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ORIENTATIONS

THE MAGAZINE FOR COLLECTORS AND CONNOISSEURS OF ASIAN ART



Rediscovering Augusto Gansser's Cave
Mentsün Lhakang, Mustang
Tragkhung Kowache, Ladakh
Monumental Thangkas of Gyantse

Two Western Himalayan Bronzes Revisited

Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains at the National Palace Museum, Taipei

Symposium Report

'The Art and Cultural History of Central and Western Tibet, 8th to 15th Century' and 'Cultural Heritage Preservation'
University of Vienna
6-8 April 2011

These two combined events were co-sponsored by the Austrian Science Fund/NFN (Cultural History of the Western Himalaya) and the Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Documentation of Inner and South Asian Cultural History (CIRDIS) of the University of Vienna (both under the direction of Deborah Klimburg-Salter) with the collaboration of the China Tibetology Research Center (CTRC). This collaboration was initiated by CTCRC when they hosted scholars from the above-mentioned research units in a symposium held in Beijing in June 2007. The proceedings were published in the bilingual volume, *The Cultural History of Western Tibet: Recent Research from the China Tibetology Research Center and the University of Vienna* (Deborah Klimburg-Salter, Liang Junyan, Helmut Tauscher and Zhou Yuan, eds, Vienna, 2008).

The symposium comprised three thematic sessions presenting ongoing research focused on art historical, archaeological and textual materials. **Xiong Wenbin** (Institute for History Studies, CTCRC) presented the preliminary results of research conducted together with **Shargan Wangdue** (Institute for Protecting and Researching Tibetan Cultural Relics, Lhasa) on the two phases of wall paintings (15th and 17th century) from the Assembly Hall of the Gongkar Chode monastery, Gongkar county. **Huo Wei** (Center for Tibetan Studies, Sichuan University) described findings on the recently discovered cave-temples of Zanda and Pargarbu 11th-13th century in Ngari. The paintings are related in style and subject-matter to Xixia (Tangut) examples from Khara Khoto, as well as some of the same period from Ü-Tsang. They can be seen as belonging to the corpus of work earlier identified as the Inner Asian International Style. **Cristina Scherrer-Schaub** (École pratiques des hautes études, Paris) and Kurt Tropper (Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna) discussed the wall paintings of the Lotsava Lhakhang in Riba, documented during their field research in Ngari in 2010. The depiction of eight monks, including Rinchen Zangpo, each accompanied by an inscription, is the first identifiable pictorial representation of the group sent by Yeshe Ö to Kashmir in order to bring back monastic Mahayana Buddhism to West Tibet. The paintings, *circa* 15th century, could be shown to follow an earlier composition.

In the second session, **Xie Jisheng** (Capital Normal University, Institute of Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Art) studied the motif of the Eight Great Stupas in the depiction of the life of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni in cave 76 at Mogao. He illustrated parallel examples in Tibetan, Liao and Tangut (Xia) art. **Zhang Changhong** (Center for Tibetan Studies, Sichuan University), presented a comparative analysis of recently discovered wall paintings from Nyag Lhakhang in Ngari. She compared the Dharmadhatu-Vagishvara Manjushri mandala

with examples dated to the 11th-13th century: the horizontal mandala at Tabo, and the palace-mandalas from Alchi and Nako.

Deborah Klimburg-Salter and **Erika Forte** considered the importance of artistic production in the borderlands of the Tibetan empire (7th-10th century) for the cultural history of Tibet. Klimburg-Salter proposed that the 'art of the book', and particularly the exterior painting on the wood book covers, was transferred from northern Pakistan to Tibet 'as an entire decorative concept'; Forte presented evidence for cultural transfer from Khotan based on recent archaeological discoveries. **Helmut Tauscher** (Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna) and **Bruno Lainé** (University of Vienna) spoke on the 'Early Mustang Kanjur' manuscripts; and **Shen Weirong** (Renmin University, Institute for Sino-Tibetan Buddhism) discussed an illustrated collection of Ming Chinese translations of Tibetan tantric texts which prove that after the Yuan-Mongol rule Tibetan Tantric Buddhism continued to be practised extensively in China.

Session three began with **Chen Qingying's** (Institute for History Studies, CTCRC) analysis of the figure of Purangir through the biography of the sixth Panchen Lama, while **Leonard van der Kuijp** (Harvard University) placed a 15th century biography of Yeshe Ö within the historical context of other contemporaneous texts from Tholing. **Zhang Yun** (Institute for History Studies, CTCRC) discussed the geographical definition of Yangtong/Zhangzhung and its relationship to the Tubo (Tibetan) kingdom, and the evidence provided by a contemporaneous Chinese seal from a private collection for the historical events of this period. **Charles Ramble** (École pratique des hautes études, Paris) presented a comparative analysis of a Bon ritual as described in a recently discovered manuscript from Mustang in relation to the same ritual he documented during recent anthropological research in the region.

The workshop on 'Cultural Heritage Preservation' was jointly organized with the Heritage Preservation Committee of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS), and was the second in a series of such events (the first convened in June 2010) at the University of Vienna. The keynote speech was delivered by **Franz Sattler** (Schloss Schönbrunn), who discussed the complex of issues converging on the financing and implementation of conservation research, restoration and maintenance at the 'world heritage complex' of Schönbrunn. Specific examples were discussed during a tour of Schönbrunn organized for workshop participants. **André Alexander** (Tibet Heritage Fund) demonstrated, on the basis of two case studies, that traditional Tibetan architecture was more resistant to two types of natural disaster: earthquakes (Jyekundo, Yushu Qinghai) and floods (Ladakh). **Minyag Choekyi Gyaltzen** (China Tibet Buddhist Institute; Plateau Heritage Association) discussed how the preservation of cultural heritage can be improved. **Klimburg-Salter** contrasted the impact on the monastic and lay communities of the heritage preservation

programme in Nako village (NRRP) in Kinnaur, a local initiative, and at Tabo monastery under the protection of the Archaeological Service of India. **Heather Stoddard** (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris) gave an overview of eight restoration projects carried out in Tibet between 1994 and 2000.

Karel Kriz (Department of Geography and Regional Research, University of Vienna) illustrated the advantages of an online interactive cartographic information system on the Western Himalayas (CHIS) for monument conservation. **Shargan Wangdue**'s paper discussed 'The Citadel of Mangyul gung thang in Lower Ngari'. **Huo Wei** formulated specific regional challenges in his paper 'Preservation at Archaeological Sites in Ngari'. Unfortunately, the Tibetan scholars were unable

to attend, but their papers, read by their colleagues, were highly appreciated.

The round-table format and the small size of the conference – limited to the scholars who had participated in the Beijing CTRC meeting and the members of the Vienna-based research units – proved to be an effective platform for the open exchange of current field research and heritage preservation problems. A bilingual publication of the proceedings is planned.

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Asia Week in New York

Arts of Pacific Asia

Despite opening on 23 March, halfway through the week of highly successful auctions, the Arts of Pacific Asia show (APA) had its busiest preview party in a decade. Many collectors from the US and Europe and curators from the Met, Rubin, Newark, Los Angeles County and other museums attended and were actively buying across the board, leaving the impression that the US market had rebounded. However, it was the dealers with Chinese material who benefited the most from the huge number of Chinese buyers in New York for the week; those who were unable to compete at the auctions were probably happy to be able to buy from the dealers.

Nader Rasti of **Knapton Rasti** said: 'It has been a better fair than last year and we've seen all the clients we know.' Most of the gallery's sales were to Asian buyers, including a blue-and-white Xuande mark-and-period sprinkler that went to a mainland Chinese collector for over US\$500,000 – one of the top sales of the show – along with several jades that exceeded US\$100,000. Mostafa Hassan of **Imperial Oriental Art**, who specializes in Chinese imperial porcelain, commented: 'The Chinese, encouraged by the success of the auctions, came to the show ready and willing to buy. I also saw a lot of new faces.'

Stuart and Barbara Hilbert of **The Jade Dragon** made sales at all price ranges, for Japanese pieces as well as Chinese, finding that the highest-value items were the easiest to sell. Erick Schiess of **Jadestone** sold many snuff bottles – primarily of jade – to Chinese buyers, as well as other jade pieces, but expressed concerns about how the high auction prices would affect the market. **Mark Walberg**, who usually shows a lot of Japanese material, was pleased he had brought more Chinese jade this year, having sold many pieces in the US\$20/30,000 range to Chinese buyers.

In the Japanese field, Jean Schaefer of **Flying Cranes** said: 'It has been a great show. I was happy to have sold some very good pieces on opening night [and] we had a steady stream of people throughout.' In the Himalayan field, those with Tibetan gilt bronzes and *thangkas*, which the Chinese are now collecting, were very successful. Suzy Lebas from **Soo Tze Oriental Antiques** thought it was her 'best ever' APA, having sold a Tibetan bronze and several pieces of gold repoussé. Marsha Vargas Handley of **Xanadu**

Gallery was glad to have returned to the show after ten years, and found it great for reconnecting with collectors and curators. She has also had several post-show inquiries. **Thomas Murray** brought some of his star pieces from Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands anticipating a stronger market; he did well with these, but still felt it could have been better.

Asia Week New York

The 34 Asian art specialists who joined forces in this group also benefitted in the overall success this year. In the Chinese field, **Eskenazi** sold eleven works, including some on view but not in the special catalogue, totalling several million dollars. One of the most remarkable objects, a tiny Warring States period gold-and-silver standing figure, was bought by a European collector, and several pieces of imperial porcelain were acquired by East Asian and mainland Chinese collectors. **James J. Lally** was very satisfied with the result of his exhibition 'Ancient Chinese Bronzes' – 82 per cent was sold or placed on reserve at the opening, and total sales were also in the millions. Carol Conover of **Kaikodo** noted they had sold an archaic bronze for US\$250,000, and made many sales of ceramics and paintings from their show 'Asian Journeys', to Chinese from overseas, American collectors and museums. **Cynthia Volk** did very well with her selection of Tang to Qing white wares. Notably, a white marble Tang period figure of a seated bodhisattva went to a mainland Chinese collector. **MD Flacks'** exhibition 'Scholar's Trays', probably the first of its kind in the US, was 70 per cent sold, a strong improvement over last year.

As far as Japanese art went, **Joan Mirviss** said that her show 'Birds of Dawn: Pioneers of Japan's Sodeisha Ceramic Movement' was 'far and away the most successful exhibition of my 35-year career'. Thirty-nine of the 54 pieces were sold, and two paintings by artists Suzuki Kiitsu and Kawanabe Kyosai were also snapped up. A steady stream of daily visitors resulted in the sale of 35 objects featured in **Sydney L. Moss's** centenary exhibition of Japanese art, for a total of over US\$750,000, according to Paul Moss. A lacquer box decorated with *sagemono* ensembles by Ogawa Haritsu (Ritsuo) sold for some US\$200,000 to an American collector, who purchased four other pieces as well. Beatrice Chang of **Dai Ichi**