

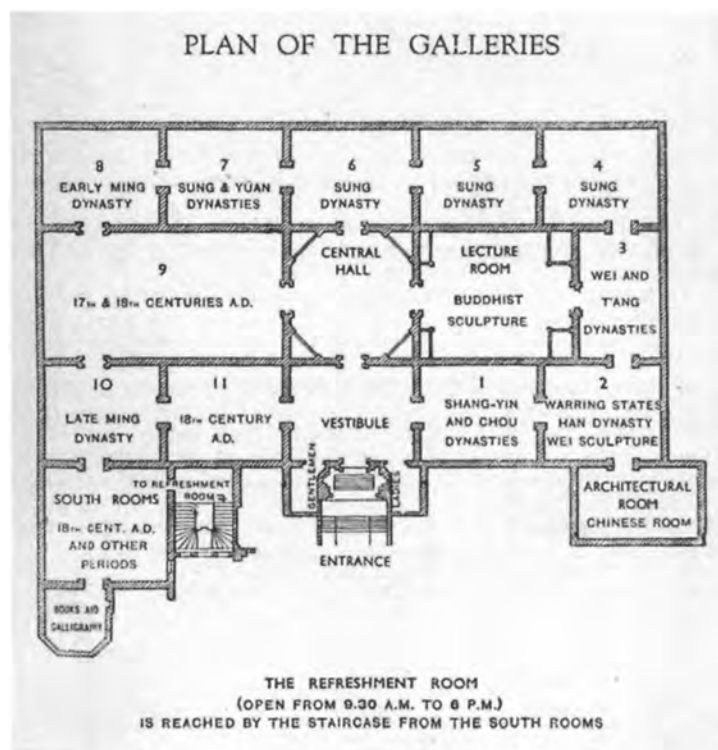
The exhibition of Chinese art at Burlington House, London, 1935–36

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THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION of Chinese Art held by the Royal Academy of Arts at Burlington House, London, from 28th November 1935 to 7th March 1936 was the largest exhibition of Chinese art ever mounted. Of the over 240 lenders from throughout the world – museums and institutions, scholars, collectors and dealers – most, if not all, were sponsored or promoted by their government institutions.¹ Even against recent large-scale exhibitions at the Royal Academy and elsewhere, the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* was extraordinarily well received and attended, attracting a total of 401,768 visitors. Student groups and industrial organisations were enticed to the exhibition by discounts on train fares and admission tickets. A total of 108,914 exhibition catalogues were sold, as well as 3,486 illustrated supplements, 2,196 exhibition handbooks and 336 copies of the *Royal Society of Arts Journal*.² With one in four visitors buying publications, knowledge of the exhibition soon spread, both at home and abroad.³

The exhibition contained 3,080 exhibits displayed in sixteen galleries at Burlington House (Figs.9–11). In the exhibition catalogue, Laurence Binyon (1869–1943),⁴ one of the exhibition's organisers, introduced the predominantly Western audience to Chinese art history. It was necessary to understand, he noted, that Chinese art is able to 'transcend the world of sense and to speak in some subtle and secret way to the emotions of the spirit'.⁵ Binyon's introduction prepared visitors to experience the works aesthetically, historically, intellectually and spiritually.

Several national and international socio-political factors affected the planning and realisation of the exhibition. The last half-century of China's Qing dynasty (1644–1911) witnessed a steady deterioration of traditions that extended back two thousand years to the time of the first Chinese emperor during the Qin dynasty (221–207 B.C.). At the close of China's final dynasty, long-established Confucian philosophical aspirations – tranquillity, harmony and ethical relationships – failed to stem transformations in Chinese intellectual, social, political and economic realms. Qing dynasty officials were cognisant of the alarming rates at which Western and Asian industrial states were destabilising the traditional imperial power structures. Around 1861, in order to acquire new tech-



9. Plan of the galleries for the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* at Burlington House, 1935–36. (Adapted from the catalogue, p.xxiii).

nologies and models for political statecraft, the Qing leadership initiated a policy of 'self-strengthening' (*zhiqiang*), formulated to adapt and incorporate new intellectual, social, political and economic standards without directly challenging established Chinese systems of imperial rule, societal norms and Confucian ideals. Imperial officials and select groups of students were sent abroad for training in the belief that they would return to China and establish new political institutions and university programmes.

However, rather than helping to bolster the Qing dynasty, the 'self-strengthening' movement gave rise to critical revolutionary-minded leaders, most notably Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), Chiang Kai-shek (1888–1975) and Mao Zedong (1893–1976). Sun, Chiang and Mao exposed the movement's inability to profit from industrial technologies, or to reform

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¹ There were loans from China, Austria, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Japan, Korea, Russia, Sweden, Turkey, the United States, the City of Danzig and Great Britain; see *Annual Report from the Council of the Royal Academy to the General Assembly of Academicians and Associates for the Year 1937*, London 1938, p.30.

² As well as the official catalogue, *The International Exhibition of Chinese Art*, London (Royal Academy) 1935–36 (hereafter cited as London 1935–36), which was edited by F. St George Spendlove (assistant secretary to the exhibition), the exhibition gener-

ated related publications, including F.T. Cheng: *Civilization and Art of China: Lectures*, London 1936, and C.F. Kelly: *The Chinese Exhibition in London*, La Salle 1936. As well as publishing a spate of articles on the Chinese exhibition between December 1935 and February 1936, *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 67 (1935) printed an Advertisement Supplement of 'Notable Works of Art Now on the Market' which included five Chinese pieces. The preamble ran: 'The close of 1935 will ever be associated, in the annals of connoisseurship, with the opening of the great Exhibition of Chinese Art at Burlington House. As long as it has existed, *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* has devoted particular attention to the arts of the Far East; and the present issue reflects all through the special interest, with which, at this moment all lovers of art turn to the past achievement of China. It is no more than natural, that among the

the government's legislation for education and the economy. The three agreed that European, American and Japanese powers epitomised the advantages of modernisation, although each stressed different ways in which China should react to them. In support of their criticism of the West and aspirations for their own country, they cited China's traumatic experiences and deteriorating domestic conditions caused by the opium trade, territorial losses, economic collapse and military defeats at the hands of European, American and Japanese powers.

In constructing diplomatic relationships between the East and West, as well as between China and neighbouring East Asian nations (particularly Japan), Sun, Chiang and Mao formulated an agenda for revolutionary change that involved art, archaeology and politics. During the 1935–36 exhibition, the leaders of China's governing body, known as the Executive Yuan, which included Chiang, sought to benefit from the exhibition's vast international audience by publicising their idea of China's political status.

Two factors are important in understanding the political undercurrents between China and Japan during the 1935 exhibition. Following the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, Japan was granted control over former German territories in mainland China in present-day Shandong province. Although these territories were returned to Chinese control within the next few years, the governments of China and Japan gained valuable experience of international legal negotiations as well as pursuing nationalistic goals. Second, from 1932 to 1945, the Japanese seized the area called Manchukuo, previously known as Jehol province (the present-day autonomous region of Inner Mongolia) where they attempted to establish regional colonial rule.

It is well known that the Japanese led excavations both in China and Korea before the exhibition of 1935–36.⁶ Following the imperialist pattern of mapping out lands that had recently come under a new political power, Japan set out to record and explore its new territories scientifically; new regional boundaries were drawn, natural resources were mined and archaeological sites were methodically excavated, documented and published. The circulation of new archaeological material became a useful component in the justification of imperial hegemony.⁷

Given China's experiences with European and American imperial concessions during the final decades of the Qing dynasty, Sun, Chiang and Mao understood all too well the ramifications of the early twentieth-century encroachment by the Japanese into mainland China.⁸ Throughout the nineteenth century England, France and the United States had dominated China militarily, which enabled them to extract



10. Entrance to the exhibition: Vestibule and Central Hall. (Photograph courtesy of the Royal Academy of Arts, London).



11. Ancient bronzes and jades displayed in Gallery I: Shang-Yin and Chou dynasties. (Photograph courtesy of the Royal Academy of Arts, London).

works of art surveyed in the present section, the Chinese items should this year be more numerous and important than ever before; and, yielding to a sense of fitness, it is with these that, on the present occasion, we shall commence our survey'.

³ London 1935–36, p.xvii.

⁴ After over forty years' service at the British Museum, Binyon retired in September 1933. He had built up the Museum's collections of Chinese and Japanese art and established the sub-department of oriental prints and drawings in 1913; see J. Hatcher: 'Binyon (Robert) Laurence (1869–1943)', in H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison, eds.: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford 2004; www.oxford.dnb.com.

⁵ London 1935–36, p.xvii.

⁶ For example, see Toa Koko Gakkai: 'Hung-shan-hou, Ch'ih-fêng: Prehistoric Sites at Hung-shan-hou, Ch'ih-fêng in the Province of Jehol, Manchukuo', *Archaeologia orientalis* A, 6 (1938). For Japan's earlier excavations in Korea, see Harada Yoshito: *Lo-lang: A Report on the Excavation of Wang Hsü's Tomb in the Lo-lang Province, An Ancient Chinese Colony in Korea*, Tokyo 1930.

⁷ E. Said: *Orientalism*, New York 1979, discusses similar scenarios of imperialist power in the Middle East.

⁸ European and American powers had previously forced China to concede territories in which foreigners enjoyed extra-territorial rights that allowed foreign nationals to be governed separately from China's own legal codes.



12. Photograph of C.T. Loo, 1940s. (Courtesy of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art Archives, Kansas City).

treaties favourable to their own political and economic interests. The three leaders had already witnessed Western government-backed archaeological expeditions in China, beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing through the early decades of the twentieth century.⁹ Aurel Stein (1862-1943), Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) and Langdon Warner (1881-1955) all led expeditions to China under the auspices of archaeological explorations on behalf of their countries and collecting institutions, respectively the British Museum, the Musée Guimet, Paris, and Harvard University.¹⁰

These archaeological digs and art-collecting expeditions were sanctioned by imperial treaties and directly supervised by foreign governments and academic institutions. Chinese art, and by extension China, was defined in terms set by the foreign powers. Foreign publications on Chinese archaeology and the arts were both the result of, and the justification for, colonial rule in China. Sun, Chiang and Mao undoubtedly realised the potential for political authority that could be provided by means of archaeology and the arts since they witnessed them first hand in China. They were also made aware of foreign discourses defining China which were circulating abroad by returning government officials and newly trained university students.

The Royal Academy's exhibition was the culmination of a series of shows of Chinese art held before and after the First World War. A review of these earlier exhibitions reveals their competitive, almost nationalistic, nature. Each catalogue noted the existence of earlier shows as well as actively promoting its own as an improvement (and often as an enlargement in terms of the total number of exhibits) on its predecessors. In 1925, an international loan exhibition of Chinese art was co-ordinated and presented in Amsterdam by the Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst (Society of Friends of Asiatic Art).¹¹ This Society, founded in 1918, had staged two previous Asian art exhibitions in 1919 and 1922. The 1925 exhibition was held in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and included 212 carefully chosen objects. Members of the Society lent from their personal collections and pooled their knowledge, wealth and social connections to organise the show. Only a few years after the First World War, the Society was able to secure loans from prominent foreign museums, such as the Musée Cernuschi and Musée d'Extrême-Orient (Palais du Louvre) in Paris and the Ostasiatische Kunstsammlung in Berlin. Private collectors, including George Eumorfopoulos (1863-1939) in London and Adolphe Stoclet (1871-1949) in Brussels, also agreed to lend.¹² Eumorfopoulos and Sir Percival David (1892-1964) and scholars such as Otto Kummel (1874-1952) from the Berliner Museen and Robert Lockhart Hobson (1872-1941)¹³ of the British Museum attended the opening ceremonies and later were to play significant roles in the development of the conceptual framework of the Burlington House exhibition.¹⁴ The success of the 1925 exhibition gave the Vereniging the funds and confidence to advocate the establishment of a museum of Asian art in the Netherlands, which was eventually realised in 1932 (and now forms part of the Rijksmuseum's collections).

A year later, an exhibition devoted to Asian art was organised in Cologne under the auspices of the Freunde Ostasiatischer Kunst (Friends of East Asian Art).¹⁵ The organisers invited the noted historian of Chinese art Alfred Salmony (1890-1958) to edit the catalogue.¹⁶ The Cologne exhibition was also the first exhibition in Germany following the First World War to succeed in borrowing a large number of objects from other European institutions including the Musée Cernuschi and Musée Guimet in Paris, as well as private collectors including Eumorfopoulos, and dealers such as the Paris-based C.T. (Ching Tsai) Loo (1880-1957; Fig.12) and the London-based Sadajiro Yamanaka (1865-1936). This in turn led to the acquisition of some of the exhibited works by collectors and institutions, such as a wall painting now at

⁹ For Western archaeological undertakings in China, see Xiaoneng Yang: 'A History of Chinese Archaeology', in *idem: The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology: Celebrated Discoveries from the People's Republic of China*, New Haven and London 1999, pp.25-45.

¹⁰ Stein had British citizenship, Pelliot was French and Warner was American; see A. Stein: *Ancient Khotan: Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan Carried out and Described under the Orders of H.M. Indian Government*, Oxford 1907; *idem: Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China*, London 1912; P. Pelliot: *Les Grottes de Touen-Houang: peintures et sculptures bouddhiques des époques des Wei, des T'ang et des Song*, Paris 1914-24; L. Warner: 'Chinese Expedition 1923-24', *Fogg Art Museum Notes* 2, no.1 (April 1925), pp.3-18.

¹¹ H.F.E. Visser, ed.: *exh. cat. The Exhibition of Chinese Art of the Society of Friends of Asiatic Art, Amsterdam*, Amsterdam (Stedelijk Museum) 1925; the exhibition ran from 13th September to 18th October 1925.

¹² See P. Lunsingh Scheurleer: *Asiatic Art in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*, Amsterdam 1985, pp.9-13.

¹³ Hobson worked at the British Museum from 1897 to 1938, when he held the post of Keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities and Ethnography. He served on the Consultative Committee of THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE from 1911 and published the catalogue of Eumorfopoulos's collection between 1925 and 1928; see his obituary in *ibid.* 79 (1941), p.30.

¹⁴ Lunsingh Scheurleer, *op. cit.* (note 12), p.12.

¹⁵ A. Salmony: *Asiatische Kunst: Ausstellung der Vereinigung der Freunde Ostasiatischer Kunst, Köln, Oktober-November 1926*, Cologne 1926. A commemorative illustrated book was published later; *idem: Asiatische Kunst Ausstellung Köln 1926*, Munich 1929.

¹⁶ Alfred Salmony was a distinguished scholar of Chinese and Japanese art. Hungarian-born, from 1921 to 1933 he was curator of the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in

the Art Institute of Chicago (Fig. 13).¹⁷ Nearly six hundred exhibits from Burma, Cambodia, China, Japan, Java, India and Nepal were shown to illustrate each region's most important historical and creative epochs.

In 1929 the Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst and the Preussische Akademie der Künste organised the exhibition *Ausstellung Chinesischer Kunst* in Berlin.¹⁸ The Gesellschaft had been established in January 1926 and boasted over one thousand members by the time the exhibition opened.¹⁹ It promoted a variety of lectures, exhibitions and publications, and co-ordinated publications with the *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, Germany's leading East Asian scholarly journal. Accompanied by a 458-page illustrated catalogue with a foreword by Otto Kummel, the exhibition included 1,272 exhibits on loan from 171 public and private collections and from dealers in thirteen countries. Although the vast majority of works came from Europe, others were lent from Asia and North America. The Berlin exhibition was six times larger than the Amsterdam show and twice the size of the one held in Cologne. Its lecture series included well-known scholars such as the Swedish archaeologist Johan Gunnar Andersson (1874–1960), R.L. Hobson, Bernard Rackham (1876–1964) of the Victoria and Albert Museum and Walter Perceval Yetts (1878–1957).²⁰

The Vereniging van Vrienden der Aziatische Kunst in Amsterdam and the Freunde Ostasiatischer Kunst in Cologne built the foundations for future museum collections and national academic associations. The rapid growth in the number of members within the first few years of both organisations suggests that, although the founder members were financially secure, well educated and seasoned travellers, the organisations opened up the membership to a wider audience, particularly to scholars and art dealers. These local organisations quickly evolved into national and international promoters of Chinese art and archaeology through their growing series of publications, lectures and exhibitions.

Given the prevalent spirit of competitiveness and the claims of local and national pride, the mounting of such exhibitions became increasingly complex as the number of objects and costs multiplied. While membership fees and donations covered their operating costs, these organisations had to generate additional financial resources. One source of funds was provided through the direct involvement of art dealers in the exhibitions by inviting them to lend works as well as to advertise in the accompanying catalogues. For example, the catalogue of the Berlin show included twenty-two pages of advertisements along with twenty-eight announcements from dealers in Chinese art with offices throughout Europe, North America and Asia.

Cologne. From 1934 to 1936 he taught at Mills College in Oakland, California, and mounted major exhibitions of Chinese and Japanese art.

¹⁷ Both Loo and Yamanaka had offices in London; Loo also had representatives in New York, Beijing and Shanghai, while Yamanaka had staff in New York, Boston, Chicago, Osaka and Beijing. For the wall painting at the Art Institute of Chicago, see Salmony 1926, *op. cit.* (note 15), no. 280; and *idem* 1929, *op. cit.* (note 15), p. 63 and pl. 70. These are the earliest records of the painting's provenance; see S. Little: 'Early Chinese Paintings in The Art Institute of Chicago', *Museum Studies: The Art Institute of Chicago* 22–23 (1996–97), pp. 36–53.

¹⁸ The exhibition ran from 12th January to 2nd April 1929; for the illustrated catalogue, see exh. cat. *Ausstellung Chinesischer Kunst*, Berlin (Preussische Akademie der Künste) 1929 (hereafter cited as Berlin 1929). A revised and enlarged commemorative catalogue limited to an edition of three hundred copies and including black-and-



13. Wall painting fragment with Bodhisattva figure. Five Dynasties period, Later Zhou dynasty, c.952 A.D. 84.5 by 57.2 cm. (Art Institute of Chicago).

Several forces combined to make the Burlington House exhibition the largest yet held. The collectors based in London, such as Eumorfopoulos and David, as well as London-based dealers such as Loo and Yamanaka, who had already lent to the earlier shows, made common cause with museum curators and academics. With well over three thousand exhibits, the London exhibition dwarfed the 1929 Berlin show which, in its turn, had trumped the Cologne and Amsterdam exhibitions, although these earlier shows still rank among the largest exhibitions of Chinese art ever held and included a large number of objects that were later selected for the London exhibition, including those from the Eumorfopoulos collection (Fig. 14).²¹

white and colour photographs appeared later; O. Kummel, ed.: exh. cat. *Chinesische Kunst: zweihundert Hauptwerke der Ausstellung der Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst in der Preussischen Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 1929*, Berlin 1930. The catalogue was physically impressive, measuring 42 by 32 cm.; for a review of the exhibition, see W.P. Yetts: 'Chinese Art in Berlin', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 54 (1929), pp. 128–39.

¹⁹ *Idem*: 'Exhibition of Chinese Art in Berlin', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 61 (1929), p. 337.

²⁰ Yetts lived in China in his youth and was a pioneer in the study of archaic bronzes. He was the founding Professor of Chinese Art and Archaeology at the Courtauld Institute (1931–46) and published regularly in *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE*; see his obituary in *ibid.* 99 (1957), pp. 313–14.

²¹ This bronze vessel was no. 260 in London 1935–36; no. 4 in Berlin 1929; and no. 1 (col. pl. L) in Visser, *op. cit.* (note 11).



14. Ritual wine vessel in the shape of a pair of rams supporting a jar. Shang dynasty period, thirteenth–twelfth centuries B.C. 43.2 cm. high. (British Museum, London).

In the aftermath of the First World War it had been difficult to secure loans from other European states. Loans from China were even rarer because of its geographical distance and the political revolutions that led to the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911. The 1929 Berlin exhibition included only three works lent from China – from a European collector in Qingdao (Tsingtao), who sent three ceramics dated to the Song dynasty (960–1279).²² Thus, the extent to which the London organisers aggressively sought works from foreign collections, especially from China and Japan, was a major innovation. To mount such an ambitious exhibition required scholarship, but also business and financial acumen, and the entrée into both private and public collections of Chinese art.

In London, the Burlington Fine Arts Club had among its members many collectors, curators and connoisseurs of Chinese art who later served as the chief organisers, lenders and promoters of the 1935–36 exhibition. The Club was a private organisation founded in 1856 (when it was known as the Collectors Club) to promote art exhibitions ranging from Italian old masters to Asian art. Throughout the late nineteenth century the number of Chinese and other Asian art exhibitions increased,²³ and by the early twentieth century the Club was publishing high-quality catalogues, some of which included colour plates. In 1910 Eumorfopoulos, Sir Charles Hercules Read (1857–1929)²⁴ and Hobson prepared an exhibition of early Chinese pottery and porcelain for the Club.²⁵ This was accompanied by two descriptive catalogues, one illustrated with colour and black-and-white plates and one with text

²² The ceramics loaned from the German concession of Qingdao were from the K. Schirmer collection, nos. 511, 512 and 517.

²³ Exhibitions of Asian art were held in 1878, 1888, 1894, 1895 and 1896. For an early account of the Club, see C. Dickens: *Dickens's Dictionary of London, 1879: An Unconventional Handbook*, London 1879, p.28; *Burlington Fine Arts Club: History, Rules, Regulations and Bye-laws, with List of Members 1912*, London 1912; and *History, Rules, Regulations and Bye-laws, Burlington Fine Arts Club*, London 1925. The National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, holds a typed manuscript detailing the Club's history; see *Draft History of the Burlington Fine Arts Club*, typescript no. MSL/1952/1360.

²⁴ Read worked at the British Museum for over forty years and was President of the Society of Antiquaries; he also served on the Consultative Committee of THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE; see his obituary in *ibid.* 54 (1929), pp.153–54.

only. The expansion of the Club's publications showed its commitment to making significant contributions to the field of Chinese art history, such as generating momentum for the development of the Oriental Ceramic Society of London (founded 1921), and was thus in line with developments in other European centres.

The chief organisers of the 1935 exhibition included Eumorfopoulos, David and Hobson. Eumorfopoulos brought a wealth of experience to the project, particularly in the production of publications, as well as an understanding of the protocols necessary for successfully arranging an international loan show on this scale. The committee travelled to inspect works before their selection (Fig.15), co-ordinated international loan agreements, loan fees, insurance, packing, shipping, photography, publications, publicity, exhibition design, conservation, installation, formal openings, symposia and lectures, as well as the return packing and shipping.

Another extraordinary phenomenon of the 1935 exhibition was the generous co-operation of the Chinese government. The Executive Yuan worked closely with their counterparts in the British government to ensure that the country's loan of 984 objects from national museums, libraries and other institutions would be safely delivered to London and returned intact. It described its decision as follows:

In October, 1934, the Executive Yuan decided that we should send some of our national art treasures to the International Exhibition of Chinese Art to be held in London from November, 1935, till March, 1936. Our sole aim in so doing is to make the West appreciate the beauty of Chinese Art. An Organizing Committee was accordingly set up to carry this aim into effect. And since it is of the utmost importance that a proper selection of exhibits should be made, the Organizing Committee appointed a special Subcommittee of Experts to take charge of this part of its work. After a friendly exchange of opinions with the members of the English Selection Committee, such a selection has now been completed.

The exhibits selected comprise Bronze, Porcelain, Painting, Calligraphy, Jade, Carvings in Bed Lacquer, Cloisonné, etc. The period covered by the exhibits is from the earliest times till 1800 A.D.

The exhibits are from the Palace Museum, the National Museum, the Academia Sinica, the Honan Museum, and the Anhwei Provincial Library. Most of them come from the Palace Museum and the National Museum.²⁶

Before the loans were shipped to London, the Chinese Organizing Committee exhibited most of the works in

²⁵ Exh. cat. *Exhibition of Early Chinese Pottery and Porcelain*, London (Burlington Fine Arts Club) 1910. The Club sponsored another exhibition of Chinese art in 1915; see exh. cat. *Catalogue of a Collection of Objects of Chinese Art*, London (Burlington Fine Arts Club) 1915, and review by A. Clutton-Brock in THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE 27 (1915), pp.114–24 and 158–68.

²⁶ The Chinese Organizing Committee: *Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Government Exhibits for the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London*, Shanghai 1936 (hereafter cited as Shanghai 1936), I, p.iv.

²⁷ The Chinese Organizing Committee: *The International Exhibition of Chinese Art: Catalogue of Exhibits at The Preliminary Exhibition in Shanghai*, Nanking 1935 (hereafter cited as Nanking 1935). This remains among the largest loan exhibitions of Chinese art in China.

²⁸ The entries for each section numbered 108 for Bronze, 314 for Porcelain, 173 for

Shanghai (8th April to 1st May 1935) and published a catalogue.²⁷ Written in English and supplemented with a Chinese text, this unillustrated publication included 753 entries divided into four sections: Bronze, Porcelain, Painting and Calligraphy, and Miscellaneous.²⁸ Detailed information on object type, date, historical and archaeological provenance and historical value was given for each of the bronzes and porcelains. The Committee also published a four-volume cloth-bound *Illustrated Catalogue of Chinese Government Exhibits for the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London*, similar in outline to the paperback catalogue.²⁹ This publication was intended to promote the accomplishments of the newly established Institute of history and philology, Academia Sinica, an academy of scientists, archaeologists and historians working in China, some of whom had been trained abroad. Volume 4 included a report on the progress of archaeological work conducted by the archaeological section of the new Institute,³⁰ and described and illustrated recent archaeological undertakings in the period 1928–34 conducted at Yinxu, Anyang, Henan province and elsewhere, making the information available to an international audience.³¹

By highlighting Chinese scientific progress in archaeology, the Executive Yuan brought China to international attention. Chinese participation in the exhibition defined China on the Executive Yuan's terms and vied with Japan's hegemonic efforts in Manchukuo. Like the complex political manoeuvring that took place during the preparation of the Royal Academy's Italian exhibition in 1930,³² the 1935 Chinese exhibition was, from the Executive Yuan's perspective, nationalistic in its thematic construction. China's involvement with foreign governments and official institutions worldwide provided the opportunity to effect a greater balance of power in China and East Asia. The exhibition would provide a focus for public debate on the political, academic, social, economic and military predicament of China. The Executive Yuan took full advantage of the opportunities provided by the exhibition, including publications, news coverage and public speaking engagements.

A few years before the exhibition, the Chinese government had issued laws aimed at curtailing the exportation of Chinese antiquities, as well as developing governmental agencies, such as the National Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities, to deal with the problem.³³ The earliest laws date from 7th June 1930 and 3rd July 1931.³⁴ Recorded as the 'Law on the Preservation of Ancient Objects' and 'Detailed Rules for the Implementation of the Law on the Preservation of Ancient Objects', they suggest that the Executive Yuan was establishing a legal framework to control the national and



15. George Eumorfopoulos (left) and Robert Lockhart Hobson inspecting a Han dynasty limestone tomb casing slab at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Photograph taken before the 1935–36 exhibition. (Courtesy of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art Archives, Kansas City).

international market in Chinese art. Illegal excavation and smuggling by both locals and foreigners were acknowledged threats and underlined the Chinese government's inability to control activities within its own borders leading to humiliation at the hands of European, American and Japanese collectors. In an effort to establish control, the government reformulated policies dealing with the art markets both within China and beyond.

These concerted efforts can be better understood by taking account of the situation following the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. After the revolution and the attendant collapse of the economy, many former officials and upper-class collectors were forced to sell their art collections to the highest bidder. Cash in exchange for art and archaeological goods was commonplace throughout China, while the years immediately following 1911 are termed a golden age for the acquisition of Chinese art by European and, particularly, American private collectors, such as Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919), and public institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.³⁵ Late Qing dynasty imperial officials and upper-class collectors had long-standing relationships with traditional Chinese scholars and archaeologists.³⁶ The ability of officials and collectors to successfully combine political, 'archaeological' and collector/antiquarian endeavours helps to explain how and why Chinese 'fieldwork' was being conducted at a time when Western collecting expeditions were rampant throughout China. In this context, it is commendable

Painting and Calligraphy and 158 for Miscellaneous.

²⁹ Shanghai 1936.

³⁰ See Li Ji, ed.: *Anyang fajue baogao*, Beijing 1929–31 (I–III), Shanghai 1933 (IV). For the Institute, see Tu Cheng-sheng et al.: *Tradition and Innovation: A Guide to the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica*, Taipei 1998.

³¹ See Li Chi: *Anyang*, Seattle 1977; Kwang-Chih Chang: *Shang Civilization*, New Haven and London 1980. The excavations provided Paul Pelliot with new material for his public lecture 'The Royal Tombs of An-yang' given on 6th January 1936 at the Royal Society, Burlington House; see London 1935–36, p.xi.

³² See F. Haskell: 'Botticelli, Fascism and Burlington House – The "Italian Exhibition" of 1930', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 142 (1999), pp.462–72.

³³ Following 1930s fieldwork in China, Gustav Ecke (1896–1971) described the conservation, protection and restoration policies instated by the National Commission.

Ecke was interested in the restoration and protection work at the Buddhist cave temples on the Yi River at Longmen, Luoyang, Henan province; see G. Ecke: 'On a Wei Relief Represented in a Rubbing', *Monumenta Serica* 2 (1936–37), pp.205–07.

³⁴ See J.D. Murphy: *Plunder and Preservation: Cultural Property Law and Practice in the People's Republic of China*, Oxford 1995, p.183. For more on laws and Chinese antiquities, see *idem*: 'An Annotated Chronological Index of People's Republic of China Statutory and Other Materials Relating to Cultural Property', *International Journal of Cultural Property* 3, no.1 (1994), pp.159–67.

³⁵ For a detailed study on these and other American collectors, see W. Cohen: *East Asian Art and American Culture*, New York 1992.

³⁶ For archaeology in China, see Chen Xingcan: *Zhongguo shiqian kaoguxue shi yanjiu 1895–1949*, Beijing 1997; and Yang, *op. cit.* (note 9), pp.25–45.



16. F. St George Spendlove and F.T. Cheng making condition reports on objects in the exhibition. 1935. (Photograph courtesy of the Royal Academy of Arts, London).

that the Executive Yuan attempted to curtail the great exodus of works to private collectors both at home and abroad, as well as promoting the conservation and protection of their heritage.

Unlike the antiquarian archaeologists and collectors of the Qing dynasty, the Chinese Organizing Committee favoured the new generation of university-trained Chinese archaeologists who had studied in England, France, Germany, Sweden and the United States. The Executive Yuan placed such importance on lending generously to the Burlington House exhibition and on their involvement in its catalogue because it was attempting to establish an international identity based on credibility, control and intellectual leadership in the field of art as well as internal political and legal control. The Executive Yuan had supported expeditions of Chinese and foreign archaeologists working together, such as those led by the Swedish archaeologist Johan Gunnar Andersson.³⁷ Andersson had noted the co-operation between Chinese and foreign archaeologists working in China in the late 1910s and early 1920s, and explained China's decision to allow a Western team to lead the work: 'A powerful impetus to follow up the initial discoveries was the decision of the Directors of the Geological Survey Dr V.K. Ting and W.H. Wong, that, amongst the existing scientific institutions of the Chinese government, the Geological Survey is best prepared to carry on these field researches in a strictly topographic and stratigraphic manner'.³⁸ V.K. Ting (1887–1936), who had studied in Japan as well as in Britain – at Cambridge and Glasgow – during the 1900s, was the founder of the China Geological Survey and the 'Palaeontologia Sinica' series. W.H. Wong (1889–1971), who had studied in Belgium, was a leading

³⁷ J.G. Andersson: 'An Early Chinese Culture', *Bulletin of the Geological Survey of China (Dizhi zhuanbao)* 5, no.1 (October 1923), pp.1–68.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2.

³⁹ See *idem: Children of the Yellow Earth*, London 1934, pp.94–126, esp. p.88. The fossils of Beijing (Peking) Man date to 700,000 to 230,000 years B.C. For Andersson and V.K. Ting, see M. Fiskesjö and Chen Xingcan: *China before China: Johan Gunnar Andersson, Ding Wenjiang, and the Discovery of China's Prehistory*, Stockholm 2004. For an earlier biography of Ting (Ting Wen-chiang, or Ding Wenjiang), see Hu Shi: *Ding Wenjiang de zhuanji*, Taipei 1956. Ting arrived in England in 1904 and returned to China in 1911 after graduating from the University of Glasgow. Andersson's auto-



17. Bi disc with dragon motif. Eastern Zhou period, c.770–221 B.C. Jade, 16.5 cm. diam. (Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City).

professor of geology in China. In October 1926 he hosted a scientific and archaeological meeting just south-west of Beijing at Zhoukoudian village, attended by Andersson and Chinese and foreign archaeologists and the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden, to discuss the material related to Peking Man (*Homo erectus pekinensis*; originally *Sinanthropus pekinensis*), recently unearthed near the Longgushan Cave at Zhoukoudian, Fangshan, Beijing.³⁹

These amicable joint archaeological endeavours suggest that Chinese archaeology and art history were progressing at such a rate that the Chinese would soon assume the lead in scientific expeditions. From the late 1920s Chinese archaeologists no longer needed scientific or financial assistance from abroad: the Executive Yuan financed the excavation and subsequent publication of the Yinxu tombs dated to the Shang dynasty (c.sixteenth–eleventh centuries B.C.).⁴⁰ However, European powers were also aware of the national honour that accrued through their involvement in Chinese archaeological work. Research on Andersson and Ting shows that Swedish government officials were keenly aware that 'any scientific breakthrough and new discovery would benefit Sweden as a country, not just science in general'.⁴¹

biographical account of his close relationship with Ting discloses an adventurous friendship; see J.G. Andersson: *The Dragon and the Foreign Devils*, Boston 1928. W.H. Wong's full name in Pinyin romanisation is Weng Wenhao.

⁴⁰ See Li Ji, *op. cit.* (note 30).

⁴¹ Fiskesjö and Chen, *op. cit.* (note 39), p.32.

⁴² Zheng Foting was also known as T'ien-hsi Cheng. As a lawyer and judge, he published on the Chinese Supreme Court and criminal procedures during the 1920s as well as on Confucius, Chinese art and East–West relations; for his autobiography, see T'ien-hsi Cheng: *East and West: Episodes in a Sixty Years' Journey*, London and New York 1951.

18. *Twelve views of landscape* (detail), by Xia Gui. Active c.1220–c.1250. Handscroll, 28 by 230.5 cm. (Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City).



19. Cizhou ware flower vase with sgraffito decoration of a dragon. Northern Song dynasty, 960–1127. 56.8 cm. high; 25.4 cm. diam. (max). (Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City).



In its effort to couple governmental interests with archaeological and art-historical achievements, the Executive Yuan despatched F.T. Cheng (1884–1970) to London as the official Chinese representative at the events connected with the Burlington House exhibition.⁴² Cheng was a professor at Beijing University as well as an internationally trained legal expert (he was the first Chinese student to earn a law doctor-

ate abroad, at Cambridge University, and after the exhibition closed he was nominated as an international judge at The Hague). As the special commissioner of the Chinese government, he supervised the couriers delivering loans from China (Fig.16) as well as delivering eloquent public lectures during November and December 1935.⁴³ These perfectly integrated art and propaganda: while introducing his Western audience to ancient China he suggested that modern Chinese society and politics could be better understood through the works displayed at Burlington House. Despite the Chinese Organizing Committee's claim that 'Our sole aim in so doing is to make the West appreciate the beauty of Chinese Art', the political impetus behind the exhibition was not in doubt.⁴⁴ For example, Cheng ended his first lecture by noting that the 12th November 'happens to be the birthday of Dr Sun Yat Sen, Founder of our Republic'.⁴⁵ China was to be regarded as the intellectual and political equal of Western powers, and the West was being primed to form a new understanding of China's future domestic and international roles. Cheng's duties were to present China as an equal and modern participant in contemporary world events; not only did the Executive Yuan influence the content of his lectures and publications, the political body also ensured that its voice would be heard by London's international community of government officials and scholars.

Seventy years after the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* it is possible to see that the show was unparalleled even by today's 'blockbuster' Chinese exhibitions⁴⁶ and that it shared many of the specific characteristics that have come to define the 'blockbuster' show in the thirty years since the term was coined.⁴⁷ For example, the total number of exhibits – 3,080 objects – is still the largest ever to be lent to a Chinese art exhibition. The Royal Academy's accountants, Price, Waterhouse

⁴³ See Cheng, *op. cit.* (note 2).

⁴⁴ See Nanking 1935, p. iv.

⁴⁵ Delivered on 12th November 1935 to the China Society in Rhodes House, Oxford; see Cheng, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 18. Cheng's description of democracy and freedom in China reads: 'she [China] has been able by a revolution that was almost bloodless to adapt herself to the environment of the modern world'; see *ibid.*, p. 34. As China was defining itself to the outside world, Cheng was consciously equating the Executive Yuan's Kuomintang China with political models based on Western institutions.

⁴⁶ See Xiaoneng Yang, ed.: exh. cat. *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology*, Washington (National Gallery of Art) 1999; and E.S. Rawski and J. Rawson, eds.: exh. cat.

China: The Three Emperors 1662–1795, London (Royal Academy of Arts) 2006; see also Yang, *op. cit.* (note 9).

⁴⁷ For the concept of a 'blockbuster' exhibition, see J. Morris: 'Join the Queue', *Museums Journal* 103, no. 11 (November 2003), pp. 18–19; C. Gore: 'The History and Impact of the Blockbuster Exhibition, 1973–2003, in Britain and America', unpublished MA thesis (Courtauld Institute of Art, London, 2003); E. Barker: 'Exhibiting the Canon: The Blockbuster Show' in *idem*, ed.: *Contemporary Cultures of Display*, New Haven and London 1999, pp. 127–46; and R. Spear: 'Art History and the "Blockbuster" Exhibition', *The Art Bulletin* 68 (1986), pp. 358–59.

20. Advertisement for Spink & Son Ltd offering a carved lacquer jewel casket in the form of an imperial barge. The casket was exhibited in the exhibition, no.1672B. Advertisement section of *The Antique Collector* 7, no.3 (18th March 1936).



& Co., in their 'Statement of Receipts and Expenditure From 1st December, 1934, to 30th September, 1937' records expenses totalling £28,005 and receipts of £49,099.⁴⁸ Finally, international politics and state affairs played significant roles in the show, although the 'promoters' did not (or could not) foresee such an outcome.

The exhibition also served a variety of objectives in the art market, the museum world and the academic field. The selection of an object from a museum, dealer or private collection enhanced its pedigree while giving the owner increased recognition in the Chinese art community. Participating in the exhibition gave museums the chance to establish reputations that were to be of considerable importance after the Second World War and the political division in 1949 of China into two entities, Beijing and Taipei. For example, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, which had opened its doors to the public only in 1933, lent nearly thirty objects, several of which were of such high artistic quality that they gave the Museum instant credibility among larger and older Western museum institutions (Figs.17-19). The Nelson-Atkins Museum's collection helped fill a gap in the West for access to world-class examples of Chinese art.

Dealers in Chinese art were able both to lend to the exhibition and to advertise in the catalogue; as well as C.T. Loo and Sadajiro Yamanaka, other dealers who lent objects included Bluett & Sons, Peter Boode, Spink & Son Ltd (Fig.20) and John Sparks. Loo lent the colossal marble Amitabha Buddha (Fig.21) with inscribed lotus base (no.2360), dated to 585 A.D.



21. The Amitabha Buddha observed by an unknown man. Sui dynasty, 585 A.D. 580 by 203 cm. (British Museum, London; photograph courtesy of the Royal Academy of Arts, London).

in the Sui dynasty (581-618), which came from the Chongguang Temple in Hancui village, Hebei province. Loo presented the sculpture to the Chinese government which, in turn, donated it to the British Museum, where it now dominates the north staircase.⁴⁹ A provenance that involves a Chinese dealer based in London and New York, the largest Chinese art exhibition ever held and the British Museum epitomises the unique nature of the show.

The 1935-36 exhibition continues to hold its role as the pivotal event in Chinese art history, in which the social, economic, political and academic theatres in the West and East first became fully integrated. As such, it not only prompts us to reconsider other past exhibitions of Chinese art from a historical, political and economic perspective but, more importantly, may help us to understand the complexities and motivations that underlie more recent and future exhibitions in this or other comparable fields.

⁴⁸ *Annual Report from the Council of the Royal Academy to the General Assembly of Academicians and Associates for the Year 1937*, London 1938, pp.30-31. A financial success, the profit of £21,094 was divided evenly between the Royal Academy of Arts and the promoters of the exhibition (Sir Percival David, Sir George Hill, Sir Neill Malcolm, George Eumorfopoulos, R.L. Hobson and Oscar Raphael). Out of this surplus, the Royal Academy contributed £1,000 towards an acquisition fund that

eventually secured the Eumorfopoulos Chinese art collection which was later divided between the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

⁴⁹ Acc. no.1938.7-15.1; its label reads: 'Gift of the Chinese Government in memory of the Chinese exhibition in London 1935-36'. I thank Carol Michaelson, Keeper of Chinese Art at the British Museum, for generously advising me of the sculpture's provenance.