

AN INTERVIEW WITH RODERICK WHITFIELD ON THE STEIN COLLECTION IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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The Stein Collection in the British Museum is home to some of the most important artifacts discovered in China's Central Asian regions. There are 249 paintings from Dunhuang and several thousand works from various sites along the ancient Silk Road, including painted wooden panels, architectural ornaments, terracotta sculptures, coins, and textiles. All these works, along with over 45,000 manuscripts and printed documents now in the British Library as well as 221 paintings from Dunhuang and large murals and archaeological finds from Central Asian sites in the National Museum of New Delhi, were obtained by Sir Aurel Stein (1862–1943) during three expeditions to the region that he undertook under the joint auspices of the Government of India and the Trustees of the British Museum in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Stein's successes in acquiring thousands of ancient manuscripts and artifacts from the Daoist abbot Wang Yuanlu at Mogao Caves and bringing them safely to Europe had earned him tremendous fame as one of the greatest explorers of all times.¹

While his contribution to uncovering many long lost civilizations in Central Asia and establishing the study of material remains from these ancient cultures as a viable field of research in modern academia is beyond doubt, Stein's style of carrying out archaeological excavations and removing artifacts to foreign countries has made him a much vilified figure in post-imperial China. Indeed, his fourth expedition to China's northwest frontiers in 1930 was thwarted by nationalist intellectuals who actively cast the explorer as an imperialist plunderer of China's national treasures and demanded his expulsion from the country.² As a result, Stein and many foreign explorers of his generation have since been tied to this negative narrative, which in many ways facilitated the development of a national policy on heritage preservation under the Republican government and later in the People's Republic of China.

More than a century has passed since Stein first brought manuscripts and objects from the ancient Silk Road to England.³ As expected, the first generation of scholars who worked on these materials—most of whom were personally invited by Stein to participate—focused on identifying the contents and interpreting their significance within their proper historical contexts, while Stein devoted himself to producing an impressive number of detailed expedition reports and catalogues. The explorer's own legacy did not become a subject of inquiry until recent decades, when curators at the British Library and the British Museum began to publish critical studies on Stein and his time.⁴ As our understanding of the history of archaeological exploration along the ancient Silk Road continues to evolve, the interest in reassessing Stein will no doubt persist for many years to come.

In the meantime, the historiographic turn in Silk Road studies has also called our attention to other episodes in the history of the field that have remained little explored. A case in point is the state of the Stein Collection in the postwar era. In the first few decades following the end of the Second World War, Central Asian objects were part of the display in permanent galleries of the British Museum, but they were rarely featured in any special exhibitions or research projects organized by the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the time. It was not until the arrival of Roderick Whitfield as Assistant Keeper in the department in 1968 that the situation began to change. His tenure not only marked a renewed interest in the Stein Collection both in the U.K. and abroad, but also coincided with the opening of Communist China under Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms. The increased contact with colleagues in Dunhuang and elsewhere in China brought about new directions in research and collaboration, thus signaling the emergence of a different kind of internationalism in the study of Buddhist art and archaeology beyond its roots in the imperialism and nationalism

of the past century.

This interview was conducted on June 30, 2016, in London. Its publication was originally intended to coincide with the eightieth birthday of Roderick Whitfield, Percival David Professor Emeritus at SOAS, University of London, in 2017. The following is a straightforward transcription of the conversation between the author and Dr. Whitfield on a wide range of topics related to his work in the British Museum, including exhibition and display practices, collection management and development, museum culture, the relationship between Chinese painting studies and Dunhuang art history, conservation and technical investigation, and teaching.

Prior to his appointment at SOAS and as Head of the Percival David Foundation in 1984, Dr. Whitfield was Assistant Keeper in the Department of Oriental Antiquities in the British Museum from 1968 to 1984. He is the author of numerous articles, books, and exhibition catalogues on Chinese art history and Dunhuang painting, including *The Art of Central Asia: The Stein Collection in the British Museum* (Tokyo, 1982), *Caves of the Singing Sands: Buddhist Art from the Silk Road* (London, 1995), and *Exploring China's Past: New Discoveries and Studies in Archaeology and Art* (London, 1999).

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Interview

[SL = Sonya S. Lee; RW = Roderick Whitfield]

SL: Before we begin on the main subject, could you tell us how you came to the job in the British Museum? And what was it like to work there at the time?

RW: The story starts a bit early, because when I graduated in 1965, I also submitted my dissertation to my Cambridge college, St. Johns, and was awarded a three-year research fellowship with an option to spend one year anywhere I chose. I elected to stay at Princeton for another year. In the summer of 1965 I worked with my supervisor, Professor Wen Fong, on the Morse Collection.⁵ During the fall, I taught Art 304, the undergraduate survey course of Chinese art, as Professor Fong was not

well that term. In early 1966 I worked as Peter Swann's assistant on installing the Asian galleries in the new Princeton Art Museum, which had been rebuilt and was due to open in the summer. Peter Swann was the Keeper of Oriental Art at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.⁶ We worked together for six weeks. After he departed, I continued to do the rest of the installation. Peter was an irascible character who couldn't stand Princeton society, preferring to spend the weekends with friends in New York, but he was great to work with.

While we were in the middle of this period, he was appointed to be the next director of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, and his post at the Ashmolean Museum was advertised. So I breezed in one morning and said, "Hello Peter, you will be glad to know that I have applied for your job!" He was not amused, wondering why this student had applied for a senior position. And of course I didn't get interviewed, but one of the members of the board considering applications happened to be Basil Gray, Keeper of the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum.⁷ Two years later, in the summer of 1968, Basil Gray wrote to me, asking me to apply for a post at the British Museum. This was on the retirement of Soame Jenyns, who was an authority on Ming ceramics and later Chinese porcelain.⁸ I inherited his magnificent roll-top Victorian desk, which the in-house carpenters at the Museum beautifully restored.

The work at the Princeton Art Museum involved all kinds of things, as there were ancient bronzes, ceramics, and other objects in addition to Chinese and Japanese paintings. I designed cases for handscrolls. For the end wall of the gallery, I made a giant map of the Silk Road on perspex, basing it on a late 19th-century German map of Asia from the library of the American Museum of Natural History that showed physical features such as the Yellow River very clearly. That was my first exposure to museum work, although I was a very practical person. My mother was a bookbinder and weaver, and I was taught at home until age 11, so I have always been accustomed to making things. I was a good assistant for Peter, because we understood each other and I could do what he wanted. He would send me off to New York to buy fabric for cases. Professor Fong was very keen on long explanatory labels, which I handset and printed on tasteful

Table of changes in departmental names

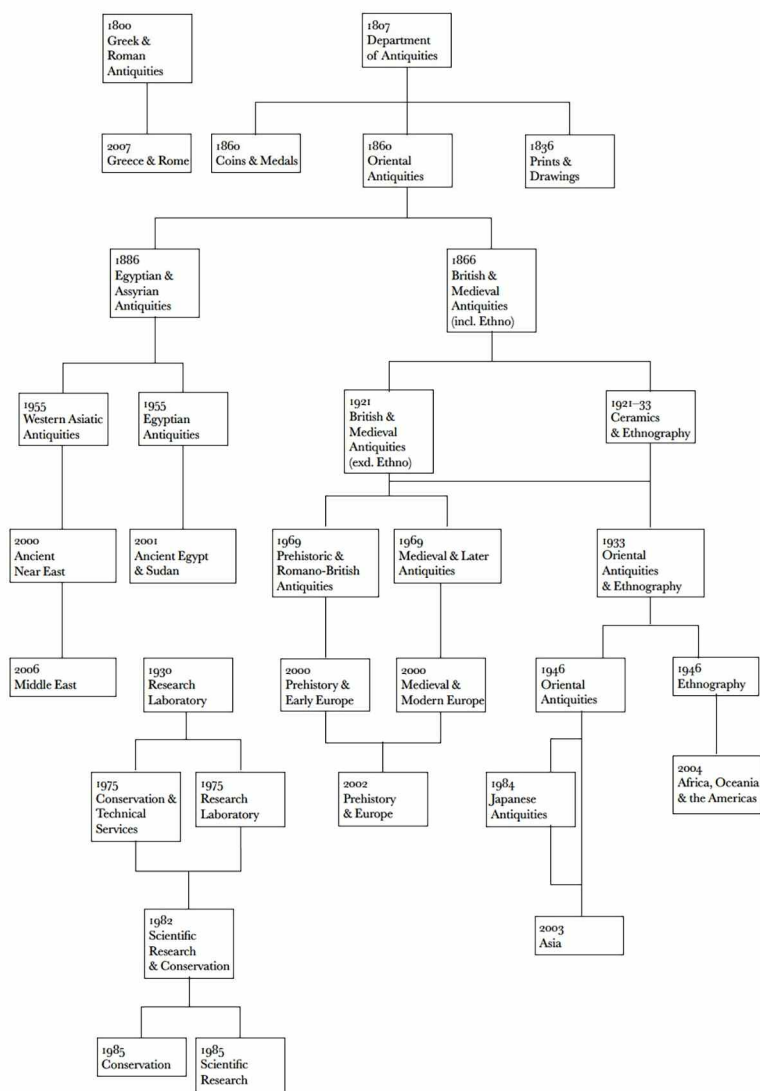


Fig. 1. Table of Changes in Departmental Names in the British Museum.
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green paper. This style of long, explanatory labels survives at Princeton Art Museum and I brought them over to the British Museum later on.

I started to work at the British Museum in September 1968. I well remember that there was nobody in the department on the day I started, except for Basil Gray, son-in-law of Laurence Binyon, who had been the head of the Sub-Department of Oriental Prints and Drawings in the early 20th century [Fig. 1]. Gray was one of the last keepers to live on the Museum premises, in the East Residence, where I visited him during my time at Cambridge. Later I visited him in his house in Abingdon, where I remember works by Ben Nicolson and two

brightly colored fragments of a wall painting from Kizil.⁹ Albert von le Coq had financed his expedition to Central Asia by selling such pieces, and I imagine he had inherited these from Binyon. Gray was the Keeper of Oriental Antiquities but that year he was also the Acting Director of the British Museum, so I didn't see very much of him, but he was my main support in the department, where apparently, there had been some consternation on account of my Ph.D., which no one else in the department had, although Ralph Pinder-Wilson was universally known as "Doctor" as he had embarked on a Ph.D. at SOAS but never completed it. An Islamic scholar, Ralph was the nicest person, extremely knowledgeable and friendly.¹⁰

For Japan, there was Lawrence Smith, who had joined the department from the Department of Manuscripts in 1965 to fill the position vacated by David Waterhouse.¹¹ In regard to Chinese art, Jessica Rawson had come to the museum in 1967, succeeding William Watson on his appointment as Professor of Chinese Art and Head of the Percival David Foundation.¹² Her remit was from ancient times down to the Song dynasty, whereas mine was from Yuan dynasty to the present day, plus Chinese painting, including the paintings in the Stein collection. In 1975 she and I collaborated on the installation of the exhibition of *Chinese Jade through the Ages* at the Victoria and Albert Museum, for which

she and John Ayers wrote the catalogue.¹³

On Basil Gray's retirement in 1969, Douglas Barrett became the next Keeper.¹⁴ Barrett was a specialist of Indian Sculpture and had very good contacts through Spink's, a major dealer in Indian sculpture. He published a catalogue on the Amaravati collection which at that time was not on public view, as it was stored away in a distant basement.¹⁵ In September 1976 during Barrett's Keepership, the colossal Sui Buddha, dated 585, was brought out of another basement where it had been lying and erected on the North Staircase, which had to be filled with scaffolding to bring it in through the top window.¹⁶

Also working on Indian art was Wladimir Zwalf, who joined the department from the Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books at Barrett's insistence.¹⁷ Wladimir was a Sanskritist and a wonderful person, with whom I was able to work to gather together in the large basement of the King Edward Building all the Indian sculptures until then stored in various basements around the Museum. This was a preliminary task prior to the compilation of his definitive catalogue on Gandhara sculpture.¹⁸ In 1976, much against his better judgement, I persuaded Wladimir, a fluent Russian speaker, to join me in a week-long visit to Leningrad. In the event, it was a great success: we spent almost the whole time in the State Hermitage, and were shown all the paintings from Khara Khoto, as well as the galleries of Central Asian Art, at that time closed to the public. This was a great help to me when, at Wladimir's behest, I undertook to produce the third volume of *Art in Central Asia: the Stein Collection at the British Museum*, comprising the textiles, stucco sculptures and wooden objects from Central Asian sites, which were nominally Wladimir's responsibility. In 1985, soon after leaving the Museum, I was also able to contribute to his fine exhibition catalogue, *Buddhism: Art and Faith*.¹⁹

It was a hierarchical society in the British Museum at that time. Below the Keeper were the Assistant Keepers (First and Second Class) who each had an office on the mezzanine floor below the reading room. Below the Assistant Keepers were the Museum Assistants, who might have a comprehensive knowledge of where everything was, but in order to advance to assistant keeper, you had to have a first-class or 2.1 degree. Museum assistants were responsible for locating things and running the Students' Room. Every afternoon, from Monday to Friday, we had what you call in America "Show and Tell." People would bring things to seek information from the museum staff. And there were students who wanted to have materials put out. I did all the fetching and carrying of Chinese scrolls and Stein paintings, when people wanted to see them. Below the Museum Assistants were the messengers who wore blue uniforms and would deliver the mail in the morning, take messages to other departments, fetch books, and control entry to the Students' Room. Below them again there were the

cleaners who wore green uniforms. Some were immigrants: I remember one with the lovely name Pushpadonta, which Wladimir explained meant "She of the Flowery Teeth."

SL: Did the museum change much during your time there?

RW: Well, there were major changes at about the time I left. The first team of computer experts had arrived in the early 1980s. I mentioned earlier that when I first came to the museum, I taught myself to touch-type on one of my trans-Atlantic crossings. I bought my first typewriter with the money that my Cambridge tutor Dr. Cheng Te-kun paid me for doing the index to his monograph on the archaeology of Shang China.²⁰ It was an Olympia which I still treasure: a faithful machine on which I typed my thesis. But when I got to the museum, we were not allowed to type our own letters. These had to be written in longhand or dictated to one of the secretaries who would then type it up for you to sign. There were two typists in a small office. They kept a card index of every letter that was sent and received in the department. When we wanted extra information about a given object, I would then look first in the handwritten register to see who it was from, then at the card index under that name to see what kind of correspondence there had been. Then one could go down to an office where the Islamic Gallery is now to see all the brown files where all past letters were kept. Now the Museum has an Archivist and such past records are centrally kept.

SL: Could you tell us about the exhibitions that you did at the museum? And when did you start working on the Stein Collection?

RW: When I first arrived, Basil Gray gave me the remit to do the exhibition "Chinese Paintings Acquired through the Brooke Sewell Fund" (1969). P. T. Brooke Sewell (1878-1958) was a merchant banker whom Gray visited in Lausanne in 1956. He established two funds: the Brooke Sewell Fund and the Brooke Sewell Bequest. The former allowed for the purchase of Chinese painting. Basil Gray used it to acquire fine works such as Wen Zhengming's *Wintry Trees* and a few paintings that turned out to be fakes, notably the *Landscape* attributed to

the tenth-century master Juran, which eventually proved to be by Zhang Daqian. Gray was encouraged by Mrs. Walter Sedgwick (1883-1967) who collected Chinese bronzes and ceramics and who had some Chinese paintings, including a very nice album of eight leaves by six Nanjing artists with annotations by Zhou Lianggong (1612-1672) and others. The exhibition was intended as a farewell for Gray on his retirement, to show what he had accomplished through all the major acquisitions he had made in this field, some from dealers such as Jean-Pierre Dubosc (1903-1988) and Walter Hochstadter (1914-2007).²¹

It was on my first day in September 1968 that Basil Gray asked me to prepare this exhibition, to be shown in May 1969. I objected at first because I was already committed to install "In Pursuit of Antiquity" in July of the same year in Princeton, but to no avail. The exhibition was one of the last to be installed in the old gallery before it was remodeled in the early 1970s. It was in the same place as it is now, but at that time there was no Japanese gallery above. Both exhibitions went ahead successfully in London and Princeton, respectively, and I would eventually install "In Pursuit of Antiquity" again at three venues in Britain: in the British Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, and the Castle Museum, Norwich.²²

One exhibition that was done entirely from scratch was "The Iron Brush: Chinese Rubbings from Engraved Stones" (1974), from the collections of the Museum and of the British Library.²³ I was keen to show examples from Han to the Southern Song dynasties. It included items such as the Twenty Masterpieces from Guyang Cave at Longmen, the Nestorian tablet, pictorial carvings from Wu Liang shrine, the star map and the map of the city of Suzhou from the Beilin collection in China. As far as I know, it was the first exhibition of Chinese rubbings in the West. At that time, people didn't pay much attention to them, and I had to sort things out at the British Library. There was no catalogue, just a hand-list and an article in *Apollo*.²⁴ Some years later, there was "Chinese Painting of the Ch'ing dynasty" in 1978, from the Museum's own collection.

In 1975, I did "T'ang Buddhist Painting," which was my first exhibition on the Stein Collection.²⁵ This

was before the Kodansha publication (1982-85). In 1984, there was "Buddhist Art of Central Asia" and, as I said earlier, I also contributed to Wladimir Zwalf's "Buddhism: Art and Faith" (1985-1986), which included quite a few objects from that collection.²⁶ I did "Caves of the Thousand Buddhas" with Anne Farrer in 1990, after I left the museum.²⁷

SL: Do you have some favorites among all these exhibitions?

RW: You know, all the exhibitions are like children. You love them all equally. I did an exhibition of "Chinese Traditional Painting: Five Modern Masters 1886-1966" at the Royal Academy (1982). This entailed going to Paris where the exhibition was first shown, taking photographs of the works. John and Orna Design used my photographs in the catalogue, while as well as compiling the introduction and brief notes on the painters, I wrote out all the titles and glossary terms in Chinese, and even faked Chen Zhifo's signature! Of the five painters, my favorite was Pan Tianshou. And there was an exhibition of Sir Harry Garner's collection of Chinese lacquer, which was eventually given by him to the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. John Ayers and I had to divide it, choosing one piece each in turn, trying to make sure that I got the pieces that the British Museum was most interested in.²⁸

My last exhibition at the British Museum was "Treasures from Korea" (1984).²⁹ This was an amazing opportunity to learn much more about Korean art, so I stayed on at the museum a little longer in order to accommodate this exhibition after being appointed to the chair at SOAS. Even after that, the Stein Collection has proved to be very much an ongoing project: after I left the museum, I asked Alfred Crowley to straighten out a lot of crumpled silk fragments and they proved to be most interesting, some of them quite sizeable.

SL: Besides special exhibitions, were objects from the Stein Collection displayed in the permanent galleries at the British Museum?

RW: The Stein Collection was displayed only in the main gallery on the first floor, where there were three-dimensional objects from Central Asia.

Some of those were wooden utensils, some were pottery and a number of molded stucco figures. There was at that time no dedicated space for the display of silk paintings, which for conservation reasons were and still are kept in a humidity-controlled environment away from light. But there will be space for Chinese paintings, including items from the Stein collection, when the Hotung Gallery reopens after the refurbishment now taking place [Fig. 2].³⁰

While it was my remit to take care of the collection, there was not much that could be done by way of publication. I could do research on it, but the real impetus only came after Kodansha produced a series of books called *Oriental Ceramics in the World's Great Museums*.³¹ I was responsible for Vol. 5 on Yuan–Qing porcelains. Sir John Addis was very impressed with this, and he asked me to do a

special volume on his collection of twenty-two large Yuan and early Ming porcelains that he was giving to the museum.³² I drove down to his house in Kent and collected them all. It reminded me of my time at Princeton, when I drove to New York to get the C. D. Carter collection of ancient Chinese bronzes for the Art Museum. It was when editing the catalogue of Sir John Addis's collection that Kodansha first proposed a catalogue of the Stein collection.

SL: I see. Before we go further on this subject, could you tell us where the Stein Collection was stored?

RW: When I arrived, all the Stein Collection was mostly housed in mahogany cupboards outside of offices in the department, on the floor below the Prints and Drawings Students Room. Most of the



Fig. 2. The Hotung Gallery in the British Museum after its reopening in 2017. © 2019 The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license.

paintings were in frames and they were stored vertically, back to back. There was a divider between each pair of frames. To get a painting out, you would pull both of the frames out simultaneously. Jessica Rawson's office was lined with glazed cupboards on all sides, where the Stein banners, mounted flat on archival card mounts was stored in stout blue solanders. Many Chinese painting scrolls were rolled up and stored in these cupboards too. In Basil Gray's office, there were cupboards on one side and bookcases on the other side. This was what it was like when I arrived in 1968, and it remained like this until the early 70s. It was unsatisfactory, especially for the larger paintings.

SL: When was the new storage facility built then?

RW: Well, in the early 1970s I went to Stockholm and saw how paintings were stored at the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities. They had slides on which the paintings were hung, and which could be pulled out individually. As I remember, this arrangement was part of the gallery, rather than in a locked store. As at the British Museum, many of the paintings were in frames. Upon returning, I said, "This is what we need." Although the facility has since been refurbished and expanded, it is still essentially as I first envisioned it.

When Kodansha expressed an interest in the Stein Collection, my office was moved to a large room close to the storage. I would bring the paintings there and we did all the photography in this room against the wall. The editor, Mr. Maruyama, who had also worked on the Ceramics series before, would be standing there, making notes and keeping track of everything, which he did zealously in Japanese style. We got through the whole collection in six weeks. That was also where I did all the color corrections, especially for Vol. 1, which came out in 1982.³³ They sent me all the color proofs and I would examine them and suggest corrections. It was in the winter, so there was good light without bright sunshine. It is very interesting that in the book the colors appear brighter than the paintings themselves. This is because of the type of lighting we had, with strict color temperature control. Lights were set at an angle top and bottom on either side. So all the pigments lodged between the

weave structure were well lit. The color you see on the surface is paler because some of the pigment got rubbed off. But when the light comes in at an angle, the color comes out much stronger. You have to make some compromises, but I am confident that the balance was right. Indeed, when we did the second volume, the color proofs came out absolutely just like the paintings. So I was pleased with that.

As I noted earlier, the third volume of *Art of Central Asia* was supposed to be written by Wladimir Zwalf, because he was responsible for Central Asian as well as Indian antiquities. However, he pleaded that he had no expertise in this area and he refused to have anything to do with it. So he got me to take over, and I made the selection. A weaver from Brighton helped me to understand the weave structures of the textiles. We went over the objects together, comparing notes with those made by Stein's "recording angel" Miss Lorimer.³⁴ That work has since been superseded by Zhao Feng, Director of the China National Silk Museum, and his assistants in *Textiles from Dunhuang in UK Collections* (2007).³⁵

SL: So many of these paintings fall between different categories. They are not exactly scroll paintings. They are not textiles, nor are they paper.

RW: True. The majority of the paintings in the Stein collection are on silk or hemp cloth, although there are some on paper and a number of woodblock prints. The silk paintings had no roller or top stave. Instead, the four edges of the silk were reinforced with a border, also of silk or hemp cloth. Most of the paintings on hemp cloth, however, did not need a border, as the material is heavier and stronger. Both kinds were simply folded up when out of use. Some of the narrow banner paintings still retain a wooden weighting board at the bottom; these could be rolled up around this board.

SL: Besides organizing exhibitions and writing catalogues, what other activities were you involved in at the museum?

RW: Routine activities included recording objects in the collection for easy reference in the Students' Room, providing opinions on objects brought to

the Museum by members of the public, and making presentations for potential acquisitions by gift or purchase, and registering them. The main division in the Department of Oriental Antiquities was between graphic objects (of drawings or paintings of any description) and ceramics or anything three-dimensional. We kept separate registers for these categories. The procedure was that all acquisitions were sanctioned by meetings of the trustees, which would take place eight times a year on a Saturday morning, at which items submitted for acquisition either by bequest, gift or by purchase were presented to the trustees and sanctioned by them. On the following Monday assistant keepers would record them in the register and assign the number for the objects (year, month, day, and item number). To distinguish the two categories, the item number for graphic items would start with a zero.

In the nineteenth century, the description would include a miniature drawing for each object. Most of the three-dimensional objects in the Stein Collection were probably recorded in this way.

In the 1970s, we were beginning to make large filing cards for every object in the department. Several years were spent typing or writing out slips for all the ceramics which were down in the basement. In the mid 1970s, I went with Zwalf to locate and rehouse all the Indian sculptures in the museum. Some were around the front colonnade, and others were in different places. As I said before, the Buddhist carvings from the Amaravati stupa were in a basement somewhere beneath the Duveen Gallery. For the Indian sculptures, we had the basement of the King Edward Building. I designed and the carpenters built for me a large divider or a step-arrangement for the sculptures. There were about seven hundred Gandharan sculptures alone and thousands of small Tibetan figures. A lot of my work at the museum was housekeeping. Tasks would come unexpectedly. Keeping records took time and I didn't do as much research as I should have done. In my first year, Basil Gray kept up the tradition that assistant keepers had to write a diary and I could never think of anything new to put in it—What have I done this week? In theory, he would then look at it and sign it off. I am afraid I was never very diligent at this.

SL: Let me return to the subject of the Stein Collection. It was split up when the British Library became an independent entity. Were you involved in the process?

RW: To be clear, from the beginning, the Dunhuang manuscripts had been kept in the Department of Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books, and the paintings in the Department of Oriental Antiquities, so that I had no official involvement with the manuscript collection.³⁶ But in order to demonstrate the essential unity of the collection, it was my decision to include a sample of the manuscripts from the Library Cave, especially those which were dated precisely, or those with well-preserved roller and end knobs, in the first volume of *The Arts of Central Asia: the Stein Collection at the British Museum*. After I had left the Museum to take up the Chair of Chinese and East Asian Art and Archaeology at SOAS, there was a further opportunity to be involved with the manuscripts when Wang Xu and his assistant Wang Yarong came from China in 1988 to photograph the secular manuscripts from the Stein collection for the *Dunhuang baozang* series published by Sichuan People's Press.³⁷ I helped him to secure the necessary equipment, and at Christmas I drove him to my parents' house in Edgbaston, Birmingham, and to Stratford and Oxford. Wang Xu was an extraordinary person, who had conducted detailed experiments on every aspect of Han and Tang dynasty textile techniques of weaving and dyeing, and who had taken a prominent part in the excavation of Famensi. He compiled a diagrammatic record of every place he had ever been to (and by what means of transport) between 1937 and 1993, including his service in the Korean War.³⁸ He and Wang Yarong worked incredibly hard, photographing all day and developing and recording the negatives in the evenings until late at night.

With the Kodansha project, I was very keen that we should include some manuscripts as well as the paintings. I chose representative samples on the basis of chronology and calligraphic quality. I spent some time with the collection in order to select pieces that were complete, showing the rod at the end, the cover, and dated colophons.

I was also involved from 1975 onwards to search for a solution to the conservation of Chinese paint-

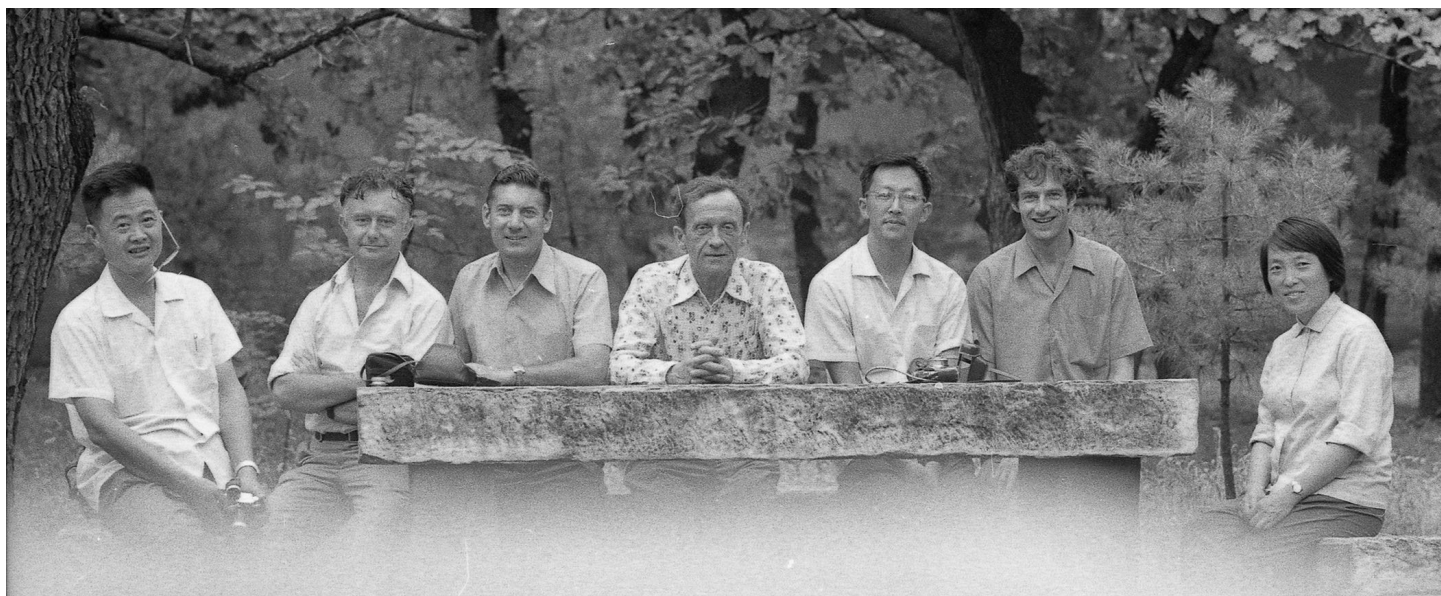


Fig. 3. Luo Zhewen (far left), Peter Lawson (second from left), Alfred Crowley (third from left), Norman Bromelle (center), Roderick Whitfield (second from right) and their two Chinese guides at Changling, Mausoleum of the Yongle Emperor, outside Beijing, September, 1975. Photograph courtesy of Roderick Whitfield.

ings. At this time there was only a very inadequate workshop in the basement of the King Edward Building. When I came to the Museum there was David Dudley who had studied for a year in Japan. When he was offered a post in conservation at the Royal Ontario Museum, his successor was Alfred Crowley.³⁹ Alf had served a seven-year apprenticeship as a bookbinder, and came to Oriental Antiquities from the Department of Egyptian Antiquities for which he had developed a means of conserving papyrus fragments. He had also worked with some of the Stein manuscripts.

As I saw it, the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. had a workshop with Japanese-trained conservators who were all Japanese. When they retired, they were replaced by others. I felt that this system was not satisfactory. We needed to have some home-trained specialists to order to assure some continuity, and I felt it was extremely important that Chinese paintings should as far as possible be conserved with Chinese materials and in Chinese style. So I was asked to lead a small delegation to visit conservation facilities in China in May, 1975 [Fig. 3]. The three other members were Norman Bromelle, Keeper of Conservation at the V&A (his wife was an expert of color pigments, the chief technician at the National Gallery); Alf Crowley from the British Museum; and Peter Lawson from the British Library. We spent a month in China, accompanied by Luo Zhewen, an architec-

ture specialist, expert photographer, and a wonderful person. We started in the Beijing Library looking at the conservation of rubbings. Then we spent a few days in the Palace Museum workshops for the conservation of furniture and paintings, respectively. Alf Crowley was allowed to show off his skills. He was mainly self-taught at the time and the Chinese were pleased with the way he handled the brush. A bonus was that two famous Song handscrolls were being remounted at that time: I was able to see both *Qingming shanghe tu* and *Han Xizai yeyan tu* and even to look at the reinforcement strips on the back of the latter, as the final backing had yet to be applied. Peter Lawson subsequently introduced Chinese mounting techniques for the conservation of Stein manuscripts at the British Library. We also saw the mounting studio in the Nanjing Museum, but the most rewarding of all was at the end of the trip, in the Shanghai Museum, where we could see and photograph every stage of conservation of hanging scrolls, album leaves and even a long handscroll.

At the Shaanxi History Museum in Xi'an, however, we were not allowed to visit the conservation facilities. This often happened. Instead they arranged a demonstration in the hotel lobby. Two old fellows came along with some bronze mirrors and demonstrated how to take rubbings from them. One of them took a mouthful of water, then made an almighty HAAA! and discharged onto the sheet of

paper that his companion was holding. The paper went instantly and evenly limp, to just the right degree to apply to the object to be rubbed. It was very impressive. I made friends with a young curator there who was interested in Western watercolors. Through him I exchanged some rubbings from fourteenth-century brass memorials in English churches, receiving instead for the British Museum some rubbings of panels from the stone funerary shrine of Princess Yongtai's tomb, which had just been excavated.

After Xi'an we went to Longmen. We saw the conservation work that they had done. The site, as you know, consists of cave shrines cut in a limestone ridge which had been thrust up aeons ago, so that the originally horizontal layers are now vertical. There are caves on both banks of the river that bisects the ridge. Rain falling on the ridge, miles away from the site, gradually percolates through and comes out through the sculptures. In 1975, the Chinese had developed their version of the two-part resin that in Britain we call Araldite. They used this brown-color material to fill in the cracks. In Brommelle's opinion, this was a mistake, because the water would build up behind and would eventually lift the surface off. We tried to tell them the error; at the same time, I was very impressed with the thorough knowledge and understanding that the curators had of the Longmen site, although they appeared to have few possibilities at that time to travel to other cave-temple sites.

We then went down to Changsha to see the finds excavated from Han Tomb no.1 at Mawangdui. We saw what the conservators at the Hunan Provincial Museum were doing to preserve lacquer vessels that had been waterlogged. When lacquer objects have become waterlogged, the wood core is basically supported by the water that is within it. As soon as the water is removed, the cells in the wood would shrivel up. So they were developing ways to exchange the water with a different liquid that would strengthen the cell walls and so prevent the catastrophic shrinkage typical of lacquer vessels from earlier excavations. We also saw different methods for preserving textiles in plastic bags with inert gas inside. So it was very interesting to see the problems that were only beginning to be solved.

SL: Did you go to Dunhuang in the same trip as well?

RW: No. I went to Dunhuang for the first time in 1981. I first went to China in 1974, almost nineteen years after I first learned Chinese (I went to Hong Kong and Taiwan four years before that). I then made a trip there almost every year since then. In 1981, I took a very small group of twelve, including some from SOAS, to Turfan and Dunhuang. We were in Dunhuang for three days. Dunhuang airport opened only in 1982, so we had to come to Liuyuan by train from Lanzhou overnight and then took the bus down a very bad road to Dunhuang. I met Director Duan Wenjie, who was not very friendly at all.⁴⁰ He had a grudge against the English because of Stein. He told me that the man with the keys had gone into town, so we couldn't see anything that afternoon. But that evening I met the first director Chang Shuhong's son, Chang Jiahuang, who invited me to come with him to the caves the next day. We caught the six o'clock bus to the caves, so we were there in the early morning and the atmosphere was magical. As the sun came up, we climbed to the top of the dunes. I photographed the cliff showing the view to the south from the old road that you are not allowed to go up anymore. Around eight o'clock one or two Chinese groups started to arrive and we could follow them into individual caves, beginning with the famous Library Cave. That first time was very important for me because it was just one year before I started on the Kodansha project.

Basil Gray had been to Dunhuang in 1957 and brought back a set of photographs.⁴¹ That would have been the first official contact between the British Museum and the Dunhuang Academy. Gray must have known Stein, but I do not remember asking about him. A portrait drawing of Laurence Binyon still hangs in the office of the Keeper.

After 1981, the next time I went to Dunhuang was for the international conference in 1987. Arriving was memorable: not only were we able to fly to Dunhuang, but my seat on the plane was next to Chang Shuhong, the first director of the Dunhuang Institute, now the Dunhuang Academy, whose son I had already met.⁴² Another time, I met Chang Jiahuang again, and he showed me the 'new caves' that he was having dug in the cliff some

thirty-odd miles away.

In 1981, the first volume of the Heibonsha series on the Mogao Caves had just come out, and we were eagerly waiting for the rest because of the shortage of color photography.⁴³ The old publication I had was *Dunhuang bihua* which was in black and white.⁴⁴ There was only a small book on Chinese landscape painting from Thames and Hudson and a large Japanese album called *Tonkō no bi hyakusen*, which was a selection from the caves.⁴⁵ So I was beginning to get an idea of the colors of the murals. And there was Akiyama Terukazu's volume in the *Chūgoku bijutsu* series—vol. 2 (1961).⁴⁶ Professor Akiyama came to the British Museum several times and I was able to show him and his disciples the collection. It was very important for me, on account of Professor Akiyama's knowledge of early landscape painting, and because I had always been interested in the relationship between the materials found in Cave 17 and the wall paintings. Is there any relationship? If so, what kind? With stencils it is fairly easy to determine, but other things are much less so. Recently I have become interested in Cave 205, a Tang cave that was begun shortly before the con-

struction of the Great Buddha in Cave 96. Then work was interrupted for a while. My hypothesis is that the rather odd arrangement that we can observe in that cave with different compositions lumped together is the result of that interruption. If I am right, by the time work resumed, more paintings had arrived from central China and the locals tried to incorporate them all into the iconography of the cave.



Fig. 4. The remaining parts of the Representation of Famous Buddhist Images as they were mounted in 1914 after the best preserved portions had been reserved for the Government of India, ink and color on silk, 7th to 8th centuries, 1919,0101,0.51.1-4 & 1919,0101,0.58, British Museum. © 2019 The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license.

SL: It's certainly an important next step for researchers today to put the two together in a more systematic way.

RW: Yes, I think so. Zhang Xiaogang, a scholar at the Dunhuang Academy, has just published a large volume on *Gantong hua*, paintings of spiritual response.⁴⁷ I'm interested in that, because it includes the paintings of auspicious or Famous Images, the subject of one of the most important paintings in the Stein collection, now divided between the British Museum and the National Museum in New Delhi. Over the years, I have attempted to reconstruct the whole painting [Fig. 4].⁴⁸ The best preserved section was assigned to New Delhi, and the remaining frag-

ments were left at the British Museum assembled in no particular order.⁴⁹ The reconstruction worked particularly well for the scenes at the top of the

painting, which had been all mixed up.⁵⁰ In the process of reconstructing the whole painting, I discovered a previously unrecognized fragment, an eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, in Delhi. Now that the reconstruction is as complete as it will ever be, I feel that the painting needs to be written up in a more comprehensive way. Zhang Xiaogang dates the Famous Images paintings to no earlier than the late High Tang period, which was when a certain monk went to Puzhou to make an image. Zhang assumes that the image from Puzhou in the silk painting is the image made by that monk. But in fact, the monk went there to “*moxie*” or copy an image that was already there, so the painting may well be earlier. I plan to write more on this to show the relationship such as it existed between the other images of this kind in the Mogao caves and the painting.

SL: I look forward to your new study. Since you have brought up New Delhi, could you describe your relationship with colleagues from India? When was the first time you had the opportunity to see the Stein Collection in New Delhi?

RW: I had no opportunity to travel to India during my time at the British Museum (my early visits to China were as a lecturer for tourist groups). I have from time to time met with Dr. Chhaya Bhattacharya-Haesner, who was for a long time in charge of the Stein collection in New Delhi, and who compiled a register by site in 21 volumes of the objects in the collection. I have also met with Dr. Robert Jera-Bezard and Monique Maillard who had spent time with the collection, and in 1982 I had the rare opportunity of examining at close quarters the painting of Famous Images, which had been lent by the National Museum, New Delhi to the exhibition “The Silk Road and the Diamond Path” organized by Dr. Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter.⁵¹ The first occasion to visit the National Museum was not until 1997, in connection with the Feasibility Conference for the Documentation of Central Asian Antiquities held at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, IGNCA. At that time there was no curator in charge of the Stein collection. A year later, in 1998, Dr. Binoy Kumar Sahay, a numismatist, was assigned to be in charge; unfamiliar with the collection, he proceeded to compile a new register of all the objects, with new numbers classified

according to material and not according to site. Only a part of the collection was on view in one large gallery, with an adjacent gallery not open to view. Since then, a catalogue of 141 paintings from the collection, authored by the distinguished Buddhist scholars Dr. Lokesh Chandra and Dr. Nirmala Sharma, has been published in 2012 by Niyogi Books. It is very much to be hoped that eventually the collection can be documented online by the International Dunhuang Project (IDP), as that has been done for the Dunhuang materials in other museums and libraries.

SL: I hope so too. Now, returning to the subject of Dunhuang painting, it is interesting to see that you were first trained to write about traditional Chinese paintings in scroll format and then came to work on wall paintings and other forms of pictorial arts.

RW: At Princeton, we studied with Professor Kurt Weitzmann, a foremost Medievalist, learning about narrative sequences in Norman mosaics at Monreale and in medieval manuscripts.⁵² With Professor Fong and Professor Shujirō Shimada, we were intensively looking at Chinese paintings, particularly with regard to composition but also in my case, narrative. Professor Shimada also gave us some marvelous seminars on the Shōsō-in and on early Japanese Buddhist sculpture, emphasizing the contribution of craftsmen of Korean descent.⁵³ Through him I became aware of the need to view the art of East Asia as a whole and not from a single viewpoint. For my dissertation, I chose Zhang Zeduan’s *Qingming shanghe tu*, which I had come across when it was first published in 1959, before I went to Princeton. So I was interested in the narrative aspect of the Stein collection. Some of the larger silk paintings have marginal narratives, and a number of banners illustrate the legendary life of the Buddha. I didn’t know much about Buddhist texts. I had to try to absorb all that. It’s been made easier nowadays, as you can search the Daizōkyō Database by typing a phrase and get all the instances of that phrase.

SL: When you first worked on the painted banners in the Stein Collection, did you think of them as part of the Chinese painting tradition? Or was it completely separate?



Fig. 5. Maitreya, the future Buddha, seated in the Tusita heaven. Clay stucco image from the north wall of Mogao cave 275. Northern Liang dynasty, early 5th c. AD. (Photograph courtesy of the Dunhuang Academy, after Tonko Bakkokutsu, Tokyo: Heibonsha, vol. 1, pl.80)

RW: Yes, I have never considered them as something separate. I tried to relate them to things that had just been discovered at that time, such as the wall paintings from the tombs of Princess Yongtai and Prince Zhanghuai from the early Tang. I have mentioned Professor Akiyama's knowledge of landscape painting and my own interest in narratives. These made a profound impression on me and it became possible to relate the ways in which wall paintings were depicted to the banners and the wall paintings in Dunhuang. We see how close the hunting scenes and paintings of horses were to actual Tang paintings. Dunhuang is a very special place but you have a meeting of East and West and

the coloristic tradition is coming from the West. The highlightings of clothing and figural depiction mark a meeting with the Chinese tradition. You can even see that in the earliest central pillar caves with the architectural format of a front hall with a transverse gabled roof. The lower niches on the side walls are Indian in character, but in the upper niches Maitreya sits beneath a transverse gabled roof, between a pair of *que* towers of manifestly Chinese character. Thus as soon as you enter the cave, you are in Maitreya's paradise [Fig. 5]. But the implication is that in the future when Maitreya comes, it is going to be entirely Chinese.

Interestingly, the very first time that paintings from the Stein collection were exhibited, there was no distinction of Buddhist versus traditional Chinese paintings, as the exhibition was simply titled "Exhibition of Chinese and Japanese paintings IV–XIX centuries," which was organized by the Department of Prints & Drawings in the White Wing.⁵⁴ In the International Exhibition of Chinese Art at the Royal Academy, 1935–1936, paintings from Dunhuang were also shown in the same gallery as some Five Dynasties and Song paintings, with no distinction of category. In the recent Masterpieces exhibition at

the V&A, they were also presented close to traditional paintings.⁵⁵ But of course there are important distinctions in subject-matter and structure.

SL: I see. It is remarkable that you are able to write about such a wide range of topics in Chinese paintings.

RW: I wish I had done more writing while in the museum. In particular, in 1998 I was involved in a plan to publish the Stein paintings in New Delhi, and we made a good start with photography, only for the project to come to a halt with the appointment of a new Director of the Museum, and the

early death of Michael Aris, twin brother of Anthony Aris who had negotiated the deal with the previous Acting Director.⁵⁶ But to be an art historian, one should be alert to all kinds of things, and ready to investigate them when you meet them. Building a collection can also be a matter of making the most of opportunities that turn up. My acquisitions for the British Museum range from five small fragments from a Stein painting (sent to auction by the widow of a President of the Royal Academy to whom they had been given by Stein), to Ming dynasty paintings of the Zhe and Wu schools and Chinese woodblock prints of the 17th and mid-20th centuries. Since coming to SOAS, I have had the good fortune to have a considerable number of Ph.D. students, who have researched very different subjects. From them I have learned a great deal and they have gone on to distinguish themselves in academic and museum careers.

I continue to be passionate about conservation. In 1987 I introduced Mrs. Qiu Jinxian, who remembered our 1975 visit to Shanghai, to the Museum and she has been working there ever since.⁵⁷ I also introduced her friend and colleague Gu Xiangmei from Shanghai to Yutaka Mino in Chicago, whence John Winter rapidly recruited her to the Freer, where she still works in the conservation studio. The BM set up a Japanese-style mounting studio at 38 Montague Street in 1981 when Paul Wills, whose name I first encountered in Japan in 1970 where he had just started an apprenticeship in mounting, came to the museum on my recommendation. In 1995, thanks to a generous donation from Professor Ikuo Hirayama, the studio moved to a spacious old banking hall on the British Museum site, with equipment for mounting in both Japanese and Chinese styles. Even after her retirement, Qiu *laoshi* continues to work there three days a week, training British, Italian, and Korean mounters.

There is a new one-year MA course at the Courtauld Institute, now in its third year, called “Buddhist Art and Conservation.” It is led by Dr. Giovanni Verri, an expert on the identification of pigments in mural paintings, who graduated from the three-year diploma program on Conservation of Wall Painting at the Courtauld, which Prof. Youngsook Pak and I have supported for many years. Each year seven or eight students from as many countries are selected. They are highly moti-

vated and we have been able to take them to Paris (Musée Guimet and Musée Cernuschi) and to China (Beijing and Dunhuang).

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ENDNOTES

¹ Stein has provided by far the most detailed accounts of his activities in Dunhuang. See especially *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and Northwestern China* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1933), 193–237; and *Serindia*, vol. 2 (London: Clarendon Press, 1921), 791–830. For the reception of Stein’s expeditions in the United Kingdom, see Helen Wang, *Sir Aurel Stein in the Times: A Collection of over 100 References to Sir Aurel Stein and His Extraordinary Expeditions to Chinese Central Asia, India, Iran, Iraq, and Jordan in the Times newspaper 1901–1943* (London: Saffron, 2002).

² Justin Jacobs has offered a provocative account of the change in opinion on Stein among Chinese intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century. See his “Confronting Indiana Jones: Chinese Nationalism, Historical Imperialism, and Criminalization of Aurel Stein and Raiders of Dunhuang, 1899–1944,” in *China on the Margins*, eds. Sherman Cochran and Paul G. Pickowicz (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 2010), 65–90.

³ For a detailed discussion of how the Stein materials were divided among various institutions in the U.K. and India, see Helen Wang, Helen Persson, and Frances Wood, “Dunhuang Textiles in London: A History of the Collection,” in *Sir Aurel Stein: Colleagues and Collections*, ed. Helen Wang (London: British Museum, 2012), 1–8.

⁴ Frances Wood, Susan Whitfield and Helen Wang have spearheaded this trend through their respective scholarship. Particularly notable is the exhibition catalogue *The Silk*

Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith, edited by Susan Whitfield and Ursula Sims-Williams (Chicago: Serindia Publications Inc. and London: The British Library, 2004), in which historical studies on the objects appeared alongside those focusing on the history of the collections and issues of conservation for the first time.

⁵ Wen Fong (1930–2018) was Edwards S. Sanford Professor of Art History Emeritus at Princeton University, where he taught Chinese art history from 1954 to 1999.

⁶ Peter Swann (1921–1997) was the Keeper of Oriental Art at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford from 1955 to 1965. He served as the director of Royal Ontario Museum of Art in Toronto from 1966 to 1972.

⁷ Basil Gray (1904–1989) joined the British Museum in 1928 and became an assistant to Laurence Binyon in the Sub-Department of Oriental Prints and Drawings in 1930. He was Keeper of Oriental Antiquities from 1946 to 1969 and served as Acting Director and Principal Librarian in 1969 before his retirement from the museum in the same year. See a detailed biography by Ralph Pinder-Wilson, “Basil Gray (1904–1989),” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 105 (2000), pp. 439–457.

⁸ R. Soame Jenyns (1904–1976) worked at the British Museum from 1931 to 1968.

⁹ One of these Kucha mural fragments is now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University (EA1990.1243). It came to the museum in 1990 as a bequest from Basil Gray.

¹⁰ Ralph Pinder-Wilson (1919–2008) joined the British Museum in 1949 and remained there until 1976, when he was appointed the Director of the British Institute of Afghan Studies in Kabul.

¹¹ Lawrence Smith (1941–) joined the British Museum in 1962 and became Keeper of the new Department of Japanese Antiquities in 1987.

¹² Jessica Rawson (1943–) served as a curator in the Department of Oriental Antiquities from 1976 to 1994. She joined Oxford University in 1994 as the Warden of Merton College and remained until 2010.

¹³ Jessica Rawson and John Ayers, eds., *Chinese Jades through the Ages* (London: Oriental Ceramics Society and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1975).

¹⁴ Douglas Barrett (1917–1992) served as Keeper of Oriental Antiquities from 1969 to 1977.

¹⁵ Douglas Barrett, *Sculptures from Amaravati in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1954).

¹⁶ The Amitabha Buddha was recently restored by the conservators in the British Museum.

¹⁷ Wladimir Zwalf (1932–2002) joined the British Museum in 1962 and retired in 1993. See Pierfrancesco Callieri, “Wladimir Zwalf: 1932–2002,” *East and West* 52, no. 1/4 (Dec. 2002), 441.

¹⁸ Wladimir Zwalf, *A Catalogue of the Gandhāra Sculpture in the British Museum*, 2 vols. (London: British Museum Press, 1996).

¹⁹ The exhibition was held in the British Museum from July 1985 to January 1986, showcasing over four hundred pieces that were drawn mainly from the museum’s own collections and those from the British Library. The show drew over 223,000 visitors. Whitfield was one of fifteen contributors to the exhibition catalogue, which was published by British

Museum Publications, Ltd., in 1985.

²⁰ Cheng Te-k’un, *Archaeology of China: Vol. 2: Shang China* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960).

²¹ Dubosc was a well-known collector of Chinese art who was stationed in China as a diplomat during the 1930s and 40s. Hochstadter became a dealer of Chinese ceramics and paintings in Shanghai and Beijing after escaping from Nazi Germany in the 1930s. He moved his collection to the United States just before the Communist victory and the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.

²² This exhibit was on view in the British Museum from April to June 1972. There was an accompanying catalogue: Roderick Whitfield, ed., *In Pursuit of Antiquity; Chinese paintings of the Ming and Ch’ing Dynasties from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Morse* (Princeton: Princeton Art Museum, 1969).

²³ The exhibition was on view from April to September in 1974.

²⁴ Roderick Whitfield, “The Iron Brush,” *The Connoisseur* 188, no. 1 (1975).

²⁵ The exhibition was held from June to October in 1975, drawing over 60,000 visitors. This marked the first show in the British Museum to have featured Buddhist paintings from the Stein Collection since 1938.

²⁶ The Buddhist Art of Central Asia exhibition was held from February to April 1984.

²⁷ The exhibition was held from April to December 1990 and accompanied by a catalogue: Roderick Whitfield, ed., *Caves of the Thousand Buddhas: Chinese Art from the Silk Route* (London: Braziller, 1990).

²⁸ Eighty-seven pieces of lacquer of the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries were given to the British Museum. Some of them are discussed in Harry M. Garner, *Chinese Lacquer* (Art of the East) (London: Faber, 1979).

²⁹ See the exhibition catalogue: Roderick Whitfield, ed., *Treasures from Korea: Art through 5000 Years* (London: British Museum Press, 1984).

³⁰ The Hotung Gallery (Room 33) underwent a major renovation and was reopened to the public in November 2017. The work was sponsored by the Sir Joseph Hotung Charitable Settlement.

³¹ Jan Fontein, ed., *Oriental Ceramics, the World’s Great Collections*, 11 vols. to date (Tokyo and New York: Kodansha International, 1980–).

³² Sir John Addis (1914–1983) was a British diplomat who served as Ambassador to China from 1947 to 1974 and as Ambassador to the Philippines from 1963 to 1970. In addition to the works donated to the British Museum, there were a further seventy pieces much smaller pieces destined for the Victoria and Albert Museum which he had collected while working in the Philippines.

³³ Roderick Whitfield, *The Art of Central Asia: The Stein Collection in the British Museum*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1982).

³⁴ See Helen Wang, “Stein’s Recording Angel: Miss F.M.G. Lorimer,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Third Series*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Jul., 1998), 207–28.

³⁵ Feng Zhao, Helen Wang, Helen Persson, Frances Wood, Le Wang, and Zheng Xu. *Textiles from Dunhuang in UK Collec-*

tions (Shanghai: Donghua University Press, 2007).

³⁶ After the creation of the British Library as a separate institution in 1973, the Stein manuscripts were held in the India Office Library on the Blackfriars Bridge Road, then moved to Store Street close to SOAS.

³⁷ Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan lishi yanjiu suo, *Yingcang Dunhuang wenxian: Han wen fojing yi wai bufen* (Dunhuang manuscripts in British Collections: Chinese Texts other than Buddhist Scriptures), 15 vols. (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1990–1992).

³⁸ See Zhao Feng, ed., *Wang Xu and Textile Archaeology in China* (Hong Kong: ISAT, 2001), 176–87.

³⁹ Crowley worked as a conservator in the British Museum from 1967 to 1990.

⁴⁰ Duan Wenjie (1917–2011) was Director of the Dunhuang Academy from 1982 to 1998. Having first arrived in Dunhuang in 1946, he devoted his entire career to promoting the art of Dunhuang in China and abroad through publications and making copies of the murals.

⁴¹ Gray was part of a delegation of ten that visited China in May 1957. They were invited to have tea with Zhou Enlai in Beijing. Gray was given the permission to spend four days in Dunhuang. The experience inspired him to write *Buddhist Cave-Paintings at Tunhuang* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959).

⁴² Chang Shuhong (1904–1994) first came to Dunhuang in 1943 to establish what would become the Dunhuang Academy. He served as its first director until 1985.

⁴³ *Zhongguo shiku/Chūgoku sekkutsu: Tonkō Bakkokutsu/Dunhuang Mogaoku* [Mogao Caves of Dunhuang], 5 vols. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe; and Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980–82).

⁴⁴ Dunhuang wenwu yanjiu suo, ed. *Dunhuang bihua* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1959).

⁴⁵ Enjōji Jirō, *Tonkō no bi hyakusen* [The Beauty of Dunhuang in 100 Plates] (Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 1978).

⁴⁶ Akiyama Terukazu and Matsubara Saburo, *Arts of China: Vol. 2: Buddhist Cave Temples; New Researches* (Tokyo and Palo Alto, Calif: Kodansha International, 1968–1970).

⁴⁷ Zhang Xiaogang, *Dunhuang fojiao gantong hua yanjiu* [Research on pictures related to the Buddhist concept of sympathetic responses from Dunhuang] (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2015).

⁴⁸ See Whitfield's reconstruction in Whitfield and Sims-Williams, ed., *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith*, fig. 36.

⁴⁹ Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, ed., *The Silk Road and the Diamond Path: Esoteric Buddhist Art on the Trans-Himalayan Trade Routes* (Los Angeles: UCLA Art Council, 1982), pl. 56.

⁵⁰ Ibid., cat. 242a.

⁵¹ See note 48.

⁵² Kurt Weitzmann (1904–1993) taught in the Department of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University from 1935 to 1993. He was also a permanent member of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton.

⁵³ Shujirō Shimada (1907–1994) taught Japanese art history at Princeton University from 1965 to 1976, having worked at the

Kyoto National Museum and Kyoto University for many years beforehand. After retiring from his posts in the United States, he returned to Japan and became the director of the Metropolitan Center for Far Eastern Art Studies and Japan Art History Society.

⁵⁴ The 1910 exhibition contained only two dozen works brought back from Stein's expeditions to Chinese Turkestan. The first public exhibition devoted solely to the Stein Collection was held at the British Museum in 1914. See British Museum, *Guide to an Exhibition of Paintings, Manuscripts and Other Archaeological Objects Collected by Sir Aurel Stein in Chinese Turkestan* (London: Printed by Order of the Trustees, 1914).

⁵⁵ See the exhibition catalogue *Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700–1900*, ed. Zhang Hongxing (London: V&A Publishing, 2013), entries nos. 1–12.

⁵⁶ Neil MacGregor was appointed director in 2002. He stepped down from the post in 2015 and was succeeded by Hartwig Fischer the following year.

⁵⁷ Qiu is senior conservator of Chinese painting at the British Museum. She worked in the Shanghai Museum for fifteen years before moving to London in 1987.