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PAGODE

Europeana China

**A contribution towards a different understanding  
of the binary relationships of East and West**

Europeana China

PAGODE



PAGODE Europeana China is rooted in the belief that the common care for cultural heritage knows no borders. Promoting further understanding of the cultural values of China and the cultural exchange between China and Europe allow cultural heritage institutions to connect and to share their collections and metadata across new sectors and countries. It offers the foundations for further reinterpretation of questions of the circulation, trade, collecting and display of Chinese art in modern Europe. Through the Europe-China relationship, from historical and contemporary perspectives, the diversified cultures can build a civilizational digital belt, facilitating connectivity between the European Union and China. Today, Chinese objects are considered as being among “the world’s leading global commodities”; they are not only the material expressions of specific cultures, but also reflect the social, ideational and economic values of the global market and embody socio-political interpretations of societies and individuals. The digital exhibition presented in this book aims to give new lens to the virtual visitors to discover, on Europeana, the Chinese heritage preserved by European memory institutions.



A contribution towards a different understanding  
of the binary relationships of East and West

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## **A contribution towards a different understanding of the binary relationships of East and West**

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## Foreword

George Manginis  
Academic Director, Benaki Museum

In the year 1792, the first-ever embassy of the United Kingdom to reach China arrived at the Court of the Qianlong Emperor in Peking; its head was George Macartney and his aim was to negotiate better trading terms and a permanent mission in China. The embassy went comically wrong. The emperor considered Macartney's presents to be tribute and an act of submission; back in the United Kingdom, Chinese gifts were deemed inferior as some had already been available in the West due to the East India Company trading from Guangzhou. The two countries knew each other in some ways but ignored each other in most other ways, as if they moved in parallel but on different planes of comprehension. The experience was not different from similar exchanges between the 'Celestial Empire' and other European countries. Further encounters during the ensuing century were more dramatic – and traumatic – as gunboat diplomacy, rather than gift-exchange, was called on to address the trade imbalance. In the twentieth century, increased mobility enabled people and goods to travel, crosspollinating inquisitive and creative minds, scholars and thinkers; all the while, collections of documents, books and works of art were formed, shedding light on the history, culture and current situation of both ends of the Eurasian landmass.

The early years of the twenty-first century offered opportunities for further contact, more crosspollination, and stronger light. The world-wide-web, an information repository used by billions, transformed the ways in which culture was created and accessed. If the Qianlong Emperor had to wait for Macartney to experience a Herschel telescope or a Wedgwood urn in the 1790s, he would just have to tap on a keyboard to satisfy his curiosity in the 2010s. However, challenges remain significant. Wide access is a major one; the ability to filter searches towards focused results is another; the ways in which these results can contribute to contemporary needs remains the biggest challenge. If the eighteenth century was an era of wonderment, the nineteenth the period of acquisitiveness and the twentieth the age of specialisation, the twenty-first century is the moment to make the best out of treasures already discovered, accumulated and interpreted.

An initiative like PAGODE – Europeana China fits the bill. Making available, through a well-established platform, the Chinese collections of European cultural and educational institutions, it surveys the field and facilitates delving into it. Researchers are the main beneficiaries but not the only ones. If the third decade of our century is to mark the transition from the economic state-of-mind of globalism to the cultural state-of-mind of cosmopolitanism, if we are to live in harmony alongside the 'billions of strangers' with whom we share the planet (to quote Kwame Anthony Appiah), culture is the way forward. The misunderstandings which made a failure of Macartney's embassy cannot be allowed to impede contact in the age of information oversaturation. The challenge is set and we, PAGODE partners, will prove good and generous ambassadors.

## Preface

Mauro Fazio  
PAGODE – Europeana China Project Coordinator  
Italian Ministry of Economic Development

Antonella Fresa  
PAGODE – Europeana China Technical Coordinator  
Promoter S.r.l.

PAGODE – Europeana China is a project co-funded by the European Commission under the Connecting European Facility Programme framework, to support the development of the Europeana initiative, which focuses on Chinese cultural heritage in Europe.

The project began in April 2020, with a duration of 18 months, under the coordination of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, and included the participation of Promoter and PostScriptum – two consultancy companies from Italy and Greece –, the Royal Institute of Cultural Heritage and United Archives – two digital archives from Belgium and Germany – and the Department of Asian Studies of the University of Ljubljana.

In addition to the partners of the EU funded project, a wide range of content providers from across Europe joined the project to contribute their digital archives, together with scholars from important academic and cultural heritage institutions who offered their reflection on the different values of the initiative.

This book documents a synthesis of the main outcomes of the project, providing an overview of the multitude of themes and disciplines that formed the basis of the work conducted by such a large consortium of partners.

The core objective of the PAGODE project is to contribute towards the generation of a rich user experience, and high audience engagement with Europeana, by proposing a thematic approach to the aggregation, curation and presentation of Chinese cultural related content that is hosted in European museums and cultural heritage institutions.

The book starts with Chapter 1 – Introduction that forms a collection of several key papers, designed to set the scene.

The first two questions of the chapter deal with connecting communities when tackling cultures that are often not well-known, and also what we mean by the term Chinese cultural content when looking into European memory institutions. These topics are addressed in the papers of Prof. Neil Forbes of Coventry University and also Prof. Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik and Dr. Maja Veselič of the University of Ljubljana. Prof. Forbes is a historian, coordinator of a series of projects dealing with the study and research of participatory approaches, the latest being the REACH Social Platform, funded under the Horizon 2020 programme, about re-designing access to cultural heritage for a wider participation in preservation, re-use and management of European culture. Prof. Vampelj Suhadolnik and Dr. Veselič are sinologists; applying a systematic multidisciplinary approach, they provide a critical understanding of the main cultural determinants of the region under consideration, in their social context. The two papers Connecting with communities and Chinese and China-related cultural heritage in Europe allow the reader to gain an understanding of the work, and avoid becoming overwhelmed by the enormous amount and scope of Chinese cultural heritage that is collected in Europe and that has greatly influenced our cultural development over the centuries.

The next two questions addressed in the introductory chapter focus on the priority topic of access to the digital contents via Europeana. Here, two papers are provided: The value of aggregated collections by Prof. Frederik Truyen of KU Leuven and PAGODE in Europeana: fostering the Sino-European dialogue by Michelle Lewis, Milena Popova and Jan Wuyts of the Europeana Foundation. Prof. Truyen is an expert on

digitisation in the cultural heritage and digital humanities sectors, and is also President of Photoconsortium. In his paper, he introduces the role that digitisation, metadata creation and the adoption of controlled vocabularies play in the discovery of hidden treasures, as has happened in PAGODE project. The paper from the Europeana Foundation tackled the core issues of this book, by looking at the interaction of European cultural heritage with other cultures and societies around the world, and at the space of dialogue that Europeana can offer.

It would have not been possible to undertake such an exciting project experience without thorough preparation. The preparatory steps that led to the concept of PAGODE project are illustrated in the very personal narrative of Kostas Konstantinidis, CEO of PostScriptum. With a title that cites the words of Confucius “To know the road ahead, ask those coming back”, the paper describes his initial encounters in China and why we found it so important to start our ‘digital journey’ via Europeana, throughout Chinese cultural related contents.

Having defined how the PAGODE project was developed, Chapter 2 – Chinascares presents a ‘complementary’ catalogue of the digital exhibition that is accessible via Europeana. We call it ‘complementary’ because the experience of browsing a digital exhibition is different from the traditional visit to a physical exhibition. The digital exhibition, available online through the Europeana portal, provides access to content and the associated stories that are embedded into the general Europeana experience, based on hyperlinks and connections with its full content space, made up of tens of millions of cultural digital objects. In contrast, the Chinascares chapter of this book provides, instead, a curated selection of the best quality pictures from the 11 content providers that participated in the project. This selection comprises four sections: arts, inventions, legacy and reflection. Each section is articulated in turn into diptychs through which we hope to hint at the vastness of what Chinese cultural heritage entails.

The four sections are followed by a curiosity, what we called the Duos. During her research, Sofie Taes of KU Leuven, the curator of the digital exhibition and of the Chinascares chapter, encountered examples of imagery in Europeana where similar photographic poses and objects representing the human body, settings of landscape and drawings, architectural shapes and details seemed to indicate common elements, as if this culture had inspired common themes to appear in new and varied destinations.

Chapter 3 – Content Providers highlights the 11 archives, libraries and museums that participated in the PAGODE project, from 9 European countries, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Switzerland, representing both public and private institutions. Many of these institutions have participated in Europeana initiatives for many years, although others have joined more recently. We should note that all of the partners enjoyed their experience of working on this project and are eager to continue the collaboration further. We are particularly proud to mention the collaboration with the Benaki Museum in Athens, the KADOC Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society of KU Leuven in Belgium, the Leiden University Libraries, the Historic Museum of Lausanne, the Finnish Heritage Agency Museovirasto in Helsinki, the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen and Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam, the Promoter Digital Gallery in Pisa, the Royal Institute for Cultural in Brussels, the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana, the International Center for Information Management Systems and Services in Torun, and United Archives in Cologne.

The Annexes offer additional information and an invitation to consider this book, and the PAGODE project, as the first step of a longer journey, made up of encounters with Chinese institutions, and in depth individual stories that belong to a vast variety of cultural collections preserved by European institutions, plus a selection of useful online references.

The title of the last paper Connections: images from China by Prof. Alessandro Tosi of University of Pisa, Director of Museo della Grafica of Palazzo Lanfranchi, closes this book. The paper tells the story of encounters, journeys and exhibitions related to Chinese art and their combination with the imagery of the Italian art, which happened in Italy, and in Pisa in particular, since the fifties: “connections to know and to know each other”. We had chosen, for these reasons, the Museo della Grafica in Pisa to host the PAGODE – Europeana China exhibition, but unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis made it impossible. Despite the pandemic that prevented partners from meeting and physically exhibiting our results, this book provides both the physical legacy of the PAGODE project, and an invitation to continue together on this journey.





## Chapter 1

# Introduction

# Connecting with communities

Prof. Neil Forbes  
Coventry University

Questions of identity, and especially cultural identity, form a key part of the public discourse around the conceptualisation of the nation. In recent times, some commentators and political actors have criticised the pervasive influence of globalisation because it is perceived as a force that acts to dilute national identity – however that is defined – and thereby weaken the nation state. However, from the perspective of the historian, globalisation is anything but a recent phenomenon: indeed, if trade between geographically distant parts of the world is taken to be the cornerstone of globalisation, it could be argued that humankind has engaged in such exchanges ever since the coming of agrarian societies.

This is not to argue, of course, that nations are without distinctive identities, made up of a mixture of historical events, customs and traditions, socio-legal norms and values, and many other features. But, when conceptualisations of identity incorporate claims that purity, uniqueness or exceptionalism are the hallmark of a nation's culture, constructing a national narrative may be characterised as little better than myth-making. This throws into sharp relief the responsibilities carried by institutions that are key transmitters of ideas and knowledge related to culture – not least those institutions such as museums that are repositories of artefacts of one kind or another. In addition to caring for collections through conservation and preservation work, those responsibilities frequently include research functions and educational outreach activities. Although controversy and even conflict has always accompanied the debates around the role of museums in society, the challenges facing collection-holding institutions have never seemed greater. Apart from current concerns over how to recover from the pandemic, museums face increasing calls to examine their policies with a critical detachment and play an effective part in promoting values of diversity and inclusivity, and countering demagoguery that espouses intolerance and nativism.

The public realm, especially in European countries, comprises a plurality of different communities – whether characterised by ethnicity, socio-economic factors, sexual orientation, or on some other basis. Bridging the gaps that exist between museum collections of various kinds and different communities' forms, therefore, a fundamental part of the values and mission of museums. When collections involve what might be called in broad terms 'world cultures', and many museums across Europe were a product of the age of empire or otherwise hold collections that are a legacy of empire, ethical considerations are foregrounded. Not least of the concerns facing museums is the controversial question of restitution or repatriation of cultural artefacts that were acquired, especially through violent means, under the jurisdiction of colonial administrations.

But cultural institutions are neither less, nor more, than a reflection of society; they are representative of, and reflect, the complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions which are self-evidently to be found in the diverse and heterogeneous nature of contemporary society. To take just one example: in a globalised world, one manifestation of what political commentators call 'culture wars' is the distinction between some affluent citizens for whom 'place' and 'citizenship' have relatively little meaning, and those in society who are far from affluent, and for whom 'place' carries a great deal of meaning. In the latter case, citizens with an ethnic minority background may identify both with the place where they live and their diasporic homeland.

It is in this context that the museum must attempt to engage, as far as it is able, with this complexity – to communicate for the purposes of explaining, contextualising, and exchanging knowledge about collections in a way that resonates with the public in general and especially with relevant communities. The co-design of the environment in which collections are held, exhibited, and made accessible, especially by embracing digital media, are key requirements if cultural diversity and multi-identity are to be respected. The environment may be contested ground, but only through engagement and participation can such issues as representation, interpretation, and ownership be mediated and even resolved.

# Chinese and China-related cultural heritage in Europe

Maja Veselič and Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik,  
University of Ljubljana

Deciding what is heritage is always an inherently political project. Defining something as heritage accords significance to it, it brings attention and promises preservation. It is an act of inclusion, yet at the same time it is also – intentionally or not, a tool of exclusion. As a boundary-drawing process, heritage is always an interpretation of the past from the position of the present and is thus inevitably bound up with the questions of power. These may relate to issues of gender, class, ethnicity, nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism. The more culturally and socially diverse societies are, the more convoluted the arguments may be of what counts as heritage and whose heritage it is. In politically conflicting situations, subsuming the past of one community into that of another may be viewed as an act of domination and appropriation.

In the PAGODE – Europeana China project this negotiation of what is considered as Chinese cultural heritage in Europe is to some extent guided by the practical goals of the project – digitization of content provided by partner and associate partner institutions, crowd-sourced annotation and automatic enrichment of the targeted number of Europeana records. Underlying this, however, is a broader concern of how to move beyond the simplistic approach of “something from there – China that found itself here (European heritage institutions).”

## Europe-China Spaces: Three Types of Flows

To avoid some of the pitfalls indicated above, our starting position is to approach Europe and China not as two clearly delineated, discrete, separate entities, but as a space of diverse interactions and rich exchanges throughout history. Although a more global circulation of goods began with the rapid development of European economic power and the strengthening of maritime contacts in the 17th and 18th centuries, trade between the two regions began much earlier – as early as the seventh and sixth centuries BC, when the Scythians obtained gold from the Tianshan Mountains. The exchange intensified especially in the period of Han dynasty and its contemporary counterpart of Roman Empire, which placed a high value on silk, spices and other Chinese products. For centuries, the flow of manufactured items from China to Europe was almost entirely one-way due to the advanced material and technical production in China. Over time, but especially since the 17th century, trade grew and enthusiasm for Chinese things gripped European society. However, it would be too narrow to assume the exchange of objects or the transfer of ideas or concepts from in one place to another can ever be simply one-sided; there has always been mutual interaction and exchange. While ships transported a huge number of different objects from China to Europe, carrying with them new ideas and concepts, there was also the transfer of different ideas and practices from Europe to China, most notably with the Jesuit missionaries in the 17th and 18th centuries and especially after the Opium Wars of mid-19th and subsequent developments in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In order to show this very diverse and rich exchange we use the well-established anthropological notion of flows to underline the connections and circulations between the two regions. Based on what is “on the move”, we address the Europe-China space through three main types of flows: (1) of objects, (2) of ideas and practices (knowledge) and (3) of people.

The flow of objects is probably most self-evident, as objects from China find themselves in European museums and galleries, libraries and archives. The routes of the objects to their current locations have been varied and the mapping of networks that enabled this movement (e.g. Silk Road, diplomatic and religious missions, maritime trade, art dealers and collectors), too, must be considered a part of this broadly envisaged understanding of Chinese and China-related cultural heritage in Europe.

This tripartite scheme further allows, even requires, the inclusion in the Chinese cultural heritage in Europe of the networks and individuals that enabled this movement of objects. Among these, there are Europeans who travelled to China for brief visits or longer stays – the most prominent groups include missionaries, traders, diplomatic and military personnel and adventurers –, those Chinese that settled in Europe temporarily or permanently, and those who became inhabitants of Western empires through the European colonial expansion, while at the same time instigating new waves of labour migration to Europe and other parts of the world. Anything that documents the lives of individuals and communities in the Europe-China space and offers a reflection on this intercultural connection is also considered as Chinese cultural heritage in Europe.

Both objects and people have been a vehicle for yet a third kind of exchange, that of ideas and practices (knowledge) – philosophical, aesthetic, bodily, culinary, and technical to name a few. This flow also allows for the inclusion of immovable heritage through rich textual, and audio/visual documentation of gardens, architectural and urban design, and archaeological excavation sites etc.

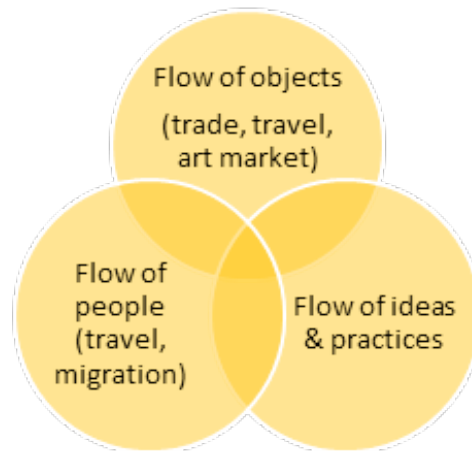


Fig.1: The three flows of interactions and exchange between China and Europe

The three flows are often inextricably intertwined - think of a doctor of traditional Chinese medicine who migrates to Europe to open his practice, bringing with him his books and his equipment as well as a new conception of body and mind, illness and cure. Nevertheless, it is useful to keep the three flows analytically distinct in order to foster a broader, more imaginative and more inclusive understanding of what constitutes Chinese or China-related cultural heritage in Europe.

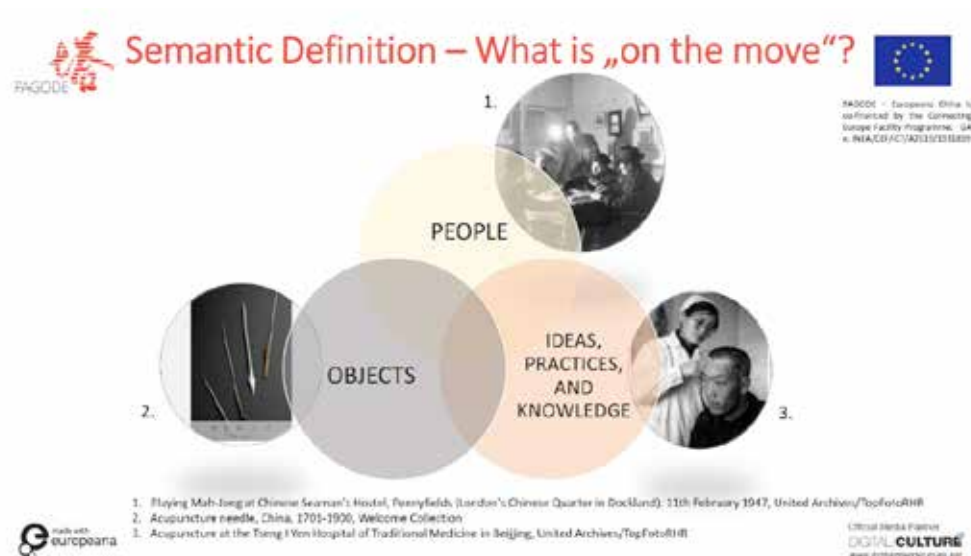


Fig. 2: Traditional Chinese Medicine as an example of the interlacing of the three flows (presentation slide)

### Defining China and its Heritage

Europe and China, of course, are not simple, self-evident geographical regions. They are entities with complex histories of waning and waxing political and cultural borders, with contested definitions of who belongs and who does not. Furthermore, the current understandings may differ significantly from those of the past, the past on which we are now imposing the label of heritage. For the purpose of the PAGODE project, Europe is defined by the scope of countries that are able to provide content to Europeana. In historical terms, it also encompasses colonies of those countries. On the other hand, China is defined in terms of the territories of all dynasties/states that identified themselves as Chinese and were acknowledged or recognized as legitimate governments in the traditional Chinese historiography.

In line with the above, any object produced in a place that was part of China at the time of its production can be considered at least partly Chinese regardless of who it was made by or whether it was intended for local consumption or for export. Moreover, it is still necessary to distinguish e.g. between the porcelain manufactured for use in China from that produced to be

sold abroad, or between the silk robe made locally to be worn by a Chinese courtier and a European dress made from a piece of silk woven in China. We therefore propose a distinction between “Chinese heritage” and “China-related” heritage, which is particularly salient in the analysis of objects.

Objects of “Chinese” heritage are those that were made in China, primarily from Chinese materials with Chinese technology, at least partly based on Chinese designs or aesthetic principles. Both types of ceramics mentioned above are thus included in this category. Objects that were made in China as (semi-)products and were processed elsewhere, such as the piece of silk fabric, however, are construed as “China-related” heritage. This “China-related” category is limited to pre-1978, i.e. before the period of the opening up of the People’s Republic of China and the subsequent move of large swaths of global industrial production there.

Objects, designs, and ideas and practices that were inspired by those in China represent another subcategory of “China-related” heritage. Chinoiserie with its imitation of Chinese motifs and techniques in art, architecture and design is the most prominent example of such heritage, but Leibniz’s philosophy, fusion kitchen or contemporary fashion designs are equally construed as China-related heritage in Europe.

In addition to the territorially based demarcation, “Chinese” further indicates anything written in the Chinese language and/or script. Texts or books that are written entirely or partly in Chinese language/characters (e.g. dictionaries) may be considered as Chinese heritage, no matter who authored them or where they were produced. Furthermore, Chinese cultural heritage in Europe includes translations of Chinese literary and non-fiction writing into European languages, but by analogy it can be broadened to include such translations into any other language. Books on any aspect of Chinese society and culture, written in foreign languages fall under China-related heritage.

In terms of people, defining “Chinese” is an extremely complicated and politically sensitive subject. In European languages, there tends to be no distinction between “Chinese” that connotes belonging to the political unit, i.e. the Chinese state(s) in all their historically diverse iterations, and “Chinese” denoting an ethnic group or a people that is defined by Chinese language and certain cultural practices. The two cannot be considered congruent and by equating them we impose one particular narrative on a very contested past. Contemporary China is ethnically remarkably diverse, as were its predecessors. Some of the groups which make up 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities in China today have historically formed large independent states, exerting political, economic, cultural influence in the larger Asian region. Others formed smaller political entities whose fortunes ebbed and flowed. Their relations with respective Chinese states were diverse, changing over time. Some of the groups consider themselves exclusively a part of China, others maintain strong emotional and political links with other countries. For these reasons, in this project the notion of Chinese people (as opposed to the people(s) of China) is limited to the majority ethnic group, including individuals and communities residing outside China as a result of either historical or recent migration. The notion of Chinese culture is, by extension, limited to the practices of Han and of sinicized non-Han rulers and other inhabitants of China.

To sum up, the definition of Chinese and China-related heritage elaborated above, is an attempt at historically and socially sensitive understanding of the rich material and ideational exchanges between Europe and China, highlighting transcultural dimensions, mutual influences and transformations. Our deliberations on the complex nature of what is Chinese further show how fraught with danger of imposition, appropriation, and exclusion unreflected use of such denotations may be. Throughout the development of this definition, we tried to strike a balance between the desire to include the wonderful, even extraordinary material held in our partners’ and associated partners’ institutions and a more cautious approach dictated by the insights of contemporary scholarship on heritage. Our initial arguments were refined in response to the partners’ queries and it is important to stress once again that this definition was primarily devised for the PAGODE – Europeana China project. Nevertheless, it is our hope that others may find it a useful in considering their own material.

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# The value of aggregated collections

Prof. Frederik Truyen  
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Photography is an overwhelming medium. The ease with which today a digital photograph can be taken, means that the number of circulating images must be close to Googolplex. Art photography takes up only a small fraction of this mass, while documentary photography is seemingly ubiquitous.

But photography also plays a key role in the digital representation of other (art) artefacts. Many museal collections are catalogued through photographic images. These almost never are strict one to one technical facsimiles, but often result from photographic interventions. These include actions involving the angle, distance, perspective, framing, and highlighting of the whole or a part of the object. Taking this as a point of departure, it makes sense to look at the way in which artefacts have been photographically represented throughout history. Photo libraries such as United Archives and archival institutions, such as KIK-IRPA, house virtual “museums of artefacts” that, once online, can rival established museum collections. In that sense, boundaries between heritage institutions are increasingly becoming blurred.

While artworks can be enjoyed in isolation, documentary evidence only becomes relevant when it is juxtaposed and combined with other documentation, to make the picture more complete. While displaying an artwork online is intended to draw you to the object, and in fact encourage you to visit it in real life, it becomes more interesting to display documentary photographs in context, as Lev Manovich famously did in his display of Time magazine covers. Looking at all of the designs next to one another, one can see patterns emerge, that open up new opportunities for interpretation.

By adopting common metadata standards of description, implementing thesauri and Linked Open Data, digital collections can be integrated into virtual exhibitions, galleries, and online stories. This is part of the labour-intensive, hidden work undertaken in GLAM institutions. It requires an interplay between scholarly work and the digitization workflow.

The PAGODE – Europeana China project is a very good example of such a practice: in a collaboration between university-based sinology scholars, photo archivists and researchers at heritage institutions, a controlled vocabulary has been developed to describe dispersed holdings of Chinese heritage artefacts in European collections.

While there is no substitute for the scholarly work of closely reading sources from a background of historiographic tradition – allowing us to give meaning to the events and creations documented – the problem that many archive holdings are still not catalogued, let alone described and interpreted, remains. Digitization of collections often has been a way to finally “unbox” the hidden treasures stored in the depots of museums and archives. While offering glimpses of physical exhibitions on a website, even in the highest resolution or 3D rendering, does not actually bring “new” material to the surface, digitising hitherto undisclosed collections does.

The European Commission recommendation of 27 October 2011 on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation triggered a huge digitization effort in the European Union, with many member states subscribing to bold mass digitization goals, allowing the Europeana portal [europeana.eu](http://europeana.eu) – the gateway to European digital heritage collections – to reach about 60 million digitized objects by 2020. Today, still, digitization is the focus of many GLAM institutions’ policies, even if stimulus programmes funding such activities have dried out.

However, it is not solely because sources have been digitized that they immediately become part of a new collective consciousness of the past: an intermediate step of curation is needed. In fact, an in-between layer has emerged, with aggregators and aggregation

platforms playing an important role in interfacing with the audience, in all its dimensions. While Google and social media have made it incredibly easy, even for a less informed amateur, to discover and explore the richness of cultural heritage, as we all know, unfiltered information can easily become distorted, selective, and mis-contextualised.

A good example is the so-called “Yellow Milkmaid Effect”. Appreciating the true colours and dimensions of this famous work by Dutch 17th century painter Johannes Vermeer would be a challenging task if only social media copies were available to the viewer. Furthermore: fake media are not limited to the 21st century, neither is fake news. There is, in other words, an urgent need for institutionally curated, validated heritage content online. Ever more, what originally were online catalogues or limited image galleries on GLAM websites, have become high resolution showrooms of carefully curated virtual exhibitions.

While linking becomes a new art of writing, navigating becomes a new art of reading. The story unfolds while we follow link after link to continuously recontextualise artefacts in adjacent contexts. So, a new domain of investigation opens up before us: besides the classical historical work of going into a specific collection in an archive, painstakingly dissecting the sources to unravel the underlying story, there is now a bird’s eye perspective that enables aggregated collections to be scanned, just by following links, as one would do on a Wikipedia page.

Two issues arise, however. The first one is that mass digitization creates a huge background noise. When a digitization process consists merely of scanning everything found in old archive boxes, the chances are that you end up with low-quality metadata and a lot of irrelevant sources. And when well described collections are available, often copyright issues stand in the way of online exploitation, as is usually the case with 21st century collections. This is why it often makes sense to perform targeted digitization of smaller, carefully selected subcollections, in close collaboration with curators, as has been done in the PAGODE project.

The second issue runs deeper. While a Wikipedia-web of content is ideal when retrieving required information, it cannot be compared to specifically designed learning materials. A student would easily become lost in a series of links pointing in myriad directions. Therefore, aggregating content and simply linking it through entities, does not suffice. You need to take the reader by the hand and tell a consistent story. This is exactly what so-called thematic aggregators, such as Photoconsortium do: they add a layer of curation to the aggregated content.

Once again, we end up alongside the classic humanities scholar, painstakingly “close reading” the materials and discovering new patterns, new similarities, new clusters of meaning to be shared with readers. The Europeana feature page on Chinese Heritage, provided by the PAGODE project to Europeana, is exactly this: a hub of stories that connect different collections together and weave a new narrative that comes directly from the source materials rather than relying on the historiographic tradition. I wish the reader an instructive online journey that will undoubtedly also prove to be inspiring!

# PAGODE in Europeana: fostering the Sino-European dialogue

Michelle Lewis, Milena Popova, Jolan Wuyts  
Europeana Foundation

European cultural heritage has been shaped by its interaction with other cultures and societies around the world. Europe's rich cultural history is closely intertwined with Chinese culture too, be it through acculturation, exchange, trade, imperialism, war, or otherwise. As an established digital service infrastructure aiming at democratising access to culture so that everyone in our society is empowered to embrace diversity and flourish, Europeana is well placed to be the platform that highlights the narratives of intercultural dialogue between Europe and China.

In 2018, the China National Center for Culture Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences 'CASS', Recursive Technology, PostScriptum and Europeana Foundation launched Europeana China - a joint initiative to promote the digital preservation of Chinese - Asian - European cultural heritage through digitisation of cultural resources, research and knowledge exchange.

The PAGODE – Europeana China project is aligned with this initiative and has explored further the cultural exchanges between Chinese and European societies throughout history by highlighting Chinese heritage objects in Europe's repositories. The project aggregated many new Chinese objects into Europeana and increased the discoverability of that content through crowdsourced and semantic enrichments. The project also encouraged engagement with Chinese cultural heritage through crowdsourcing campaigns and exciting editorial pieces. As a result, the PAGODE project has lowered the cultural barriers by creating a unique cross-border perspective, connecting existing digital historical resources between Europe and China.

## **Hidden content gems**

Nowadays, many European cultural heritage institutions hold a vast variety of Chinese cultural collections, such as artefacts and pottery; however, these are rarely the focus of institutions' physical exhibitions. The PAGODE project created the opportunity for these underappreciated collections to find a spotlight.

The PAGODE project supported European cultural institutions by providing digital access to more than 10,000 new cultural heritage objects related to Chinese heritage. It has also enabled the enrichment of over 20,000 existing objects in Europeana's database by using Linked Open Data Vocabularies, such as VIAF and Wikidata, and of another 2,000 records through crowdsourcing.

Beautiful new and high-quality collections have surfaced, offering new perspectives on Chinese society and its interaction with Europe. A collection of objects from the Finnish Heritage Agency preserved 19th century studio pictures. The United Archives released several collections of important pioneers of photography that captured China on their travels, such as Carl Simon. The Benaki Museum in Greece provided beautiful ceramics and other physical objects showing excellent Chinese artisanship. The Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen/Dutch National Museum of World Cultures also contributed thousands of objects, showing arts and crafts, fine china and statues, and other objects attesting to China's rich heritage.

These collections bring Chinese cultural heritage more to the forefront in Europeana's vast repository and unlock countless new stories to tell and explore the multi-faceted culture and history of Europe and China.

## **Captivating narratives**

Europeana showcases these novel narratives on a dedicated feature page, called Chinese Heritage. This digital foyer is meant to collect and promote all editorial pieces that were created throughout the PAGODE project, as well as editorial delivered in other projects and seasons that touch on Chinese heritage concepts.

The Chinese Heritage feature page shows the breadth of stories that have been told through the PAGODE project and beyond. There is, of course, a focus on political aspects throughout history: the story of Empress Cixi, the last empress of the Chinese empire, is beautifully told with historical photographs and other imagery illustrating the narrative. Chinese cultural influence in its broadest sense is also explored: from the acculturation of tastes for ceramics and furniture in the Chinoiserie style to the impact of the Chinese Junk as a boat design on worldwide trade and travel.

Specific collections, some of them newly ingested into Europeana or updated by cultural heritage institutions as part of the PAGODE project, are given special attention due to their quality of content, historical significance, or aesthetic exceptionalism. Pioneers of photography such as John Thomson, Osvald Sirén and Wolfgang Schröter all have collections of photographs of East Asia that are featured in Europeana's Chinese Heritage space, as is the artefact collection of Ernest Erickson.

Even more captivating than the highlights of the individual collections are the digital galleries that reshape narratives around Chinese cultural concepts by aggregating cultural heritage objects from the heterogeneous collections of various cultural heritage institutions. A gallery depicting Chinese parasols, for instance, connects cultural heritage objects from across 12 institutions from 8 countries across Europe: Sweden, Serbia, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, Finland, Austria, and France. The same transnational connection between cultural heritage objects can be found in all the Chinese Heritage galleries. A few more examples include Fruits from China, the Chinese dragon, and Jewelry with a Chinese twist.

#### **Novel interactions**

The Chinese heritage discovery journey doesn't stop with the Europeana website. The PAGODE project raised awareness of Chinese related heritage available in Europeana by mobilising and engaging European citizens through two crowdsourcing campaigns during summer 2021. These used the online platform CrowdHeritage to enrich the Europeana collections on Chinese heritage with more than 2,000 crowdsourced annotations. The first campaign on Scenes and People from China engaged European citizens with Chinese Images by asking them to recognise places, historical periods and pictorial styles. The second campaign, Chinese artefacts, highlighted centuries-old amulets, beautifully aged bronzes, and translucent jade. These interactive formats proved to be an effective mechanism for content discovery, enrichment and audience engagement.

#### **A success story**

The PAGODE project has been an exciting collaboration between valued project partners and Europeana to highlight a previously often underappreciated intersectional topic of European heritage. PAGODE project partners have been exceptionally proactive and thoughtful in their approach, consulting Europeana at every step of the way and making sure that the created editorial was culturally appropriate.

Cultural consultants were actively involved in co-creating the editorial and curating the collections for the PAGODE project. Europeana's Chinese Heritage feature, populated and co-curated by the PAGODE project, greatly increases the discoverability of Chinese heritage in the Europeana platform and allows for serendipitous browsing and discovery at its best. It puts newly ingested high-value collections on Chinese culture sharply into focus, and promotes user engagement and re-use of this content by enticing those who come across it.

Through this work, the PAGODE project has been exemplary in furthering the diversity of Europeana's collections and its editorial, leading the way towards a more diverse and inclusive cultural heritage sector. The project has raised awareness of the value of establishing cultural bridges between Europe and China and laid a strong foundation for future Sino-European collaborations around the cultural heritage.

# “To know the road ahead, ask those coming back” Confucius

Kostas Konstantinidis  
PostScriptum

## “To know the road ahead, ask those coming back” Confucius

In October 2017, I travelled for the first time to China. As the CEO of PostScriptum, I had formulated that summer, along with my colleagues and my team, an initiative to design cultural trips for Chinese tourists who wished to travel to Greece. My journey was full of intense business meeting, initially struggling to create a solid network to China. Eventually, through small, nearly private meetings in Beijing and Shanghai, I first met my early Chinese colleagues, among them artists, curators, representatives of public cultural institutions and private foundations, and entrepreneurs. My very first vision was very vague and improbable “to start business with China” in the cultural sector.

Since that intimate and more or less auspicious beginning I have been to China eleven more times and in the midst of a pre-emptive and disheartening critique of the Belt and Road Initiative - BRI (formerly One Belt One Road - OBOR), of which I was a proponent, I also felt the impending and objective limitations that I had to face, such as, language barriers, distance, cultural differences etc. I was convinced that it was the time to start a cultural dialogue to mitigate the differences, overcome the barriers and understand each other.

During this same period, I was delegated to represent Europeana in China, being responsible for liaison with China by promoting Europeana through workshops and presentations at cultural heritage institutions and fostering opportunities for collaboration between Europeana and Chinese parties.

The PAGODE – Europeana China project is the beautiful outcome of my journey to China, Chinese culture, my early business pursuits and my, in retrospect, fruitful acquaintances and collaborations. The perfect occasion to have Antonella Fresa, friend and colleague by my side, led us to the PAGODE project proposal and eventually to get the project funded and ‘get things done’.

### Why China?

The question ‘Why China?’ comes side by side with The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and an invitation from China to Europe for collaborative implementation. To this day BRI has justified itself and is considered the best – although the debate is ongoing – global project uniting world countries into a single whole. The BRI concept promotes a “mutually beneficial cooperation”, aiming at strengthening EU relations with China and building on interests, ambitions and common goals.

Aligned with the above concept, culture is an integral part of the foreign policy of both Europe and China. Culture is a powerful tool to build bridges between people and reinforce mutual understanding. It can also be an engine for economic and social development. As we face common challenges, culture can help in growing ties and opening a wide-ranging dialogue among civilizations, as an essential part of political cooperation between China and EU countries.

Within this framework, the cultural heritage sector has faced, and is still facing, the unprecedented challenge of the worldwide COVID-19 crisis. Museums, libraries, and archives were among the first to close down, being

among the most popular places for people to visit, with severe consequences for their operations and income streams. The question of digital transformation is therefore more relevant than ever and the crisis has made the need to embrace this transformation even more urgent, in order to empower the cultural heritage sector.

The relevance of digital platforms, tools and experiences is now at the forefront of public minds and many institutions have increased or moved activities online; a recent Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) survey found that more than 60% of the museums surveyed have increased their online presence since they were closed due to social distancing measures.

To this end, the PAGODE project seemed to have arrived at the right time and the right 'place' or, if I may say 'no-place'. My personal interest in China, combined with Antonella's expertise of CEF projects, along with our common goals and vision on cultural projects provided the flesh and bones, and we built on them along with our extremely competent partners in the consortium.

### **Liaising with China**


Naturally, liaison with China was assigned as an activity to PostScriptum, also a partner of the PAGODE project, in order to promote Europeana in China and to establish collaborations between Europeana and the Chinese cultural heritage institutes. PostScriptum invited Chinese associate partners to attend PAGODE project events with presentations, and this is how PAGODE project partners became acquainted with The National Library of China, The Capital Library of China (CLCN), Shenyang University, The Palace Museum and the China National Center for Culture Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CNCCS). Although it might sound like an easy task, the mix of overcoming distance and time difference, bureaucracy and institutional complexity, combined with the lack of basic communication made it less 'digestible' as a daily task.

### **Chinese perspective**

From a European perspective engaging culturally with China, could play a significant role here, not only because this would mean future prospects but also revisiting the EU's foreign policy and understanding the 'other'. In order to understand how the Chinese perceives the EU, one might consider the wider framework within which Chinese foreign policy is conceived and how Europe's cultural diplomacy is appraised. At first, it seems that such a positive perception is not widespread among the Chinese general public. In fact, from public opinion surveys, it clearly emerges that few Chinese (only 17%) consider the EU as being a world power, while other surveys show that the Chinese general public tend to have little or no confidence in the EU.

However, what is surprising in these surveys is the negative correlation between levels of confidence in the EU and the level of education of the population. The data show that the higher the education of respondents, the lower the level of confidence in the European Union. Having said that and in light of this element, one should consider also the arguments of those Chinese Europe-watchers that express concerns about a perceived attempt to 'westernize China' that somehow, in their view, derives from a feeling of cultural superiority.

For most Chinese, Europe is the cultural centre of the West just as they see China as the cultural centre of the East. This should not be understood really as deriving from the interest or admiration that many Chinese express for European civilisation – similarly to the Greco-Roman legacy, the cultural heritage of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, as well as the economic and political consequences of the Industrial Revolution. In fact, Chinese admiration for European civilisation is the fact of its continuity per se, comparable to their own.



For Chinese, Europeans represent the ultimate other, the inventors of change and progress who give meaning to the Chinese mission of ensuring harmony and stability.

#### **The PAGODE project perspective**

The PAGODE project is the first European digital heritage project with a Chinese Epicenter, aiming at promoting further understanding of the cultural values of China and the cultural exchange between China and Europe, allowing cultural heritage institutes to connect and share their collections and metadata across new sectors and borders and in this way to increase awareness and usage of Europeana to a wider audience, internationally. In these terms the PAGODE project team created a framework for a holistic overview of all Chinese collections within the scope of the pan-European area. The project's rationale put into the spotlight a very specific and focused attempt to define what might be understood as Chinese/China-related cultural heritage in Europe. It has taken into consideration all the questions and issue arising from the cultural policy frameworks of both Europe and China but also from the partners collections digitized and published to Europeana.

The PAGODE project highlights the importance of this 'shared' cultural heritage in fostering intercultural communication and cooperation. It also intends to pave the way for further activities aimed at increasing visibility and accessible to these often-unnoticed resources through networking and collaboration among museums, cultural institutions and research organisations.

Europeans and Chinese may be very different in their cultural forms and expressions, but the balance between the spiritual and the rational makes them 'nevertheless mutually comprehensible'. One example of this has been the longstanding European respect of Chinese culture by early 'cultural ambassadors' and philosophers in the 17th century, such as Ruggieri, Leibniz or Montesquieu, or, equally, modern China's wide openness to European classical music. The PAGODE project therefore reflects the longstanding European admiration of Chinese culture, already showcased in museums and other cultural heritage institutions in Europe, by multiplying this admiration via the digital path of Europeana.

#### **'Other' Perspectives**

I believe that an insight into Europeana is necessary to understand how, if not impossible, definitely problematic it is, to realize a project that aims at making a political statement and is by default an attempt to define and decide what is heritage. In this field of economic and political forces the institutional self-preservation mechanism of Europeana does not easily allow for 'experiments' that go far beyond what can be projected onto the notion 'of pan-European interest'.

The PAGODE – Europeana China project is an excellent vessel through which to think about the role of cultural diplomacy that Europeana and Chinese heritage institutes are typically bound to play. The decision to conceive the PAGODE project, moving its geographic and ideological centre from its home, was a result of the feeling of necessity of rethinking the Eurocentric view of the world and to symbolically cease the cultural supremacy of the West, yet rooted in Europe with a digital international dimension. The PAGODE project is a lesson to see the world again in an unprejudiced way, unlearning the predominant cultural conditioning that explicitly presupposed the supremacy of the West, its institutions and culture over the 'other', the 'rest'. Cultural interchanges between China and Europe are an opportunity which must be seized by creating bridges between two ancient cultures and cherish its legacies.





## Chapter 2

# Chinascapes





*(previous page image) Gates and pillars (double exposure), 1924, Toivo Koskikallio, Finnish Heritage Agency. CC BY*

## Perspectives on China through European heritage collections

Curator Sofie Taes  
Photoconsortium International Consortium for Photographic Heritage

The quickest way to get to know someone, is to step into their shoes and walk for a few miles. Wear their glasses, sleep in their bed and read their books. Talk to family, friends, neighbours and colleagues. Become that person for a couple of days. But, what if that someone is not a person but an entire culture, with thousands of years of ideas, practices and people?

This chapter reflects a journey of (re)discovery: an exploration of China, not as another world, but as a part of the space of exchange in which East and West have been meeting for centuries. Created at the end of a project dedicated to Chinese heritage collections preserved in Europe, Chinascares also celebrates that the wonderful wandering of PAGODE project partners has only just begun. Strolling through time, across continents and cultures, we have set out to look for traces of what distinguishes and connects us: an enchanting and enthusing itinerary that will not let itself get halted easily.

The story captured in this book is one of thousands that could have been told. The first part, laid out in four thematic diptychs, is a reflection of our search for crossroads and bridges. Not a theory or a history but an experience: our experience of embarking upon a dazzling tour. To add to the polyvocal narrative, a series of eight visual duos follows, representing unexpected echoes and coincidental (?) reverberations we saw emerge from different collections. Our hope is that, through this handpicked selection of objects, from eleven partner institutions and Europeana, we will be able to hint at the vastness and profusion of what Chinese cultural heritage entails.



## Arts

### Nurtured by nature



*Bronze pot with a lid shaped like a peach, 18th century, Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). CC BY-SA*

A core element of Chinese culture is nature. What might seem an oxymoron at first is in fact the soul of the matter: Chinese art reflects the Daoist philosophy of observing a harmonious, respectful relationship with nature rather than exploiting it.



*Gouache depicting butterflies, 1773-1776, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. CC BY-SA*

Nature is regarded as the physical manifestation of heavenly powers through the interplay between yin and yang. By creating a painting, sculpture or drawing, an artist accepts and submits to the laws of heavens. A deep knowledge of nature is therefore considered to be a prerequisite for being an artist.



*Lobsters in waterscape, 1773-1776, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. CC BY-SA*

In Chinese traditional art no element of nature is rendered for the sake of art alone. As flowers, fruits, trees and animals are committed to the canvas or paper, they reflect a process of observation, internalization and communication, showing how the artist has crossed the bridge from the physical to the metaphysical.



*Framed by a hexagonal window, a bamboo grove becomes part of the collection of the Museum in Suzhou, Photo by Adam Kola, 2008, International Center for Information Management Systems and Services. CC BY-SA*

Beyond demonstrating a reverence to nature, the integration of elements of fauna and flora in works of art often takes on complex and nuanced symbolic meanings. Bamboo, for example, is associated with scholars, whose spirit cannot be broken as they stand firm in their belief. It therefore represents moral integrity, modesty and loyalty.



*Ceramic brush holder shaped like a bundle of bamboo, Ming dynasty, first quarter of the 18th century, Rijksmuseum. Public domain*

Purity is represented by the orchid – a Confucian symbol – as well as by the winter plum and the lotus flower. The latter can be added to other symbols, increasing their power by its auspicious and harmonious connotations. Lotus seeds, moreover, are tokens for a couple's potential to grow a numerous family.



*Lotus decorations on a lotus-shaped plate, Qianlong dynasty, c. 1735-1795, Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). CC BY-SA*

The symbolic value of each of these symbols is rooted in intricate stories, myths and legends, explaining the powers bestowed upon them. The peach, for instance, is said to stem from a tree grown by a goddess, that would bloom only once in a thousands of years.

*Peach-shaped ewer. Porcelain with painted enamel over moulded decoration. Jingdezhen, Qing dynasty (probably Kangxi), 18th century  
Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*



To ripen, a peach would again take 3,000 years. The Immortals, eager to have a Feast of the Peach, had to wait for 6,000 years for the event to happen. As a result, the peach is associated with longevity and immortality.



*Pear-shaped wine ewer with peach application and spout ending in a bird's head, 19th century  
Rijksmuseum. Public domain*

Representing immortality too, the butterfly signifies summer and joy. This belief is rooted in a story about Taoist philosopher Zhuangzi, who after a dream about being a butterfly started to question the essence of his existence.



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*10th anniversary celebration of the Finnish mission at Mengxi. Ceiling decorated with natural motifs, among which butterflies, s.d. Hannu Haahti, Finnish Heritage Agency. CC BY*



The butterfly furthermore stands for grace, happiness and romantic bliss. This goes back to one of China's most well-known legends, often deemed the nation's Romeo and Juliet. In The Butterfly Lovers or Liang Zhu, two young lovers are scorned by their opposing families. When death tears them apart, it is loyalty and love that brings them back together, flying away from the tomb as a pair of butterflies.



*Cup and saucer in porcelain with café au lait brown glaze on the exterior and iron red enamel painted decorations representing a butterfly among peonies and millet. Jingdezhen, Qing dynasty, 18th century, Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*

Like many symbols, the butterfly-motif gains and adds meaning when used in combination with others. Together with a plum, it points to a long and joyful life. With a chrysanthemum, longevity is connected to beauty. A butterfly carved from jade is a symbol of romantic love as is a depiction of two butterflies flying together. Flying solo, the butterfly represents a rich social life.



*Teapot with lid in porcelain with enamel decoration depicting flowers, insects and butterflies. The white porcelain body was made in Jingdezhen, the painting applied in Europe (London?), Qianlong period, 1736-1795, Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*

The butterfly as a symbol is seen around the world, often taking on similar symbolic meanings. The ancient Egyptians considered the butterfly to be a token of good luck, as do the Japanese. In Northern America, the association of the butterfly with summer feeds into its connection with fertility. For the ancient Greeks, the butterfly coming out of its cocoon signified a new-born coming into the world. As this example helps to demonstrate, scripts and languages might vary extensively across the globe, but networks of symbols and the beliefs they rest upon are often surprisingly alike.

## A culture of symbols



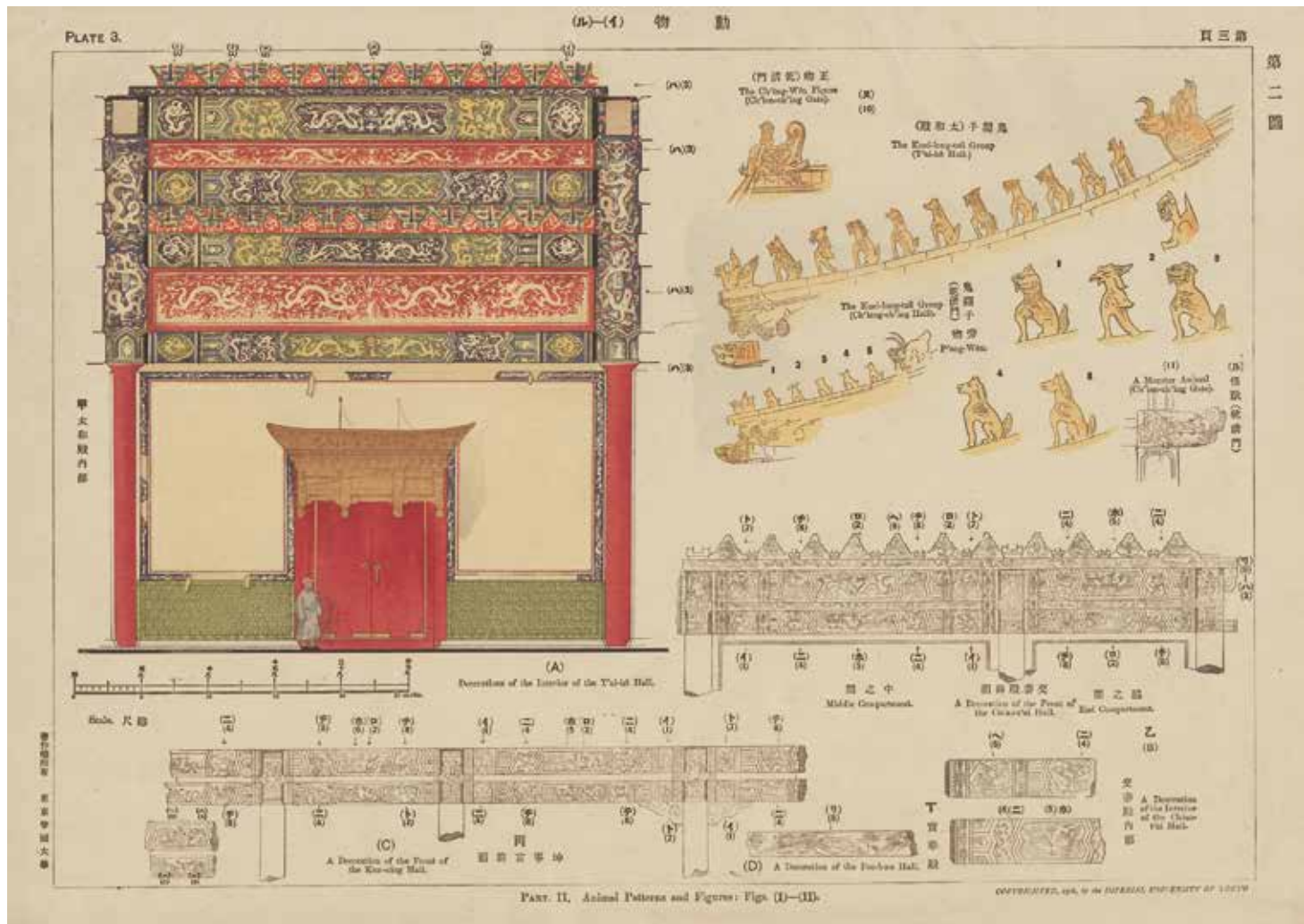
*Roof of Nanputuo: a famous Buddhist temple in the Chinese city of Xiamen, s.d. Photo by Adam Kola, 2008, International Center for Information Management Systems and Services. CC BY-SA*

With nature as the crux of China's belief system, semantics and culture, the use of a tight network of nature-related symbols, clustered in explanatory and guiding metaphors becomes more understandable. Yet the Chinese symbolic language goes far beyond the boundaries of the physical world.



*Porcelain fountain decorated with water plants and animals. The vessel, to be mounted on a wall, has a taotie's mouth for a spout, 1700-1900  
Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. CC BY-SA*

Since ancient times, mythical creatures have been at the core of theories and philosophies explaining everyday phenomena. Gaining meaning through tales and allegories, creatures such as the gluttonous taotie, the truth detecting Xiezhi and the unicorn-like Luduan have become part not only of spiritual life, superstition, folklore and religion, but of Chinese culture and artistic creation as well.



Animal motifs in painted patterns and ceramic tiles adorning the buildings of the Forbidden City in Beijing, c. 1906, Ogawa Kazumasa, Tokyo Imperial Museum Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA

Of the twelve imperial insignia – used on decorations, garments and objects in the emperor’s palace – the dragon (Loong, Long or Lung) is the most prominent.



*Three dragons curling around an ewer with a lid in white 'blanc de chine' porcelain, Fujian province, Ming - Qing dynasty, 17th century, Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*

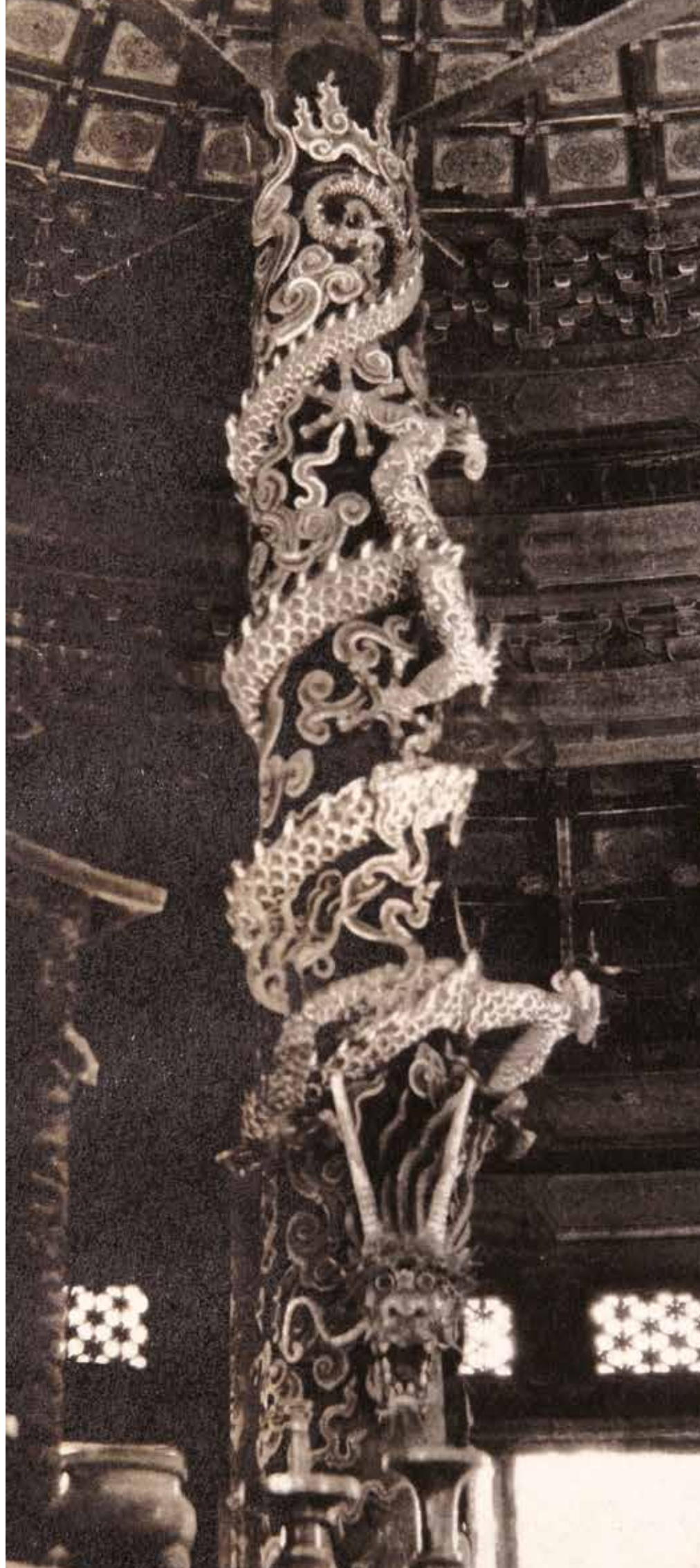


*Wooden stand consisting of two dragons, Kangxi era, 1662-1722, Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). CC BY-SA*

With traces leading back to the 6th millennium BC, the dragon evolved from a stylized representation of a creature of nature into a mythical figure boasting nine anatomical resemblances with animals – from claws similar to those of an eagle, to scales mimicking the skin of a carp and a snake-like neck.

*Dragon pillar in Qianian Hall in the Heavenly Temple complex in Beijing, late Qing era, early 20th century, Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

Originally, the dragon is thought to have been a benevolent rain deity. To honour its ability to induce fertility and generate plenitude, rain dances were performed. But, as a symbol of the emperor, the dragon represented almighty power and potential danger as well.





*Myth melting into nature: dragon topping a garden wall in Yuyuan Garden, Shanghai, s.d. Photo by Adam Kola, 2008, International Center for Information Management Systems and Services. CC BY-SA*

Another mighty, mythical presence in Chinese culture is the stylized lion or 'foo dog'. Next to being sculpted as porcelain figurines or bronzes, foo dogs – also known as 'stone lions' or 'shishi' – are commonly integrated into architecture, as guards of gates and buildings.



*Bronze statue of a foo dog with a cub as a lid, 18th century, Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). CC BY-SA*

Foo dogs were thought to protect properties from physical and spiritual harm. Originally a trait of Chinese palaces, they soon spread to other countries and became a globally recognized icon of Asian culture.



*Guardian lion in Southwest Hubei, 1920s-1930s*  
KADOC-KU Leuven. CC BY-SA



*Guardian lion at the Si Mausoleum near Beijing, late Qing period, early 20th century*  
Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA

Next to the foo dog, other creatures are thought to have protective powers too. Guarding the world in four directions is a quartet of sacred animals: the white tiger of the west, the azure dragon of the east, the black tortoise of the north and the vermillion bird of the south.



*This dish is decorated with two dragons and two Fenghuang birds. Dishes like these were commissioned by the emperor or presented to the court as a sign of reverence and respect. After 1650, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. CC BY-SA*

The latter – sometimes called the Chinese phoenix, even though it bears only superficial similarities to the Western phoenix – is the mythical creature Fenghuang who unites male and female forces. Representing the power of the emperor bestowed upon him by the heavens, Fenghuang symbolizes not only supreme authority but also moral integrity. Used in palace ornaments, it signifies that the ruler living there is honest and incorruptible.



COPYRIGHT, 1906, by the IMPERIAL MUSEUM OF TOKYO.

(一五) 陸前宮清乾

THE CENTRAL FRONT FLIGHT OF THE CH'EN-CH'ING HALL. No. 1.

(一五) 陸前宮清乾

*Dragons and Fenghuangs decorating the staircase of the Hall of Heavenly Purity in the Forbidden City, dedicated exclusively to the emperor, late Qing, early 20th century, Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

# Invention

Process & practice



*The Tiger Balm Garden or Aw Boon Haw Garden in Wan Chai, Hong Kong, 1968, Hanna Seidel, United Archives. CC BY-SA*

From papermaking, the compass, gunpowder and printing – the so-called ‘Four Great Inventions’ – to complex economic systems, naval architecture and exquisitely conceived mechanisms, China has been known as a nation of creativity, invention, skill and innovation for centuries.



Detail from a map by Jodocus Hondius, printed by Johannes Janssonius. The inscription, in Latin, refers to Chinese invention and innovation. Amsterdam, 1634, Leiden University Libraries. COLLBN Port 177 N 79. CC BY

Walking through Chinese heritage collections only strengthens this notion, as an unfathomable range of objects, illustrations and writings testify to the depth and detail with which theoretical frameworks for inventions and plans for their precise implementation have been made.



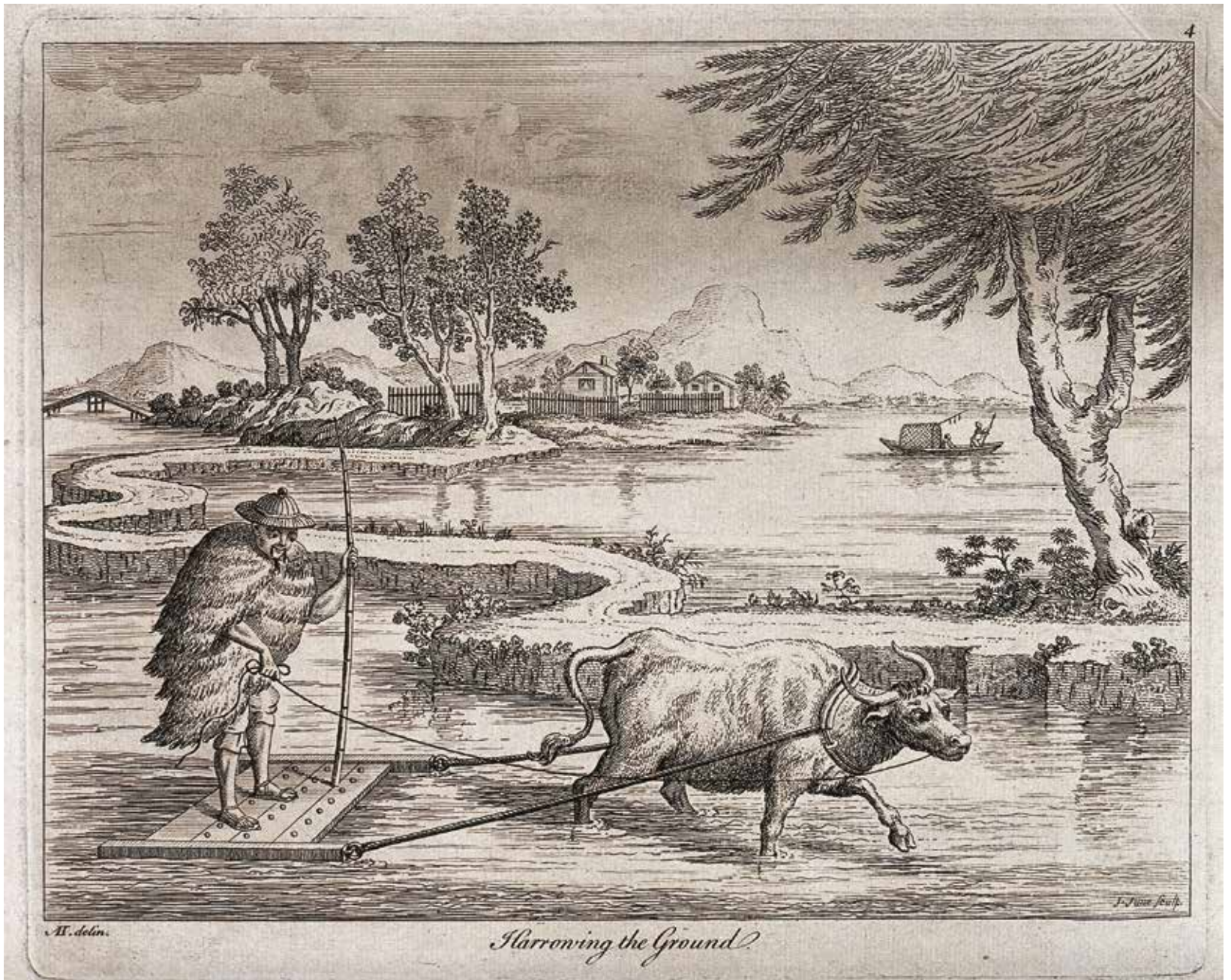
*Illustration from a book discussing the production of cotton (p. 14), 1765, Guancheng Fang, Qianlong, Leiden University Libraries.  
SINOL. VGK 10.000 1. CC BY*

With agriculture as a pivotal point of its societal and economic structures, China has developed a wide range of methods for working the land with maximum efficiency. An important aspect is the cultivation of rice: a main staple of the Chinese diet.



*Porcelain, fan-shaped plaque decorated with 'famille verte' enamel. Depicted is a (slightly altered) scene from the Chinese standard work Geng zhi tu ('Agriculture and sericulture in pictures'), 17th century, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. CC BY-SA*

The process of growing and harvesting rice is perplexingly complicated. Seedlings need to be transplanted to submerged areas or paddy fields to grow strong and nutritious. After harvest, either the husks alone are removed (brown rice), or the brans are taken too (white rice). While some producers use large mills to process the grains, others use the power of hands and feet. Many Chinese drawings, books, paintings and objects depict parts of this extensive production process. Conversely, in Western representations of life in China, labourers working the rice fields is a common topos.



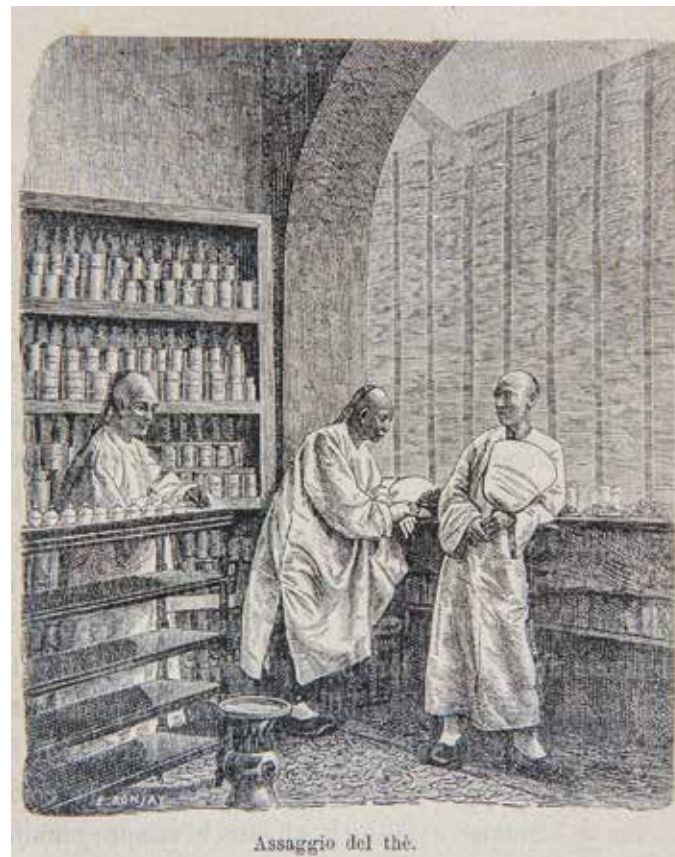
Soaking the rice in an irrigation ditch. Engraving by J. June after Augustin Heckel, 1770, Wellcome Collection. CC BY

The intricate process of producing and preparing tea, too, is at the pinnacle of Chinese inventivity and finesse. After harvest, leaves have to be wilted, oxidized and fermented, fixed, rolled, dried and – in some cases – left alone to age for years. Then sorting and grading, sifting and breaking, packing and sealing the tea conclude the process.



Sorting and tasting tea: scenes from the book *Viaggio in Cina*, c. 1900  
John Thompson and T. Choutzé (Gabriel Devéria)  
Promoter Digital Gallery. CC BY-SA

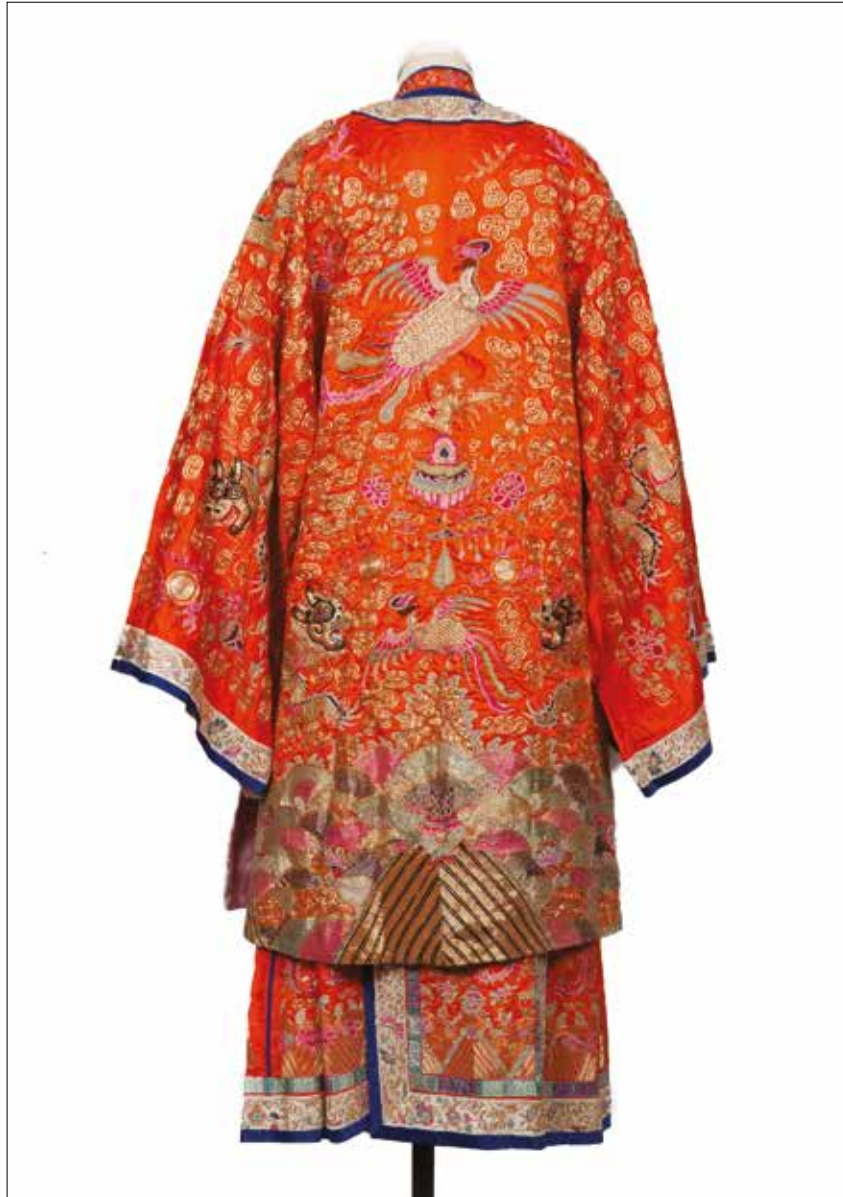
Invention is not a matter of technology or mechanics only. It is of resourcefulness, skilfulness and dedication too. These elements are at play in China's rich history of sophisticated embroidery: not just as a craft or a trade but an art in and of itself. Early examples are known from the Zhou Dynasty (1027-221 BC) but embroidery would truly blossom and diversify into four distinct schools from the Han Dynasty (206-220BC) onwards.





*Bridal collar embroidered with natural and symbolical motifs. The flaps are cut and superposed to represent the neck feathers of a Fenghuang, c. 1900, Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. CCO*

As this bridal costume demonstrates, embroidery – such as painting, drawing, sculpting and object design – draws from the rich range of nature-inspired symbols to feed into ornamental styles. Here, the orange ‘dragon skirt’ carries not only embroidered motifs of a dragon’s head but also of Fenghuangs. The combination of both designates the couple as ‘emperor and empress’ for the day and represents conjugal bliss.



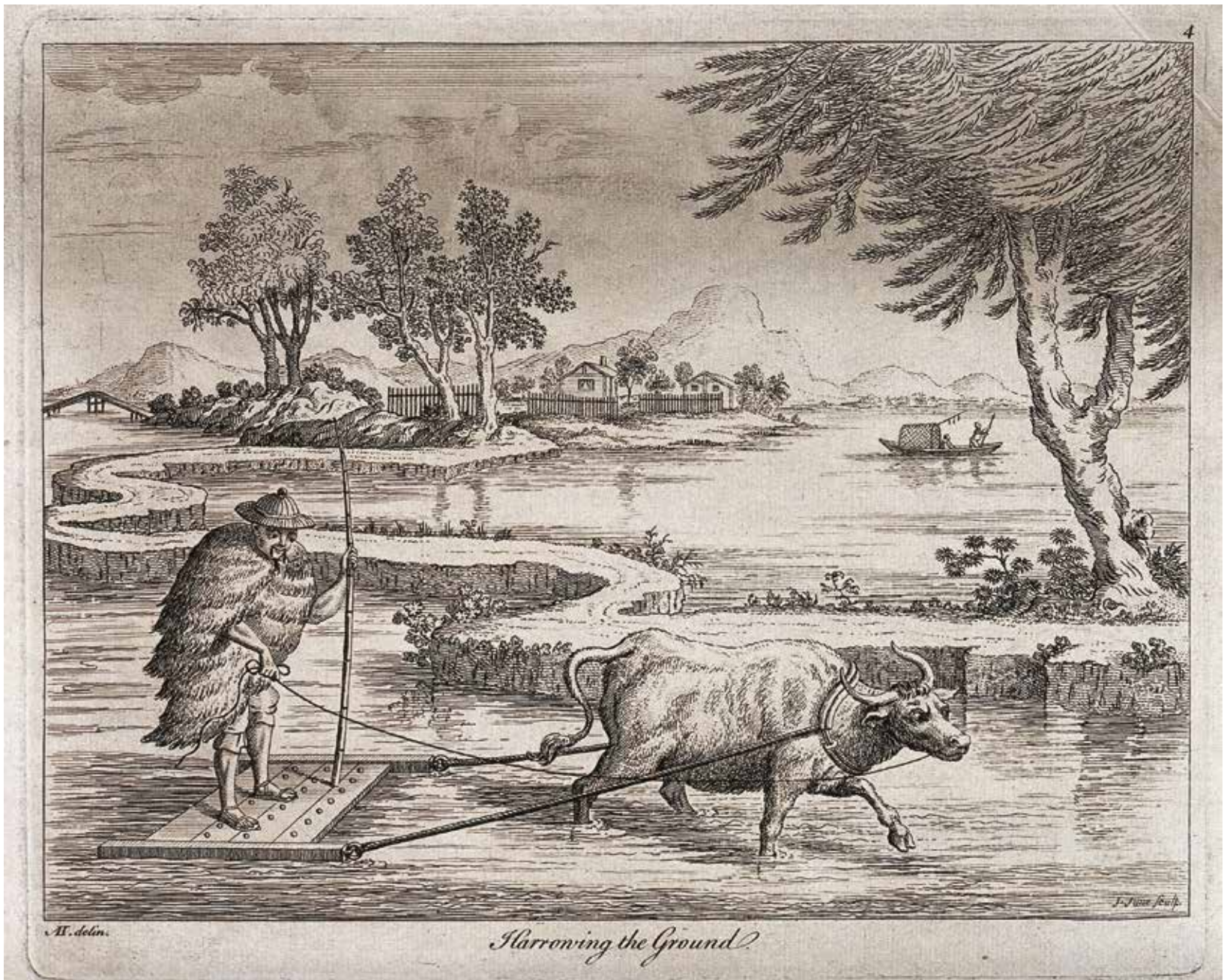
*Embroidered skirt of a bridal costume, c. 1900, Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. CC0*

To knowledge, technique and skill, spirituality might be added as a crucial ingredient of Chinese invention. This aspect is vital to the art of designing and cultivating a garden: an activity closely connected with intellectual and artistic practices. Chinese garden design is intentionally aimed at providing a natural feel to sculpted grounds, so as to create a space for reflection where thoughts and emotions can emerge, freed from everyday stressors.



*Gouache depicting courtly ladies walking in a garden with water elements, rocks, pavilions and meticulously designed vistas, late Qing period  
Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

Not intended to be discovered in a single glance but aimed at constant incitement and surprise, the Chinese garden is laid out as a road of discovery. This is why dedicated structures are built offering the best sights of certain plants, animals or panoramas, as well as windows and doors – sometimes shaped round, hexagonal or even in the form of a piece of fruit – framing scenes worthy of being marveled at.



Soaking the rice in an irrigation ditch. Engraving by J. June after Augustin Heckel, 1770, Wellcome Collection. CC BY

The intricate process of producing and preparing tea, too, is at the pinnacle of Chinese inventivity and finesse. After harvest, leaves have to be wilted, oxidized and fermented, fixed, rolled, dried and – in some cases – left alone to age for years. Then sorting and grading, sifting and breaking, packing and sealing the tea conclude the process.



*Pagoda in the garden of the Villa of Scoonenbergh near Brussels, 1792,  
William Byrne and S. Le Febvre, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. Public Domain*



*The Chinese-inspired gardens at Beaumarchais, France, 2nd half of the 18th century*  
 gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.No Copyright - Other Known Legal Restrictions

As interest grew, gardens across Europe began to follow the Chinese model, and in many of them a pagoda was erected to add an 'exotic' flavour – from Kew Gardens in London to Catherine the Great's grounds at the Tsarskoye Selo palace. Today, isolated elements from the Chinese garden style are to be found all across the world, as they now belong to the established vocabulary of landscape architecture.



Objects of affection



Five ritual objects – a pair of flower vases and candlesticks and a censer – in the Lamaist Yonghegong Temple in Beijing, c. 1906. From the album *The Imperial City of Beijing*, Ogawa Kazumasa, Tokyo Imperial Museum, Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA

It is easy to forget that even the simplest object often conveys a long and interesting history. That can certainly be said of pottery made out of porcelain. Hard or 'true' porcelain is obtained by mixing ground petuntse (stone) with kaolin (clay) and firing the paste at extreme temperature. The sculpted object then hardens while retaining a translucent quality: a unique combination of characteristics that made Chinese pottery much coveted around the world. Early porcelain production blossomed during the Tang dynasty (618–907), while export took off via the Silk Road and Tea Horse Road trade in the Middle Ages. Soft-paste porcelain was made in the West as early as the 16th century, but the secret of true Chinese porcelain would only be discovered 200 years later.



*Inspired by China, intended for the European market: two mid-18th-century plates with westernized central scenes and oriental decorative motifs. top: European woman with Dutch inscription ('I'm always sweet when I need to be'). bottom: biblical scene with a couple embracing. Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). CC BY-SA, Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*

A striking parallel between Chinese and western porcelain production are the blue-and-white pottery ranges. The blue colour obtained from cobalt – originally imported into China from Persia – is highly resistant and effective as an underglaze paint, due to its resistance to high temperatures. This quality is at the source of its application on Chinese pottery from the 14th century onwards.



*Porcelain painted with vases and Buddhist symbols in underglaze cobalt blue. Jingdezhen, Kangxi period, 1662-1722, Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*

From China, the underglaze blue style spread around the world and blended in with distinct decorative traditions. One of the most iconic is that of Delft in the Netherlands, where a huge explosion of gunpowder destroying industrial brewery buildings – a sector that was already on the decline – allowed for local potters to expand their businesses in response to the fashion for Chinese pottery. The demand was high at the time, as import was hindered after the death of the Wanli emperor (1620).



*Faience container in Chinese blue-and-white style made in the Netherlands. The water reservoir is meant to keep flowers fresh for a few days, the nozzles to make each one stand out. The decor is a combination of European hunting scenes and Chinese motifs such as dragons with open mouths, Delft, c. 1670-1680, De Grieksche A / Adrianus Kocks, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg. CC0*

It was a golden opportunity for the Delft craftsmen to fill in the gap and produce thin earthenware, resembling Chinese porcelain but offered at a much better price - an interesting counter movement to Chinese goods produced for the export market. Chinese patterns on blue-and-white Delftware remained en vogue well into the 18th century.



*Vase possibly compiled of two stacked butterfly shapes, symbolizing good fortune. The Arabic inscription reads 'May Allah honour his kingdom with prosperity until the end of time.' The vase was made for the Muslim community in China or as export ware for the Islamic market, early 16th century Rijksmuseum. Public Domain*

Chinese porcelain is not just a material or a range of functional products. Cups, dishes, vases and vessels are often exquisitely decked out with painted decorations and sculpted ornaments, mostly referring to motifs and themes related to nature.



*The inventive, colorful and unique design of Chinese porcelain in a drawing from the collection Piatus Wantz, 1920-1939 KADOC-KU Leuven. CC BY*

Moreover, Chinese porcelain collections often contain detailed figurines, devotional objects, even complex, multidimensional landscapes - all executed with high levels of skill, sophistication and fantasy.



*Rhinoceros-horn shaped cup in porcelain, decorated with dragons in moulded relief and with flowers in painted famille verte enamels. Jingdezhen, Kangxi period, 1662-1722, Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*

As authentic, iconic and ground-breaking as porcelain objects are the bronzes produced in China as early as the second millennium BC. Casting such bronzes initially was a prerogative of the mighty and wealthy, staying confined to the court. These archaic bronzes exerted a significant influence on popular culture during the Ming dynasty, when the shapes were recreated and reinvented. Ancient patinas, too, were considered the pinnacle of refinement and therefore often artificially applied.

*Bronze censer in the shape of a fantastic creature, 18th century  
Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). CC BY-SA*

Many bronzes, including bells, vessels, sculptures of deities and candleholders, were cast with a view to ritual practices or commemoration purposes. While in some cases decoration is modest, other examples are ornamented elaborately, with geometric motifs, scenes from nature and mythical creatures. Under the Xuande Emperor (1425-1435), a great patron of Buddhism, Chinese bronze production reached its peak. Still, today, these bronzes stand out as pioneering achievements of artistic invention and technical advance.





*One of two bronze turtles in front of the Tai He Dian Hall at the Imperial Palace, Forbidden City, Beijing. Symbolizing longevity, power and strength, the turtle looks proudly into the sky. Yet more than just decoration, the statue was used as an incense burner, letting the smoke escape through its mouth, s.d. Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

Incense burners used in rituals, as well as in the household, were also often made of bronze and mostly four-legged with a square vessel on top, or in a circular shape with tripod support. Handles, sometimes plain but in other cases heavily ornamented, were mounted to the shoulders of the main volume, as a lid cover came into use from the Han dynasty onwards.



*Double page from a book of incense burner designs (pg. 89). Block print, Chinese binding, 1878, Ding Yuehu, Leiden University Libraries. SINOL. Gulik B 128. CC BY*

Many other materials – such as wood and earthenware – were used for censers too. The practice of burning incense is associated with tranquillity, contemplation and rejuvenation, and therefore with the activities of literati, calligraphers and other practitioners of science and arts. Lightweight censers had the added benefit of being movable, and were often taken along by their owner to warm hands during wintertime.



*One of a pair of porcelain censers decorated with green, yellow and aubergine paint. Flat stand with two raised plateaus, three gentlemen posing on each, early 18th century, Rijksmuseum. Public domain*

Chinese cultural artefacts testify to thousands of years of revolutionary materials, techniques and designs, and to the ways in which creation has always been intertwined with artistic and spiritual practices. All of these aspects touch and resound against one another in woodblocks such as these, used for printing Chinese prayers, religious books and other devotional readings.



*Print block bearing a prayer for the offering of paper clothes to the deceased at the Ghost Festival. The year, the names of the giver and the recipient are to be filled in, s.d. Leiden University Libraries. Or. 23.986 (2). CC BY*

Translating inspiration to reflection and emotion, these unique objects point to tangible and intangible heritage of Chinese origin that, through flows of people, objects and ideas, has found fertile ground to grow and blossom worldwide.

## Legacy

### Follow the flow



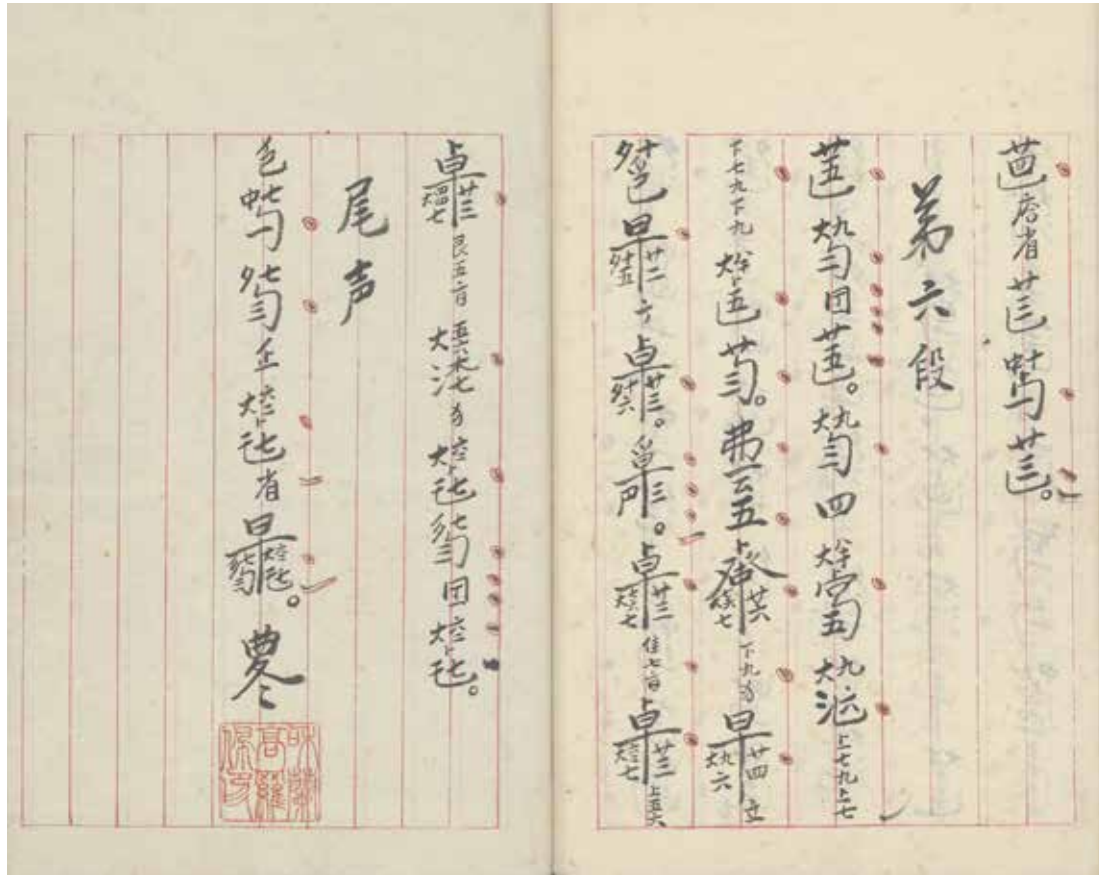
*From the collection donated by George Eumorfopoulos to Benaki Museum, Athens: stoneware dish with green, yellow and white glaze over impressed moulded decoration, consisting of waves, clouds and floral elements, Liao dynasty, c. 907-1125, Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*

Many Chinese and China-related objects in European collections were acquired by travellers who visited the Far East either for a brief stay or extended periods, often not (only) for leisurely reasons but for work-related matters. Several prominent Chinese collections in Europe originated from the legacies of these expats and travellers. A good example is the estate of the Swiss artist and journalist G  a Augsburg (Georges-Charles Augsburg), who travelled to China in 1959 for the celebration of ten years of the People's Republic of China. Interestingly, the legacy of Augsburg - today conserved at the Historical Museum of Lausanne - not only contains Chinese works of art but his own reflections of motifs and techniques used in the East as well.



*Kovanlon c  ramiste, drawing from 1959, G  a Augsburg  
Historical Museum of Lausanne,    2021 ProLitteris, Zurich*

Robert Hans van Gulik (1910-1967), a sinologist, diplomat, musician and writer, worked for the Dutch Foreign Service, which took him – among other places – to China, where he avidly collected fine art, literature and music. His private collection is nowadays the cornerstone of Leiden University Libraries' Chinese special collections.



Music score copied by Robert van Gulik with rhythmic signs in red (p. 8), s.d. Leiden University Libraries. SINOL. Gulik 6771.9. CC BY

It was finely carved Chinese furniture that enchanted Slovenian collector Ivan Skušek (1877–1947): an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army who lived in Beijing from 1914 to 1920. Skušek dreamt of opening a museum in his native country to share his fascination with Chinese arts and traditions. His collection, containing numismatic objects, spiritual sculptures, porcelain, photo albums and architectural artefacts, is housed today at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.



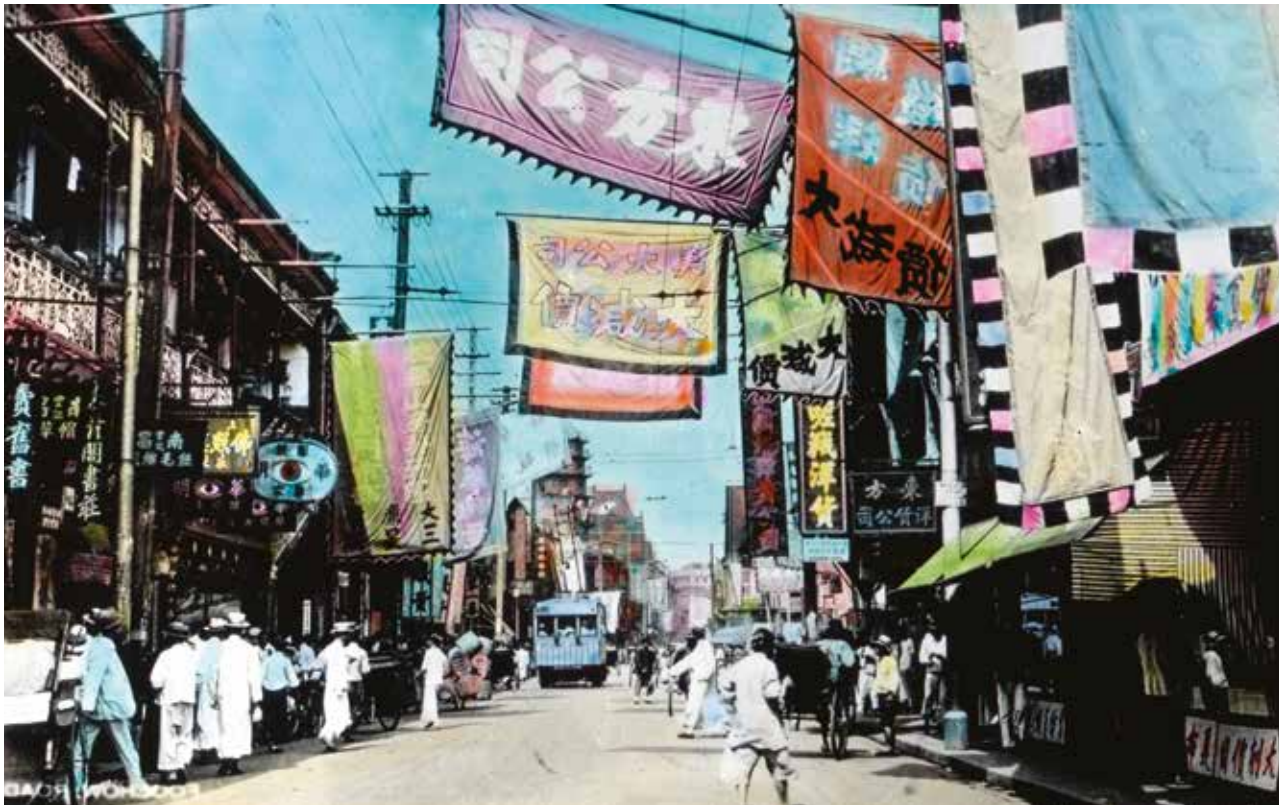
Pigeon whistle, Beijing, early 20th century, Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the Skušek Collection. Photo: Blaž Verbič, 2019. Copyright: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Using a spindle, such flutes were attached to the pigeon's tail so that it produces sound as it flies.

Contrary to Skušek, George Eumorfopoulos, a London-born business magnate of Greek descent, did manage to establish his own museum as an extension to his Chelsea Embankment home, after his collection of oriental objects had grown to monumental proportions. Among the first to see the beauty and value in Chinese heritage, he was instrumental in its discovery by future generations. Eumorfopoulos supported associations such as the Oriental Ceramic Society and the Royal Asiatic Society, and enriched both the British and the Benaki Museum - the realization of another iconic collector.



*Donated by George Eumorfopoulos to Benaki Museum: a model of a building (perhaps a granary) with a staircase, windows, balcony and pitched roof. Green lead glazed earthenware, Eastern Han dynasty, 25-220, Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*

Like Eumorfopoulos, Carl Simon did not explore China himself, but he nonetheless managed to collect sufficient photographic material to produce 80 glass slides to be used in public events. How he acquired the images is unknown and whether or not they were intentionally focused on certain topics, or haphazardly gathered isn't clear either. The pictures offer a fascinating view on Chinese culture, history and society, literally peeking through a colour lens. Simon had his staff hand-colour the slides to self-configured pallets, and included slides representing Japan to illustrate his China-oriented narrative. For his audience, which was unlikely to have ever visited China or to possess the specialized knowledge to distinguish between Eastern traditions, this 'personal touch' would not have been problematic.



*A Chinese shopping street, 1910s, Carl Simon, United Archives. In copyright*

Tracing the steps of travellers to China and collectors throughout the centuries, it should not be forgotten that cultural connections were reciprocal. At least since the Roman period (the Han dynasty) Chinese travellers have been known to visit Europe, often settling there and forming close-knit communities. Europe's colonial history, too, spurred migration waves from China. Many Chinese rulers, finally, were intrigued and inspired by Western culture to such an extent, that architectural elements, technical innovations and socio-cultural customs were introduced at the imperial court.



*Roman ruins at the Old Summer Palace area called 'the European Pavilions', built by the Jesuits in the European Baroque style but destroyed in 1860. Their remains testify to the interest of Emperor Qianlong (reigned 1735–1796) in Western art. The photo dates from the late Qing period, early 20th century, Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

## Inside out



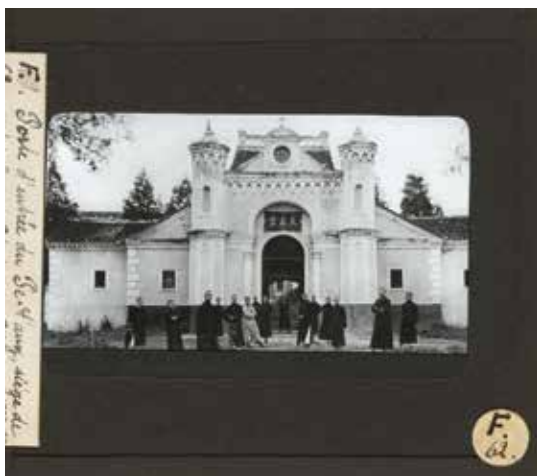
*Sitting at the mouth of the cave, 1910-1949, Finnish Heritage Agency. CC BY*

Several of the China-related collections preserved in Europe touch upon the history of missionaries in Asia. The catholic faith, while favoured by the Yuan dynasty in the late Middle Ages, became rooted more firmly among the Chinese population from the 16th century onwards, when Jesuit missionaries started to set up posts, soon followed by Franciscans, Scheutists and other orders. Lutheran missions ensued in the early 19th century, often consisting of smaller congregations but exerting substantial impact, spurring the emergence of new local spiritual movements.



*A musical performance involving several types of cymbals and tambourines, documented by Piatius Wantz, c. 1920-1939, KADOC-KU Leuven. CC BY*

The legacy of Franciscan friar Dionysius Piatius Wantz, kept by KADOC-KU Leuven, bears witness to life in the Hubei province during the first three decades of the 20th century. As in many similar collections, the photographs and documents not only testify to historical events, but also help to paint a picture of both the expats building a new life far away from home, and of the community in which they entered not as passive guests, but as agents of religious reform.



*Chinese and Western Christians, as well as Chinese and Western architecture meet at the 'Grand Séminaire', in the southwest of Hubei, 1922-1927 KADOC-KU Leuven. CC BY*

Yet there is more to these collections than documentary value. The personal photographs in particular – often arranged in substantial albums – and studio-produced photo souvenirs speak of what was regarded as iconic of China: the must-see sites, the perceived national idiosyncrasies, local customs and traditions brought along from home, the level of adoption of newly introduced cultural and religious practices are all reflected in these missionary legacies.



*Guanyin with a thousand arms to reach out to those in need of help, 1920-1939, KADOC-KU Leuven. CC BY*

As the historical, documentary and referential value of these collections unfold, a vital force in keeping them safe, relevant and loved, is diving into the materials unearthing their intrinsic qualities.



*A highly stylized yet evocative and emotional landscape: view over rice embankments on the way from Aiko to Yongtin, c. 1914, Hannu Haahti, Finnish Heritage Agency. CC BY*

The missionary collections from FELM (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission), inherited by Finnish Heritage Agency / Museovirasto, contain gems of photography by pastors such as Eero Koskinen, Hannes Sjöblom and Juho Toivo Koskikallio. Their images are often of museal quality. Rising above the documentary, the personal and anecdotic, they portray Chinese people, landscapes and architecture in an almost transcendent way - highlighting patterns, textures, lines and details that would escape the less observant or more transient traveller.

## Reflection

The lens as a mirror



*A diorama in a street in Beijing. Engraving from the book Viaggio in Cina by J. Thompson and T. Choutzé, c. 1900, Promoter Digital Gallery. CC BY-SA*

It is striking – but not coincidental – that early photography in and of China has been studied mostly focusing on photographers from the West, such as Felice Beato (British, 1834-1906), John Thomson (Scottish, 1837-1921) and Jules Itier (French, 1802-1877).



*View of the pagoda at the Imperial Summer Palace, Beijing, c. 1860  
Felice Beato, Wellcome Collection. CC BY*

Their images convey a world that seems remote, elevated, frozen in time. With shades of eternity resting on the shoulders of mandarins and farmers, scenes of daily life are lifted to sacrality. The portfolio of John Thomson is at the peak of early portrayals of China, with its immense range of subjects, razor-sharp definition and unique combination of stillness in scenery and urgency of movement. Thomson succeeded in offering a panorama of a nation and a culture, while also highlighting the individuality of each of his subjects.



*Manchu women gathered around the table, Beijing, 1869, John Thomson, Wellcome Collection. CC BY*

While the pictures of Kazumasa Ogawa exude a timeless grandeur as well, universality rather than individual expression seems to have been the main concern. The majestic nature of sites, buildings and architectural details is a constant feature in his work. But, next to monumentality, the photographs exude nostalgia and melancholy too – especially those revealing that neglect and time have harmed what were once proud and intricate constructions.



*The Wanshou Shan complex, c. 1906, Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

Ogawa was designated by a Commission established at the Imperial University of Tokyo, after the end of the Boxer Uprising, to photograph all the important views and buildings in the Forbidden City. The aim was to use the pictures to investigate architecture and decorative styles. The collotype plates along with an explanatory text were published as a two-volume book as well.



*Embracing one of the four central pillars in the Hall of Supreme Harmony in the Forbidden City, Beijing. From the album *The Imperial City of Beijing*, late Qing period, early 20th century, Ogawa Kazumasa, Tokyo Imperial Museum Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

Notwithstanding the splendour of the work of Thomson, Ogawa and contemporary non-Chinese photographers, an additional factor explaining the scholarly attention for these oeuvres, as opposed to work by Chinese photographers, is that professional (studio) photography started to emerge in China only from the 1860s onwards – about two decades after Alexander Wolcott opened his “Daguerrean Parlor” in New York City. Interestingly, this was not the consequence of a delay in sharing the new technical accomplishments in photography: it is known that the discovery of the daguerreotype process was reported on by a Macau newspaper only two months later. The first cameras travelled in the equipment of British explorers charting the Yangtze River in 1842. A Hong Kong studio was set up a few years later by an American, but only in the 1860s Chinese studios start to open, after diplomatic missions gather the necessary knowledge in the West.



*Three women photographed in a studio against a painted background, first half of the 20th century, Finnish Heritage Agency. CC BY*

Still, the new medium took its time to convince China of its merits. Taking pictures was regarded by many as a magical procedure, an uncontrollable and therefore dangerous practice. Capturing a likeness was equalled to catching the essence or the soul of the sitter. Furthermore, photography was often abused by scrooges claiming to be able to chase away evil spirits. Finally, as a documentary or artistic practice, photography in China would remain a costly affair well into the 20th century, only affordable by the rich and fashionable.



*From the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission's photo collection: pastor/photographer Hannu Haahti's approach to a Mandarin's office in Anfu, 1914. Finnish Heritage Agency. CC BY*

### Aspects & angles

*Young woman wearing traditional garments at the Tiananmen Square in Beijing, c. 1990  
Peter Friebe, United Archives. CC BY-SA*



Representing immortality too, the butterfly signifies summer and joy. This belief is rooted in a story about Taoist philosopher Zhuangzi, who after a dream about being a butterfly started to question the essence of his existence.



*The Great Wall melts into its surroundings, c. 1870, John Thomson  
Wellcome Collection. CC BY*

One of the most striking visual themes is that of the Great Wall. For foreign photographers, majestic landscapes framing the gargantuan construct have always been a staple of China-imagery. Professional photographers often portrayed the eternal, sacrosanct beauty of the monument, withstanding the decay of time, in a picturesque style, theatrically articulating the natural surroundings with the grand manmade structure.



*The Juyong Pass on the Great Wall of China from the album bought by Ivan Skušek during his stay in Beijing, late Qing period, early 20th century, Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

With images such as those of John Thomson as an inspiration, Chinese photographers of the early 20th century started to use the Great Wall as a symbol of national culture. They often adopted a similar photographic style as well, remodelling and reconsidering Chinese identity in a time of social and political turmoil.



*From Carl Simon's presentation on China: man looking over the Great Wall, c. 1910  
United Archives. CC BY-SA*



*Parts of the Great Wall of China from the album bought by Ivan Skušek during his  
stay in Beijing, late Qing period, early 20th century  
Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

To express the distinct identity of Chinese culture, Western and Eastern photographers alike tend to focus on the 'otherness' of what can be seen there: the upswept eaves of the roofs with their typical tiles, banners and posters displaying Chinese ideograms, street scenes featuring local culinary traditions, modes of transport, and people in special attire or involved in particular occupations.



*The impression of a Chinese street scene with tile-roofed gate and riksjas, recolored by Carl Simon's staff, 1910, United Archives. CC BY-SA*



*A multi-plan composition of architectural structures resulting in a layered amalgam of shapes, colors and decorative styles epitomizing 'China', s.d. Photo by Adam Kola, 2008, International Center for Information Management Systems and Services. CC BY-SA*

Emphasizing the hustle and bustle of the vibrant communities that they portray, these images suggest the position of an observer who is more than an onlooker. He is part of that scene and that action, yet still setting himself apart by placing a lens in between.



*A black-and-white photo of a street vendor carrying a rack with feathered fans, from the album bought by Ivan Skušek during his stay in Beijing, late Qing period, early 20th century, Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

Individual portraits made by Western photographers in China reveal a wider spectrum of proximity versus distance. The curious observer, conscious of his intrusive gaze, often stays at arm's length and focuses on registering the full impact of the figure standing before him. Portraits such as that of the 'average man from the countryside' from the Carl Simon collection suggest no intimacy or personal attachment to the subject, but rather a confirmation of otherness.



(previous page image) *An average man from the countryside, China 1910s, Carl Simon, United Archives. CC BY-SA*

In this studio image, the portrayal retains a documentary element but the way in which the figures have been positioned, their averted looks and the intentional composition convey a different kind of distance – that of an artist looking at his models.



*Chinese workers with an umbrella and a basket at a photo studio, c. 1905, United Archives / Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum. CC BY-SA*

Piatus Wantz's snapshots and portraits of locals – often farmer families – encountered during his time as a missionary in China, exude reciprocal musings: the photographer taking on the role of a reporter, documenting scenes from a polite distance that allows for careful observation; and the people portrayed, wondering about the function and impact of both the camera clicking and their likenesses being preserved for others to examine.



*Locals and their houses, 1920s-1930s, Piatius Wantz, KADOC-KU Leuven. CC BY*

The China portraits of German photographer Hanna Seidel, on the other hand, dismiss formalities, instead opting for spontaneous interaction. Sometimes extremely close but never aggressive, her pictures capture more than a physical appearance, as they reveal something of the inner world of the model.

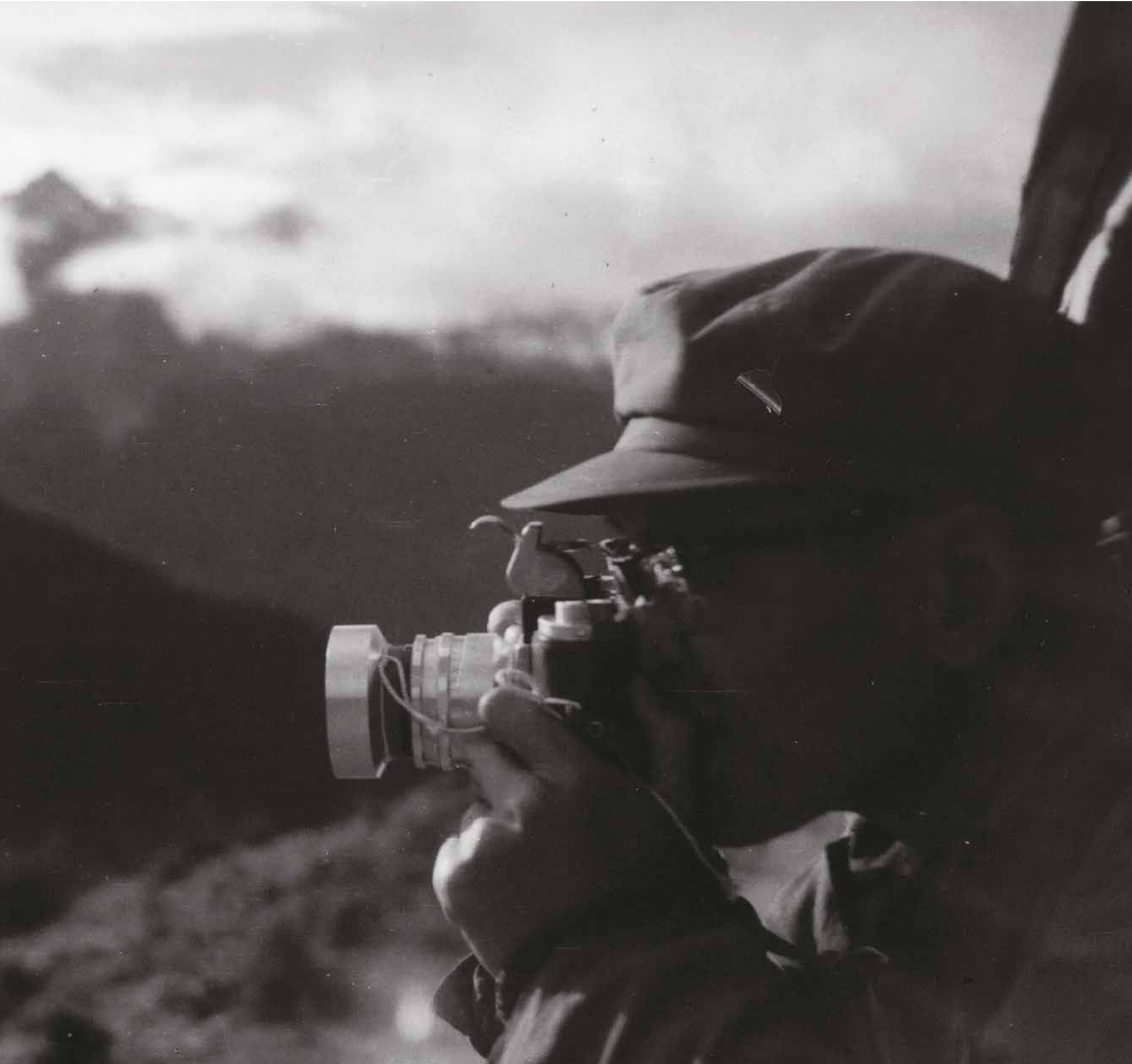


*A local at the border in Lok Ma Chan, Hong Kong, 1968, Hanna Seidel, United Archives. CC BY-SA*

As with all photography, images reflecting life and culture in China are never free from subjectivity and bias. By choosing a momentum, a position and a perspective, a photographer guides not only the onlooker's eye but his impressions and interpretations as well.

In photographic views of the East, there is a multitude of layers to be discerned, catching and reflecting different shades and lights, which collide in a veil of meaning. The marquisette that is Chinese photographic heritage offers a glimpse of a culture that never ceases to intrigue and inspire, but also partly conveys it. The appeal of the image is our call to action: only by coming closer, will we be able to look behind the lace.

*Chinese artist captured while capturing a Tibetan landscape, 1976, Situ Zhaoguang, Promoter Digital Gallery. CC BY-SA*







Duos

Portrait of a lady

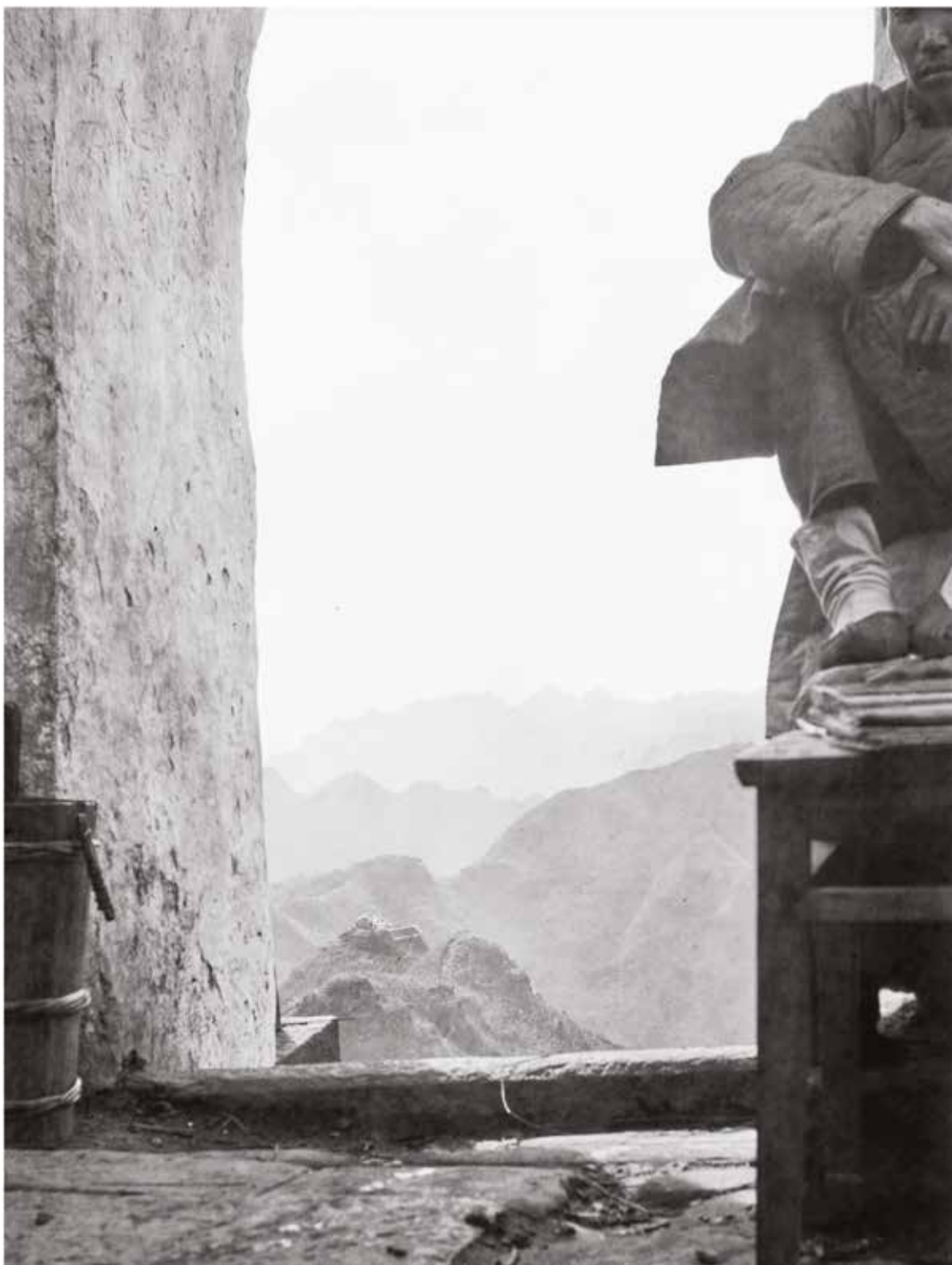


*Piatus Wantz, KADOC-KU Leuven. CC BY*



*John Thomson, Wellcome Collection. CC BY*

Through the keyhole



*Toivo Koskikallio at Finnish Heritage Agency. CC BY*



*From the Ivan Skušek Collection at Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

Pictorial pillow



*Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. CC BY-SA*



*Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). CC BY-SA*

## Wired



*Piatus Wantz, KADOC-KU Leuven. CC BY*



*Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA). CC BY-SA*

## Lotus for bliss

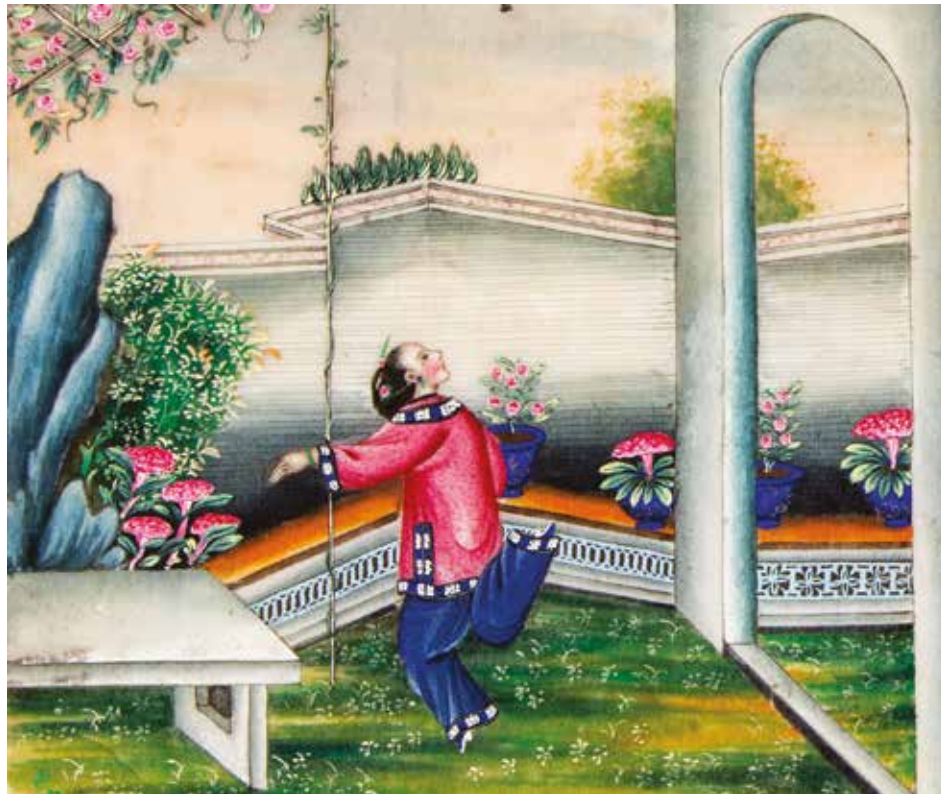


*In a fountain. Photo by Adam Kola, 2008, International Center for Information Management Systems and Services. CC BY-SA*



*As a cup. Benaki Museum. CC BY-SA*

### Palace garden dance

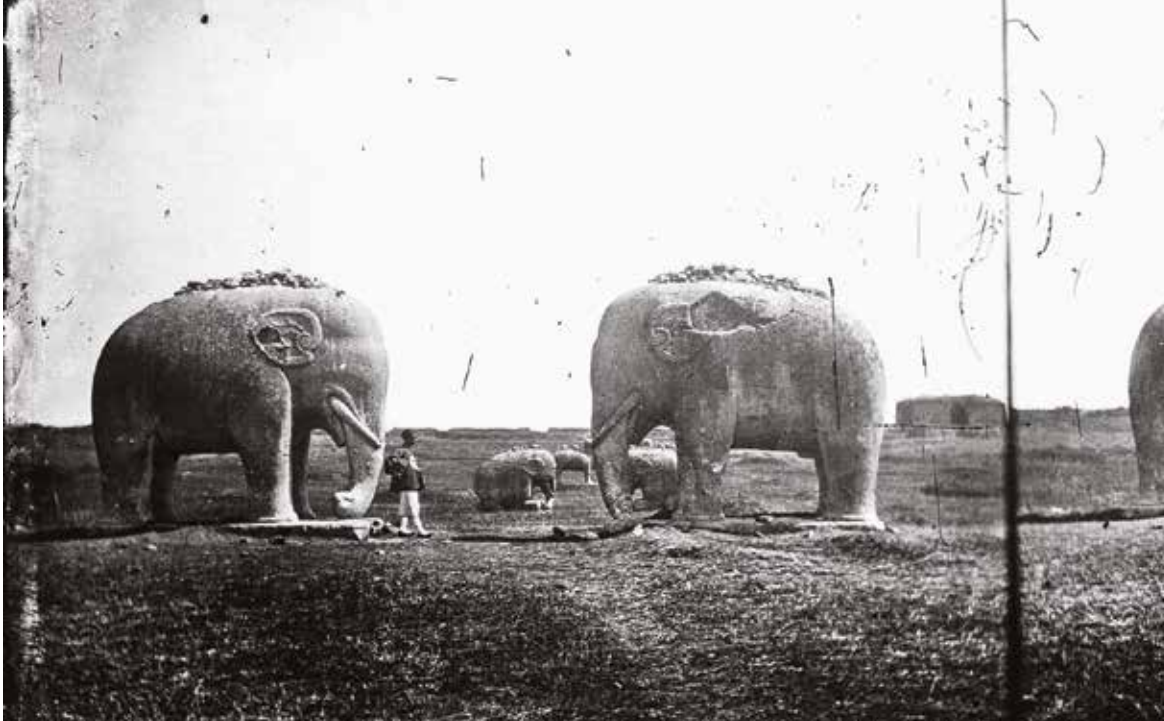


*From a book of gouaches owned by Ivan Skušek. Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*



*From an English school book. Museon. CC BY*

### Guarding the Ming tombs



*John Thomson at Wellcome Collection. CC BY*



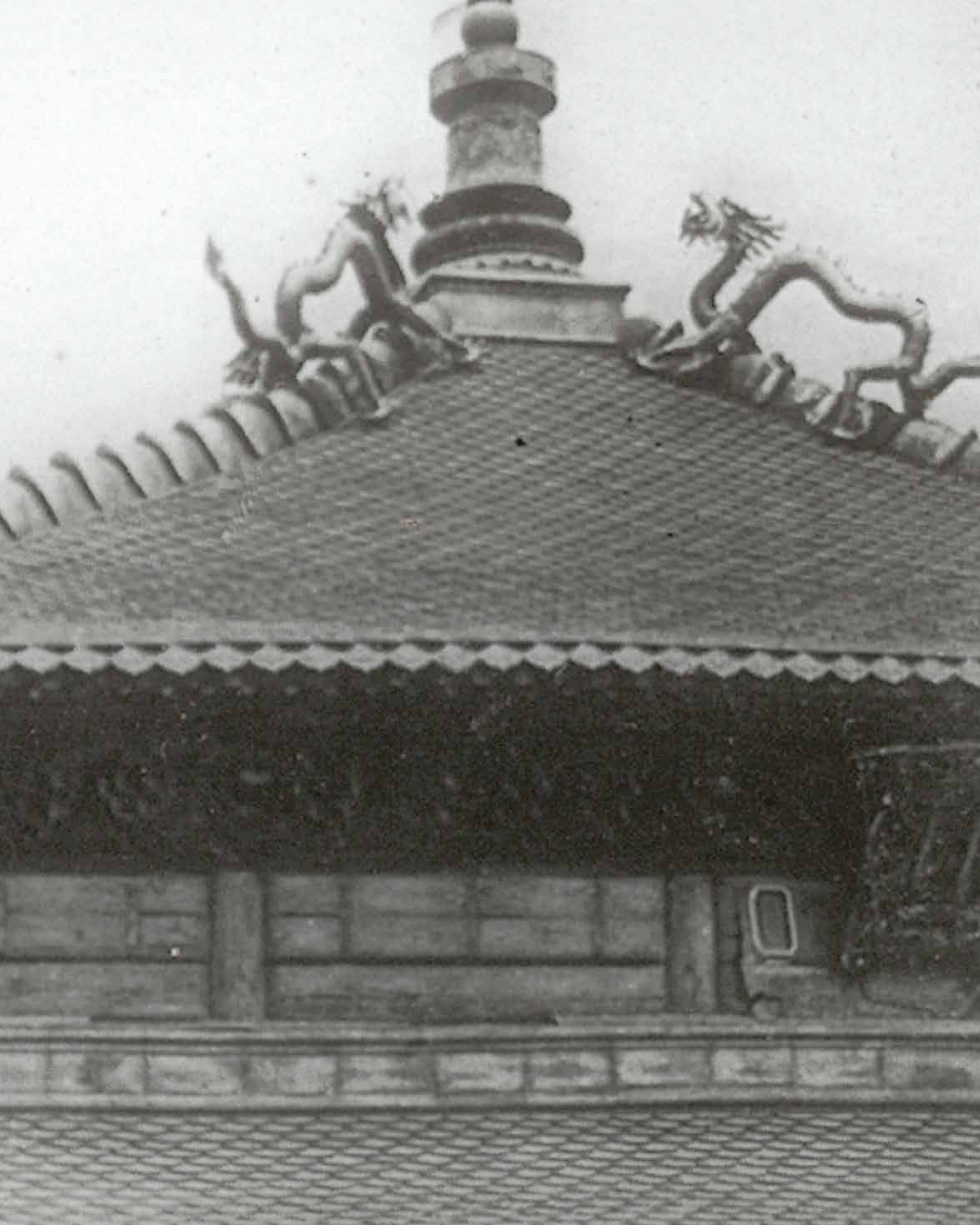
*From Ivan Skušek's collection at Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*

### The emperor's dragon



*At a Beijing observatory. Slovene Ethnographic Museum. CC BY-SA*









## Chapter 3

# The Content Providers



This chapter provides an overview of the partners and associate partners that participated in PAGODE – Europeana China, contributing digital contents from their archives.

In addition to the contents provided by the archives presented in the following pages, further content was discovered within Europeana and became part of the PAGODE project.

We express our gratitude to the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, *Museon (The Netherlands)*, *Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg (Germany)*, *Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Austria)*, *Rijksmuseum (The Netherlands)*, and *Wellcome Collection (UK)*. Some of their interesting images enrich this book.





## BENAKI MUSEUM

Benaki Museum, Greece  
[www.benaki.org](http://www.benaki.org)

The Benaki Museum is among the most extensive and innovative museum organisations in Europe. Diverse cultures engage in dialogue with Greek culture and contemporary art movements across a network of venues all over Athens—and beyond. It was founded by Antonis Benakis in 1930 and subsequently donated to the Greek state. Arranged across a satellite network of seven museum buildings, the Museum also features four archival departments and an extensive library. It currently holds a 500,000-strong inventory covering all periods of Greek culture (from prehistory to the present) as well as Western European, Islamic, Pre-Columbian, African, Chinese and Korean art. The Museum presents over 30 exhibitions and in excess of 450 events per year, welcomes over 450,000 visitors and offers a wide range of educational and cultural activities for all interests. It has earned international recognition and forged collaborations and partnerships with established cultural and academic entities, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Royal Academy of Arts in London, the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, Princeton University and UCLA. Its collections appear on its website and many other digital platforms, including Europeana, Google Art Project and Museums with no Frontiers.

### **Benaki Museum and Chinese cultural heritage**

The Benaki Museum Collection of Chinese and Korean art primarily consists of items donated by the London-based Greek expatriate George Eumorfopoulos, one of the seminal early 20th-century collectors and connoisseurs of East Asian culture. The evolution of Chinese ceramic art from the third millennium BC up to the 19th century is represented by more than 900 examples: Neolithic vases decorated with geometric patterns, funerary sculpture from the Han and Tang dynasties, elegantly proportioned wares dating to the Song dynasty and porcelains from the Ming and Qing dynasties. A few fine Korean ceramics as well as further works of Chinese art, like snuff bottles and small sculptures in jade, hardstone and other materials, complement the collection, bringing the total to some 1,400 items.

### **Digitisation at the Benaki Museum**

The Information Technology Department of the Benaki Museum was established in 1991 in order to introduce, develop, coordinate and support the use of information technology at the Museum. Its activities include the electronic documentation and management of the Museum's collections by developing and supporting computer systems; the promotion of the Museum's collections and of Greek culture in general through multimedia applications; the broadening of the Museum's communication platform with the public, by developing and updating the Museum's website; the production of terminology standards to document cultural information on museum objects; the digitisation of collections and archives; and the management and curation of digital records. The Benaki Museum Information Department has kept close track of developments in information technology and communication, and has participated actively in many European programmes, in which new and pioneering computer technologies have been tested and applied.



Ewer. Porcelain with underglaze blue and wucai coloured overglaze enamel decoration (dragons). China, Jiangxi province, Jingdezhen. Mark and period of Wanli, AD 1573-1620. Height 25.5 cm. Donated by George Eumorfopoulos (GE\_2550)

Figure of an earth spirit . Polychrome glazed (sancai), painted and gilt earthenware. China, Hebei or Henan provinces. Tang dynasty, first half of 8th c. Height 63.5 cm. Donated by George Eumorfopoulos (GE\_2172)



Tripod censer. Greenish-blue (celadon) glazed Longquan stoneware. Gold lacquer repairs. China, Zhejiang province, Longquan. Southern Song dynasty, 13th c. Diameter 9 cm. Donated by George Eumorfopoulos (GE\_2388)



Zun-shaped flower pot. Blue glazed on the interior and purple glazed on the exterior Jun stoneware. One character inscription ("nine" numeral, jiu) incised on the base. China, Henan province, Yuzhou. Early Ming dynasty. Diameter 16.2 cm. Donated by George Eumorfopoulos (GE\_2325)



## KADOC Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society, Belgium

[www.kadoc.be](http://www.kadoc.be)

KADOC is the interfaculty Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society at KU Leuven. Established in 1976, KADOC is an international centre for the study of the interaction between religion, culture and society in the 19th and 20th centuries. It preserves and discloses an extensive archival collection and heritage library that emerged from the interplay between religion, culture and society in a Belgian, European and global context. Political and social developments such as the welfare state, civil society, democratization, European integration, and secularization are documented in the collections of political movements, trade unions, NGOs, and religious congregations. Its 'international' collections document a wide range of interactions between Europe and the Americas, Asia and Africa as intermediated by political movements, churches, NGOs and individual actors. KADOC stimulates international research by organizing conferences, maintaining relations with European universities and partner institutions, by publishing innovative studies, and by hosting junior and senior researchers from across the world.

### **KADOC and Chinese cultural heritage**

Amongst the international collections preserved by KADOC, the material pertaining to China stands out for its diversity and its relation to major historical events. Particularly the archives and libraries of missionary congregations active in various regions in China offer a rich insight into the interaction between China and the West over the course of the long 19th and early 20th centuries. Both published and unpublished sources (e.g. schoolbooks, catechisms and correspondences) show how Belgian missionaries, predominantly Scheutists, Franciscans and Jesuits, manifested themselves culturally (e.g. education and catechesis) and physically (e.g. architecture and clothing). Yet, while striving to increase their influence on local communities, missionaries also extensively documented their environment, either through ethnographic observations or through the medium of photography, thereby transmitting a unique panorama of local religious traditions, industries and cultural expressions. A gripping illustration of this documentary zeal is the extensive glass plate collection of the Belgo-Luxembourgian Dionysius Piatius Wantz (1884-1986), a Franciscan missionary who worked in the region of today's Hubei province from 1904 until 1933. Missionary archives and photographic collections reveal unique information about some major historical events that missionaries were witnesses to. A photo album preserved in the Archive of the North-Belgian Jesuit Province, for example, shows the construction of the Jinghan railway between Beijing and Hankou (Wuhan) between 1899-1902. A photo-album dedicated to the Boxer Rebellion and to the memory of its victims, preserved in the Scheutist archives, offers an unexpected perspective on China's impactful anti-imperialist resurrection between 1899 and 1901.

### **Digitization at KADOC**

KADOC is committed to disclosing and harnessing both analogue and born digital heritage through the online publication of content and metadata. Much emphasis is placed on to the contextualisation and linking of data, in accordance with international standards, preferably as open data and allowing full-text search. KADOC collects born-digital heritage in cooperation with archive creators and commits to digitising analogue collections, either at the request of readers, systematically or project-based. It invests in LIAS, a digital ecosystem for the management, preservation, and provision of digital sources. KADOC publishes its heritage through its own catalogues and through platforms and consortia such as Europeana and Wikidata. It also curates thematic collections and online exhibitions through its own web platform [www.kadocheritage.be](http://www.kadocheritage.be) and its Dutch counterpart [www.kadocerfgoed.be](http://www.kadocerfgoed.be). In this way, KADOC aims to bridge the gap between specialists and a wider audience. To ensure that its collection reflects social and technological evolutions, KADOC keeps a finger on the pulse of access trends, invests in incorporating new media, and integrates new technologies in its work processes.



Portrait of the photographer Yung-Fong, active in Hankou during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, included in a photo album that depicts the construction of the Beijing-Hankou railway (1897-1906). KADOC-KU Leuven, KFH2505.



Catechetical print by the Belgian CICM missionary Leo Van Dijk (1878-1951), from a series created in the years 1925-1927 and printed and distributed in China in the 1930s.  
KADOC-KU Leuven, Archives of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Generalate, 6563.



Map of the city of Beijing by Wang Hua Long (1920s), from the cartographic collection in the archives of CICM, which contains up to 600 maps dated between 1840 and 1950.  
KADOC-KU Leuven, Archives of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Geographical Maps, 45.



Glass positives from the collection of the Belgo-Luxembourgian Franciscan missionary Dionysius Piatius Wantz (1884-1986), active in the region of today's Hubei province from 1904 until 1933.  
KADOC-KU Leuven, Archives of the Franciscans – Flemish Province Saint-Joseph, Image Collection, Collection Piatius Wantz, 2045 and 2051.





## Leiden University Libraries (UBL), The Netherlands

[www.library.universiteitleiden.nl](http://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl)

Founded in 1575, with the donation of a copy of the Polyglot Bible by Prince William of Orange, Leiden University Libraries (UBL) has grown into a knowledge node for Leiden University, where information is produced, kept, used and shared - both physically and virtually. Not only does the UBL provide a solid base for Leiden researchers and others to find their own way in the challenging world of research data and global information infrastructures, it also looks ahead to future developments and opportunities, to further develop and improve its services for education and research. With these scholarly information services, the UBL acts as a trusted partner in knowledge for researchers, teachers and students. Open to the world, the UBL also develops effective ways of collaborating with other libraries and cultural heritage institutions on a local, national and international level.

UBL's reputation is also based on its world-class collections with strengths in many distinct collection areas from medieval prayer books to contemporary Asian Art. Of particular note are the medieval manuscripts, collections of Caribbean, Science, Law and Political theory, European history and European languages, Middle Eastern and Asian cultures and languages. As for Asia, the rich Southeast Asian Special Collections focuses on the Malay world, in particular on the Netherlands-Indies/Indonesia, while the Chinese Special collections are of world renown.

### **Leiden University and Chinese cultural heritage**

Many rare books and manuscripts have enriched the UBL Chinese Special Collections since the first printed Chinese book entered its holding at the beginning of the 17th century. The corner stone of the Chinese collection at the UBL is indubitably the Van Gulik Collection. It reflects the interest of the Dutch sinologist, diplomat and writer, for Chinese culture in general and for Chinese popular fiction, fine art, and music in particular. This collection contains rare documents collected in China and Japan, and used by Van Gulik for his sinological studies or fictional work. Also noteworthy are the collection of Yao manuscripts (mostly Taoist text from the Yao people, written in Chinese characters), the Gützlaff collection (109 Chinese protestant works from before 1855), the Gumbert collection of translations in Western languages of the Daodejing, the KNAG collection (named after the Royal Netherlands Geographical Society, it features the personal Chinese library of four 19th century Dutch sinologists who worked as interpreters in the Netherlands Indies), the collection of Sino-Vietnamese books, and the collection of Unofficial poetry journals from the People's Republic of China (an internationally unique collection, covering a period from 1978 to current). In 2019, the UBL launched a digitisation project aiming to make as many titles from this collection available online worldwide, and has collaborated since 2020 with Fudan University Library in Shanghai at its completion. This project embodies both the international and digital ambitions of the UBL.

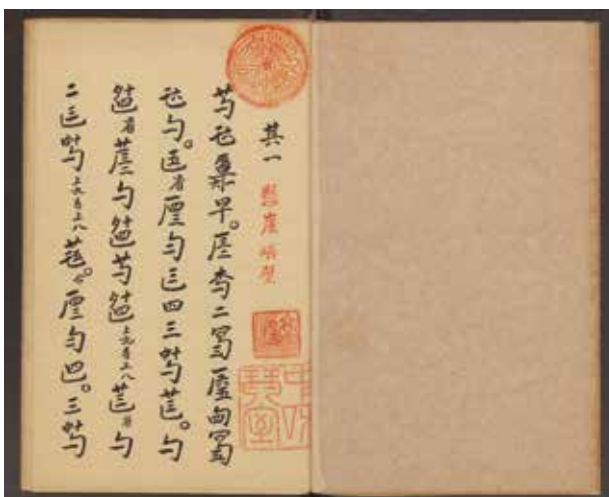
### **Digitisation at Leiden University**

Currently, the UBL has indeed made ca. 450,000 cultural heritage objects (more than 90TB) available worldwide for education, research and the general public through its website [digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl](http://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl). This service features both digitised and born-digital material from the UBL. The website provides access to Leiden's rich and diverse collections, including the mythic epic La Galigo (which is enlisted on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register), Maps and Atlases, Anatomical Drawings, Scholarly correspondences from previous centuries, Photo Albums, Western Medieval Manuscripts and Southeast Asian Pop Music.

The UBL uses international and open standards in order to make this material available as widely as possible. In addition, new functionalities are being developed, such as specific options for maps and other geographic material, videos of interactive objects, extensive download options so that these collections can also be searched using computational techniques, and applications (for instance to make annotations) based on the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF). One of the founding members of the IIIF Consortium, the UBL is currently working on a project to aggregate its content to Europeana using IIIF technology.



Complete map of the Nine Borders Towns of the Great Ming of the human presence and travel routes of the Ten thousands countries, after 1663 Later Japanese reprint of a folio map issued by Wang Junfu in 1663, under the Qing emperor Kangxi. China occupies 3/4 of the map and is bounded by the Great wall (North), the oceans (East and South) and the Yellow river (West). The surrounding lands represent the rest of the world, including the New world discoveries and Europe. Leiden University Libraries, SINOL. Gulik E 224

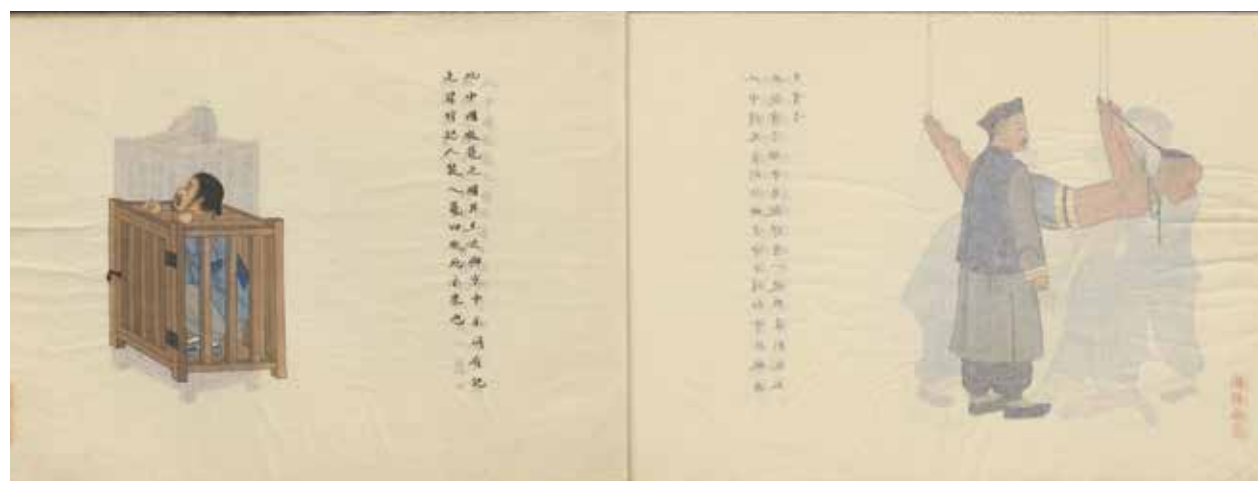


Manuscript of High Mountains and Flowing Waters in Eighteen Sections from the Lute Room of the Middle Harmony, 194 - Score for the Chinese Lute (qin) copied by Robert van Gulik in Washington in the 1940s. The first page features several personal seals engraved by its former owner. Leiden University Libraries, SINOL. Gulik 6771.13

*Designs of Incense Burners, 1878*  
 Part of the Van Gulik collection, this book compiles designs of incense burner covers. One of these covers inspired Robert van Gulik for the design of the maze in his famous mystery, the Chinese Maze Murders.  
 Leiden University Libraries, SINOL. Gulik B 128



*[The Red Manifesto], 1716* Imperial decree in which Emperor Kangxi inquires after four Jesuits he sent to Rome between 1706 and 1708, at the time of the Chinese Rites Controversy, and who had not returned to China. Leiden University Libraries, Or. 1615 (2)



*[Examples of Corporal Punishments] ([Voorbeelden van Lijfstroffen]), late 19th – early 20th century*, Album with 32 gouaches depicting Chinese punishments and methods of torture. Illustrations are accompanied by a text in Chinese and Zhou Peichun's seal, an artist or a studio active in Beijing at the turn of the 20th century. Leiden University Libraries, Or. 25.406





## Musée Historique Lausanne / Historical Museum of Lausanne, Switzerland

[www.lausanne.ch/vie-pratique/culture/musees/mhl.html](http://www.lausanne.ch/vie-pratique/culture/musees/mhl.html)

The Historical Museum of Lausanne (MHL) was recently renovated. It reopened in April 2018 with a new permanent exhibition entitled *Lausanne, the Exhibition*. As it is housed in Lausanne's old Bishop's Palace – a monument of national importance (with the highest rating in Switzerland's inventory of historical monuments) – the utmost care had to be applied to the substance and integrity of the building. Due to its historical content and location within Lausanne's old town, MHL juxtaposes past and present, allowing visitors to step back and forth in time. From its hilltop perch overlooking a modern European city, the MHL showcases history and the importance of passing historical knowledge on to future generations.

The role of the Historical Museum of Lausanne goes far beyond safeguarding our local heritage. Taking its cues from a city in flux – no less so than in the 19th century – and the wondrously complex urban-planning challenges that we face, the Museum explores Lausanne's past and present, drawing links between art, history, economics, architecture and politics. It also focuses increasing attention on Lausanne's current inhabitants – the people who make the city what it is today – and provides a welcoming space for the visiting public.

The MHL's missions are collecting, preserving and highlighting all matter concerning Lausanne history. It forms collections in all main fields where local society expresses itself. The MHL preserves and restores collections in order to transmit them to future generations by studying, researching and showcasing them through publications, exhibitions, loans and information (consultations, survey), the museum provides accessibility by raising the awareness of visitors. MHL contributes to the advance of scientific knowledges and the expansion of cultural life in Lausanne, Switzerland and further afield. If its collections reflect mainly the past of the region, they also include Asian artworks, as well as Chinese, provided by private collections, or brought back to Lausanne by travellers.

### **Musée Historique Lausanne and Chinese cultural heritage**

As part of its collection, the Historical Museum of Lausanne owns the work of Géa Augsbourg (1902-1974), a Swiss artist of the 20th century. After his death in 1974, the Association of Géa Augsbourg's friends (l'Association des Amis de Géa Augsbourg) was created. In 2007, the Association offered the fund to the Historical Museum of Lausanne, which contains hundreds of pieces of art including oil painting, drawings, engravings, ceramics and photographs.

Géa Augsbourg was a painter, artist, journalist and ceramist and had a great network of friends and acquaintances including Marc Chagall and Pablo Picasso. During his life, he made an important contribution to the art world, both in Switzerland and throughout the world, looking for new forms of graphism.

In 1959, Géa Augsbourg went to China with two Swiss friends to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the People's Republic of China. The three men visited Beijing and the provinces of Shanxi and Sichuan. Géa Augsbourg completed more than 180 watercolours, gouache, ink paintings and sketches of what he saw during his travels. His artistic style was influenced by traditional Chinese art, such as using ink and a traditional Chinese stamp. Most of his production depicts people (portrait or group), but also animals and nature.

Géa Augsbourg was a privileged observer of the deep mutation of China. His work is a great testimonial of this period. His stay in China, from September to October 1959, is concordant with a very important time in modern Chinese history. It is the moment of the Great Leap Forward (1958-1959) which had the purpose to change China from an agricultural into a great industrial country. In April 1959, Mao was removed from power and replaced by Liu Shaoqi, who reoriented the economy towards agriculture. This period also correlated with the breakdown of China's relationship with the Soviet Union. The drawings of Géa Augsbourg show us how China was changing, depicting the countryside and peasants, but also factories and workers.

In addition to the artist's works, further 'treasures' by Géa Augsbourg were found by the museum, such as an old Chinese pith painting album. Many of these albums have been disassembled, in order to sell the paintings separately. Even now, the museum does not really know how the album arrived in Géa Augsbourg's hands.



Géa Augsburg, sans titre, aquarelle et craie grasse sur papier, 1960, Musée Historique Lausanne, © 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich.



Géo Augsbourg, Chentou vue de la maison du poète Tu Fu, aquarelle, gouache et encre de Chine sur papier, 1959, Musée Historique Lausanne, © 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich.



Grande boîte à couvercle, porcelaine peinte aux émaux polychromes et à l'or, Jingdezhen, époque Yongzheng, 1725-1730, AA.46.C.65, coll. Musée Historique Lausanne © photo Roland Blaettler



Géo Augsbourg, Usine, craie grasse et encre de Chine sur papier, 1959, Musée Historique Lausanne, © 2021, ProLitteris, Zurich.





## Museovirasto Finnish Heritage Agency

### Museovirasto, Finnish Heritage Agency, Finland

[www.museovirasto.fi](http://www.museovirasto.fi)

Museovirasto (the Finnish Heritage Agency) was founded in 1884 and is responsible for protecting environments with cultural historic value, archaeological and architectural heritage, and other cultural property. It also collects, studies and presents national collections and both supports and develops the museum field nationally. Museovirasto is funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

Museovirasto promotes and supports the opening up of cultural heritage material on a larger scale, as well as providing better availability, easier accessibility and the free use of cultural heritage material. This is done by making material available and inspiring people to experience and find it. Museovirasto also supports new models and tools for the freer and more versatile use of cultural heritage.

Sustainable development, common well-being as well as digitalization and developing new digital services, new manners of cooperation and our own customer understanding are all in the scope of Museovirasto. The Finnish National Digital Library [finna.fi](http://finna.fi) is one good example of both digital services and cooperation. The National Library of Finland is responsible for Finna, and Museovirasto is developing and using it with other GLAM organizations.

#### **Museovirasto and Chinese cultural heritage**

The National Museum of Finland, which is part of Museovirasto, has in its archaeological, historical, ethnological and ethnographic collections about 2 million objects. The Picture Collections of Museovirasto have over 18 million images. They consist of historical, ethnological, architecture and journalistic picture materials. Ethnographic collections include 40,000 objects and about 200,000 images, collected from every continent, among them some important collections also from China and Central Asia. Some of these were collected in the 19th century.

Best known and most important are the collections of C.G. Mannerheim and the collections of FELM (Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission). Mannerheim served as a Colonel in the Imperial Russian Army and was sent to the East as a military intelligence officer in 1906–1908 – on horseback across Central Asia, through Tibetan territory and onwards to Beijing. Mannerheim posed also as a scientist and acquired a sizeable collection of objects from the peoples in the region and took over a thousand pictures. These pictures have already been digitized and can be found also on Europeana.

The artefacts of the discontinued Kumbukumbu Museum of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) were added into the ethnographic collections in 2015. They include both objects and about 160,000 images. FELM started its work in China in 1902 and this collection tells of both their work, as well as their interest in Chinese culture and heritage. The work of FELM in China was concentrated in the Hunan province, but its collection has material also from other provinces and parts of China.

#### **Digitization at Museovirasto**

Collections are digitized using different cameras and software (mainly Capture One Pro, Adobe Photoshop® and Lightroom®) and digital files and metadata are preserved in the MuseumPlus collection management system. Metadata and files are ingested also onto the servers of CSC (IT Center for Science), which preserves cultural heritage for future generations.

Museovirasto publishes digitized collections mainly on the Finnish national digital library [finna.fi](http://finna.fi), on its own platform [museovirasto.finna.fi](http://museovirasto.finna.fi) and on Europeana. Images are published mainly using CC BY license and most of them can be uploaded freely in high-resolution, with best quality files on Finna.

Selecting, cataloguing, digitizing and publishing material for the PAGODE – Europeana China project would not have been possible without the work and knowledge of Paula Laajalahti, Simo Karisalo, Jaana Onatsu, Terhi Aho and Helena Ojala. This applies especially Paula Laajalahti who did tremendous work, mainly voluntarily, and spent several years going through over 10,000 images of the FELM collection. Minna Rönkä from the Finna team of the National Library also helped a lot in publishing our PAGODE dataset onto Europeana. Thank you all.



Pavilion near the Fairy cave temple in Guling (Lushan) 1933. Toivo Koskikallio, Finnish Heritage Agency.



*Prince Lan at his desk, Ürümchi, Xinjiang, July – August, 1907. C.G.E. Mannerheim, Finnish Heritage Agency.*



*Buddhist (Tibetan) monks in Hankow (modern Wuhan) July, 21st, 1902. Hannes Sjöblom, Finnish Heritage Agency*



*Four missionaries enjoying tea or coffee in Guling (Lushan) 23.5.1921. From the left, Sylvi Maria Korhonen, Martta Suominen, Niilo Korhonen and Karin Tiainen. Finnish Heritage Agency.*



## Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW) Wereldmuseum Rotterdam (WMR), The Netherlands [collectie.wereldculturen.nl](http://collectie.wereldculturen.nl)

The Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW) is an umbrella institution founded in 2014 that incorporates the formerly separate institutions: Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, and the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal, whose collections belong to the Dutch state. Since 2017, NMVW has developed a partnership with the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam (WMR), whose collections belong to that city. These museums bring together the largest, most diverse and best collections of non-European art and material culture in the Netherlands, consisting of almost 450,000 objects and 750,000 images, including the most important anthropological material culture and photographic collection in the Netherlands. Overall, the collections highlight the intercultural nature of all cultures and periods, and presents a resource for all those interested to learn about history, cultural diversity and creativity. The museum is for – and about – people. NMVW believes that it is important to interpret the collections and understand historical processes in an open and critical way, in order to continue to build on the relevance of these world cultures collections in our custodianship, and to see their role in fostering understandings of citizenship in a global frame.

### **Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen and Wereldmuseum Rotterdam and Chinese cultural heritage**

The Chinese collections at NMVW and WMR consist of nearly 2,000 images and over 20,000 objects, ranging from Shang dynasty oracle bones to contemporary art. Most of these continue to be housed in the repositories of the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, a precursor of which was founded in 1837 as one of the first academic ethnographic museums in the world. Museum Volkenkunde's initial collection consisted of objects acquired by the physician Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866), mainly from Japan, but also China and Tibet. The earliest Chinese collection was amassed during the eighteenth century by lawyer Jean-Theodore Royer (1737-1807). Royer tried to study Chinese language and culture, for which he acquired hundreds of objects such as Chinese books, paintings, ceramics, scholar's objects, and clothing. Highlights include over 80 albums of watercolour paintings, of which at least a dozen can be dated to the mid-1770s. Another important early collection is that of Prof. Jan J. M. de Groot (1854-1921) who systematically collected religious and ritual artefacts during his fieldwork in Xiamen in the 1880s, later included in his ground-breaking publication *The Religious System of China*. The NMVW holds an outstanding collection of 19th- and 20th- century paintings and calligraphy, many of which were acquired from Dutch sinologists such as Robert van Gulik and Erik Zürcher. Other noteworthy categories include export paintings on canvas and (reverse) glass, Yao religious paintings, Dongba manuscripts, numismatics, and over 500 prints dating from the 17th – 20th centuries in which there are a number of rare examples.

### **Digitization at the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen and Wereldmuseum Rotterdam**

NMVW/WMR has always invested in digitizing its collection and publishing its collection online. We strongly believe that it is important to share information about our collections as widely as possible and be transparent regarding our collecting practices. Nearly all of the collection objects on our website have published metadata. Due to sensitivities regarding rights or the objects themselves, we sometimes need to limit the amount of data that we can share or at times we are not able to share a digital image of the object. We currently have images for 92% of our collection. In the coming years we will be working on improving the quality of our images, developing machine learning pipelines for generating better metadata for our photographic collection, experimenting with 3D scanning, modelling and using storytelling applications and AR applications aimed at a more general audience as well as researchers. We will be working on further implementing Linked Open Data (LOD) techniques during the coming years. On our website we provide professionals with computer readable datasets about our collection as well as our Wereldculturen thesaurus.



Wu Chuangshuo (1844-1927), Balsam and Rock, ink on paper, 133 x 33 cm (excluding mount),  
China, 1919, collected by Robert van Gulik, Collection Stichting Nationaal Museum van  
Wereldculturen, inv. no. RV-5262-4.



Statue of Xiamen's City god, wood, hair, gesso, lacquer, paint, 31 x 21,2 x 17,5 cm, Xiamen, China, 1886-1890, collected by Jan J. M. de Groot, Collection Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, inv. no. RV-962-10.



: Statue of Guanyin, wood, paint, 145 x 90 cm, China, late 14th – 16th century, Collection Wereldmuseum Rotterdam, inv. no. WM-29004, photo: Erik Hermerg.





## Promoter Digital Gallery, Italy

[www.promoter.it](http://www.promoter.it)

Promoter S.r.l. is an SME based in the province of Pisa, bringing together competencies and experiences in the areas of digital transformation, multimedia innovation, business promotion and project management. The business has existed since 1996 and has been active in the multimedia production since its establishment. The limited company was constituted in 2010 and regularly participates in international exchanges. Promoter features long-standing experience in technical coordination and communication of European projects and this is the main role that Promoter had in PAGODE – Europeana China.

In 2011, Promoter launched [digitalmeetsculture.net](http://digitalmeetsculture.net), an online magazine that provides information, resources and articles about the encounter of digital technologies with cultural heritage and the arts. It addresses both professionals and the general public: members of the arts and cultural heritage sectors interested in digitisation processes and digital technologies, experts interested in the creative use and re-use of digital cultural heritage, members of the educational sector and non-professional users wishing to be informed and kept up-to-date on these matters. [Digitalmeetsculture.net](http://Digitalmeetsculture.net) is constantly growing and it receives currently c 25,000 visitors per month.

Promoter has a keen interest in photographic heritage, and in 2014 organized a crowdsourcing action for the digitization of family albums from citizens in the area of Pisa. The digitization action ran for three months, hosted at the premises of the Museo della Grafica in Pisa, during the successful photographic exhibition “All Our Yesterdays”, showcasing masterpieces of early photography from important archives and photo-agencies in Europe. The crowdsourcing associated with “All Our Yesterdays” resulted in over 1,000 photographs digitized at the highest standards, and released by their owners to Promoter under a Creative Commons license for the purposes of online dissemination and non-commercial reuse. A selection of this archive is presented in the Promoter’s Digital Gallery at [digitalgallery.promoter.it](http://digitalgallery.promoter.it) and is also available on the Europeana portal.

### **Promoter’s Digital Gallery and Chinese cultural heritage**

A collection of Chinese-related content is present in the Promoter’s Digital Gallery.

A first dataset is the result of the digitization in high quality format of the illustrations contained in the book “Viaggio in Cina” by J. Thompson and T. Choutzé, illustrated with 167 engravings. Even if in the book, the name of the photographer is misspelled as “Thompson”, the author is actually the Scottish photographer and traveller John Thomson (1837-1921), while T. Choutzé is the pseudonym of Gabriel Devéria (1844-1899), a French diplomat and interpreter who worked and travelled in China. The book was created by Fratelli Treves Editori toward the end of 19th century and published in various editions in the early 20th century.

The second dataset provided to the PAGODE project includes a selection of highly relevant, and previously unseen, original photographs depicting the life of the Chinese renowned sculptor Situ Zhaoguang. Outstanding among the second generation of sculptors nurtured in the new China, his artistic practice in the reform and opening period led the artistic field of the nation to flourish. He had an active impact on the field of sculpture, in particular urban sculpture and art education in China. He studied at the Sculpture Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1959 and then at the Repin Art Institute in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). On returning to China, he became a professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing and then served as Dean of the Sculpture Department. His first commission was the large-scale clay sculpture “Anger of the Farming Slaves”, in 1974 in Tibet. The contents made available through Europeana comprises a photographic collection of this trip to Tibet. The photographs were made available expressly for the PAGODE project by Zhaoguang’s son Situ Xiaochun who has been partner of the Promoter limited company since 2013.



*Tibet life in the 1970s, photo was taken by the sculptors who worked there*

*Sculptors worked in Tibet in 1976  
(right first is Situ Zhaoguang)*



*People in Tibet, 1976*



*Situ Zhaoguang's sculpture for Tibet, 1976*







## Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA), Belgium

[www.kikirpa.be](http://www.kikirpa.be)

The Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) is a Belgian scientific institution devoted to the study and conservation of the country's rich cultural heritage. An interdisciplinary team of art historians, photographers, chemists, archaeologists, engineers and conservator-restorers carries out research on various aspects of cultural heritage objects such as materials and techniques used, production date and means to ensure their sustainable conservation. KIK-IRPA is a unique resource for scientific, photographic and technical documentation about Belgian heritage. An impressive photo library contains over one million photos and the BALaT online database ("Belgian Art Links and Tools" <http://balat.kikirpa.be>) displays more than 450,000 records (with more than 750,000 images) of cultural heritage objects, all freely accessible for personal use. The number of publications, courses, conferences and seminars reflect the important role that KIK-IRPA plays in the preservation and promotion of Belgian heritage. KIK-IRPA contributed with around 150,000 items to Europeana, is a member of Photoconsortium, Time Machine and many other national and international organizations in the field of the study, conservation and restoration of works of art.

### **KIK-IRPA and Chinese cultural heritage**

KIK-IRPA studies the arts produced in Belgium from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. So, why did we participate in a project focused on Chinese cultural heritage? Since historically one of the missions of KIK-IRPA was to make an extensive photographic inventory of cultural heritage in Belgium many more artefacts were photographed than solely those falling within the limits mentioned above. Several museums and private collections preserve and exhibit Chinese cultural heritage (e.g. Chinese export porcelain) and parts of these collections were photographed and inventoried by KIK-IRPA, as well as made accessible through the website BALaT. The metadata for these objects were (often quickly) copied from the local inventories or catalogues and reflect the status of knowledge at the time the photographs were taken. Another source for photographic material is when an artwork enters KIK-IRPA for study, restoration or analyses by our researchers and specialists.

### **Digitization at KIK-IRPA**

When a negative needs to be digitized a whole workflow is set in motion. The first step is to make the selection. In general, and due to the enormous number of negatives that have to be digitized, priorities have to be set. These priorities are roughly divided into two groups: negatives that are in a fragile state or in the process of auto-degradation (an inherent process that can't be stopped, only slowed down) and negatives that could be valued for multiple reasons (publications by colleagues, orders by external 'clients', and all kinds of collaboration opportunities, including projects such as PAGODE – Europeana China). Our negatives are stored in a special acclimatized 'bunker' that is currently in the process of being renovated. An extremely complicated task awaits: up to 1,000,000 negatives need to be repackaged, moved and stored into an external repository, before the renovation works in the bunker can start. Finally the negatives will be put back into newly compartmented 'rooms' with different temperatures and humidity according to the different supports. However, for the moment, the negative, together with the 10 to 50 other negatives that are stored in the same box, is taken from the bunker to the digitization room, where it is gently cleaned. We do not restore the negatives, although, if by accident we stumble upon broken glass plates for instance, they are digitized separately and can subsequently be shown as 'digitally restored' online.

The standard digitization set-up used is fairly simple: a Canon EOS 5Dsr (50.6-megapixel CMOS) with 50 mm, 70 mm and 100 mm objectives with a Kaiser "slimline plano" LED light box 42,9 x 30,9 cm. The RAW images are 8.688 x 5.792 pixels, and from those the preservation master (TIFF 6.0 uncompressed, 350 x 350 dpi, 48 bits per pixel) is created, which is also the base from which to create multiple derivatives for different uses (from thumbnail to print quality files). On the web, a simplified International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) server is used to give the public access to images ranging from thumbnail view to high-resolution zoom. Post-processing is done in Adobe Photoshop® and Lightroom®. For colour correction, aside from the manual work, the Negativ Lab Pro tool is used. Moreover, of course, a final visual quality control is performed, ideally on another colleague's work. After the digitization, the negatives are repackaged in acid-free archival quality paper and boxes to be stored again in the climate bunker for long-term preservation, while the digital images are sent to multiple back-up systems and long-term preservation digital centres.

Finally, a big thank you to all the colleagues who made this project possible: Jenny Coucke, Eva Coudyzer, Elodie De Zutter, Eva Lecluyse, Clémentine Marlier, Eric Parisi, Jeroen Reyniers, Sander Raes, Chris Sleewaert and Ophélie Walem.



*Fô lion (19th century), Museum voor Oudheidkunde en Sierkunst en Schone Kunsten, Kortrijk. CC BY-SA KIK-IRPA, Brussels: KM011220.*

*In the picture: in the late 90s KIK-IRPA was asked to participate in the restoration of a Bodhisattva head (<http://balat.kikirpa.be/object/10074787>) from the collection of the Musée royal de Mariemont (Morlanwelz-Mariemont). Every restoration project consists of photographs of the object before, during and after restoration. [KN007548 (after), KN005929 (before)]*

*Bodhisattva head (17th century), Musée royal de Mariemont, Morlanwelz-Mariemont*



CC BY-SA KIK-IRPA, Brussels: KN007548 (after restoration).



CC BY-SA KIK-IRPA, Brussels: KN005929 (before restoration)



*Costume of the Imperial Theatre, China (1736-1796), Art & History Museum, Brussels. CC BY-SA KIK-IRPA, Brussels: G004222.*





## Slovenski etnografski muzej, Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM), Slovenia [www.etno-muzej.si/en](http://www.etno-muzej.si/en)

The Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) is the only national museum in Slovenia dedicated to the preservation, study and presentation of tangible and intangible ethnological heritage. Established in 1923, it now houses more than 40,000 objects in Slovene collections and a further 10,000 objects in non-European collections.

The Slovene collections, which encompass traditional culture as well as mass and pop culture in Slovenia and the diaspora, are treated in a contemporary way as multi-layered bearers of information, a material witness of working and festive days in the life of the rural and urban population, and as narrators of creativity, knowledge, wisdom, and co-existence with the natural world. Non-European collections are arranged by continents and by donors or sellers, who include researchers, globetrotters, missionaries, seamen, merchants and diplomats.

SEM is a museum “about people, for people”. The key concepts shaping SEM’s museum vision are identity, intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, inclusiveness and participation.

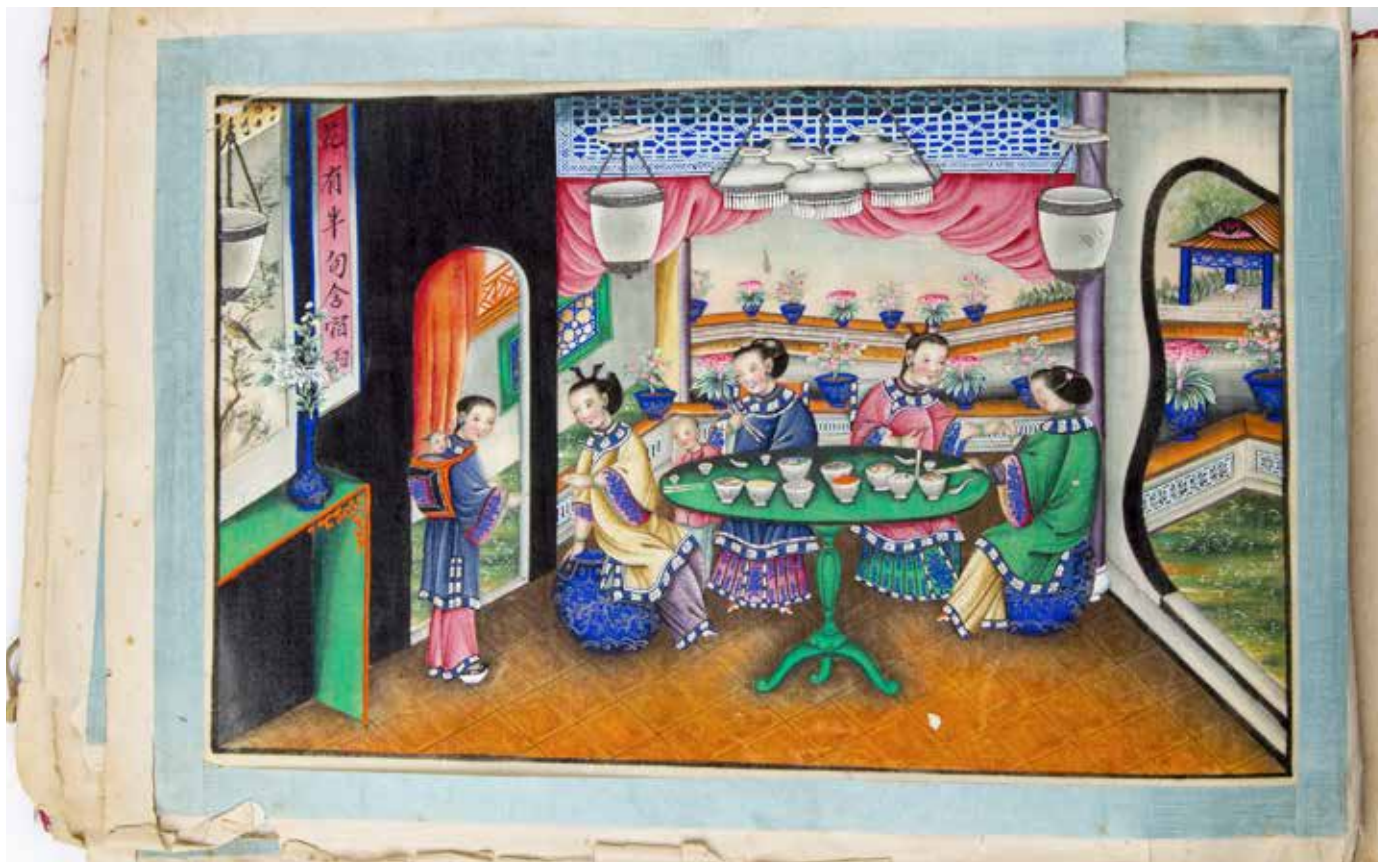
### **SEM and Chinese cultural heritage**

The collection of Ivan and Marija Skušek is the largest collection of Chinese objects in Slovenia. It contains around 500 objects, among them high-quality items, such as richly embroidered textiles, paintings, albums, Buddhist statues, ceramics and porcelain, furniture, decorative wall screens and a model of a house, as well as less prestigious collectibles such as coins, musical instruments, everyday objects, photographs, and old postcards. The most remarkable and valuable part of the collection are the various specimens of richly carved Chinese furniture. Astonishingly, Ivan Skušek (1877–1947), who lived in Beijing from late 1914 until 1920, was one of the first Western collectors to discover the refined lines of Chinese wooden furniture.

Skušek was a high-ranking officer aboard the Austro-Hungarian cruiser S.M.S. Kaiserin Elisabeth, who was interned as a prisoner of war after German and Austrian troops in Qingdao were defeated by the Japanese. Skušek’s time in China remains shrouded in mystery; however, recently uncovered correspondence that suggests he was employed by the Dutch embassy towards the end of his stay. In Beijing, Skušek met his future wife, a young Japanese woman Tsuneko Kondō Kawase, later baptized Marija (1893–1963), and began to systematically collect various objects. His intention was to open upon his return a museum in the style of a traditional Chinese house. While he never had sufficient means to fulfil this ambition, Skušek’s home in Ljubljana, crammed with various Chinese objects, became a kind of “living” museum and was frequented by the intellectual and artistic elite of the time. In the late 1950s, Marija Skušek donated the collection to SEM. With a rare exception, the objects have not been exhibited since the closure of the SEM’s dislocated non-European collections branch in 1990.

### **Digitization at SEM**

The recent three-year project East Asian Collections in Slovenia (VAZ), supported by the Slovene Research Agency (ARRS, No. J7-9429), provided funding for the first comprehensive study of five East Asian collections in Slovene public museums, including Skušek’s. Directed by the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Ljubljana, in partnership with SEM and in cooperation with further three national and regional museums, academic researchers and museum professionals have developed interdisciplinary, locally-tailored approaches to the documentation, classification and analysis of such objects. Furthermore, the team has created the VAZ database ([www.vazcollections.si](http://www.vazcollections.si)) with the long-term goal of digitizing all East Asian collections in Slovenia, thus granting the public access to items mostly tucked away in museum storages. The VAZ database has enabled the inclusion of nearly 900 items from the Skušek collection into the Europeana Library. Inspired by the PAGODE – Europeana China project, the VAZ website has been enriched with blogs, galleries, thematic exhibitions, in addition to information about the team’s diverse activities.

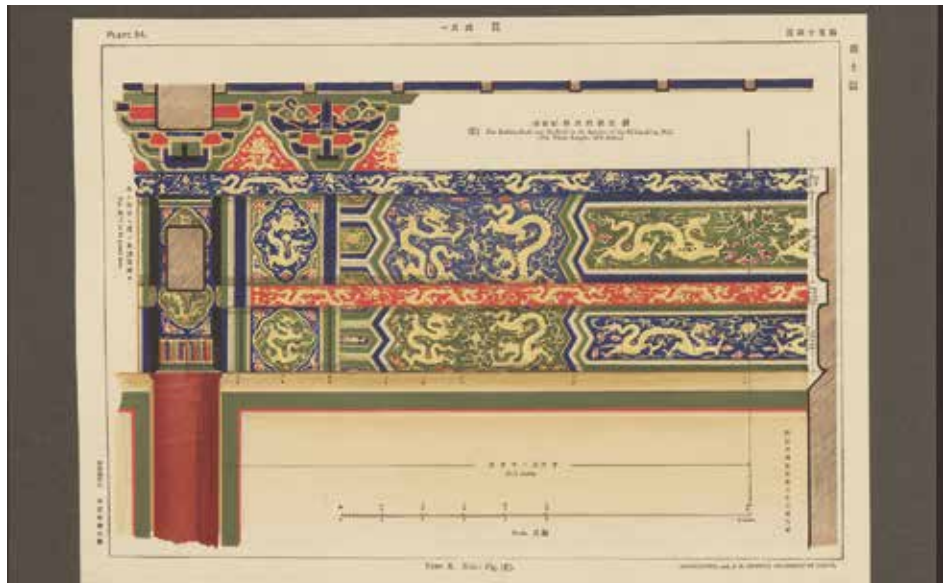


*Ladies with children during a meal, album of 12 Chinese pith painting depicting leisure activities of women in their daily life, late 19th/early 20th century, the Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum*

*Chinese judicial system, album of 12 Chinese pith painting depicting crime and punishment in the Qing dynasty, late 19th/early 20th century, the Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum*



*A detailed study of the decoration of the joinery in Qian Qing Hall in the Forbidden City, a plate from the album The Decoration of the Palace Buildings in Peking published in 1906 by Imperial University of Tokyo, the Skušek Collection, Slovene Ethnographic Museum*



*Ivan Skušek and his wife to be Tsuneko Kondō Kawase in Beijing, between 1918–1920  
(Copy kept in the library of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the original is kept by Skušek's great nephew Janez Lombergar)*







## Stowarzyszenie Międzynarodowe Centrum Zarządzania Informacją - The International Center for Information Management Systems and Services (ICIMSS), Poland [www.icimss.edu.pl](http://www.icimss.edu.pl)

ICIMSS is a scientific association established in 2002. Its activities are focused on information, education and culture. Among the various activities, ICIMSS has created a portal, the Private Collections Library - [www.bikop.eu](http://www.bikop.eu), which belongs to the network of Polish digital libraries. 147 records have been transferred to Europeana included photos from Harbin, the Chinese city established in 1898 by Polish engineers working on the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway. The photos digitized by ICIMSS show the activities of the Polish community in the 1920s and 1930s.

An exciting and unexpected result of making these photos available to the public was the request of a lady from the Czech Senate, who recognized her grandfather's brother, who appeared to be the husband of the owner of the photo delivered to Europeana. Thanks to this collection, both ladies met in Poland.

### **ICIMSS and Chinese cultural heritage**

Text by Adam F. Kola, Ph.D, Nicolaus Copernicus University

The second portal, [www.pictures-bank.eu](http://www.pictures-bank.eu), offers more contemporary digital-born images. 1,200 of the nearly 96,000 photos available online were taken by Adam Kola during one of his numerous trips to China over the past twenty years. The collection of photos comes from a monthly fascinating journey in 2008 through numerous Chinese provinces and cities. What can be seen in this collection, and even more visible from the perspective of twenty years, is a constant and rapidly progressing change in China.

Kola's first journeys at the turn of the 21st century took place just before the country's radical change. China's creativeness and rapid modernization were just beginning. The countryside was radically different from the cities in terms of its distinctiveness, multiculturalism, other traditions and customs. Cities, in turn, have been subjected to the force of globalization. The year 2008, when the photographs from the collection were taken, is already marked by a change, a strong emphasis on modernity.

However, everywhere one can discover Chinese customs (tai-chi training in a downtown park), local colors (such as thousands of bicycles on the streets, now increasingly replaced by scooters and mopeds, not to mention cars), traditional architecture (pagodas, temples, old Hutongs). The photos show iconic places (such as the Great Wall), but also those that disappear from view in the stereotypical view of the country - the world of ordinary Chinese life: work, food, school, art, travel, mourning, prayer, the elusive beauty of everyday life.

The collection is a unique record of a specific part of the Chinese world. Together with the photos taken by Kola during other journeys, it provides a collective portrait of a period of significant transition for the Chinese people.

The journey of many thousands of kilometers led from Beijing (and its vicinity), then to the so-called Chinese Venice - Suzhou (with a magnificent museum designed by Ieoh Ming Pei, author of the famous Louvre pyramid), Shanghai, and then to the south of the country. From this region there are photos from Fujian provinces, including Fuzhou, Xiamen and the nearby Gulang Yu Island, and the charming Hakka homes of Yongding. The South of China incorporated a visit to the Pearl River Delta, including Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Macau. The journey then led north-west to Guilin, Toruń's partner city. There you had to visit Yangshuo, one of the most picturesque places in China. The other road led to Sichuan, the provincial capital of Chengdu, and various places around the city.

The final part of the journey led north-east - to Xian, the former capital of China and one of the most influential cities in history. It ended with a trip to the aforementioned Harbin, where Adam Kola's "Chinese aunt" lived among the local Polish community a century ago. Thus the journey came full circle on the map of the Middle Kingdom. It has historically returned to the place of an important, yet still underestimated and forgotten history of Poles.



*Xian: Terracotta Army inside the Qin Shi Huang Mausoleum, 3rd century BC.  
Photo by Adam Kola, 2008, International Center for Information Management Systems and Services. CC BY-SA*



*Tourists on the Great Wall of China. Photo by Adam Kola, 2008, International Center for Information Management Systems and Services. CC BY-SA*



*Black Pagoda of Fuzhou. Photo by Adam Kola, 2008, International Center for Information Management Systems and Services. CC BY-SA*



*Fujian - tulou in Hakka. Photo by Adam Kola, 2008, International Center for Information Management Systems and Services. CC BY-SA*



## United Archives (UA), Germany

[www.united-archives.de](http://www.united-archives.de)

United Archives is based in Cologne, Germany and has, since 2008, acquired photo archives that are no longer operating in the market. Additionally, UA has obtained analogue photo collections earmarked for destruction and the estates of photographers, who had sold their work through photo agencies that have since ceased to exist. Nevertheless, the quality of these works still exists today, capturing the 'zeitgeist' of a time gone by, something that is of a growing historical and cultural importance. UA digitizes these works and makes them accessible online.

With ten press photo agency and publisher archives, thirteen photographer lifeworks and many more assets to our name, UA currently holds combined stock of several million images, and can say today, that these collections are united in United Archives.

Years of cooperation in and with the press and image agencies, together with the latest knowledge of photo-technology represent the basis of UA's experience and provides the directive for the digitization of the archives.

UA's headquarters, with all workstations, is located in the historical heart of Cologne, with archives stored around this city. In addition to its own holdings, UA also represents partners from Germany and abroad who work with the content for publishing clients.

### **United Archives and Chinese cultural heritage**

Many of UA's archives hold images that have a relationship to China: most of them are travel related, which show what was the focus of tourists in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s or what professional travel photographers thought could be of interest for their picture agencies worldwide.

A small but highly peculiar collection, with great historical interest, is provided via the Chinese related lecture created by Carl Simon in the first half of the 20th century. We are sure that Carl Simon never visited China, nevertheless he created a lecture with about 80 hand coloured glass slides, to show his audiences in Germany in the early 20th century and share his ideas about Chinese culture, history and politics. The lecture was not precise or professionally curated, and, for illustration purposes, he also mixed images of Japan and China – thus creating inconsistencies which were only identified during the PAGODE – Europeana China project: a curatorial mistake made about 100 years ago.

As detailed above, Carl Simon somehow had these black and white glass slides coloured by his staff. The slides were arranged according to corresponding themes or countries and conserved within small wooden boxes. For this slide series we have to assume that he had teachers or historians involved to create the so-called "lecture booklets", in which every slide motif was individually described. He used to lend these wooden boxes with the hand-coloured slides to interested people, together with the lecture booklets and a slide projector, to enable replication of the show. The slides were shown, for example, in a town hall or in a parish, and supplemented by the detailed lecture texts: in this way it was easy to tell exciting stories and present the appropriate pictures, thus recreating an educational and also entertaining event. We have to imagine that at the beginning of the 20th century only a few people were able to travel to get to know other countries, their people and culture. For others, this was made possible by Carl Simon's visionary idea, which motivated him throughout his life. Unfortunately, we do not know how he came to hold this large slide collection. Perhaps he got it from those early travellers who returned to Europe, or from photographers that he knew. That will remain his secret, as there are no longer contemporary witnesses.



*Trip to China, interior of a monastery, hall of princes of heaven, 1910s.*



*Trip to china, Chinese teacher with pupils in school, 1910s.*



*Trip to China, portrait of Pu Yi as child, last emperor of China, 1910s.*



*Trip to China, Chinese at the Great Wall of China, 1910s.*





## Annexes

## PAGODE Digital Festival

Photoconsortium International Consortium for Photographic Heritage

With the aim of creating opportunities for the dissemination of collections, included in the PAGODE – Europeana China project, and for also generating further user engagement, a series of short, online seminars were planned to take place between May and September 2021: the PAGODE Digital Festival.

The action was coordinated by project partner Photoconsortium, with the collaboration of all PAGODE project partners and associate partners. Partner University of Ljubljana hosted the events on Zoom and also recorded each seminar, to eventually compile a final dissemination video to be presented at the project's Final Conference on 23 and 24 September 2021.

The PAGODE Digital Festival was conceived as an engaging programme of short online events open to anyone interested in discovering the variety and richness of Chinese heritage in Europe. Cultural heritage professionals, academics and sinologists, but also culture lovers and interested parties, joined us on the journey.

Each event had a thematic focus, chosen by the organizing partner with participation of experts who presented their Chinese heritage collections, and the work undertaken in content selection, restoration, digitization and in metadata preparation, all in sight of enabling the collections to appear on the Europeana Collections Portal. Additionally, one event was dedicated to telling the stories of the PAGODE project's crowdsourcing and annotation campaign, which enabled enrichment of digital heritage collections available in Europeana with more and contextualized keywords, for a better showcase and retrieval of the collections via the web. The annotation action made use of a crowdsourcing platform, where users of any kind could access curated collections sourced from the Europeana portal, and manually "tag" each record with appropriate keywords about places, subjects and highly-specific terms related to Chinese heritage, selecting from controlled lists of Linked Open Data.

The intention of the PAGODE Digital Festival was not to deploy specialist or technical discussions, but to "just" unveil gems from more and lesser-known cultural heritage collections related to China and held in European Institutions. The scope was really about creating engagement, by enjoying the beauty of Chinese artefacts, or discovering life in China in the 1800s and 1900s through heritage photography, or showcasing the influence of Chinese cultural heritage in fashion, food, and in our everyday life.

Each event of the Festival was open for attendance without prior registration, with a link to Zoom freely available in the programme. Recordings of each event and the compilation trailer video are accessible in dedicated sections of the project's website.

Visit the PAGODE Digital Festival at [www.photoconsortium.net/pagode/festival](http://www.photoconsortium.net/pagode/festival)

# PAGODE and the National Library of China

National Library of China

The PAGODE – Europeana China project aims to display China's cultural heritage in diversified digital forms. The National Library of China (NLC) had the honor of participating in the project in early 2020, to help spread and showcase Chinese culture around the world.

Based on the network platform of the European Digital Library, Europeana, the PAGODE project has enriched European digital resources related to China's cultural heritage by means of semantic description and digital human technology, and provided such services as semantic retrieval, semantic relation, information visualization and knowledge discovery, so that readers across the world can explore and understand Chinese cultural heritage through the network.

The PAGODE project has provided a new model of interaction for its partners. At the same time, the project has integrated scattered digital resources into the existing database for processing through new technologies, highlighted the relevance with China's cultural heritage, created a new mechanism for discovering Chinese cultural heritage in European collections, and planned to widely promote it between June 2020 and September 2021 through various forms of communication among partners and interaction with users.

During the project period, the NLC sent experts of digital resources to participate in two webinars on digital disclosure of Chinese cultural heritage, held respectively in July and September 2020. And on invitation, we delivered a special report entitled "Research and Practice of Semantic Mining and Semantic Organization of Multi-Source and Heterogeneous Resources" during the "data integration and data traceability - best practice demonstration" section, sharing the experience of semantic integration of digital resources in the National Digital Library of China. In that report, we introduced the practices of the NLC and the National Digital Library of China to the partners of the PAGODE project, including the three procedures of semantic mining and semantic organization of digital resources – ontology indexing, linked data and thematic aggregation, and analyzed the problems and challenges we had encountered in the research.

Since joining the PAGODE project, the NLC has gained a deeper understanding of the framework and development of Europeana. It has innovated the cooperation model among libraries, museums and art galleries, focused its service on creative industries, and provided users with a more convenient data sharing environment. Europeana is of enlightening significance to the development of the National Digital Library of China, and enables us to better understand the preservation, dissemination and disclosure of China's cultural heritage in Europe.

To be concluded in September 2021, PAGODE – Europeana China is another successful example of China-EU cultural exchange. We expect that more inspiring and constructive projects like it will be launched in the future, and hope to see new chapters of cultural exchanges between China and Europe.

## Testimonials

As a sinologist, I have devoted most of my research endeavors to Chinese culture, history, society and tradition. However, it was only my participation in the PAGODE project, especially its crowdsourcing activities, that gave me a broader perspective on my area of study. It helped me see far beyond the strictly academic aspects of the field. I discovered ways to employ my knowledge to interact with other people and contribute to a wider presentation of Chinese culture among culture enthusiasts of any kind, not only experts in East Asian studies.

Exploration of various China collections in Europe through the PAGODE project's crowdsourcing activity is beyond doubt something I would warmly recommend to anyone interested in cultural heritage. It is striking to discover the richness and variety of Chinese collections in Europe, for experts and other enthusiasts alike. This innovative way of learning about the diversity of Chinese heritage is, at the same time, also an excellent interactive method that enables participants to jointly contribute to a better understanding of Chinese culture. It was absolutely a highly rewarding experience to be part of this interactive process, during which I and my colleagues from the East Asian Collections in Slovenia project also contributed to the list of keywords intended to describe the photographs in the PAGODE project's galleries.

I believe crowdsourcing activities of this kind are an important part of digitizing Chinese and other kinds of cultural heritage. Presenting Chinese collections and their specifics in a digital format has certainly become a demand that has to be met in order to enable a wider distribution and knowledge of Chinese culture and tradition in Europe.

Mina Grčar, PhD student in Asian and African Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana

In 2020, I got into touch with Sofie Taes after hearing of the PAGODE project. What seduced me in that project was the idea of building bridges between China and Europe through history and culture. In today's world, trying to understand each other, in a reciprocal approach, seems more and more important.

I've always found amazing how objects and ideas travelled through the world. How the world has been interconnected since the beginning of human history; exchanges and trades between Far East and Europe are a good example. This project gave me the opportunity to mix my interest for history, education and the transmission of knowledge, which are for me great values.

I enjoyed the magnificent challenge of writing several articles in which I had to explain and make understandable to everyone the wealth of this history. The great challenge was to find a link between the past and today's world and give information at the same time. Another challenge was to select, in the Europeana database, the most relevant objects to illustrate the articles.

I am thankful to the project team, to have trusted me and given me the chance to write articles and allowed me to introduce some Swiss institutions who were interested in joining the project, like the City Museum of Lausanne and the Ethnographic Museum of Geneva.

Julien Ménabréaz

## **Online references**

[Latest access on 31st August 2021]

*Links to PAGODE Europeana China project and its activities*

<https://photoconsortium.net/pagode/>

*PAGODE Europeana China project's website*

<http://europeana.eu/chinese-heritage>

*PAGODE Europeana China thematic space on Europeana*

<https://pro.europeana.eu/project/pagode-europeana-china>

*PAGODE Europeana China project's page on Europeana Pro portal*

<https://www.digitalmeetsculture.net/projects/pagode-blog/>

*PAGODE Europeana China project's showcase on digitalmeetsculture.net magazine*

<https://withculture.eu/pagode>

*PAGODE Europeana China project's page on the WITH platform*

*PAGODE Europeana China project's annotation campaigns on CrowdHeritage platform:*

- *Scenes and People of China:* <https://www.crowdheritage.eu/en/china>

- *Chinese artefacts:* <https://www.crowdheritage.eu/en/artefacts>

- *PAGODE Summer Sprint:* <https://crowdheritage.eu/en/summer-pagode>

*Link to HaDEA European Health and Digital Executive Agency*

*HaDEA is the Agency of the European Commission, responsible for monitoring the PAGODE Europeana China Grant Agreement for the co-funding of the European Union*

<https://hadea.ec.europa.eu/>

*Links to connected initiatives*

<https://emwg.site/european-collections/>

*Website of the East Meets West in Greece initiative*

<https://pro.europeana.eu/page/europeana-china>

*News about the Europeana China initiative on Europeana pro portal*

<https://www.reach-culture.eu/>

*REACH RE-designing Access to Cultural Heritage for a wider participation in preservation, (re-)use and management of European culture*

## Connections: images from China

Prof. Alessandro Tosi

University of Pisa

Director of Museo della Grafia, Palazzo Lanfranchi, Pisa

In June 1954, the exhibition *Gli acquarellisti della scuola di Pechino. Gli affreschi di Tun-huang (The watercolor painters of the Beijing school. The frescoes of Dunhuang)* was inaugurated in Pisa, at *Palazzo dei Cavalieri di S. Stefano*. It was a traveling exhibition organized by the *Centro Studi per lo sviluppo delle relazioni economiche e culturali con la Cina (Study Centre for the development of economic and cultural relations with China)*, the association born in Rome the year before, in 1953. Promoted and animated by significant personalities from Italian politics and culture (from Ferruccio Parri to Piero Calamandrei, from Giuseppe Nitti to Armando Saporì and Sergio Segre) the Centre, with its headquarters in Piazza Montecitorio in Rome, aimed to create a commercial and cultural bridge between Italy and China, establishing itself as an episode of considerable importance in the history of relations between the two nations after World War II.

Among the initiatives undertaken by the young association, the exhibition – as stated in the small, refined catalogue printed for the occasion by Giovanni Bardi's Senate typography – was “the first of a series of cultural events aimed at making Italian public opinion aware of the most salient features of Chinese civilization and to re-establish the cultural and friendship ties between Marco Polo's homeland and the great Chinese nation”. Already hosted in Rome and Florence, the exhibition was destined to go onto Bologna, Mantua and Milan. It presented works by contemporary artists linked to the great figurative tradition, a group “representing the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac” and some reproductions of the frescoes of the *Thousand Buddha Caves* at Dunhuang, with depictions of scenes of religious and civil life.

Not only the charm of the palace of *Cavalieri di S. Stefano* made the Pisa stage particularly suggestive and significant, but, even more, the organisation by the Institute of Art History of the University of Pisa and the critical intelligence of its director, Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti, contributed to the success of the event. Engaged in an articulated process of development of the Institute, with disciplinary and methodological openings that would have made it one of the most modern and relevant realities in the Italian academic panorama, in organizing the Pisa stage, Ragghianti confirmed the value of this exhibition planning, one of the distinctive features of his extraordinary didactic and informative activity.

Indeed, the exhibition lent itself to multiple, exciting readings. The Dunhuang caves held tales of the “*fabulous silk road*, for which the precious product from China reached Rome, crossing the Gobi desert, the Tarim basin and the Iranian plateau”; they spoke of the discovery, at the beginning of the 20th century, of a splendid pictorial and sculptural heritage and of its growing fortune. The experience culminated in the great exhibition “of a thousand reproductions” set up in Beijing in 1951, “an exhibition that aroused enormous interest in all environments artistic and cultural heritage of China”. Culture, society and visual languages from the 4th to the 17th century were documented through the cycles of frescoes, “the result of the work of anonymous artists-craftsmen commissioned by those travellers and pilgrims who wanted to ingratiate themselves with the divinities, having to undertake long journeys full of unexpected events or to thank them for being protected”.

The exhibition combined the reproductions of the frescoes, where it was possible to retrace an imaginary inspired not only by the parables of Buddhism but also by “hunting scenes, parties, work in the fields”, with works by water-colourists linked to “classical Chinese painting” and to his motifs made of “landscapes, figures of men, flowers and birds”. Furthermore, it was possible to admire the watercolours by Chi Pai Shih (Qi Baishi), the old “poet-painter” – born in 1861 – whose work was establishing itself on the world scene as one of the most notable and admired episodes of contemporary Chinese art.

In short, the exhibition promoted by the *Study Centre for the development of economic and cultural relations with China* offered many suggestions and ‘food for thought’. On the occasion of the Pisa stage, the review by Gilberto Casini in *La Nazione* (Tuscany newspaper) underlined the quality of the watercolours inspired by nature, both in the landscape vein, “where the human figure blends into the surrounding harmony”, and in the “delicate floral motifs”; the review pointed out the refined watercolours of Hen Suen, which interpreted the mythological tradition “derived from popular tales and childhood fairy tales”; and above all Casini's article invited readers to discover the works of the “leading exponent of the Beijing school”, Chi Pai Shih, where “nature becomes poetry of colour”, where “fruits, animals, flowers, fish, insects give the sensation of a very lively sensitivity, which shuns the descriptive to give us the essential character of the subject with a few brushstrokes”. The painting of the old poet-painter appeared to be “profoundly modern, with a simplicity and rigor of themes and expression that brings it closer to us, to our way of feeling and expressing ourselves”.

In that June of 1954, in Pisa, the modernity of Chi Pai Shih's watercolours could be measured also in comparison and dialogue with the drawings and paintings by Spartaco Carlini, which were exhibited at the same time at *Saletta Ciardelli*. The unexpected

combination appeared exciting, joining the “eminent artist of Chinese people, who have made a significant contribution to the development of Chinese fine arts” (as stated in the parchment donated in 1953 to Chi Pai Shih by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs for his ninety-third birthday) with the very Pisan Carlini, in his own way a poet-painter and essential reference for many Tuscan artists of the early 1900s.

Chi Pai Shih's watercolours were a revelation: between tradition and innovation, the painter's language managed to capture the attention of the public and of great artists – starting with Picasso – for the intensity of the fragments of natural reality declined with a surprising poetic lightness. As Wang Hsueh-Tao wrote when presenting the work of Chi Pai Shih in the catalogue of the Venice Biennale in 1956 – where a personal room was reserved for the painter – “with a few brushstrokes, rich, firm and yet simple, he communicates, in a national style, feelings poetics of ‘splendour’, ‘liveliness’, ‘health’ and ‘happiness’”.

In addition to the growing interest in international arts collection of the work of Chi Pai Shih – recorded in the large collections such as those of the *National Museum of Oriental Art “Giuseppe Tucci”* in Rome, of the *Musée Cernuschi and of the Musée national des Arts asiatiques Guimet* in Paris – and beyond the significant episodes linked to the taste of refined connoisseurs such as Franco Calamandrei, still further connections were established from that moment between China, Europe and Italy in particular.

On the one hand, the attention to modern and contemporary Chinese art recorded a new important event with the exhibition *Cent ans de Peinture Chinoise 1850-1950*. The exhibition was organized by the *Union des artistes chinois at Maison de la pensée Française* in Paris, then conveyed to Bologna, Genoa and, thanks to Ragghianti, to *Palazzo Strozzi in Florence in June 1959 (One hundred years of Chinese painting 1850-1950)*. On the other hand, the commitment and activity of the *Study Centre for the development of economic and cultural relations with China* allowed Italian artists to ‘discover’ China and to leave moving images of their discovery. Thus, the drawings of the painter Ernesto Treccani, who in October 1955 had participated in the trip of the second official Italian delegation visiting China (the first, in the autumn of 1954, was also attended by Orfeo Turno Rotini, professor of agricultural chemistry in Pisa), accompanied by Carlo Cassola's *Viaggio in Cina (Journey to China)*, a volume published in 1956 by Feltrinelli. Then, drawings, watercolours and sculptures by Antonietta Raphaël Mafai – who travelled to China in May of that year together with Giulio Turcato, Agenore Fabbri, Ampelio Tettamanti and Aligi Sassu – were exhibited in December in *Palazzo Strozzi* in Florence, within the exhibition *A. Raphaël Mafai. Ritorno dalla Cina (A. Raphaël Mafai. Return from China)* organized again with the complicity of Ragghianti, including also a portrait of Chi Pai Shih.

Among the artists who participated in the 1956 trip to China, the name of Tono Zancanaro stands out, the great engraver from Padua, who translated masterfully the profound suggestions of landscapes, atmospheres, naturalistic fragments and humanity. Pastels, engravings and drawings dedicated to the *500 Buddhas of Hang Ciu* and to the views of the *Port of Shanghai and of the Lake Hang Ciu* were partly exhibited at the large anthological exhibition *Tono Zancanaro. Opera grafica (Tono Zancanaro. Graphic work)* that Ragghianti organized in 1964 at the *Drawings and Prints Cabinet* of the Institute of Art History of the University of Pisa. This was the occasion for further unexpected and fascinating suggestions and seductions derived from the approach of the Chinese views, with those of the Mantua Lake, the scenes of the rice pans and the amazing imagery of Sicily and Greek myths. In an even more surprising way, the same spell was to be repeated twenty years later, in 1987, on the occasion of the splendid *Tono/China exhibition* set up again in Pisa, at Palazzo Lanfranchi.

Connections, therefore, to know and to know each other.

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