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Collecting China: Buying a Civilization in the Chinese Art Market, 1911 - 1945

Introduction

Modern day travelers to Beijing will notice advertisements for a recently renovated art and antiques market called Liuli Chang, located to the southwest of the Forbidden City. A famous provider of old books, paintings, calligraphy, bronzes, and other art and antiques, the area was a favorite site for international collectors of Chinese art during the early twentieth century. Between 1911 and 1945, the area bustled with Chinese, French, British, German, Japanese buyers, and functioned as a contact zone between foreign and domestic nationals. As Western Europe, America, and Japan expanded their interests in owning pieces of China, transactions in Liuli Chang fundamentally changed the international market for Chinese art. Chinese art sales became a politically sensitive issue of status, nationalism, and empire-making, particularly as the Chinese became more and more aware of the aforementioned countries' ambition to civilize Chinese civilization.

Over the last twenty years, a number of former art dealers and journalists embarked on oral history projects, recording the memories of Chinese antique dealers who worked in Liuli Chang between 1911 and 1945. In these projects, antiques dealers and collectors shared their memories of the sales, trades, collectors, and famous industry events from the first half of the twentieth century. The interviewees gave detailed and complicated responses regarding foreign presence in the art market, and described, at length, the slippery power dynamics between buyers and dealers. The records contain a heavy bias towards interactions with the Japanese, whose command of Western European languages enabled them to act as middlemen between Chinese and Western dealers. Chinese art dealers bemoaned that their Japanese counterparts used an

extensive network of international buyers and monetary resources to quickly move Chinese art from Beijing, Shanghai, and Manchuria to London, Paris, New York, Tokyo, and Osaka. Chinese art dealers tended to portray themselves as cheated victims in these transactions; the sale records, however, show that they used every available advantage to compete with the Japanese presence. Chinese dealers utilized regional connections to purchase prize pieces before Japanese art dealers got wind of their existence, encouraged local men and women to mine the countryside for ancient relics, developed credit and commission mechanisms that allowed them to expand their sales territories, and even manipulated their friendship with the Japanese to sell counterfeit pieces for high profits.

Whilst China tumbled from the Sino-Japanese war to the Manchurian Incident and then the Pacific War, both Chinese and Japanese individuals strove, to the best of their ability, to profit from the commercial interest in Chinese civilization. Selling art is about selling knowledge. In the Liuli Chang, a dealer's mastery of Chinese art connoisseurship represented his intellectual ownership of Chinese civilization. In the shadow of Manchuria, where Japanese imperial subjects and their Chinese collaborators confiscated entire palatial complexes and established colonial museums, the Beijing art market represents a more ambiguous contact zone. Here, Chinese and Japanese dealers engaged in direct competition over the material culture of Chinese civilization, using whatever monetary and coercive instruments available to them. These art deals reveal the collaborative nature of empire, and the willful use of imperialist and nationalist narratives to establish a material culture for Chinese civilization.

The Making of a Market

Japanese and Chinese sources concur that between 1911 and 1945, buyers interested in fine Chinese art swarmed upon Beijing's Liuli Chang, a premier art and antiques market whose

name denotes the area's association with the imperial production of lapis lazuli tiles.ⁱ The fact that Japanese art dealer Yamanaka Sadajirō (1866 – 1936), owner of the state-funded international art and antiques dealership Yamanaka and Company, put his China flagship store in Beijing underlines the market's key position in the international market for Chinese art at large. Between 1911 and 1927, Chinese art dealers rallied together enough market power to establish a guild, break up into specializations (bronzes, painting, ceramics, precious stones, ancient musical instruments), and establish set rules for commissions, payments, and auctions.

Storefronts in Liuli Chang segregated themselves by nation: the Chinese, British, French, German, and Japanese enclave occupied different sections in the market.ⁱⁱ The British, French and German enclaves were small, as few western Europeans at the time could muster the requisite combination of familiarization with the Chinese language, art connoisseurship, and an international network of clientele that made dominating the market possible. Japanese dealers fared much better. They spoke Chinese, or understood enough Chinese script to communicate by brush, knew Chinese art connoisseurship, and commanded the funds and international clientele necessary to acquire an art object, then sell it overseas for several times the original price. Chinese dealers also did well – they maintained an extensive network of regional buyers and sellers from Manchuria to Hong Kong, and developed a credit and commission system that allowed dealers to transport and sell items for one another in distant cities.

Chinese dealers expanded their sales territory with residential and traveling dealerships. Residential dealers owned storefronts in main market area, regularly attended activities at the arts and antiques guild, and often held leadership positions in guild administration.ⁱⁱⁱ Traveling dealers gathered and stayed in Xinglong Dian, a different part of the market. These sojourners

traveled to Beijing from nearby Shaanxi, Henan, Shanxi, and Shandong provinces, delivering art objects between their respective hometowns and the residential dealers in Liuli Chang.^{iv}

After buying and selling among dealers in the international enclave for decades, Liuli Chang art dealers developed a sense for regional differences in international demand.^v Here is how Che Zizhen, a Liuli Chang old-timer, categorized the early Republican period market,

“The international enclave was divided into French, South East Asia, American, and Japanese. Foreigners who bought jewelry and jades bought it for the quality of Chinese craftsmanship. France and South East Asia favor jade display pieces: large, rough-hewn, low priced jades; America and Japan like carefully-worked Jade, the Japanese especially demanded jade displays and delicate decorative pieces, they put a high value on the material – beautiful color and delicate shape and veining. Since the Qing dynasty fell and the Republican period began, America and Japan took off with a lot of top quality jade art. Before 1921, the Auspicious and Flourishing Studio settled a deal with the antiques and jade department of Yamanaka and Company that was worth six thousand taels of gold. Yamanaka and Company bought countless antiques, jewelry, and jade from Beijing.”^{vi}

Japanese dealers also noted that among ceramics collectors, “The British and Americans like ceramics from the Diao Kiln and the French like floral patterns.”^{vii}

Japanese dealers of Chinese art either made seasonal buying trips to Liuli Chang or owned storefronts in its Japanese enclave. More well-known dealers include the aforementioned Yamanaka Sadajirō, Yamanaka and Company’s China branch store manager Takada Yisanro, Mayuyama Matsutarō (owner of the Ryusendō art dealership), and a Japanese embassy employee nicknamed “Old drunkard Nishizawa”.^{viii} Chinese art dealers agreed that Yamanaka and Company, with its offices in London, Tokyo, Osaka, Beijing, Boston, New York, Chicago, and Paris, was their most formidable competition. Chinese ceramics dealer Xiao Shunong attributed the following quote to Takada, the manager of Yamanaka and Company’s Beijing branch, “for us Japanese, the antiques and jewelry business is all about information. I must know which stores have outstanding merchandise at the earliest possible moment. Otherwise, our general manager would sack me.”^{ix} Chinese dealers spoke wearily of Takada, a reputedly clever man who had his eye on every valuable object that surfaced on the market.^x

Neither did dealers harbor warm thoughts about Yamanaka Sadajirō, whose connections to the Japanese state allowed him unusual liberties in China. These tensions grew only more contentions in the context of China losing the Sino-Japanese war and conceding to most of Japan's 21 demands. At the time, China did not permit foreign ownership of landed property on Chinese soil. Yamanaka, however, used connections with the Mitsui company to purchase a grand estate - the former Sheng Boxi residence in the center of Beijing.^{xi} Huang Jiashou, a Chinese employee of the Mitsui bank in China, signed the deed for Yamanaka.^{xii}

Chinese art dealers described Yamanaka as a “thin, small, dried up”, and pretentious man who never spoke to minor shopkeepers.^{xiii} The Japanese art dealer often arrived at antique stores in his car (a rare and luxurious sight in early Republican China), followed by his bodyguard and accountant. Chinese art dealers remembered him for his status-conscious quirks: when purchasing outside of the main Liuli Chang area, Yamanaka walked in front, followed by his accountant. If he liked any item, he pointed at it.^{xiv} His accountant then asked the shopkeeper for a price and wrote the owner a check. The Japanese man garnered a reputation for never negotiating – whatever price the shopkeeper wanted, Yamanaka paid.^{xv} Yamanaka also never carried his purchases home; shopkeepers wrapped up his purchases and sent them to his residence. In fact, after 1921, Yamanaka took to visiting Beijing every spring and fall.^{xvi} Upon Yamanaka's arrival, dealers either visited his Beijing estate, or simply set up shop on the estate grounds, filling the courtyard with stands selling fine antiques and precious jewels. Yamanaka could buy top grade Chinese art without ever leaving his home.^{xvii}

Traditionally, friends introduced other friends to trusted shopkeepers in the Liuli Chang. Luo Zhenyu, the oracle bones scholar famous for his collaboration with the Japanese, introduced Yamanaka to antiques dealer Huang Bochuan. An old and respected figure in Liuli Chang,

Huang owned the True Zun Studio, a high-end antique store that specialized in ancient bronzes – one of the most prized and costly items on the Chinese art market during the early twentieth century.^{xviii} Huang famously sold Yamanaka a Shang dynasty zun, a ritual wine vessel that boasted both delicately incised patterns and carvings in ancient Chinese script. The shopkeeper claimed that the vessel came from the imperial palace; Emperor Puyi gifted it to one of his relatives, who in turn sold the zun to Huang.^{xix} Enthralled by the object, Yamanaka offered Huang twenty thousand silver dollars. Huang, who had not even paid the five thousand that he offered for the Zun, accepted the price. Reputedly, Yamanaka then sold the bronze to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.^{xx}

Yamanaka's branch stores in Europe and America helped him establish relationships with overseas clients such as the Rockafellers and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, who commanded much bigger budgets than collectors in China. His overseas connections also gave him information on art prices that Chinese art dealers, as well as Chinese collectors, had no opportunity to know. This intelligence network became especially profitable after World War I, when American collectors offered high prices for Chinese bronzes, but only trusted a select few dealers to bring them high-quality items.^{xxi} Chinese dealers often remembered the aforementioned Yamanaka-Huang bronze sale, among others, with a note of jealousy and regret. As the narrator of the bronze deal lamented, "Sellers believed that five thousand silver dollars was a lot of money, worth an estate with twenty or thirty rooms in Beijing. How could they know what the market for bronzes was outside of China?"^{xxii}

Chinese art dealers used their connections to regional dealers and magistrates, as well as their ability to manufacture counterfeit art objects, to compete with their international counterparts. Two well-known transactions over Western Wei period bodhisattva statues

epitomize these transactions. In both deals, every individual made full use of their connections and wits, using a combination of art connoisseurship, regional networks, and clever counterfeiting to obtain the highest possible profit.

Statues from the Western Wei period enjoyed great popularity in the early twentieth century art market. In 1918, a farmer in Hebei province found a golden bodhisattva statue.^{xxiii} News quickly reached Beijing, and three different groups of dealers approached the farmer, offering up to ten thousand silver dollars for the item. The farmer refused to sell, arguing that if he sold the statue the auspicious aura that protected his village would disappear – dealers suspected that the locals believed the statues were pure gold, and so did not want to sell. Experienced dealers of Western Wei objects, however, knew that the bodhisattva must be a bronze statue covered with gold leaf. Nevertheless, the dealers realized that they needed the local magistrate's intervention to seal the deal.

Three dealers with local connections, Hebei natives Yu Huaiqing, Yu Yanzhai, and Ding Jiqian conspired to have the regional magistrate, Wang Shizhen, help obtain the statue.^{xxiv} With Wang's intervention, the farmers negotiated and finally sold the statue for thirty thousand silver dollars. Once the dealers delivered the statue to Beijing, Yamanaka and Company's Takada immediately called on Yu Huaiqing.^{xxv} The two dealers set a secret bargain where Yamanaka and Company paid Yu one hundred and fifty silver dollars, but the two announced the selling price as one hundred thousand silver dollars. In return, Yu received the extra fifty thousand silver dollars, plus a share of the announced price, which he split between his two partners.^{xxvi}

The first golden bodhisattva transaction occurred shortly after China conceded to Japan's 21 demands, which may explain why it follows two stereotypes so closely: the clever Japanese art dealer and a profiteering Chinese art dealer. The second golden bodhisattva statue transaction

presents a more complicated story, where a maverick Chinese art dealer, Ni Yushu, got the best of Yamanaka and Company, but maintained a friendship with another Japanese art dealer.

Active in the late 1920s and 1930s, Ni had a reputation for breaking into forbidden religions sites and making copies of ancient statues. Ni befriended a Japanese dealer surnamed Hirano, a chemistry expert who taught Ni the Japanese method for aging statues.^{xxvii} Armed with this knowledge, Ni conspired with a skilled sculptor to manufacture three statues. Once the two finished the counterfeits, Ni made an announcement in Liuli Chang: he purchased three Western Wei statues, freshly unearthed from Shanxi. During the auction, a Japanese buyer suggested that the statues were older than Western Wei – possibly the Qin or Han dynasties. Laughing, Ni countered that the statues only measured three Chinese inches, and therefore could not be the large, golden bodhisattva statues attributed to the Qin or Han. In the end, Ni and his accomplice sold the statues to Reuter, Brockelmann & co (a German export company), French dealer and ambassador P. Verondart, and Yamanaka and Company.^{xxviii}

Ni's timing suggests an additional reason for this record's fame among Chinese art dealers. Ni opened his antique dealership and sold the counterfeit statues shortly after the Marco Polo bridge incident of 1937, one of the key events leading up to the Pacific War. The victory sealed the Imperial Japanese Army's conquest of costal China – Beijing and Tianjin fell soon thereafter. The shock of foreign invasion may have made Ni's cheating the foreign connoisseurs appear even more satisfying to Chinese art dealers.

The 1920s discovery of ancient Buddhist sites in Shanxi caused a great stir among international collectors, scholars, and travelers. Once Western Wei relics began appearing on the Chinese art market, adventurers swarmed to Shanxi to authenticate and purchase the available goods. In 1928, Yamanaka Sadajirō published a curious travelogue that recorded his own

experiences at the sixth century Buddhist cave temples of Tianlong Shan, a mountain in central Shanxi.^{xxix} Published by Yamanaka and Company, and phrased in the style of nineteenth-century European travelogues about their colonies, the volume featured Yamanaka and Sekino Tei (1867 – 1935), a friend that the art dealer invited to travel with him. Both men wrote prefaces, in Japanese and English, for the publication.^x

The Japanese and English versions of both authors' prefaces reveal the Japanese Empire's ambition to appear civilized, and to take on the role of civilizing Chinese civilization. Sekino's English preface gushed over Yamanaka's extensive knowledge of Chinese art, calling him "a gentleman well versed in ancient art [who] visited T'ien Lung Shan twice before."^{xxx} The architect marveled at the carvings, which "stayed in tact and...maintain the original forms...nevertheless, they met in recent years the fate of destruction, thereby presenting a miserable sight, which is indeed an extreme regret".^{xxxi} The language evokes contemporaneous European travelogues, where privileged colonialists depicted encounters with ancient ruins in Egypt and India. In the Japanese version, Sekino self-righteously accused "ignorant local residents" of destroying the cave statues. He also attacked westerners, who supported the dumb yokels by buying several hundred Buddha heads. Sekino praised Yamanaka's collection and photographs of severed Tianlong Shan Buddha heads, however, because the art dealer possessed the social distinction required to assume guardianship over the objects.^{xxxii}

Like the prefaces to his plethora of art catalogues, both of Yamanaka's writings employed a connoisseur's language for art authentication and evaluation. The narratives described the trip, which involved taking a scenic morning train ride from Beijing (depicted in a panoramic foldout in the book). The pair then hired a team of local guides, and a buggy to carry their baggage up the treacherous mountain precipice.^{xxxiii} In the Japanese version, Yamanaka

ended his narrative with a comprehensive account of each grotto's contents, an evaluation of the art inside, and a description of the extent of damage. The art dealer's narrative included a status-conscious lament over the damage that the statues suffered at the hands of unknown looters. Ironically, it also conveyed his joyous pride in the Yamanaka Buddha statue collection, a collection of severed heads, hands, and feet from the Tang and Six Dynasties period. Indeed, the adventurous tone of Yamanaka's preface invites the reader to seek out Tianlong Shan for himself.

The visual narrative of Yamanaka's Tianlong Shan trip refers to contemporaneous publications by European adventurers of the Great Game, historical Indiana-Jones figures like Aurel Stein and Sven Hedin. A group photo of the entire party shows the stark contrast between the Yamanaka party, dressed in gentlemen's finery, and the dusty locals who guided them up the mountain.^{xxxiv} In the center of the photo, Sekino, brass buttons shining, stands with feet spread apart and hands on hips while Yamanaka, dressed in his signature suit and tie, poses in a chair set out for the occasion. Before the Japanese party sits a gathering of hired hands, cleaned-up to the best of each man's ability (some even donned white shirts, a curious choice for mountain climbing). Unlike the Japanese party, who gaze out with a sense of self-possession, the men seated on the floor stare at the camera with eyes lowered to the ground. One particularly dispirited man (lower right corner) looks down at the ground before him, folding his body inward as if he might stay there for hours. Two other men, caught perhaps in surprise, stare out open-mouthed.^{xxxv}

Photos of the Japanese party's ascent likewise belay the Japanese party's superior status, and their possession of the mountain itself. The photo entitled "Ascending the western tip of Tianlong Shan, grotto 17" presented Sekino, still wearing his suit with the brass buttons, helping Yamanaka up a precarious set of rocks.^{xxxvi} Hired men nowhere in sight (likely behind the

camera, taking the photo), Yamanaka and Sekino removed their hats, but nonetheless appear presentable in their climbing gear. Ever meticulous about his appearance, Yamanaka chose to brave the rocks in leather dress shoes and a suit. Caught at the moment when the younger Sekino reaches out to grab Yamanaka's hand, the photograph also shows Yamanaka's cane – left beneath his feet as if in testament to the older man's feisty adventurousness. In the photo entitled "Western side of Tianlong Shan, before grotto 12", Yamanaka and Sekino pose next to one another, wearing matching liberty hats.^{xxxvii} Yamanaka points his cane ahead, ready to proceed, while Sekino rests both hands on his hiking stick, blinking at the sunlight. Behind the two adventurers stand three hired hands. One holds a box and a tin of water – perhaps for Yamanaka, given the art dealer's reputation for never carrying anything. The other two, barely in focus, lurk behind the photo's protagonists, standing in their own dust.^{xxxviii} When placed in the context of the Japanese Empire in China, the book's message could not be clearer. Here stands Yamanaka and Sekino, a wealthy international businessman and a prominent architectural preservationist, utilizing Japan's social and economic superiority to possess the riches of East Asia's past.

Japanese art dealers used their international network of clients to create an overseas market for old Diao ceramics, ceramics baked in the Diao Kilns in Hunan province.^{xxxix} While Chinese ceramics collectors maintained minor interests in this kiln, Japanese art dealers used the international market to sell Diao ceramics at high prices to Europe and America, and Japanese curators included information about Diao ceramics in survey texts. For example, in his article entitled "Ceramics from the Song and Yuan", ceramics connoisseur Ozaki Nobumori credited the kiln with producing fine ceramics for the imperial court, and admired its innovative uses of red coloring in ceramic design.^{xl} Hasebe Gakuji, a Tokyo National Museum curator and

ceramics specialist, praised the Diao Kiln for its thick glazes, its excellent juxtaposition of red and purple coloring, and its contributions to the Chinese imperial ceramics collection.^{xli}

Takada displayed his knowledge of international pricing for Diao ceramics in the haggling over a Song dynasty platter in 1929. The record also showcases Chinese art dealers' ability to use Japanese international connections to obtain a quick turnaround on new merchandise. The platter in question came from a Beijing dealer named Li Maoting, who obtained the piece in a bulk purchase for three hundred silver dollars.^{xlii} Once Li returned to Beijing, he spread word among his colleagues that he discovered a rare platter from the Diao Kiln. Buyers were much impressed by the platter at the Liuli Chang's guild auction. Rectangular, measuring 22cm x 13cm x 16cm, the platter had a solid clay body of dark grey, and a thick glaze with rose-red and nephrite-green floral patterns throughout. Most importantly, a number nine marked the bottom of the platter, proving the piece's authenticity.^{xliii} Ceramic connoisseur and art dealer Wang Dongting, a buyer for the Chinese international art dealership Lu, Wu and Company, won the piece for 9606 silver dollars.^{xliv} Yamanaka and Company immediately expressed interest in the item. Wang named his selling price at fifteen thousand silver dollars, but Takada, knowing that Wang purchased at less than ten thousand, refused to buy. Instead, he told Lu, Wu and Company that the ceramic would not sell at fifteen thousand. Lu, Wu and Company believed Takada, and refused to pay Wang for the ceramic, at which point Takada stepped in and purchased the ceramic at a lower price.^{xlv} In a different version of the same story, Takada actually paid Wang the fifteen thousand silver dollars, but as a result Wang lost Lu, Wu and Company's patronage.^{xlvi}

Liuli Chang memoirs are littered with stories of complex friendships between Chinese and Japanese – friendships that not only have a financial aspect, like that between Ni and Hirano,

but also involved genuine humor and sentiment. Old timers in Liuli Chang lovingly remember the antics of an embassy employee that they nicknamed “old drunkard Nishizawa”. Although no one seemed to remember when Nishizawa first arrived in China, they recalled that he returned to Japan in the early 1940s and lived in Beijing for over forty-years. According to some versions of the Nishizawa story, when the tide of the Pacific War turned against Japan, the geriatric Nishizawa wanted to return, so that he could die on home soil.^{xlvii}

Most of the stories about Nishizawa revolve around his love of drink. One, however, articulated Chinese art dealers’ anxiety over Japanese “old China hands” and their ability to blend into Chinese society. Although Japanese art dealers used the term to describe Japanese who were well versed in Chinese language and Culture, for Chinese art dealers the term denoted their weariness of well-connected, educated consumers.^{xlviii} Chinese art dealers complained that “old China hands” liked to flout their expertise in Chinese history, and used their knowledge of Chinese society for profit. Specifically for Nishizawa, “old China hand” belied Chinese art dealers’ anxiety over his Japanese loyalties, as well as the fact that the dealers could not fool him as easily as other clients. Nishizawa spoke Chinese well, liked wearing Chinese garb, and even wore a queue. Chinese art dealers could not tell the embassy employee apart from other Chinese, even though his loyalties, as indicated by his desire to die in Japan, did not support China’s interests.

Especially as the Japanese Empire closed in on Chinese territory, Chinese art dealers suspected and spread rumors about Nishizawa acting as a spy for the Japanese. As the story goes, Nishizawa purchased some knickknacks from the Grand View Studio, hired a rickshaw and left. After two hours, the driver pulled the entire cartload back to the Studio and told the shopkeeper, “that man that just bought your merchandise and hired my car is a Japanese spy, he’s just dressed

like a Chinese – his queue is fake!” When pressed further, the driver revealed that after the Japanese had some drinks he got into an argument with the driver. Nishizawa called the driver a donkey, the driver replied that with his queue Nishizawa looked more like a donkey. The two started a street fight.^{xlix} In the tussle, the driver grabbed Nishizawa’s queue and pulled it off, revealing the Japanese man’s naked head beneath. Gravely insulted, Nishizawa began cursing loudly in Japanese, to which the driver responded by yelling, “Japanese spy!”^l Nishizawa panicked and ran to the Japanese embassy, where the Japanese guards broke up the ensuing crowd. A few days later, Nishizawa returned to the Grand View Studio. The shopkeeper gave the Japanese man back his merchandise, and asked him whether he worked at the embassy. Surprised, Nishizawa asked how the shopkeeper knew – at which point the shopkeeper showed Nishizawa his lost queue. Although the two shared a laugh over Nishizawa’s antics, rumor soon spread among dealers that Nishizawa secretly worked as a spy.^{li}

Chinese art dealers liked Nishizawa because he gave them information about Yamanaka and Company’s sales. Nevertheless, Chinese art dealers still reveled in stories about art counterfeiters who outsmarted the “old China hand”. These stories may have assuaged Chinese art dealers for all the other times that Japanese art buyers bested them with their knowledge of Chinese, their superior buying power, and their ability to turn bigger profits with an international network. Like the narratives about Yamanaka and Company employees, the Nishizawa transactions showed off both the Japanese man’s international connections, as well as the Chinese dealer’s plucky salesmanship.

In 1940, for example, Yue Bin, an infamous Liuli Chang counterfeiter and art smuggler, asked Nishizawa to appraise a chemically-aged, bronze Père David's Deer sculpture that he manufactured the year before. As the bronze sculpture stood at least one meter tall, Yue’s

counterfeiting took nearly one year. The dealer rubbed the sculpture in saltpeter and cooked it in acid for over two hundred hours, until the bronze turned green. To achieve rust, Yue buried the statue under the urinal of an outhouse, where it was corroded by urine everyday for one summer. When Nishizawa arrived at Yue's shop, Yue first served him some alcohol, then asked him to appraise the statue. Yue plied Nishizawa by praising him as an "old China hand" who knew more about Chinese history and art than the Chinese themselves, and asked him to appraise the statue.^{lii} Nishizawa looked at the carving on the sculpture, and took a sniff. He then pressed Yue to also sniff the sculpture, after which Nishizawa said, "you see? It smells rank...the stench indicates that the rust is fake...otherwise, it might be from the Warring States period."^{liii} Alarmed, Yue replied that Nishizawa had too much to drink; the sculpture bore no smell. Yue later confided in his colleague, art dealer Ding Zhaokai,

"After I finished that thing, I didn't put it out in the sun for long enough. I closed it up in a satin-lined box. That box probably absorbed the smell before it had a chance to disappear. I'm going to give it some more time to air out before I box it up again."^{liv}

Ding observed that Nishizawa later helped sell the statue to some foreign collectors that he knew from the embassy, under the premise that his "old China hand" status made him a master of Chinese art connoisseurship.^{lv}

Chinese art dealers not only kept complex friendships with Japanese customers, but also with Japanese art dealers. Yang Boheng, owner of the Broad Contents Studio, for example, maintained a steady friendship with Mayuyama Matsutarō.^{lvi} Yang and Mayuyama's relationship helped Yang utilize the Liuli Chang's large supply of international buyers to ensure a higher sell price for their merchandise. The two dealers' famous sale of a Song dynasty celadon burner traces one single art object from the Longquan Kiln in Zhejiang province to the Tokyo art market. The longevity of the Yang-Mayuyama relationship also tracks the market for

Chinese art from the fall of the Qing dynasty to the heyday of Liuli Chang prosperity, and through the vicissitudes following the Great Kanto Earthquake.

An established dealer in both Beijing and Tokyo, Mayuyama imported merchandise from China as early as 1905, taking advantage of the booming teaware market to sell Chinese ceramics in Japan. He bought old Chinese ceramics in Beijing, and sold them to specialty shops in Kyoto and Osaka. In 1916 he found enough customers to open his own storefront at Ginza 1-chome in Tokyo. The Ginza shop steadily accrued business, and by 1920 Mayuyama moved the store to its present location in Kyōbayashi, Tokyo. He also established a jewelry shop in the Tokyo Imperial Hotel.^{lvii} Mayuyama counted collectors Yokogawa Tamisuke, Ozaki Nobumori, and Okuda Seiichi as regular customers and frequently showed them his wares in Kobe and Osaka.^{lviii} Between 1912 and 1926, Mayuyama sold Yokogawa over three thousand pieces of ancient Chinese ceramics that he acquired from various trips to Beijing, Shanghai, and other Chinese territories. The company claims credit for selling Yokogawa a tri-colored vase with dragon handles and applied medallions from the Tang dynasty, currently registered with the Japanese government as Important Cultural Property.^{lix} Mayuyama sold ceramics to the customer base as Yamanaka Sadajirō, however, the company did not have Yamanaka's extensive connections in Europe and America.

Mayuyama named his Tokyo storefront Ryusendō, after a Longquan celadon incense burner that he purchased from Yang Boheng in 1914. Yang purchased the burner from a Qing court family that needed money in 1913, and set the price at four thousand silver dollars. Although Chinese dealers and collectors all agreed that the celadon burner was one of the best examples of Southern Song ceramics, they refused to pay Yang's asking price. Soon after Chinese New Year in 1914, however, a Japanese customer walked into Yang's studio. He

looked all through the store, finally settling on a Song dynasty bowl. Yang walked over to the customer, who asked in halting Chinese whether the store had any ceramics from Longquan Kiln, or Buddha statues.^{lx} Yang showed the customer the celadon burner, which he regarded with strong interest. He left the burner on the desk and told Yang that he would soon return with a friend to communicate on his behalf.

Mayuyama entered the store soon after the first customer left. Yang knew Mayuyama to be an “old China hand”.^{lxi} Like Nishizawa, Mayuyama often wore Chinese garb when working in China. He typically walked about in a long robe, satin shoes, and white cloth socks, although he kept the handlebar moustache that so many Chinese associated with Japanese men. Yang invited Mayuyama in for tea. Habitually diplomatic in his transactions, Mayuyama observed,

“We Japanese like Longquan Kiln ceramics because it is also known as the fraternal kiln. The Chinese and Japanese are like older and younger siblings. I think that’s the reason [why the Japanese favor this kiln].”^{lxii}

Yang countered that in terms of years, it was in fact Mayuyama who was the elder, and took the comment as an invitation to show Mayuyama the Longquan Kiln celadon burner.

The burner itself measured about thirty centimeters. It had two ears and three legs, and the shape resembled a hybrid between a bronze ding and an incense burner. The clay body (visible at the bottom of the legs) was solid and grayish-white, covered with a gleaming celadon green glaze. As Yang and Mayuyama haggled over the burner, the first customer returned with his Japanese friend.^{lxiii} At the behest of apprentices rushing in to announce the new customers, the customers themselves asking for the Longquan burner at the front desk, and Yang’s threat to sell the burner to the Japanese, Mayuyama quickly agreed to pay Yang’s asking price. After Mayuyama returned to Tokyo, he exhibited the Longquan burner in his shop. The burner caused a stir among Japanese and Korean collectors, and was likely sold to Hayashi Shinsuke, a

Japanese art dealer and ceramics collector, who also famously purchased a Longquan celadon vase with moulded peony designs from Mayuyama.^{lxiv}

Mayuyama's diplomatic manner endeared him to the Liuli Chang Chinese community, which worried about him after the Kanto earthquake in 1923. After the earthquake, Japan's economic situation took a downfall, and Chinese art dealers did not see Japanese buyers for a few years. On Chinese New Year in 1926, however, Mayuyama surprised Yang at his doorstep. Relieved, Yang asked Mayuyama about the earthquake, as well as the whereabouts of the incense burner. Mayuyama thanked Yang for his concern, and revealed that the incense burner brought him much fame among collectors in Japan – the notoriety was so good for business that Mayuyama changed the name of his storefront from Asendō to Ryusendō. Mayuyama told Yang that during the earthquake he ran out of his shop only carrying the Song incense burner. The ordeal inspired Mayuyama keep the incense burner as a store charm (Mayuyama's memoir about the Hayashi sale, however, indicate otherwise).^{lxv} Yang loved the story, and the Liuli Chang community praised Mayuyama for his love of Chinese art. A photo of Mayuyama sitting with the burner remains one of the signature brands of Mayuyama and Company.^{lxvi}

Conclusion

When remembering the Forbidden Palace staff's efforts to preserve Chinese art during the early twentieth century, Hang Liwu, a top Guomindang official and professor of political science, suggested the following relationship between Chinese art and the Chinese nation-state. He said,

“Once the war was underway, the people could help the state fight enemies. If we lost the country we could recover it. If Chinese Cultural Property were destroyed, however, we could not replace it. That would be the equivalent of throwing away the cultural apotheosis of thousands of years. We would have no answers for history.”^{lxvii}

These words speak to the crucial relationship between art and national history. Hang's words articulate the conviction that a country needs objects of art to stand in for pivotal moments in its past, otherwise it cannot construct a convincing national narrative. The ownership and rhetoric behind Chinese art objects are state priorities, especially in cases where the objects have legacies that reach back several dynasties, and were sought after by occupying powers.

Furthermore, conflict over art objects is not an isolated case between two nations, but a multinational project. During the period covered in this paper, collecting pieces of another civilization and organizing that collection according to one's appraisal of that civilization was part of what made imperial powers empires. European and Japanese connoisseurs fashioned themselves as armchair collectors, assembling comprehensive collections of Chinese ceramics, bronzes, jades, without setting foot in China. The museums that housed these objects absorbed them into national collections, using pieces of other civilizations to construct a narrative of cultural patrimony. The imperial system not only enabled these collectors and national institutions with purchasing agents, like Yamanaka and Huang, but also a scholarly prestige – museums courted connoisseurs for donations, and sought them out as sources for their first textbooks of Chinese art.

The aforementioned evidence from Chinese art dealers reveals that cultural patrimony was a complex and collaborative process. Japanese businessmen took advantage of Japan's interest in Chinese civilization to turn profits in the international art market, but Chinese sellers also used the Japanese to create an elaborate world of art transactions that yielded high profits and lingering regrets. Companies like Yamanaka and Co and Mayuyama and Co carved out new markets for Chinese art in Europe and America. Chinese dealers like Huang Buochuan made their Japanese acquaintances, but remembered to keep a record of every antique he sold, so that

even if the object left the country, Chinese connoisseurs could still have a copy of its visage. Furthermore, collecting worked both ways. Not only did members of the Japanese Empire collect from China, Chinese nationalists also collected pieces of its Japanese occupiers. Ceramics collector Zhou Gongtai recalled that Japanese ceramics also sold in abundance, especially during the occupation of Shanghai. Prices were relatively low, and Zhou managed to purchase more than 100 pieces from various flea markets and antique shops in China.^{lxviii} The contemporary Chinese national narrative portrays the selling of national treasure as a crime. In the heyday of Chinese art collection building in early twentieth century China, however, pitting one empire against another was the business strategy of the day.

Appendix

Yamanaka and Co



天龍山聖壽寺客堂前



天淵山西塚第十七窟ニ在ル



天龍山西方第十二窟前



ⁱ Art dealer Hirota Fukosai noted that he made various trips to Liuli Chan, and even befriended a Chinese art dealer with the last name Lee. Hirota Fukosai 広田不孤斎, *Kottō: Ura Omote (Antiques: Waiting Within)* 骨董: 裏おもて (Tōkyō: Daviddo sha 1957), 154.

ⁱⁱ For information on foreign presence in Liuli Chang, see Chen Zhongyuan 陳重遠, *Guwan shihua yu jianshang (Antiques: its History and Connoisseurship)* 古玩史話與鑒賞 (Peking: Xin hua shu dian, 1990), 15.

ⁱⁱⁱ The antiques guild assembled in 1909, at the same time as the Jade guild. Chinese art dealers considered Jade a part of the antiques business and often sold jade themselves. Jade merchants, however, boasted a large Muslim population, and the antiques guild did not allow Muslim members. Chen 1990, 23.

^{iv} Chen 1990, 15.

^v Although their market intelligence often lagged behind large, international dealerships, like Yamanaka and Company.

^{vi} Chen Zhongyuan 陳重遠, *Gudong shuo qizhen (Antique Tales – Rare Occurrences)* 骨董說奇珍 (Beijing: Xin hua shu dian jing xiao, 1998), 287.

^{vii} Chen Zhongyuan *Guwan tan jiuwen (Antiques tell old tales)* 古玩談舊聞 (Beijing: Beijing chu ban she, 1996), 155.

^{viii} For a more complete list of names see Chen 1990, 14 and Chen 1998, 247.

^{ix} Chen *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 125.

^x Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 125.

^{xi} A well-known Qing official and art connoisseur, Sheng collected oracle bones and bronzes. Chen, *Guwan Tan Jiuwen* 1996, 45.

^{xii} Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 45.

^{xiii} Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 45.

- ^{xiv} Yamanaka acted more deferential to the residential dealers in Liuli Chang proper because the shopkeepers had more social status – members of the former imperial palace, famous intellectuals, and known scholars often visited the area – even former Qing officials called store managers “brother”. Chen, *Guwan Tan Jiuwen* 1996, 46.
- ^{xv} Chinese art dealers were not too honest. The quote, however, illustrates the power that Yamanaka held in the Chinese art market – Chinese art dealers felt intimidated enough by the man that they described their trade with him in a victimized voice. Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 46.
- ^{xvi} A common practice, given Beijing’s severe summer and winter weather conditions.
- ^{xvii} Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 45.
- ^{xviii} Huang won a reputation for his ability to read seal script, and his knowledge of bronzes and ancient jades. Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 46.
- ^{xix} During the late Qing and early Republican period, many members of the imperial family sold off their treasures in the Liuli Chang through a go-between (to avoid the embarrassment of having local antique dealers know the seller’s identity and poverty). This particular bronze was sold by Baoxi 宝熙, a Qing dynasty official who frequented the Liuli Chang and befriended several of its shopkeepers. Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 44.
- ^{xx} Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 46.
- ^{xxi} The discovery of a group of ancient tombs in Anyang, a city in Henan province jolted bronze sales, especially when excavation began in 1928. Between 1928 and 1931 many Beijing antique dealers went to Anyang and purchased bronzes, and some even devised special tools to dig for bronzes themselves. The infamous “Anyang shovel”, a long bamboo probe that allowed diggers to access soil quality many meters below the surface, dates from this era. As a result of such frenzied digging and selling, many Shang dynasty bronzes passed into foreign possession. In fact, Harvard’s Sackler museum owns a collection of bronze figurines, jewelry, and vessels from the Anyang tombs.
- ^{xxii} Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 45.
- ^{xxiii} Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 21.
- ^{xxiv} Chen 1990, 172.
- ^{xxv} Takada was remembered as often muttering “Yaoheixi” 吆嘿西 (another possible pronunciation is “Yaomoxi”) Chen 1990, 172.
- ^{xxvi} Chen 1990, 173.
- ^{xxvii} Two methods exist for creating fake rust on bronze statues. The foreign method involves scratching and corroding the statue’s surface with rubbing alcohol. The native (Chinese) method, which preserves the statue’s carving, involves a two step process: cover the statue in brine, then leave the statue to dry in the sun until purple rust covers the surface; then bury the statue, and frequently pour urine over the soil in which the statue is buried. After spending one year in the ground, the statue should emerge “with splotches of green rust, beautifully and naturally.” Ni apparently invented a combination of the two methods to create his statues. Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 27 - 28.
- ^{xxviii} Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 28.
- ^{xxix} Yamanaka Sadajirō 山中定次郎 *Tenryusan sekibutsushu (Stone sculptures of Tianlong shan) 天龍山石佛集* (Osaka: Yamanaka & Co., 1928)
- ^{xxx} Sekino Sei “Preface” in Yamanaka 1928, unnumbered back page (?).
- ^{xxxi} Sekino Sei “Preface” in Yamanaka 1928, unnumbered back page (?).
- ^{xxxii} Sekino Sei Japanese version of “Preface” in Yamanaka 1928, unnumbered page (1?).
- ^{xxxiii} Yamanaka, both English and Japanese prefaces in Yamanaka 1928, 1 – 6 (bck) and 1 – 14 (frnt).
- ^{xxxiv} For photo see appendix, Figure 1.
- ^{xxxv} Yamanaka 1928, photo entitled “before the lobby in the Shenshou temple of Tianlong Shan.”
- ^{xxxvi} For photo see appendix, Figure 2.
- ^{xxxvii} For photo see appendix, Figure 3.
- ^{xxxviii} Yamanaka 1928, unnumbered pages in travel section of book.
- ^{xxxix} Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 94.
- ^{xl} Ozaki Nobumori 尾崎洵盛, “Sō, Gen no tōji” (Ceramics from the Song and Yuan) 宋元の陶磁, *Tōki Kōza 陶器講座* 24 (1938): 63 – 64.
- ^{xli} Hasebe Gakuji, quoted in Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, Ataka Korekushon Tōyō Tōji Meihin Ten (The Ataka Collection: an Exhibition of Famous East Asian Ceramics) 安宅コレクション 東洋陶磁名品展 (Tōkyō: Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 1970), ceramics explained section.

- ^{xlii} Chen 1990, 188.
- ^{xliii} According to ceramics connoisseur Wang Dongting, during the Song dynasty the Diao kiln marked the bottom of their productions with numbers one through ten, with single numbers demarcating particularly fine pieces. Other connoisseurs suggest that the number nine marked the ware as a part of an imperial tribute. Chen 1990, 188.
- ^{xliv} Purchasing practices at Liuli Chang's internal dealer's auctions went by the "sleeve pulling method". The seller donned a large sleeve over his clothes, and walked around to each buyer. Interested buyers pulled on his sleeve and wrote their bids on pieces of paper, which they put in the sleeve. This method ensured that dealers could keep their bids anonymous – the highest bid won the piece.
- ^{xlv} Chen 1990, 189.
- ^{xlvi} Chen, *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 103.
- ^{xlvii} Chen Zhongyuan 陈重远, *Wenwu hua chungiu (The History of Antique Talk)* 文物话春秋 (Beijing: Xin hua shu dian Beijing fa xing suo jing xiao, 1996), 418.
- ^{xlviii} Hirota 1957, 149.
- ^{xlix} When men with queues fought, they kept their queues out of the way by wrapping the braid around their neck and securing the end in their mouths. Nishizawa, however, did not know this and fought with his queue swinging wildly behind him. Chen *Wenwu hua chungiu* 1996, 419.
- ^l Japanese spy was likely not a threat to Nishizawa. Wearing a fake queue while dressed in Chinese garb, however, was. Especially during the late years of the Qing, cutting queues was a symbol of rebellion; men protected their queues, because a lost queue could arouse grave suspicions. Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: the Chinese sorcery scare of 1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 7 – 22.
- ^{li} Chen *Wenwu hua chungiu* 1996, 419.
- ^{lii} Chen 1998, 138 – 139.
- ^{liii} Chen 1998, 139.
- ^{liiv} Chen 1998, 139.
- ^{liv} According to Ding, Nishizawa later showed the sculpture off to some Germans, who purchased it for more than ten thousand silver dollars. Chen 1998, 139.
- ^{lvi} Chen *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 154.
- ^{lvii} For more information on Mayuyama and Company, see the store website at http://www.mayuyama.jp/mayuyama_hist_e_01.html
- ^{lviii} Mayuyama Junikichi, "Preface" in Mayuyama, seventy years. by Mayuyama & Company. Vol 1 (Tokyo, 1976)
- ^{lii}.
- ^{lix} Mayuyama, iii.
- ^{lx} In another interesting case of Chinese dealers quoting "Japanese Chinese", Yang remembered his customer asking "Longquan de you, Foxiang de you?" (龙泉的有, 佛像的有?) This may be a transliteration of "Ryusen no ga, Fuzō no ga". Chen *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 155.
- ^{lxi} Chen *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 155.
- ^{lxii} Chen *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 155.
- ^{lxiii} Chen *Guwan tan jiuwen* 1996, 156.
- ^{lxiv} Mayuyama, iii.
- ^{lxv} Chen 1990, 94.
- ^{lxvi} For a copy of the photo, see the second figure in the History section of Mayuyama and Company's website, entitled "Mayuyama Matsutarou and a tripod celadon incense burner" http://www.mayuyama.jp/mayuyama_hist_e_01.html
- ^{lxvii} Hang Liwu 杭立武, *Zhonghua wenwu boqianji (The Journey of Chinese Cultural Property)* 中華文物播遷記 (Taipei: Taiwan shang wu yin shu guan, 1980), 8.
- ^{lxviii} Lan Xiang 蓝翔, *Zhonghua shoucang wenhua daguan (A Survey of Chinese Collecting Culture)* 中华收藏文化大观 (Tianjin Shi: Bai hua wen yi chu ban she, 2001), 352.