), commonly known by his name as a novice, Zanabazar. The chief religious figure of the Khalkha Mongols from age 14 to 16, he received instruction and initiations in Tibet from the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. On his return, he began casting reliquaries

<sup>50</sup> Elverskog, 2003, pp.187–8; Altan'orgil, 1981, pp. 89–97.

<sup>51</sup> Elverskog, 2003, pp. 174, 187, 193.

<sup>52</sup> Jackson and Jackson, 1984, pp. 45–67.

<sup>53</sup> Tsultem, 1986b, Preface.

and designing temples, and in 1655 he cast his first mature Buddha, no longer extant. A number of Buddhas from his hand survive today, with others being attributed to his school.

His greatest masterpieces include the Vajradhara cast in 1683, the set of five Dhyani Buddhas cast around the same time, the Sitasamvara and consort also of that time, and his White and Green Taras (the latter was traditionally completed in 1706). Zanabazar's religious images share with previous Mongolian Buddhist art a strong Nepalese influence visible in the delicate detail of the ornamentation, while Chinese influence can be seen in the soft modelling of the robes. Zanabazar's sculptures are all of cast bronze with gold gilding in which the matt finish of the skin contrasts with the burnished finish of the robes and jewellery. While Zanabazar used colouring for the hair and a few other details, he rarely if ever used the inlaid jewels common in other Tibetanstyle Buddhist sculpture. Adhering closely to the iconometric conventions, Zanabazar's masterpieces show a strikingly lifelike gracefulness and beauty of face. Legends connect his White and Green Tara images to the maturing beauty of his consort, the 'Girl Prince' (Kheükhen Khutukhtu). The artist's anvil has been preserved as a relic, although the only pieces in the hammered repoussé technique that could possibly be from his hand are the flame aureoles traditionally placed behind some of his sculptures. After Zanabazar's death, his school in Khüriye continued to produce masterworks of Buddhist sculpture during the eighteenth century, but this school was replaced by artists trained in differing schools in the nineteenth century.<sup>54</sup>

In Inner Mongolia, the town of Dolonnuur (modern Duolun) was the main centre for producing religious artefacts. A distinctive school of highquality Dolonnuur sculpture flourished from 1700 to the early twentieth century, alongside a vast number of crude, mass-produced items. Masterpieces of this school, such as the series of three Buddhist deities, Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani, share much of the harmonious proportions and lifelike dynamism of Zanabazar's works, but otherwise are quite different in method and overall effect. Major Dolonnuur statues were made in parts of beaten brass plates soldered together and gilt with burnished gold. Opulent inlays of lapis lazuli, turquoise and coral along with lacquer and enamel pigments appealed to patrons. Billowing scarves, flat earrings and five-leaf crowns are also characteristic of the Dolonnuur style. By the nineteenth century, the Dolonnuur school dominated the production of high-quality Buddhist sculpture and members of this school may have also relocated to Khüriye to work.<sup>55</sup>

The other major media of Tibetan-style Buddhist fine art are the *thangka* or iconographic painting and the temple banner or iconographic appliqué. *Thangkas* were painted

<sup>54</sup> Berger, 1995; Tsultem, 1982; Choinkhor, 1995.

<sup>55</sup> Bartholomew, 1995, pp. 81–2; Stoddard, 1995, pp. 219–20, 243–5; Rhie and Thurman, 1991, pp. 68–9, 144–5.

on silk or cotton stretched on a wooden frame. The cloth was primed with a mixture of liquor, glue and chalk and smoothed with stones. The pigments were made of ground minerals or lac in a size of animal fat. Basic colours were called 'father colours' while white was the 'mother colour'; their mixing produced 'son colours'. Demons and evil figures were depicted in ash-grey 'servant colours'. Half-tones were rarely used. Designs were first produced on paper and then transferred to the cloth by piercing the drawn figures with a needle and applying dye along the pricked outline. Temple banners were produced by sewing appliqués of silk and brocade along patterns drawn by master artists. Pearls and other jewels were frequently also sewn into these temple banners.<sup>56</sup>

Although some *thangkas*, including a self-portrait and a portrait of his mother Khandu-Jamtsu, are attributed to Zanabazar, these traditional attributions are not certain. Few Mongolian *thangkas* can be reliably dated before the mid-nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, Khüriye was the great centre of *thangka* and temple-banner production in Mongolia, and one of the major centres of this medium in the whole Tibetan Buddhist world. Masterpieces by nineteenth-century artists include Agwangsharab's mid-nineteenth century portraits of the First and Fifth Jebtsundamba Khutukhtus, Gendündamba's images of the deity Jamsrang (or Beg-tshe), Chojjantsan's painting of the deity Mahakala (late nineteenth century) and Jügder's painting of Ushnishvijaya (turn of the twentieth century). It should be noted, however, that the Khüriye artists worked within a highly traditional school. Attributions of *thangkas* commonly differ from source to source and must be regarded as subject to further study and revision. Similarly temple banners, produced by seamstresses in the service of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu's great establishment under the guidance of master artists, are hard to attribute to particular individuals (Fig. 23).<sup>57</sup>

An interesting feature of Mongolian Buddhist fine art was the importance of individual portraiture. In particular, the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtus were portrayed as distinct, recognizable individuals despite the overall iconographic conventionality of their art. Whether in *thangka* paintings, sculpture, temple banners or popular prints, Zanabazar's round balding head, characteristically inclined with a kindly expression, is very distinctive (Fig. 24). Portraits of the Seventh Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu (1850–68) are easily recognizable by his swarthy skin and strong, square-set jaw, typical of his Tibetan ancestry. Recognizable portraits of other high Mongolian lamas such as the Jangjiya Khutukhtus in Beijing are also known.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Tsultem, 1986b, Preface; Jackson and Jackson, 1984.

<sup>57</sup> Tsultem, 1986b, Preface, Pls. 3–86; Dariimaa, 2003, pp. 10–123.

<sup>58</sup> Tsultem, 1986b, Pls. 88–92, 105–16; Rhie and Thurman, 1991, p. 276.



FIG. 23. Temple banner of the fierce Buddhist protectress deity Baldan Lhamo. (Sanskrit, Shri Devi; Mongolian Okhin Tenggeri). Appliqué with inlaid semi-precious stones (necklaces), mother of pearl (skull diadem), and peacock feathers (floating crown). Artist and date unclear. (Source: Tsultem, 1986b, Pl. 79.)

## Buddhist architecture to 1900

As nomads, the Mongol tradition of domestic architecture was limited to the yurt (Mongolian, *ger*). Contrary to popular impressions of the unchanging yurt, yurts in fact underwent fairly significant changes, with today's collapsible lattice-work yurt first appearing in the sixth century and replacing non-collapsible forms on carts only in the fifteenth century.<sup>59</sup> During times of imperial expansion, the Mongols successively adopted a number of monumental architectural styles. At the time of the second conversion, the Tümed Mongols of southwestern Inner Mongolia were already employing Chinese architects and builders in creating palaces and pavilions. As a result, it is not surprising that Chinese architectural forms initially dominated Mongolian religious architecture. Later, however, Tibetan forms challenged the dominance of Chinese architecture. Hybrid forms, particularly with Tibetan walls surmounted by a Chinese roof, were also common. Among the

<sup>59</sup> Andrews, 1999.





FIG. 24. Zhanabazar (the First Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu), by Agwangsharab. Mineral paints on cotton. Mid-nineteenth century. (Source: Tsultem, 1986b, Pl. 105.)

Kalmuks and Buriat Mongols of the Russian empire, Buddhist temples were almost all influenced to varying degrees by European architectural forms, ranging from the neo-classical colonnade to the onion dome of Russian Orthodox churches, while still maintaining Chinese and/or Tibetan motifs.<sup>60</sup>

Fine examples of Chinese-style architecture among the Mongols of Inner Mongolia include the Maidari Juu temple (built in 1606) near Baotou in south western Inner Mongolia, and the Yekhe Juu (Chinese, Dazhao) temple in Höhhot, first built in 1579 and rebuilt in 1640. The vast Badgar Sume (Chinese, Wudangzhao) monastery (begun in 1749) north of Baotou is a Tibetan style temple complex in Inner Mongolia. Shireetü Juu in Höhhot (first built in 1585, rebuilt in 1697) combines Chinese and Tibetan architectural elements in an appealing mix. A very distinctive monument is the Five Pagoda temple (Chinese, Wutasi) of Höhhot, dating from 1727. Built with the load-bearing, slightly inward-slanting walls of Tibetan architecture, the roof is surmounted by a Chinese-style pavilion and five unusually shaped stupas (reliquaries). The temple's walls are faced with stone on which are carved Buddhas and mantras, and a unique astronomical chart with Mongolian captions. This 'five pagoda temple' style originated in China's Ming dynasty (1368–1644), as an imitation of

<sup>60</sup> Borisenko, 1994; Minert, 1983.



the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya, India.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, few Inner Mongolian temples outside the Höhhot-Baotou area survived the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

In Mongolia proper, only Erdeni Zuu and Gandan-Tegchinling, the second of the two great temple complexes of Khüriye, survived the destruction of Buddhism in the 1930s. Vast Tibetan-style complexes such as Manzushiri-yin Kheid (outside Khüriye), Zaya-yin Kheid (Tsetserlig) and Baraibung Kheid (Khentii) were razed virtually to the ground. In general, in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Khalkha the northern, more mountainous areas preferred Tibetan-style architecture, albeit often with Chinese roofs, while in the Gobi desert areas Chinese-style temples were more common.

Yurt-style log cabins among the Buriat Mongols of Siberia are known from their early contact with the Russians in the seventeenth century. A striking part of temple architecture in Mongolia proper, especially Khüriye, was the use of cylindrical buildings with conical roofs, inspired by the yurt form, and square marquee-type forms, inspired by tents (*maikhans*) used by Mongols at countryside entertainments. Both were constructed in wood and appear to have been designed for relatively easily mobility like the yurt and *maikhan* tents themselves. Indeed, the great temples of Khüriye remained mobile for over a century and a half, being moved to a new location every few years. The earliest known monumental yurt-style wooden temple was the shrine of Abtai Khan (1554–88), placed in Khüriye. Since the city of Khüriye did not settle at its present site until 1779, this wooden yurt must have been regularly dismantled and set up before that time. Yurt- and marquee-style tents were also used to surmount Tibetan-style temples as at the Gombo-Gurgi temple at Erdeni Zuu. These and all other yurt-style temples were destroyed in the 1930s and 1940s.

The most famous marquee-style building was the *tsogchin dugang*, or great assembly hall, of Khüriye's central temple, the Nom-un Yekhe Khüriye (officially titled Rebu-Gejai-Gandan-Shaddubling). This hall was square in shape, measured 42 × 42 m and could accommodate up to 2,000 lamas. The three-tiered wooden roof was erected on 108 poles (108 was a sacred number in Buddhism). The design of this temple was attributed to Zanabazar, although like Abtai Khan's yurt-temple it must have been regularly dismantled and set up until Khüriye was fixed at its present location in 1779. Mongolian hagiographies assigned great symbolic meaning to each of the features of this *tsogchin dugang*. Other smaller assembly halls in Khüriye imitated the form of the great *tsogchin dugang*.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Altan'orgil, 1981; Nei Menggu Bowuguan, 1987; Sélhéjab and Oyunbilig, 1991; Gaubatz, 1996, pp. 201–2.

<sup>62</sup> Shchepetil'nikov, 1960; Tsultem, 1988; Ölzii, 1992; Dashnyam et al., 1999, pp. 295–79.

## Architecture and the fine arts in the early twentieth century

In 1911 the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu (1870–1924) led Outer Mongolia to independence with the assistance of the Russian empire. Although Mongolia was forced eventually to accept only autonomy from China, not genuine independence, and make numerous economic concessions to Russia, this declaration began Mongolia's opening to the world and the country's halting efforts to develop modern institutions. Although Mongolia was reoccupied by Chinese troops in 1919 and by White (anti-communist) Russians in 1921, officials of the old autonomous government and young intellectuals formed a political party that appealed to Soviet Russia. In July 1921, with Soviet assistance, they established a revolutionary nationalist government, with the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu as the nominal head of state.

### ARCHITECTURE

From 1911 to 1921 Mongolia was a theocracy in which the clergy established under the incarnate lama emperor, the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, expanded rapidly in wealth and prestige. Expanded patronage funded some of the great monuments of Mongolian architecture, while modern artistic trends and the paradoxically worldly atmosphere led to new experimentation.

The most outstanding monument of the theocratic period was the great temple of Migjid Janraisig (Eye-Opening Avalokiteshvara), which housed a 14-m high gilt copper image of the deity. The temple, which still occupies a prominent place on the Ulaanbaatar skyline, consists of a three-storey Tibetan-style hall surmounted by a further two-storey Chinese hall (Fig. 25). In contrast to many of these hybrid Tibeto-Chinese-style buildings, the proportions are strikingly harmonious. Built between 1911 and 1913 and funded by alms collected from the populace, the temple was erected to cure the Khutukhtu's blindness.<sup>63</sup>

Other architectural monuments of the turn of the twentieth century include the palaces of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu along the Tuul river, just south of the capital Khüriye, and the Choijung Lama temple. The latter was built between 1899 and 1901 to house the younger brother of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu as the official state oracle. The only extant palace today is the Sharabpeljailing, popularly known as the Green (or Winter) Palace, built from 1893 to 1906 (Figs. 26 and 27). A striking feature of this palace complex is a two-storey Russian-style building added in 1905. Between 1912 and 1919 a magnificent

<sup>63</sup> Ölzii, 1992, pp. 123–33.



FIG. 25. Temple of Migjid Janraisig (on the left) and the *tsogchin dugang* (great assembly hall) of Gandan-Tegchinling monastery (on the right). This *tsogchin dugang* is built in the marquee style pioneered by the no longer extant *tsogchin dugang* of Zanabazar. (Photo: Courtesy of Katherine Petrie.)

ceremonial gate in the Chinese style was built in front of the temple – the 280,000 *taels* of silver for its construction were again collected as alms from all over the country. The massive multiple roofs, supported by 108 brackets (no nails were used in the construction), appear to float over the slender supporting poles. All of these buildings were constructed by Chinese contractors, using both Mongolian and Chinese craftsmen. The Buddhist images inside were the work solely of Mongolian monastic craftsmen.<sup>64</sup>

Another, albeit minor, element in Mongolian architecture was the introduction of Russian vernacular architecture. From 1860 onwards, occasional Siberian log cabins, with their distinctive decorative shutters and trimmings on the windows, dotted the city. An elaborate two-storey version of Russian vernacular architecture was introduced in the famous ‘Red House’ built by the Russian mining executive Victor von Grot (b. 1863) near the Jebtsundamba’s Brown Palace (Fig. 28).

## FINE ARTS

In the fine arts, the theocratic era saw the birth of secular genre paintings, experiments with ink drawings and the growing influence of photography. These developments are associated especially with the famous painter Busybody (*marzan*) Sharab (1869–1939), although other artists were also pursuing them. Trained in iconography in the countryside, Sharab moved to Khüriye in 1891 and eventually became the official portrait painter for the court of the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Ölzii, 1992, pp. 5–46, 107–19.

<sup>65</sup> Lomakina, 1974; Sonomtseren and Batchuluun, 1989, pp. 46–56.



FIG. 26. Ulaanbaatar. The ceremonial gate complex Andingmen, outside the Green (or Winter) Palace of the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, completed in 1919. (Source: Tsultem, 1988, Pl. 70.)

The development of genre paintings, exemplified by Sharab's famous works, *Airag* [fermented mare's milk] *Feast* (also called *A Day in the Life of Mongolia*) and *Autumn* (Fig. 29), appears to have been inspired by the Buddhist genre of the wheel of samsara painting. In wheel of samsara paintings, the painter portrays the six possible births for living beings (as a Hindu god, demi-god, human, animal, hungry ghost or hell being) as the result of



FIG. 27. Ulaanbaatar. Andingmen (detail): front of the main gate in the ceremonial gate complex, completed in 1919. (Source: Tsultem, 1988, Pl. 71.)



FIG. 28. ‘The Summer Residence’ or Khaistai Labrang Palace of the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu. Painted by an anonymous painter of the Khüriye/Urga school. The large ‘Red House’ was built by the Russian mining executive Viktor von Grot. Mineral paints on cotton. Early twentieth century. (Source: Tsultem, 1986b, Pl. 170.)

ignorance, anger and lust (allegorically represented by a pig, a snake and a rooster). As can be seen in Buriat examples from the turn of the twentieth century, the section on the human birth began to be used for portraits of the details of human life, whether evil (hunting, slaughtering animals, farming), good (lamas holding religious ceremonies) or neutral (wrestling, shearing sheep, setting up yurts). Evidently, Sharab and others in Khüriye were inspired by depictions of the human birth to begin to paint these genre scenes separately.<sup>66</sup>

Sacred-place portraits was another Buddhist genre that eventually fed secularizing artistic trends at this time. Notable portraits of sacred places included the nineteenth-century portraits of Khüriye and Bereewen monasteries, and especially the portrait of the Tibetan capital of Lhasa sometimes attributed to Sharab and the painting of the Maitreya procession attributed to Dorji (1870–1937). After independence in 1911, this genre took a secular direction in Jügder’s 1912 portrait of Khüriye (Fig. 30), which was conceived not primarily as showing a religious site but as displaying accurately the new and rapidly changing capital of an independent country. Other painters in the Khüriye school during the theocratic period mixed pictures of the new palaces and European-style buildings of Khüriye with the animal and human figures of the genre painting style.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Pupyshv, 1995, Pls. 74–7; Tsultem, 1986b, Preface, Pls. 161–9.

<sup>67</sup> Berger, 1995, pp. 172–9; Tsultem, 1986b, Preface, Pls. 153–7, 170–3.





FIG. 29. *Autumn* by B. Sharab. The painting depicts the typical activities in autumn. Mineral paints on cotton. Early twentieth century. (Source: Tsultem, 1986b, Pl. 166.)



FIG. 30. Ulaanbaatar. Mongolia's capital Khüriye (Urga, modern Ulaanbaatar) in 1913. Painted by Jügder. Mineral paints on cotton. Now kept in the Bogd-khaan Palace-Museum. (Source: Tsultem, 1986b, p. 156.)

In this period, the use of Chinese ink paintings and photography influenced iconographic art. The famous Inner Mongolian poet and novelist Injannashi (1837–92) painted sketches of the courtyard where he was born and birds and flowers in a thoroughly Chinese

style.<sup>68</sup> In turn-of-the-century Khüriye, Damba was inspired by Chinese landscape drawings in his portrait of Zaya-yin Gegeen's monastery painted in mineral paints with mostly monochromatic hues. Tsagan Jamba ('White Jamba') used coloured drawings to picture livestock and game animals, as well as portraits of the female deity Gūnjin Lhamo and the epic hero Dugar Zaisang. Sharab mastered pencil and *tush* (thick Russian ink) as well as the traditional mineral paints. In his most famous portraits, he inked in the flesh tones of his patrons (such as the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, his consort Dondugdulma and other high clerical figures) but painted the clothing and background in mineral paints. His settings were mixes of traditional Buddhist iconographic conventions and more realistic depictions of the figures, throne and room. He frequently drew faces from photographs.<sup>69</sup>

## Fine arts, 1921–90

The 1921 revolution brought to power a revolutionary junta supported by the Soviet Union. The new government was initially very cautious about making radical cultural changes, a reluctance accentuated by the embryonic state of the country's modern intellectual class. For many years, the new government had neither the will nor the finances to sponsor large-scale experiments in secular arts.

Even so, the revolution made a striking difference to the work of painters like Busybody Sharab. Sharab gave up painting both his genre scenes and his iconographic portraits and instead took up printing political cartoons and portraits (drawn from photographs) of world revolutionary figures such as Lenin and Karl Liebknecht and Mongolia's leader General Sükhbaatar. Little if anything of the occasional and journalistic art of the next two decades has great artistic significance. Famous Buddhist artists such as Gendündamba and Nawangdendüb continued to work and train pupils into the 1930s, although their work has not survived. The massive purges of 1937–40 and the concurrent destruction of the Buddhist monasteries and laicization of the lamas killed off the older generation of artists.

In 1942 Mongolia's now thoroughly communist-style government organized the Union of Mongolian Artists with the mission of funding and nurturing artistic talent in all branches, while simultaneously enforcing socialist-realist canons of art on the Soviet model. The artists recruited had varying backgrounds, although most had spent time working as illustrators or commercial artists for publishing houses or newspapers. Work on cinema and theatre sets was also important for this early European-style art in Mongolia. ürjingiin Yadamsüren (1905–87), for example, went from carving block-prints of Buddhist

<sup>68</sup> See the plates in Erdenitoūtaqu, 1958/1981; Liu Wenyan and Lai Bingwen, 1988.

<sup>69</sup> Tsultem, 1986b, Pls. 158–60, 174–8 (note: Pls. 176–8 are actually copies, not originals).



FIG. 31. *Breaking in a Horse* (1963) painted by O. Tsewegjaw. Oil on canvas. 200 × 150 cm. (Source: Sonomtseren, 1971, Pl. 3.)

scriptures in 1918 to Moscow's Communist University of the Toilers of the East in 1930 and the Surikov Fine Art Institute in 1939. Luwsangiin Gawaa (b. 1920) trained from 1933 with a Soviet artist K. I. Pomerantsev (and later with Sharab) as an apprentice illustrator at the State Publishing House.

Soviet influence, while dominant, was not the only conduit for modern artistic influences, however. Ochiryn Tsewegjaw (1915–75) was born in Buriatia in Siberia, fled the Russian revolution with his family, and entered high school in Ulaanbaatar (Fig. 31). There an Inner Mongolian artist Soyoltai, who had trained at the Beijing Art Institute before migrating to Mongolia, introduced him to the French Impressionists (Soyoltai himself perished in the Great Purges).<sup>70</sup> Dulamjawyn Damdinsüren (1909–84), who became a lama in 1920, had experience as an iconographic artist before being laicized in 1937. He studied with Sharab in that same year and worked at the printing house until 1947, when he began working full time as an artist.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Sonomtseren and Batchuluun, 1989, pp. 80–104.

<sup>71</sup> Dariimaa, 2003, p. 10.

At first the new Union of Mongolian Artists treated European-style oil and canvas as the sole superior medium for painting. Until the mid-1950s, scenes from revolutionary and military history and portraits of political leaders were virtually the only permissible topics for Mongolian artists. The ideological thaw created by the de-Stalinization movement in the Soviet bloc after 1956 had a direct influence on Mongolian art. Portraits of living leaders and the idolization of the deceased Marshal Choibalsan (Mongolia's 'Stalin' from 1936 to 1952) disappeared and the range of acceptable themes expanded vastly. Although Mongolian urbanization accelerated in the 1950s and 1960s, the country's artists preferred to focus on the countryside and traditional themes, a trend that has continued to the present. Depictions of horses, camels and the herding life were particularly popular. Yet scenes of rural life often stressed modernization, portraying a train in the distance or a motorcycle parked by a yurt.

Political pressures did not disappear, however, and the artists' clear preference for traditional and rural themes was frustrating for the national leadership. In March 1959 the ruling Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) charged that Mongolian artists had 'hardly studied Marxism-Leninism at all or the works of the world's classic authors, and not worked intensively to master socialist realism'. Despite this criticism, de-Stalinization continued in the Soviet Union until 1963, and the Mongolian Government had to follow the liberalizing trend. In the mid-1960s, however, the political and cultural space opened by de-Stalinization began to close. In January 1969 the MPRP again issued a decree criticizing abstract art and calling for the Committee of the Union of Mongolian Artists to stick to socialist realism.<sup>72</sup> This time, the cultural climate in the Soviet Union was likewise becoming increasingly dogmatic and the decree greatly inhibited Mongolian artistic development. Trends towards abstract art and 'unedifying' subjects were driven underground, ending the period of unusual artistic creativity that had begun in the mid-1950s.

Although painting remained the dominant branch of the fine arts, other media that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s included drawing, printing and sculpture. Drawing in pencil had been a phase of production in Mongolian *thangka* painting, and it was through pencil drawings that Mongolian artists assimilated European canons of composition and draughtsmanship. Likewise printing, including lithographs and linocuts, had been the main medium for the illustrations and propaganda art that formed the bulk of artists' work before the 1940s. Two of the most familiar and widely reproduced works of Mongolian art are the linocuts *Good Morning, Mommy!* (1963) by D. Amgalan (b. 1933) (Fig. 32) and *A Herd of Horses* (1962) by S. Natsagdorj (b. 1928). Modern sculpture in Mongolia began with Sonomyn Choimbol's monumental sculpture of the revolutionary leader General Sükhbaatar

<sup>72</sup> Sonomtseren and Batchuluun, 1989, pp. 149, 151.





FIG. 32. *Good Morning, Mommy!* (1963) painted by D. Amgalan. From the collection 'Morning in Our Motherland'. Linocut. 45 × 75 cm. (Source: Sonomtseren, 1971, Pl. 33.)

on horseback, erected in the capital city Ulaanbaatar's main square (unveiled in 1946). More so than any other medium, however, sculpture remained limited to either sentimental portrayals of folk life or monumental depictions of historical and political leaders.

The neo-traditional movement in Mongolian art was clearly expressed in the creation of the *Mongol zurag* (Mongolian painting) style. In this style, the traditional medium of *thangka* painting (mineral paints on cotton) is used for non-religious topics. D. Manibadar was an early pioneer in this style with his painting *Old Warrior* (1942), portraying a bearded warrior in armour on a throne. This 'feudal' style and theme was only tolerated during the years of patriotic fervour during the Second World War. No further examples of the *Mongol zurag* style won public acclaim until 1958, when Ü. Yadamsüren unveiled *Old Fiddler*, portraying a bearded fiddler playing the Mongolian 'horse-head fiddle', the traditional instrument *par excellence* in Mongolian folk music. In the following decades, *Mongol zurag* artists created a number of classic paintings that became iconic images of Mongolian tradition such as *Naadam* [Games] (1966) by D. Damdinsüren, *Migration* (1967) by Ts. Minjuur (b. 1910), *Chess Players* (1968) by B. Awarzad (b. 1907), *Black Camel* (1968) and *Camels* (1971) by A. Sengetsokhio (b. 1917) (Fig. 33), *Mongolian Woman* (1968) by Ts. Jamsran (b. 1924) and *The Call* (1975) by N. Tsültem (b. 1923) (Fig. 34). Although oil painting continued as a widely used medium, the officially approved impressionism-influenced socialist-realist style was overshadowed in the 1960s and 1970s by the new *Mongol zurag* school.

In the *Mongol zurag* school, paintings of historical topics from the 1921 revolution were also popular; the use of this neo-traditional style to represent revolutionary topics graphically expressed the assimilation of the events of 1921 into Mongolian tradition as part of the





FIG. 33. *Camels* (1971) painted by A. Sengetsokhio. Mineral paints on cotton. (Source: Tsultem, 1986b, Pl. 186.)

legacy of the elders. The *Mongol zurag* painters also paid homage to the pre-purge generation of Mongolian artists in, for example, Sengetsokhio's *Portrait of the Painter Busybody Sharab* (1963). Tsultem's *The Call* was a much more elaborate 'remake' of Sharab's own lithograph of a soldier calling revolutionaries to war by blowing on a conch shell used as the masthead to the party periodical *The Call* in November 1921. (The conch shell was used in Buddhist services to summon lamas to the services.)

The *Mongol zurag* school was by no means monolithic. Some artists, like D. Damdinsüren, remained rooted in the old Buddhist painting traditions, while others adopted European methods of perspective, shading and realistic portraiture. Kh. Tserendorj (b. 1910), for example, in his *Wedding Ceremony* (1967), made extensive use of shading (although without a single consistent source of light) to render the landscape and abandoned the traditional conventions of *thangka* painting in rendering the waves on water, clouds and grassy slopes. His *Migration for the Servants* (1968), however, shows a topic unusual in the *Mongol zurag* repertoire (criticism of class inequalities in the old society), with geometric perspective (unknown in traditional Buddhist painting) and an abundant use of half-tones,



FIG. 34. *The Call* (1975) painted by N. Tsültem. Mineral paints on cotton. (Source: Tsültem, 1986b, Pl. 189.)

yet with an elaborate cloudscape taken directly from *thangka* conventions. In general, however, while *Mongol zurag* painters made more use of half-tones than did traditional *thangka* painters, they generally emulated the *thangka* painting practice of using outlines filled with swaths of colour.

Paintings of rural scenes like Ts. Dawaakhüü's *Festivities at a Cooperative* (1979) (Fig. 35) and Minjuur's *Migration* were typically composed without geometric perspective in an episodic panel-style composition very similar to Sharab's *A Day in the Life of Mongolia*. On the other hand, indoor scenes, such as *The New Masters Have Come* (1963) by B. Gombosüren (b. 1930) (Fig. 36), showing the arrival of the 1921 revolutionaries at the palace of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu, and *An Audience with Lenin* (1967) by Sengetsokhio, depicting Sükhbaatar's meeting with Lenin in Moscow, use perspective to centre the heroic figure of Sükhbaatar with his followers faced with either the darkened authority of the Khutukhtu or the welcoming figure of Lenin. In line with his aim to document traditional rituals in their architectural setting in pre-revolutionary Khüriye,



FIG. 35. *Festivities at a Cooperative* (1979) painted by Ts. Dawaakhüü. Mineral paints on cotton. (Source: Tsultem, 1986b, Pl. 191.)



FIG. 36. *The New Masters Have Come* (1963) painted by B. Gombosüren. Mineral paints on cotton. The painting depicts Sükhbaatar (centre) and his revolutionaries (on the left) receiving the seal of government from the Jebsundamba Khutukhtu (enthroned on right) and his entourage. (Source: Tsultem, 1986b, Pl. 190.)

Damdinsüren's portrayals of the *Naadam* games and the *Tsam* dances were drawn from an aerial perspective, as if from a photograph taken from an aeroplane (Fig. 37).<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Tsultem, 1986b, Preface, Pls. 181–92; Sonomtseren, 1971.





FIG.37. *Tsam in Khüriye* (1966) painted by D. Damdinsüren. Mineral paints on cotton. The Tsam was an exorcistic dance performed in honour of the fierce Buddhist deity Yamataka. The painting is looking north towards the centre of Mongolia's capital Khüriye (modern Ulaanbaatar) and represents the city's look around 1920. In the middle of the immediate foreground is the city's ceremonial gate. The walled compound behind the dancers is the 'Yellow Palace' of the Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu. The low white building to the north-west of the Yellow Palace is the marquee-style *tsogchin dugang*, or Great Assembly Hall designed by Zanabazar. (Source: Sonomtseren, 1971.)

Despite the roots of *Mongol zurag* in Buddhist painting, religion itself had only an ambivalent presence in *Mongol zurag* painting, due to the continuing ideological pressure of the communist government, and perhaps to a reluctance on the part of traditionally trained artists to mix secular and religious styles. Compositions that explicitly adopted iconographic methods of portraiture, even for secular topics such as D. Urtnasan's *Wise Queen Mandukhai* (1982) or D. Damdinsüren's *Mother's Glory*, were rare. In private, however, painters such as Damdinsüren, who had never given up his Buddhist faith despite forced laicization, continued to paint Buddhist icons.

## Architecture, 1921–90

Mongolian architecture, like the fine arts, did not emerge from the period of revolutionary destruction until the 1940s. As in the Buddhist period, monumental architecture in Mongolia continued to be more strongly influenced than the fine arts not just by foreign models but by the presence of foreign architects and construction workers. Until the mid-1960s, foreign labour played a major role in Mongolia's building industry.

Despite the 1921 revolution, little visible change occurred at first in the cityscape of Khūriye, renamed Ulaanbaatar ('Red Hero') in 1924. The first distinctive new building was the Green Dome theatre (built in 1927), designed by a Hungarian architect, Joseph Gelet, with a round green roof in a form inspired by the yurt. The few buildings built before 1945, such as the State Printing Press of 1929, followed a purely European style. The architects were generally Soviet, but their designs in Mongolia in this period were surprisingly ornate, perhaps influenced by the Siberian vernacular architectural style.

After 1945, Soviet architects such as N. M. Shchepetil'nikov and Gerhard Kozel designed the buildings around the central square of Ulaanbaatar in a full-blown neo-classical style with columns, entablatures and pilasters (Fig. 38). Meanwhile Japanese prisoners of war built the first large apartment blocks in Mongolia, four storeys high and again with a number of neo-classical touches. This style was continued in the 1950s in apartment blocks built by Chinese guest workers under the direction of a city plan drawn up by Soviet and Mongolian architects. The pioneering Mongolian architect in the post-war era was B. Chimed, who closely imitated Soviet styles, modelling his tombs of General Sūkhbaatar and Marshal Choibalsan, for example, on the tomb of Lenin in Moscow. In designing the Ulaanbaatar Hotel (1961), Chimed moved in a more modernist direction while also adding touches of Mongolian 'national characteristics'. Despite the imitative character of the architecture, the centre of the new Ulaanbaatar kept a certain charm and architectural unity marked by, for example, the widespread green roofs. This charm has, however, been marred by the generally poor upkeep of the buildings and the subsequent addition after 1990 of several multi-storey steel and glass constructions.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Mongolia witnessed a construction boom both on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar and in the surrounding cities. Construction had to be rapid to keep up with the rapid pace of population growth, urbanization, and industrialization and most of the buildings fit the stereotype of Soviet concrete public housing projects with shoddy construction and an alienating gigantism. Few if any presented any distinctive Mongolian characteristics, nor did they mix harmoniously with the previous neo-classical style in the Ulaanbaatar centre.<sup>74</sup>

## The contemporary art scene

The increased openness of the late 1980s and the peaceful 1990 democratic revolution removed the ideological controls on art in Mongolia. The Green Horse Modern Art Society was formed to promote abstract and avant-garde trends in art, and its members eventually

<sup>74</sup> Shchepetil'nikov, 1960; Tsultem, 1988.





FIG. 38. Ulaanbaatar. The Opera and Ballet Theatre on Sükhbaatar Square. Designed by Gerhard Kozel. The Opera and Ballet Theatre was unveiled in 1949. (Source: Tsend et al. (eds.), 1974, p. 56.)

created their own Art Institute. The Union of Mongolian Artists remains, however, the major professional organization.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, the economic crisis eliminated state funding for the arts and put virtually all large construction plans on hold until the late 1990s.

Mongolian painting has a relatively high profile both in Mongolia and abroad – it has established a significant reputation in Japan, Europe and North America, where many Mongolian artists have exhibited. Artistic trends are very diverse. Religious and erotic themes that were previously prohibited are now given free expression. Despite the new importance of purely abstract art, Mongolian painting remains predominantly representational and traditional themes based on the national past, the countryside and pastoralism are still important. The definition of the traditional past has, however, been expanded to include shamanism, religious rituals, the great conqueror Chinggis Khan and other previously taboo subjects. The religious revival has meant that Buddhist iconographic art is again in great demand for temples, private devotions and connoisseurs. Ironically, however, the secular *Mongol zurag* style has been somewhat overshadowed both by the new vitality

<sup>75</sup> Union of Mongolian Artists, 2002–4.

in European-style oil and canvas painting and the return to purely religious art. In 2002, 14 *Mongol zurag* artists established an organization called Mongol Zurag to promote their style. New or revived media include leather art, felt art, and calligraphy in the traditional vertical and cursive Uighur-Mongolian script, which had been replaced by a new Cyrillic alphabet between 1945 and 1950. Overall, the Mongolian artistic scene is remarkably lively for a nation of only 2.5 million people set in the heart of Asia.