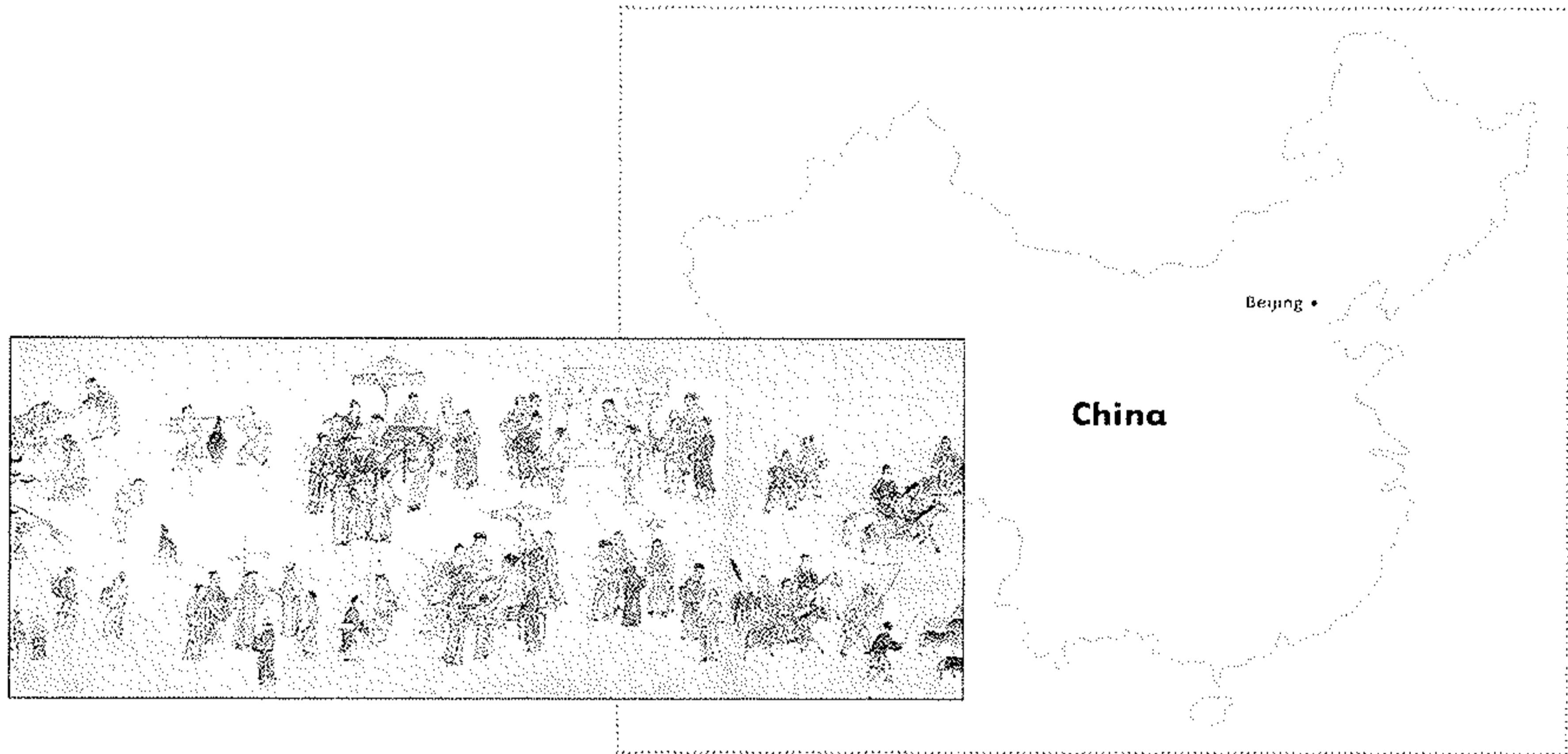


Transparency 8



Zhu Yu, Chinese (1293–1365) *Street Scenes in Times of Peace* (detail, scene 9), Yuan Dynasty, 1279–1368 Handscroll; ink and colors on paper; l: 287 in. x h: 10 1/4 in. (790 x 26 cm) Kate S. Buckingham Endowment Fund, 1952.8

Street Scenes in Times of Peace is a long, painted handscroll that shows off the wide range of people and activities typical of a large, 14th-century Chinese city. Among the 478 figures present on the nearly eight-meter scroll are families, scholars, drunkards, merchants, professionals, musicians, carpenters, masons, painters, **diviners**, silk workers, dancers, and puppeteers—all going about their daily business of laboring, trading, relaxing, and playing. This scroll offers a rare glimpse of what life might have been like in an urban Chinese society more than 600 years ago.

Some areas of this scroll reveal the disorganized clatter of people, vehicles, and animals typical of **medieval** cities. Other areas illustrate how in urban centers people of similar professions tend to congregate. In one area of this city, woodworkers, stonemasons, and laborers gather with the common goal to build new constructions (scenes 6 and 7; figure 24). In another, men herd goats, horses, and cows (scene 8; figure 25). In still another area, (scene 9; see transparency) artists and diviners

have come together to market their crafts. In the center **foreground**, a man sits at a table under a parasol with an inscription that reads (in Chinese characters) “Composer of Poetry and Prose; Inscraper of Hanging Scrolls.” He is just about to inscribe, or write upon, the blank scroll on the table before him, while a crowd of men with scrolls in hand stand around and wait their turns. To the right, a man stands under a parasol that reads “Diviner of Faces.” This man is a physiognomist, someone who reads a person’s character through his or her facial features. Behind this crowd, a man in a covered booth with a sign reading “Following Prescriptions, Pills, and Powders Mixed to Respond to Illness” dispenses handmade medicines. To the left, another man at a booth bearing the sign “Astrologer: Fate Examined According to the Five Planets” offers fortune-telling based on the arrangement of stars. In the lower left, a man standing under a parasol that reads “Writer of **Talismans**... to Expel **Noxious** Influences and **Apparitions**” hands a small piece of inscribed cloth to a person in a small crowd gathered before him.

These artists and diviners offer to predict their customers' fates based on Taoist principles (see *What Is Taoism?* sidebar, page 70). The astrologer bases his fortune-telling on the Taoist theory of the Five Planets—Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—which correspond respectively to the five elements—metal, wood, water, fire, and earth (figure 26). The positions of the planets in the sky, combined with the sign of the **zodiac** at the time of one's birth, may determine a person's destiny. A person may also need protection against "Noxious Influences and Apparitions," as the Writer of Talismans in the handscroll promises. Talismans are objects believed to have magical powers of protection. In Taoism, they are **abstract** patterns—often resembling Chinese calligraphy—written on pieces of cloth or paper that can be worn or hung on doors to ward off malign influences.



FIGURE 24

Detail *Street Scenes in Times of Peace*, scenes 6 and 7



FIGURE 25

Detail *Street Scenes in Times of Peace*, scene 8

ELEMENT	SYMBOLIZES	PLANET
water	clarity, communication, and transmission of ideas	Mercury
metal	wealth and financial success	Venus
fire	action, motivation, and intellect	Mars
wood	growth, creation, and nourishment cycles	Jupiter
earth	stabilize, solid, reliable, and confident	Saturn

FIGURE 26

Taoist theory of the Five Planets that corresponds to the five elements.

The remaining four planets—Earth, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto—were not recognized as part of this Taoist theory.

CHINESE PAINTING

During the **Yuan** (yoo-AHN) **dynasty** (1279–1368), when Zhu Yu (joo yoo) painted this handscroll, China was under the rule of **Mongol** conquerors (figure 30). Chinese scholars and officials withdrew from public life and turned their creative energies to art and literature. This period gave birth to new forms of drama, writing, and painting.

Zhu Yu's painting appears in the traditional form of a handscroll, a long, horizontal piece of paper with images and calligraphy. This kind of scroll was intended for occasional viewing. It was brought out only when its owner wished to look at it alone or with a small group of people in an intimate setting. Normally it was stored in a special box. Because of their format, long handscrolls are viewed two or three feet at a time from right to left, the same way one would read Chinese writing. Many Chinese painters attempted to capture the spirit of their subjects rather than just their likenesses. For this reason, abstract qualities of painting, such as brushwork and calligraphy, are most important. Here, the figures are not set into a recognizable space or environment; they are isolated against a blank ground.

ARTISTS, OWNERS, AND VIEWERS

Painted handscrolls were often amended by colophons (KAH-leh-fons), added lengths of paper on which subsequent owners or viewers wrote commentary and impressed their chops, or personal seals (stamps of jade, wood, ivory, horn, or amber carved with the owner's name) (figure 27). The *Street Scenes in Times of Peace* contains seven colophons and 26 separate seals. Some of the commentaries relate the circumstances of the writer's encounter with the scroll. Others critique the artist's skill. One owner, Weng Tonghe, wrote, "Especially to be treasured is the forcefulness of the brushwork.... Zhu was a high-minded scholar, not to be classified as a mere painter."

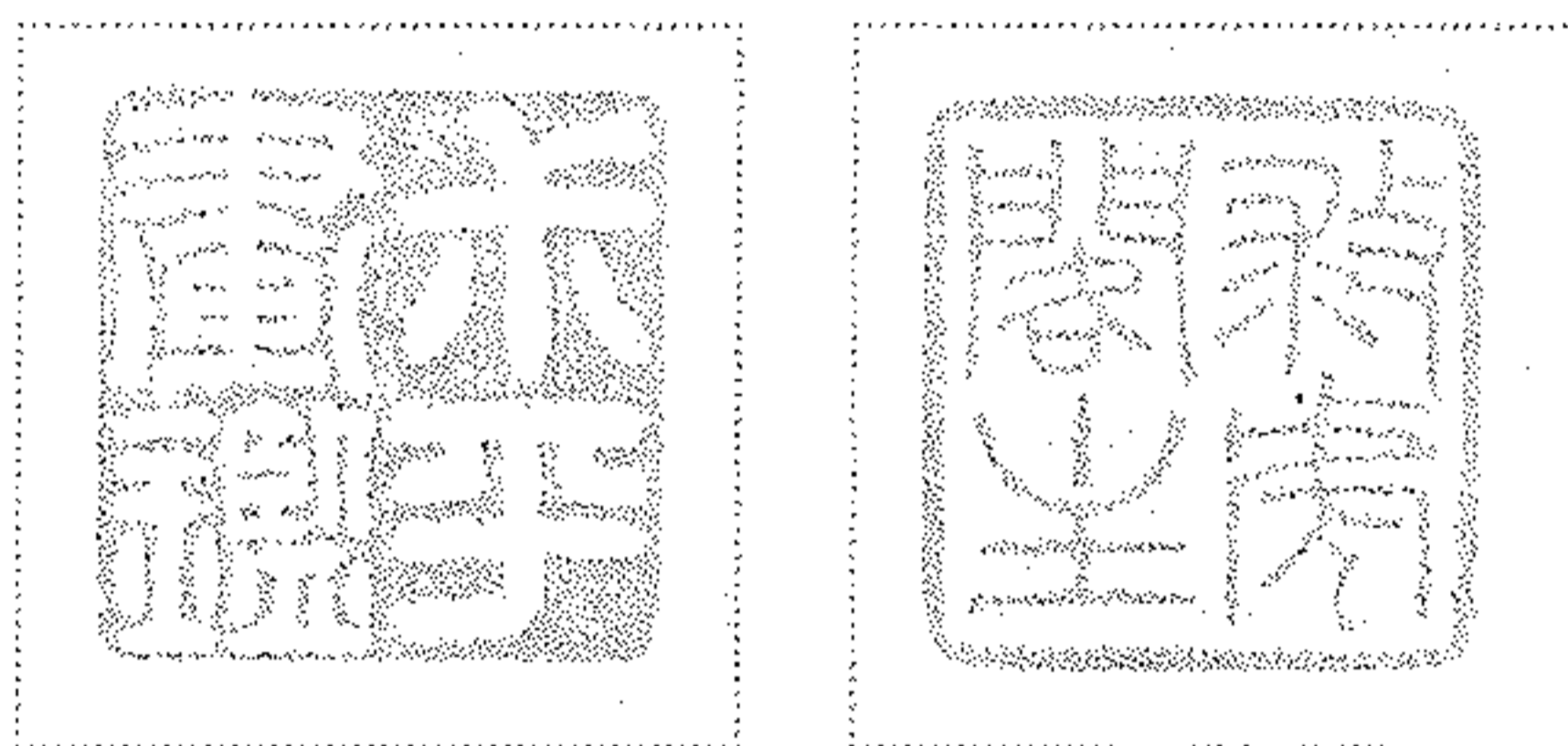


FIGURE 27

Examples of chops, or personal seals

Over time, as handscrolls passed from owner to owner, a handscroll might accumulate many poems and comments and would thus become an ongoing document of its ownership. It might also record the changing opinions about a particular **style** of painting over the course of centuries. During the **Ming dynasty** (1368–1644), an observer of this scroll commented on how painting had changed in the generations since Zhu's time.

Paintings of this caliber have been rare. That the people of today are inferior to the ancients not only in writing and accomplishments is certain, and this is a fact to be lamented.

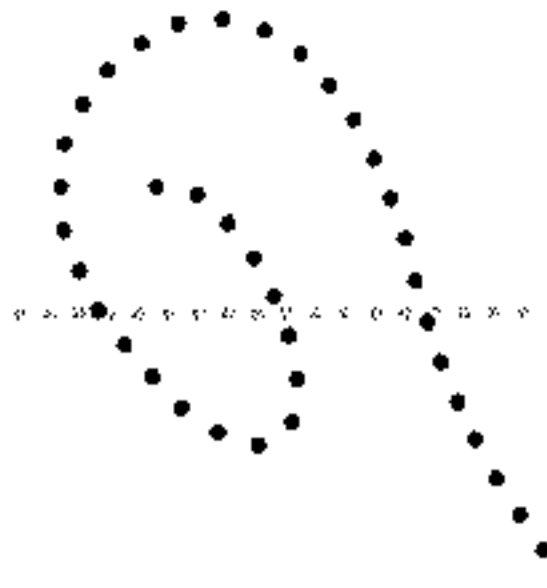
ART AND THE MIDDLE CLASS

The colophons of the handscroll identify it as a scholar painting, yet the subject of the scroll is the professional class—merchants, tradesmen, artists, diviners, and performers—who inhabit the city center. The type of brushwork that Zhu employed is more descriptive than the expressive style used by self-proclaimed scholar-amateurs. Zhu Yu may have found himself in the unfortunate situation of being out of favor with the ruling dynasty. Some artists of the time retired from court life and created communities in remote areas of China where they continued the practice of creating and discussing paintings, writing poetry, and listening to music.¹⁵ Scholar-artists who stayed in the employ of the Yuan dynasty court, as Zhu did between 1312 and 1320, may have needed to supplement their now meager incomes by selling paintings to the growing middle class. Perhaps his paintings were designed to appeal to the tastes of both classes—scholars and professionals (figure 28).



FIGURE 28

The nomadic Mongol Yuan rulers instituted a complex social hierarchy in which racial discrimination dominated. The people were divided into racial categories, depending on their ancestry—Mongol, Colored Eyes, Han, and Southerners. These categories were further subdivided into these 10 classes (highest to lowest).



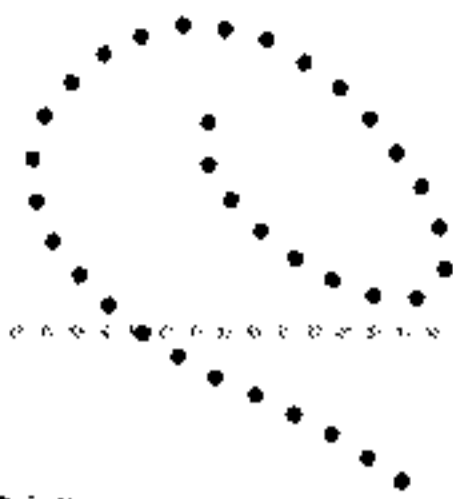
What is Taoism?



FIGURE 29

The Taoist yin-yang ideogram taiji

In Taoism, the **cosmos** is a balance between structured cycles and constant change. Humans participate in the ordered structure through the process of birth, death, and rebirth but are also subject to the perpetual change and unpredictability of the universe. The balance between these opposites is called the Tao, or the Way. The Taoist seeks to follow the Way by harmonizing with both the cyclic and irregular workings of the cosmos. This balance is also typified by two opposing forms of energy—yin and yang (figure 29). Yin describes yielding energy. Yang describes assertive energy. Sometimes one type of energy is more present than the other; sometimes both energies are present simultaneously. Because Taoist cosmology involves not only the remote heavens but also the earthly realm of the human, astrologers and diviners perform the important function of reading the stars to explain a present situation or anticipate a future course of events.



Foreign Rule of China by The Mongols: The Yuan Dynasty

Foreign occupation and rule of China arose at the start of the 13th century, and continued throughout the Yuan (yoo-AHN) dynasty (1279–1368), when the rulers were **Mongolian** in origin. Control of China by the Mongols dates back to the early 13th century, when the warrior **Genghis Khan** united the nomadic tribes of Mongolia and invaded China from the north. By the end of the 13th century, the Mongol invaders, led by Genghis's descendants, ruled an empire that stretched, during the time of the Yuan dynasty,

from what is now Poland to Korea, from Siberia to Vietnam, and included Persia and parts of Arabia (see map below).

European interest in China, both diplomatic and religious, grew during the Yuan dynasty, which was founded by Genghis Khan's grandson, the Emperor Kublai Khan. The famous Italian explorer Marco Polo worked in Kubilai Khan's court. Although top officials in China were generally Mongols, Kubilai was tutored to respect Chinese culture and surrounded himself with Chinese advisors. Subsequently, the visual arts, music, and literature flourished in China during the Yuan dynasty, despite its foreign occupation and rule.

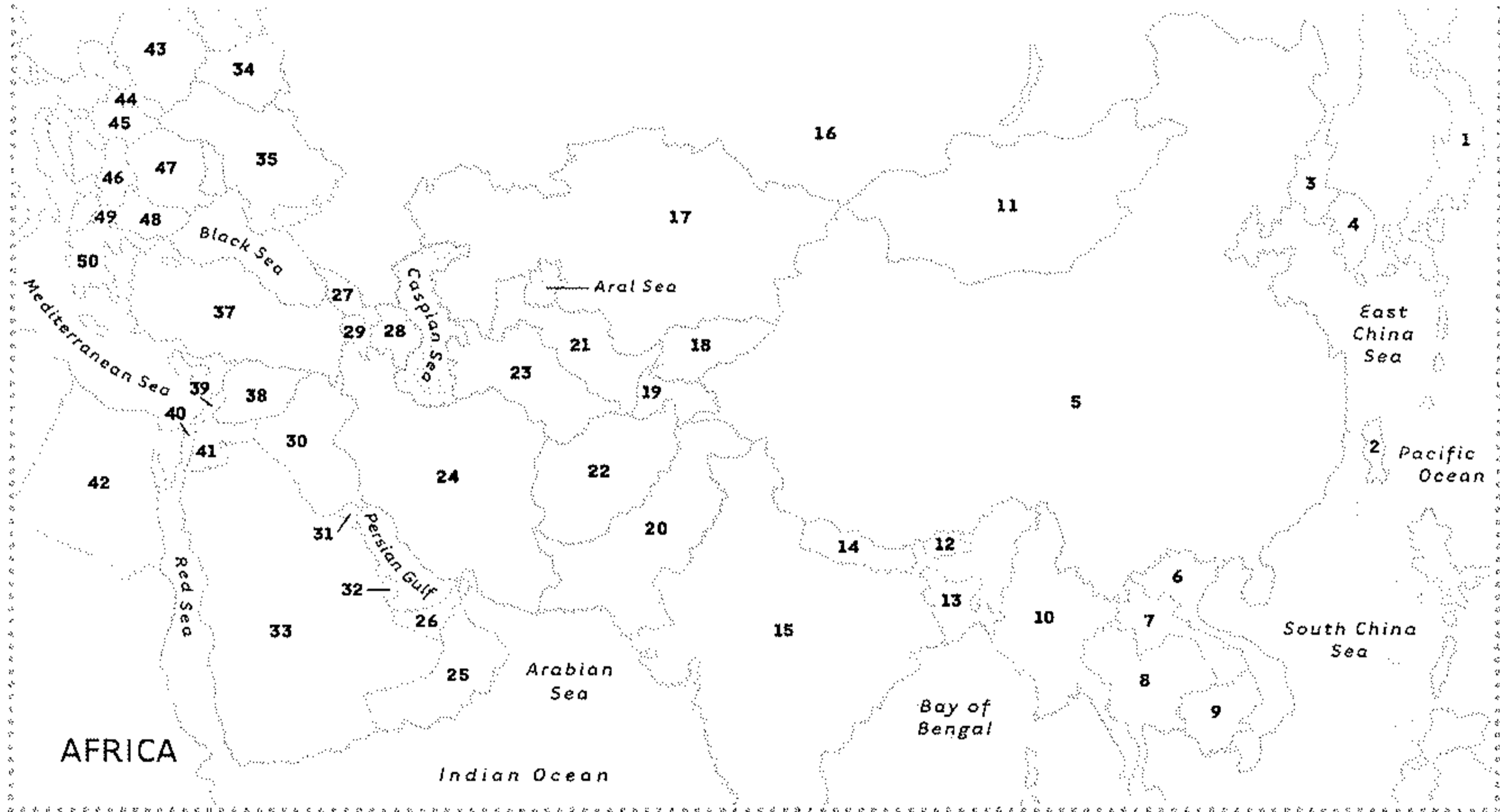


FIGURE 30
The Mongol Empire in the 13th century (shaded area)

MODERN-DAY COUNTRIES KEY

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1 Japan | 14 Nepal | 27 Georgia | 40 Israel |
| 2 Taiwan | 15 India | 28 Azerbaijan | 41 Jordan |
| 3 North Korea | 16 Russia | 29 Armenia | 42 Egypt |
| 4 South Korea | 17 Kazakhstan | 30 Iraq | 43 Poland |
| 5 China | 18 Kyrgyzstan | 31 Kuwait | 44 Slovakia |
| 6 Vietnam | 19 Tajikistan | 32 Qatar | 45 Hungary |
| 7 Laos | 20 Pakistan | 33 Saudi Arabia | 46 Yugoslavia |
| 8 Thailand | 21 Uzbekistan | 34 Belarus | 47 Romania |
| 9 Cambodia | 22 Afghanistan | 35 Ukraine | 48 Bulgaria |
| 10 Myanmar | 23 Turkmenistan | 36 Moldova | 49 Macedonia |
| 11 Mongolia | 24 Iran | 37 Turkey | 50 Greece |
| 12 Bhutan | 25 Oman | 38 Syria | |
| 13 Bangladesh | 26 UAS | 39 Lebanon | |

Classroom Applications

Transparency 8

Zhu Yu (Junbi). *Street Scenes in Times of Peace* (detail, scene 9), Yuan Dynasty, mid-14th century

1. I Spy!

This hand scroll records the great variety of occupations and forms of entertainment in 14th-century China. Among the figures are families, scholars, merchants, professionals, and craftsmen of all kinds. Ask students to look carefully at the details of the painting and answer the following questions. How many people do you see? (There are 478 figures represented in the full painting.) How are people dressed? Identify the children and describe what they are doing. Identify people working and describe the kind of tools they are using to do their work. What kind of animals do you see? Locate the puppet show. What else do you see in this picture?

State Learning Standards: 18A, 26A

2. Handscrolls

Explain to the students that a handscroll is a horizontal painting, sometimes embellished with calligraphy, that often reflects the culture or everyday life of the place or time it was created. The scroll is meant to be held in the viewer's hands and seen from a close vantage point. Scrolls are most easily viewed by a small group of people in an intimate setting. Scrolls are traditionally read two or three feet at a time, from right to left.

Create a model of a handscroll using a long, thin sheet of white paper rolled at each end around some sort of cylinder, such as a paper towel roll. Have students practice rolling the scroll, showing only two to three feet of the paper at a given time. Discuss how reading the handscroll is different from reading a picture book. Compare the handscroll, which is read right to left, with the picture book, which is read left to right. Ask students to consider how the format changes the reader's relationship with the written word or image. Today, what do we scroll through in order to see the full text?

State Learning Standards: 1C, 26A

3. The Hustle and Bustle of School Life

Have students create a class scroll depicting everyday life in their school or neighborhood. Decide as a class which scenes will be included in the scroll and in which order they will appear. Scenes may depict children's activities, people working or learning, a craft fair, marketplace, or celebration. Assign each scene to a group of students and instruct them to observe these activities taking place in their neighborhood or school. Have them make preliminary drawings based on these observations or their imagination. Students should

work collaboratively on the preliminary drawings. Once the drawings are finished, instruct students to draw a final version of their scene on a long sheet of white paper, moving from right to left. Display two to three foot portions of the class scroll at a time.

State Learning Standards: 18B, 26B

4. Word Pictures and Calligraphy

The Chinese language has been used for more than 3,000 consecutive years. It is made up of characters, or simple pictures and **symbols** that stand for things or ideas. Calligraphy is the art of producing artistic handwriting or lettering. Paintings often include calligraphic characters, which describe or respond to the painting in some way. The artist's signature is also written in calligraphy. Calligraphy can be so beautiful that one character is sometimes the sole subject of a work of art.

In Western culture, a person is taught how to write the letters that make up the alphabet, but the method they use to form those letters is often quite varied. This results in the particularities of handwriting. Chinese characters, however, are drawn using a uniform method (for example, each character has its own instructions). (figure 31) The instructions do not vary depending on the person drawing the character. Have students practice writing Chinese characters using white paper, watered-down black paint, and bamboo or paint brushes. Instruct them to hold the brush perpendicular to the writing surface and repeat the character multiple times following the directions below. When they have completed this activity, discuss the differences between Chinese characters and our alphabet. Consider the apparent differences between handwritten samples of calligraphy and the English language. Discuss the role of the "hand" in both.

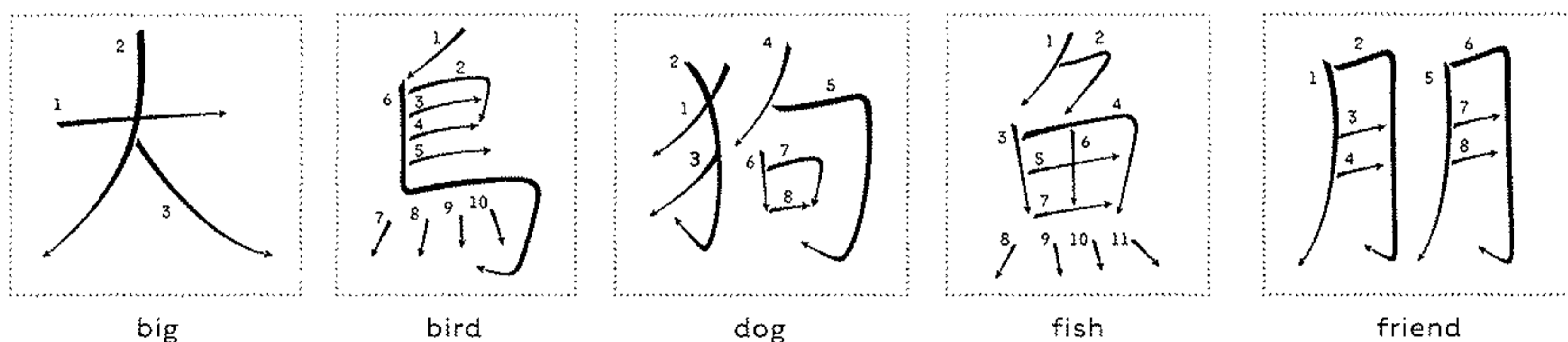


FIGURE 31

Examples of Chinese calligraphy characters

As an extension, consider letters of our alphabet as works of art, rather than symbols or signs that have a learned meaning. Enlarge the word "symbol" below and print it on an overhead transparency. Turn the page so that the word is upside down. Cover the entire transparency with a piece of paper. Instruct students to draw what they see on the overhead screen with a piece of white paper and a black marker, as you slide the cover sheet down bit by bit to expose small segments of the upside-down word. After the entire word is exposed, ask students to describe the drawing they have made. Only after they have considered their drawings are they allowed to turn the paper over to discover the meaning of their mark.

SYMBOL

For older students, discuss the variety of ways one can write the English language using different fonts. Look at a selection of fonts used in old and new printed texts, media, and word processors. Discuss how these have changed over time due to technology. (You may also want to check your local bookstore for a book of fonts.) Have students create their own font based on their handwriting or imagination. Instruct them to reproduce the alphabet (A–Z) and numbers (1–10) using their new font. Share these with the class.

State Learning Standards: 1B, 2A, 13A, 18A, 26B, 27A

4. Character Signatures

Chinese artists often signed their works with a chop, or personal seal. These seals displayed the character of the artist's name in calligraphy. Have students create a personal seal to use when signing an artwork or homework assignment. Instruct each student to draw a symbol that represents something they like about themselves. Have students transfer their drawing to a small square or rectangular piece of linoleum or wood, and then carve away the negative (or unused) space. Ink the seals with black ink and print them on rice paper.

State Learning Standards: 26B, 27A

5. Picture Story

Challenge students to use a different art medium, such as photography, and a form of writing, such as poetry, to create a story depicting everyday life in a style similar to this Chinese handscroll. Ask students to contribute one or more photographs to create a photo essay about everyday life in their neighborhood. Discuss with the students what images they might want to photograph. If someone found their photo essay 100 years from now, what do they want him or her to know about their community? Set up a system so that students can borrow a camera to make their images. Written explanations should accompany each photograph. Create a booklet (folded "accordion-style") for the explanations and photograph.

State Learning Standards: 2A, 3B, 26A, 26B,