

Module 5

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



Who were the “ literati”? What styles did they introduce? Consider the importance of their role in Chinese art and culture. The literati were learned scholars in Imperial China, who occupied official posts in the government after they had taken and passed the civil service examination. These examinations were comprised of a battery of tests which were administered at the various local levels, and successful examinees were tightly limited in number. It was not unusual for a student to take the examination several times before earning his degree. The examination included Chinese literature and philosophy. Passing the examination, however did not guarantee a government position, but it made attaining one considerably easier. Those who finally do attain a post are called the mandarins.

Literati scholars were schooled in a particular form of Confucianism known as the School of Literati. There are four arts of the Chinese scholar: qin, qi, shu (calligraphy), and hua (painting). Qin, or more precisely guqin, is the literati’s musical instrument meaning old (gu) musical instrument (qin). It is a seven stringed zither that is plucked to produce sound. Invented some 3, 000 years ago, the guqin maintains its relevance into the space age; when the unmanned spacecraft Voyager was launched in 1977, it contained a recording of a guqin piece.

The second art, qi, is a chess-like board game now called weiqi (‘ surrounding game’) in Chinese, and go in Japan and in the Western countries. Various speculations exist regarding the origins of the game; one is that it is a fortune-telling tool employed by ancient Chinese astronomers who discern the influence exerted by the universe on an individual. In this game, black and white stones are placed on a 19 by 19 line grid. The stones

are placed on the intersections of the lines; when a stone is surrounded on all four sides by an opposing color, then the stone is captured and removed from play; the game ends when there are no more possible moves.

The third art is shu (Chinese calligraphy). This is the source of all calligraphic tradition in East Asia, including Japan, Korea and Vietnam. These are distinctive because they emphasize motion and “sheer life experience,” with “time and rhythm in shifting space” (Stanley-Baker, 2010).

The fourth art of the literati is hua (Chinese painting). Literati paintings were prized above all academic paintings by educated people because of the painting’s goal of revealing the inner character of the painter and how he depicts sensitivity towards the conditions of human life (Indiana University, 2012).

References

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Video Review

Beijing Opera Masks: The Face of Chinese Tradition

<http://digital.films.com/play/MMGKVB>

<https://assignbuster.com/module-5/>

The video chosen is centered on the design and creation of Beijing opera masks. The topic is of great interest because this is one of the time-honored traditions which may soon be lost to obscurity. Mask-making begins with the casting of the overall shape of the mask; the facial form is impressed in clay from the basic mold, a plaster cast is made, and after hardening, the mask base is painted over with intricate and stylized designs depicting specific heroes and characters in Chinese theater. The painting stage is the most difficult. As with face painting, masks are employed to initially emphasize faces which may not readily be visible to audiences sitting farther out. The expression on the mask must immediately convey to the audience the character being played, and colors have a distinctive symbolism. Blue symbolizes courage and resolve; red symbolizes loyalty, utter devotion, and righteousness; purple symbolizes wisdom, justice and resourcefulness; black represents loyalty and uprightness; yellow stands for cruelty and ferocity; and green is for chivalry. Gold and silver symbolize the gods, Buddha, ghosts and monsters.

Opera itself is an art which is slowly being forgotten wherever it existed around the world. This is the lamentable fact that while other forms of art endure throughout the centuries, the performing arts, such as dance, stage plays and opera, are perishable because in their pure forms they exist only for the duration that they are executed. However, tangible remnants associated with them - such as costumes, masks, and recordings - stand testament to their actual beauty and glory.

Response to the post

Kublai Khan was a feared Mongolian warrior, and the post describes the

succession wars these emperors fought, even against their own family, in order to gain or maintain power. Having achieved this, he set his sights on administration, not only in the delivery of social services and public infrastructure but moreso in the preservation of the nation's soul - through an enhancement of the arts and culture and the establishment of religious freedom. Western historians have portrayed Kublai Khan much as it had portrayed his grandfather Genghis Khan, a barbarian, but the post shows that the statesmanship of Kublai Khan could put to shame many of our political leaders today. The quest for power and the employment of radical means to achieve it has not been lost in our generation, particularly in the less stable nations of the world, although even developed countries have their political quarrels. Although his government failed during his later years due to a level of excessiveness and disunity in the mixed society he fostered (because multiculturalism was a concept centuries before its time), the fact that Kublai Khan was able to maintain order and progress for several decades belies his reputation as barbarian.