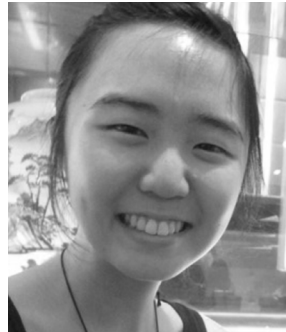


Asian Temple Artifacts: Foreignization and Domestication

SARAH PARK



WRITER'S COMMENT: I never visited museums growing up. I perceived them as intimidating places, places only for cultured and classy people. To be plain, I felt awkward during my first visit to the Asian Art Museum. A self-conscious museum go-er, I walked through the museum afraid that someone would call me out and ask what I was doing there. That anxious visit gave me an unrealistic perception of my own cultural knowledge. My second visit was for AHI 110, and it changed everything – it was a turning point that encouraged me to turn and question the so-called authorities of my Asian culture. I wrote this essay as I felt more conflicted about my cultural identity. Using my training as a Comparative Literature major, I began thinking of museums in terms of literary translations. Like translators, museum curators engage in translation processes and decision-making. Considering that my own cultural heritage has sent me on a complex personal journey, how much more sensitive would the process be for understanding foreign cultures?

INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENT: This paper originated in AHI 110, Cultural History of Museums, a course that centered on the development of museums and collections in Europe from the sixteenth century to the present. In it, students learn – many for the first time – that art museums are not the straightforward repositories of beauty they may seem to be. They have long been created with ulterior motives in mind, with exhibitions that can express power, political affiliation, and social aspirations. By presenting an edited version of history, art museum exhibitions create biases. My course's paper assignment was an exercise in observation and analysis. Students were asked to investigate a pair of museum installations and how elements of the viewing experience might create impressions about the past not necessarily inherent in the art itself. Sarah's piece took on the issue of displacement: What happens when institutions remove art and artifacts from the specific roles they played elsewhere and turn them into museum objects? Sarah explored this vexing and recurrent issue through the example of two northern California museums exhibiting artworks that once served Asian temples.

– Diana Strazdes, Department of Art History

Devout worshippers waited apprehensively, perched on the steps of the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Trivandrum, India. While security guards restricted entry, excavators unearthed \$22 billion worth of treasures from the temple's vaults.¹ The discovery of gold and precious jewels stirred debate throughout the economically “rising but still [impoverished]” country.² On July 6, 2011, the Indian Supreme Court ultimately commissioned a Keralite museum to preserve the excavated treasure. Inevitably, transferring objects from temples to museums exacts repercussions: what was sacred in the temple is now repurposed in the museum as an artifact – a historical relic, a fragment of antiquity. Museum visitors can more readily interact with the holy objects, but the interaction is mediated by a secular institution that must carefully balance accessibility with authenticity.

For museums housing foreign temple art, the task is difficult in two ways. Museums with foreign art engage in a translation process, repackaging their collections in a more understandable way for visitors. Domesticated arrangements manipulate material rhetoric to accommodate the target culture (that is, the museum visitors); this typically favors accessibility, allowing the visitor to associate the foreign artifact with a more familiar object. Foreignization, on the other hand, aims to retain, perhaps even evoke, the foreign culture's presence; this favors authenticity and encourages the visitor to both participate in foreign customs and to adopt behaviors in line with the foreign attitudes, whether reverence or disdain.

The Asian art collections stored at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and the Crocker Art Museum approach foreign temple art differently. The Asian Art Museum typically provides several cultural cues for the museum visitor: where to go, in which direction, at what pace... these cue are either explicitly stated or obviously suggested through the placement and orientation of objects. Moreover, collections are sorted by region. In contrast, the Crocker Art Museum's Asian arts wing is more

1 Memmott, M. (2011, July 6). India's Supreme Court Takes Steps To Protect \$22 Billion Treasure. Retrieved December 17, 2014, from [http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2011/07/06/137645373/indias-](http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2011/07/06/137645373/indias-supreme-court-takes-steps-to-protect-22-billion-treasure)

[supreme-court-takes-steps-to-protect-22-billion-treasure](http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2011/07/06/137645373/indias-supreme-court-takes-steps-to-protect-22-billion-treasure)
2 Bajaj, V. (2011, July 8). A \$22 Billion Question for India: What to Do With a Treasure? Retrieved December 17, 2014, from http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/09/world/asia/09temple.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&

challenging: displays and object placement seem cluttered to some eyes but thematic to trained ones. By approaching Asian collections differently, the museums reinforce different mentalities.

However, the employed techniques are also curiously the same: both collections aim to blend classical Greek architecture with Asian temple art displays. Curatorial decisions – such as the orientation of objects, their placement inside (or outside) of glass cases, and their location in relation to other art – often alternate between domestication and foreignization. The museums employ these strategies to shape visitor attitudes towards Asian temple art. The classical container does not domesticate Asian temple art; rather, the interior design integrates the temple art purposefully, suggestive of the fact that the museum itself is a temple, a place of worship. Although the temple artifacts reside in a museum, their orientation, placement, and location recreate the temple layout and ergo situate the visitor as a worshipper.

The Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, located in San Francisco, CA, unapologetically abounds in references to classical Greek architecture and adornments such as columns, pillars, and grand staircases rising to the front entrance. The museum exterior exudes grandeur in a style befitting its surroundings: the Civic Center, City Hall, and San Francisco Public Library, all magnificently classical and domed. The Asian Art Museum contributes to the civic theme of Greek culture. Artistically, it blends in with the surroundings, the dominant culture. Only the posters hint at the Asian collections that lay inside. The museum pays homage to the city's Asian demographics – if only very subtly.

Such classical themes also feature prominently in the interior design of the museum. Upon entering the building, visitors stand directly across from a grand staircase, which beckons them to climb the steps and rise to enlightenment. Indeed, the tunneled staircase opens into an expansive space where the high ceiling captivates and guides visitors gaze towards inscriptions all along the perimeter walls. These remind the visitor about true knowledge by quoting various English, Greek, and Roman philosophers and Biblical passages, notably the book of Proverbs. Thus, the classical references reinforce the Asian Art Museum as a place for not simply collecting cultural artifacts but also a site for discerning their meaning. The classical structure and inscriptions attach philosophical importance to the contents of the museum. Considering that these same quotes also loom over the Main Staircase Hall at the San Francisco Public Library,

the quotes connect the Asian Art Museum to another civic place in San Francisco. The museum is once again presented as a seamless part of the whole city. Perhaps more problematically, this is an invitation for the eastern culture to fit in, but the invitation is offered on the condition that their quotes and architectural style submit to the dominating classical Greek/classical Western philosophy, style, and culture.

Indeed, classical references serve more than aesthetic purposes; they embrace an entire intellectual understanding of other cultures. The Asian Art Museum understands “Asia” as a concept defined by geographical boundaries:

“‘Asia’ is a term invented by the Greeks and Romans, and developed by Western geographers... Culturally, no ‘Asia’ exists, and the people who inhabit ‘Asia’ often have little in common with each other. Recognizing the diversity of the huge area conventionally designated ‘Asia,’ the Asian Art Museum has arranged its collections into seven general groupings”³

By calling a region “Asia,” assumes a wholeness between all its inhabitants. This misconception plays into the display decisions, at times even commanding the entire layout of collections and groupings of artifacts. At the Asian Art Museum, the Asian art collections are divided by geographical origins and rarely by cultural themes, such as Buddhism. Buddhist temple statues are scattered throughout the museum; many are stored on the third floor with other works originating from “The Himalayas and the Tibetan Buddhist World.” More are housed under “Chinese Buddhist Art.” Several others are kept separately on the second floor in the Japanese art collection. Such a layout makes it difficult to follow how one particular religion or artistic form developed throughout cultures; instead, the artifacts are distinguished by geography, and visitors must rely on these geographical markers to categorize different artifacts.

Ultimately, classical design and Asian temple art are connected seamlessly. At the museum entrance itself, two Japanese statues of guardian lions, typically found in shrine entrances, are mounted. Unlike lions found at Greek temples, these Japanese lions have curly tails, floppy ears, and vicious facial expressions – they resemble dogs, not felines. Naturally, these Japanese-styled lion statues would not be found in Greek temples. For many museum visitors, the presence of such odd statutes may at

³ Lee, C. (1995). [Inscription on Bust]. San Francisco, CA: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

first be bewildering. They look out-of-place when placed in front of a huge Greek-styled building. However, the decision to place these temple artifacts at the museum entrance – which can also be considered a type of shrine – is both domesticating and foreignizing because it installs the artifact in a way that matches its original context (places of worship), recreated through the more familiar Greek temple. Thus, the Asian Art Museum architecture does not invoke only the Greek or Roman temples; the incorporation of Asian artifacts as architectural pieces invokes Asian temples as well. In this way, foreignization and domestication are in dialogue, helping the museum visitor comprehend the foreign artifacts.

If the Asian Art Museum is characterized by the seamless relationship between the classical and Asian elements, the Crocker Art Museum would be best described as disjointed, abrupt. The museum is located in a residential area of Sacramento, CA, likely because the museum is in a house donated to the California Museum Association by Margaret B. Crocker. The Loen Vanderveen Asian Wing entrance features two columns, very much conforming to classical styles. There is no door, yet the wing is clearly set apart from the rest of the museum. Recently renovated, the brightly-lit wing stands in stark contrast to the rest dimly-lit, carpeted, and gilded home. It feels very out-of-place.

Unlike the Asian Art Museum, which focuses on Asian art, the Crocker Art Museum holds collections ranging from European to African to Oceanic art. Consequently, the Asian art collection is less extensive than that of the Asian Art Museum. The curators of the Crocker Art Museum approach Asian Art and its display differently for conceptual and logistical reasons. Because the collection is small, it is very tempting to showcase it all in one room. The museum wing includes a hallway and two rooms jutting out of it: one circular sunroom and another square room at the end of the hall. The square room features works from all over Asia. This, however, is not just an issue of storage. It taps into a deeper issue that defines Asia. Unlike the Asian Art Museum where the collections are separated based on geographical characteristics, the Asian collection at the Crocker Art Museum is more thematic. As a result, the setup calls attention to the development, patterns, and similarities between cultures.

For both the Asian Art Museum and the Crocker Art Museum, analyzing how the visitor progresses and browses through the collections reveals important clues about how museums understand temple

art. Typically, the museums guide visitors from west to east, beginning with South or Southeast Asia and ending with Japan or Vietnam. The direction mimics how religion and technology spread throughout the world: Buddhism allegedly started in India, entered China, passed through Korea, and crossed over to Japan. When comparing how the two museums lead their visitors, we can glean important insights about their mentalities. Largely, the Asian Art Museum takes the approach of domesticating the temple art – that is, it encourages visitors to use their own culture as a basis for understanding a foreign one. In contrast, the Crocker Art Museum throws the visitor into a disorienting experience, a result of foreignization.

In the Asian Art Museum, the curators suggest visitors take the escalator to the third floor, enter the South Asian art collection, and wind downwards. Similarly, in the Crocker Art Museum, the Asian art collection also first displays works from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, starting from the most western countries and moving towards the most eastern ones. The circular sunroom – completely devoid of any temple art – also encourages the visitor to browse clockwise: viewing ceramic art from China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam (again, most west to most east and south). Although the sunroom does not feature temple art, the hallway and square room do feature them abundantly, which suggests that temple art is somehow incompatible with ceramics. At the Asian Art Museum, curators dedicated rooms specifically to ceramics and jades as well. In both museums, temple art appears throughout the museum, outside of the rooms dedicated to them, somehow suggesting that there is a strain between exclusive crafts and the more abundant temple art, which overflows into different spaces throughout the museum. Museums, then, seem to rely on hallways and room shapes to guide visitors in a particular direction and along paths strewn with temple artifacts and classical motifs.

By placing temple artifacts in sites noticeable upon entering, museums establish a sense of place. In order to evoke temples, such artifacts are typically placed in spaces with high visitor traffic. In the Asian Art Museum, many visitors occupy the lounge area on the first floor, next to a restaurant and gift shop. The statue of a Nandi, a bull made of granite, sits casually next to a customer service desk, and in an area all visitors must cross to take the escalators or move onto other spaces of the museum. Culturally, the granite bull is often placed facing the temple

sanctuaries so that worshipers approach it from behind.⁴ However, the Nandi bull is oriented in the opposite direction: facing the visitor rather than facing the sanctuary. The bull's adjusted orientation is more in tune with the supposedly American characteristic of confrontation. While the placement of the Nandi bull in the lounge area evokes a temple entrance, its orientation hints at the domestication (in this case, the westernization) of the temple artifact.

The Crocker Art Museum also establishes a sense of place by displaying temple artifacts in full view. Visitors standing at the entrance of the Asian arts wing can look into the brightly lit hallway which funnels their view to the hallway's end. At the end of that hallway, visitors can spot a carving of Apsara, carved from sandstone, and framed by the door's outline. Apsara, considered a minor Hindu deity, was often carved onto the exterior walls of temples to illustrate the holiness of the temple from the outside without passersby having to look inside.⁵ Likewise, because of the absence of a solid door, visitors who stand at the entrance of the Asian art wing can gain a sense of what lies inside without stepping in – the alignment of the entrance and the carving is nearly perfect. The setup achieves a twofold effect: implying content and conveying holiness. The Apsara carving, part of a temple wall, more or less functions as a wall in the museum. This translation of function is an example of how a sense of place is achieved through foreignization.

Both domestication and foreignization can help establish a sense of place: related to this strategy is the concept of inside and outside. As previously stated, temple art is often found in “outside” places – in hallways and lounges and rarely in glass cases. It is safer to place objects of value in glass cases. Glass cases are also invitational by nature – they invite visitors to scrutinize or appreciate whatever is encased within. However, in both the Asian Art Museum and the Crocker Art Museum, certain temple arts are displayed outside. This is more consistent with how the temple art is traditionally displayed. Case in point: sandstone statues of Ganesha, the Hindu god with an elephant head, are found in both the Asian Art Museum and Crocker Art Museum in various poses, including dancing

⁴ Nandi [Museum exhibit label]. San Francisco, CA: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

⁵ Unknown Artist Apsara, 12th - 13th century. (n.d.). Retrieved December 17, 2014, from <https://crockerartmuseum.org/collections/permanent-collections/asian-art/item/apsara-12th-13th-century>

and seated. The Asian Art Museum owns three, which they effortlessly place at a small entranceway (almost unceremoniously) next to the doors that open into the South Asian collection. The museum visitor will likely feel puzzled and distracted by the statues lined along the wall, almost randomly. However, Ganesha is known as Remover of Obstacles, and this deity is found outside of temples where “his image is the first that one encounters upon entering a Hindu temple.”⁶ Thus, it is not only appropriate that these figures are outside, but it is also accurate for them to be sitting outside. Placing Ganesha in the lonely corner on the third floor of the Asian Art Museum may be bewildering, yet such foreignization strengthens the likening between museum collections and temples.

In the same way, the Crocker Art Museum displays Ganesha just outside of the square room at the end of the hall: shut out, cut off from the rest of the temple inside. The carving is raised on a pedestal on the left side of the doorpost. Smaller pieces of temple arts – scraps of a temple wall, for instance – are generally enclosed in a glass case to emphasize the larger encompassing historical or cultural themes, such as Buddhism or silver vessel production. Indeed, this carving is smaller than the ones at the Asian Art Museum. Nonetheless, the carving is raised on its own pedestal and distinguished from other sculptures. Moreover, it is not enclosed; the sculpture carries out its duties as the Remover of Obstacles. The setup is in tune with how Ganesha functions, again a sign of foreignization.

Just as artifacts can establish concepts of outside and inside, doorways help museum visitors navigate through space. Doorways act as in-between spaces; such spaces are critical to the visitor experience, especially when doorways are used both literally and symbolically. The grand staircase at the Asian Art Museum is an example of a figurative doorway in which the tunneled stairway represents intellectual ascension. Considering its womb-like characteristics, including the dark, narrow channel and the passage from darkness to light, the grand staircase possibly represents rebirth. In either case, the staircase is a transition point in which a transformation occurs. For most museum visitors, this grand staircase will be their entry point into the museum. Rather interestingly, there are two niches at the bottom of the staircase. Nested in these niches are Mahakala and Nandishvara, a pair of Indonesian door guardians, traditionally placed in niches located on the doors of Hindu

⁶ Ganesha [Museum exhibit label]. Sacramento, CA: Crocker Art Museum.

temples.⁷ Though they sit on opposite sides of the grand staircase, horizontally facing one another, the staircase is understood to be a type of door leading into a sanctuary. More importantly, these artifacts are seamlessly placed in niches where classical antiquities and sculptures would traditionally be placed. Thus, the placement of these Indoneisan door guardians translates well in a classical context. In order to prompt the museum visitor to respect temple artifacts and treat them reverently, the artifacts are intertwined in classical architecture that is generally understood to add status and value.

In the Crocker Art Museum, door guardians are also incorporated to expand on the temple analogy, though in a more literal, layered way. When museum visitors enter the Asian wing, they must cross three different doorposts. Decorations of classical influences adorn the first doorpost. A doorjamb with elaborate engravings is propped at the next doorpost. After crossing this doorpost, visitors encounter the third and final doorpost, which demarcates the deepest, furthest end of the hallway. Next to this doorpost, a sandstone engraving of Nagini (the female woman with a snake hood) sits atop a platform. Unlike the other deities, such as Ganesha and Apsara, Nagini is a figure whose “importance undoubtedly lies in local, folk traditions that lay outside the realm of temples.”⁸ By placing Nagini at the doorpost closest to the heart of the art collection, which is understood to be a temple itself, the art “[bridges] any gap between ‘high’ religion and ‘low.’”⁹ In this case, the doorway does more than demarcate space: it makes a statement on religious hierarchies, and the juxtaposition comments on what is high and low art. Both the Asian Art Museum and Crocker Art Museum frame their Asian temple art collections and manipulate doorways, either by constructing a classical temple doorway or by placing temple artifacts near doorposts. Indeed, classical architecture does not bear any cultural connections with Asian temple art. However, by framing temple art with classical architecture, the temple art is domesticated and understood as work to be worshiped and revered.

When transferring temple art to a museum, the artifacts can be domesticated or foreignized. Domesticated foreign art can be criticized

⁷ Mahakala [Museum exhibit label]. San Francisco, CA: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco.

⁸ Nagini [Museum exhibit label]. Sacramento, CA: Crocker Art Museum.

⁹ See Note 8.

for being ethnocentric – is it wrong to change the orientation of Nandi? On the other hand, foreignization demands more from museum visitors who must rely on prior knowledge to understand the foreign art. No foreign art, however, can be absolutely foreignized, because when foreign temple art is taken out of its sacred spaces, the temple art inevitably becomes a temple antiquity.

In conclusion, museums cannot fully reproduce the temple container and the hallowed context. The museum interprets the temple arts in decision-making processes that determine where to place temple arts, how to orient them, and even what to display. Visitors interact not only with the temple art but also with the manipulated surrounding environment. All museum visitors, then, must be conscious of how the museum decides to domesticate or foreignize temple art. The visitor must also question the reasons for making such decisions: what are the underlying assumptions, messages, and tone? Asking such questions will indeed lead to a more rewarding, informed visit, a visit that goes beyond the information written on plaques and investigates how the museum’s material rhetoric influences visitor attitudes towards foreign temple art.

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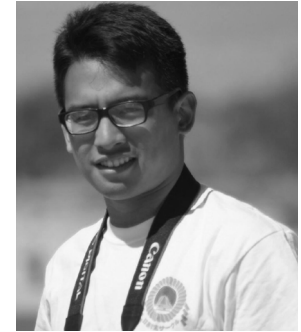
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Subtlety & Subversion: The Role of the Masculine in Taeko Kono's *Toddler Hunting & Other Stories*

CHRISTIAN PASCUAL



*WRITER'S COMMENT: I vaguely knew from the time I first picked up *Toddler Hunting and Other Stories* that I would be intrigued by the Taeko Kono's writing. Kono's unnerving descriptions of seemingly regular women and their various relationships fascinated me. I feel I've had enough exposure to a wide variety of literature to understand how typical characters and plots develop, but I was consistently surprised by Taeko Kono. JPN 103 has been only class to require me to read a book about sadomasochism, so I feel an odd gratitude for it introducing me to Taeko Kono. When the term paper came around, I knew that the simplest topic was to write about the female protagonists since they are the primary lenses through which Kono writes. However, a part of me felt that that was too predictable, uninteresting even. Instead, I was intrigued by the influence that Kono's minor male characters had on her female protagonists, prompting me to explore their role in her stories.*

INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENT: Christian wrote this essay for JPN 103, a survey of modern Japanese literature in translation. He focuses on the short stories of Taeko Kono (1926-2015), whose long career and stature in the world of Japanese letters contrast starkly with the scant availability of her works in English translation. A member of the generation (which included Yukio Mishima) that experienced the Second World War as an adolescent, Kono's often unsettling vision of postwar Japan deftly interfuses the quotidian with the perverse. Christian explores with great insight how Kono's female protagonists creatively disrupt an entire constellation of societal and gender norms. His attention to the representations of femininity leads him to address the co-constructive roles played by masculinity, implicitly arguing against the continued ghettoization of women's literature. The essay serves as an excellent introduction to the writings of this author and the complexity of her storyworlds.

– Kevin Singleton, Department of East Asian Languages and Culture