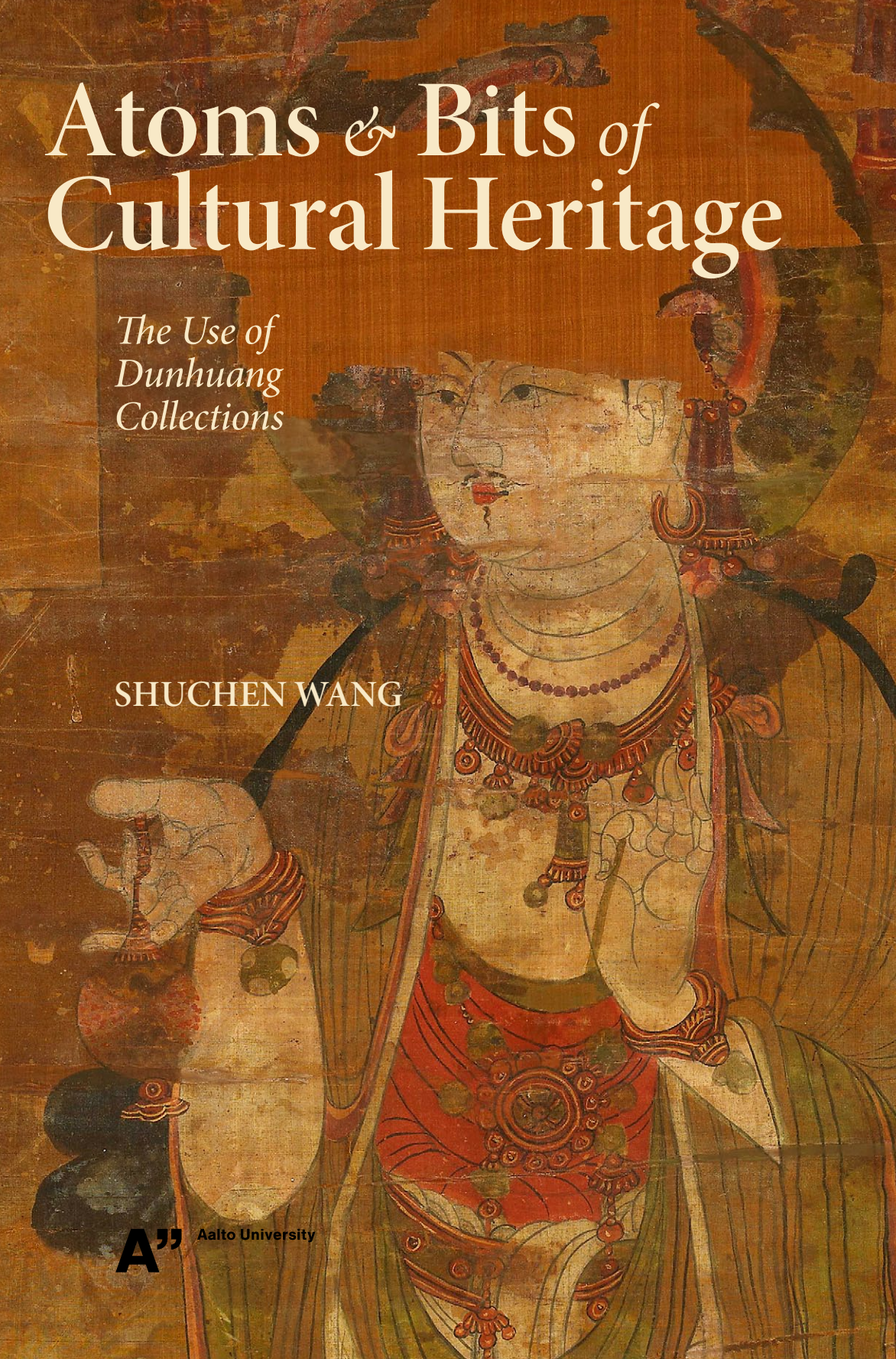


Atoms & Bits of Cultural Heritage

*The Use of
Dunhuang
Collections*

SHUCHEN WANG



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For my dear mother Lanshian (蘭香), my father Shoujun (守均),
my brother Vincent, my beloved daughter Lumi and
her grandmother in Berlin, Ruth.

Contents

Figures	12
Note on Transliteration	14
Acknowledgements	16
1 Introduction	18
<hr/>	
1.1 <i>Entering the Inquiry</i>	20
1.1.1 About the Subject Matter	21
1.1.2 Research Questions as Roadmap	23
1.2 <i>Literature Review and Conceptual Framework</i>	26
1.2.1 Dunhuang From Objects to Collections: Religion, Science, Politics	27
1.2.1.1 <i>The Heritage Notion and Practice</i>	28
1.2.1.2 <i>Institutionalising Antiquarianism into Archaeology, Anthropology and Art History</i>	30
1.2.1.3 <i>Collection of Orientalism and (De-/Reverse-)Coloniality</i>	32
1.2.2 Cultural Heritage and International Relations	35
1.2.2.1 <i>Cultural Exchange (Diplomacy)</i>	35
1.2.2.2 <i>International Heritage Politics</i>	37
1.2.2.3 <i>Museum Diplomacy: Political Economy of Cultural Heritage</i>	38
1.2.3 The Neoliberal Turn of Cultural Heritage	40
1.3 <i>Methodology and the Design of Research</i>	42
1.3.1 On Collections	43
1.3.1.1 <i>The Making of the Dunhuang Collections</i>	43
1.3.1.2 <i>The Political Uses of Dunhuang Objects</i>	44
1.3.2 On Exhibitions	45
1.3.2.1 <i>Dunhuang Exhibitions and World Order</i>	45
1.3.3 On Digitisation	46
1.3.3.1 <i>The Economic Lives of Dunhuang Heritage</i>	46
1.3.3.2 <i>Dunhuang in a Digital Arena</i>	46
1.4 <i>Thesis Structure</i>	48
1.4.1 Part I: Object, Knowledge, Politics	48
1.4.2 Part II: Displaying Power	49
1.4.3 Part III: Atoms and Bits of Dunhuang Economics	51

PART I.

OBJECT, KNOWLEDGE, POLITICS

53

2 The Making of the Dunhuang Collections

54

2.1	<i>The Many Discoveries of Dunhuang Objects</i>	55
2.1.1	Miraculous Unearthing of Sacred Relics in 1900	55
2.1.2	Scientific Finds of Archaeology, Anthropology and Art History	60
2.1.2.1	<i>Western Expeditions of Orientalists, 1900-1930</i>	60
2.1.2.2	<i>Pilgrimage of Japanese Buddhist in 1902, 1908 and 1910</i>	71
2.1.2.3	<i>Military Espionage of Finland, the Grand Duchy of Russia, in 1906</i>	73
2.1.3	Nationalistic Survey on Buddhist Art in 1940	75
2.2	<i>Historic Background for the International Race of Antiquities</i>	77
2.2.1	The Geopolitics of East Asia along the Silk Roads	77
2.2.2	Important Expeditions in the Chinese Turkestan	79
2.2.3	A Knowledge Network to Build Dunhuang Heritage	84
2.2.3.1	<i>A Constellation of Great Minds</i>	86
2.2.3.2	<i>Imperialistic Powers behind the Scientific Expeditions</i>	87
2.2.3.3	<i>The Scientific Culture of 'Scholarship Sans Frontières'</i>	89
2.3	<i>The (de-/re-) Contextualisation of Dunhuang Objects</i>	95
2.3.1	Physical Displacements of Archaeological Finds	95
2.3.2	Question of Context for Cultural Objects	98
	Sub-Conclusion: <i>The Birth Histories of the Dunhuang Collections</i>	100

3 The Political Use of the Past

101

3.1	<i>Intercultural Contact Zone of Dunhuang Collections</i>	102
3.1.1	China: Using Its Own Cultural Heritage for Nation-Building	102
3.1.2	The West: Taking Cultural Objects from the 'Others' for Empire-Making	106
3.2	<i>(Dis)similar Traditions of Heritage Enterprise in the West and China</i>	110
3.2.1	The West: Scientific Culture, Antiquarianism and Archaeology	111
3.2.2	China: Confucianist Civil Service, Imperial Examination and Art Connoisseurship	115
3.2.2.1	<i>Qing Literati's Study (Cabinet of Antiquarianism)</i>	115
3.2.2.2	<i>A Han-Centric Cultural System and Heritage Making</i>	120
3.2.2.3	<i>The 'Heart-Broken' Chinese Dunhuangologists of the Republic</i>	122

3.3	<i>Whose Culture? Whose Heritage?</i>	125
3.3.1	The 21 st Century China Wants Its Lost Heritage Objects Back	125
3.3.1.1	<i>Repatriation to the Countries of Origin in Europe</i>	129
3.3.1.2	<i>Universal Museums to the Rest of the World</i>	134
3.3.2	Reality Talks: Guns and Wealth	137
3.3.2.1	<i>Returning Colonial Collections to China after WWI and WWII</i>	137
3.3.2.2	<i>Buying Back Important Collections Lost during the Century of Humiliation</i>	140
3.3.3	Debates in Law, Ethics and Morality	141
	 Sub-Conclusion: <i>The Political Lives of Dunhuang Collections</i>	 147

PART II.

DISPLAYING POWER

4 Exhibiting Objects, Shaping Politics

4.1	<i>Linking Subjectivity, Material Culture and Power</i>	151
4.1.1	Phenomenology of Architecture: Temple, Museion, Agora	151
4.1.2	Visual Epistemology of Cultural Heritage	154
4.1.2.1	<i>Exhibiting Power: the Politics of Gaze</i>	154
4.1.2.2	<i>The Grammar of Exhibition Communication, Mediation or Education</i>	155
4.2	<i>Dunhuang Collections in (Dis)play</i>	158
4.2.1	Ways of Seeing the 'Others': Decolonizing Archaeology into (Fine) Art	158
4.2.1.1	<i>From Ethnographic Exhibition to Art Exhibition</i>	159
4.2.1.2	<i>A Phenomenological Description on the White-Cube of 'Salon Pelliot'</i>	166
4.2.2	Ways of Seeing 'Self': from National Wound to Soft Power	168
4.3	<i>The Cultural, Heritage and Museum Diplomacy of Dunhuang</i>	174
4.3.1	The ROC's National Treasures to Solicit Western Supports 1930s-1960s	175
4.3.1.1	<i>International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London 1935</i>	175
4.3.1.2	<i>Exhibition of Chinese Art in Moscow and Leningrad 1940-1942</i>	177
4.3.1.3	<i>Tour Exhibition of Chinese Art Treasures in the USA 1961</i>	179
4.3.2	The PROC's Soft Diplomacy during the Cold War	181
4.3.2.1	<i>International Dunhuang Exhibition in the 1950s</i>	181
4.3.2.2	<i>Alternative 'National Treasure' for Public Diplomacy</i>	183
4.3.3	Post-conflict Heritage Diplomacy between the West and China	185
4.3.3.1	<i>Silk Roads to Approach China and Dunhuang to Connect Taiwan</i>	185
4.3.3.2	<i>Taiwan's 'National Treasures' Travelled to the West Again</i>	187
4.3.3.3	<i>Universal Museums' Diplomacy with China and Business with Taiwan</i>	189
4.3.3.4	<i>Dunhuang on the Belt and Road Initiative of Sharp Power</i>	191
	 Sub-Conclusion: <i>The Diplomatic Lives of Dunhuang Collections</i>	 195

PART III.

ATOMS AND BITS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

197

5 Economics of Dunhuang Heritage

198

5.1 *The Neoliberal Turn of Cultural Heritage*

199

5.1.1 International Cultural Politics and Heritage Mechanism of UNESCO

199

5.1.2 Fragmented Studies of Heritage Economics

203

5.2 *The Political Economy of Dunhuang*

207

5.2.1 Value Creation of Dunhuang Objects

207

5.2.2 The Myth of Cultural Capital

210

5.3 *Market and Industry of Dunhuang Heritage*

213

5.3.1 Museum Economy

214

5.3.1.1 *From State Controlled to Non-State Controlled Museum Economics*

214

5.3.1.2 *Dunhuang Heritage under 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'*

217

5.3.2 Destination Dunhuang

220

5.3.2.1 *The Magic Wand: Cultural Tourism of World Heritage*

220

5.3.2.2 *Environmental Concern and Heritage Development*

223

Sub-Conclusion: *The Economic Lives of Dunhuang Collections*

226

6 Dunhuang in the Digital Land

227

6.1 *Towards a Digital Dunhuangology*

228

6.1.1 Cataloguing and Digitisation

228

6.1.1.1 *Cataloguing the Dunhuang Collections*

228

6.1.1.2 *Dunhuang Collections Online*

232

6.1.2 Systems of Communication in the Milieu of Exhibition

235

6.1.2.1 *The Art and Craft of Early Dunhuang Preservation and Exhibition*

235

6.1.2.2 *Digital Media Technology for Immersive Virtual Reality of Dunhuang*

237

6.1.3 Museum Without Walls in the Mobile and Web Environment

239

6.1.3.1 *Virtual Museums for Dunhuang Objects*

239

6.1.3.2 *Mobile Interpretation of Dunhuang Collections*

241

6.2 *Cultural Commons and Digital Repatriation (or Digital Plundering?)*

243

6.2.1 Who Owns Digital Cultural Heritage?

244

6.2.1.1 *The IPR (Copyright) of Digitized Antiquities*

244

6.2.1.2 *Conflicting Nature of Museum and the Web in the Commons*

248

6.2.2 Digital Divides of Cultural Heritage

251

6.2.3 Digital and Creative Economy of Heritage Enterprise

254

6.3	<i>Futuristic Perspectives: (De-)Linking the Past to the Future</i>	259
6.3.1	Inclusive Heritage	259
6.3.1.1	<i>The Digital Trends for Museums</i>	259
6.3.1.2	<i>Musée Imaginaire: A Participatory Virtual Universal Museum of Dunhuang</i>	263
6.3.2	The Atoms and Bits of Cultural Heritage	266
6.3.2.1	<i>The Aura of Authentic Object</i>	266
6.3.2.2	<i>The Dunhuang Simulacrum in Black-Box</i>	268
6.3.2.3	<i>Post-Humanism in Digital Humanities</i>	269

	Sub-Conclusion: <i>The Digital Lives of Dunhuang Collections</i>	272
--	--	-----

7	Discussion and Conclusion	273
----------	----------------------------------	------------

7.1	<i>About the Journey</i>	274
-----	---------------------------------	-----

7.2	<i>On the Findings</i>	276
-----	-------------------------------	-----

7.3	<i>Epilogue and Future Directions</i>	278
-----	--	-----

7.3.1	Transculturation through Cultural Heritage	278
-------	--	-----

7.3.1.1	<i>China: The Present Oriental in Orientalism</i>	279
---------	---	-----

7.3.1.2	<i>Sinology, Chinese Art and Buddhism in the West</i>	280
---------	---	-----

7.3.2	Utopia and Dystopia of World Heritage	282
-------	---------------------------------------	-----

7.3.2.1	<i>Soft Power of Culture for New World Order</i>	282
---------	--	-----

7.3.2.2	<i>Museum Praxis and Heritage Enterprise vs. Culture War</i>	283
---------	--	-----

7.3.2.3	<i>Museum Objects, Collective Memory and Cultural Identity</i>	286
---------	--	-----

7.3.3	Emerging Phenomenon and Issues of Heritage Enterprise	287
-------	---	-----

7.3.3.1	<i>Ethics of Object, Cultural Commons and Global Citizenship</i>	287
---------	--	-----

7.3.3.2	<i>Cultural Heritage to Reconciliate or Further Divide?</i>	289
---------	---	-----

7.3.3.3	<i>Museum and Religion</i>	290
---------	----------------------------	-----

	Bibliography	294
--	---------------------	-----

	Abstract	326
--	-----------------	-----

Figures

FIGURE 1.1	<i>Conceptual Map: Dunhuang Objects as Cultural Heritage from 1900 to Present</i>	26
FIGURE 2.1	<i>Wang Yuanlu in 1900 (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	58
FIGURE 2.2	<i>Aurel Stein with his dog and research tem in the Tarim Basin 1910 (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	61
FIGURE 2.3	<i>Paul Pelliot examining manuscripts in Cave 17 at Mogao Caves in 1908 (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	63
FIGURE 2.4	<i>'En Chine, Le gâteau des Rois et... des Empereurs, Jan 16th 1989', Image produced by Henri Meyer BNF (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	79
FIGURE 2.5	<i>List of Most-Known Expeditions to Central Asia 1815-1944</i>	82
FIGURE 2.6	<i>The Knowledge-Network Sans Frontières on the Making of Dunhuang Collections</i>	85
FIGURE 2.7	<i>Displacements of the Dunhuang Collections after 1900</i>	96
FIGURE 2.8	<i>The (de-/re-) contextualisation of Dunhuang objects</i>	99
FIGURE 3.1	<i>Ole Worm's Cabinet of curiosities' from Musei Wormiani Historia' 1655 (Original source from Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Wikimedia Commons)</i>	113
FIGURE 3.2	<i>Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture at the Louvre (1712-1721) (Original source provided by Jean-Baptiste Martin RMN, Wikimedia Commons)</i>	113
FIGURE 3.3	<i>Exhibition Room of Somerset House 1808 by Thomas Rowlandson and August Pugin (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	114
FIGURE 3.4	<i>The Set of 13 Bronzes from Shang Collected by Duan Feng (Metropolitan Museum, CCo 1.0)</i>	121
FIGURE 3.5	<i>A Tripod Cauldron from the late Shang Dynasty (Metropolitan Museum CC1.0)</i>	128
FIGURE 3.6	<i>Plundering of Mechelen by the Duke of Alba in the 16th Century (Drawing by Frans Hogenberg, Collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Wikimedia Commons)</i>	130
FIGURE 3.7	<i>The Observatory in Peking, photo by Thomas Childe 1877 (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	139
FIGURE 3.8	<i>Drawing of European gardens and pavillions in the Xiyang Lou at Yuanming Yuan (where the 12 bronze zodiac animal heads were installed originally) (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	139
FIGURE 4.1	<i>Plan of early Ptolemaic Alexandria Egypt 3rd Century BC by W. Hoepfner and E.-L. Schwandner, Haus und Stadt im klassischen Griechenland (München 1994) Abb. 225 (DAI)</i>	152
FIGURE 4.2	<i>Chang Le and Wei Yang Gong (206 BC-220 AD) by Bi Yuan (1730-1797) (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	152
FIGURE 4.3	<i>The Power of Display Evolved in the History of Museal Exhibition in General</i>	153
FIGURE 4.4	<i>Hooper-Greenhill's model of museum communication (Hooper-Greenhill 1991, pp 49-61)</i>	156
FIGURE 4.5	<i>Pyramid Model of Exhibition Communication</i>	157
FIGURE 4.6	<i>Authentic Buddhist Ceremony at Musée Guimet by P. de Haenen 1899, Paris Known and Unknown, vol. 1, by William Walton (1843-1915), p 287. (Digitised by Google, Originanl from University of Minnesota, Hathi Trust Digital Library)</i>	160

FIGURE 4.7	<i>Amitabha Buddha in the Central Hall for the Exhibition of Chinese Art 1935 (Royal Academy of Arts, London)</i>	163
FIGURE 4.8	<i>House of German Art, First Great German Art Exhibition 1937 (akg-images)</i>	165
FIGURE 4.9	<i>Muséographie of Musée Guimet (Courtesy MNAAG)</i>	166
FIGURE 4.10	<i>Salle Pelliot 'trésors de Dunhuang' au Musée Guimet (Courtesy MNAAG)</i>	167
FIGURE 4.11	<i>List of Selected Special Exhibition of Dunhuang 1900-1991</i>	169
FIGURE 4.12	<i>Installation view on the Chinese Art Treasure in the National Gallery of Art Washington DC 1961 (Courtesy of Gallery Archive of National Gallery of Art)</i>	180
FIGURE 4.13	<i>List of Selected Special Exhibition of Dunhuang 1991-2012</i>	188
FIGURE 4.14	<i>List of Selected Special Exhibition of Dunhuang 2013-2017</i>	192
FIGURE 5.1	<i>State controlled museum economics</i>	214
FIGURE 5.2	<i>Non-state controlled museum economics</i>	216
FIGURE 6.1	<i>Image search with details on IDP (British Library Board and The Trustees of the British Museum)</i>	233
FIGURE 6.2	<i>Image search on IDP (British Library Board and The Trustees of the British Museum)</i>	233
FIGURE 6.3	<i>IDP Statistics 2018 June (British Library Board)</i>	234
FIGURE 6.4	<i>IDP Statistics 2017 June (British Library Board)</i>	234
FIGURE 6.5	<i>Pure Land 360 (2012) by Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw, City University of Hong Kong</i>	237
FIGURE 6.6	<i>Pure Land AR (2012) by Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw, City University of Hong Kong</i>	237
FIGURE 6.7	<i>A virtual immersive experience at the Getty Centre 2016 by yU+co</i>	238
FIGURE 6.8	<i>Snapshot of British Museum Website in the 1990s (Internet Archive and The Trustees of the British Museum)</i>	239
FIGURE 6.9	<i>Screenshot of Google Image Search 26.5.2017</i>	241
FIGURE 6.10	<i>Screenshot of Google Image Search 29.7.2018</i>	241
FIGURE 6.11	<i>Musée Guimet website accessed by smartphone 30.7.2018 (MNAAG)</i>	242
FIGURE 6.12	<i>British Museum's mobile site 30.7.2018 (The Trustees of the British Museum)</i>	242
FIGURE 6.13	<i>British Museum Guide apps by Museum Tour Guide Ltd. 30.7.2018 (The Trustees of the British Museum)</i>	243
FIGURE 6.14	<i>Business ecosystem of digital heritage in the mobile and web environment</i>	252
FIGURE 6.15	<i>Digital engagement of the Getty, British Museum, Musée Guimet and Dunhuang</i>	256
FIGURE 6.16	<i>Original (part) of the Riverside Scene during the Festival of Qingming (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	261
FIGURE 6.17	<i>Digital version at Shanghai Expo 2010 by Cristal CG (Wikimedia Commons)</i>	261
FIGURE 6.18	<i>Research in need seen in the archive of IDP (British Library Board and The Trustees of the British Museum)</i>	265

Note on Transliteration

In a transcultural and transdisciplinary research work such as this one, that draws on primary and secondary sources written in many different languages (for example, traditional and simplified Chinese, English, French, German, Russian, Japanese, Swedish, Finnish, etc.), it is impossible to have a consistent rule on proper names. For example, the name of the subject matter Dunhuang that I use consistently in this work is a modern phonetic form of Latin alphabet directly translated from the two logograms of Chinese characters ‘敦煌’ or ‘燉煌’ (meaning ‘grand’ and ‘affluence’ to denote the municipality of the region established by the Han dynasty in 111 BC), which remain unchanged in the Japanese (kanji) and Korean (hanja) writing systems. Its alternative Western forms include T’uen-Huang (used by the French sinologist Paul Pelliot), Tun Huang, Tun-huang or Tunhuang that are still widely used now in French, German or Russian. The city on the Silk Roads, Turfan (吐魯番), is also spelled as Turpan in French or German. The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China, bordering Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, is used to be written in Latin alphabet as Xinjiang or Sinkiang (新疆) to indicate the province or territory entering into the rule of Qing dynasty in the 18th century; however in the West this area is often termed as the Chinese Central Asia or Chinese Turkestan or East Turkestan. And the Maogao grottos (莫高窟), where the core objects of the Dunhuang collections the ‘medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia’ were found, has an epithet in Chinese known as Q’ian-fo dong (千佛洞) to describe the image of ‘innumerable Buddhist grottos’. However this is literally translated as the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas in English and becomes commonly applied by Western scholars. Besides, names of Chinese places that change over time in Chinese itself are the most difficult. For example, the capital of modern China, Beijing (北京), also translated as Peking was called Pei-ping (北平) by the Nationalist government of the Republic of China from 1928 to 1949.

In this work, the principle of using translated names are primarily according to their original languages and forms written in the consulted sources appearing at certain times, regions and cultures. Translations of Chinese names and quoted texts are my own, with the originals in classic, traditional or simplified forms cited in corresponding footnotes.

Should there be any ambiguity on transliteration that I have adopted common usage for spellings, I ask for kind understanding from reader of this work who demands high consistency on the matter.

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This work is original, unpublished and independent work by the inspector, Shuchen Wang. It summarises the research project *Atoms and Bits of Cultural Heritage: The Public Use of Dunhuang collections in Knowledge Making, Nation (Empire) Building, Museum Diplomacy, Cultural Tourism and Digital Economy* that I performed in the Department of Media and the Department of Art of the School of Arts, Design and Architecture in Aalto University. The underlying work would not have been possible to complete without receiving kind support and help during my lengthy research journey in many different ways.

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Kaunas, the Challenge in the Past Diversify the Future in Gothenburg, the 38th ICOFOM Symposium in Tsukuba, the 24th ICOM General Conference in Milano, the World Congress of Humanities of CIPSH-UNESCO-UN in Liège, etc.

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Being an Asian female researcher living and working in several countries and traditions of the West and the Sinosphere world, I know how hard it is to grow out of one's own cultural prejudice and conventional bias towards the 'Others' and the past entangled world history. I sincerely wish all the best to myself and to the reader who endeavours to face, accept and reconcile with the 'otherness' that exists with and in every single one of us.

1 Introduction

Outside academia, in eastern Asia, Dunhuang¹ represents an emotive theme embodying romantic imagination and poetic longing for the remote past, a ‘foreign country’², in the wild west of China. Featuring sand-buried cities, painted Buddhist grottos, sacred manuscripts in extinct languages and well-preserved mummies, it has been made a sensation in the field of arts and culture since the second half of the 20th century. Innumerable works of literature³, music⁴, dance⁵, drama⁶, paintings⁷ and movies⁸ have been tirelessly telling stories about the dreaded Taklamakan desert, tranquil oasis, sorrowful departure of soldiers, a gracious princess from Chang-an⁹, exotic encounters of merchants, mysterious rituals of cults and the great unknown one shall meet when his or her journey ends on earth. And it is also an exhibitionary symbol of grief, which reminds the contemporary Chinese people of the ‘shame’ of the darkened lives of their fathers and grandfathers under the shadow of New Imperialism during the unforgettable ‘century of humiliation’ (from the First Opium War to the end of WWII when

- 1 Original in Chinese as ‘敦煌’, also spelled as Dun-Huang or Tuen-Huang.
- 2 David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- 3 For example, in Japan the historical novel *Dunhuang* (どんこう) was published in 1959 by the novelist and poet Inoue Yasushi (いのうえ やすし) (1907-1991); and in China four essays on Dunhuang were written by Yu Qiu-Yu (余秋雨) (1946-) with one entitled as *The Taoist Tower* (道士塔) from *Sad Journey of Culture* (文化苦旅) being included in the school textbook *Language and Literature III* (《语文》第三册) designated for all junior high school students.
- 4 Xi et al., “Dunhuang Scores (敦煌乐谱).”
- 5 Xin and Lin, *Dunhuang Dance Show: Flying Apsaras*.
- 6 Chen, *Tale of the Silk Road: Folk Dance Drama* (大梦敦煌); Huang, Liu, and Ouyang, *Appointment from a Thousand Years: Dance Performance for the Opening of Belt and Road International Forum* (千年之约，一带一路国际合作高峰论坛文艺晚会开场舞蹈).
- 7 Preserving the frescos of the Mogao Grottos in the pre-digital era was conducted by professionally trained artists in Chinese or Western painting. Those authentically ‘copied’, ‘transcribed’ or ‘duplicated’ murals with ink and polychrome onto silk papers became independent artworks (but not ‘forgeries’). Besides, this is also a standard learning method in traditional Chinese art education.
- 8 Kurosawa, *Dunhuang* (敦煌).
- 9 Original in Chinese as ‘长安’, the capital of more than ten dynasties in Chinese history.

China fell into a semi-colonised country). But in the West, Dunhuang is a topic much less known by the common public, except where it represents an intriguing subject for a few non-scientific or journalistic writings about ancient trade routes, pilgrimage and war as well as the ‘race of antiquities’¹⁰ during the Great Game. Under the name of ‘the caves of a thousand Buddhas’ (Mogao Grottos) and encompassing hundreds of excavated caves with rock-cut architecture of Buddhist sanctuary, altar or shrine in the tradition of Indo-Chinese from the medieval times¹¹, the archaeological site of Dunhuang is located on the east end of the southern Silk Road¹², which was trodden by the legendary Italian merchant Marco Polo (1254-1324). Polo’s itinerary, to this date, still inspires many adventurers from the West to traverse this transcontinental path, across the many cultures which connect the Mediterranean to China and, beyond that, to Japan¹³. Inside academia of the Sinosphere, Dunhuang stands as the root word for ‘Dunhuang-xue (Dunhuangology)’¹⁴, a term coined by a Japanese sinologist in 1925¹⁵ and became widely applied by the Chinese, Korean and Japanese historians¹⁶. Denoting a contested ground for multidisciplinary studies based on the material culture of Dunhuang objects found at the Mogao Grottos and the nearby areas along the Silk Roads of the Chinese Central Asia, Dunhuangology incorporates subjects as diverse as Chinese literature, medieval studies, religion, music, art, medicine, folk tradition, etc. In the West, studies relating to the collections are limited to disciplines such as archaeology¹⁷, anthropology or art history under the traditional department of Oriental Studies, or the modern divisions of Asian Studies and Middle Eastern Studies covering geographic areas of Middle East, Central Asia, Tibet, Mongolia and India. Coming into the 21st century, Dunhuang has become a synonym of one of the most popular ‘tourism destinations’ certified by UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre. This is a result of the Western ‘heritage diplomacy’¹⁸ since the late 1970s, under the conception of linking heritage preservation and development work with cultural tourism. Staged for this international cultural politics, UNESCO used the Silk Roads to reach out to China at the end

10 Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia*; Hopkirk, *Quest for Kim: In Search of Kipling’s Great Game*; Whitfield, *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith*; Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*.

11 Hasty, “Silk Road Secrets: The Buddhist Art of the Mogao Caves.”

12 The term ‘silk roads’ is actually invented by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905) in 1877.

13 Lefebvre, *La Route de La Soie et Autres Merveilles*.

14 Ji, *Dictionary of Dunhuangology* (敦煌學大辭典). Besides, an ‘Dunhuang academy’ was established in 1944.

15 Ishihama Juntaro (1888-1968). Graduated from the Imperial University of Tokyo in the field of Chinese Literature, with the Kyoto Circle he studied the documents found in the cave of Mogao. See: Dutton, *Anthropological Resources: A Guide to Archival, Library, and Museum Collections* (*Sinology, Psychology, Reference*).

16 The University of Korea has recently established a centre of Dunhuangology in the Research Institute of Ethnology and Culture Studies in 2014.

17 Bahn, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Archaeology*.

18 Winter, “Heritage Diplomacy.”

of Cold War¹⁹. Now millions of visitors come from across the globe every year to see this celebrated ‘world heritage site.’ For the China Dream—built on the economic success by the opening-up policy of Deng Xiaoping in 1978 with the ‘socialism of Chinese characteristics’—Dunhuang has taken centre stage²⁰ of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)²¹ proposed by President Xi Jinping²² during his visit to Kazakhstan in 2013²³. Historically, the reason why Dunhuang heritage fell into oblivion is the isolationism of the late Ming and Qing period. Now it is experiencing a full revival while the BRI is engaging with the world using the Silk Roads as well to export the soft and sharp power of China.

The real humble beginning of all these developments was the fortuitous discovery of the ‘medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia’ in the Mogao Grottos by a Chinese Taoist abbot, prior to the many (re)discoveries of them by many Western orientalist-explorers trained in archaeology, sinology, ethnology or art history. Over the past century, in spite of fruitful results from studying their material cultures as well as religious, historic and cultural significations, the Dunhuang collections have been very little discussed in the fields of museology and critical heritage studies in terms of their meaning making, political and economic usage. Nor has their application in the emerging digital cultural heritage or digital humanities been much inspected—despite being the very first collection in the world to be reunited in virtual space by an ‘interactive online database,’ free to access by curator, researcher and visitor alike. This research shall bridge this knowledge gap with a thorough exploration on the biographical lives of the Dunhuang objects in a comparative and analytical manner following three lines of development—collection, exhibition and digitisation—from 1900 until now and covering the West and China their country of origin.

1.1 Entering the Inquiry

The phenomenological description above preludes the inquiry into this research project. Although Dunhuang is a well-known term signifying an archaeological site of Chinese Central Asia and medieval Buddhist art of the region, it is necessary to have a clear notion on what exactly are the so-called Dunhuang collection(s). That, as the subject matter of this research project, raises a set of rich issues in the field of museology and heritage studies. The detailed research questions and design of the research roadmap will subsequently be presented.

19 UNESCO, “Reviving the Historic Silk Roads: UNESCO’s New Online Platform.”

20 Cao and Zhang, “China’s Dunhuang Takes Center Stage in Silk Road Rejuvenation.”

21 As seen in the opening performance (a dance drama) for the 2017 Belt and Road Summit, see Huang, Liu, and Ouyang, *Appointment from a Thousand Years: Dance Performance for the Opening of Belt and Road International Forum* (千年之約, 一帶一路國際合作高峰論壇文藝晚會開場舞蹈).

22 Original in Chinese as ‘習近平’. The objective of BRI was to build trade routes between China and the countries in Central Asia, Europe and Indo-Pacific littoral countries.

23 Tian, “Chronology of China’s Belt and Road Initiative.”

1.1.1 About the Subject Matter

Like the Parthenon Marbles, Rosetta Stone and Benin Bronzes, the Dunhuang objects are now permanent collections of national GLAM institutes and ‘universal museums’²⁴ located in almost all of the major Western metropolises, including London, Paris and Berlin. These cultural items of the ‘Others’ were acquired by former colonial powers sending scientific expeditions to the rest of the world with mixed agendas. The term ‘Dunhuang objects’ signifies a collective entity covering both the movable and immovable parts. The former denotes not a single but a large group of diverse artefacts, and the latter the provenances of the former—the original archaeological sites in the Chinese Central Asia—with remaining items in addition to rock-cut grotto-architectures, temples or tombs. As a matter of fact, the exact contents of Dunhuang objects, and even their whereabouts, had to wait until the late 20th century to be known, because it demanded vigorous research on these artefacts in an often interdisciplinary manner with subjects ranging from archaeology to anthropology, sinology, Tibetology, art history and Buddhism.

It is commonly acknowledged now that the term ‘Dunhuang collections’ contains miscellaneous cultural objects originated from a vast geographic area of Central Asia, with the core substance being categorically the ‘medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia’ found by a Chinese Taoist abbot in 1900 and ‘collected’ by many orientalist-explorers from the West. Financed by the public funding of colonial governments, during their missions these scientist-explorers also ‘collected’ in other regions along their journeys on the Silk Roads, from Europe to Dunhuang and elsewhere. All of their gatherings while entering those national GLAM institutes of their colonial metropolises were given a label with an accession number affixed with a letter of their names and became known as ‘the Stein Collection’ or ‘the Pelliot Collection’ instead of ‘the Dunhuang collections’.

At that time standard collection management system was yet to be developed, and not all collected items of the genre were noted with explicit provenance information, and this made it difficult to draw a clear contour to define the Dunhuang collections. To have an overview, a few publications of Dunhuangology can be helpful. In the *History of Chinese Dunhuangology*²⁵, three major categories of the objects are identified: 1) manuscripts and artefacts, 2) research papers on the collections, and 3) the theories applied. In a catalogue of Dunhuangology from 1908 to 1997, twelve themes are listed: catalogue, general study, historiography and geography, society, law and economics, language, literature, classics, religion, art, technology, and comment²⁶. Further, the most direct relevance is the computational ontology used to construct the interactive online database of International Dunhuang Project (IDP) in mid-1990s, where the so-called Dunhuang objects

24 A term proposed in 2002 by the 18 directors of world renowned museums in the West in response to the repatriation demand of Parthenon Marbles. See Chapter 3.

25 Lin, Ning, and Luo, *History of Chinese Dunhuangology*.

26 Zheng and Ju, *Catalogue of Research Publications on Dunhuangology 1908-1997* (敦煌學研究目錄).

are defined as ‘all things consisting of and relating to the Dunhuang collections’. Despite the diversity of objects, all things under the name of Dunhuang collections in all disciplines do relate to each other. This resonates with the concept of ‘family resemblance’ proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) to stress on a certain ‘similarity’ or ‘relationship’, that can be identified amongst a group of seeming heterogenic objects.

In summary, there are four types of ‘Dunhuang objects’: medieval archive, antiquarian artefacts, archaeological sites, and expedition relevant documentation and scientific reports. The medieval archive denotes mainly the ‘medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia’ found at Mogao. Totalling around 50,000 articles, the majority of them are manuscripts and the rest woodblock printings and stone rubbings in the format of scroll, binding, folding book and single paper²⁷; about eighty-eight percent are in classical and vernacular Chinese and the rest in classical Tibetan, Nam language (undeciphered yet), Sino-Tibetan Zhang-zhung language (extinct), Khotanese, Sanskrit, Sogdian, Tocharian, Persian, Tangut, old Uyghur, Turkic, and Hebrew²⁸; their age ranges from the 4th to the 10th century with the most part from the 9th century; and the main genre is the holy scripts of Buddhism and also Taoism, Manichaeism, Christianity, and Confucianism and the rest consist of secular documents such as legal papers, private letters, business contracts and texts of astronomy, administration, military, medicine, math, music, art and the calendar. Second, antiquarian artefacts incorporate fragments of murals, statues, drawings and paintings on paper, silk, linen, and other textiles, and miscellaneous items like coins, wood-slips, mummies, grave goods and funerary texts. Third, archaeological sites include the Buddhist rock-cut grottos comprising the 492 caves of Mogao and the West Thousand Buddha Caves, Yulin Caves²⁹, and other grotto-sites found in Turfan, Jiuquan or Yuman³⁰, and in each of these caves are polychromed murals and built-in altars or niches for Buddhist deities or monks. Fourth are the expedition relevant documentations containing map, photograph, ethnographic drawing, diary, fieldnote and personal correspondence atop the scientific report, catalogue and research publication.

27 Zheng and Ju.

28 Whitfield, *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith*.

29 Original in Chinese as ‘榆林窟’.

30 Original in Chinese as ‘吐蕃’, ‘酒泉’, and ‘玉門’.

1.1.2 Research Questions as Roadmap

Intentionality distinguishes living beings from lifeless objects. To study an object's biography, it is insufficient to solely rely upon the materiality of object, but should instead rely almost exclusively on the documented materials about the surroundings or contexts that the object in question has been to or used in during its time of existence. The large amount and diverse genre of Dunhuang objects as described above, and their traversing such a wide range of time and space in the hands of various peoples, makes it extremely challenging to build a comprehensive biography of them. Imagine that you are standing in front of a set of Dunhuang statues at the Salle de Pelliot of Musée Guimet in Paris at the turn of the last millennium. Like meeting someone that you would like to befriend for the very first time, a series of questions would naturally pop up unto your mind: Where are you from? Why are you here? How was the trip? What have you been doing previously? Any plan for the future? Now this 'someone' is the Dunhuang objects, and the questions should be the same except that they are to be answered not by the objects but by you. And, as a curious mind, you often try to understand what happened to you, and why, in a rational way. To wonder about the historical, philosophical or cultural origins or factors resulting in those important events that occurred to you, becomes a common habit. It is the same as understanding what happened to the Dunhuang objects, and why. These questions also form an important part of this research.

So the fundamental questions I intend to inquire are: 'where' the Dunhuang collections come from; and 'why' and 'how' the Dunhuang collections are made, displayed and used socio-politically, economically and digitally, both in the West and China from 1900 to this day. Following a quasi-chronological order with three lines of development in collection, exhibition and digitisation, the journey of my investigation can be divided into five phases with specific focuses intended to establish:

- 1) The histories and knowledge network of collection-making from 1900 to the 1940s by the West and China, as well as the historical background of world politics that resulted in the de- and re-contextualisation of collections;
- 2) The positioning of Dunhuang collections in this entangled history, the underpinning intellectual and cultural traditions and the question of ownership prompted by the distribution of collections from Dunhuang to the colonial empires of the West and China, the semi-colonised 'country of origin';
- 3) The histories of Dunhuang exhibitions and the power relations of political economies displayed in the public sphere both in the West and China from the early 20th century to this day;
- 4) The economic usage of Dunhuang collections in cultural tourism appearing after WWII with the encouragement of intergovernmental heritage preservation agencies; and
- 5) The application of Dunhuang objects in the digital arena or the formation of digital Dunhuangology since the mid-1990s, embodied in collection

management, exhibition design and online education, as well as challenges presented in copyright law and digital divide between the West and China.

It is discernible that when the Dunhuang objects (mainly the Buddhist statues and manuscripts) left their altars or shrines at the Mogao Grottos or nearby temples and sanctuaries, they lost their initial 'life purpose' given by their makers and became scientific specimens of archaeology, anthropology or art history, preserved in the stores or displayed in exhibition rooms of specialized cultural institutes both in the West and China. The first cluster of questions include: How did this heritage process happen? Under what kind of socio-political circumstances? What is the positioning of this heritage process in the entangled world history of New Imperialism?

Following the collection-making, the public uses of Dunhuang objects begin. But prior to finding out what these uses are, it is important to understand what are the intellectual or cultural traditions both in the West and China behind such heritage process as they will provide background knowledge for the phenomenon embodied by Dunhuang collections known as acculturation, deculturation or transculturation. Leaving their native homes in the desert, Dunhuang objects become public properties held by cultural institutes of specific countries—often transforming from colonial or colonised empire to a modern nation-state. How has that formalised the legal ownership of distributed Dunhuang collections in the international forum of cultural heritage? How is the international power game influencing the cultural right to such heritage? In addition to issues relating to 'whose heritage' or 'whose collections' or 'whose past', the question 'who benefits from the Dunhuang collections and how, when and where' will be explored in this research.

The third cluster of research questions targets the histories and compositions of Dunhuang exhibitions. Being imposed with a nationality, the Dunhuang objects become a token displayed publicly to manifest political powers nationally and internationally in addition to contributing to the production of knowledge. But, initially, how does displaying objects relate to the inner cognitive functions of people and the external authoritative power? What are the differences or similarities between the traditions of the West and China? Is there an exhibition grammar that facilitates the communication process in the milieu of museum exhibition? If so, does it change or evolve over time, from the exhibition communication that describes the ancient war booty to those which index diplomatic ties with important collections? What kind of messages are delivered through the Dunhuang exhibitions, domestically and internationally?

The social function of an exhibition works in conjunction with the creation of economic value in cultural heritage. When, and how, does this turn of heritage usage from politics to the market happen? What is the history and relationship between intergovernmental heritage agencies and globalising museum praxis and heritage enterprise? Is it valid the Western idea to link heritage preservation and development work in the Third World? Is there any hidden agenda behind this linking, in terms of universal norms, political ideology or economic

exploitation? And is there any negative effect of the marketisation of heritage, especially in terms of environment issues (natural and cultural), or the risk of neo-colonialism? Whilst largely ignored before, these side-effects of promoting cultural heritage as a profitable business, certified by organisations like the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO, needs to be considered urgently.

The latest development for the heritage collections of Dunhuang relates to the ubiquitous digital technology. How are the collections developed with the onset of digital communications since the mid-1990s, in terms of collection management, exhibition representation and online education? Being the very first example in the world of a scattered cultural collection of the 'Others' to be digitally reunited online, is it time to identify the formation of 'digital Dunhuangology'? Would the field of cultural heritage become a utopia as promoted by computer scientists to 'decentralise, democratise, globalise, harmonise and empower'³¹? Can digital technology help to virtually decolonise 'universal museums'? Shall we reformulate the question 'whose cultural heritage' into 'whose *digital* cultural heritage'? Is it possible to apply the idea of the 'digital commons' in making a 'cultural commons'? How does 'digital repatriation' relate to Dunhuang objects? What are the interlaced realities that Dunhuang heritage faces in international relations and politics, neoliberal economics and digital technology?

These five clusters of research questions—respectively focusing on collection, culture politics, exhibition, economics and digitisation—serve to draw a roadmap that can help orientating my research journey, which traversing a massive ground (temporally, spatially and culturally) provides a holistic heritage landscape for further discussion on 'coloniality' and 'transculturation.' As suggested by Roland Barthes in his *The Death of the Author*, the lives of the Dunhuang objects are out of the hands of their '(cultural) makers' and will continue inside and outside the museum walls that confine them, like their original grotto-shrines or temples did. In addition to being religious artefacts, scientific specimens, works of fine art, national treasures, symbols of cultural identity, tools to forge collective memory, tourist destinations, the world heritage of all mankind, digital content for museum without walls and inspiration to creative and digital economy, Dunhuang objects will continue to accrue new meanings and usages in the future as long as they remain relevant to peoples' lives. Rather than studying the material culture of Dunhuang collections, my research is to study and analyse the political, economic and cultural lives that peoples built on and around them. Cultural heritage is not so much about things but peoples and the exchange of ideas and affections attached to these 'things' among them. This ambitious research journey on the public uses of Dunhuang collections in knowledge making, empire and nation building, heritage and museum diplomacy, cultural tourism and digital economy shall provide a unique and valuable example.

31 Negroponte, *Being Digital*.

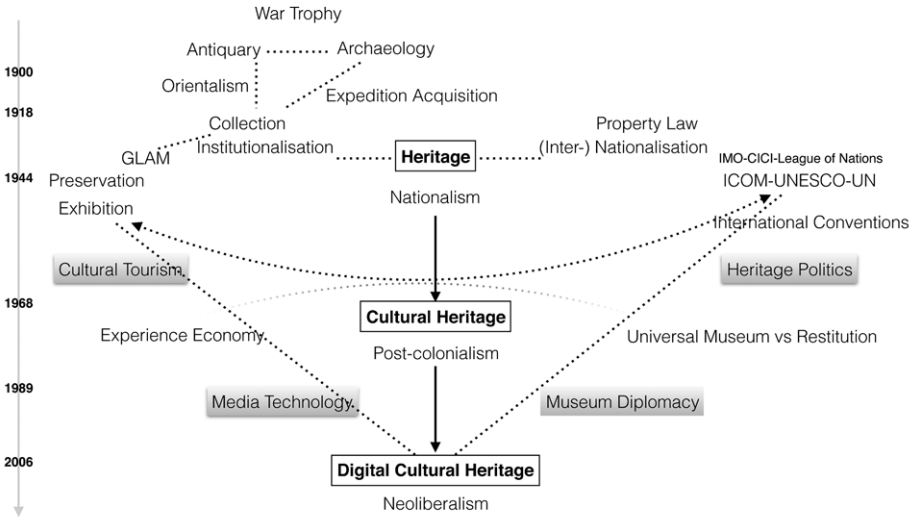


FIGURE 1.1 Conceptual Map: Dunhuang Objects as Cultural Heritage from 1900 to Present

1.2 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

The compass that I hold to navigate my research journey is the biographical lives of Dunhuang objects being a cultural heritage in the matrix of time, space and people(s). The visual diagram in Figure 1.1 provides a summary of the apparent knowledge fields traversed by my conceptual trajectory in tracing the transition of Dunhuang collections from religious objects to nationalised cultural properties. This diagram also shows how the research is designed. On the left side is a timeline indicating essential turning points for the development of Dunhuang objects from heritage to cultural heritage and digital heritage: in 1900 the ‘encyclopaedia of Central Asia’ was found; in 1918-1944 the Belle Époque the Dunhuang collections were made; in 1944-1968, after WWII, the museum praxis and heritage enterprise of Dunhuang objects started to be globalised; in 1968-1989 after the May 1968 events³² visitor replaced object as the core concern of heritage institutions; and in the mid-1990s, following 1989, ‘digital Dunhuangology’ began to form especially, with the Digital Age landmarked by the launch of smartphone in 2006. In the centre of the diagram above is the evolution of heritage processes with diverse zeitgeists of nationalism, postcolonialism and neoliberalism—which are reflected in cultural economies featured with tourism and experience economy, as well as in international cultural politics manifested in heritage preservation and museum diplomacy. Beyond this conceptual framework, notions of ‘coloniality’ and ‘transculturation’ will be applied because the horizon perceived during this journey is towards a cross-cultural, or transcultural, perspective of entangled world history.

32 De Certeau (1997) has discussed that the May 1968 Events in France between elite and the public in terms of culture conception and participation, has made museum embraced society and shifted its focus from object to people. See Certeau, *Culture in the Plural*.

1.2.1 Dunhuang From Objects to Collections: Religion, Science, Politics

The rich literature on Dunhuang heritage that has amassed since the early 20th century focuses mainly on its material culture, consisting of various disciplines including archaeology, anthropology, art history, sinology and religion³³. Apart from a few quasi-scientific or journalistic writings³⁴, Dunhuang has received very little scholarly interest from the field of museology or heritage studies and none relating to ‘biography of objects’³⁵—an idea specifying that the meaning of cultural objects comes from social action and of which the process can be identified. The backbone of my research project is to cover this knowledge with a focus on the international and intercultural heritage processes and uses of Dunhuang objects both in the West and China. *The Lives of Chinese Objects: Buddhism, Imperialism and Display* by Louise Tythacott,³⁶ based on her curatorial experience in ethnology about a set of bronze Buddhist figures coming from China during the First Opinion War to Liverpool Museum, is the closest comparison to the part of my research retracing how Dunhuang collections were made and exhibited in the past century. However, she does not tackle the intellectual and cultural traditions behind the biography of her five migrating bronze deities, which I intend to do so. And one essential concern of my research is exactly to map out the impacts of Dunhuang objects in the cultural phenomenon of ‘acculturation’³⁷, ‘deculturation’³⁸ or ‘transculturation’³⁹ between the West and the Orient (China) through museum praxis and heritage enterprise, in addition to investigate their social actions in (international) identity politics, political economy and creative and digital industry. The heritage objects, concept and culture of Dunhuang in a way represents a ‘contact zone’⁴⁰ between the West and China, through which

33 Lin, Ning, and Luo, *History of Chinese Dunhuangology*; Ji, *Dictionary of Dunhuangology* (敦煌學大辭典).

34 Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia*; Liu and Meng, *A Hundred Years of Dunhuang*.

35 Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things.”

36 Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects: Buddhism, Imperialism and Display*.

37 The idea of ‘acculturation’ comes from cultural anthropology. It means a process of social, psychological and cultural change that stems from the balancing of two cultures while adapting to the prevailing culture. In the context of this research, it indicates the application of museum praxis and heritage enterprise of China from the West.

38 ‘Deculturation’ denotes the opposite of ‘acculturation’. It originally means the process of divesting a tribe or people of their indigenous traits. Here it denotes that China went through a series of cultural reforms where the usages of cultural heritage changed.

39 A process of cultural transformation marked by the influx of new culture elements and the loss or alteration of existing ones. Through important collections of cultural heritage from the Orient, the West enjoyed an orientalism that propagated trends like Chinoiserie or Japonisme. And the Orient followed the Western scientific culture and tradition as manifest in the field of museology and heritage studies.

40 The term ‘contact zone’ is invented by Mary Louise Pratt to describe spaces where ‘cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism and its aftermath’.

this many other sorts of ‘world-levelling unificatory epistemologies’—as noted by the social anthropologist Ernest Gellner⁴¹—could be observed to develop⁴².

1.2.1.1 *The Heritage Notion and Practice*

As indicated by Figure 1.1, the concept and practice of heritage enterprise is not a modern invention. One of its most direct origins is the European cultural tradition of learned society and museum praxis supported by colonialism and imperialism following the development of museum history from the Ancient Greek museion to Medieval church treasury, Enlightenment curiosity cabinet⁴³ and the nationalised cultural institutions after the French Revolution, which transferred a culture’s owning rights from aristocracy to the republic⁴⁴. Since the 19th century it became pervasive in Europe that royal collections became open to common people. Being a public sphere, and coinciding with industrialisation and democratisation, museum exhibitions started to act as a communication milieu for political powers to advocate ideas like nationalism and colonialism⁴⁵. In addition to raw materials, commodities and slaves, a large quantity of cultural objects from the ‘Others’ were brought to European metropolises from overseas colonies, which resulted in the first museum boom in Europe. Many national museums were built on the basis of world fairs to display for empire-building rather than knowledge-making. This museum development continued after WWII. When decolonisation ended the process of ‘transferring of culture’s owning rights’ from the ‘Others’ to the West, it started another process of ‘transferring of the remaining culture’s owning rights’ to newly independent governments in the countries of origin. And so a second museum boom took place, in ‘the rest’⁴⁶ of the world, for the purpose of nation-building.

In the post-colonial era, reflections on modern museum conventions occurred with the borrowing of postmodern theories such as poststructuralism or deconstructionism proposed by French continental philosophers like Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze or Jacque Derrida. Such sceptical interpretation of arts and culture applied to the studies of material culture has shifted the focus from ‘object’ to ‘people’, which resonated with the emergence of New Museology⁴⁷ in

41 Gellner, *Relativism and the Social Sciences*. p76.

42 To further explore these ‘coloniality’ related concepts is beyond the scope of this research—which is focused on finding the biographical lives of Dunhuang objects. Yet as relevant to an overview on the findings of the research, they will be applied phenomenologically to discuss and conclude from the perspective of comparative heritage studies or comparative museology.

43 Alexander, Alexander, and American Association for State and Local History., *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*.

44 Lixinki, “Selecting Heritage: The Interplay of Art, Politics and Identity.”

45 Pascal Blanchard and others, *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); George Steinmetz, ‘Empire in Three Keys: Forging the Imperial Imaginary at the 1896 Berlin Trade Exhibition’, Thesis Eleven, 139.1 (2017), 46–68.

46 Ferguson, *Civilization : The West and the Rest*.

47 Vergo, *The New Museology*; McCall and Gray, *Museum and the “New Museology”: Theory, Practice and Organizational Change*.

France—a French movement of *éco-musée* started after the 1968 May events. It was to embrace visitors and was led by professionals of natural and science museums to challenge the condescending attitude of art museums—which most of the so-called ‘universal museums’ are—in being a modern temple to civilise or educate the citizen⁴⁸. Across the English Channel in the Anglophone world, the relationship between museum and society also became a prime concern. This shift of heritage focus not only occurred to anthropology⁴⁹ and archaeology but also contributed to the establishment of heritage studies⁵⁰, which distinguished itself from the ‘material-based, narrowly-defined and institution-centred museum studies’⁵¹ with Lowenthal’s insightful note ‘the past is a foreign country’ marking its debut⁵². Instead of the rather object-centred materialism in museology, heritage studies refocused on the interconnections between text, people and object⁵³ in supposing that meanings of objects are by nature in flux and contextual⁵⁴. This approach consolidates the backbone of my research in Dunhuang objects’ biography, since their social actions are made by and for people(s) only.

In the evolution of this heritage scholarship, the notion of heritage⁵⁵, like the definition of museum⁵⁶, is in constant revision. The notion has been expanding since the second half of the 20th century from movable objects, historic building, monument, archaeological site, natural environment, underwater heritage to the intangible⁵⁷ folklore tradition and indigenous culture⁵⁸. As to how ‘things’ enter the heritage realm, Harvey⁵⁹ has criticised the closed temporality of restricting a definition of contemporary heritage to the present and has suggested the concept of ‘heritage process’ which gives room to understand how the production of identity, power and authority heritage can evolve throughout society. He assumed that such a ‘process’ can go beyond the Modern Epoch to, for instance, the Middle Ages where a sense of community was performed in folk traditions. And the latest added item in the broadening spectrum of heritage definition is

48 Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*.

49 Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*.

50 David Harvey, ‘Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: Temporality, Meaning and the Scope of Heritage Studies’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 7.4 (2001), 319–38.

51 The establishment of heritage studies was through a multidisciplinary effort. See Hardy, “Historical Geography and Heritage Studies.”

52 Sørensen and Carman, “Heritage Studies: An Outline.”

53 See Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman eds. 2009. *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches*, London: Routledge.

54 Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things.”

55 J Jokilehto, *Definition of Cultural Heritage: Reference to Documents in History* (Paris, 1990); Marilena Vecco, ‘A Definition of Cultural Heritage: From the Tangible to the Intangible’, *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 11.3 (2010), 321–24.

56 ICOM, “Museum Definition.”

57 Laurajane Simth, ‘Intangible Heritage: A Challenge to the Authorised Heritage Discourse?’, *Revista d’Etnologia de Catalunya*, 39 (2014), 133–42.; Smith and Akagawa, *Intangible Heritage..*

58 Vecco, “A Definition of Cultural Heritage: From the Tangible to the Intangible.”

59 Harvey, “Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: Temporality, Meaning and the Scope of Heritage Studies.”

‘cultural landscape’, an idea proposed in the 1990s by Selicato⁶⁰ from the domain of civil engineering and urban planning. Coming into the Digital Age, it is foreseeable that ‘digital cultural heritage⁶¹’ will be the next genre to be included in the foci of authoritative heritage discourse in the forum of ICOM-UNESCO-UN. In addition, other contributing factors to the notion and practice of cultural heritage also came from the fields such as law⁶², cultural policy⁶³, human rights, development, peace studies, tourism and economics⁶⁴.

1.2.1.2 *Institutionalising Antiquarianism into Archaeology, Anthropology and Art History*

How the Buddhist objects of Dunhuang become scientific specimens and works of fine art is pertinent to the institutionalisation of antiquarianism into the academic disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology and art history, as well as the institutionalisation of transferring these cultural objects’ ownership rights publicly and collectively from one generation to another. As a matter of fact, the so-called ‘heritage process’ has much to do with law. Selicato⁶⁵ specified that according to etymology the term ‘heritage’ was derived from the Latin word ‘*patrimonium* (father-duty)’: things belong to one’s father or things collected by one’s father, handed from one generation to the next. Inheritance, or how collected and owned things are handed down ‘from father to son’, is usually contained by social convention and reinforced by a corresponding legal system. And the ‘institutionalisation’ of this transacting mechanism plays a crucial role in the heritage process of the Dunhuang objects.

In exploring the tradition of ‘collecting’ in Europe, Pearce⁶⁶ discussed the process, practice and politics of collecting in four phases: the archaic, the early modern, the classic modern and the post-modern. She suggested that the origin of collecting or accumulating started when prehistoric European chiefdom societies held things in hoards, graves and shrines; in the classical world in temples and states; and in the Renaissance era in feudal treasuries and churches. To define such a culture, Pearce took the 18th century’s view proposed by Sir William Jones saying that ‘Sanskrit, Greek and Latin, and perhaps Gothic, Celtic and Old Persian also, all sprang from a common source that no longer existed⁶⁷, which is

60 Selicato, “The Concept of Heritage.”

61 Sullivan, “Cultural Heritage and New Media: A Future for the Past.”

62 Along the development of cultural heritage practice, legal instruments become needed. Although it may vary from country to country, in general to perverse heritage collections and sites shall involve: art and entertainment law, cultural property law, environmental law, historic preservation law, land use law, marine resources law, museum law, native or indigenous law, natural resource law, etc. See LCCHP, “LCCHP - Mission and Statement of Principles.”

63 Mignosa, “Theory and Practices of Cultural Heritage Policy.”

64 Throsby, “On the Sustainability of Cultural Heritage”; Choi et al., “Economic Valuation of Cultural Heritage Sites: A Choice Modeling Approach”; Rizzo and Mignosa, *Handbook on the Economics of Cultural Heritage*; Towse, *Advanced Introduction to Cultural Economics*.

65 Selicato, “The Concept of Heritage.” p 49.

66 Pearce, *On Collecting: An Investigation into Collecting in the European Tradition*. p 55.

67 Pearce. p 42.

the unique Indo-European tradition.' In this light, the making of the Dunhuang collections is Western.

However, such Eurocentric view was contested⁶⁸ together with the supposition of the amateurishness of antiquarianism⁶⁹. To study 'world antiquarianism', Schnapp inspected Egypt, Mesopotamia and China based on Pomian's theory which defined collecting as a 'semantic operation' and collected objects as '*semiophores*'. It suggested that, while collecting, the collector would bestow new meanings on his/her collections by isolating them from their original contexts and places, where they once laid or formed the historical or sediment layers that concealed them⁷⁰. Schnapp also identified the origin of collecting in human history through Leroi-Gourhan's study (which discovered a group of fossils far more ancient than their surrounding Magdalenian layer) and suggested that the Palaeolithic humans were already capable of distinguishing and appreciating relics from earlier times. But why only in Europe but not elsewhere—including China—could antiquarianism evolve into modern disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology or art history? Why were the Dunhuang collections made in the West rather than their country of origin in the first place? Institutionalised scientific culture is a key.

As Pearce noted, in Europe collecting strange and rare things and exploring historic remains and monuments were most certainly associated with the Renaissance humanists—as in Italy, for example, where Petrarch, Boccaccio and Vergerio had confirmed the historical basis of legends by examining the archaeological remains of Rome⁷¹. This brought forth Humanism⁷² and those found or recovered historic ruins that invoked artistic performances⁷³, and also reflected the Enlightenment, because prime importance was attached to humans rather than divine or supernatural powers. Such a rationalistic system of thought thus became the intellectual driver, institutionalising cultural heritage of not only Europe but also the world over into archaeology, anthropology or art history. Further, the concept of 'fine art' denoting objects like paintings or sculptures that are characterised by technical skill, imagination and aesthetic expression has prevailed in the changing institutional framework for art production, appropriation and consumption. And, in such transition, the artist started to be regarded as an isolated individual expressing their inner experiences and feelings. Handcrafted artefacts as a result were extracted from their original contexts to be displayed as autonomous and self-sufficient objects in private salons and public art galleries, or museums of modern nation states⁷⁴. Thus, the Dunhuang objects were

68 Schnapp, "Introduction: The Roots of Antiquarianism."

69 Momigliano, "The Rise of Antiquarian Research"; Murray, "Rethinking Antiquarianism."

70 Schnapp, "Introduction: The Roots of Antiquarianism." p 4.

71 Philip Joshua Jacks, *The Antiquarian and the Myth of Antiquity: The Origins of Rome in Renaissance Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

72 Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Europe (New Approaches to European History)*.

73 Cunnally, "Changing Patterns of Antiquarianism in the Imagery of the Italian Renaissance Medal."

74 Duncan and Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum."

decontextualized from their Buddhist context and were recontextualized into institutes of archaeology, anthropology or art history.

The influential force behind such a transition was the colonial ambition of imperial and nationalist government, because this development of scientific thought not only diminished the possibility that human prehistory is unknowable, and oblivion would overcome memory, but also extended the history of a nation back into prehistoric times in order to establish an ‘antiquity’ of the nation or ethnic group in question⁷⁵. Provided with the natural and cultural objects acquired from overseas colonies during the time of New Imperialism, the evolutionist archaeology (or the account of human history) developed into anthropology—a specialised area associated to anatomy, ethnology and philosophy—of which the theoretical ground of racism became useful for the coloniser to conquer or govern the colonised land and people. In *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe* edited by Diaz-Andreu and Champion⁷⁶, such phenomenon was reported explicitly with case studies drawn from former colonial powers such as Denmark, France, Spain, Italy, Britain and Russia. And in *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology/Archaeology* edited by Kohl and Fawcett⁷⁷, similar operations were found within Nazi Germany, the former Soviet Union, China, Korea and the states in Near East. Being the depository of archaeological and anthropological objects, the museum institute is also involved with colonial ideology and becomes a milieu of public communication to manifest imperialism or nationalism⁷⁸. Either the scientific specimens gathered from the ‘Others’, the collections previously stored in royal palaces or princely cabinets of curiosities or the properties that private collectors bequeathed to ‘the nation’⁷⁹—all have found their new places in ‘national’ or ‘universal’ museums to forge, shape and demonstrate national identities⁸⁰. The Dunhuang objects thus are seen to be used for empire and nation building in the West and China.

1.2.1.3 Collection of Orientalism and (De-/Reverse-)Coloniality

The interlaced relationship between archaeology and colonialism⁸¹ resulted in orientalist museum collections. As a term, orientalism first signified a collective scholarly effort to study the ‘Others’ in ‘the Orient’ and then, after conquering the ‘new world’ across the Atlantic sea, became to denote cultures of the ‘old world’ in Africa and Asia. Orientalism or oriental studies became a dominant subject during the colonial expansions of especially Britain and France⁸² from

75 Murray, *From Antiquarian to Archaeologist: The History and Philosophy of Archaeology*. p 21.

76 Diaz-Andreu and Champion, *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*.

77 Kohl and Fawcett, *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*.

78 Pohlsander, *National Monuments and Nationalism in 19th Century Germany*; Kaplan, “Making and Remaking National Identities”; Knell et al., *National Museums: New Studies From Around the World*.

79 For example, the Musée Guimet in France; or the Bullock’s Museum in Piccadilly, see Garwood, *Museums in Britain: A History*.

80 Kaplan, *Museums and the Making of “Ourselves”: The Role of Objects in National Identity*.

81 Kohl and Fawcett, “Archaeology in the Service of the State.”

82 Poddar, Patke, and Jensen, “Orientalism and Exoticism.”

the early 19th century to the end of WWII, in addition to other states including Russia, Germany, Italy, USA and even Japan⁸³. Although the root of orientalism or Egyptomania was found already in the Renaissance⁸⁴, Napoleon's invasion in Egypt to build his own Roman empire served as the turning point for Europe to put its eyes from the sea to the Orient. This colonial push was helped also by Christian missionaries⁸⁵.

One of the most prominent examples which illustrates this mixture of political, economic, scientific and religious efforts under New Imperialism is the 'international conference of orientalists'⁸⁶. The proceedings of the Twelfth Congress of Orientalists, held in Rome in 1899 October⁸⁷ which served as a road sign to Dunhuang, provides a good example. Participants included delegations from Russia (Finland), Britain (and India), Germany, France and Hungary; a wide range of topics was discussed including philology, geography, ethnography, religion, literature, history and archaeology; and the areas covered were North Africa, Near East, Middle East, Far East and Southeast Asia. At the opening, the Italian Minister of Education read a speech given by the King Umberto I, patron of the Congress, saying:

...The significant discoveries of a century drawing to a close, have allowed us to get closer to those peoples which, isolated from humankind, had closed their doors to progress, thus sealing their fate to eternal stagnation. After many efforts, modern civilisation has won over these peoples, forcing them to open their doors and to submit to the inescapable laws of human co-operation, so that everybody can share the triumphs and achievements attained by others. Human civilisation sailed from the shores of the Indian Ocean, gradually spread to Central Asia, Egypt, Greece and to the rest of Europe, now travels back, enriched, towards those regions on the way to civilisation, to reign supreme in the known world. However, it is your knowledge, delegates, that knowledge you so lovingly cultivate, that knowledge of things oriental, which is the bright star, radiating its brilliance to reach the farthest corners of the globe and bring these peoples out of their centuries-old darkness. Ex Oriente Lux [Light comes from the East]⁸⁸.

This talk befits Saïd's⁸⁹ canonical critique in his *Orientalism*, which not only pioneered postcolonial studies but also redefined the term 'orientalism' by revealing

83 Japan was at the same an studying object (the Other) to the West in orientalism and a colonial empire (1895-1945) keen to study its colonized 'Others', like Taiwan.

84 Gyss, "The Roots of Egyptomania and Orientalism: From the Renaissance to the Nineteenth Century."

85 Saïd, *Orientalism*; Estrada, "A Fresh Perspective on Chinese Museum Visitors."

86 MacKenzie, *Orientalism : History, Theory, and the Arts*.

87 Genovese, "Proceedings (Extract) of XII International Congress of Orientalists, Rome, October 1899."

88 Genovese. Although the Chinese delegate has attended the conference, his talk was not in line with the main theme but on the legal reform, which was the prime concern of late Qing China.

89 Saïd, *Orientalism*.

the heavily biased, misguided or distorted idea and imagination towards the Orient in Western colonial discourses. All of the conflicting sensations of exoticism—alluring but dangerous, aweing but despising and mysterious but primitive—were exploited in displaying archaeological findings and the negotiating colonial rulings. These oriental ‘Others’, in Saïd’s observation, suffered a systemised approach of identification, evaluation and propagation operated by the public institutions of the West. The ‘heritage process’ on the Dunhuang collections was based on such a logic (which dominated the Enlightenment thinking), offering a generalised and stereotyped oriental ‘Other’—the opposite to the West⁹⁰.

Accompanying the European orientalists to the Orient was their scientific thinking and activity, which has since brought forth changes to cultures of the Orient. In a macro point of view, the West’s making of the Dunhuang collections at the turn from the 19th to the 20th century established a ‘contact zone’ where the heritage traditions of the West and China were encountered. Soon after this ‘contact’, the Western heritage process was modelled in China through an interlaced knowledge network driven by sociological and economic power struggles. This can be interpreted as a cultural phenomenon of ‘acculturation’ to the Sinosphere world. The questions of ‘coloniality’⁹¹ and ‘decoloniality’⁹² were thus conceived. China, the country of origin for the Dunhuang collections, though different from Quijano’s or Mingolo’s focused terrains in Latin America as it was semi-colonised without settler society being built, nonetheless remains similar in its dilemmatic struggle to modernise the country through applying Western economic and socio-political paradigms to assert a non-Western cultural identity based on heritage collections. Although beyond the scope of this research, it is worth mentioning that ‘acculturation’ also occurred to the West, because the cultural heritage of the ‘Others’ was accompanied by their ‘alternative’ ways of thinking and living. For example, following New Imperialism, trends like Chinoiserie, Japansime or even Buddhism became popular in Western societies. In a global and historical view, such exchange of ideas between the West and the Orient, resulting in their cultural transformations, can be understood as a process of ‘transculturation’. Eventually, as seen in the museum praxis and heritage enterprise of the Dunhuang collections, the so-called ‘world-levelling unificatory epistemologies’⁹³ are seemingly formed.

90 Loomba, *Colonialism-Postcolonialism*.

91 A concept interrelates the practices and legacies of European colonialism in social orders and forms of knowledge. Proposed by Anibal Quijano, the term is advanced in the postcolonial studies of Latin America.

92 A term to denote the understanding of ‘modernity’ in colonized societies. It often involves with various ethnic, gender and area studies.

93 Gellner, *Relativism and the Social Sciences*. p76.

1.2.2 Cultural Heritage and International Relations⁹⁴

The Dunhuang collections, constituted through orientalism, resonate with not only Saïd's critique but also Diaz-Andreu's note that 'archaeological collections can only be understood in governments' nation-building projects'⁹⁵. This view accurately depicts the complex associations between the heritage process and colonialism in terms of the cultural objects obtained from the 'Others'. However, entering the exhibitionary realm of the museum, the objects' marks of a colonial past or an intercultural history, in a biographical sense, do not fade away but continue to be animated in public, though with a specific political ideology or diplomatic function.

1.2.2.1 Cultural Exchange (Diplomacy)

The role of culture has gained significant attention since the 1990s⁹⁶ in the field of international relations across a wide range of its prevailing theoretical traditions, including realism, liberalism, constructivism, postmodernism, (post)colonialism and non-Western perspectives⁹⁷. A specifically Chinese school⁹⁸ has become distinctive in recent years addressing 'the world under heavens', non-confrontational Confucianism and the tributary system⁹⁹. Lebow¹⁰⁰ said that basic human motives like spirit, appetite, and reason not only create culture but also craft and forge histories of international politics and relations. Grayson¹⁰¹ even suggested that culture has become 'the source of, and solution to, all of international relations' problems'. Although it is debatable whether such opinion is sustainable, the longstanding practice of using culture as public or soft diplomacy has earned an unprecedented importance¹⁰² especially through globalised museum praxis and heritage enterprise.

Although often used in the top-down decided events of foreign affairs to promote mutual understanding between two or more countries, the term 'cultural exchange' needs to be defined explicitly. The etymology of 'culture' can be traced

94 Part of this section 1.2.2 has been published by the author in a journal article. See Shuchen Wang, 'Museum Diplomacy: Exploring the Sino-German Museum Forum and Beyond', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 00.00 (2018), 1–17.

95 Diaz-Andreu, "Archaeology and Nationalism in Spain."

96 Chay, *Culture and International Relations*; Reeves, *Culture and International Relations: Narratives, Natives, and Tourists*.

97 Non-Western International Relations Theory : Perspectives on and beyond Asia, ed. by Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan (New York: Routledge, 2010); A. Amitav, 'Dialogue and Discovery: In Search of International Relations Theories beyond the West', *Millennium*, 29.3 (2011), 619–37; Sudeep Kumar and others, 'Theorising Chinese International Relations and Understanding the Rise of China: A Preliminary Investigation'.

98 Linsay Cunningham-Cross and Peter Marcus Kristensen, 'Chinese Internatioal Relations Theory', *International Relations*, May (2014); Kumar and others.

99 Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: The Opening of Treaty Ports 1842-1854*. pp 73-74.

100 Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*.

101 kyle Grayson and Grayson, "The Rise of Popular Culture in IR: Three Issues."

102 Cull, "Review: Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy."

back to ‘cultura animi’ of Ancient Rome¹⁰³ which, according to the German philosopher Pufendorf (1632-1694), refers to the ‘cultivation of human soul through artifice’¹⁰⁴. In this light, an end result of cultural exchange could be understood in an anthropological sense as cultural appropriation, enculturation, acculturation¹⁰⁵ or deculturation and transculturation¹⁰⁶. For example, the interconnection between Japonisme and Art Nouveau during the second half of the 19th century¹⁰⁷, or how Chinese antiquarian artefacts have been elevated to equal Ancient Greek or Roman art in the early 20th century, all are the fruitful results of cultural exchange between the West and the Orient with institutional efforts.

After decolonisation, the continuing cultural dominance of former colonial powers on the newly independent countries also took the form of cultural exchange as evidenced in the ways that in Africa, Britain, France and the United States all endeavoured to sponsor language instructions at local libraries and cultural centres to propagate a preferred ideology for the implementation of cultural exchange or diplomacy¹⁰⁸. While standing against the West during the Cold War, China also used culture—orchid cultivation, ping pong¹⁰⁹, ballet and the Go game—to manifest diplomatic ties, both with its allies of Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia and also with ‘enemies’ like the United States and Japan¹¹⁰. International Dunhuang exhibitions were sent out on tour for such mission as well. Furthermore, the *raison d'être* of UNESCO-UN, created after WWII and succeeding the ICIC-League of Nations after WWI, is exactly to use culture to help ‘building peace in the minds of men and women’ for a new world order¹¹¹. ‘Conflicts of interest between men are settled by the use of violence’ yet ‘conflicts of opinion [...] seem to demand some other technique for their settlement’. This is what Freud answered to Einstein’s question ‘why war’¹¹² in their little known correspondence in 1932, when the League of Nations endeavoured to create an absolute authority for international security. Thus, in a time of peace, culture has become the fierce battlefield where canny battles of soft power are fought with

103 Cicero and Jean, “Tusculanes.”

104 Velkley, “The Tension in the Beautiful: On Culture and Civilisation in Rousseau and German Philosophy.”

105 Gudykunst, *Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Communication*; Lakey, “Acculturation: A Review of the Literature.”

106 Richard A. Rogers, ‘From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation’, *Communication Theory*, 16.4 (2006), 474–503.

107 Wichmann, *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art since 1858*.

108 Mary Niles Maack, ‘Books and Libraries as Instruments of Cultural Diplomacy in Francophone Africa during the Cold War’, *Libraries & Culture*, 36.1 (2001), 58–86.; Christina Marie. Luke and Morag M. Kersel, *U.S. Cultural Diplomacy and Archaeology: Soft Power, Hard Heritage* (New York, London: Routledge, 2013).

109 Yan and Gao, *Turbulent Decade: A History of the Cultural Revolution*. p 433.

110 Palit, “China’s Cultural Diplomacy: Historical Origin, Modern Methods and Strategic Outcomes.”

111 Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*.

112 Sigmund Freud, ‘Sigmund Freud, Civilisation and Its Discontents (1930) German Title: Das Unbehagen in Der Kultur (“The Uneasiness in Culture”)', XXI (1961).

sharp diplomacy¹¹³. Cultural heritage, as an important actor-agent of culture, plays a crucial role on the frontlines.

1.2.2.2 *International Heritage Politics*

Protecting cultural property in the event of armed conflict was the initial concern of the international heritage preservation legal platform established after WWII by the leading powers of the West, within the framework of ICOM-UNESCO-UN. Starting with the Hague convention of 1954, the second half of the 20th century generated a series of charters, conventions and treaties for the purpose, such as the one concerning the illicit trafficking of cultural property in 1970, the world cultural and natural heritage in 1972, the UNIDROIT convention of illegally exported cultural objects in 1995, the underwater cultural heritage in 2001, the intangible heritage in 2003 and the diversity of cultural expressions in 2005¹¹⁴. These intergovernmental agreements have paved ways for an international heritage politics, dealing with the rest of the world's postcolonial identity, cultural tourism, musemification of local cultures¹¹⁵ as well as repatriation of important collection acquired from the 'Others' under rampant imperialist invasion of earlier times.

Since the 1970s, UNESCO has promoted intensive training of diplomats for international cultural cooperation¹¹⁶ and a heritage diplomacy was composed upon heritage protection charters and laws¹¹⁷. Targeted at the Third World of Africa or Asia¹¹⁸, various UNESCO programs of heritage preservation and management with financial aid and expert-knowledge support, carried out to create profitable cultural tourism for local development, have been embedded with implicit universal norms and value like democracy or human rights¹¹⁹. Such heritage diplomacy reached out to China in the 1980s¹²⁰. After the opening-up policy, China started to acknowledge or ratify heritage charters and, following economic success, became more and more active in the international bodies of UNESCO-UN. In 1997, the year that Hong Kong was returned to China, Dunhuang was engaged again by the West through the good old Silk Roads with the Silk Road Project¹²¹, only that this time, the arrivals were not explorer-collectors but financial aid and expert knowledge for site preservation, restoration and conservation.

113 UNESCO, "The Soft Power of Culture."

114 UNESCO, Conventions.

115 Laurajane Smith, *Archaeological Theory and Politics of Cultural Heritage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp 16-32; Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo, *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of 'Race'* (Routledge, 2005).

116 Köchler, *Cultural Self-Comprehension of Nations*. p 142.

117 Winter, pp 997-1015; IIAS, 'Heritage as Aid and Diplomacy in Asia', IIAS, 2016 <<https://iiias.asia/heritageaid>> [accessed 27 March 2018].

118 Hancock, *The Politics of Heritage from Madras to Chennai*; Su and Teo, *The Politics of Heritage Tourism in China: A View from Lijiang*; Joy, *The Politics of Heritage Management in Mali : From UNESCO to Djenné*.

119 Lekarev, "UNESCO: Protecting World's Heritage or Forcing an Agenda? - Sputnik International."

120 Du, "UNESCO Support for Cultural Conservation in China."

121 Agnew, "Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road (1997)."

That has successfully turned Dunhuang into a world famous heritage attraction certified by UNESCO in the spirit of globalized neoliberalism. Although such a development is not lacking criticism¹²², this commodification or ‘Disneylandisation’ of cultural heritage seems to be on a path of no return.

As to the question of repatriation, the topic has aroused ardent debates amongst curators¹²³ and academics¹²⁴—with the former often holding firm on the importance of ‘universal museums’ and supporting heritage cosmopolitanism or internationalism, and the latter sympathising with the ‘country of origin’ of restitution demands and insisting on heritage nationalism or retentionism. Cuno in *Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopaedic Museum* denied that museums are the site of transaction between the visitor and the state for an essentialised, state-derived cultural identity¹²⁵. He called such criticism a fantasy. However, he did not respond to Flynn’s claim: the true reason not to return objects is ‘revenue generation and sustaining the reassurance of long gone empire’ as well as ‘the fear that the institutes would be emptied, people impoverished, and tourism seized if collections that contributed to the legacy of Enlightenment should fall into the hands of nations driven by radical nationalism without curatorial skills and museological expertise to care for their material of culture’¹²⁶. The fact is ‘context matters’¹²⁷, as the meaning of objects is in perpetual flux and contextual. Views change according to where people stand. If a curator left their position in their museum and saw what the object in question can mean to, and affect deeply, the people in the country of origin, they may change their opinion¹²⁸. Nevertheless, history shows that the repatriation of cultural objects of others, or from the ‘Others’, can only be achieved through the international hard and sharp power struggle of war, law or political economy.

1.2.2.3 *Museum Diplomacy: Political Economy of Cultural Heritage*

Framed by the ‘here and now’, and the restricted view as perceived from inside a curator’s office in the modern-day ‘temple’ of the art museum, it is perhaps difficult to imagine how the criticisms that Cuno vigorously rejected could be valid. Yet looking into where a museum comes from and how it is globalised, it is hard to deny that such public institutions are political, especially given their social

122 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, 1998; Di Giovine, *The Heritage-Scape: UNESCO, World Heritage, and Tourism*.

123 “Br. Museum”; Boyd and MacGregor, “Museum of the World for the World: London, United Kingdom and beyond. British Museum Review. April 2004-March 2006”; Cuno, *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage*.

124 Gill, “The Universal Museum”; Gill, “Looting Matters for Classical Antiquities: Contemporary Issues in Archaeological Ethics.”; Sowole, “The Bizot Group & the Universal Museum”; Flynn, *International Colloquy-Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles*.

125 James B. Cuno, *Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopedic Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). p 2-3.

126 Flynn, *International Colloquy-Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles*.

127 Gill, “Context Matters: Museums and the Looted World”; Gill, “Context Matters: Fragmented Pots, Attributions and the Role of the Academic.”; Gill, “Context Matters: The Cleveland Apollo Goes Public.”

128 Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects: Buddhism, Imperialism and Display*. pp 223-242.

function to display culture¹²⁹. The critical thinking on exhibiting cultural objects of the ‘Others’ has been widely discussed in recent decades, since the pioneering anthology *Exhibiting Cultures*¹³⁰ published after the conference *The Poetics and Politics of Representation* held by the Smithsonian in 1988. Despite being inspiring, the discussions were mostly descriptive, as was *Exhibiting Dilemmas: Issues of Representation* published a decade later in the same series¹³¹. To this date, very little of the rich studies of museum heritage has explored the diplomatic role of museum exhibition.

From random display of exotic objects to the systematic interpretation of material culture, museums possess a specific communication system¹³² serving not only as an art temple or significant milieu to produce knowledge¹³³ but also as an important medium to carry out identity dialogue¹³⁴ and a window to approach the arts and culture of the ‘Others’. Often museums are the result of political reforms—either from feudalism to democracy or from colonial regimes to independent states—and, in such transactions of sovereignty, the royal gatherings of high art or high culture are nationalised and become the cultural symbols of modern nation-state. Besides, as mentioned earlier, major Western museums have been deeply involved in colonisation and hold ‘important collections’ of ‘world civilisations’—a term coined in the aforementioned self-reflection of archaeology and anthropology¹³⁵ to replace ‘ethnology’ or ‘ethnography’. Although it is contestable whether the legitimacy of ‘national identity’ is presented by museum from a national view¹³⁶, it is seldom in doubt that national museums speak of the ‘nation’ and define its cultural identity from a global perspective.

Furthermore, the museum world is highly hierarchical—as seen in both its organisational administration structure, which is ranked from municipal, regional, provincial to national (even universal), and in its collection management

129 Robert Lumley, *The Museum Time Machine: Putting Cultures on Display* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988); Ivan. Karp and Steven Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Michigan: The University of Michigan: Smithsonian Books, 1991).

130 Karp and Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*.

131 Handerson and Kaeppler, *Exhibiting Dilemmas: Issues of Representation at the Smithsonian*.

132 Hooper-Greenhill, “A New Communication Model for Museums”; Ferguson, Greenberg, and Naime, *Thinking About Exhibitions*; Hooper-greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*; Duncan, “A Viewpoint: The Museum as a Communications System and Implications for Museum Education.”

133 Pearce, *Interpreting Objects and Collections*.

134 Dubin, *Displays of Power: Memory and Amnesia in the American Museum*.

135 Alison Wylie, ‘Putting Shakerstown Back Together: Critical Theory in Archaeology’, *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 4.2 (1985), 133–47; Philip L Kohl and Fawcett; Oscar Moro-Abadía, ‘The History of Archaeology as a “Colonial Discourse”’, *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology*, 16.2 (2006), 4.

136 David McCrone and others, ‘Who Are We? Problematising National Identity’, *The Sociological Review*, 46.4 (1998), 629–52; Stephen. Caunce, *Relocating Britishness* (Manchester University Press, 2004); Ross Bond, ‘Belonging and Becoming: National Identity and Exclusion’, *Sociology*, 40.4 (2006), 609–26; Stuart Hall, ‘Whose Heritage? Un-Settling “The Heritage”, Reimagining the Post-Nation’, in *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of Race*, ed. by Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo (London : Routledge, 2004), pp. 21–31.

system, where objects are ranked by the importance of their value and defined as ‘national treasures’ or ‘educational samples.’ In most countries, the directors of national museums act as government functionary in high positions, are appointed by the leading politics and are involved to varying degrees with domestic politics and foreign affairs. Permanent collections of national museums are often forbidden to be deaccessioned and are protected by national or state laws. To make a loan or to tour them abroad often requires special permission from a state council or parliament¹³⁷. These features are the contributing factors for national museums to perform ‘museum diplomacy’—a concept I propose to explain the phenomenon that high-level foreign guests are received in national museums, that touring ‘important collections’ abroad can lobby for political backing or economic cooperation and that national museum directors play the role of ‘cultural diplomats’ in international forums. This is a novel field that has been little studied in museology or heritage studies. Following the tradition of cultural exchange and heritage diplomacy, it shall gain more importance especially in this Global Age of networked societies where culture is on the frontline of the international political economic power struggle.

1.2.3 The Neoliberal Turn of Cultural Heritage

One significant feature of ‘the important collections of universal museums’ is that they are a veritable ‘treasure’ in the monetary sense, in addition to their cultural, scientific or artistic value. This, however, has been much neglected by the rich heritage discourses and museological discussions amassed since the 1980s, in spite of the fact that the market factor of cultural artefacts has played a crucial role in the development of heritage enterprise. Prior to being used to ‘generate revenue’ for universal museums¹³⁸, the net value of those exquisite antiquities or archaeological artworks from world cultures were already high. As far as the Chinese cultural objects are concerned, the market operation to increase value is evident. The most significant case is the elaborate cooperation between private dealers, art collectors, art academy and museums in the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London, in 1935. It is, in part, through such an effort that the artistic value of Chinese object was elevated to compete with the fine art of Greek or Roman antiquity.

However, entering into national institutes this monetizable market value of cultural objects becomes frozen or forgotten as, by law, the disposal of permanent collections or registered ruins or built monuments is either completely forbidden or considered to be unethical¹³⁹. On the contrary, they become costly objects to be safeguarded, maintained and displayed. This creates financial challenges for socialist and welfare governments as cultural heritage traditionally is considered

137 Boyd and MacGregor, “Museum of the World for the World: London, United Kingdom and beyond. *British Museum Review*. April 2004-March 2006”; NPC, 中华人民共和国文物保护法.

138 Flynn, *International Colloquy-Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles*.

139 ICOM, *Museums, Ethics and Cultural Heritage*.

to be free to access public service. Facing global economic crisis, the economics of cultural heritage—a much ignored topic by museum professionals or heritage practitioners—started to gain attention in the 1990s¹⁴⁰ and grew to a serious concern in the new millennium. In the past two decades, with the globalised neoliberalism gathering pace, an increasing amount of literature on the topic of heritage economics¹⁴¹ has emerged for policy makers, heritage service providers and the international bodies of ICOM-UNESCO-UN¹⁴² to consult. Cultural economists, from a previously rather marginal role in the heritage sector, have moved centre stage providing refreshing understandings of the behaviour of heritage enterprise from the perspective of market and economics.

As Peacock and Rizzo noted in *The Heritage Game: Economics, Policy, and Practice*¹⁴³, differences between countries (such as Britain and Italy) do exist. By far, the leading studies of heritage economics are basically Western-Eurocentric and based on the free market economy system of the liberal democratic political system. The ideological baggage loaded onto cultural heritage, as seen in the aforementioned ‘collections of orientalism’, seems to have dropped in the cultural market in the post-conflict era. Instead of imperialistic promotion or nationalistic propaganda, the economic prospect of heritage enterprises serves to be the most persuasive argument appealing to policy makers, investing corporates, and taxpayers.

Integrated with economic and market concerns, after embracing economists the heritage sector has now opened its arms to computer scientists. Much more than an instrumental attempt to ameliorate collection management or administration work, digital technology has created a new arena in the exhibitionary realm of cultural heritage¹⁴⁴. In addition to realising Malraux’s ideal of the ‘museum without walls’¹⁴⁵ with digitised collections¹⁴⁶, online exhibitions¹⁴⁷ and mobile interpretation¹⁴⁸, an ‘experience economy’¹⁴⁹ of cultural heritage is emerging and a novel solution to restitution demands is taking shape—the so-called

140 Peacock, “A Future for the Past: The Political Economy of Heritage”; Hutter, *Economic Perspectives on Cultural Heritage: An Introduction*.

141 Brian Graham, Gregory John Ashworth, and J. E. Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture, and Economy* (Arnold, 2000); Throsby; *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture*, ed. by Victor A Ginsburgh and David Throsby (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006); Rizzo and Mignosa; Enrico Bertacchini and Donatella Saccone, ‘Toward a Political Economy of World Heritage’, *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 36.4 (2012), 327–52.

142 ICOM, “Keynote Speakers at 2016 ICOM Conference.”

143 Peacock and Rizzo, *The Heritage Game*.

144 Sullivan, “Cultural Heritage and New Media: A Future for the Past”; Kenderdine, “Pure Land: Inhabiting the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang.”

145 Malraux, *The Psychology of Art, Vol. 1: Museum without Walls*.

146 Hughes, “Digital Collections.”

147 Verma, “How Technology Is Transforming the Museum Experience.”

148 Katsoni, Upadhyay, and Stratigea, “Tourism, Culture and Heritage in a Smart Economy: Third International Conference IACuDiT, Athens 2016.”

149 *Enterprising Initiatives in the Experience Economy: Transforming Social Worlds*.

‘digital repatriation’, an idea at first limited to indigenous cultures¹⁵⁰ now being expanded to cover colonial collections as well. The Dunhuang collections are the very first ‘dispersed world cultural heritage’ to be reunited in virtual space, with the interactive online database of IDP¹⁵¹. However, the key to determine whether such engagement could be termed ‘digital repatriation’ depends on the ownership of the IPR of those uploaded digital images. Economics remains the core issue regarding repatriation, on the bits just as with the atoms. While the latter contributes to the tourism economy, the former is foundational to the rising digital economy¹⁵².

1.3 Methodology and the Design of Research

To investigate the biographical lives of the Dunhuang collections, from 1900 to this day, both in the West and China, the main methods I apply are qualitative approaches—seeking answers to questions by collecting evidence to produce findings—aligned to the social interpretive paradigm of research. Unlike individual biographies, which can be built on biographical narratives and documents acquired from oral or written interviews, diaries or *mémoires*, the social construction of an ‘object’s biography’ can rely solely on the introductory or interpretive materials produced by those people who are related to the discovery, ownership, preservation, care and use of these objects at particular points in time. In this light, to reconstruct the entire life histories of the Dunhuang collections, and to constitute their identities and meanings, it is necessary to consult an exhaustive amount of primary and secondary literature as well as direct and indirect sources of materials that were written, printed, photographed, recorded or filmed documenting their existence in various social and cultural contexts—which in one way or another represent the social actions of these objects that forge and shape their social lives. As described above in Section 1.1.1, the subject matter of this research substantially qualifies the so-called ‘world cultural heritage for all mankind’—a slogan much used by the international bodies of ICOM-UNESCO-UN—as the collections are distributed to dozens of GLAM institutes and universal museums, and particularly since they are the very first case in the world to be virtually reunited by an interactive online database free for access by anyone at anytime from anywhere. From Chinese Central Asia to the world over, from the Belle Époque to the Digital Age, the different parts of the Dunhuang collections have lived through diverse destinies—which, as whole, share a ‘family resemblance’. This has given each of the dispersed parts of ‘the family’ a chance to write its own biography, in different languages, social conventions and traditions. Similar to human agency, these objects’ adoptive institutes, countries and

150 Powell, “Digital Repatriation and Virtual Exhibition-Digital Partnerships with Indian Communities”; Tythacott and Arvantitis, *Museum and Resitution: New Practice, New Approaches*.

151 IDP, “IDP Statistics.”

152 Ghosh, Malina, and Cubitt, *CODE : Collaborative Ownership and the Digital Economy*.

cultures are determining factors to their lives and destinies. And this forms the basis for my studies of comparative cultural heritage or comparative museology embodied in the Dunhuang collections.

Anchored with three focuses—collection, exhibition and digitalisation—this research incorporates five clusters of research questions, as described in Section 1.1.2. I now present a general report on the principle methods and materials that I use to draw findings and construct a conclusive (family) biography of the Dunhuang objects.

1.3.1 On Collections

1.3.1.1 *The Making of the Dunhuang Collections*

To construct the many discovery stories of the Dunhuang objects at the end of the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century, I reviewed an extensive primary literature written and published by the ‘makers of Dunhuang collections’—such as the orientalist-explorers like Stein or Pelliot as well as the early Chinese Dunhuangologists like Luo Zengyu or Wang Guowei—in their mother tongues of English, French and traditional Chinese. Such a literature is composed of scientific reports, fieldnotes, transcriptions of Dunhuang manuscripts, comments and research results (contributing to and resulting in the cataloguing of collections). The method of ‘narrative analysis’ is applied to study selected texts written by Pelliot, Stein, Warner and He Zhenghuang to elucidate their fieldwork of collecting and especially to highlight the ‘rencontre’ between the Western explorers’ embodied scientific culture and intellectual tradition and the local Chinese heritage tradition and social conventions of late Qing period.

In scrutinizing these primary and secondary sources, a ‘knowledge network’ can be identified and constructed through a visual approach¹⁵³ based on Latour’s actor-network theory, which posits that things in the social and natural worlds exist in constantly shifting networks of relationships. The connecting points of this knowledge network are those key actor-agents (person, book, private letter, conference, institution, etc.) that contribute to the making of the Dunhuang collections. They are often the key factors that constitute the turning points of the many divergent lives of Dunhuang objects.

Based on the birth histories of the Dunhuang collections, the comparative approach—which aims to make comparisons across different countries or cultures—is applied to further discuss the (de-/re-)contextualisation of Dunhuang objects on a global level between the West and China. Such comparison is drawn

153 This method is largely used in computer science, where network theory is the study of graphs as a representation of either symmetric relations or asymmetric relations between discrete objects. Here I apply this graph theory to visualize and discuss the complicated relations built by communicating ideas and sharing knowledge that directly and indirectly resulted in the making of the Dunhuang collections. One important feature of this knowledge network is that it is transbordering or without national borders—thus making the question ‘who owns the collections’ more ambiguous, in my opinion.

from and designated to major features of the environmental, social and cultural contexts in the West and China.

1.3.1.2 *The Political Uses of Dunhuang Objects*

Following the reconstructed scene of Dunhuang objects' (de-/re-)contextualisation, historical methods are employed to inspect their political lives in the West and China. Regarding the Dunhuang collections as a 'contact zone' between the East and the West, it is potent to consider the cultural phenomena known as 'acculturation', 'deculturation' or 'transculturation' in anthropology. From a historical and global point of view, it is discernible that China uses its own cultural heritage for nation building and the West uses cultural heritage of the 'Others' for empire making. And of the latter the cultural mechanism is 'accultured' by the former, that 'decultured' its own heritage tradition. The primary sources being utilised include the manifesto published by the first Chinese learned society of archaeology and media reports, and the secondary ones include scientific reports of Western expeditions after WWI and publications discussing the West's colonial tradition of museum praxis and heritage enterprise.

To inspect the origins of the West's and China's heritage traditions before they 'rencontre' in Dunhuang, comparative-historical approaches are employed to study and contrast their respective social structures and formations, or transformations relating to cultural heritage. The development of the West's scientific culture through heritage collections (including Dunhuang objects), from antiquarianism to modern disciplines like archaeology or art history, is recounted through evidence drawn from secondary literature. On the China side, primary resources are used as well, including the diaries, literary notes, art critiques or artistic researches of those Qing literati, the early Chinese Dunhuangologists. Texts selected for narrative analysis, for example Duan Feng's letter, Sheng Hong's translation and Chen Yuan's preface to a book, illustrate their Han-centric cultural attitude towards the Dunhuang collections and explain their profound grief seeing the cultural heritage of their fathers' country being deposited and dispersed to the West.

Rooted in this divergent point of different destinies, the question 'who owns the Dunhuang objects' is raised. To examine China's attempted repatriation demands the analysis of primary and secondary materials, such as media reports, journalist publications and the declaration of Chinese ambassador to the UN General Assembly. In searching for potential resolution for such arguments, comparative historical methods are employed to find out cases within and outside Europe, with specific examples like the Parthenon Marbles studied to draw reference.

1.3.2 On Exhibitions

1.3.2.1 *Dunhuang Exhibitions and World Order*

The most significant social actions of Dunhuang objects are manifest in exhibitions—the public display of a set of carefully curated artefacts to deliver a message. As power is conceived, cultivated and demonstrated within such public display, the foundational thesis on the physical and metaphysical connection between ‘object’ and ‘authority’ is explored in a novel way, through a comparative historical study on the phenomenology of architecture in the early Ptolemaic Alexandria Egypt and the Chang Le and Wei Yang royal palace of Han China around the 3rd BC. Based on the common pattern of ‘exhibiting power’ drawn from these two examples, using philosophical methods, a further exploration on the mechanisms of museum exhibition throughout history is achieved and a novel model of exhibition communication incorporating four actor-agents (object, curator, maker and viewer) is proposed (as presented in Section 4.1.2).

This power relation formation provides a theoretical ground to further explore the performing lives of Dunhuang collections in their designated institutions, countries and cultures with qualitative, comparative and historical approaches. An extensive primary and secondary literature including exhibition records, catalogues, media reports and research papers are scrutinised and a chronological list of Dunhuang exhibitions is built. It is worth mentioning that, in addition to literature review and archive survey, empirical information was accrued from my fieldtrips to selected exhibition milieus of Dunhuang objects¹⁵⁴ where informal exhibition evaluation as well as natural observation were carried out. The findings of such ethnographic methods¹⁵⁵ confirm my conclusions drawn from studying said materials (as presented in Section 4.2) regarding ways of seeing, muséographie and the thematic and ideological aspects of Dunhuang exhibitions.

The list of Dunhuang objects’ performing lives in different institutes, countries and cultures forms the basis of my investigation into the role cultural heritage plays in the realm of international relations and politics. Termed as cultural, heritage or museum diplomacy, the positioning of important collections like the Dunhuang objects is examined using historical methods from the inter-war period, the Cold War and the post-conflict era to this day. Content analysis is applied to study selected news, photographs, research papers and museum archives to reconstruct the historical facts about how the republic and communist China and Taiwan use

154 For instance, the Dunhuang Academy in Dunhuang, the Salle de Pelliot of Musée Guimet in Paris, the exhibit of Turfan objects at Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, the National Library in Taipei, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, the Mannerheim Museum and the National Library in Helsinki, the exhibition tour kit of Dunhuang art at the Central Academy of Fine Art and the National Museum of China in Beijing the Getty Centre in Los Angeles.

155 As the said fieldtrips were not specifically done for the purpose of this research and permissions to use oral evidence from informal interviews or conversations with corresponding curators are not acquired or updated, I shall not include the data and analysis of these empirical studies in this dissertation (but further develop them later while conditions of research ethics are met).

important collections to obtain support from the West, and how the West starts to use them during the Cold War and in the post-conflict era to reach out to and deal with China.

1.3.3 On Digitisation

1.3.3.1 *The Economic Lives of Dunhuang Heritage*

In the formation of heritage diplomacy, UNESCO proposed the thesis of using cultural tourism to link heritage preservation with development work (in the Third World). This propelled the neoliberal turn of cultural heritage, first, within the framework of ICOM-UNESCO-UN and then to the rest of the world. To inspect such a turn from political purpose to economic end, qualitative research methods are applied—and one important source incorporating both primary and secondary materials are the programs and archives of UNESCO's many heritage agencies. However loosely connected they are to each other in organisational structure or management, these agencies are often found to be led by the West (especially the former colonial powers) and according to shared universal norms and values, such as democracy or human rights. In addition, a general survey on the literature of cultural economics, which emerged from the 1990s, is carried out to verify the said thesis.

Reflecting on the Dunhuang collections, such a neoliberal turn is identified while using historical methods to investigate their value creation and proposition since the early 20th century, across different times, including the inter-war period, during the Cold War and the post-conflict era. As the field of Dunhuang economics is unexplored, and it is beyond the scope of this research to procure primary data, I use secondary sources which suggest that the above-mentioned thesis of UNESCO—using heritage based cultural tourism for sustainable development—can be unjustifiable since cultural tourism has started to show signs of wreaking negative impacts.

As a country's economic model is closely tied to its political system, comparative historical methods are used to explore the Western and Chinese heritage economics of museum praxis and heritage enterprise. Based on both primary and secondary literature, such as public documents, government reports and policies, we can recognise that the dispersed Dunhuang objects live different economic lives in the West and China in different times. In addition, evidence drawn from emerging research papers on the natural environment of Dunhuang confirms that said thesis to be problematic, since the rapid development of Dunhuang tourism does cause serious environmental concern.

1.3.3.2 *Dunhuang in a Digital Arena*

Riding on the neoliberal turn of cultural heritage is the rapid development of 'digital cultural heritage' or 'digital humanities' since the mid-1990s. With the pervasive and ubiquitous digital technology of communication and media, the formation of 'digital Dunhuangology' becomes possible. To explore it, a survey from three dimensions—collection management, exhibition representation and

heritage education—was carried out through historical methods. In each dimension, by studying internet archives, public documents and printed publications, it is identified that such a digital turn does contribute to popularising knowledge and culture of Dunhuang heritage. In terms of the digital native programs or applications—such as the unprecedented interactive online database of International Dunhuang Project (IDP), the immersive Dunhuang exhibition design, the virtual museums of Dunhuang objects and mobile interpretations—a study of user interface and user experience and a content analysis are employed to find out the progress of digital Dunhuangology.

This holistic view on digital Dunhuangology provides the grounds to investigate the deep structure of the digital matrix composed by interlacing factors of culture, technology and economics. Such a structure can relate to a new power struggle of international relations and politics, though it is encrypted from the public eyes since problems conceived in the digital world are often too new and too technical. I try to approach these hidden or invisible problems through the investigation of intellectual property rights, which is the key to the digital economy of cultural heritage as well as to the socio-political phenomenon of the ‘digital divide’ (especially between the West and China). In addition to the content analysis of public documents and legal items, a philosophical approach is employed to explore the conflicting nature of ‘commons’ in the digital and the cultural domains.

Following the studies on the neoliberal and digital turn of Dunhuang heritage, a futuristic envisioning of museum praxis in terms of collection, exhibition and education is fulfilled observing the applicable cutting-edge digital trends. And a further exploration on the value of the atoms and bits of cultural heritage is made through a philosophical approach to illuminate and discuss concepts like ‘aura’, ‘simulacrum’ or ‘post-humanism’ of cultural heritage in the Digital Age.

As described above, this extensive research journey is unique in providing a comprehensive knowledge on the public uses of the Dunhuang collections, in a global perspective on how they are resulted from, and can result in, the exchange of ideas, interaction of politics and dynamics of economics, in addition to how they can connect distant societies for a common future, for example between the West and China—the two very different cultural systems of distinctive features. Although a significant amount of literature about Dunhuang written in Russian, German, Swedish, Danish or Japanese is unfortunately omitted (due to my language capacity which is limited to traditional and simplified Chinese, French and English), this should not undermine my findings and conclusions, as the majority of Dunhuang collections are in classical and vernacular Chinese. Besides, it is not the material culture that I have researched, but an ‘archaeology of knowledge’ (in the Foucauldian sense), embedded in the heritage process of Dunhuang objects. Since a genuine objectivity of research does not exist—according to Kant’s philosophy of rationalism which states that knowledge of external objects cannot be inferential considering the potential problems of perception, language and memory—I shall include as many multiple perspectives and stances towards Dunhuang objects from referencing literature as possible, and apply Comte’s positivism to avoid value judgement or privilege observable facts.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The above section on methodology and the design of research has introduced the structure or blueprint of this dissertation on the public uses of the atoms and bits of Dunhuang heritage in knowledge making, nation and empire building, museum diplomacy, cultural tourism and digital economy. In keeping with the three anchors of my research in collection, exhibition and digitisation, bookended by the introduction and conclusion, this report incorporates three parts, entitled: 1) objects, knowledge, politics, 2) displaying power, and 3) the atoms and bits of cultural heritage. Part I contains two chapters telling how and why the collections were made, as well as examining issues of ownership over cultural heritage. Part II has a long chapter exploring the social origins of public display being a heritage practice, the mechanism of museum communication, and the diplomatic role of important collections such as the Dunhuang objects. Part III encompasses two chapters investigating the value creation and proposition of cultural heritage through museum praxis and heritage enterprise, as well as the neoliberal and digital turn of Dunhuang heritage. In the final concluding chapter, I will discuss the cultural phenomenon of coloniality and transculturation manifest in the cultural heritage of Dunhuang based on the research findings.

1.4.1 Part I: Object, Knowledge, Politics

In Part I, Chapter 2 *The Making of Dunhuang Collections* is foundational to this research on the biographical lives of Dunhuang collections. It reconstructs the birth histories or the many discoveries of the ‘medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia’—the core component of the Dunhuang collections. They are made by the Chinese Taoist abbot; the well-organised scientific expeditions supported by public funding of colonial governments and led by orientalist-explorers like Stein from the British Empire in 1900, 1907, 1914 and 1930, Pelliot from the Third Republic of France in 1908, Oldenburg from the Russian Empire, Grünwedel and Le Coq from the German Empire in 1902, 1904 and 1905 and Warner from the United States of America in 1924 and 1925; the pilgrimage exploration of the monk-politician-orientalist Otani from the Japanese Empire in 1902, 1908 and 1910; the military espionage of Mannerheim from Finland the Grand Duchy of the Tsar in 1906; and the nationalist-artistic survey of Wang Ziyun sent by the Republic of China in 1940. The geopolitical background during this heritage process in an entangled world history is also investigated, together with an analysis on the transbordering knowledge network (according to the theory of Bruno Latour¹⁵⁶) that resulted in the making of the Dunhuang collections. The question of (de-/re-)contextualisation of Dunhuang objects is analysed as well since this shall form a conceptual foundation for the further exploration on the political usages of cultural heritage like the Dunhuang objects.

¹⁵⁶ B Latour, *Reassembling the Social, Política y Sociedad*, 2006, xliii.

In Chapter 3 *The Public Use of the Past*, the making of the Dunhuang collections is found to be a result of the ‘clash of civilisations’ between the West and the East in an entangled world history. Regarding Dunhuang objects as a ‘contact zone’, China learned to use cultural heritage for the political end of nation building just as the West used it for empire making. The only difference is that China uses its own heritage collection yet the West uses the ones of the ‘Others’. Also comparatively inspected with such a ‘clash’ or ‘contact’ are the two different heritage traditions manifest in the West’s scientific culture and China’s classic cultural system embodied in those Qing literati’s cultural practice of heritage collection—which can be an equivalent to the West’s learned society, curiosity cabinet and salon exhibition. If not for those colonial, revolutionary and civil wars, the private collections of Qing literati may well have become nationalised into the public cultural property of modern China and may have well stayed in China, their country of origin. This also explains why the early Dunhuangologists shared a nationalistic sentiment towards the Dunhuang objects dispersed to the West. And this sentiment resurfaced a century later with requests for repatriation enunciated during the *Centenary of Discovering Dunhuang Manuscripts* in 2000 and the UN general assembly in 2009. To have a comprehensive understanding of the topic, it is useful to draw reference to similar cases, such as the Parthenon Marbles and the precedents between Germany and China after WWI and between Japan and China after WWII.

1.4.2 Part II: Displaying Power

The political lives of Dunhuang as described above are performative in public through exhibitions. This leads to the second part of this research, which aims to explore how Dunhuang objects are used in ‘displaying power’. The moment when these collections left their original sites and entered museum institutions, they are endowed with new identities, values and interpretations that were to be shown to the public. Part II examines the exhibitionary realm of the Dunhuang collections from the historical and theoretical origin of exhibiting cultural objects to studying the development and change of Dunhuang exhibitions since the beginning of the 20th century, and how they are used in international relations and politics.

Chapter 4 *Exhibiting Objects, Shaping Politics* starts by tracing the historical and theoretical origins of the physical and metaphysical connection between people (subjectivity), object (material culture) and power (authority) through the phenomenology of architecture in the ancient times embodied in the temple-museion-agera structure of Greece and the spatial composition of Chang-Le Wei-Yang palace of Han China. This ancient urban cultural landscape may explain how the mental space of ‘citizen’ or the public is structured cognitively to arbitrarily associate object with religious and political power. What happens in the milieu of museum communication is then studied through the visual epistemology of cultural heritage, constituted by the politics of gaze and the grammar of exhibition language—of which the communication model of museum

display's operative mechanism, I argue, should include the role of 'maker' to object, curator and visitor. This is to highlight the long neglected or ignored fact that, in some cases, the 'original purposes' of museum collections, given by their makers, still exist in the societies of their country of origin, for example Buddhism—for which most Dunhuang objects were created for—is still believed and practiced in the Sinosphere world.

After the theoretical ground is explored, Chapter 4 continues to discuss how the Dunhuang collections were exhibited throughout the 20th century both in the West and China. In the West (as seen in Section 4.2.1 *Ways of Seeing the 'Others'—Decolonising Archaeology into (Fine) Art*), the definition, meaning or identity shift of Dunhuang objects from scientific specimen in archaeology and anthropology to works of (fine) art is traced by the change of muséographie from educational style to 'white-cube'—a modern exhibition design invented by Bauhaus, confirmed by the Nazi government and globalised to the world over, including China. In China, through the ways of seeing 'Self', the display of Dunhuang art also changes from revealing a 'national wound' to demonstrating the soft power of national cultural heritage.

Following this change of Dunhuang objects' exhibitionary styles from the museological perspective, the third part of Chapter 4 shifts the narrative focus from 'the national realm' to 'the international arena' with in-depth inspection of the cultural, heritage and museum diplomacy (dis)played by Dunhuang collections. The prerequisite is that these important collections are institutionalised and nationalised so to be able to carry out 'national dialogues' to solicit political, financial and military aid in times of war, and to negotiate for benefits to the political economy in times of peace. Prominent examples are examined, such as loaned exhibitions of prestigious antiquities from the Republic of China to the United Kingdom in 1935, to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1940 and to the United States in 1961; and the Dunhuang art exhibitions (as alternative national treasure because important collections are mostly removed to Taiwan by the Nationalist Party in 1949) sent by the People's Republic of China to Southeast Asia and East Europe as well as Japan in the 1950s. The same tactic is observed to be employed by the West during the Cold War to reach out to the Communist China, and Dunhuang is an anchor point in the Silk Roads Project of UNESCO in 1988. After the opening-up policy, China restarted to tour Dunhuang art exhibitions not only to the West but also to Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1990s. At the same time, Taiwan too began to send the prestigious collections of National Palace Museum to the West when tensions with China rose. Coming into the new century, with China established as a world power, the important collections from the 'universal museums' of the West, for the first time in history, started to take up a diplomatic role and visited China with the economic mission to facilitate the negotiation of foreign direct investments and important trade deals. From the second decade of the 21st century onwards, with the Belt and Road Initiative to realise the China Dream, Dunhuang heritage acquired once again a leading role, performing centre stage of cultural heritage diplomacy with sharp power behind to the neighbouring countries along the inland and maritime Silk Roads.

1.4.3 Part III: Atoms and Bits of Dunhuang Economics

The political and performative lives of Dunhuang objects presented in Part I and II provide a ground to inspect their economic and digital lives after the Cold War and especially in the Digital Age. The commodification of the cultural objects—as seen in the exhibition milieu of, for example, the International Art Exhibition of China in London in 1935 or even earlier when Stein and Pelliot ‘bought’ their collections with money as well as when the Qing literati appraised their collections—has indicated that since always there is a significant economic value adhered to Dunhuang objects. Chapter 5 *The Economics of Dunhuang Heritage* reports the findings on this much ignored feature of the ‘important collections’ acquired from the ‘Others’ during the colonial times. Starting from the neoliberal turn of heritage enterprise, propelled by UNESCO’s heritage diplomacy (as mentioned above) to reach out to the Third World by linking heritage preservation and development work with tourism industry, the economic lives of cultural heritage start to boom after the Cold War in the post-conflict era. This is reflected in emerging studies of cultural economics since the 1990s, where economists began to occupy the centre stage of heritage sector. Dunhuang, being targeted by UNESCO’s heritage diplomacy, started to play a leading role in the ‘heritage game’ of China and the monetised value of Dunhuang objects grew in parallel with the increasing meanings, definitions or identities imposed upon them over the century. Nevertheless, the proposition to use heritage enterprise to generate cultural capital risks to be fallacious, since the cost of environmental pollution and damage is not considered. Promoted by the international cultural politics of UNESCO, cultural tourism is expected to convey universal norms and values such as democracy or human rights—that are embedded in the deep structure of the market economy a ‘modernised’ country would expect to have, while adjusting its socio-political paradigms which are necessitated for museum praxis and heritage enterprise. In this light, various ecosystems of museum economy are compared to understand the changing museum and heritage business landscape in China. The drawback of a market-oriented heritage process is also identified, with the emerging studies on the environmental crisis caused by overdeveloped cultural tourism, including Dunhuang.

Chapter 6 *Dunhuang in the Digital Land* continues the economic turn of cultural heritage in mapping out the potential ‘digital Dunhuangology’ which emerged around the mid-1990s. This is composed by digitised collections of the interactive online database, the immersive and interactive exhibition design and the ‘museum without walls’ in the mobile and web environment. One crucial question asked here is: who owns digital heritage? Is it possible to achieve a ‘digital repatriation’ which by far is used to deal with collections of indigenous peoples only? And can the concept and practice of the ‘digital commons’, popularised in the field of computer science, being translated into a ‘cultural commons’? The key to answering these questions is the economic potency of digital cultural heritage, as seen in the thriving creative industry and digital innovation economy. In a phenomenological perspective, it is observed that out of the atoms

of Dunhuang heritage the bits are in actuality building an independent realm of digital culture isolated from the epistemology of the past, with an inclination towards the experience economy of entertainment businesses and game industries. This might 'delink' the heritage future from the past in terms of knowledge, identity and value. Another crucial question is the social concern of the 'digital divide' between the haves and the have-nots and between the West and China—as seen in the Google-land and Baidu-land of each. Eventually, the question whether digital technology can enable a truly participatory museum remains unanswered. After all, bits cannot replace atoms in any way because the 'aura' of authentic objects in the white-cube of museum exhibition simply cannot be reproduced in their simulacrum projected and (dis)played in the black-box of immersive exhibition, no matter how digital a cultural heritage can be and how strong the potential is to propagate trans-human or post-human in the digital wonderland.

Finally, in the concluding Chapter 7, based on the biographical lives of Dunhuang objects presented in the previous chapters in knowledge making, nation and empire making, heritage and museum diplomacy, cultural tourism and digital economy, I shall boldly use it as a background to discuss questions relating to postcolonialism, such as coloniality and de-coloniality as well as the cultural phenomenon of (ac-/de-)culturation and transculturation between the West and China. A critical review on the mechanism of international cultural politics embodied in the intergovernmental platform of ICOM-UNESCO-UN will be pursued and a discussion of the utopia and dystopia of market-based practice of 'world cultural heritage' offered. According to McLuhan, 'the medium is the message'. Considering the museum or the said platform a medium, one important question is: are the universal norms and values conveyed to China, after three decades of heritage diplomacy, envisaged by the West? Or is the said platform becoming occupied by 'alternative power' like the rising China? Like previous UNESCO endeavours to reaching out to the Red China through Dunhuang and the Silk Roads during the Cold War, now the rising China seems to attempt to engage the world with the very same idea with the BRI for its China Dream. It is critical whether the cultural heritage as the Dunhuang collections will reconcile or provoke new tensions between the West and China. In any case, their biographical lives will continue to be written in the new century.

PART I.

OBJECT, KNOWLEDGE,
POLITICS

2 The Making of the Dunhuang Collections

In historic events the so-called great men are labels giving names to events, and like labels they have but the smallest connection with the event itself.

—Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), *War and Peace*, Chapter I. 1808

While many generations of humans perished on earth, in the darkness of a sealed grotto among the Caves of a Thousand Buddha in Dunhuang—a once-upon-a-time metropolitan city, located at the east end of the southern Silk Road, which had connected the ancient civilisations of Rome, Persia, India and China—were hidden a massive amount of sacred relics bearing the best wishes for afterlife of those monks, worshipers, soldiers, merchants, governors, princesses or peasants who, like us all, were passengers of past times and spaces. The miraculous unearthing by a Chinese Taoist abbot, in 1900, brought these objects into daylight and became the ‘medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia’ known in the West. Together with other archaeological articles found in the region, they represented desirable objects for many Western orientalist-explorers of archaeology, anthropology or art history. Funded by the colonial powers of New Imperialism, and cultivated in a scientific culture developed since the Enlightenment, these expeditioners travelled by train, on horseback or camelback and on foot to this remote desert region, joining the Great Game¹ in their own ways for the ‘international race of antiquities’. Carrying the acquisitions back for their national institutes of arts and culture, they have made their names in history: Sir Aurel Stein, Paul Pelliot, Gustav Mannerheim, Albert von Le Coq, Sergei Oldenburg and Otani Kozui. Or, it was not they who made a name for themselves, but rather the transbordering and cross-cultural ‘social and knowledge network’ weaved by them and the learned societies, international conferences and research institutes to which they were affiliated. In a way, such knowledge ‘actor-agent’ (be it a book, a person or an event) was the real maker of the Dunhuang collections. Being removed away from Dunhuang into dozens of GLAM institutes located

1 The term came from Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* published in 1901—a novel written on the backdrop of the political struggle between the Great Britain and Russia in Central Asia.

in Western metropolises such as London, Paris, St. Petersburg or Berlin, these collections have gone through a process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation which altered their environmental, social and cultural contexts as well as the value, definition or interpretation imposed on them.

2.1 The Many Discoveries of Dunhuang Objects

The making of the Dunhuang collections is not a simple story but a complex one involving multifaceted perspectives originating from various cultural traditions and socio-political systems. In a period of time, ranging from 1900 to 1940, it involved at least eight countries in Asia, Europe and America, including China, Britain, France, Russia, Germany, the United States, Japan and Finland. Judging by the designated nature of expedition, or the given form of discovery, the histories of these discoveries can be categorised into three types: 1) the miraculous revealing of religious manuscripts of holy scripts in Buddhism found by a Chinese Taoist abbot in 1900; 2) the scientific approach of Western orientalist-explorers in archaeology, anthropology or art history, mixed with secret missions assigned by imperialist governments with colonial agendas between 1900 and 1930; and 3) the nationalist survey of traditional art, or the modernised way of seeing the ‘Self’s’ cultural heritage from the distant past, in 1940.

2.1.1 Miraculous Unearthing of Sacred Relics in 1900

In 1900, in Paris, the Exposition Universelle in a style of Art Nouveau was celebrating the Age of Optimism, with innovations of Industrial Revolution and goods from foreign colonies to summarise the achievements of the past century and to accelerate development into the next. Around the same time, in a remote desert town named Dunhuang, an insignificant Taoist abbot under the failing rule of Qing China—of which the capital ‘the forbidden city (Beijing)’ was suffering the Western military coalition of the Eight-Nation Alliance under the excuse of controlling the Boxer Rebellion—discovered a sacred treasure, buried in the Buddhist ruins known as the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas. The name of the abbot was Wang Yuanlu, and the ‘treasure’ the ‘medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia’, which was the core component of the Dunhuang collections, now preserved and displayed at dozens of GLAM institutes worldwide. Many scholars in the past century tried to understand how exactly this illiterate abbot discovered them, but a precise account is yet to be accomplished² because very little documentary or direct evidence of this historical figure has been identified (with the exception of a few texts left by his successors and records in the notes

2 For example, Rong Xin-jiang (榮新江) thought it was the assistant of Wang Yuanlu who first found out the existence of the hidden treasure based on the notes of Xie Ziliu (謝稚柳) and Chang Daqian (張大千); however Wang Jiqing (王冀青) disagreed because the dates of the correspondences between Wang Yuanlu and the officialdom of the Qing court, Ting Dong (廷棟), do not match.

and photographs of those Western explorers who came to negotiate taking part of his finding from him).

By far, the three most relevant documents written in traditional Chinese recounting the original discovery of Wang Yuanlu are: 1) the wooden tablet carved with the *Epigraph on the Merits and Virtues of Repairing the Three-storeyed Caves of the Thousand Buddhas*³ established in 1906 in front of grotto number seventeen (where the hidden 'treasure' was found) and on the southern wall of the grotto number sixteen; 2) the letter pleading for a restoration grant known as the '*funding requirement to maintain the Sutras*' or the '*letter by the Taoist Wang*', which was written under the name of Wang Yuanlu around 1908⁴; and 3) the inscription on the tomb stone of Wang Yuanlu entitled the *Epitaph of the Abbot of Tai-Qing Temple Wang Master Fa Zhen (Yuanlu)*⁵ established in 1931 by his Taoist successors Zhao Yuming and Fang Zhifu⁶. Nevertheless, narrations of all these three documents are neither precise nor factual, and the wordings are very 'literary' and inclined to myth creating: for example, in the third document the discovery story was told in a generic way, stating that 'those who saw it were astounded by the miraculous scene and those who heard of it were in awe at these sacred and holy religious relics'⁷. In the '*letter by the Taoist Wang*', it was written:

*In Dunhuang, Gansu⁸ Province, about forty kilometres southeast of this ancient city, was located the Caves of A Thousand Buddhas, previously named as Huang-Qing Si (Royal Celebration Temple)⁹. The caves were built upon a rocky mountain. Inside them were tens of thousands of stone Buddhas, stone niches, and clay sculptures of Buddhist statues. They were made in Tang or Song dynasty, as written on some stone tablets. In our dynasty during the years of the Guangxu Emperor¹⁰ I, a poor Taoist monk, while visiting Dunhuang to worship the universe of Buddha, saw that the grottos and statues were in serious deterioration and were devastated by robbers and thieves from earlier times. Thence, I vowed to raise funds for refurbishment. **Miraculously, in the early morning on the 26th of May in the 26th year (of Guangxu Emperor, 1900), a thundering cracked the sky and all of a sudden in the rocky mountain appeared a fissure. With an assistant we dig with hoes and found a hidden cave and saw a carved stone tablet***

3 The original text in classic Chinese is '重修千佛洞三層樓功德碑記'.

4 Original in Chinese as '催養經款草丹' or '王道士薦疏'. Although the letter was signed with the name of Wang Yuanlu, it is unknown who actually wrote it as Wang Yuanlu was believed to be illiterate by many Dunhuangologists.

5 Original in Chinese as '太清宮大方丈道會司王師法真墓誌', the name Fa Zhen is the given name of Wang Yuanlu in the Taoist school that he attained.

6 Original in Chinese as '趙玉明、方至福'

7 Original in classic Chinese: '以流水疏通三層洞沙,沙裂一孔,仿佛有光,破壁,則有小孔,豁然開朗。內藏唐經萬卷,古物多名。見者驚為奇觀,聞者傳為神物'.

8 Original in Chinese as '甘肅'.

9 Original in Chinese as '皇慶寺'.

10 Original in Chinese as '光緒'.

dated the 5th year of the Ta-Zhong¹¹ nation by Ta De Wu Zheng¹², who was a respected master of three-religions¹³. In the cave there were thousands of ancient manuscripts, including the translated sutras such as the India Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, the Nirvana Sutra, the Multi-Heart Sutra¹⁴, and many others. In the 33rd year and the 34th year (of Guangxu Emperor, 1907 and 1908), the French visiting scholar mister 'Pe-' named 'lilot' and the English Education Minister mister 'S-' named 'tein' arrived at Dunhuang and visited the Thousand Buddhas Caves. With piety they were granted with thousands of manuscripts¹⁵. In the glory of heavens, ten thousand units of silver were kindly promised by you the greatness but they are yet to arrive. This has made it very difficult to continue my work, although over the years I had raised more than twenty thousand units of silver in this small municipality to renovate the temple, the Buddhist statues and the architectural construction of the grottos. Please kindly consider to proceed the grant so the restoration can continue¹⁶.

As we can see in this letter, the description about how he found the 'treasure' was not factual and the event was praised as 'miraculous'. The unearthing seemed to him to have occurring as a result of a mysterious supernatural power—a thundering cracked the sky and all of a sudden in the rocky mountain appeared a fissure'. In fact, the exact year of Wang Yuanlu's discovery has been debated by scholars because the dates in all the aforementioned three documents are not in agreement. By far the year 1900 is presumed to be the most probable date, as both the notes of Pelliot and Stein point to it. Although little is known about the personal life of this abbot and how he dealt with his find in the first

11 Original in Chinese as '大中五年'.

12 Original in Chinese as '大德悟真'.

13 In the common folk belief of China, the Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism belong to the same religious family, and the histories and scripts of each are often intertwined or overlapped for example in terms of saints, teachings and ritual practices.

14 Original in Chinese as '印度經、蓮花經、涅槃經、多心經'.

15 The original sentence is '請去佛經萬卷', which in the Buddhist convention signifies that the sacred manuscripts were respectfully granted to the believers [Pelliot and Stein] to take home to read, practice and worship.

16 The original document is now preserved in the Academy of Dunhuang. It was written in classic Chinese in an Asian format from top to down and from right to left. The English translation is based on the transcription quoted in Su Yin Hui's Introduction to Dunhuangology (蘇瑩輝, 敦煌學概論) and the original in Chinese is as: '(道末湖北省麻城縣人, 現敦煌千佛洞住持王圓祿敬叩, 伏俯叩懇天恩活佛寶台座下, 敬稟者) 茲有甘肅敦煌古郡迤郡東南方距城四十里, 舊有千佛洞, 古名皇慶寺。其洞在石山之側, 內有石佛、石洞、泥塑、佛像, 俱有萬萬之像。惟先朝唐宋重修, 碑跡為證。至本朝光緒皇帝年內, 因貧道游方至敦, 參拜佛宇, 近視洞像, 破壞不堪, 係先年賊匪燒損, 貧道誓願募化補修為念。至貳拾陸年伍月貳拾陸日清晨, 忽有天炮響震, 忽然山裂一縫, 貧道同工人用鋤挖之, 欣出閃佛洞壺所, 內有石碑一個, 上刻大中五年國號, 上載大德悟真名諱, 係三教之尊大法師。內藏古經數萬卷, 上注繙繹經中印度經、蓮花經、涅槃經、多心經, 其經名種頗多。于參拾叁肆年, 有法國游歷學士貝大夫諱希和, 又有陰國教育大臣司大人諱代諾, 二公至敦煌, 親至千佛洞, 請去佛經萬卷。異日覆蒙天恩賜銀壹萬兩, 近聞其名, 而未得其款, 以得佛工不能成就。區區小縣, 屢年募化, 至今創修寺院, 以及補塑佛像, 重修樓殿等項費用, 過銀貳萬有餘。緣為經款, 叩懇青天佛祖電鑒, 特修草丹上達。肅此謹稟。'



FIGURE 2.1 Wang Yuanlu in 1900 (Wikimedia Commons)

place¹⁷, it is for sure that before the Western explorers came to Dunhuang the local officials had been informed. Soon after the discovery, the abbot walked fifty kilometres to see the head of Dunhuang city Yen Zhe¹⁸ with two scrolls of manuscript, which were regarded by the latter as ‘useless old papers.’ In 1902, the abbot travelled again to see the new head of Dunhuang Wong Zhonghan¹⁹, who was a connoisseur and antiquarian collector so was interested enough to visit the caves of Mogao in person. Nevertheless, after he hand-picked a few scrolls from the piles, this Qing literati-government official simply gave the abbot an order to keep them just the way they were found. Not giving up, in 1904 the

abbot went all the way to the capital of Gansu Province, Su-Zhou²⁰, to see the head of the Province Ting Dong²¹, who after seeing the samples presented by the abbot also did nothing, adding ‘my own art of calligraphy was far better.’ Although Ting Dong informed his superior Ye Changchi²² about the news, and the latter did appreciate the Sinological value of the manuscripts, nothing was done to protect the find except taking a few scrolls to add to his own collection. All the attempts of the abbot to get the Chinese authorities to act had failed. It took until 1910 (after Stein came in 1907 and Pelliot in 1908) that the central government of the Qing dynasty made a move to transport ‘the rest’ of the abbot’s finding to the Library of Education Ministry (now the National Library of China) in Peking. Yet this domestic ‘removal’ trip (urged by Luo Zhengyu²³, a distinguished Sinologist who saw a few scrolls demonstrated by Pelliot in 1909 in Peking) proved to be disastrous, as during the long journey from Dunhuang

17 Some said that Wang Yuanlu sold some of the manuscripts to the villagers (the believers), who would burn them into ashes and drank it with water in the belief that these ‘sacred relics’ hold a healing power (as noted by Hu Shi 胡適); some said that Wang Yuanlu has traded them to the local men of letters for money to furnish his monastery or sanctuary, the Tai-Qing temple (太清觀).

18 Original in Chinese as ‘嚴澤’

19 Original in Chinese as ‘汪宗翰’

20 Original in Chinese as ‘肅州’

21 Original in Chinese as ‘廷棟’.

22 Original in Chinese as ‘葉昌熾’.

23 Original in Chinese as ‘羅振玉’.

to Peking, numerous officials and powerful people stole the best parts of the rest of the find²⁴—of which some were hidden away by the abbot before the transfer.

Although a few Chinese literati like Luo Zengyu or Wang Guowei²⁵ at the Qing court recognised the scholarly value of the manuscripts (through the sample demonstrated by Pelliot), the discussion above reveals that the general attitudes of the original discoverer, local people and officials from the region were different. To the Taoist abbot, they were religious objects, sacred relics, worth of worship and believed to possess a supernatural healing power. To those local officials they were ‘useless old papers’ or ‘bad (calligraphy) art’. The piety of the abbot was detailed in the said *Epitaph* written by his successors, where it states that these secretly hidden ancient objects were of monetary worth for several cities, and the expense of renovation raised by Wang Yuanlu was over two hundred thousand units²⁶ of silver²⁷. Stein also noted that the abbot ‘was completely devoted to his religious mission to restore the caves and tried all he could to recover the past glory of the temple imprinted on his mind [...] he spent all the funds that he raised in restoring the temple and never took a penny into his own pocket²⁸. It was because Stein was believed to be an enthusiastic follower²⁹ of the great Buddhist pilgrim-monk Hsü-tsang from the Tang dynasty³⁰ and to thank him for donating five units of silver, the abbot ‘gifted’ (or ‘sold’³¹ to Stein’s understanding) him hundreds of scrolls of manuscripts, so this ‘pious Buddhist follower from the West’ (to the abbot’s mind) could practice and worship the holy scripts at home. Also it was for the purpose of repairing the Mogao Grottos and furnishing his temple that the abbot hid away parts of his find and continued to ‘trade’ or exchange them with foreigners for donations or offerings, rather than transferring them to the Qing court in 1910 with the remaining scrolls.

This attitude, stressing the religious or artistic quality of the Dunhuang objects, was obviously very different from that of the Western explorers, which was ‘scientific’ in orientation and situated within archaeology, anthropology or art history. Such a gap was not bridged until years later, when ‘modernisation’ reached full speed with the modern nation-state of China being established

24 Jin-Bao Liu and (劉進寶), *Essays on the Dunhuang Studies* (Taipei: Hong-Ye culture, 1995). (劉進寶, 敦煌學論述)

25 Original in Chinese as ‘王國維’

26 One unit equals 156,25 grams.

27 Liu and (劉進寶), *Essays on the Dunhuang Studies*. pp 192-204.

28 Stein, *On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and Northwestern China*. p 185.

29 Stein wrote: ‘the priest was obviously impressed by what in my poor Chinese I could tell him of my own devotion to the great pilgrim, and how I had followed his footsteps from India across inhospitable mountains and deserts. See: ‘Stein. p 177.

30 Original in Chinese as ‘唐玄奘’, the monk in Tang dynasty who went to India to bring back original Buddhist sutras written in Sanskrit and translated them into Chinese. See Stein, p 178.

31 This is exactly where the accusation of Chinese scholars on Stein was originated from. Although there was money involved, to the abbot it was not a trade but a donation and the manuscripts were given as a blessed gift according to the religious convention, and the fact that Stein ‘pretended’ to be a Buddhist follower was considered as cheating.

and the younger generation of learned scholars being trained in the West or by Western experts—for example, the Swedish archaeologist, palaeontologist and geologist Johan Andersson (1874-1960) contributed greatly to the initiation of Chinese archaeology while working as an advisor in mining for the Chinese government (his team discovered the prehistoric Peking Man in 1926); and his fellow countryman Sven Hedin (1865-1952) collaborated with the ‘archaeology association of Peking University’ turning his own expedition in 1930 into the Sino-Swedish Expedition³².

2.1.2 Scientific Finds of Archaeology, Anthropology and Art History

2.1.2.1 *Western Expeditions of Orientalists, 1900-1930*

» *Britain: Stein in 1900, 1907, 1914 and 1930*

Sir Marc Aurel Stein (Stein Márk Aurél 1862-1943) was born in Hungary and received his PhD in Sanskrit and Persian from Tübingen University in 1883³³. Working in British India from 1887 to 1899, first as Registrar at the Punjab University and then as Principle at the Oriental College in Lahore and Calcutta Madrasah, he became familiarized with archaeological works in the area and was influenced by the book of Sven Hedin, *Through Asia*, which was published in 1898. Treading in Hedin’s footsteps, Stein made four expeditions to the Chinese Central Asia: 1) 1900-1901 to the Taklamakan Desert oasis of Dandan Oilik, 2) 1906-1908 to Dunhuang, 3) 1913-1916 to Khara-Khoto, and 4) 1930-1931 to the Xinjiang Province. His success from the first expedition enabled him to adopt British nationality and to be knighted in 1904. This expedition was funded by the British Indian government and the local governments of Punjab and Bengal under the agreement that, after being studied in London, the finds should be allocated to specific museums not only in Britain but also in India. His publication about the expedition was entitled the *Sand-Buried Ruins of Khotan*³⁴, which earned him great fame in the field worldwide.

The Dunhuang collection of Stein was mainly the product of his second expedition, which was sixty percent funded by the government of British India and forty percent by the British Museum. The two funders agreed that Stein’s finds should be divided between them proportionally. A detailed report by Stein was published in 1912 entitled the *Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China*³⁵, in which he described how he managed to win the trust of Wang Yuanlu, so acquiring the objects with a very small donation to help him renovate his temple³⁶. He wrote that this took

32 We will return to this in the following section 2.1.1.3 *Nationalist Way of Seeing Ancient Art*.

33 Mirsky, *Sir Aurel Stein: Archaeological Explorer*.

34 Stein, *Sand-Buried Ruins of Khotan*.

35 Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China*.

36 Jan, *Le Voyage En Asie Centrale et Au Tibet : Anthologie Des Voyageurs Occidentaux Du Moyen Age a La Première Moitié Du XXe Siècle*. pp 791-862.



FIGURE 2.2
Aurel Stein with
his dog and
research team in
the Tarim Basin
1910 (Wikimedia
Commons)

place 22nd May 1907 while Stein was at the grotto-site of Mogao, accompanied by local guards assigned by the Chinese government together with his personal secretary and translator, Chiang Xiaowan³⁷:

*The day was cloudless and hot, and the 'soldiers' who had followed me about during the morning with my cameras, were now taking their siesta in sound sleep soothed by a good smoke of opium, so accompanied only by Chiang I went to the temple*³⁸.

In Stein's eyes, the Taoist abbot was a 'very curious figure, extremely shy and nervous, with a face bearing an occasional furtive expression of cunning which was far from encouraging'. Persuaded by Chiang Xiaowan, this shy and cunning abbot agreed to let Stein select the manuscripts and paintings from his miraculous find in secret. Stein wrote:

*The Tao-shih (Taoist monk) had summoned up courage to fall in with my wishes, on the solemn condition that nobody besides us three (Stein, Wang Yuanlu, and Chiang Xiaowan) was to get the slightest inkling of what was being transacted, and that as long as I kept Chinese soil the origin of these 'finds' was not to be revealed to any living being*³⁹.

The 'transaction' (to Stein's interpretation) was composed by twenty-four cases of manuscripts and four cases of paintings from the cave number seventeen and 'two Yambus (M. 1500, incl. M. 340 already paid)⁴⁰.

37 Original in Chinese as: '蔣孝畹'.

38 Stein, *Ruins of Desert Cathay: Personal Narrative of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China*. p 165.

39 Stein. p 181.

40 Jiqing, "Aurel Stein's Dealings with Wang Yuanlu and Chinese Officials in Dunhuang in 1907."

The third expedition to Khara-Khoto was funded solely by the government of British India under the condition that the majority of acquisition should be used to build a new museum in New Delhi except those ‘representative specimen’ and ‘literary remains’ to be taken by the British Museum⁴¹. A total of 182 empty cases were brought over to pack and transport the findings. Together with the gatherings of the two earlier expeditions, the entire ‘Stein collections’ have filled up several exhibition rooms of the British Museum in London and the Museum of Central Asian Antiquities in New Delhi. After this third trip, Stein published the *Serindia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China*⁴². A few years later, in 1929, Stein gave a talk in Boston at the Lowell Institute, and Sir Leonard Woolley praised Stein’s forays as ‘the most daring and adventurous raid upon the ancient world that any archaeologist had attempted’⁴³. Funded by the Americans, Stein’s fourth and final expedition to Dunhuang in 1930 nevertheless was a complete failure (which Stein himself did not talk much about) because of the various rivalries between the British and American diplomats in China, between the Fogg Museum of Harvard University and the British Museum, and between the art historian Langdon Warner from Harvard and Stein. But the main reason was that the situation in China was completely different from a decade earlier: by 1930, the Qing dynasty has been overthrown for about two decades by the Republic of China and the anti-imperialist May Fourth Movement has taken place in Peking after WWI, a strong awareness of protecting cultural property or ‘national treasures’ was evoked by the upsurge of nationalism.

The collections of Stein are now to be found in Britain and in India. In Britain, they were scattered at fifteen GLAM institutes located in London, Oxford and Cambridge with the majority stored by the British Museum, British Library, British Academy and the Victoria and Albert Museum⁴⁴. The learned societies such as the Royal Asiatic Society, Royal Geographical Society or Royal Society for Asian Affairs, that endorsed or awarded Stein, also received a few items of Stein’s collections. Although in 1923, 1932 and 1933 the government of British India gave permanent loans of Stein’s collections, consisting of hundreds of textile fragments, to the Victoria and Albert Museum, a total number of about 12,000 from Chinese Turkestan remained at the National Museum of India in New Delhi (formerly the museum of Central Asian Antiquities)⁴⁵.

» *France: Pelliot in 1908*

Similar to Stein, who learned about Dunhuang from the British colony in India, Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) became acquainted with it via the French colony in Indochina. Graduating from the *École des Langues Orientales Vivantes*, he went to Hanoi (the capital of Indochina) in 1900, working as a researcher at the *École Française d’Extrême Orient*. Upon arrival, he was commissioned to Peking with

41 “Sir Aurel Stein - Victoria & Albert Museum.”

42 Stein, *Serindia: Detailed Report of Explorations in Central Asia and Westernmost China*.

43 Brysac, “Last of the ‘Foreign Devils.’”

44 Wang and Perkins, *Handbook to the Collections of Sir Aurel Stein in the UK*.

45 “Central Asian Antiquities - National Museum, New Delhi.”

a mission to enrich the École's Chinese book collections and earned the Légion d'Honneur because of his heroic behaviour confronting the Boxer Rebellion. Coming back to Paris, he was appointed by the Third Republic of France, through the French Committee under the International Middle and East Asian Association,⁴⁶ to lead a publicly funded archaeological expedition to Chinese Turkestan. With a team consisting of geographer and doctor Louis Vaillant (1876-1963) and the naturalist and photographer Charles Nouette (1869-1910), Pelliot set off in 1906 and arrived at Dunhuang alone in 1908⁴⁷. Speaking 13 languages including Chinese, Mongolian, Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Tibetan and Sanskrit⁴⁸, Pelliot was able to handpick 'the best parts' of Wang Yuanlu's finding and so formed the most prestigious collection of Chinese manuscripts known as the *Fonds Pelliot de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.

Pelliot has described how he managed to accomplish his selecting of Dunhuang objects inside the dark cave number seventeen of Mogao:

Enfin la clef arriva, et le 3 mars, pour le mardi gras, je pus entrer dans le saint des saints ; je fus stupéfié. Depuis huit ans qu'on puise à cette bibliothèque, je la croyais singulièrement réduite. Imaginez ma surprise en me trouvant dans une niche d'environ 2 m. 50 en tous sens, et garnie sur trois côtés, plus qu'à hauteur d'homme, de deux et parfois trois profondeurs de rouleaux. D'énormes manuscrits tibétains serrés entre deux planchettes par des cordes s'empilaient dans un coin ; ailleurs des caractères chinois et tibétains sortaient du bout des liasses. Je défis quelques paquets. Les manuscrits étaient le plus souvent fragmentaires, amputés de la tête ou de la queue, brisés par le milieu, parfois réduits au seul titre ; mais les quelques dates que je lus étaient toutes antérieures au XIe siècle, et dès

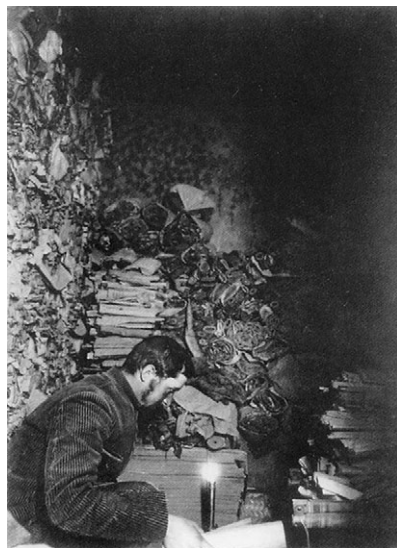


FIGURE 2.3 Paul Pelliot examining manuscripts in Cave 17 at Mogao Caves in 1908 (Wikimedia Commons)

46 The International Middle and East Association—which was proposed to be established in 1899 in Rome during the 12th International Congress of Orientalists and was actually established in 1902 in Hamburg during the 13th Congress—has funded Pelliot's expedition. And the Association's funding came from the Russian Tsar. We will come back to this in Chapter 2.2.

47 Rong, *Account on Foreign Collections of Dunhuang and Turfan Manuscripts* (海外敦煌吐魯番文獻知見錄). p 41.

48 Honey, *Incense at the Altar: Pioneering Sinologists and the Development of Classical Chinese Philosophy*.

ce premier soudage, je rencontrais quelques feuillets d'un pothi en brâhmî et d'un autre en ouïgour. Mon parti fut vite pris L'examen au mois sommaire de toute la bibliothèque s'imposait, où qu'il dût me mener De dérouler d'un bout à l'autre les quelque 15.000 à 20.000 rouleaux qui se trouvaient là, il n'y fallait pas songer ; je n'en eusse pas vu la fin en six mois. Mais je devais au moins tout ouvrir, reconnaître la nature de chaque texte, et quelles chances il offrait d'être nouveau pour nous ; puis faire deux parts, l'une de crème, de gratin de ce qu'il fallait se faire céder à tout prix, et l'autre qu'on tâcherait d'obtenir, tout en se résignant, le cas échéant, à la laisser échapper. Malgré que j'aie fait diligence, ce départ m'a pris plus de trois semaines. Les dix premiers jours, j'abattais près de 1,000 rouleaux par jour, ce que doit être un record : le 100 à l'heure accroupi dans une niche, allure d'automobile à l'usage des philologues. J'ai ralenti ensuite... Je ne pense pas avoir rien négligé d'essentiel. Il n'est pas seulement un rouleau, mais un chiffon de papier—et Dieu sait s'il y en avait de ces logues,—qui ne m'ait passé par le mains, et je n'ai rien écarté qui ne m'ait paru sortir du cadre que je m'étais tracé⁴⁹.

In this detailed fieldnote we could see that how surprised Pelliot was to see that so many (15,000 to 20,000 scrolls) manuscripts were still there as it had been eight long years since the abbot's discovery and especially that Stein had just visited a year before. He stayed inside the grotto working day and night (for ten days he inspected approximately 1,000 scrolls per day). After sending his collection back to France, Pelliot made a show in Peking to present his find to Chinese scholars. Returning to Paris, on February 25th 1910, he presented a scientific report to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres and, on March 12th, the 'salle Pelliot' was inaugurated at the Louvre Museum to display his gatherings.

Different from the Stein's expeditions, which were archaeological art in nature and directly sponsored by museums for acquisitions, Pelliot's mission had multiple tasks including a topographic survey and natural history studies. Originally proposed by Émile Senart from the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, with the aim of catching up with the English, German and Russian achievements in exploring Central Asia, the funding for Pelliot's expedition came from not only the Académie but also the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle and the Society of Geography⁵⁰. In addition, it was revealed decades later that Pelliot's expedition received extra funding provided by the Russian Empire through the said French Committee of the International Middle and East Asian Association, together with a secret arrangement to include to his crew a Russian lieutenant and the Tsar's military espionage in disguise of ethnographer, the Russian (Swedish-Finnish) Carl Mannerheim. What remains unknown is the French view of such scheme.

Prior to Pelliot's own archaeological report in 1910, already in 1909 an account entitled *La mission géographique et archéologique de Pelliot* was published

49 Renou, "Notice Sur La Vie et Les Travaux de M. Paul Pelliot, Membre de l'Académie."

50 Jarrige, "Les Carnets de Route de Paul Pelliot (1906-1908): Un Document Exceptionnel Enfin Publié."

by Zimmermann in the *Annales de géographie*⁵¹. As a Sinologist, Pelliot was able to study his own collections. From 1920 to 1924 he published six volumes of planches entitled *Mission Pelliot en Asie centrale I, Les grottes de Touen-houang, Peinture et sculptures bouddhiques des époques des Wei, des T'ang et des Song, and Sûtra des causes et des effets du bien et du mal*⁵². However, the original fieldnotes of Pelliot preserved in the library of Musée Guimet—a total of six carnets (one has gone missing)—were never published as a whole until the turn of the last millennium (under the sponsorship of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation from the United States). In this latest publication, *Les Carnets de Route de Paul Pelliot*, around 1,700 photographs were included as were the original notes of Pelliot, written in Chinese, Russian and many other languages. It is worth noticing that these photographic images taken by Nouette remained the only documentation about the Mogao Grottos and have become extremely valuable as many of the caves and murals were destroyed, particularly during 1920-1921 when White Russian troops occupied the site fleeing from the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917⁵³. In a certain way, Pelliot remains an enigmatic figure: he closed the cave number seventeen right after his departure and he made it extremely difficult for others to access his collections, which were locked in the basement of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (to which the only key was chained to his waist). Besides, he was bitterly attacked for forgeries by his peers in France in the 1910s (to that Stein has given concern). And being the only Western orientalist revealing the existence of Dunhuang objects to the Chinese literati in Peking, and as the collaborated editor of *T'oung Pao* for decades, his death in 1945 strangely received little attention in China⁵⁴.

» *Russia: Oldenburg in 1909 and 1914*

Being the neighbouring country of China, and having border conflicts as early as the beginning of Qing dynasty, Russia (the major player of the Great Game with Britain) enjoyed a long tradition of gathering geographic, military and ethnographic information from Central Asia. As early as 1879 Nicolaï Prjevalski (1839-1888) had described the Caves of a 'Thousand Buddhas as an 'anonymous oasis with a thousand or hundreds of grottos' in the report of his third exploration to Chinese Turkestan⁵⁵. At the 12th International Congress of Orientalists, held in Rome in 1899, Radloff introduced Klementz's discovery in Turpan and immediately aroused a great interest amongst Western orientalists. Radloff went up to propose the Congress to establish an 'international association (International Middle and East Asian Association)' to facilitate cooperation of orientalism. The charter was passed in the 13th Congress held in Hamburg in 1902 and the Russian Committee established by Radloff and Oldenburg, under the approval

51 Zimmermann, "La Mission Paul Pelliot."

52 Sawicki, "PELLIOT Paul, Eugène."

53 Agnew and Wang, "Stemming the Tide of Deterioration: Conservation and Collaboration at the Mogao Cave Temples of Dunhaung."

54 Wood, *The Silk Road: Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia*. pp 208-212.

55 Prjevalsky, "Dunhuang, Oasis Anonyme En 1879."

of the Tsar, played a leading role to all other national committees with financial support provided from Russia. In fact, these committees were not only academic but also political. For example, the members of Russian Committee comprised not only the Academy of Sciences, the Department of Oriental Studies of St. Petersburg University, the Committee of Archaeology, the Society of Geography and the Society of Russian Archaeology but also the major ministries in royal affairs, national defence, finance, public education and domestic affairs. Indeed the Russian Committee was subordinated directly to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is evident that such 'academic network' designed to share scientific information was involved with an imperialistic agenda⁵⁶, considering that it was exactly through this network (between the Russian Committee and the French Committee of the Association of the Congress) that Mannerheim's 'secret mission' was incorporated into Pelliot's 'scientific expedition' to Dunhuang.

The Russian Dunhuang collections were put together by Sergueï Oldenburg (1843-1924), a Buddhist art historian and Indologist. Although he was commissioned to lead an expedition to Central Asia in 1903, right after the establishment of the Russian Committee of the Association, this plan was interrupted by the Russian-Japanese War. It was not until 1909 that he finally set off with public funding of 35,000 roubles to explore the area of Turpan. With great success, he brought back to Russia a massive number of artefacts, together with his detailed fieldnotes and drawings of topography. In 1914, he undertook a second expedition to Dunhuang, with funding of 100,000 roubles. Arriving on the 20th August 1914, a few months after Stein's third expedition, he endeavoured to study the site of Mogao, concluding that they were built about 1,500 years ago and the murals were well preserved because of the dry climate of desert. Oldenburg stayed there till February 1915. He completed more than 443 drawings about the façades of grottos, took more than 2,000 photographs, acquired numerous fragments of murals, paintings on textile, silk and paper and purchased a certain amount of the manuscripts from the abbot.

These collections were transported to St. Petersburg and stored at the Asian Museum (the predecessor of the Department of Oriental Studies of Academy of Science) and the Hermitage Museum together with Oldenburg's scientific reports, drawings of topography, ethnographic materials, fieldnotes and diaries. However, for a very long time, they were not known to the world as few publications had been produced on the collections. It was not until the 25th International Congress of Orientalists, held in Moscow in 1960, that the existence of these collections were revealed to foreign scholars. In 1963 and in 1967, two catalogues were published which contained about one-third of the collection of Chinese manuscripts. In 1986, a more detailed report about the entire Oldenburg collections was presented at the International Conference of Dunhuang Studies held in Taipei, by a Chinese scholar affiliated to the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) of France.

56 Liu (劉進寶). pp 222-225.

» *Germany: Grünwedel in 1902, Le Coq in 1904 and both in 1905*

Albert Grünwedel (1856-1935), the deputy director of the Indian Department and Ethnographic Collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin⁵⁷ since 1883, was commissioned to lead the first German expedition to Central Asia in the company of an art historian George Hurh, in the winter of 1902. Prior to this, he was invited in 1899 by the Russian orientalists Radloff and Salemann to participate in a Russian exploration to the northern part of Chinese Turkestan and was very impressed by the abundant archaeological remains along the Silk Roads⁵⁸. For his own expedition, twenty-five percent of the total budget was sponsored by his Museum and the rest was covered by the private collector and industrialist, Friedrich Krupp (1854-1902), the German magnate of armaments⁵⁹, and the Berlin Committee for the Advancement of Ethnology⁶⁰. The targeted area was Turpan and the result was published in 1905 in his *Bericht über archäologische Arbeiten in Idikutschahri und Umgebung im Winter 1902-1903* (Report on Archaeological Work in Idikutschahri and the Surrounding Areas in Winter 1902-1903). A total of twenty-six cases of fresco, manuscript and sculpture were brought back to Berlin and became an immediate sensation. The German Emperor and the Krupp family then created a special fund right away to support a second expedition (which took place in 1905). As Grünwedel fell ill and Hurth died, Albert von Le Coq (1860-1930) was chosen by the Committee for the mission. Being a prominent Indologist, Tibetologist, art historian and archaeologist, Grünwedel has accomplished more than a hundred publications on archaeology and art history. His contribution to the Buddhist art history was especially acknowledged as he established a connection between the visual arts of Greece, Rome, Persia, India and China and built a theoretical ground for the Greek origin in the Gandhara style of Buddhist art and its variations throughout Central Asia⁶¹.

As an archaeologist of high ethical standards, Grünwedel took great concern on the archaeological methodology and insisted to document the site well before removing the finds, however many of his peers were just keen to hoard as many valuable pieces as possible without any fieldnotes, photographs or making any drawings. His successor Le Coq (who was a wealthy merchant taking up the archaeological career in his forties) was unfortunately one of these less ethical explorers. With a recommendation letter from the Russian Academy of Science, and with a sponsorship of 32,000 German gold marks given by the

57 Now it is part of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

58 Yarshater, "Grünwedel, Albert."

59 Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia*. *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984). pp 110-147. The French translation of this book was entitled '*Bouddhas et Rôdeurs sur la Route de la Soie*' where it was specified that the modification of the title from its English original was to leave room for the readers to decide how those explorers should be judged. See Philippe Picquier, 1995, l'édition de poche, p 164.

60 Hopkirk. p 214.

61 Grünwedel, *Mythology of Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia Guide to the Lamaist Collection Prince Ukhtomsky*.

German Emperor Wilhelm II⁶² (who, as the head of the new German Empire which emerged after the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, was eager to cut a piece of the 'China pie' from the Great Game), Le Coq went to Turpan in 1905 and, using a saw, removed 360 kilograms (in 305 cases) of wall-carvings, frescos, artefacts, icons and murals which were brought back to Berlin to fill all thirteen rooms of the Museum für Völkerkunde. In response, Grünwedel criticised his methods and said that the artefacts acquired in this way were like looted treasures rather than scientific specimens. In fact, while Le Coq was still in Hami, a Turkman-merchant told him about Wang Yuanlu's discovery in Dunhuang. But as he needed to meet up with his superior Grünwedel, who was on the way to join him in Kashgar, he had but to leave the 'treasures' of Dunhuang to Stein and Pelliot. Besides, in the Kucha region, as the 'international race for antiquities' by the German, Russian and Japanese expeditions became frenzied, certain settlements were agreed to regulate each country's 'interest zone', so it would be clear 'who has the right to dig what and where' in Chinese Central Asia⁶³. The account of the second German expedition in 1905 was published by Grünwedel in the *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten in Chinesisch-Turkistan (Ancient Buddhist Religion in Chinese Turkistan)* in 1912 and by Le Coq in the *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan* in 1928⁶⁴. Although Le Coq had planned another expedition to Central Asia, WWI put a stop to it.

Like many other museums and historic buildings in Germany, the Museums für Völkerkunde in Berlin suffered considerable damage during WWII. The 'treasures' collected by Grünwedel and Le Coq were partly destroyed in the air raids of the Allies during 1944, including the twenty-eight large murals which were cut and removed from the Bezeklik Caves⁶⁵ in Turpan. This was mainly due to the fact that they were cemented to the walls of exhibition room, whereas most of the 'movable objects' could be transferred to the safeguarded bunker at Berlin Zoo or the bottom of West German coal mines. In contrast, the manuscript-collections were well-kept in the Prussian Academy. According to statistics, a total of sixty percent of the German Dunhuang collection were spared from the War and can be found now in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin). It is worth stating that some of the collection stored at the Berlin Zoo were taken by the Soviets in 1945 as war booty. At least eight or nine crates of clay sculptures were transferred to Russia, and their location remains unknown to this day. In addition, a large amount of Indian and Turkestan sculptures in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin were also plundered by the Russian army, and some of them can now be seen in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Although the demand of repatriation was proposed by the German authority, no action has yet been taken (unlike the case with the impressionist paintings).

62 Parzinger, *Terra X Schatzjagd an Der Seidenstrabe*.

63 Judy Bonavia, *The Silk Road: Xi'an to Kashgar (Odyssey, 2008)*.

64 von Le Coq, Albert. *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*. (Oxford, 1986)

65 Sato, Onishi, and Kitamoto, "Central Asian Buddhism: Turfan and the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves."

» *The United States: Warner in 1924, 1925 (and Stein in 1930)*

Having emerged as a new world power, the United States started to follow in the footsteps of European orientalism to Central Asia with a pure purpose to increase museum acquisition. Already having started to systematically purchase artworks from Europe, to 'catch up' culturally with the old continent since the late 19th century, the American institutes of arts and culture were eager to obtain Asian arts from China as well. In 1913, the Smithsonian Institution sent a young Harvard graduate of art history, Langdon Warner (1881-1995), to Peking to study the feasibility of establishing an 'American archaeology school' following the common models built in Rome and Athens. Warner's report⁶⁶ published in 1914 mentioned that, on his way to Peking, he went to Europe to see Stein's collections in the British Museum and Le Coq's collections in the Museum für Völkerkunde, and he also met up with Pelliot and Pelliot's teacher Chavannes in person to make himself familiar with the archaeological works of Chinese Turkestan. Knowing that this young art historian who was anxious to earn 'a name in the field', in 1923 Edward Forbes the Director of the Fogg Museum of Harvard University chose this red-haired young archaeologist (the prototype of Indiana Jones for Spielberg from Hollywood) for the very first American expedition to Dunhuang, with a donation of 46,400 dollars solicited from those wealthy members of Harvard Friends, including Forbes, Sachs, Walter, Warburg, Crane and Rockefeller. Another Harvard graduate, Horace Howard Furness Jayne, was also hired as an expedition member. They arrived at Dunhuang on the 21st January 1924, fully prepared with cutting-edge equipment, to try a new method of 'removing' the murals from the Mogao Grottos.

Being the 'most visually educated' explorer to visit the site, Warner was enraged to see how the White Russian troops had damaged the murals, the rest of which he vowed to 'rescue' home⁶⁷. After negotiating, in the presence of Wang Yuanlu Warner performed his experiment: cloths were soaked in barrels of thick glue and then put onto the surfaces of wall paintings, which, when dried, were peeled off using the cloths. He used this 'scientific method' to remove several murals of the grottos, writing to Forbes that the result would be 'the first murals removed from the walls without being seriously marred by saw marks, and they are undoubtedly of an aesthetic and historic value equal to any Chinese paintings which have hitherto come to this country'⁶⁸. To secure more museum acquisitions of Chinese art, Sachs and Forbes raised another 50,000 dollars to secure a second expedition, led again by Warner in 1925. However, this time it was a complete failure. Already in Peking before setting off to Dunhuang, Warner was 'warned most emphatically...that nothing can be removed from the chapels' while applying for permission to 'study and photograph the caves' from the Chinese government. A team led by Warner's team member Jayne left first

66 Warner, "Report on the Advisability of Founding an American School of Archaeology in Peking."

67 Andrews, Shen, and Spence, *A Century in Crisis: Modernity and Tradition in the Art of Twentieth-Century China*.

68 Meyer and Blair Brysac, "Barrels of Glue."

to Dunhuang while waiting for permission, however while approaching they encountered a large protest by local peasants calling them the 'foreign devils' who destroyed their sacred Buddhist statues. Jayne wrote to Warner that 'after you had left last year the populace was exceedingly displeased with what had been removed, had raised a fearful roar and accused the magistrate of Dunhuang of accepting a bribe to allow you to take things away, and in consequence thereof he had to be removed from office'. Thus Warner stopped his trip at Anxi⁶⁹. In a letter to Forbes, Jayne said 'I came to the conclusion that it was folly to attempt to remove any frescoes' though they had discussed and planned earlier to remove and transport an entire grotto-mural back to the United States by aeroplane. Jayne continued in the letter:

It was a very different matter to remove a few fragments of damaged frescoes, which could be done swiftly without attracting attention or causing undue distress among the monks or local people, compared with attempting to take away one or more complete caves, a matter of three or four months' work at least which would inevitably attract great local attention and probably actual disturbances... we would probably have gotten into an equal amount of hot water, besides, thereby jeopardizing future expeditions, either sent out by the Fogg or, which would be even worse, by the Big Scheme⁷⁰.

As a matter of fact, Warner's expedition the year before in 1924 had aroused tensed reaction in Peking. In 1926, shortly after Warner's second expedition, the Chinese National Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities was officially established and, in 1928, a special law to protect historical remains and antiquities was proposed. This law came into force in 1930. Since then, foreign archaeologists were prohibited to carry out any excavations without permission, or to remove or send any findings away from the soil of Chinese territory. To acquire a permission, the applicant must include Chinese scholars as team members and the findings must stay in China except duplicates or samples for educational purposes. It was under such circumstances that the Sino-Swedish Expedition in 1928 was led by Hedin (as mentioned earlier) and the Sino-French Expedition, sponsored by Citroën, was led by the Director of Musée Guimet in 1929. To comply, the Fogg Museum modified the original plan into forming a Sino-American Expedition managed by the Museum of Natural History and led by Stein (instead of Warner who became ill-reputed in China) in 1930. Nevertheless, this expedition was another failure. The local officer in Dunhuang, Hung Ye, after receiving them kept a close watch on Stein. The news about the expedition, reported in the capital area (for example in Tianjin), denounced Stein as a 'vandal' and 'villain' and said that his mission was intended to plunder the antique treasures in Xinjiang.

69 Meyer and Blair Brysac. p 76.

70 The Big Scheme referred to the planned collaboration between American and Chinese scholars of Harvard University and Peking University, as a result the Harvard-Yenching Institute as established in 1928.

Fearing that Stein would jeopardize the future of the Big Scheme, Fogg called off Stein's mission.

After the expedition, Warner published his two exploration diaries entitled *The Long Old Road in China* and *Wan Fo Hsia*⁷¹. To his dismay, he did not 'earn a good name' in the field but stayed a rather controversial figure. In defending his 'pillage' he claimed that he was to rescue the Dunhuang objects from the ignorance of local residents, the rebellion of Muslims or possible war damage. But to the Chinese, these arguments were not valid. The Dunhuang Academy while renovating the site has specifically marked the exhibit of an emptied and broken shrine at one of those grottos 'worked' by Warner in order to show the damage to the original site after objects were removed to the exhibition room of Fogg Museum. In fact, a total of twenty-six Tang dynasty frescos were removed by Warner from caves numbered 335, 321, 323, 328 and 320. And, despite the claimed advantages of his 'scientific method', most of the peeled murals were permanently damaged due to chemical components of the glue. Out of twenty-six murals, only five remained in a good enough condition to be put on display⁷².

2.1.1.2 *Pilgrimage of Japanese Buddhist in 1902, 1908 and 1910*

Since the modernisation of Japan in the mid-19th century under the rule of Emperor Meiji, 'students' were systematically sent to Britain, France, Germany and the United States. Otani Kozui (1876-1948) was one of them. Just he was not an ordinary student but a man of high social status—he was the 22nd abbot of the West Hongan Monastery (Nishi Honganji) leading the sub-sect of the Jodo Shinshu (Pure Land) Buddhism in Kyoto⁷³, and his wife was the elder sister of the Empress to the Emperor Taisho, who reigned Japan from 1912 to 1926. Otani took an interest in the work of orientalists (like Hedin and Stein) while studying at the Ryukoku University in Kyoto, after dropping out from two schools in Tokyo. In 1900, he went to London to 'study' as a member of the Royal Geographic Society, with the aim of organising the very first Japanese expedition. This expedition, in 1902, set off from St. Petersburg and covered the areas of Hotan and Kucha. Led by Otani, the team members included Honda Eryu, Inoue Koen, Watanabe Tesshin and Hori Kenyu. However, unlike Hedin's or Stein's expeditions, which were 'scientific' in nature, the mission of Otani's exploration was mysterious. In his own words, written on 14th January 1903, he said that he spotted 'a miraculous light from the mountain where Gautama Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) had given a teaching while he had been living in this world'⁷⁴. He then received news

71 Plumer, "Langdon Warner (1881-1955)."

72 Meyer and Blair Brysac, "Barrels of Glue."

73 This sect was one of the three largest Buddhist sects in Japan, and it is known now that this sect was keen to collaborate with the Japanese military, who used the sect's Buddhist priesthood in intelligence gathering operations by allowing military officers to disguise as monks or vice versa. See Boyd, "Undercover Acolytes: Honganji, the Japanese Army, and Intelligence-Gathering Operations."

74 長澤和俊, *Anthology of the diaries from the journey to the west borderland*, Tokyo: Baishui publishing, 2004. (西域坦險記行選集, 東京: 白水社)

that his father had died and so he had to leave the team and return to Japan—this occurred right before the Russo-Japanese War, which took place in 1904 (in the northeast of China), and Otani used the opportunity to send a whole troop of monks from his Monastery to join the Japanese army as missionaries under the excuse of ‘preaching Buddhism’ in China (such operation has well continued till the end of WWII). To hold the collections amassed from this expedition, Otani built a villa in Kyoto in 1908 and, in the same year, sponsored a second expedition led by his student-monk of the Monastery, Zuicho Tachibana (1890-1968), to cover Turfan, Lopnol, Kucha and Hotan. In 1910 (until 1914), a third expedition was sent again under the lead of Tachibana to explore Dunhuang and the north route of Tienshan. In 1914, Tachibana met up with Koichiro Yoshikawa (also sent by Otani) and travelled to Dunhuang acquiring 600 scrolls from Wang Yuanlu and then disappeared. During the same year, Otani resigned from the position of abbot due to ‘financial difficulty’ and ‘retired’ to the northeast part of China (Manchuria)⁷⁵, which was occupied by Japan at that time and became the base to invade the whole of China⁷⁶.

Although the Japanese authorities insisted that the purposes of Otani’s expeditions were purely ‘religious’ or ‘scientific’—this abbot was only tracing the path of Buddhism coming to Japan from India via China⁷⁷ and the correspondences between him and Stein between 1906 and 1910 were used to support this claim—certain facts about Otani have been revealed which suggest otherwise. For example, Otani has been described as ‘the sub-sect’s most xenophobic, racist and nationalist abbot’⁷⁸ and actually proposed the ideology Great Asianism (or Japanese pan-Asianism)—central to Japanese propaganda and used to justify invading the Asian countries during WWII—to support the colonial agenda of the Japanese Empire. Being suspected by some of his European competitors, like Le Coq or Oldenburg, of being a military scout, Otani was found to be behind several emissaries to Lhasa such as Aoki Bunkyo and Tada Tokan⁷⁹. British intelligence, which closely followed the Otani expeditions, also discovered that the two members of the second expedition, Tachibana and Nomura, were identified by a Russian informer as Japanese military—the former coming from the Imperial Navy instead of the Monastery and the latter being a Japanese Army captain rather than a personal secretary of Otani. These two ‘scouts’ undertook extensive and

75 Otani remained politically active in the arena of international relations and politics. Staying in extremely low profile, most of his missions and involvements with organizations in the Japanese colonies such as Korea and Manchuria remained mysterious. For example, the exact details how and why he met up with doctor Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) and his connection to the South Manchuria Railway Co. were unknown. And only a very few facts became known about Otani’s role in implementing the Japanese colonial expansion. One of them was revealed in an interview of Watanabe in 1966: Watanabe pointed out that it was Otani Kozui who had drafted the plan for him to administer the Malay Peninsula.

76 Myers, Peattie, and Zhen, *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, p 128.

77 Galambos and Koichi, “Japanese Exploration of Central Asia: The Otani Expedition and Their British Connections.”

78 Berry, *Monks, Spies and A Soldier of Fortune: The Japanese In Tibet*, p 8.

79 Berry, p 56.

unrequired surveys and sketches, as well as examining and following the telegraph network in Tibet (though this was disavowed by their Government). In addition, British intelligence also confirmed that a Japanese spy under the name of Mr. Ama was involved in these expeditions, working for the Japanese Secret Service⁸⁰.

The collections gathered by the Otani expeditions were not treated 'religiously' (to be worshiped in Buddhist temples) or 'scientifically' (to be preserved in museums or libraries) but rather as mere 'treasures' held at Otani's private villa in Kyoto. Judged to be the third largest hoard of Dunhuang objects, they were later sold together with Otani's villa in Kyoto, and ended up dispersed all around Japan, China (Manchuria) and Korea⁸¹. The remains in Japan are now to be found in the Kyoto Museum, Tokyo National Museum and the Buddhist Ryukoku University's Omiya Library. In the third of these institutions, the objects are collected under the title *Cultural Materials of the West Collected by the Otani Expedition*. Together with other documents found in the region of Chinese Central Asia, the total amount of manuscripts gathered by Tachibana are said to amount to 600 scrolls. Those that he purchased in 1914 from Wang Yuanlu were hidden by the latter in a stucco Buddha (this was supposed to have been transferred to the Qing court, as ordered in 1910⁸²). The Tokyo National Museum published the *Archaeologic Catalogue of West Borderland* in 1916, the *New Travel Notes of West Borderland* in 1937, the *Catalogue of Otani Exploration* in 1971, and the *Cultures of West Borderland* (in a series of seven volumes) in the period of time between 1958 and 1963⁸³. Nevertheless, it remains unknown, to this date, the exact amount and content of Dunhuang objects obtained by the Otani expeditions.

2.1.2.3 *Military Espionage of Finland, the Grand Duchy of Russia, in 1906*

The Finnish discovery story is a similar one to the Japanese version, described above. However, unlike the latter the Finnish expedition is openly admitted to be a military espionage, carried out by Carl Gustav Mannerheim (1867-1951) under the cover of scientific expedition sent by the Tsar Nicolai II. While Finland was still under Russian rule, Baron Mannerheim was a lieutenant general in the Imperial Russian Army. Immediately after returning to St. Petersburg from Manchuria, where he volunteered to participate the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, Mannerheim received an order to be a secret intelligence officer from General Palytsyn, who wanted to inspect the detailed situation of China's modernisation. Through the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Palytsyn obtained the consent from the French Government to utilise Pelliot's expedition as a cover so Mannerheim could appear to be more like an ordinary citizen and an explorer of ethnography. Equipped with cutting-edge equipment to gather materials

80 "Count Kozui Omani 1876-1948."

81 Until now in the 21st century there are still objects noted as the Dunhuang manuscripts of Otani appeared in some auctions houses in China. See Chen, "Otani Dunhuang Manuscript on Auction (大谷光瑞旧藏领衔荣宝春拍10件国家一级文物敦煌写经专题)."

82 Crossland-Guo, "A Century of Regret Coming to an End."

83 西域考古圖譜, 1916, 國華社。新西域記, 1937, 有光社。東京國立博物館圖版目錄 (大谷探險隊將來品篇) 1971。西域文化研究, 1958-1963 法藏館。

of archaeology and natural history, the real mission of Mannerheim was to collect military information about the garrisons in the west frontier of China, so to find out how the army and administration systems of China had been reformed or modernised and specifically to investigate possible routes for the Russian troops to approach Lanzhou and Peking⁸⁴. The reason why Mannerheim was a perfect candidate for such assignments is that he was not Russian (but Swedish-Finn), he spoke many languages, he knew China (Manchuria) and was acquainted with Pelliot through the Swedish fennoman Otto Donner (1835-1909) who founded the Finno-Ugrian Society⁸⁵. On the French side, the young Pelliot whose first career choice was to be a diplomat while graduating from the Science Politique, accepted favourably this settlement, coming as it did with extra funding from Russia, on the condition that he be the only leader of the expedition to decide which routes to take. In return, Pelliot promised to share all 'useful information' with Mannerheim. Their co-journey started in July 1906 but ended in October, having covering the areas of Taschkent and Kachgar, due to their disagreements on financial issues and, in particular, with Mannerheim unsatisfied that Pelliot held tight onto his authority of being the only leader. This Franco-Russian (Finnish) collaboration thus stopped right after crossing the Chinese border.

As a matter of fact, Mannerheim arrived at Dunhuang much sooner than Pelliot, according to his diary dated on the 14th of November 1907. However, he stayed in the region for only four days and he did not visit Mogao Grottos. He would have had a chance to make his name as Stein just left six months previously and Pelliot had yet to arrive (in February 1908). In his diary, he wrote:

I had intended to visit a miao (temple) called 'Chien fo-tung', lying in a gorge in the mountains... However, the pheasants and djeirans were too tempting... After losing much time in shooting we reached the mouth of the gorge, but the sun was already so low that we had no alternative than to drop all idea of the 'thousand gods' and try to find out way back to the sarai before nightfall⁸⁶.

After two years of exploration in Chinese Central Asia, on his way back to Russia Mannerheim stayed a whole month at the Russian Embassy in Peking to prepare a detailed report for General Palytsyn and the Tsar. There he included the fieldnotes for the entire trip covering 3,087 kilometres, the meticulous plans of all eighteen garrison towns in the region, the schematic maps of Chinese troops positions, and the documentation about meeting up with the 13th Dalai Lama of Tibet (who was in exile at a monastery in the Wutai mountain around the mid-summer of 1908)⁸⁷. This report was printed in 1909 for the Russian army to invade Xinjiang and Gansu of China.

Although only his cover-story, Mannerheim prepared himself well to pretend being an ethnographer, and had actually fulfilled the assignments to collect

84 Mannerheim Foundation, "La Mission de Renseignement de Chine."

85 Tamm, "Mannerheim as Ethnographer."

86 Ratio, "Mannerheim's Central Asian Expedition of 1906-1908."

87 Halén, "Mannerheim, Carl Gustaf Emil."

scientific specimen for the Finno-Ugrian Society and the Antell Delegation. Provided with extra funding by these two learned societies, Mannerheim was requested to transcribe inscriptions, to purchase manuscripts and archaeological items, to make anthropometric measurements, to photograph indigenous peoples and to assemble ethnographic and linguistic materials⁸⁸. Before departing for the expedition, Mannerheim completed extensive readings of relevant literature, for example the *Hints to Travellers and Notes and Queries on Anthropology* for 'practical knowledge' and the travelogues of Marco Polo, Nikolai Przhevsky, Sven Hedin and Aurel Stein for learning the field⁸⁹. With an advanced camera purchased from Sweden, Mannerheim took about 1,300 photographs of various indigenous peoples in Chinese Central Asia, carried out anthropometric measurements and collected around 1,200 objects from the Sart, Kirghiz, yellow Uigur, Tibetan and Chinese. All these formed a well-established collection for the National Museum of Finland located in Helsinki after independence (in 1917), except his manuscripts and fieldnotes which were preserved by the Finno-Ugrian Society. Although the size of the manuscript collection bought from local 'treasure hunters' of Turfan is rather big, the majority of them are in fragments. Judging by physical condition, there are 204 large pieces, 592 medium sized pieces and 1,175 small pieces⁹⁰. Most of them are in Chinese and the rest in Uighur and Sogdian. In 1911 Mannerheim published his fieldnotes about the 'yellow Uigur people'. In the 1930s Mannerheim's travel diaries were published both in Finnish and in Swedish and, in 1999, a more complete version of these diaries together with most of the photographs was published⁹¹.

2.1.3 Nationalistic Survey on Buddhist Art in 1940

Although Hedin agreed with the Chinese government to change his 1928 expedition into a Sino-Swedish one, by including a few Chinese students from the Peking University, the first authentically 'Chinese' expedition did not happen until 1940. In view of the catastrophic devastation of similar historic remains by Japanese troops since 1937 (such as the Datong Grottos and Longshan Grottos in Shanxi Province⁹²), the Expedition to the Northwest of China on Art and Artefacts⁹³ was organised by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China to investigate the situation in Dunhuang for further protection. The mission comprised twelve members and most of them were young graduates from the Hungzhou Art Academy. The leader was Wang Ziyun⁹⁴ (1897-1990), a graduate

88 Ratio, "Mannerheim's Central Asian Expedition of 1906-1908."

89 Tamm, *The Horse That Leaps through Clouds: A Tale of Espionage, The Silk Road and the Rise of Modern China*.

90 Harry Halén, 'Baron Mannerheim's Hunt for Ancient Central Asian Manuscripts', 87 (1999), 109-116.

91 The latest edition in three volumes in Swedish was published by Harry Halén in 2008 (following a revised edition in English published in 2004).

92 Luo, "1940-1945 教育部艺术文物考察团考察活动评述."

93 Original in Chinese as '教育部西北藝術文物考察團'.

94 Original in Chinese as '王子雲'.

from the *École Supérieure des Beaux Arts* in Paris, and the secretary was He Zhenhuang⁹⁵ (1914-1994), who had just returned from Japan where she studied at the Tokyo Academy of Art. The main assignments of this expedition with a focus on Dunhuang were to investigate the physical condition of Mogao Grottos with scientific methods and modern technologies like photography, sketching, stone robbing, reproduction, measurement and recording. And the themes to be studied included architecture, sculpture, painting, costume, artefact, craftwork and folk traditions.

The rich result encompassed around 2,000 artefacts, 1,000 sketches of various monuments and sculptures, 1,000 photographs, thousands of stone rubbings and panoramas of landscapes, maps of nearby archaeological sites and illustrations with exact measurements. Besides, the expedition diary of He Zhenhuang was published in contemporaneous newspapers in the form of an essay or travelogue⁹⁶. However, most of her diary manuscripts (in multiple volumes) went missing during the Cultural Revolution, except one volume which was edited into an anthology published in 2015. In a chapter dated the 30th of December in 1940, she wrote:

The mission of our expedition, to statistically analyse, investigate, copy, model, classify and preserve ancient arts and culture, is pioneering in the Chinese art world. The ancient arts of China represent the finest spirit of our nation. Culture, is the pointer to tell how civilised a nation is. In this era of wars, the ancient arts of China have been either looted and purchased by foreigners or destroyed in armed conflicts. Those thousand year old antiquities and ancient arts, that are the bone and flesh of our national spirit, existed among the people are now disappearing—this is most tragic and devastating. Therefore, with our humble talents we try our best to fulfil the work without any fear of danger or difficulty, as it is our duty as citizens and our honour as artists. Hope that in the future there will be a national museum or gallery resulting from our expedition, as we have paid a least contribution to build its foundation at this early moment while not much attention has been received on such a matter. We shall rejoice at seeing it and feel gratified—as a tiny spark to light up a great prairie fire of our national glory—even if our team will no longer exist by then⁹⁷.

95 Original in Chinese as '何正璜'.

96 Those essays were rather literary, such as 'Beautiful Lintong (美麗的臨潼)', 'Ancient city of Han—Changan (漢長安古城)', 'Time traveling to Xienyang (咸陽訪古)', 'The spring song of Changan (春風長安頌)', 'In love with Qinghai (青海之戀)', 'Expedition diary of Tang tombs (唐陵考察日記)', and 'The Vatican of the East: Labulengzhen (東方的梵蒂岡: 拉卜楞)', etc.

97 The original text is '小而言之, 本团在现代中国所负之使命, 如古代文化艺术之正式统计、调查、描绘、模塑、分类、保存等, 允为中国艺术界之开荒工作。因各民族之文明程度, 每以其文化为其标准, 中国古代之艺术, 即足代表民族之优秀文明。而今世战乱频仍, 每为外人所窃购, 为炮火所毁坏, 数千年古物古艺术流传于民间, 而为民族精神之骨液者今将逐渐不存, 痛心可惜, 孰此为甚。故我们不量才力, 不畏风霜, 不避艰辛而作此劳苦工作, 乃国民之本分, 更为艺人之光荣也。将来中国若能因此有一国家公立之美术馆或博物馆等, 则本团虽已不存, 而在此开始无人注意及此之时, 即已尽力奠其基础。星星火粒燃起民族光荣巨焰, 本团定亦在旁为之欣慰无已。' See He, *Diary of Expedition to the Northeast of China: 1940-1941*. (何正璜, 西北考察日記)

Unfortunately this is wishful thinking—not only was the national museum or gallery not built but also the precious collections resulting from this expedition were lost. It is worth noticing that these artist-expeditioners have witnessed how another Chinese artist-restorer, Chang Daqian⁹⁸ (1899-1983), was on the site to ‘preserve’ and ‘repair’ the wall paintings in his own way⁹⁹ while studying the styles and techniques of those medieval traditional Chinese paintings. After this expedition, in 1944, the ‘national art research institute of Dunhuang’ (the predecessor of current Dunhuang Academy) was established under the direction of Chang Shuhong¹⁰⁰ (1904-1994), another artist (specialised in oil painting) who had seen Pelliot’s collections while studying in Paris.

2.2 Historic Background for the International Race of Antiquities

In the late 19th and early 20th century, the Western colonial powers of New Imperialism were in rapid expansion and China remained the last massive country and old civilisation to conquer. Approaching the area of Chinese Central Asia, Britain came from the British India, France from the French Indochina, Japan from the East China Sea and Russia from the northern borderline with Germany, each eager to cut in for a piece of pie while important coastal cities were already in the hands of these European empires. Preparing for territorial invasion, numerous scientific expeditions were sent to gather information of military intelligence like topographical survey (land) or ethnographic situation (people). Archaeologic findings were a by-product and became important for museum acquisition in addition to offering the best cover-up for such missions. While listing important explorations to the area, a knowledge network without borders is identified with the actor-agents connecting to each other, including the ones in China, where Dunhuang objects also turned into collections of national institutes of arts and culture.

2.2.1 The Geopolitics of East Asia along the Silk Roads

The geopolitics in the area of Central and East Asia is one of the near causes for the making of Dunhuang collections. Such historic background plays an important role when considering arguments over the ‘repatriation of important collections’ and the ‘importance of universal museums’. Specifically, an ethical dilemma is rooted in the curious interconnection between the imperialistic attempts and the intellectual endeavours of the West towards the cultural heritage of the ‘Others’ or the ‘country of origin’. The former has become politically

98 Original in Chinese as ‘張大千’.

99 The methods he applied have created harmful and irreversible damages to the frescos, this will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

100 Original in Chinese as ‘常書鴻’.

incorrect since the postcolonial era after WWII, yet the latter has continued to be ‘universalised’ to this date (as a cultural phenomenon known as ‘coloniality’ in ‘the rest’ of the world).

In the late 19th and early 20th century when the medieval archive was unearthed, the colonial powers of New Imperialism were occupying Asia and circulating the area of Chinese Turkestan from around and within China. As stated, Britain started to rule India from 1613—first indirectly through the British East India Company and then directly through the establishment of British India (or the British Raj) in 1858—and approached Tibet from the west; France, occupying Southeast Asia since 1862, came through French Indochina (including Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) to the Yunnan Province from the south. On the east coast of China, the important cities which became the concessions to Western countries included: Macau to Portugal in 1557, Guangzhou bay to France in 1899, Hong Kong to Britain in 1842, Jiao Zhou bay to Germany in 1807, Dalian and Lushun to Russia in 1898 and Weihaiwei to Britain in 1898. Further, Japan after the Meiji Restoration turned into a colonial empire. It took Formosa (Taiwan) in 1895 after the Sino-Japanese War, Manchuria and Korea in 1904 after the Russo-Japanese War, and was looking into further invasion from across the East China Sea. Besides, Russia, the longstanding adversary of Qing China from the north after taking over the northern Manchuria, was looking into conquering Mongolia and Xinjiang and cut in to Tibet. In the contemporaneous French newspaper *Le Petit Journal* a political cartoon by Henri Meyer (1844-1898) appeared on the 16th of January 1898 has satirically and vividly illustrated how these Western colonial empires, with knives in their hands, were eager to fiercely cut a piece of the China pie¹⁰¹. In Figure 2.4 we can see, from left to right, caricaturized figures representing Queen Victoria of the British Empire, Emperor Wilhelm II of the German Empire, the Tsar Nicolai II of the Russian Empire, Marianne of France (a national symbol of the French Republic, a personification of liberty and reason and a portrayal of the goddess of liberty), and a samurai of the Japanese Empire. Marianne was standing (instead of sitting at the table) peeping over the shoulder of Wilhelm II because Germany has just defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. And Japan was represented by a samurai instead of the Emperor himself because officially until 1867 the sovereignty was held by Tokugawa Shogunate the last feudal military government, and it had to wait until 1889 the reign of Japanese Emperor was confirmed by the Constitution of the Empire of Japan. In this picture, we can see the Great Qing, the last imperial dynasty of China established in 1636, who could only stare helplessly at them from behind, being too old and too weak to interfere. It is obvious that the Qing China was incapable of defending the territorial integrity, let alone the cultural heritage like the Dunhuang objects.

101 Meyer, “China Pie.”



FIGURE 2.4 'En Chine, Le gâteau des Rois et... des Empereurs, Jan 16th 1989', Image produced by Henri Meyer BNF (Wikimedia Commons)

2.2.2 Important Expeditions in the Chinese Turkestan

Following the footsteps of Genghis Khan, the colonial powers of the West in the late 19th century approached China not only from the sea but also from the inland Silk Roads, which had long been the unique passage to reach the inner territory of China guarded by the natural defences of mountains and deserts. To fulfil the colonial agenda, there were many explorations sent to the area of Chinese Central Asia, as seen in the following list which compiles the better known ones, including those that were sent by the Qing court to inspect its borderland¹⁰². Together

¹⁰² In fact, this area known as the Chinese Turkestan or Chinese Central Asia by the West and Xingjian Province by China was the 'new territory' (what the term Xingjian literally means) acquired by the Qing dynasty in the 17th century. Historically, this borderland was not always 'Chinese', as the 'medieval archive of Central Asia' found in Dunhuang have shown. In fact, the earliest record of this area being 'Chinese' could be traced back to the Han dynasty—which was the time when the westmost section of the Great Wall was built in Dunhuang.

with the explorers, other important actor-agents such as learned societies, funding organisations or international conference and publications are noted as well.

Examining this list of important expeditions¹⁰³, it becomes clear that the important museum collections of Dunhuang objects were actually made out of the interplay between science and politics. The major Western expeditions to Chinese Turkestan were all funded directly by high-level authorities like ministries of war, education or foreign affairs and even Emperors, and their missions were often multitasked to include studies of topography and ethnography which could be useful for military purposes. The work of Oldenburg is a typical example. Resulting from an elaborate collaboration among ministries, universities and learned societies to serve Russian territorial ambitions, the expedition of Oldenburg amassed one of the best Dunhuang collections in the world. Supporting the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution of 1917, Oldenburg became the Minister of Education in the Russian Provisional Government and created the Commission for the Study of the Tribal Composition of the Population of the Borderlands of Russia. Being acquainted with Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924), Oldenburg used his linguistic and ethnographic knowledge to help govern the Asiatic peoples and deal with the ethnic problems of the country¹⁰⁴.

Another example is the exploration of Mannerheim. Although assigned by the Tsar to collect critical information for military purposes, he volunteered for missions given by the Finno-Ugrian Society to collect archaeological, linguistic and ethnographic materials and to carry out anthropological studies on the little-known tribes of East Turkestan (Chinese Central Asia)¹⁰⁵. From the 1880s, a sense of nationalism started to boom in Finland the Grand Duchy of Russia, and the Finno-Ugrian Society, while being instructed by Russia, played a key role. The origin for this was the political movement from the 1830s known as Russification, the purpose of which was to ideologically distance the Finnish people from Swedish cultural identification¹⁰⁶. Finland was encouraged to believe that the ethnic origin of the Finns was from the East (the area of Alai Mountains) and thence began a long tradition of sending out ethnographic expeditions to find material evidences. For example, Anders Johan Sjögren (1797-1855) and Johan Reinhold Aspelin (1842-1915) were sent to eastern Finland under the support of the Imperial Russian Academy of Sciences. Following this agenda of cultural or identity politics, and with the aim of strengthening the status of Finland as the rightful heir of the Finno-Ugrian cultural heritage, the Finno-Ugrian Central Museum was established in Helsinki in the early 1870s and the Finno-Ugrian

103 This list of selected important expeditions relating to the Dunhuang collections is compiled by the author based on *Le Voyage en Asie Centrale et au Tibet* and *The Foreign Devils on the Silk Road*.

104 Michel Jan, *Le voyage en Asie centrale et au Tibet : anthologie des voyageurs occidentaux du Moyen Age a la première moitié du XXe siècle* (Paris: Laffont, 1997).

105 Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia*.

106 Prior to that Finland was under the siege of Sweden ever since the 13th or the 14th century, and the armies of Alexander I of Russia took over Finland from Sweden in the Finnish War in 1809.

Society was founded in 1883 to collect linguistic, archaeological, ethnological and ancient history of the Finns—as a founding influence to the latter, Otto Donner was the actual instructor for Mannerheim's cover-up story. During the 1880s and 1890s, the Society sent out a series of scientific expeditions to the areas of Mordvins and Udmurts to gather materials on folklore and tales, including the expeditions led by Porkka (1854-1889), Passanen (1865-1919) and Wichmann (1868-1931). Presuming that the origin of the Finno-Ugrian languages could be found in the archaeological finds of Bronze Age (for example, a manuscript was found and decoded by Thomsen (1842-1927) to be written in a Turkic language from the 7th century), the Society started to look into West Siberia, Mongolia, Russian Turkestan and East Turkestan. Mannerheim's mission given by the Tsar was a perfect coincidence.

In addition to Russia, the British Empire also has a long tradition of sending expeditions out over the Himalayan mountains, to Tibet and Xinjiang, after the British Raj was ratified in 1858. For example, the Indian military spy Mohamed Hameed was sent in 1863, the British surveyor William Johnson in 1865 and Sir Thomas Forsyth (1827-1886) (a well-known anti-Chinese Anglo-Indian administrator who was a diplomat and also a member of the Royal Geographic Society) in 1870. In 1889, on a secret mission to Chinese Turkestan, the British Indian Army officer Hamilton Bower (1858-1940) found a Sanskrit manuscript and brought it back to the President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Through an exposition organised in 1890, it became known as the 'Bower Manuscript' and was translated and published by Rudolf Hoernle (1841-1918), a German-British orientalist. This manuscript lit up a frenzy in European orientalists and initiated the 'international race for antiquities' in Chinese Central Asia (or Chinese Turkestan). The expertise of these orientalists in philology, archaeology or art history made them perfect leaders for 'multitasked' expeditions, as their scholar-identities allowed them to avoid suspicion whilst their works provided in-depth understanding about local geography and people. International collaborations were also made, as like said in the case of Mannerheim and Pelliot¹⁰⁷.

Incapable of regulating any of these ambitious expeditions, China was undergoing a tremendous change politically, socially and culturally from a feudal empire to a modern nation-state. The Qing dynasty started to decline rapidly in the face of the severe aggression of Western empires, as seen in the First Opium War in 1840, the Second Opium War (Anglo-French expedition to China) in 1860, the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and the Eight-Nations Alliance in 1900. However, the establishment of the Republic of China (ROC) in 1911 was greeted with more wars. Although the ROC joined the Allies in WWI, the Versailles Treaties signed at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 decided to not return the 'German overseas possessions (in China)' to China but to Japan. Similar issues occurred with the Ottoman Empire: western Anatolia was handed to Greece, and the Dodecanese to Italy. Besides, the civil wars were ceaseless among the warlords until the military campaign was launched by the Nationalist Party in

107 Whitfield, "Scholarly Respect in an Age of Political Rivalry."

1926, to overthrow the Beiyang Government¹⁰⁸. With the Japanese Empire continuing their military assaults, the Second Sino-Japanese War exploded in 1937 (which later became part of WWII). Immediately following WWII, a civil war between the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party was fought until 1949, with the former retreating to Taiwan and the latter establishing the People's Republic of China (PROC). This explains why the western borderland and important cultural heritage like the Dunhuang collections were left 'unattended' for a long time after Wang Yuanlu's discovery. With the decline of colonial powers, since the 1920s modern China began to reclaim from the West the international concessions down the east coast. After WWII, in 1945, the ROC finally recovered territorial integrity¹⁰⁹, after almost a century since the First Opium War (Anglo-Chinese War) took place in 1840—the century known as the 'century of humiliation', a term coined by student-protestors and reflecting the thriving nationalism in 1915 directed against the Treaties of Versailles¹¹⁰ and Japanese aggression. As to the Asian colonies of Western colonial empires which encircled China: Vietnam gained independence from France in 1946, India from Britain in 1947, Korea from Japan in 1948 and the Philippines from the United States in 1954. Only Russia continued to have border conflicts with China. By the mid-20th century, all Western colonial powers had withdrawn from Asia, officially at least. It was no longer possible for Western archaeologists, anthropologists or art historians to roam over the territories of the 'Others', like China, without permission or supervision. In 1930, like said China established a law to protect cultural heritage (in a Western model instead of Qing laws)¹¹¹; and all Western scientific expeditions became completely banned by the PROC until the end of Cold War.

2.2.3 A Knowledge Network to Build Dunhuang Heritage

Looking into the many discoveries of Dunhuang objects, it becomes clear that, beyond the political or military purposes, there was a 'knowledge network' which was by nature borderless, in spite of momentary political influence. Figure 2.6¹¹², shows the extensive connections among almost all the major actor-agents contributing directly or indirectly to the making of the Dunhuang collections. The

108 Original in Chinese as '北洋政府'.

109 With the exception of Hong Kong and Macau, which were to be returned to the PROC in 1997

110 Sims-Williams, "Aurel Stein's Correspondence with Paul Pelliot and Lionel Barnett."

111 It is known as the 'law of ancient artefacts protection (古文物保護法)', which was set by the government of the ROC in Nanjing (proposed in 1928 and ratified in 1930). In 1982, the PROC set another edition of the law known as the 'law of protecting the PROC's ancient relics (中華人民共和國文物保護法)'. However, it is worth noticing that already in the Qing dynasty there were 'laws' as well to prevent plundering or pillages of antiquities, e.g. 'excavation' was a death crime according to the Qing law since 1646 (see Staunton 1810) and it was forbidden for common people to possess any 'antiquity, bronze, medal or extra-ordinary artefact' unearthed from both the public and private lands within the entire Qing territory.

112 The visualisation of this network was accomplished by the author based on the literature cited in Chapter 2.1.1.

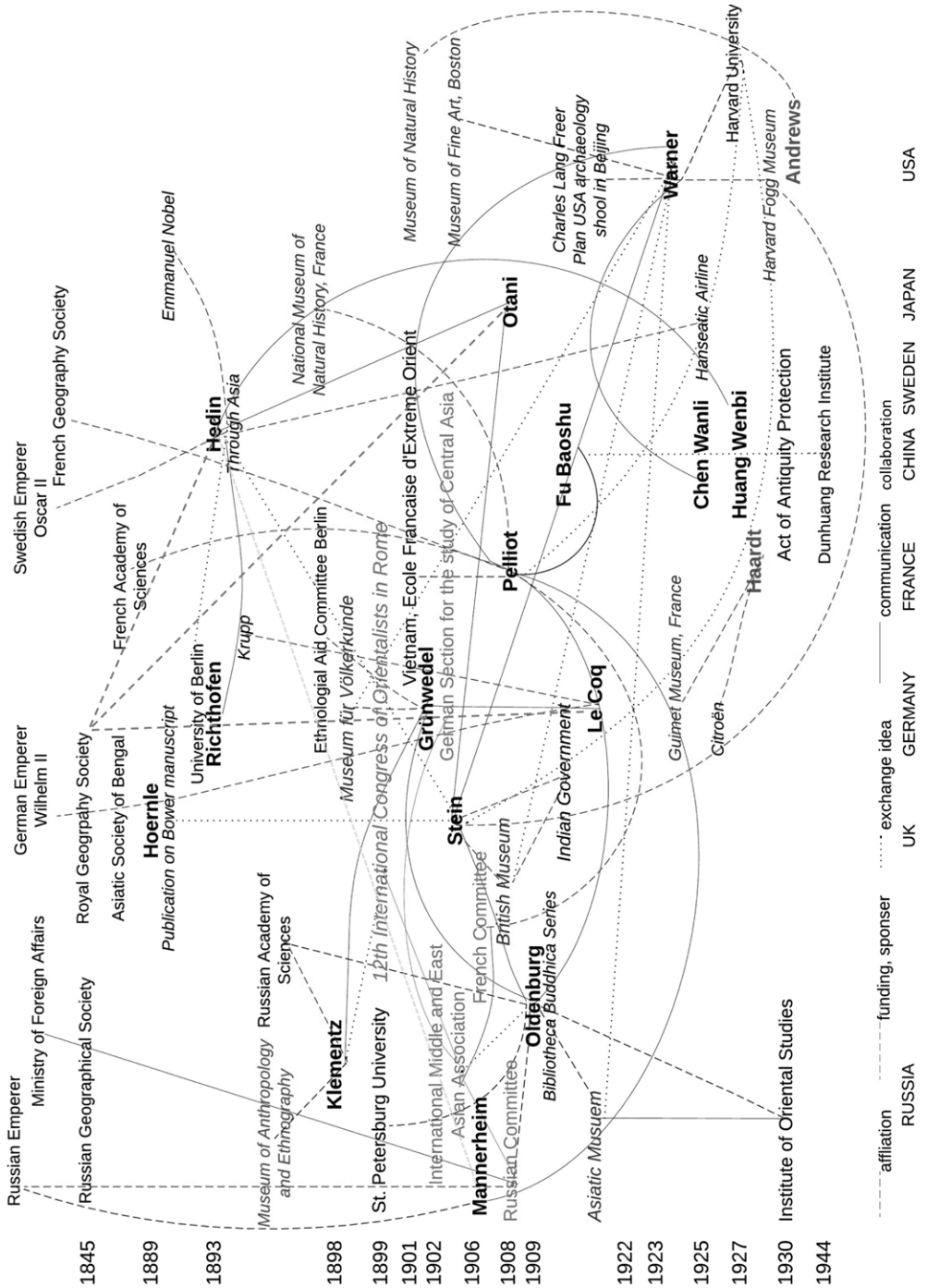


FIGURE 2.6 The Knowledge-Network Sans Frontières on the Making of Dunhuang Collections

visualisation of such a network reveals the fact that those objects falling out of this net have most probably gone missing, like those that were stolen by Qing officers and those that were gathered by Otani. In contrast, those that were caught by it ended up safeguarded as ‘permanent collections’ of national institutes which are mostly open and free for the public to access. In recent studies of Dunhuangology, this relational topic has roused attention. For example, during the post-War era, Stein and Oldenburg enjoyed an amicable collaboration regardless of the political atmosphere at the time or their past history, competing in the ‘international race of antiquities’¹¹³. In addition, the letters exchanged between Pelliot and Stein¹¹⁴ and between Otani and Stein¹¹⁵ show a similar collaboration of these peer-competitors. This international and intercultural ‘knowledge network’ eventually included China, and it is exactly because of it that making the Dunhuang collection became possible in China, the country of origin.

2.2.3.1 *A Constellation of Great Minds*

Figure 2.6, shows that in addition to the ‘Bower manuscript’, mentioned above, another important collaborative starting point is the book *Through Asia* written by Hedin, who was enthusiastic about the Scandinavian tradition in sea exploration and was trained in Berlin learning the work of Richthofen (who invented the term ‘silk road’ in 1877). While his fellow countryman Nobel accomplished the first Arctic northeast passage, Hedin took up the land route, following in the footsteps of Marco Polo and Jesuit missionaries to Asia. He since inspired many of his peers like Stein, Mannerheim, Le Coq and Otani¹¹⁶. Besides, he was also the first Western explorer to collaborate with Chinese scholars, as demonstrated in the above-mentioned Sino-Swedish Expedition (from 1928 to 1935). A third starting point is certainly the Russian tradition in exploring the area for territorial expansion. Klementz, while on his way to the 12th International Congress of Orientalists in Rome in 1899, met up with the German curator Grünwedel, told him about his exploration and got him interested to engage in similar activities. The learned societies played a key role as well. For example, the British Royal Geographic Society served as an important knowledge distributor to connect Hedin, Stein, Le Coq and Otani. The journal *Bibliotheca Buddhica*, established by Oldenburg based on his ground-breaking explorations on Buddhist ruins in 1905 and 1917, has remained influential until this date. The Congress held in 1899 was a major component of this knowledge network, especially with the founding of the ‘International Association of Middle and East Asia’.

It is through this Association that those major explorers of Dunhuang were associated, including Mannerheim and Pelliot. The latter, a sinologist, was the

113 Whitfield, “Scholarly Respect in an Age of Political Rivalry.”

114 Sims-Williams, “Aurel Stein’s Correspondence with Paul Pelliot and Lionel Barnett.”

115 Galambos and Koichi, “Japanese Exploration of Central Asia: The Otani Expeditinos and Their British Connections.”

116 For example, Hedin’s success has shown Le Coq that ‘it is possible to cross the country uninjured’, see Genovese, “Proceedings (Extract) of XII International Congress of Orientalists, Rome, October 1899.”

one who shared his findings with the Qing literati in Peking, which resulted in the trip of Fu Baoshu gathering the rest of the Dunhuang manuscripts in China. In addition to Oldenburg, Stein was also in contact with Pelliot, to get help cataloguing his Chinese collection. Furthermore, Pelliot was the explorer who helped inspire American interest in exploring Central Asia. In 1923, he was invited to teach at Harvard University and was asked to carry out an expedition for the Fogg Museum. Not following up this proposition, the Museum instead chose Warner for the task because of his successful mission, commissioned by Charles Lang Freer, to investigate the feasibility of establishing an ‘American archaeology school’ in Peking—like said, on this mission he visited the Asiatic Museum in St. Petersburg, the British Museum in London and the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin. Warner included Chen Wanli from the Peking University on his expedition to Dunhuang. Unlike Pelliot, Stein accepted the invitation of the Fogg Museum and replaced Warner for another expedition, like mentioned.

Such a network has shown that, if it were not for those great minds in the universe of knowledge, the Dunhuang collections would not have existed. This web continued to extend and is still valuable to this date, as seen in its modern form in the computational ontology of the database of the International Dunhuang Project¹¹⁷.

2.2.3.2 *Imperialistic Powers behind the Scientific Expeditions*

The background information of the expeditions clearly shows the national (and imperial) powers behind them, which enabled their work through financial support, political backing and administrative assistance in setting passport arrangements¹¹⁸, soliciting foreign collaboration and negotiating with local government. The ground-breaking exploration of Hedin to Central Asia was actually funded by the Swedish Emperor Oscar II¹¹⁹. Stein was supported by the Government of British India and the British Museum for his first three expeditions, and by the Fogg Museum of the Harvard University (especially the ‘Harvard friends’—a group of most wealthy business tycoons in the America including Forbes, Sachs and Rockefeller) for his fourth expedition. Pelliot was sponsored by the French Government, that accepted the proposal of Russia to collaborate. Mannerheim, assigned directly by the imperial government of Russia, received funding from the Emperor Nicolai II (and from the Finnish-Russian learned societies). Oldenburg firstly served at the State Council of Imperial Russia and then (after

117 We will be coming back to this in Part III, Chapter 6.

118 For example, Stein required that his title for his passport to China should be ‘the prime minister of education of the great kingdom of Britain’ (大英國總理教育大臣) to facilitate his negotiation with local magistrate in Dunhuang, see Jiqing, “Aurel Stein’s Dealings with Wang Yuanlu and Chinese Officials in Dunhuang in 1907.” And Mannerheim was calling himself ‘Swedish’ rather than Finnish or Russian in his passport to China.

119 As a matter of fact, Sweden being spared from the Wars was one of the leading country in the West sending expeditions to the rest of the world, for example, except Hedin’s going to Asia, in 1899 an expedition was sent to Greenland, in 1907 to Patagonia, in 1911 to the British West Africa, in 1916 to Zion (for zoology), in 1921 to Central Africa, in 1931 to the British West Africa, in 1938 to Macedonia, in 1952 to India and Italy.

the Revolution) the Russian Provisional Government. Being the permanent secretary of the Academy of Sciences, he straightforwardly put into use his knowledge gathered from the explorations to establish the Commission for the Study of the Tribal Composition of the Population of the Borderlands of Russia. Grünwedel for the first expedition received financial support from the Ethnology Aid Committee in Berlin and the Museum für Völkerkunde, and for the second expedition (with his successor Le Coq) the funding came directly from the German Emperor Wilhelm II and the Krupp family—400-hundred years old (to this date) and the largest company in Europe in weaponry manufacture during both world wars.

Being a close relative to the Japanese Emperor, and retaining a rather ambiguous relation with the Japanese Imperial Government, it is difficult to judge whether Otani and his expeditions were 'private' or 'public'. Although he funded them himself (from his 'public' temple), the missions were implicitly political. To understand the relationship between religion and politics in Japan is beneficial. In actuality, the temple of Jodo Shinshu (meaning the true essence of the 'pure land' teaching in Buddhism) that Otani inherited was founded under the support of Tokugawa Ieyasu (徳川家康, 1543-1616)—the founder and first shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate of Japan. In 1868, following the Meiji Restoration, Tokugawa Ieyasu returned the sovereignty to Japanese Emperor. Seizing the power, the Government of Meiji issued an order to 'unify religious system and political system' which was meant to recover the tradition of Emperor Jimmu (神武, 660 BC-585 BC, the first Emperor of Japan according to legend) wherein a religious leader should be assigned by the court as a political officer. In 1872, the imperial government started the 'evangelical movement of grand religion', which united Shinto and Buddhism and all monks or priests of these two religions should be appointed with 'preaching (or teaching) positions', which in actuality meant unpaid civil servants or government functionaries. In 1882, a reform took place in Shinto to re-state its definition as a non-religion so all citizens of Japan should be obliged to participate in Shinto rituals and regard the Emperor as the highest leader. This was continued and incorporated into the constitution of the Empire of Japan in 1889¹²⁰. Besides, as mentioned earlier, since the Japanese aggressions of the early 20th century, numerous such monks or priests were sent to China with military troops—for example during the Russo-Japanese War in Manchuria in 1904, WWI in the German concession of China in 1914, the military assault in 1931 (with the 'strategy to conquer Manchu and Mongol') and the Second Sino-Japanese War (part of WWII) in 1937. 'Wherever there were Japanese army there were Japanese monks' as thousands of monks were sent to the Japanese occupied areas in the aim to persuade Chinese Buddhist leaders to comply with Japanese authorities, to take over Chinese temples and turn them into stations of propa-

120 Kurata, "Study on the Relationship between Politics and Religion in Japan (日本政教關係研究)."

ganda¹²¹. Under the excuse of liberating the Chinese from Western colonisation, these Japanese monks also built orphanages, schools and Buddhist associations (for example the ‘society of common Buddhist vow’ in Beijing) to spread the propagandistic message of a ‘friendly Japan’¹²². This historical backdrop explains why Otani, as a Buddhist leader, was keen to engage with politics and served the Japanese Empire. It also clarifies that although Otani’s expeditions were claimed to be religious, the true nature of his missions obviously resonated with the colonial agenda of Japanese Empire towards the Asian continent.

It is worth noticing that these imperialistic powers that enabled the expeditions and contributed to the formation of the knowledge network are the reason why the Dunhuang objects could survive the turmoil of early 20th century while being stored and safeguarded in national institutes of the West, like the British Museum in London, the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, the Fogg Museum in Boston, the Hermitage Museum and Asiatic Museum in St. Petersburg, the Louvre and Musée Guimet in Paris and the national museums in Kyoto and Tokyo. Through this museum mechanism, the Dunhuang objects became national properties. As previously stated, those outside of these institutions mostly went missing, as when Otatni freely sent his collections as gifts to friends and sold the rest together with his villa¹²³. In contrast, those that fell within the aforementioned organisations in the West, unless ‘force majeure’ should occur (like Le Coq’s collections in Berlin during WWII) they not only received professional care but were also accessible by the public.

2.2.3.3 *The Scientific Culture of ‘Scholarship Sans Frontières’*

Ferguson in his *Civilisation*¹²⁴ pointed out that ‘science’ is one of the major factors of Western civilisation conquering the rest of world. In describing how science is seeded in the Bible but not the Koran¹²⁵ and is encouraged by the print (media) technology of Gutenberg (which propelled the Reformation of Luther and more importantly the ‘intellectual revolution’ for ‘industrial revolution’), he specifically emphasised the laying out of the ground rules for scientific research—the dissemination of findings and attributing credits to the researchers through printing. Those ‘learned societies’, established as early as in the 16th and 17th centuries, played a key role in moving forward such an open scientific culture. A great example is provided by the Royal Society of London. With the patronage of the King Charles II and out of a Christian superiority and in an attempt to ‘catch up’

121 Yu, *Buddhism, War, and Nationalism: Chinese Monks in the Struggle against Japanese Aggressions 1931-1945* (佛教、暴力與民族主義：抗日戰爭時期的中國佛教).

122 Yu. pp 293-342.

123 Rong, *Account on Foreign Collections of Dunhuang and Turfan Manuscripts* (海外敦煌吐魯番文獻知見錄). pp 154-164.

124 Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*.

125 In Koran it was claimed ‘we came, we saw, God conquered’ yet in Bible it was ‘render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesars; and unto god the things that are God’s’ (Matthew 2.2:21). (see Ferguson 2011)

with the continental Europe¹²⁶, the Bishop of Rochester Thomas Sprat (1635-1713) in his (1666) *History of the Royal Society of London: for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* defined the qualifications of members in Section VI:

*It is to noted, that they have freely admitted **Men of different Religions, Countries, and Profession of Life**. This they were obliged to do, or else they would come far short of the largeness of their own Declarations. For they openly profess, not to lay the Foundation of an English, Scotch, Irish, Popish or Protestant Philosophy; but a Philosophy of Mankind.*

*The church of England ought not to be apprehensive, of this free converse of various Judgements, I shall frankly assert: that our **Doctrine, and Discipline**, will be so far from receiving damage by it; that it were the best way to make them universally embraced, if they were ouster brought to be canvased amidst all sorts of dissenters. It is dishonourable, to pass a hard Censure on the Religions of all other Countries: It concerns them, to look to the reasonableness in the Truth of our own. But yet this comparison I may modestly make; that there is no one Profession, amidst the several denominations of Christians, that can be exposed to the search and scrutiny of its adversaries, with so much safety as ours. So equal it is, above all others, to the general Reason of Mankind: such honourable security it provides, both for the liberty of Men's Minds, and for the peace of Government: that if some Men's conceptions were put in practice, that all wise Men should have two Religions; the one, a **publick**, for their conformity with the people; the other, a **private**, to be kept to their own Breasts: I am confident, that most considering Men, whatever their sirst were, would make ours their second, if they were well acquainted with it...*

*By their naturalizing **Men of All Countries**, they have laid the beginnings of many great advantages for the future. For by this means, they will be able to settle a constant Intelligence, throughout all civil Nations; and make the Royal Society the general Bank and Free-port of the world: A policy, which whether it would hold good, in the Trade of England, I know not: but sure it will in the philosophy. We are to overcome the mysteries of all the Works of Nature; and not only to prosecute such as are confined to one Kingdom, or beat upon one shore. We should not then refuse to lift all the aids, that will come in, how remote soever. If I could fetch my materials whence I pleased, to fashion the Idea of a perfect Philosopher; he should not be all of one clime, but have the different excellences of several Countries. First, he should have the Industry, Activity, and Inquisitive humor of the Dutch, French, Scotch, and English, in laying the ground Work, the heap of Experiments; And then he should have added the cold, and circumspect, and wary disposition of the Italians, and Spaniards, in meditating upon them, before he fully brings them into speculation. All this is scarce ever to be found in*

126 In France, the Collège Royale (Collège de France) with the Latin moto Docet Omnia was established in 1530 by Francis I with royal charter; in Italy, the Accademia dei Lincei was built in 1603 by Federico Cesi; in Germany the Leopoldina Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften was founded in 1652 by the Holy Roman Empire.

*one single Man; seldom in the same Countrymen: It must then be supplied, as well as it may, by a Publick council; wherein the various dispositions of all these Nations, may be blended together. To this purpose, the Royal Society has made no scruple, to receive all inquisitive strangers of all Countries, into its number.*¹²⁷

This statement explicitly demonstrates how this ‘learned society’ was built as a publicly funded organisation to promote research, hold conferences and publish journals. It was under such a convention that Hedin could have influenced many other orientalists with his *Through Asia* and triggered the ‘international race of antiquities’ in Central Asia; that Stein, Le Coq or Otani could connect to each other by joining the Royal Geographic Society in Britain, regardless of their nationalities; that the International Congress of Orientalists could be held to make a collective move; and that the findings of Stein, Pelliot, Le Coq or Oldenburg could be published and made known to the world so the ‘scientific value’ of the Dunhuang objects was established. It is true that political interferences did occur (as seen in the case of Pelliot and Mannerheim) and nationalist sentiments sometimes could interrupt scholarly communication—for example, the ‘savants of Germany were prevented by the French national feelings from making their appearances in the capital city (Paris)¹²⁸’ for the 1874 Congress of Orientalists due to the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) where France was bitterly defeated with the German Emperor crowned at the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles. However, it is exactly because of such a scientific culture that the making of the Dunhuang collections became possible. If China had not been reached by such a network (via Pelliot), and joined and participated in this scientific convention, the rest of the Dunhuang objects would have remained in the grottos and risked continuing to fall into the hands of treasure hunters and dispersed amongst antique dealers and private collectors, and so fall out of the public eye.

In fact, Qing China already started to participate in such a culture, as demonstrated by the 12th International Congress of Orientalists held in 1899 October in Rome (exactly the one that played a crucial role to the making of the Dunhuang collections). There were two ‘Chinese representatives’ at this Congress: a certain German ‘Doct. A Forke’ from the Oriental Society à Peking (where he worked as a consular of the German Embassy)¹²⁹, and a Chinese man named Yan Chèu who was introduced by Frédéric Hirth, the president of the IV session of the Congress, as ‘the official delegate from the Government of China’¹³⁰. The former talked about Chinese literature and the latter the Chinese reform of the legal system—which was commented as below:

127 Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society of London, for the Improving of Natural Knowledge*. pp 62–63.

128 “The International Congress of Orientalists.”

129 “Congrès International Des Orientalistes.” Vol. 2, pp 49–67.

130 “Congrès International Des Orientalistes.” Vol. 1, CCXLIII.

While European teams prepared large-scale expeditions, China, the country that would be most affected by these expeditions over the next 25 years, appeared unaware of its own treasures along the Silk Road. Testimony the fact that China's official representative to the Rome Congress delivered a lecture on 10th October dealing with contemporary law institutions in China and Japan. The irony is not lost on some readers, who compare Chên's delayed arrival with China's strict control of foreign explorations only in 1925–26, after hundreds of crates of priceless artefacts had found their way to museums and art collections around the world¹³¹.

Albeit unsuccessfully, the Qing court did make an effort to 'modernise' the country in order to catch up with the West, only that such efforts were paid with a focus on 'bigger issues'¹³² like military equipment, transportation and the political and legal system (as presented in the Congress) facing the threats of New Imperialism (as discussed in Chapter 2.1.2). In any case, the Chinese presence at such convention serves to indicate that the knowledge network of the West was somehow inclusive and open to the world, including the 'Others'.

Besides, such a scientific culture in the spirit of 'scholarship sans frontière' can explain why Pelliot was willing to share his findings with the Qing literati in Peking. The event took place in 1909 September at the Grande Hôtel des Wagons-Lits¹³³. The exposition was held to show a few samples he brought with him on the way back to France via Russia. This 'sharing' is commonly considered to be the beginning of Chinese Dunhuangology, as the first generation of Chinese (and Japanese) Dunhuangologists were exactly those who attended the event¹³⁴. Shocked and saddened by the news, Luo Zengyu published the *List of the Manuscripts from a Stone Cave in Dunhuang*¹³⁵. A Japanese scholar who also attended the event wrote the *Archive of the Dunhuang Grottos*¹³⁶ in a Japanese magazine published in Peking. Wang Renjun spent four days and nights transcribing Pelliot's samples into the five-volumes long *Transcriptions of Authentic Manuscripts from Dunhuang Grotto*¹³⁷. Luo Zengyu concluded that these first-hand materials could clarify the unknown history of Tang dynasty, and Duan Feng considered them to be 'a matter of life and death to the Chinese textology (textual criticism)'. According to Wang Jiqing¹³⁸ who cited from the Japanese scholar mentioned

131 Genovese, "Proceedings (Extract) of XII International Congress of Orientalists, Rome, October 1899."

132 Liu, "中國科技發展的歷史分析."

133 Wang, "The Banguet for Pelliot in Peking." (王冀青, 宣統元年伯希和北京宴請事件再探討)

134 They were: Wang Shitong '王式通'(1864-1931), Dong Kang '董康'(1867-1947), Luo Zhengyu '羅振玉'(1866-1940), Wang Renjun '王仁俊'(1866-1914), Jiang Fu '蔣黼'(1866-1911), and Tsao Yunzong '曹元忠'(1865-1923). See Wang 2014.

135 Original in Chinese as '敦煌石室書目及發見之原始'.

136 Original in Chinese as '敦煌石室中的典籍'.

137 Original in Chinese as '敦煌石室真蹟錄'.

138 Wang, "The Banguet for Pelliot in Peking."

above¹³⁹, at the banquet held by these Qing literati in the Hotel (to express their gratitude), Pelliot mentioned:

The purpose of my mission assigned the French government was scientific survey, the collections were in actuality but a result of chance. Although they are now being held by the French government, the knowledge they represent belong to the world. Therefore I shall dully promise to help if any wish for more photographs or transcriptions to be sent from Paris.

Nevertheless, in his own words at the conference *Trois ans dans la haute Asie* (which was dedicated to him by le Comité de l'Asie française et la Société de Géographie and held at la Sorbonne on the 10th of December 1909 with an audience of more than 4,000 people¹⁴⁰), Pelliot enunciated:

Mais tout mon but n'était pas atteint. Par relations, il nous fut encore possible d'avoir accès aux collections artistiques d'amateurs chinois, comme le vice-roi Touan'fang, chez qui M. Nouette a pu faire quelques centaines de clichés. Enfin mes compagnons sont rentrés en France avec les collections. Moi-même, je suis allé reprendre quelque temps contact avec l'Indochine, où j'ai longtemps habité, à laquelle je suis très attaché. Après quoi, je me suis attelé à une dernière besogne. Toutes les bibliothèques de l'Europe ont des fonds chinois assez pauvres. Celle de Paris ne s'était pas enrichie depuis le XVIIIe siècle. Or à quoi bon nos manuscrits, si pour les étudier nous manquons de ce qui est déjà imprimé. Aussi pendant les derniers mois de mon séjour à Changhaï et à Peking, ai-je acquis près de 30,000 volumes en chinois, destinés à la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris. Entre temps, le bruit de nos découvertes de Touen-houang se répandait parmi les érudits chinois. Le vice-roi Touen-fang m'empruntait un de nos plus précieux documents, et, comme les collectionneurs en tout pays laissent aller à regret ce qu'ils tiennent entre leurs doigts, il m'a fallu six semaines pour me faire restituer. Le érudits de Pékin se succédaient chez moi pour examiner et photographier les quelques pièces que mes compagnons n'avaient pas emportées. Finalement, ils m'offraient un banquet et se constituaient en une association pour reproduire en fac-simile et publier en une grosse collection les plus importants de nos textes, me demandant

139 The name of this Japanese scholar is 田中慶太郎 with a pen name 救生堂. See Qin, "The 1909 Event of the Beijing Academia Banquet for Paul Pelliot: With a Discussion on Wang Guowei and the Early Stage of Dunhuang Studies (1909年北京学界公宴伯希和事件补考—兼论王国维与早期敦煌学)."

140 Pelliot, "Trois Ans Dans La Haute Asie." p 15.

*de m'entremettre pour qu'à Paris on leur facilitât la besogne : c'est bien le moins que nous leur devons.*¹⁴¹

This speech (in French) was instantly translated into Chinese by a Chinese student named Sheng Hung in Paris¹⁴² and sent to Luo Zengyu, who then published it in 1909 in his *Visit the Ancient Desert*¹⁴³ and so became widely known to the Chinese ever since. Although there exists a certain dissonance in the Japanese, French and Chinese accounts of the event, what remains consistent is Pelliot's promise to 'share the knowledge' with the world, including China—from which he needed to obtain help as well to proceed cataloguing and research. In the following years, a younger generation of Chinese Dunhuangologists, such as Xiang Da and Wang Chongming¹⁴⁴, were trained in such exchange or collaboration. And sharing papers, copies, microfilms or data of Dunhuang objects like this has continued to this date.

In fact, this open culture of science occurred not only in archaeology but also in almost all other fields. With the establishment of modern China, this 'exchange' or 'collaboration' became obligatory, as seen in the case of Hedin's expedition mentioned earlier—which was funded by Lufthansa and permitted by the Beiyang Government. Upon the request of the Chinese National Commission for the Preservation of Antiquities (established specifically for the purpose), this expedition turned into a Sino-Swedish one¹⁴⁵ with conditions like: the funding should be provided by Sweden, it is forbidden to investigate matters related to national security, the historic remains are not allowed to be demolished and Chinese members must be included¹⁴⁶.

141 This French speech was translated into classic Chinese right away by Sheng Hong and sent to Peking: 同伴先归, 所得之物大宗随之, 余则视印度支那如故乡, 睽隔多年, 亟欲知彼中人事之变迁、学界之动作, 乃往河内, 留四月, 复来中国, 为购书也……巴黎图书国库存支那书籍为十八世纪教士所搜集, 甚不敷用……乃于北京、南京、上海三处买印本书约三万册。至是, 邦人委托之事一律报命。正欲回国, 而敦煌得宝之风声藉藉传播。端制军(端方)闻之扼腕, 拟购回一部分; 不允, 则谆嘱他日以精印本寄与, 且曰: 此中国考古学上一生死问题也。制军人颇殷勤, 屢次接见余, 礼有加焉。至北京, 行篋尚存秘籍数种, 索观者络绎不绝。诸君有端制军之风, 以德报怨, 设盛宴邀余上坐。一客举觞致词, 略云: 如许遗文失而复得, 凡在学界, 欣慰同深。已而要求余归后, 择精要之本照出, 大小一如原式, 寄还中国。闻已组织一会, 筹集巨资, 以供照印之费云。此事余辈必当实心为之, 以履彼都人士之意。

142 Original in Chinese as '沈紘', school name as Xinpao (昕伯), was a classmate of Wang Guowei. Back then he was studying law and philosophy in Paris.

143 Original in Chinese as '流沙訪古紀'. Curiously, in Sheng Hung's translation it was mentioned that Duan Fang proposed Pelliot to buy back Pelliot's collections and after being rejected then asked Pelliot to send photos of selected copies from Paris for the reason that these manuscripts were as important as 'the question of life to the Chinese textology', which was cited by many Chinese scholars ever since. However, this paragraph cannot be found in Pelliot's original text, as we could see here.

144 Original in Chinese as '向達' and '王重民'.

145 The results of this expeditions were abundant including discoveries of mines, dinosaur fossils, and bamboo slips from Han dynasty dated 221-206 BC. The fifty-five volumes of report made by Hedin has detailed the success of the expedition.

146 Huang, "The Implementation and Comparison of the Regulations on Cultural Heritage Preservation in Taiwan: 1900-1982."

2.3 The (de-/re-) Contextualisation of Dunhuang Objects

A local officer named Pan Zheng (1851-1926)¹⁴⁷, while acting as Stein's official contact in Xinjiang, asked: why do these ancient artefacts need to be transported to the far west? Stein's answer remains unknown, but the museum history of Europe might provide an explanation in addition to the scientific culture discussed above. By the time Wang Yuanlu discovered the 'medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia', the British Museum (the world's first national public museum), which commissioned Stein, had existed in London for 147 years; the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Louvre Museum, that received Pelliot's collections, had existed for 439 years and for 107 years respectively in Paris; the Hermitage Museum and the Asiatic Museum that kept Oldenburg's gatherings had existed in St. Petersburg for 136 years and eighty-two years respectively; and the youngest Museum für Völkerkunde, where Grünwedel and Le Coq worked, had been in Berlin for twenty years since 1879. In addition, the aforementioned learned societies or research institutes, which served as another origin of museum collections and were affiliated to by those orientalists, also had a long history. For example, the Royal Geographic Society (Geographical Society of London) was established in 1830 in London; the Collège de France in 1530 and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in 1663 in Paris; the Accademia dei Lincei was built in 1603 in Rome; the Russian Academy of Sciences (where the Asiatic Museum belonged to together with many other affiliated research institutes) in 1724 in St. Petersburg; the Munich University (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in 1472) in Ingolstadt and the Leopoldina Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften in 1652 by the Holy Roman Empire; and the Harvard University in 1636 in Massachusetts. On the other end of the Silk Roads, in China the 'country of origin', although comparable knowledge organisations like Hanlin Academy¹⁴⁸ (royal research institute) or Shuyuan¹⁴⁹ (a private schooling system) had existed since at least the Tang dynasty, the Dunhuang objects were excluded from such an academic context, which mainly served the imperial purpose of selecting governing officers. In this Section the shifting 'contexts' of Dunhuang objects will be explored as they play a crucial role in determining the meaning, value and interpretation of cultural objects.

2.3.1 Physical Displacements of Archaeological Finds

According to the studies above, a map can be drawn (see Figure 2.7) to indicate the fundamental change of geopolitical and cultural 'contexts' for the Dunhuang objects. The task of finding out where all the Dunhuang collections were was for the first time carried out by the Chinese historian Rong Xinjiang from Peking

147 Original in Chinese as '潘贊', see Liu and Meng, *A Hundred Years of Dunhuang*, p 73.

148 Original in Chinese as '翰林'.

149 Original in Chinese as '書院'.

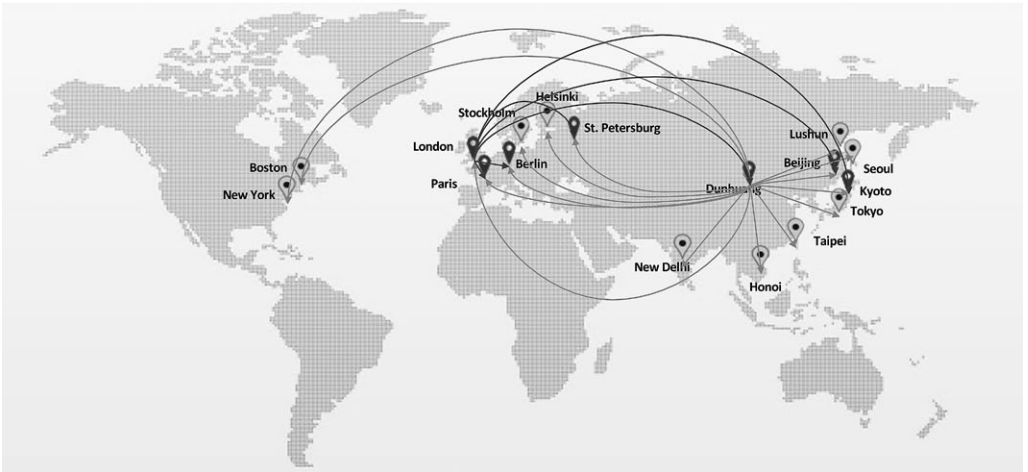


FIGURE 2.7 *Displacements of the Dunhuang Collections after 1900*

University in the early 1990s¹⁵⁰. Around the same period of time, in 1995, the initiative to digitise dispersed Dunhuang objects into a centralised database was taken by the British Library, with sponsorship from Taiwan. It is known by now that the collections, distributed through the expeditions discussed previously, were part of almost every major institute of arts and culture in both the West and Asia. A summary can be detailed as follows:

- Britain: The gatherings of Stein's four expeditions were brought to London and preserved mainly at the British Museum, British Library and Victoria and Albert Museum (with the collections transferred from the former British India's National Museum of New Delhi). Other institutes include the Ancient India and Iran Trust, Royal Geographical Society, Royal Society for Asian Affairs, University of Cambridge and its constituent colleges, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology of the University of Cambridge, the Bodleian Library of the Oxford University, etc.
- India: A part of Stein's collection, gathered from his first and second expeditions, were sent to the Indian Museum in Calcutta, the Art Museum in Lahore and the Archaeological Survey of India in New Delhi. They were transferred to the National Museum of India in New Delhi (there are about 11,000 objects in silk, hemp and paper banners from Dunhuang including over 2,000 stuccos, 900 fragments of fresco and 600 textiles).
- France: The acquisitions of Pelliot are now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the Musée Guimet (transferred from Louvre in the 1930s).
- Russia: Oldenburg's collections are now at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the State Hermitage Museum and the Russian Geographical Society Archives.

150 Rong, *Account on Foreign Collections of Dunhuang and Turfan Manuscripts* (海外敦煌吐魯番文獻知見錄).

- Finland: The collections of Mannerheim can be found in the National Board of Antiquities, Helsinki University Library, Museum of Cultures and Mannerheim Museum.
- Germany: Findings of Grünwedel and Le Coq (which form the world's largest collection of manuscripts from Turfan) are now in Berlin to be found at the Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Oriental Department of the Berlin State Library and the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin. In addition, the Folk Art Museum in Munich and the Overseas Museum in Bremen also hold parts of the collections.
- Japan: Otani's gatherings were first moved to Kyoto and Kobe but the most part were dispersed by Otani to Japanese Manchuria and Korea as 'personal belongings'. Currently in Japan, the rest of the collections of Otani are in the Omiya Library of the Academic Information Centre in the Ryukoku University, Nishi Honganji Monastery, National Museum in Tokyo, National Museum in Kyoto, Gotoh Museum, Horyujii Temple in Nara, Kyushu University in Fukuoka, Mitsui Bunko, Nakamura Shodo Museum in Tokyo, National Diet Library, Neiraku Museum, Otani University, Seikado Bunko, Tenri Central Library, Toshodaiji Temple, Oriental Institute of Tokyo University, Yurinkan, Daitokyu Memorial Library in Tokyo, etc.
- Korea: Otani sold his villa together with a part of the collection to a businessman Fusanosuke Kuhara, who then gave them to the Governor-General of Joseon and it forms the Korean Dunhuang collection to be found in the National Museum of Korea in Seoul.
- China: The rest of the Dunhuang collections, after the removal of Western expeditions, are now in the National Library of China in Beijing, Gansu collections (Dunhuang Academy, Gansu Provincial Museum, Dunhuang Museum, Gansu Provincial Library, Northwest Normal University, Jiuquan Museum, Dingxi County Museum, Yongdeng Country Museum, Gaotai County Museum, Gansu College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Zhangye Museum), Tianjin Museum, Tianjin University, Peking University, Shanghai Library, Shanghai Museum, Zhejiang collections (Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Zhejiang Library, Hangzhou Bureau for Protection and Management of Cultural Relics, Lingyin Temple), Nanjing Library, Hubei Provincial Museum, National Museum of China, Chongqing Museum, Tianjin Cultural Relics Bureau, Lüsun Museum (parts of Otani collections), Guangdong Zhongshan Library and the Chinese Buddhist Association. In addition, in Hong Kong the Museum of the Chinese University has a piece from the Royal Society of Asian Affairs, and in Taiwan the National Central Library, Academia Sinica, History Museum also have some Dunhuang objects removed after 1949.
- USA: Warner's collections are now to be found in the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Certain Dunhuang manuscripts from private donations are at the Princeton University, the Freer Gallery in Washington DC and the University of California in Los Angeles and Berkeley.

- Others:
 - Vietnam: Pelliot brought ‘copper ware, pottery, paintings, and numerous Chinese manuscripts along with documents in Tibetan and Mongolian to Hanoi while returning from Beijing in 1901’¹⁵¹ and some of them remained in Hanoi though most were sent to the National Library of France and Louvre and became part of Pelliot’s collections.
 - Sweden: Although Hedin was requested to leave all the findings from the Sino-Swedish Expedition in China, collections from his previous expeditions were transported to Sweden and now can be found in the National Museum of Ethnography, Museum of Natural History, and National Archives.
 - Denmark: A private donation from Arthur Sorensen (1880-1932) of Dunhuang manuscripts is now in the Royal Library in Copenhagen¹⁵².

As stated above, the Dunhuang objects collected by the knowledge network (as described in Chapter 2.2) have become the ‘permanent collections’ of all these national institutions, which by law are public property administered, maintained and funded by central governments. Notwithstanding, the difference in socioeconomic systems of different countries¹⁵³ can also be seen in museum management and in the use of collections. However, it is worth noticing that almost all the Western institutes of arts and culture listed above were built long before the making of Dunhuang collections, but those in China, the ‘country of origin’, were created after it following the scientific culture of the former, especially during the second half of the 20th century posterior to New Imperialism. This is a clear sign of ‘coloniality’, which involves a shift of conceptual paradigm to define the value and use of Dunhuang objects¹⁵⁴.

2.3.2 Question of Context for Cultural Objects

Although the physical displacement described above seems to have safeguarded the Dunhuang objects, placing them ever since in the permanent collections of national institutes, in fact almost every collection’s ‘maker’ damaged their collection to varying degrees, including Stein, Pelliot, Oldenburg, Le Coq¹⁵⁵ and especially Warner¹⁵⁶—considering that the question of ‘original context’ in archaeological excavation was not yet a concern at that time¹⁵⁷. Objects once

151 Jeong, *The Silk Road Encyclopedia*.

152 Rong, *Account on Foreign Collections of Dunhuang and Turfan Manuscripts* (海外敦煌吐魯番文獻知見錄).

153 The difference can be ranged from a wide spectrum, on the one end it is the free-market capitalism of the United States, and in the middle the mixed economics in the continental Europe and the welfare systems in the Northern Europe, and then to the other end the socialism and communism as seen in Russia and China. We will further explore this topic in Chapter 5.

154 That will be discussed in the following Chapter 3.

155 Onishi and Kitamoto, “Explorers: The Race for Information and Honor.”

156 Liu and Meng, *A Hundred Years of Dunhuang*. p 240.

157 King, *The Elgin Marbles: The Story of the Parthenon and Archaeology’s Greatest Controversy*.

found were removed selectively and immediately from the sites regardless of whether the surrounding environments or contexts had been documented. The haphazard situation in some of these ‘discovery stories’ was not much different from the one of treasure hunters or art thieves. This explains why local people became enraged, calling those ‘scientific expeditioners’ names like ‘foreign devils’—as used for the book title by Hopkirk¹⁵⁸. The so-called ‘scientific methods’ such as stratigraphy were just introduced from geology and palaeontology to archaeology, which until that point had been regarded merely as an amateur activity, pastime or leisure for bourgeois intellectuals. It was not until the 1920s that some sort of ‘code of ethics’ for archaeology excavations was suggested¹⁵⁹, and it was not until 1956 that such standards were recommended by UNESCO, while promoting a series of general principles and regulations about archaeological excavation and trading of antiquities. The importance of keeping the original context of archaeological objects then became commonly acknowledged¹⁶⁰ as it plays a crucial role in reconstructing the past through these materials. Understandably, yet unfortunately, most objects acquired before this time have ended up as the ‘numerous derelict objects in the storerooms’ without proper records about where exactly they were from.

CONTEXT SHIFTING OF DUNHUANG COLLECTIONS SINCE 1900		
Environment	Provenance: grottos and ruins	GLAM Institutes
	natural decaying unsorted original state content unknown material treasure private holdings kept by an illiterate monk	safeguarding, conservation, exhibition categorized, classified studied and catalogued knowledge source public collections learned orientalist
Social	Agricultural	Industrial
	Qing dynasty anti-commerce letters and art superstitious monocratic	European empires trading science scientific democratic
Cultural	East	West
	Confucius, Buddhism, Muslim peripheric borderland of China Han dominating culture target of colonisation global south	Christianity urbanised metropolises of Europe nationalistic thinking centres of colonisation global north

FIGURE 2.8 *The (de-/re-) contextualisation of Dunhuang objects*

158 Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia*.

159 Brysac, “Last of the ‘Foreign Devils.’”

160 Sease, “Conservation and the Antiquities Trade.”

Coinciding with the change of physical context was the shift of social and cultural context that directly determines the meaning, value and interpretation of Dunhuang objects (as seen in Figure 2.8). Geographically, the distribution of Dunhuang objects from the Mogao Grottos in China to the GLAM institutes of Western metropolises signifies an improvement of conditions for their existence or survival—from a state of natural decay to a well-controlled and safeguarded artificial environment; from being unsorted to being studied; from being the target of treasure hunters to being the property of the public; from being the ruins of history to being the source of knowledge making; and from being a sacred religious objects to being scientific archaeological specimens. It is obvious that such change in definition comes from the change of socioeconomic systems the objects were put in. The Chinese society during the late Qing period was characterised as: agricultural, anti-commerce, appreciating letters and arts instead of science and technology, superstitious and monocratic. However, around the same time, European society was already in the modern form of the nation-state with characteristics such as industrialisation, promoting commerce, encouraging science, and democracy surpassing monarchy. The last category is the civilizational context in the East and the West. In such a geo-cultural sense, the Dunhuang collections were shifted from a mixed culture of Confucianism, Buddhism and Muslim (in the area of Chinese Central Asia) to a Christian one; from being the target of colonialism to the centre of colonialism; and from the global south to the global north. This generic contextual analysis on the (de-/re-) contextualisation of Dunhuang objects in East and the West has precluded the topics of the following Chapter 3 in further exploring the value and use of cultural heritage embodied in the most complicated question: ‘who owns cultural heritage’ or ‘who owns the past’.

Sub-Conclusion: The Birth Histories of the Dunhuang Collections

The birth histories of the Dunhuang collections, reconstructed in Chapter 2, is foundational to my entire research. As recounted in the previous sections, the distribution of Dunhuang objects from their ‘country (and sites) of origin’ to the West’s (and China’s) GLAM institutes occurred almost simultaneously with the making or birth of them. Taken to Britain, France, Russia, Germany, the United States, Japan, Finland and many other countries, the biographical lives of Dunhuang objects are destined to be multicultural and this provides the ground for a comparative study on the heritage process and tradition in the West and China. Besides, the transbordering nature of the knowledge network can be seen in the visualisation of different relations interlacing different actor-agents that contribute to the making of the Dunhuang collections, in an entangled world history during the Belle Époque. This provides the grounds for the understanding of the Dunhuang collections’ (de-/re-)contextualisation between the West and China. Based on such knowledge, it becomes possible to further explore the political lives of Dunhuang objects in both cultural systems.

3 The Political Use of the Past

The past is a foreign country¹ and the nation an imagined community². These notions have made the public use of cultural heritage (a material reminiscence from the past) for nation (empire) building a questionable enterprise. The making of the Dunhuang collections, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, has elucidated how differently they were used in the Western and Chinese cultural traditions. To the former, they were ‘scientific specimens’ of archaeology or art history for the production of knowledge for mankind; yet to the latter, they were the sacred relics of Buddhism or Taoism,³ or the embodiment of aesthetics for the peace-making of the human soul. However, the collapse of Qing dynasty not only marked a drastic change of socio-political system, it also signified a rapid phase of ‘modernisation’ or ‘westernisation’ including the heritage concept and museum praxis. Thence, the usage of the Dunhuang collections in China started to assimilate into the West—for nation (empire) building, in addition to augmenting knowledge in discovering truth or ‘what the world is really like,’ as claimed by philosophy of science⁴. It is in this regard that arguments over ownership of displaced cultural heritage have arisen, which started to resonate in the international forum after the Cold War and became particularly heated in the Global Age. Opinions can mostly be grouped into two categories termed as ‘nationalism’ and ‘internationalism’ or ‘retentionist’ and ‘repatriationist,’ with negotiations between ‘hosting countries’ and ‘countries of origin’ mostly mediated by ICOM-UNESCO-UN—which in spite of its Eurocentric founding history and ideology has established a series of legal instruments to protect the cultural heritage of humankind around the world.

1 Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*.

2 Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

3 Shiao, *Taoism and Tao-Teaching and the Early Development of Buddhist Teaching in China* (道家道教與中土佛教初期經義發展). After the Buddhism had entered China from northern India in Han dynasty (AD 67), it started to be ‘localized’ and mixed with the Chinese tradition of metaphysics and Taoism. Not only the ‘language’ used in those translated Buddhist scriptures was ‘taoist’ as in the texts of Lao-tsu and Zhuang-tsu but also many taoist scriptures were appropriated by the Buddhist teaching. Over hundreds of years’ evolvement it has become difficult for common public to distinguish Buddhism from Taoism and vice versa in religious practice and teaching.

4 Klee, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Science: Cutting Nature at Its Seams*.

3.1 Intercultural Contact Zone of Dunhuang Collections

In 1900, at the time when Wang Yuanlu discovered his sacred relics in Dunhuang, the Qing dynasty had gone through a series of political reforms to ‘modernise’ itself so to ‘catch up’ with the West in terms of military technology and industry. Such a demand was so drastic and urgent that the Qing was dethroned by revolutionists, and in the following years the ‘modernisation’ or ‘westernisation’ has increased pace in spite of endless wars. Amidst such clash of civilisations between the hard and soft powers of the West and China, Chinese cultural heritage like the Dunhuang collections were seen to be used ‘similarly’ by both sides. In China, Wang Yuanlu’s miraculous findings became contextualised in the discourse of ‘nation-building’; while in the West the scientific gatherings of Stein, Pelliot, Le Coq or Oldenburg have respectively contributed to the demonstration of ‘empire-making’.

3.1.1 China: Using Its Own Cultural Heritage for Nation-Building

The Sino-Swedish Scientific Expedition (1927-1935), mentioned in Chapter 2.2.3, served as a signal for a new era after ‘the century of humiliation’ (or New Imperialism) was about to end. The American explorer and later the director of the American Museum of Natural History, Roy Chapman Andrews (1884-1960), being frustrated when his Sino-American Expedition was cancelled in 1930, complained about Hedin accepting those ‘radical conditions’ and blamed him for setting up an ‘unprecedented example’ to make other Western expeditions become extremely difficult. In response Hedin said: ‘it is not my doing, it is simply because a new era has been precluded by the emerging nationalism from the southern China’⁵. In fact, Hedin’s Expedition was proposed already in the winter of 1926 with the name Sven Hedin Central Asia Expedition and funding fully covered by the Deutsche Luft Hansa AG of Germany⁶. Accompanied by his fellow countryman, the archaeologist and geologist Johan Gunnar Andersson (1874-1960)—who had worked for the Chinese government since 1914 and contributed momentarily to the emergence of Chinese archaeology, especially in discovering the ‘homo erectus pekinensis’—Hedin was well-received by the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and finally succeeded in obtaining an agreement with the Director of the Chinese Bureau of Geologic Investigation under the conditions (like those previously mentioned) such as: 1) all findings shall stay in

5 Li, *China at War: An Encyclopedia*.

6 It is the predecessor of the German Lufthansa Airlines today. Created in 1926 with the merge of Deutscher Aero Lloyd and Junkers Luftverkehr AG, it had air ways as far as to Spain and Brazil and was trying to develop its Chinese market at that time. In 1933, it changed its name to Lufthansa and by the end of the 1930s it has co-owned the Eurasia Airline with the Chinese government. Closely cooperated with the Nazi Germany, it stopped operating after the War and re-started in 1951 under the new name Luft AG which was changed back to Lufthansa in 1955.

China; 2) at least three Chinese members will be included, including a geologist and an archaeologist; and 3) that the title should be changed to the Sino-Swedish Scientific Expedition to the North-western Provinces of China. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1927 news started to spread that ‘Hedin is going to explore the northwest of China for archaeological collections with a plan to remove them abroad by airways.’ Several Chinese learned societies in Beijing started to react with rage, including the Chinese Association of Libraries, the Central Astrology Observatory, the Society of Astrology, the History Museum, the Palace Museum, the Research Association of Archaeology of Peking University, the Research Institute of Qing-Hua University, the Gallery of Antiquities, the Capital Library, the Research Institute of Chinese Painting, the Peking Library, etc. In a meeting organized in March, they decided to establish an association (the Association of the Learned Societies of Beijing) and take action with a manifesto⁷ published in newspapers:

All that are found within the national borders as historic artefacts, rare specimens of palaeontology, fauna and flora, and geology should be forbidden to carry abroad and instead should be well-preserved by the learned societies of our nation for the sake of research and for the respect of our national rights. Over the past decades, ever so often foreigners have organised expeditions to all over China to search, dig and remove massive amounts of the rarest ‘study materials’ of our nation, e.g. the fossils of vertebrate in Gansu and Xinjian Provinces and the floras in Sanxi, Gansu, Sichuan and Guizhou Provinces. Although objections were made, the Government and the Society did not seem to care. This is extremely disappointing, as the fact that these materials got dispersed not only signifies the loss of our nation’s rights but also has hindered our research work and brought immeasurable harm to our academic development. Now Sven Hedin from Sweden is going to assemble a team to take away artefacts that only exist in our country. The title Sven Hedin Central Asia Expedition is intolerable. The term ‘expedition’ suggests ‘search’ and ‘conquer’, it may be used to those non-existing countries like Babylon and Carthage but absolutely not to an independent country like ours. Can Sweden tolerate such a conduct if our scholars organise an expedition to Sweden? We grieve for the loss of our nation’s rights, and fear that spoling rare materials will damage the academic future of our nation. The Association strongly opposes such unethical behaviour of international scholars like Hedin’s. It is sad that the difficult time our nation encountered in recent years has obstructed the academic development of our nation, but what we have achieved with our humble capacities by far has improved the situation rather effectively. It is necessary that we collaborate and form this Association officially so to proceed an all-inclusive plan to speed up the work and share with the world’s scholars the results of what we will have found and collected. To prevent all unethical conducts that violet our national rights and impair our academic development with the spirit of this Manifesto, we shall unite all learned societies

7 Liu and Meng, *A Hundred Years of Dunhuang*.

of the country to urge the Government to take actions to forbid such activities. Hopefully the intellectuals and the public in our country can strive to catch up so the future of our culture will be protected⁸.

Viewing such a reaction, Hedin contacted those learned societies and wrote a letter on the 9th of March to the Association saying that he absolutely did not intend to take away any historical remains; that he agreed completely with the manifesto, that he had suggested to the Chinese Government from the beginning that all possible findings would be kept in China, that he was open to any interest parties and that he could have a Chinese team member who was experienced in archaeology and had history training with all costs covered. However, as there was no response from the Government, the Association turned to the local warlords in Xinjiang and Gansu. In May, the Association was registered officially and the Expedition renegotiated according to terms. Ten Chinese members from the Association (excepting the geologists) were added and the primary goal of the manifesto to protect national rights and historical artefacts was attained to their contention⁹.

What happened to Hedin's Expedition as described above in detail has demonstrated how the time in China has changed. As Hedin pointed out, by 1926 'nationalism' had become a well-received idea in China, which has transformed from a feudalistic imperial dynasty to a modern nation-state. In fact, Chinese 'modernisation' had started in the mid-19th century after the First Opium War and could be marked by the political reforms such as the Self-Strengthening Movement during 1861-1895, the One Hundred Days' Reform in 1898 and the New Policies in 1901. The Qing dynasty was overthrown in 1911 by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen under the revolution slogan of 'repel the Da-Lu¹⁰, restore the Zhong-Hua

8 Original in Chinese as: '凡一国内所有之特种学术材料,如历史材料,及稀有之古生物、动植矿等材料,因便利研究,尊重国权等理由胥宜由本国各学术团体自为妥妥保存,以供学者之研究,绝对不允输出国外。乃近数十年来,常有外人所组织之采集队,擅往中国各处搜掘,将我国最稀有之学术材料,如甘肃、新疆之有脊动物化石,陕甘川贵之植物,莫不大宗捆载以去。当时虽亦有人呼号反对,而政府社会,置若罔闻,不惟国权丧失,且因材料分散,研究不便,致学术上受莫大之损失,兴言及此,良堪痛心。近且闻有瑞典人斯文赫丁组织大队,希图尽攫我国所有特种之学术材料。观其西文原名为Sven Hedin Central Asia Expedition[斯文赫定中亚探险队]已令人不能忍受。夫Expedition[探险]一字,含有搜求、远征等义,对于巴比伦、迦太基等现代不存之国家,或可一用,独立国家断未有能晒颜忍受者。试问如有我国学者对于瑞典组织相类之团体,瑞典国家是否能不认为侮蔑。同人等痛国权之丧失,惧特种学术材料之攘夺将尽,我国学术之前途,将蒙无可补救之损失,故联合宣言,对于斯文赫丁此种国际上学术上之不道德行为,极端反对。我国近年因时局不靖,致学术事业未能充分进行,实堪慨叹。但同人等数年来就绵力所及,谋本国文化之发展已有相当之效果。现更鉴有合作之必要,组织联合团体,作大规模之计划,加速进行,将来并可采集或研究之所得,与世界学者共同讨论。一方面对于侵犯国权损害学术之一切不良行为,自当本此宣言之精神,联合全国学术团体,妥筹办法,督促政府严加禁止,深望邦人君子急起直追,庶几中国文化之前途,有所保障,幸甚幸甚。'

9 Li, "Team Making Controversial of the Sino-Swedish Northwest Scientific Expedition (中瑞西北科学考察团组建中的争议)."

10 Da-Lu (韃虜) in classic Chinese is a pejorative term meaning the northern 'barbarians' of China, mainly the Mongolians and the Manchurians.

(China), establish the Republic, and equalise landownership¹¹. The idea to ‘repel the Da-Lu (Mongolian and Manchurian)’ was replaced after the Revolution by ‘unifying the (major) five ethnic peoples’¹²—a concept which originated in the ‘nationality law’ of Qing in 1909, following the Dutch example. This has shown the complex issue of nation, state and ethnicity in such a vast country of longstanding history¹³ while appropriating the ‘imported’ idea or concept of nation-state—a by-product of the 15th century intellectual discoveries in political economy, capitalism, mercantilism, political geography and cartography¹⁴. As stated, the definition of ‘nationalism’ after renegotiations by the time of 1920s had become a Han-centric ideology successfully used to invigorate solidarity and defend territory, as seen in the protest against the Versailles Treaty of WWI (as mentioned in Chapter 2.2.2).

Being one of the Allied Powers, China requested Germany to return the Shandong concession and Japan to withdraw the Twenty-One Demands. However, the Allies including Britain, France and the United States refused and gave the German concession to the Japanese Empire. While the Chinese representatives in Paris declined the Treaty, the May Fourth Movement as an anti-imperialist, cultural and political movement organised by the students took place in Peking to protest government weakness in defending the country. This Movement was in fact a continuation of the ‘new culture movement’ (from 1910s to 1920s), which revolted against Confucianism and embraced Eurocentrism including democracy (and Marxism), science and other socio-cultural norms¹⁵. Leaders of these movements were often found to be those younger intellectuals (like Hu Shi, Chen Duxiu, Cai Yuanpei and Lu Xun¹⁶) who had studied abroad in France or Japan. Among them, some (like Hu Shi) went to the United States as well. In 1906, the missionary Arthur Henderson Smith (1845-1932) and the president of the Illinois University Edmund James (1855-1925) suggested that President Theodore Roosevelt establish the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program¹⁷ on the presumption that if they ‘succeed in educating the young Chinese of the present generation’ the United States ‘will be the nation which for a given expenditure of effort will reap the largest possible returns in moral, intellectual and commercial influence’. James tried to convince Roosevelt by saying that ‘if only the States had successfully attracted the Chinese students thirty years ago and had continued to enlarge the number of them today the States could have dominated the Chinese

11 Original in Chinese as ‘驅除韃虜，恢復中華，建立民國，平均地權’. This is a concept of early nationalism in China proposed by Liang Qi-Chao (梁啟超) in the late 19th century facing the invasion of Western powers.

12 They are Han, Manchurian, Mongolian, Uigur, and Tibetan.

13 Fei, *Multiculturalism of Chinese People* (中華民族多元一體格局).

14 Carneiro, “A Theory of the Origin of the State.”

15 Liu, *Chinese Cultural History* (中國文化史講稿).

16 Including Hu Shi (胡適), Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀), Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培), Lu Xun (魯迅).

17 After the 1900 Eight-Nations Alliance the Qing court was demanded to pay a huge sum of ‘silver’ to compensate the loss of the eight Western countries during the Boxer Rebellion. The total amount was about 335 million U.S. gold dollars but with interests included it reached 1,180,000,000 troy ounces silver.

leaders intellectually and spiritually and could have controlled the development of China in a most sophisticated and satisfying manner¹⁸. Viewing what Japan had done in this respect and then enjoyed a dominating military and political influence in China, Roosevelt took the advice and announced accordingly to the Senate and House of Representatives¹⁹.

This case with the foreign cultural politics of the United States has provided a vivid picture about how the modern China became ‘westernised’ under the support of the West too. It was under such circumstances that those learned societies in Beijing, different from the first generation of Dunhuangologists like Luo Zengyu or Wang Guowei, could rise to protect their ‘national rights’ and cultural heritage from Western expeditions like the Hedin’s using a Western (or Westernised and modernised) language and value of heritage enterprise. As a matter of fact, Hedin’s Expedition not only became a Sino-Swedish one, as discussed above, but also became co-funded by the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai-Shek in Nanjing from the Southern China with added tasks such as to investigate irrigation systems and to draw maps and design plans for the construction of two highways for automobiles along the Silk Roads from Beijing to Xinjiang²⁰. Not only had the good old time for Western explorations in the Chinese Central Asia (as discussed in Chapter 2.1.2) now gone, they had also started to serve the Chinese nation-state government in the same way that they had to the Western empires previously. Cultural heritage continued to turn into a symbol of Chinese culture, as He Zhenhuang proposed that ‘the ancient art of China represents the finest spirit of our nation’ in promoting the Chinese Expedition to the Northwest China on Art and Artefacts in 1940 (see Chapter 2.1.3). And this has well-continued in the following years of the 20th century and has come into the new century with the China Dream.

3.1.2 The West: Taking Cultural Objects from the ‘Others’ for Empire-Making

At the time when Stein, Pelliot, Oldenburg and Le Coq brought their Dunhuang collections back to their homelands, Europe was enjoying the prime of Belle Époque (1871-1914)—in France it was during the period of the Third Republic, in Britain the Edwardian era (of the Pax Britannica), in Russian the reign of Nicholas II, and in Germany the Wilhelminism. This epoch is characterized by optimism, regional peace and economic prosperity enabled by the achievements of colonial empires. Of which, the New Imperialism was practiced with aggressive pursuits of territorial conquests overseas as well as material exploitations upon advanced technology and science. The cultural heritage of the ‘Others’ from the conquered lands of Africa or Asia became the ‘things’ for these colonial powers

18 Tang, *70 Years in Late Qing I: Transformation of Chinese Society and Culture* (晚清七十年 (1) 中國社會文化轉型綜論).

19 Meng, “The First Returned Boxer Indemnity from the States (從時間細節考察美國第一次退還庚子款的交涉過程).”

20 Smith, *China and America To-Day*.

to demonstrate their success and stimulate social consensus or domestic support to further their empire-making. It was under such circumstances that the first museum boom in Europe occurred, out of the hoarding of colonial collections and the upsurge of *exposition universelle* (and colonial exhibitions).

The fact that the major museums of former colonial powers were built to host collections acquired from the 'Others' can be read in most of their museum histories. The architecture history of the British Museum has mirrored the expansion of the British Empire. In 1808 the Townley Gallery was built to house the newly obtained Egyptian sculptures and the Greco-Roman collections of Charles Townley, in 1816 Sir Robert Smirke was called in to enlarge the Museum to hold the Parthenon sculptures brought from Greece by Lord Elgin—the new temple-like building in a Greek Revival style took thirty years to accomplish and became the norm of classic museum architecture ever since. And with new acquisitions from Egyptian, Greek, Lycian or Assyrian excavations²¹, the space of the Museum continued to be expanded throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries²². A similar situation happened in France too. In 1803, Napoléon renamed the Louvre in his own name (Musée Napoléon) and made it house prestigious cultural artefacts looted from Belgium, Italy, Prussia, Austria, Egypt and Syria. He said: 'Louvre can never be a comfortable residence. I regard it as a kind of ceremonial palace in which we must store all our riches in the field of art and science, such as statues, bronze sculptures, paintings, books, archives, medals [...]'²³. The augmentation of museum collections continued with the French colonial expanding in the Pacific Islands, Africa and Asia. The inscription on the fronton of Musée d'Éthnographie du Trocadéro in 1878 for the third Exposition Universelle held in Paris reads: 'things rare and beautiful, here sagely assembled, to teach the eye to see, as if they have never been seen before, all things there are in the world'²⁴. It is clear that while conquering the world, museums of colonial powers were collecting the world too. And just as these powers competed with each other in seizing overseas colonies, their museums rivalled with each other in increasing colonial collections as well. For example, many of Napoléon's collections from his campaigns in Egypt and Syria were taken by the British military forces and ended up in the British Museum. In Russia, the Winter Palace (Hermitage Museum) in St. Petersburg was created by the order of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna in 1754 to rival the leading European royal palaces (museums). The rapid founding of settlements across the immense area from Siberia to the North Pacific during the 18th and 19th centuries brought Moscow and St. Petersburg massive collections of archaeology, ethnography and art history, and museums and galleries were built one after another: for example, the Russian Museum of Ethnography (formerly the ethnographic department of the Russian Museum) founded in 1902 to house collections of ethnographic, cultural anthropologic and folklore nature about the peoples of Russian Empire including those in

21 Foundation, "Fourth Expedition."

22 Anderson, *The Great Court and the British Museum*.

23 "Louvre Museum, First Empire."

24 Original in French as 'Choses rares ou choses belles, ici savamment assemblées, instruisent l'oeil à regarder, comme jamais encore vues, toutes choses qui sont au monde'.

the Chinese Central Asia. In Germany the Museum Island of Berlin—composed by several major museums including the Altes Museum which was built in 1830, the Neues Museum in 1859, the Alte Nationalgalerie in 1876 and the Bode Museum in 1930—was a material result of the radical expansion of the German Empire, born out of the victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. To rival the British Museum and others alike, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin continued to thrive even after 1918 when the Empire was replaced by the Weimar Republic.

The rest of world, the ‘Others’ to the West, thus, was collected and displayed in these major museums of colonial powers, in a tangible way and through a Eurocentric viewpoint. For instance, the entire Musée Guimet where Pelliot’s collections were redistributed to (from Louvre) was solely dedicated to the ‘Asian arts’. In fact, among the eight curatorial departments of Louvre (Egyptian Antiquities, Near Eastern Antiquities, Greek, Etruscan and Roman Antiquities, Islamic Art, Sculpture, Decorative Arts, Graphic Arts, Painting, and Prints and Drawings), the majority of the contents (totalling 380,000 objects) were brought to France by expeditioners such as Dominique Vivant in Egypt in 1789 and Paul-Émile Botta in Khorsabad in 1843. The British Museum’s ten curatorial departments (Africa, Oceania, Americas, Ancient Egypt and Sudan, Asia, Britain, Europe and prehistory, Coins and Medals, Conservation and Science, Greece and Rome, Middle East, Portable Antiquities Scheme, Prints and Drawings) present a similar story. So as to almost every other major museum of the European empires at that time. It is evident that without these colossal amounts of exotic objects from the ‘Others’, these prestigious cultural institutes would be emptied or even non-existent.

It is often highlighted that these collections are resulted from the ‘splendid achievements of archaeologists’, as mentioned above, in the museum histories of the British Museum, the Louvre or the Staatliche Museen Zu Berlin²⁵. However, the ‘dark side’ of such seemingly neutral ‘scientific expeditions’ does seem to have existed as seen in the detailed accounts on the making of the Dunhuang collections (see Chapter 2.1)—not only that political and economic support of the colonial empires were indispensable, but also that the secret missions were integrated with these empires’ military agendas. It became a common knowledge since the 1980s that archaeology was used to serve the political ends of the state²⁶. In addition to ‘nation-building’ (in Germany ‘nation-building’ coincided with ‘empire-making’²⁷), after being removed to the Western metropolises the colonial collections (now being called ‘world collections’) were also used to advocate colonial propaganda and to promote further empire-making. The ‘science’ of those scientists of learned societies, or former ‘cabinets of curiosity’ and later museums of natural history or science centre, who joined the expeditions to progress science, in return contributed to the progress of colonizing those ‘countries of origin’²⁸. Accordingly, it is no surprise to see those archaeologists and explorers of the

25 SMB, “History - Staatliche Museen Zu Berlin.”

26 Kohl and Fawcett, “Archaeology in the Service of the State.”

27 Giloi, *Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany 1750-1950*.

28 Boëtsch, “Science, Scientists, and the Colonies (1870-1914).”

Dunhuang collections being honoured or decorated by their governments in one way or another: Stein was knighted in 1912 by the British government²⁹; a chair in the Collège de France for the Language, History and Archaeology of Central Asia was specifically created in 1911 for Pelliot³⁰; Le Coq became the director of the Berlin Ethnological Museum since 1925³¹; Warner was retained as professor of the Harvard University and curator of the Fogg Art Museum since 1923³²; and Oldenburg became the Minister of Education in Russia in 1917³³.

Besides, since the time of the French Revolution where ownership of the royal collections were transferred from the crown to the Republic, museums and exhibitions have become a political milieu to shape social consensus and to attain political ideology³⁴. In Germany, collecting arts and culture³⁵ was used as the main means to create a German nationalism ever since the inception of a unified Germany in 1871 from more than 500 princely kingdoms after the Thirty Coalition War (1803-1806) and the Napoleonic Wars³⁶. Cultural heritage became a powerful tool³⁷ to unite these independent political unities that were German speaking and shared a similar culture, tradition, and legal convention and to establish the modern German 'nation-state'. To rival France and Britain, not only was the Museum Island created but also the practice of world fairs or *exposition universelle* as well as colonial exhibitions were appropriated. Designated The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, the very first world fair was held in London in 1851, attracting more than six million visitors. From then on, on average there were two to three world fairs held in major metropolitan cities in Europe, North America, and Australia in each of the following decades and the apex was in the 1930s³⁸. Among them several were particularly important, such as those held in Paris, as they served as a window or showcase to demonstrate the victory and glory of colonial powers³⁹ and in the meanwhile to sell the colonial dream of a 'Greater France'⁴⁰ to the citizens and to various polities. Out of such exposition universelle, colonial exhibition was generated from those 'national pavilions' for such a purpose. The latter grew exponentially to distinguish the 'civilized' from the 'savage', to promote the 'civilizing mission' of the colonial powers and thus to justify further colonial expansion. In total, there were four colonial exhibitions of the British Empire in Australia between 1866 and 1876. On continental Europe,

29 Kashmir Bhawan Center, "Knighthood of Aurel Stein."

30 Rotours, "Paul Pelliot: 28 Mai 1878 — 26 Octobre 1945."

31 von Le Coq, "Die Buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien Ergebnisse Der Kgl. Preussischen Turfan-Expeditionedn (Postancient Buddhist Culture in Central Asia)."

32 "Warner, Langdon, 1881-1955."

33 Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*.

34 Blanchard, "National Unity: The Right and Left 'Meet' around the Colonial Exposition (1931)."

35 Lenman, *Artists and Society in Germany, 1850-1914*.

36 Giloi, *Monarchy, Myth, and Material Culture in Germany 1750-1950*.

37 Giloi, "Collecting Royal Relics 1750-1850s: Means, Motives, and Meaning."

38 "Expo Timeline of World Expositions."

39 Ungar, "The Colonial Exposition (1931)."

40 Lemaire and Blanchard, "Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies (1870-1914)."

following the Amsterdam colonial exhibition in 1883, in France such exhibitions could be found in Lyon in 1894, in Bordeaux in 1895, and in Rouen in 1896. In Britain the Colonial and Indian Exhibition was held in London in 1886, 1894, and 1899⁴¹. And in Germany, from the Berlin Trade Exhibition held in 1896⁴² until the 1930s, there were more than 400 *Völkerschauen* (folklore exhibition) organized all over Germany to carry out the functions of colonial exhibitions to introduce or educate the German citizens about the ‘savages’ and ‘inferior races’.

3.2 (Dis)similar Traditions of Heritage Enterprise in the West and China

As discussed above, by 1900 the Qing dynasty had attempted to ‘learn from the West’ with formal efforts targeting ‘science and technology’⁴³. That not only instigated the political and economic reforms during the late 19th century but also engendered a long-lasting transformation in the ‘intellectual tradition’ which is fundamental to a culture’s performance in all dimensions⁴⁴. It was also deemed as the core reason why the West could surpass ‘the rest of the world’⁴⁵. In this light, the phenomenological description regarding the ‘clash of civilisations’ embodied in the making of the Dunhuang collections can be understood as a result of the various intellectual traditions of the West and the Orient (China), in which has rooted different concepts and practices towards cultural heritage within their own historical background and socio-political paradigms. By the time that the Dunhuang collections were made, unlike Germany which had sought to arts and culture in creating a ‘national identify’ for unification or Finland which needed to collect its ‘Self’ from Siberia and East Central Asia to find a ‘national root’, and neither like France where royal collections were transferred from under the crown and to be used in negotiating political agenda or Russia that to rival with west European empires had built its winter palace and had been producing ‘scientific knowledge’ in ethnology and ethnography to administer its multi-ethnic Eurasian subjects; China was just trying to transform its ‘cultural system’ which has been a continuum from Xia dynasty (2070-1600 BC) of oral history or Shang dynasty (1600-1046 BC) of written history based on a unified social and cultural system in language (in written form), currency, measurement, transportation and so on (by law since Qin dynasty in the 221 BC) in the vast Asiatic continent. This section will explore how the different intellectual systems of the West and China influenced their concepts and practices towards cultural heritage.

41 “An Official Dramatization: The Era of Colonial Exhibitions (from Amsterdam in 1883 to Lyon in 1914).”

42 Kopf, “Picturing Difference : Writing the Races in the 1896 Berlin Trade Exposition’s Souvenir Album.”

43 Wei, *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms* (海國圖志).

44 Fong, Qian, and Zurndorfer, *Beyond Tradition and Modernity: Gender, Genre, and Cosmopolitanism in Late Qing China*.

45 Ferguson, *Civilization : The West and the Rest*.

3.2.1 The West: Scientific Culture, Antiquarianism and Archaeology

Although it was under the auspices of colonial powers that Stein, Pelliot and Oldenburg were able to travel to the Chinese Central Asia, the Western scientific tradition inherited from the radical philosophies of the early Enlightenment⁴⁶ (which changed the European intellectual culture with modernity⁴⁷) was the inner force for their makings of the Dunhuang collections. This analytic tradition based on observation, empirical evidence and experiment, and surpassed the dialectic tradition of Aristotle, was well illustrated in a speech delivered in 1875 at Harvard University under the title *Scientific Culture*, and in which physical science was praised to be the greatest power after religion in modern civilization because it ‘increased the comforts and enlarged the intellectual vision of mankind’⁴⁸. Empirical research or fieldwork to carry out direct or indirect observation and to acquire experience became requisite in studying ‘science’—which at first meant ‘natural sciences’ and then ‘human sciences’ as well⁴⁹. Expedition or exploration was the way for it. And the model was set by the greatest breakthroughs of science—Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) travelled to Lapland under the sponsorship of the Royal Society of Sciences in Uppsala and acquired a flash of insight for his *Systema Naturae* published in 1735, and Darwin (1809-1882) joined the HMS Beagle sea excursion in surveying and charting the coastline of South America (1831-1837) and confirmed the evolutionary thoughts of Lamarch (1744-1829) as detailed in his *On the Origin of Species* published in 1837. Except for professional scholars, travel-study also became a ‘à la mode’ activity for those bourgeois amateur-scholars, who were often members of those ‘learned societies’ established by European monarchies. These ‘private collectors’ brought back their collections, which were often stored and displayed in their private villas and salons (or private museums) that later on would most likely become ‘nationalized’ through donations under special arrangements with their republic governments. The Musée Guimet founded by Émile Étienne Guimet (1836-1918) in Paris, where Pelliot’s collections were relocated from Louvre to be conserved and exhibited permanently, is a typical example⁵⁰.

As mentioned, the learned societies represent a collective, official and institutional force for advancing science and the humanities. Of which the formation of modern academic disciplines as well as the schism between ‘science’ and ‘art’ are a direct result of such ‘institutionalization’. For instance, as mentioned in Chapter 2.3, in France the Collège de France that Pelliot was elected to was created in 1530, the Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres that turned into specializing in

46 Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*.

47 Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity 1210-1685*.

48 Cooke, *Scientific Culture, an Address*.

49 Initiated by David Hume (1711-1776) with the term ‘moral science’, the methodology used in natural sciences—observation on empirical phenomena—became applicable in investigating ‘human life and activities’ including subjects like history, sociology, anthropology, economics, etc.

50 Francotte, “Emile Guimet, Une Entreprise Muéale Hors Du Commun.”

history and archaeology was founded in 1663 (now part of the Institut de France built in 1795), the Société de géographie that awarded Stein was formed in 1821, and the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology that Pelliot was affiliated to was built in 1880. In Britain the societies that awarded Stein included the Society of Antiquaries of London that was built in 1751, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bombay in 1804, the Royal Geographical Society in 1830, the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland in 1871, and the Royal Geological Society joined by Otani was founded in 1807 as well as the Royal Archaeological Institute relevant to the field was established in 1844. In Russia, the Russian Academy of Sciences that Oldenburg was elected to was formed in 1724, and the Imperial Geographical Society (now Russian Geographical Society) that he participated was created in 1824. While ‘scientific expedition’ and ‘learned societies’ combined to propel the many discoveries of the Dunhuang collections, museum institutions—evolving from the Ancient Greek temple of the Muses and the library of Plato to the Medieval church treasury, the Renaissance cabinet de curiosité and the Enlightenment royal collections of monarchy—had provided a physical space not only for those found collections to be distributed to or deposited, but also for furthering specialized ‘scientific knowledge’ together with its particular social function of ‘displaying’ them to the public⁵¹. For example, the publication of collection catalogue by the Museum Wormianum of Ole Worm (1588-1654) (see Figure 3.1) and the construction of muséographie in the exhibition of Louvre (see Figure 3.2) or the Royal Academy of Art (the Figure 3.3) had contributed respectively to the formation of natural history and art history.

A direct intellectual tradition which merged into the scientific culture embodied and performed in these learned societies and museum institutions is known as ‘antiquarianism’. It was at its peak in the 18th century, where Enlightenment progressive thinking had made the desire for ‘national identity’ pervasive, and thus such studies of antiquities (as well as those disciplines that with ‘scientific methodology’ were to develop into such as history, archaeology, anthropology, etc.) became nation-concerned. Generally regarded as rooted in the Renaissance, it was assumed that antiquarianism in its early inception in the 16th century had strong links to philology, as it was through historic texts that ancient civilizations were recovered. In the 17th century, philologists, lawyers and medical doctors became dominant in studying antiquities due to their professional needs and thus the encounter with the object became the ‘site of meaning’⁵². The emphasis on ‘material remains’ of the past⁵³ in antiquarianism ever since was a reflection and part of the evolving ‘scientific culture’. The tangible and intangible accomplish-

51 We will further discuss this specific function of museum institution in the following Part II Museum Diplomacy including Chapter 4 with the theme on displaying Dunhuang and Chapter 5 on cultural diplomacy through museum exhibition.

52 Miller and Louis, *Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China, 1500-1800*.

53 Myrone and Peltz, *Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice, 1700-1850*.



FIGURE 3.1 Ole Worm's Cabinet of curiosities' from *Musei Wormiani Historia*' 1655 (Original source from Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Wikimedia Commons)



FIGURE 3.2 Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture at the Louvre (1712-1721) (Original source provided by Jean-Baptiste Martin RMN, Wikimedia Commons)

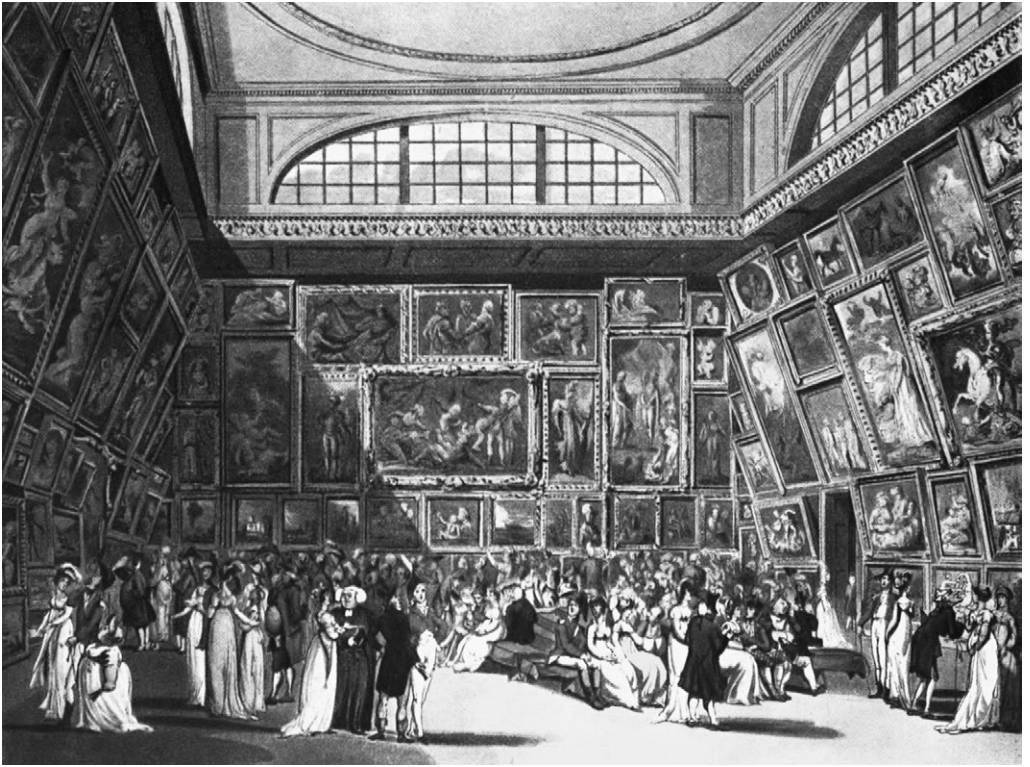


FIGURE 3.3 *Exhibition Room of Somerset House 1808* by Thomas Rowlandson and August Pugin (Wikimedia Commons)

ments of this scientific development of antiquarianism are the historical sciences including archaeology⁵⁴ and art history⁵⁵ and museum foundation.

With the colonial expansion of New Imperialism to Asia since the mid-19th century, such intellectual traditions—the scientific studies (featured with philology) of antiquarianism in the form of archaeology, art history and anthropology—as embodied in the expeditions of Stein, Pelliot, and Oldenburg became the inner drive for the making of the Dunhuang collections. However, a darker side did exist. Prominent, for example, is the racist tendencies conceived in Darwin's evolutionary theory that started to be revealed while 'scientifically studying the colonial conquest and collections from overseas', as seen in the displays of exposition universelle (which were also used to promote imperialistic propagandas) to distinguish the 'savages', 'lower races' or 'primitive cultures'⁵⁶ and so to legitimately colonize and 'educate'⁵⁷ or 'civilize'⁵⁸ them. In any case, it is in the light

54 Moshenska, "A Review of From Antiquarian to Archaeologist: The History and Philosophy of Archaeology."

55 Kaufmann, "Antiquarianism, the History of Objects, and the History of Art before Winckelmann."

56 Dreesbach, "Colonial Exhibitions, 'Völkerschauen' and the Display of the 'Other.'"

57 Vergès, "Colonizing, Educating, Guiding: A Republican Duty."

58 Bancel and Blanchard, "To Civilize: The Invention of the Native (1918-1940)."

of scientific culture that the definition and meanings of cultural artefacts of the conquered or colonized ‘Others’, such as the Dunhuang collections, has shifted from mere ‘object of antiquarian interest’ to ‘scientific specimens’ of archaeology, anthropology or art history.

3.2.2 China: Confucianist Civil Service, Imperial Examination and Art Connoisseurship

In reviewing and renewing the common belief in antiquarianism as amateur and miscellany, Schnapp noticed the very different Chinese tradition concerning ‘the study of the past’⁵⁹. The difference between the first generation of Chinese Dunhuangologists and the Western archaeologists or art historians provides a vivid illustration. In addition, the distinction between them (and between the first and younger generations of Chinese Dunhuangologists) sheds some light on the ambiguous phenomenon of ‘modernisation’ in the Chinese intellectual tradition, which prior to modern China was mainly driven by Confucianism and the civil service and imperial examination system—where an able gentleman in addition to study the Four Books and Five Classics was trained in the arts as well, such as the four arts—lyre (music), chess, calligraphy and painting. Collecting arts and antiquities was a serious side career which often coincided with significant publications⁶⁰. Often making art themselves, these literati would establish special groups or clubs with their fellow connoisseur-collector-artist-colleague friends to share their collections and artworks and to exchange opinions⁶¹. This tradition is Han-centric with a worldview and value system featuring the ‘Tian-Xia’ custom and Confucian morality and ethics. Coming into the 20th century such a tradition was gradually replaced by the Western scientific culture, and the ownership over cultural heritage in a public and collective sense also grew out of the need of the newly formed modern nation-state of China together with the idea of a narrowly defined nationalism and patriotism.

3.2.2.1 *Qing Literati’s Study (Cabinet of Antiquarianism)*

As mentioned above, the first comment given by Ting Dong (1866-1918), the Qing official of Anxi region, upon seeing the manuscripts brought by Wang Yuanlu was ‘my own calligraphy art is far better’ and he picked the best ones (judged by their aesthetic value) for his own collection. This attitude was commonly shared by his peer colleagues and superiors, such as Wang Zonghan and Ye Changchi as well as those erudite officials that Pelliot was acquainted with in Peking—including Duan Feng, Wang Shitong (1864-1931), Luo Zengyu (1866-1940), Jiang Fu (1866-1911), Wang Renjun (1866-1914), Wang Guowei (1877-1927),

59 Miller and Louis, *Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China, 1500-1800*; Schnapp, “World Antiq. Comp. Perspect.”

60 Li, “Literati Collector.”

61 The traditional ‘art history’ or ‘antiquarianism’ in classical China was largely accomplished this way, for example the *Xuanhe Iconography of Archaic Objects* in Song dynasty.

Dong Kang (1867-1947), Liu Tingcheng, Wu Yinchen and Huen Yuding⁶² (the first generation of Dunhuangologists). These literati of the late Qing period were cultivated and grown in such a thousand-year-old intellectual tradition embodied for example in their education, of which the main principle was to pass the imperial examination so to become government officials (civil servants). Except formal studies on the examination material—the Four Books and Five Classics—they were taught to morally follow Confucianism with a life purpose to ‘elevate personal morality, harmonize family-community, administer the state fairly and bring peace to the world’⁶³ in addition to receiving an art education to master the ‘classic six arts’—including rites, music, archery, charioting, poetry and history, mathematics and philosophy. It was in this classic tradition that this first generation of Dunhuangologists became government officials, erudite scholars and collectors of antiquity and arts at the same time. For leisure they would study arts and write their research or comments and critiques in their own studies, which conventionally would be given poetic names and under which their essays and works would be published. For example, Ye Changchi had Yuandu Hut⁶⁴, Duan Feng had Tao Cottage⁶⁵, Dong Kang⁶⁶ had Songfen Room⁶⁷, Wang Guowei had Guan Hall⁶⁸, Luo Zengyu had Snow Hall⁶⁹, Huen Yuding had Enlightening Cottage⁷⁰, and Li Shengduo had Muxi Building⁷¹. The pen-names for their personal publications were often put as the master, owner or host of their studies, for instance Ye Changchi called himself ‘host of Yuandu Hut’ and Dong Kang ‘master of Songfen Room’. The topics of such publications ranged widely, including poetry, personal diary, literary journal, art critique, and introductions or essays about their antiquarian studies and collections. Like creating art, collecting in this intellectual tradition was deemed at best a leisure activity with fine taste, yet it should by no means become a gentleman’s primary career, and the collectable ‘objects of antiquarian interest’ were called ‘antiquarian toy’⁷² (not ‘art’) including bronze, jade, ceramics, and the Four Jewels of the Literati Study, archaic books, manuscripts, and works of art in Chinese calligraphy and painting.

62 Original in Chinese as ‘汪宗翰、葉昌熾、端方、王式通、羅振玉、蔣輔、王國維、劉廷琛、吳寅臣、琿毓鼎’; they all served the Qing court as officers in the Ministry of Education and Imperial Academy known in Chinese as ‘學部’ or ‘京師大學堂’.

63 These are the latter four principles following the first four: eliminating material attachment, searching for truth, being honest, and elevating spirit. See Daxue (Great Learning), one of the Four Books in Confucianism.

64 Original in Chinese as ‘緣督廬’.

65 Original in Chinese as ‘甸齋’.

66 Xiao, *Personages of the Republic of China*.

67 Original in Chinese as ‘誦芬室’.

68 Original in Chinese as ‘觀堂’.

69 Original in Chinese as ‘雪堂’.

70 Original in Chinese as ‘澄齋’.

71 Li Shengduo (李盛鐸) (1859-1934) was a renowned archive and ancient book collector, and the most known one who handpicked the best parts of the manuscripts of Wang Yuanlu while being transported to Beijing in 1910. His study was named Muxi Building (木樨軒).

72 A common term in Chinese for ‘objects of antiquarian interests’ is ‘antique toy’ (古玩).

As described in Chapter 2, numerous Dunhuang objects have fallen into these private ‘cabinets of literati’ while being transported from Dunhuang to the Minister of Education in Peking. Among them, the most known cases were the ‘collecting’ of Ting Dong, Ye Changchi, and Duan Feng⁷³. As mentioned earlier, before Stein, Pelliot or Oldenburg came to Dunhuang Wang Yuanlu had visited Ting Dong (1866-1918) who was also a poet⁷⁴ with a box of manuscripts and paintings. That ended up in the hands of local officials like Chang Guanjian and Xu Chenyiao⁷⁵. Another officer that Wang Yuanlu had visited, Wang Zonghan, gave his acquisition to Ye Changchi (1849-1917), who was a connoisseur, bibliophile and epigrapher in his private life while working at the Hanlin Academy⁷⁶ and as the Education Commissioner of Gansu Province. He published the very first Dunhuang studies *Essays on Book Collection*⁷⁷ about these pieces that included a few scrolls, textile paintings and stone rubbings⁷⁸ (actually prior to Luo Zengyu who published in 1909 December⁷⁹ about the discovery of the Wang Yuanlu and the copies of Pelliot’s samples). His diary *Yuandu Hut Journal*⁸⁰ has recorded what he heard from Wang Zonghan about the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas⁸¹. Two of his collections from Dunhuang were found being sold through some art dealers to the West at the Freer and Sackler Gallery of Art in the Smithsonian Institute.

Among these officialdom-literati, Duan Feng (1861-1911) was the most established and known ‘collector’ in the late Qing period. As a Han Chinese under the Manchu banner and being spared from supporting the Hundred Days’ Reform in 1898, he was regarded as the successor of Chang Zhidong (1837-1909), who was one of the four most powerful officials of the Qing court responsible for foreign affairs and industrialisation. Because he assisted the Emperor Guangxu and the Empresses Dowager Cixi in their escape from the Forbidden City in 1900 during the Eight-Nation Alliance, Duan Feng was promoted from being a local officer to the Viceroy of Liangjiang (the Governor-General of the Two Yangtze Provinces and Surrounding Areas Overseeing Military Affairs, Provisions and Funds, the Manager of Waterways, and the Director of Civil Affairs—this position was one of the eight regional Viceroys in Qing dynasty) in 1906 after fulfilling his commissioned expedition to Europe in 1905. The mission of his expedition was to investigate Western political system and gather information for the Qing court

73 Rong and Galambos, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang*. (敦煌學十八講, 榮新江, 2011, pp 48-67)

74 One of his poems reads: ‘弱水西流出边汉, 绿杨阴里系渔船。此乡鱼米堪招隐, 到处莺花淡俗缘。杯酒园蔬村客醉, 山桃溪柳暮春烟。何时解组来湖上, 料理琴樽结数椽’

75 Original in Chinese as ‘張廣建’, ‘許承堯’.

76 Similar to the Western ‘royal academy’ in the 18th and 19th century Europe.

77 Original in Chinese as ‘藏書記事詩’. Rong, “Ye Changchi Pioneer of Dunhuang Studies.”

78 Jin, *Studies about Ye Changchi* (葉昌熾研究).

79 Original in Chinese as ‘鳴沙山石室秘錄’.

80 Original in Chinese as ‘緣督廬日記’.

81 Rong, “Ye Changchi Pioneer of Dunhuang Studies.” Curiously, according to Ye Changchi’s knowledge there was not much manuscripts left in the caves. This indicated that Wang Yuanlu might have had hidden his findings and so he was able to continue exchange them for monetary donations to repair his temple.

to prepare a political reform towards a constitutional monarchy. In 1908, through the arrangement of the French Ambassador in Peking, he agreed to receive Pelliot in private and showed him his prestigious private collections. In replying to the Ambassador on the 3rd November of 1908, Duan Feng's letter read:

You kindly indicated that Mister Doctor Pelliot from your kind country would like to visit my humble place to see the antiquities. I shall warmly welcome him. To assure your concern, once he arrives I shall promise to receive him without delay and show him my entire collections for his investigation. The two companions of his, must be fine gentlemen of antiquarian interest as well and I shall also receive them with delight. I sincerely wish to have their thoughts and comments⁸².

While waiting to be received, Pelliot went from Peking to Nanjing and visited the Jaingnan Library (established by Duan Feng after his return from Europe in 1905). The librarian Miao Quansun (1844-1919) recorded Pelliot's visits on the 15th, 16th and 18th of November in 1908 in his published diary and said Pelliot told him in person that 'there were about 7,000 scrolls of Tang manuscripts at the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas in Dunhuang and he selected about 1,000 pieces which were documents about the Shazhou (ancient name of Dunhuang county) history, manuscripts from Xixia and Uigur, and block printings of Song dynasty and Five Dynasties'. The comment about Pelliot's presence and his news given by Miao Quansun was a mere remark: 'how interesting!'⁸³ On the 7th of June 1909 (when Pelliot came to China again from Hanoi), Pelliot finally got to visit Duan Feng's study. On the 9th of June, Pelliot was offered a connoisseur-gathering (antiquarian friends club) and there he was asked to leave a few words⁸⁴ on one of Duan Feng's special collection—a stone rubbing of a stele that was said to be purchased by Grünwedel in 1902 from Turfan and brought to Berlin's Ethnology Museum where Duan Feng visited in his expedition to Europe in 1905⁸⁵. This piece was highly appreciated by Duan Feng and his fellow connoisseur-friends as it has demonstrated the transformation of Chinese calligraphy art from the Li style to Kai style during the Beiliang (or North Liang) dynasty (397-439 AD). Pelliot, as

82 Xu, "Early History of Pelliot's Looting the Manuscripts: A Copy of the 'Mingsha Stonecave Secrete Archive' Commented by Luo Zhengyu." This letter is now at the Musée Guimet in Paris. Original in Chinese as '承示有貴國博士伯希和君,擬來敝處觀覽古器,本大臣極所歡迎。一俟伯博士貴臨,自當依時接見,盡出所藏,以供考察,藉副貴大臣介紹之殷懷。其同行兩友,自必皆好古博雅之士,亦當優為款接,願得品評也'.

83 Xu.

84 This is a convention in the Chinese collecting culture of calligraphy and painting. Often the collectors would leave a word on the side of the scroll telling how he acquired the piece or his thought about the work with his signature, date, and ink seal. Sometimes his connoisseur-friends would be invited to do so as well.

85 The Juqu Anzhou Temple Creation Stele (沮渠安州造寺碑) was built in 445 in Beiliang dynasty to tell the story of how religious the builder was and what happened while this Buddhist temple was constructed. The stele itself, collected by Grünwedel to Berlin, was destroyed by the air raid in WWII. This rubbing is now at the National Museum of China in Beijing.

an honoured guest, wrote down his comment in French. And in exchange, Pelliot presented his manuscript samples from Dunhuang.

It was under Duan Feng's introduction that Pelliot became acquainted with those erudite-officials in Peking and revealed to them the Chinese abbot's discovery. In addition, the visit to Duan Feng's study was also mentioned in his public speech at the Sorbonne University on the 10th of December 1909 upon his return. Pelliot said that Duan Feng (le vice-roi Touen-fang) borrowed 'one of "their" most precious documents' for six weeks and shew the 'regret' (of a collector) of having to 'let go of what was at their fingers'⁸⁶. Like mentioned, the speech was immediately translated by Sheng Hong (1873-1916)⁸⁷, who was studying in France, and was sent to Luo Zhengyu, who then published it under the title *Visiting the Ancient Desert* in his *Manuscripts from the Stone Cave in Dunhuang*. Pelliot's words about Duan Feng were translated by Sheng Hong as:

*General Duan Feng found it [manuscripts acquired by Pelliot and moved to France] a shame and proposed to purchase back a part of my collections. After being refused, he then requested to have selected photocopies sent to him in the future. 'This is fatal to the Chinese textology', he said. General Duan was rather kind and friendly, has received me several times with great hospitality. In Beijing, as I brought several rare manuscripts with me, visits were endless. However, all those gentlemen behaved virtuously just like General Duan, **returning good for evil**, and even threw a banquet for me⁸⁸.*

Nevertheless, this translation (in classic Chinese) appeared to be different from Pelliot's original French text (as quoted in Chapter 2.2.1.3). Sheng Hong added a few words (marked in bold letters), which became widely cited ever since by the Chinese Dunhuangologists⁸⁹. In Pelliot's original words, Duan Feng was pictured as an amateur-collector of antiquarianism who regarded it as a pity not being able to acquire a collectable item that he very much desired (this was not translated in Sheng Hong's version in classic Chinese). Pelliot did not say anything to suggest that Duan Feng could recognize the 'scientific value' of his samples, nor did he in any way consider that his own doing or collecting in Dunhuang was 'evil'. As a matter of fact, being a high government official and military general, Duan Feng had all the power to 'deal with' any foreign plunderer or looter should Pelliot be regarded as one. Nevertheless, judging by how Duan Feng treated Pelliot

86 Pelliot, "Trois Ans Dans La Haute Asie." p 15.

87 岑椿煊 was a student in 1898 at the Japanese Language School established by Luo Zengyu in Beijing and an acquaintance of Wang Guowei. Sent by Cen Chunxuan

88 This is translated from Chinese by the author, for the original text see Rong, "Ye Changchi Pioneer of Dunhuang Studies." as '端制軍聞之扼腕，擬購回一部分，不允，則諄囑他日已精印本寄與，且約：此乃中國考據學上生死問題也。制軍人頗殷勤，屢次接見余，禮有加焉。至北京，行匣尚存秘籍數種，索觀者絡繹不絕。諸君有端制軍之風，以德報怨，設盛宴邀余上座。'.

89 These few 'making-up words' became most cited by the Chinese scholars who regarded it as a proof that the 'scientific value' of Dunhuang objects has already been recognized and that Pelliot was aware of his 'collecting' being morally wrong.

in his study, it is obvious that he viewed Pelliot as a fellow connoisseur, scholar and collector, who shared the same passion in Chinese calligraphy art as he did.

However, what Pelliot failed to recognize is that that Duan Feng was one of the most open minded high officials of the Qing court—as stated, he supported the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898 and contributed to the New Policies since 1901. After his expedition in 1905, he published the *Political Principles in Europe and America*⁹⁰ in 1908 and urged the Qing court to follow the Meiji Restoration in Japan. He established the Jinan University, sent students to study abroad, built the first public kindergartens and public libraries (including the one Pelliot visited)⁹¹, and he even donated seventy pieces from his own collections to the very first Chinese public museum, Nantong Museum, established by Chang Jian⁹² in 1905. His own plan to build a private museum was realised in 1909 while he was shortly dismissed from the Qing court—in Peking Liuli Chang⁹³. This Museum of Tao Cottage (the name of his study) was opened to the common public with his 'collections of bronze, jade, calligraphy, painting and antiquarian objects'⁹⁴. Unfortunately, he was beheaded by the revolutionists in 1911 and his private cabinet-museum and collections were sold by his son. In 1924, through his previous American consultant John Calvin Ferguson (1866-1945) several of his important collections ended up in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (see Figure 3.4).

3.2.2.2 A Han-Centric Cultural System and Heritage Making

The Chinese literati's cabinets mentioned above and the story between Pelliot and Duan Feng has illustrated well an intellectual tradition of Confucianism and the classic concept and practice of cultural heritage in China. To the Qing literati, the Dunhuang objects were not 'scientific specimen' of archaeology to represent the 'material culture' of the past, rather they were regarded as 'historic artworks' to be appreciated and studied and thus their aesthetic value and visual attraction became the main criteria for collecting. This was seen in the attitudes of Ting Dong, Ye Changchi and Duan Feng. It was a pre-modern time in terms of Chinese academia where the Western scientific antiquarianism was yet to be followed⁹⁵, and these Qing literati were 'traditional' not only in their education, training and way of life but also and especially in their 'Tian-Xia'⁹⁶ world view (and diplomatic tributary system) and a Confucian value system—which featured a Han-centric⁹⁷ cultural tradition and heritage making. Such an ideology

90 Dai and Duan, *Political Principles in Europe and America*. (歐美政治要義, 戴鴻慈、端方)

91 Wei, "The Number One Collector of Late Qing Period: Duan Feng."

92 This museum is known as Nantong Museum (南通博物苑) created by Chang Qian (張謇).

93 Original in Chinese as '甸齋博物館', now known as '琉璃廠' in Beijing.

94 Wei, "The Number One Collector of Late Qing Period: Duan Feng."

95 Jiang, "Having Back the Centre of Sinology: The Formation of Chinese Studies on Modern History and Literature in the 1920s."

96 It is a Chinese term '天下' which signifies a political, geographical, and cultural system where the center is the Emperor and the order is predefined from the most civilized Han circle to the regional and marginal cultures and then the barbarians.

97 Xu, "Nationalism, Internationalism, and National Identity: China from 1895 to 1919."



FIGURE 3.4 *The Set of 13 Bronzes from Shang Collected by Duan Feng (Metropolitan Museum, CCo 1.0)*

looked down on foreign cultures and considered them less civilised. Thus, Miao Chunsun would have commented on Pelliot's coming all the way to read Chinese classics in his library with a simple remark 'how interesting' and Duan Feng would have invited Pelliot to admire his exquisite private collections of Chinese antiquities with generosity. This Han-centric cultural attitude also was reflected on the making of the Dunhuang collections in China—only those written in Chinese were selected and transported to Peking but not those in other languages like Uigur, Sogdian, Mongolian, Tibetan or Sanskrit⁹⁸. In the re-edited catalogue of the Dunhuang manuscripts of Peking Library published in 1930, the editor Chen Yuan (1880-1971) admitted this Han-centric attitude:

The reason why 90 percent of the manuscripts are Buddhist scriptures [in the Chinese Dunhuang collections] is that the way was limited how the Chinese used to study the objects of the past—mainly based on 'written texts', drawings, sculptures and artefacts without 'text' were completely ignored. Besides, the 'written texts' excluded those non-Han ancient Central Asian languages. Deemed valuable were only those archaic manuscripts written in Chinese—which were valued by all. So the non-Buddhist (and non-Chinese) collections were taken by

98 Rong and Galambos, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang*; Rong, "Chinese Dunhuangology and International Perspective (中國敦煌學研究與國際視野)."

those 'early birds' [before 1910 when the order came to remove the rest to Beijing] and the rest continued to be stolen by those 'cunning ones'⁹⁹.

3.2.2.3 The 'Heart-Broken' Chinese Dunhuangologists of the Republic

After seeing Pelliot's samples in Peking, in a letter¹⁰⁰ to Wang Kangnian (1860-1911), the chief editor of the newspaper 'Shiwu News', Luo Zengyu, one of the first Dunhuangologists and a renowned expert in Chinese epigraphy and oracle bone script, expressed his thoughts about Pelliot's collecting:

To share with you I have a news that is at the same time worth celebrating, regretting and crying. Several manuscripts, block printings and archaic books from Tang dynasty and the Five Dynasties period were found in a stone cave in Dunhuang. They were acquired by a Frenchman, Pelliot, and most of them have been transported back to France. This is regrettable. As to the small part shown in the capital city (all were not included in the known Anthology of the Arts and History of Sui and Tang Dynasties) I with a few friends have raised a fund and made copies of eight pieces and transcribed one, and we have negotiated with Pelliot to take photographs of the rest in Paris. This is worth celebrating. It was revealed that there is still something left in the stone cave. I plan to request the authority and telegraph Mr. Maoshi to see whether or not there is still something left. If there is, what was lost is lost but the lesson should be learned for the future. This is worth crying. I have written a book Manuscripts from the Stone Cave, will send you a copy when printed. This news shall make you happy, and sad.¹⁰¹

The main host of the banquet for Pelliot in Peking, in the October of 1909, Huen Yuding, also wrote in his published journal that 'the removal to Pairs is to my extreme regret and grief'¹⁰². It is worth noticing that what they hated about this was the fact that the manuscripts had been removed to France, yet towards Pelliot personally they were rather thankful and content to share their expertise. This continued throughout Pelliot's lifetime. In 1916, he came to Peking as an officer affiliated to the French Embassy. A banquet was thrown for him, again, by Chang Yuanji, Miao Chuansun and Ye Changchi. During his stay he met with Luo Zengyu and Wang Guowei regularly and had high opinions on their

99 Original in Chinese as '顧何以十之九，九為佛經？則以國人研究古物，祇能於有文字求之，其無文字而為圖像器物之屬，初不屑也。有文字矣，其文非漢文，而為中亞古代語言，亦不貴也。國人所貴者，漢文古寫本。然漢文古寫本，為人所同貴。故佛經以外之寫本，多已為捷足者所先得。其留遺者，又沿途為黠者所巧取。' See Chen 1930.

100 Rong, "Dunhuang Studies and International Perspective in China."

101 Original in Chinese as '茲有一極可喜、可恨、可悲之事告公，乃敦煌石室所藏唐及五代人寫本刻本古書是也。此書為法人伯希和所得，已大半運回法國，此可恨也；其小半在都者（皆隋唐《藝文志》所未載），弟與同人釀炭影印八種，傳鈔一種，并擬與商，盡照其已携歸巴黎者，此可喜也；聞石室所藏尚有存者，擬與當道言之，迅電毛實君，余存不知有否，但有，盡力斡動之，前車已失，後來不知戒，此可悲也。弟有《石室書錄》數紙，隨後印成寄奉，公聞之當亦且喜且悲也。'

102 Original in Chinese as '輦歸巴黎，豈非至可恨可傷之事'.

academic works. In 1929, the Research Institute of History and Philology of the Academia Sinica was established and Pelliot was appointed as ‘corresponding researcher’. In 1932, Pelliot visited Beijing again, on a mission to purchase books, and a formal reception banquet was held to welcome him by the Academia Sinica, the Sino-French University, the Peping (Peking) Library and the Qing Hua University. In 1934, the preparation committee for the International Exhibition of Chinese art in London (in 1935) sent him to Beijing again as consultant¹⁰³.

However, with the ‘modernisation’ (or ‘westernisation’) which has continued to change the Chinese intellectual tradition, a ‘patriotic’ sentiment became radicalised among the younger generation of Dunhuangologists who replaced those Qing literati in the Republic—Duan Feng was killed in 1911, Luo Zengyu emigrated to Japan the same year, and Wang Guowei sank himself in the lake of Yihe Garden in 1927. Coming into the 1920s, the Western model was completely applied in the Chinese academia under the lead of those who studied abroad—often with their expertise was also a strong sense of nationalism. Sheng Hong’s ‘improved version’ of his translation from Pelliot’s speech in Paris can be a proof of such mindset, considering that he was the first to translate the latest publications in ‘citizen education’¹⁰⁴ from Japanese to Chinese and acquired two doctorates in law and politics in France. In 1923, at a meeting on the theme of Chinese classical studies in the Peking University, Chen Yuan proposed ‘to take back the title “the centre of sinology” from the West to China’¹⁰⁵, which was a manifestation of nationalism in Chinese academia. This sentiment was shared by Chen Yinke (1890–1969) and Hu Shih (1891–1962)¹⁰⁶, the two most important Dunhuangologists at that time. In fact, Pelliot considered Chen Yuan and Wang Guowei the most competent Chinese scholars—the former as a baptized Christian since 1919 was known by his work on the Christian history in China the *Research of Arkaguns in Yuan Dynasty*; and the latter’s work the *History of the Peoples in the West Borderland being Acculturated into Chinese in the Yuan Dynasty*¹⁰⁷ was highly acclaimed internationally. These indicate that the methodology employed to approach the Dunhuang objects in the 1920s largely differed from those Qing literati like Duan Feng or Ye Changchi.

In 1930, while Chen Yuan reedited the catalogue of the Dunhuang collections in the Peking Library, he particularly included the name of Stein and Pelliot in the preface and gave a title to the catalogue as *Cataloguing the Survived Dunhuang Collections from Plundering*¹⁰⁸. He asked Chen Yinke to write a few words

103 Wang, “Brief Autobiography of Professor Pelliot.”

104 Reynolds and Li, *Xinzheng Revolution and Japan: China 1898–1912*.

105 Jiang, “Chen Yuan: Making China the Centre of Sinology.”

106 Xu, “Early History of Pelliot’s Looting the Manuscripts: A Copy of the ‘Mingsha Stonecave Secrete Archive’ Commented by Luo Zhengyu.”

107 Original in Chinese as ‘元西域人華化考’.

108 Original in Chinese as ‘敦煌劫餘錄’, its English title was *An Analytical List of the Tun-Huang Manuscripts in the National Library of Peiping (Beijing)*. This alternation was found offensive by Pelliot, who protested later in T’oung Pao, see Liu and Meng 2001, p. 424.

and there came the renowned sentence that was to shape the entire 20th century's Chinese sentiment towards Dunhuang:

Some said that Dunhuang has embodied a heart-broken history of our nation's scholarship. The best parts of the findings were either taken to foreign countries or hidden in private collections. The current eight thousand items remained in the country were but what had been left. The best parts were gone, and the rest were good for nothing. All these fragments and old papers were not of important academic value. The worth of this reedited catalogue was but an expression of our anguished thoughts!¹⁰⁹

Chen Yinke, although never obtaining any diplomas, studied in Japan, France, Britain, Germany and the United States and learned Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu, Japanese, Sanskrit, Pali, English, French, German, Persian, Turkic, Tangut, Latin and Greek. Working at the Qing Hua University, the Yenjing University, the Academia Sinica, the Palace Museum and the Southwest United University, his method to study Chinese poetry with historical and social references was highly appreciated and so was his theory about the Tang dynasty—the interaction between the nomad culture of the central Asian steppe and the agriculture of the Han people made the northwest of China the political centre of the country ever since. Different than Chen Yuan, he did not join the Communist Party, refused Mao's invitation to head the Chinese Academy of Sciences (established in 1949) in 1953 and died during the notorious Cultural Revolution. His remark on Dunhuang became 'the quote' for modern China and was carved into a stone stele, which was installed right at the entrance to the exhibition room of the discovery of 'medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia' in the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas in Dunhuang. This quote became the 'lesson' included in every school textbook of China's modern history. Coming into the 21st century, around a hundred years after Wang Yuanlu's miraculous discovery, several non-scientific publications for common readers on the topic of lost Dunhuang collections have appeared. For example, the *Memo of Looted National Treasures*¹¹⁰, *Remembering the Lost Chinese Artefacts over the Century*¹¹¹, and *One Hundred Years of Dunhuang—Malicious Guests to the Silk Roads*¹¹². And this is how the Dunhuang collections are remembered by the contemporary Chinese, and formed a rationale for the demand to repatriate lost 'national treasures' overseas back to China. The real message behind such demand is to recover from the 'century of humiliation' and to re-establish the Chinese culture as the centre of Tian-Xia—the world under heavens.

109 Original in Chinese as '或曰：敦煌者，吾國學術之傷心史也。其發見之佳品，不流入於異國，即秘藏於私家。茲國有之八千余軸，蓋當時垂棄之剩餘，精華已去，糟粕空存，則此殘篇故紙，未必實有繫於學術之輕重者在。今日之編斯錄也，不過聊以寄其憤慨之思耳！'

110 Chang, *Memorandum of Looted National Treasures* (國寶劫難備忘錄).

111 Chang, *Remembering the Lost Chinese Artefacts over the Century* (百年中國文物流失備忘錄).

112 Liu and Meng, *A Hundred Years of Dunhuang*.

3.3 Whose Culture? Whose Heritage?

The core question about repatriation of cultural heritage falls on ‘ownership’. Culture is borderless, yet heritage as a property or asset can only be owned by a legal entity, be it an individual, an organisation or a country, which has legitimate standing to enter into contracts, assume obligations, incur debt, sue its own rights and be held responsible for its actions. Although it is recognised that the concept and practice of cultural heritage started in the Renaissance and formed in the Enlightenment, the shifting understandings of ‘collective ownership’ over cultural objects originates from a much older human behaviour—war spoils. In fact, it is out of the need to deal with the ‘war booties’ of Napoleon, among the European countries, that the practice of ‘returning’ cultural objects began. Through the two World Wars, such conduct became customised by international treaties, conventions and laws under the endeavour of intergovernmental organisations for ‘peace building’¹¹³. Along with the expanding concept of cultural heritage—from portable artefact to historic buildings and monuments, natural and cultural sites and intangible traditions—the items embraced by such demands have been extended to include 1) recent stolen art, 2) illegal excavated artefacts, 3) indigenous cultural relics, 4) plundered collections in wars, and 5) cultural objects lost during colonial occupation¹¹⁴. Nonetheless, the last category—where the Dunhuang collections belong, like the Elgin (Parthenon) Marbles from Greece and the Rosetta Stone from Egypt—remains unresolved. To refute pleas from the ‘rest of the world’, major museums in the West made a declaration on the importance of ‘universal museums’. According to the Chinese experiences after the Wars and in the new century, only guns and wealth can win back its cultural heritage lost to the West during the ‘century of humiliation’. By far, legal pursuits have been proven to be ineffective, as seen in the case of the Marbles and the Chinese bronze statues from Yuanming Yuan in Christie’s, despite the fact that most opinions based on the code of ethics in collecting or conservation in the field of museum and heritage studies tend to support the return. Law and morality seem to continue providing conflicting answers to such international inquiry.

3.3.1 The 21st Century China Wants Its Lost Heritage Objects Back

The grief and angst of those early Dunhuangologists over the loss of Dunhuang objects was remembered, as stated, in a tangible way. During the past two decades a thought has been brewing in China to recover the lost cultural heritage from

113 The idea of peace building through ‘international cooperation of republicans’ was firstly proposed by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) in his *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795). The ‘international cooperation body’ becomes a reality in the formation of the League of Nations between the Wars and then the establishment of UN after WWII. Dealing with art booties in the aftermath of Wars, was part of post-conflict issues to be included in such peace building projects.

114 Ray, “The Restitution, Repatriation, and Return of Cultural Objects: When Objects Go Back.”

overseas, with an initiative emerging around the turn of the last millennium. In 1996, Rong Xinjiang published his field surveys on overseas Dunhuang collections with a focus on manuscripts¹¹⁵. It was the very first publication designated to systematically introduce the general situation of collecting, conserving, cataloguing and researching of Dunhuang collections by Stein, Pelliot, Oldenburg, Le Coq or Warner in Western GLAM institutes. In 1998, the idea to recuperate them back to China was discussed in a meeting preparing for the ‘centenary of discovering Dunhuang manuscripts’¹¹⁶. In 2000, in an interview on the CCTV the president of Dunhuang Academy, Fen Jinshi openly expressed her wish ‘to see returning the manuscripts one day’¹¹⁷. In 2001 the National Fund for Protecting Important Cultural Artefacts was established to provide financial support for such endeavour¹¹⁸. In 2002, the ‘rules on using the specific fund to acquire nationally important cultural relics’ was announced by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage¹¹⁹, and a private non-profit foundation for ‘restoring nationally important cultural relics from overseas’ was registered to the Ministry of Culture—except the central government’s annual subsidy of 50,000,000 RMB included as well were private donations from the ‘nouveau riche’ in China after the opening-up policy¹²⁰. In 2003, reacting to the *Declaration on the Importance of Universal Museums*, Chinese heritage professionals spoke up addressing the recovery of lost cultural properties from overseas¹²¹ and published the *Public Letter to the 18 Museums including Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum in New York*. In 2006, when the British Museum sent its ‘important collections’ for the very first time outside of Britain and Europe to exhibit in Beijing and Shanghai, the question of returning Chinese cultural objects was asked in almost every single

115 Rong, *Account on Foreign Collections of Dunhuang and Turfan Manuscripts* (海外敦煌吐魯番文獻知見錄).

116 Rong, “Meeting on the Centenary of the Discovery of the Dunhuang Manuscript Cave.”

117 “One Hundred Years after the Discovery of Dunhuang Manuscripts (敦煌藏經洞發現迎來百年紀念).”

118 National Fund for Protecting Important Cultural Artefacts (国家重点文物保护单位专项补助经费使用管理办法).

119 Rules on using the specific funds in acquiring nationally important cultural heritage (国家重点珍贵文物征集专项经费使用管理办法).

120 The main ‘private’ funding comes from the China Poly Group Corporation, which was founded in 1999 under the authorization of the State Council and the Central Military Commission (see “about us” at poly.com.cn) to operate diverse businesses (see “listed companies” at poly.com.cn) including urban planning, construction, architecture, real-estate, art gallery, auction house, theatre, film industry, entertainment, weaponry, etc. The Fund was said to be set under the administration of the China Foundation for the Development of Social Culture, which was governed by the Ministry of Culture, with a mission statement to “assist the government with social force, to unite organizations and individuals in China and abroad who respect the cultural heritage of mankind and love Chinese civilization, to solicit funding for enabling the return of lost national treasures overseas coming back to their motherland via purchase, donation, or legal pursuit” (news.artron.net) though we could not find more document than merely a few lines mentioned on newspaper.

121 “Chinese Experts Asked Europe and America to Return Lost Cultural Heritage (中國專家要求歐美歸還流失文物).”

press conference held by the British Museum in China¹²². In 2009 the Christie's auction in Paris provoked the very first legal pursuit held by the Chinese lawyers¹²³. That same year, in the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York under the Item B43 entitled *Return or Restitution of Cultural Property to the Countries of Origin*, the Chinese UN ambassador Liu Zhenming declared the official stand of the Chinese government:

For a long period beginning in mid-19th century, the western powers, in a succession of wars of aggression against China, had plundered and looted countless Chinese cultural relics, including numerous cultural treasures from Yuan Ming Yuan Summer Palace. These cultural relics should be returned to China. China insists on its right to seek the return of cultural relics that have been illegally taken abroad. It opposes the auctions of cultural relics illegally taken from China, including treasures from Yuan Ming Yuan Summer Palace. We believe that such auctions run counter to the underlying spirit of relevant international treaties and UN resolutions, and are serious infringements of China's cultural rights and interests. China will continue to actively participate in UNESCO's activities in promoting the return of cultural property to its countries of origin, and seek appropriate solutions in this regard, thus making our due contribution to the protection of international cultural heritage¹²⁴.

In 2010, the case of the 'twelve bronze zodiac animal heads of Yuanming Yuan' became a motif for Ai Weiwei's contemporary art production¹²⁵; and in 2012 the story made its way into movie theatres in China¹²⁶. In 2014, the *Dunhuang Declaration* was published at the 4th *International Conference of Experts on the Return of Cultural Properties* in Dunhuang¹²⁷. Of which, Item 13 specifies that 'supports should be solicited from other countries for the demand of returning cultural properties that are of outstanding historic, archaeological, or cultural value and are fallen out of the time limit for legal pursuit'¹²⁸. This was publicised in the press and media as a sign that China for the first time was taking an active role and leading position on such matters.

Why is it only now in the 21st century that China started demanding the return of cultural heritage? The reasons are multifarious. On the one hand, following

122 Cao, "Returning Chinese Artefacts? Not Receiving Demand, the British Museums Says (归还中国文物? 大英博物馆称未收到请求)."

123 Richards, "The Christie's Auction Fiasco of 2009: The Zodiac Bronzes and Chinese Nationalism."

124 Zhenmin, "Statement by Ambassador Liu Zhenmin on Agenda Item 43 "Return or Restitution of Cultural Property to the Countries of Origin! At the 64th Session of the General Assembly."

125 Wong, "Ai Weiwei's Animal Heads Offer Critique of Chinese Nationalism."

126 "Chen Long Being Amassador for Returning Yuanming Yuan's Cultural Properties (成龍出任文物回歸大使期盼流失文物早日回歸)."

127 "Dunhuang Declaration (敦煌宣言)."

128 Original in Chinese as '对具有突出历史、考古或文化价值的文物提出的超过其国内诉讼时效的返还请求, 鼓励各国予以支持'.



FIGURE 3.5 A Tripod Cauldron from the late Shang Dynasty (Metropolitan Museum CC1.0)

WWII, there came the Civil War, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Indian War and then the Cold War; on the other, after Deng Xiaoping's opening-up policy in 1978 the economic development became the priority with the return of Hong Kong and Macau also concerns¹²⁹. Besides, the shift of ownership over 'national treasure' in the Chinese tradition before the 20th century was rather an 'intergenerational' issue than 'international'. To use important cultural objects as physical symbols in bequeathing the sovereign power or in rivalling the legitimate status of a regime, was a tradition as old as the Chinese civilisation itself. One of the earliest examples is the bronze tripod cauldron Ding¹³⁰ (see Figure 3.5) in the ancient times. According to the first Chinese chronicle, *Zuo-zhuan*¹³¹, published around the late 4th century BC, the Emperor Zhuang of Chu¹³² (613-591 BC) revealed his ambition to usurp sovereignty by enquiring the whereabouts of the Nine Tripod Cauldrons (a set of Ding) from the Zhou court (1046-256 BC). Another known example is the 'national seal' of jade. In 221 BC when the Qin

129 Be it rhetorical, such thought does exist in the minds of certain Chinese Dunhuangologists. For example, in an unofficial meeting at a research room of the Peking University in 2016 summer, professor Rong Xinjiang has expressed so to the author.

130 In the Chinese oral history Huang-Di (黃帝, yellow emperor) had fabricated three tripod cauldrons or dings (鼎) in bronze to signify 'sky, earth, and human' and in the Shang dynasty (1600-1046 BC) the Emperor Yu (禹) had made a set of nine Dings to indicate the nine districts of the country. These tripod cauldrons of bronze coming into the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BC) became the symbol of ultimate power given to the ruler by the mandate of heaven and were passed on from emperor to emperor while bequeathing the legitimate sovereignty of the country.

131 Original in Chinese as '左傳'

132 Original in Chinese as '楚莊王'

dynasty (221-206 BC) ended the Warring States period and united the country, a 'heirloom seal of the realm' to signify the ultimate imperial power was ordered by the Emperor, Qin Shi Huang (247-220 BC), to be made from the precious jade stone called He Shi Bi¹³³ looted from the conquered Zhao state (403-222 BC). The script carved on it said 'by the mandate of heaven to live long and prosperous'¹³⁴. Thence this seal of jade, like the tripod cauldrons (lost in Qin's wars to unify the country), became the physical symbol of sovereignty and was passed on to the following emperors of the Han dynasty (202 BC-220 AD), Jin dynasty, Sixteen Kingdoms period, Sui dynasty and Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) but was lost again during the wartime of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960 AD) and became the regret of later emperors though replicas were made. Coming into the Republican time in the 20th century, this tradition has persisted¹³⁵. Cultural heritage, in this light, is more than a mere 'property' or 'asset' to the Chinese. It could represent the political symbol of ultimate power by the 'mandate of heavens' and the legitimacy of sovereignty.

3.3.1.1 *Repatriation to the Countries of Origin in Europe*

In the West, just as in the rest of the world, sacking and displaying spoils of war like women, slaves and art treasures as trophies had been a common practice since ancient times. The victory stele of Naram-Sin of Akkadia in Sippar was looted in 1158 BC to Susa. The Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem was plundered and destructed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean king of Babylon in 586 BC. Euripides in 406 BC wrote about war spoils after the Battle of Troy (though fictional). Caesar had displayed his booty in Rome after defeating the Gauls in 51 BC. The Norsemen raiders in 793 AD destroyed the church on Lindisfarne with plunder and slaughter and in 820 AD spoiled Ireland according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the Irish Annals of Ulster¹³⁶. To return such spoils of war started in the early 18th century after the Napoleonic Wars while the political powers reached a new balance between Britain, Prussia, Russia and Austria. As mentioned earlier, the First Empire of Napoleon also marked a new age of making colonial collections and art plundering. For example, since 1794 the Convention Nationale had encouraged Bonaparte while swiping Europe to amass art treasures as a solution when the defeated country was unable to pay its war debts. In the campaign to Italy, Napoleon was told to 'endow the capital of freedom with the masterpieces to which Italy owes its reputation, so that the charm of the soothing and consoling arts may be added to the shining military trophies'¹³⁷. The four horses¹³⁸ at the entrance to St. Mark's Basilica in Venice (a war booty taken

133 Original in Chinese as '和氏璧'

134 Original in Chinese as '受命於天，既壽永昌'

135 In the Republic of China in Taiwan as well as in the People's Republic of China in the mainland, the 'national seal' were fabricated, in use, and regarded as the symbol of 'legitimate' sovereignty.

136 Woolf, *Ancient Civilizations: The Illustrated Guide to Belief, Mythology, and Art*.

137 "Louvre Museum, First Empire."

138 Freeman, *The Horses of St Marks: A Story of Triumph in Byzantium, Paris, and Venice*.



FIGURE 3.6 Plundering of Mechelen by the Duke of Alba in the 16th Century (Drawing by Frans Hogenberg, Collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Wikimedia Commons)

by the 4th Crusade from Constantinople in the 13th century) thus were removed and taken to Paris in 1795. Outside Europe in the Ottoman territories in Egypt and Syria a similar policy was practiced. In addition to more than 2000 cannons while invading Egypt (1798-1801) Napoleon commissioned a ‘scientific expedition’ (as mentioned in Chapter 3.1.2) composed by 167 engineers, artists, geologists, mathematicians, chemists, physicists, naturalists and botanists together with a large number of books and equipment to establish the Institut de l’Égypte in Cairo in 1798¹³⁹. This expédition was to assist the army, to develop the conquered land and to ‘enlighten’ the colony. It is one of the first ‘scientific expeditions’ of the kind integrated into colonial wars and, as discussed earlier, contributed to specialising ‘antiquarian studies’ into archaeology and so has created the Egyptology. It also resulted in finding numerous ‘archaeological artefacts’, which were hoarded and shipped back to Bonaparte’s Musée Napoléon (renamed from Louvre in 1802, as mentioned) to ‘make it the most beautiful museum of the world’¹⁴⁰—although most collections of the expédition were seized by the British Navy in 1802 and became possessions of the British Museum, including the Rosetta Stone found in 1799 by Bouchard (1771-1822) with the name of King George added to it.

In the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1815 and resulting from the Congress of Vienna, not only the European borderlines were redefined but also the stolen artworks of Napoleon were repatriated. Nearly 5,000 works of art were sent back

139 Miot, *Mémoires Pour Servir à l'histoire Des Expédition En Égypte et En Syrie*.

140 Malgouyres, *Le Musée Napoléon*.

to their ‘countries of origin’—the winners of war, in Europe. To protect historic monuments from war damage, in 1907 the Hague Convention enlisted the Article 27 to specify that ‘in sieges and bombardments all available precautions must be adopted to spare buildings devoted to divine worship, art, education, or social welfare, also historical monuments’. Nevertheless, war spoils of art treasures continued in WWI. In 1914, Russian soldiers captured the Ossolinski Museum in Lemberg and took 1,035 paintings, 28,000 drawings, 4,300 medallions, and 5,000 manuscripts to St. Petersburg; and Germany plundered the panels of Jan van Eyck from Belgium. In 1919 the Treaty of Versailles included the Article 247¹⁴¹ to order Germany to return the artwork to Ghent and in the Treaty of Saint-Germain it was specified that such return was a form of ‘punishment’¹⁴². In WWII, the plundering of art works and archaeological artefacts went on to a scale similar to the Napoleonic Wars. Prior to the War, Hitler conceived a plan to seize all important artworks in Europe to his ‘kulturhauptstadt (super museum)’, which was to be constructed in his hometown Linz, Austria. A military unit Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg was created specifically for this operation. In 1945, in the Alt Aussee mine alone, the Allies found 6,577 oil paintings, 2,030 drawings on paper, 954 prints, 137 statues, 128 armour, 79 containers of decorative art, 78 pieces of furniture, 122 tapestries, and 1,500 cases of rare books. Returning war booties after the War became a convention albeit one that was difficult and complicated. For example, during the War, Germany had plundered 427 museums and damaged 1,670 orthodox churches, 237 Catholic churches, and 532 synagogues in Russia¹⁴³; considered as a form of war reparation, the Red Army of Russia also looted a huge amount of what Nazi Germany had looted from other European countries in addition to German cultural belongings and refused to return them after the War. In addition to organised plundering, individual soldiers and citizens also committed such crimes. Difficult to keep records, cases of returned cultural objects plundered during WWII has been continuing to this date¹⁴⁴. And to prevent such ‘art crime’ of war in the future, in 1954 the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed

141 Final Act of the Congress of Vienna / General Treaty (1815); Chapman, *The Congress of Vienna 1814-1815: Origins, Processes and Results*.

142 Returning art collections ordered by the Versailles Treaty did not mean a progress of concept to respect the cultural rights of the ‘Others’ (as seen later in the Hague Convention after the WWII) but a ‘punishment’. This is justified by the fact that after it was after the WWI that Britain started to send ‘the British cultural mission’ to the Ottoman Empire, Iran, Iraq or Jordan and France ‘the French cultural mission’ to Syria and Lebanon and countless cultural objects from these areas were removed and shipped back to the ‘universal museums’ of both countries.

143 “Misplaced Treasures: Unplundering Art.”

144 For instance, the 1988 Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art has asked to identify and return collections in question to original owners or their lawful heirs; the 1999 the Council of Europe (Resolution 1205) has determined that ‘nationalisation’ of Jewish cultural heritage is illegal whether acquired through looting or not; the 2000 Declaration of Vilnius has compelled governments to consolidate the Washington Principles; and the 2009 Declaration of Terezin has further decided that objects should be returned to relevant foundation if owner is found deceased without decedent.

Conflict was established to protect movable art treasures and immovable historic monuments. To extend the protection of cultural heritage from war time to peace time, in 1970 the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was created to prohibit illegal excavation and dealing of heritage treasures.

This brief history about the repatriation of cultural objects has revealed the fact that the origin and nature of such act is to deal with 'spoils of war' between 'winner and loser'¹⁴⁵, within Europe. And protecting cultural heritage as a concept and practice was expanded from Europe to the world only after WWII by the international organisation of UNESCO-UN. It took a few decades for the non-European countries (former colonies or newly independent nation-states) to claim their cultural rights and demand for returning important collections. In 1978, the first African originated Director-General of UNESCO (a Sorbonne graduate who served France during WWII) wrote *A Plea for the Restitution of an Irreplaceable Cultural Heritage to Those Who Created It*.

One of the most noble incarnations of a people's genius is its cultural heritage, built up over the centuries by the work of its architects, sculptors, painters, engravers, goldsmiths and all the creators of forms, who have contrived to give tangible expression to the many-sided beauty and uniqueness of that genius.

The vicissitudes of history have nevertheless robbed many peoples of a priceless portion of this inheritance in which their enduring identity finds its embodiment.

Architectural features, statues and friezes, monoliths, mosaics, pottery, enamels, masks and objects of jade, ivory and chased gold-in fact everything which has been taken away, from monuments to handicrafts-were more than decorations or ornamentation. They bore witness to a history, the history of a culture and of a nation whose spirit they perpetuated and renewed.

The peoples who were victims of this plunder, sometimes for hundreds of years, have not only been despoiled of irreplaceable masterpieces but also robbed of a memory which would doubtless have helped them to greater self-knowledge and would certainly have enabled others to understand them better.

Today, unbridled speculation, fanned by the prices prevailing in the art market, incites traffickers and plunderers to exploit local ignorance and take advantage of any connivance they find. In Africa, Latin America, Asia, Oceania and even in Europe, modern pirates with substantial resources, using modern techniques to satisfy their greed, spoil and rob archaeological sites almost before the scholars have excavated them.

The men and women of these countries have the right to recover these cultural assets which are part of their being.

They know, of course, that art is for the world and are aware of the fact that this art, which tells the story of their past and shows what they really are, does not speak to them alone. They are happy that men and women elsewhere can study and admire the work of their ancestors. They also realize that certain works

145 Charney, "A History of Transnational Trafficking in Stolen and Looted Art and Antiquities."

of art have for too long played too intimate a part in the history of the country to which they were taken for the symbols linking them with that country to be denied, and for the roots they have put down to be served.

These men and women who have been deprived of their cultural heritage therefore ask for the return of at least the art treasures which best represent their culture, which they feel are the most vital and whose absence causes them the greatest anguish (...).¹⁴⁶

Together with this Plea was founded also the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation. Countries like Greece, Egypt and Turkey have joined. However, no matter the similarities between the looting of heritage collections during colonialism and the plundering of art works during the Holocaust¹⁴⁷, the opinions and resolutions in the West to both remained largely different¹⁴⁸. The case of Elgin (Parthenon) Marbles is most representative. In 1982, Greece started to file for the restitution of the Marbles in UNESCO through the aforementioned Committee. In 1983, the Government of the Hellenic Republic submitted to the Government of the United Kingdom an official request for the Marbles. In 1998, the rewritten declaration of the European Parliament supported Greece. In 1999, UNESCO recommended bilateral talks between the two countries. In 2000, Greece's Ministry of Culture sent the *Memorandum on the Parthenon Marbles* to the House of Commons of the British Government, saying:

The repatriation of the architectural sculptures and structural elements of the Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens. These were removed from the monument in the early 19th century at the behest of Lord Elgin, then H.M. Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, and subsequently purchased from him by the British Government, consequent upon an Act of Parliament passed in 1816¹⁴⁹.

In 2002, Greece's Minister of Culture brought the official demand in person to Neil MacGregor the Director of the British Museum. And in 2004, the Prime Minister of Greece re-stated the official Greek position:

The return of the Parthenon Marbles is a fair request of all the Greeks. It is a request of all the people, regardless of nationality, who visualise the reunification of a mutilated monument belonging to the world cultural heritage. We are dedicated to our goal, the return of the Marbles, and we shall remain so. We have persuasive arguments for our just cause. We feel optimistic that in the end, even the most doubtful will be convinced, and will change their attitude forward the

146 M'Bow, "A Plea for the Restitution of an Irreplaceable Cultural Heritage to Those Who Crated It."

147 O'Donnell, "The Restitution of Holocaust Looted Art and Transitional Justice: The Perfect Storm or the Raft of the Medusa?"

148 Glass, "Return to Sender: On the Politics of Cultural Property and the Proper Address of Art."

149 "The Memorandum of the Greek Government."

*matter. In the meantime, with the creation of the New Acropolis Museum, which is a real masterpiece in museological and architectural terms, we are strengthening our arguments even more.*¹⁵⁰

3.3.1.2 *Universal Museums to the Rest of the World*

Both demands of Greece in 1983 and in 1999 directly to the British Government were rejected. Through the mediation of UNESCO and EU, Greece then directly approached the British Museum in 2002. Soon after receiving the official request brought by the Greek Minister of Education, the British Museum published the *Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums*, which was composed by the Bizop group, an informal club of directors from the major Western museums¹⁵¹, and signed by 18 directors of these major museums in Europe and North America including the British Museum, Louvre, Hermitage, Metropolitan and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. The Declaration of Universal Museums claimed:

The international museum community shares the conviction that illegal traffic in archaeological, artistic, and ethnic objects must be firmly discouraged. We should, however, recognize that objects acquired in earlier times must be viewed in the light of different sensitivities and values, reflective of that earlier era. The objects and monumental works that were installed decades and even centuries ago in museums throughout Europe and America were acquired under conditions that are not comparable with current ones.

Over time, objects so acquired – whether by purchase, gift, or partage – have become part of the museums that have cared for them, and by extension part of the heritage of the nations which house them. Today we are especially sensitive to the subject of a work's original context, but we should not lose sight of the fact that museums too provide a valid and valuable context for objects that were long ago displaced from their original source. The universal admiration for ancient civilizations would not be so deeply established today were it not for the influence exercised by the artefacts of these cultures, widely available to an international public in major museums. Indeed, the sculpture of classical Greece, to take but one example, is an excellent illustration of this point and of the importance of public collecting. The centuries-long history of appreciation of Greek art began in antiquity, was renewed in Renaissance Italy, and subsequently spread through the rest of Europe and to the Americas. Its accession into the collections of public museums throughout the world marked the significance of Greek sculpture for mankind as a whole and its enduring value for the contemporary world. Moreover, the distinctly Greek aesthetic of these works appears all the more strongly as the result of their being seen and studied in direct proximity to products of other great civilizations.

¹⁵⁰ "The Official Greek Position."

¹⁵¹ Sowole, "The Bizot Group & the Universal Museum."

Calls to repatriate objects that have belonged to museum collections for many years have become an important issue for museums. Although each case has to be judged individually, we should acknowledge that museums serve not just the citizens of one nation but the people of every nation. Museums are agents in the development of culture, whose mission is to foster knowledge by a continuous process of reinterpretation. Each object contributes to that process. To narrow the focus of museums whose collections are diverse and multifaceted would therefore be a disservice to all visitors¹⁵².

It was to 'reunify the Marbles' for its unique value as a world cultural heritage that Greece justified its demand and the approaches taken were based on the legal instruments provided by UNESCO and EU. However, to the countries outside Europe like Egypt, Turkey or Nigeria since proper documents from the occupation era were difficult to find or non-existent, their reasons for supporting their demands became 'defending cultural dignity', 'reinstating a sense of dignity', 'symbols of identity of a nation', 'fundamental cultural rights of the people' and 'cultural artefacts are best understood if displayed in the place of origin'¹⁵³. Such opinions were labelled as 'cultural nationalism', against the 'cultural internationalism' represented by the Declaration.

In saying that 'universal museums' were a global commons and a hub to host the memory of all mankind, the Declaration was a statement not only to Greece but also to the rest of the world—all other 'countries of origin'—that may bring up similar requests. Highlighting the fact that the 'universal museums' intellectually were the result of Enlightenment thinking, that they safeguarded the collections over the decades and that they belonged to all mankind, these major Western museums wanted to show to the rest of the world their legitimacy to guard the colonial legacy. Nevertheless, what was not mentioned is that they were first 'national museums' and then 'universal museums' built for and resulting from their empire-building, as discussed earlier. Their status as 'national museums' in continental Europe was the direct reflection of the administration structure and the economic or aesthetic value of their holdings. For example, Louvre is overseen by the Ministry of Culture that aims to maintain French identity through the promotion and protection of the arts on national soil and abroad, as seen in its mission statement:

En collaboration avec les autres ministères intéressés, le ministère de la Culture met en œuvre les actions de l'État destinées à assurer le rayonnement dans le monde de la culture, de la création artistique française et de la Francophonie.

Il prépare et met en œuvre les actions qui concourent à la diffusion, à l'emploi et à l'enrichissement de la langue française ainsi qu'à la préservation et à la valorisation des langues de France.

152 Schuster, "Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums."

153 M'Bow, "A Plea for the Restitution of an Irreplaceable Cultural Heritage to Those Who Crated It."

*Il contribue enfin à l'action culturelle extérieure de la France et aux actions relatives aux implantations culturelles françaises à l'étranger.*¹⁵⁴

In addition, French nationality remains a prerequisite to attend the competitive exams of the Institut National du Patrimoine (of the Ministry of Culture) for curator positions in Louvre (or any public museums)¹⁵⁵. In Germany, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin are overseen by the the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and funded by the German federal government in collaboration with Germany's federal states. The mission of the Foundation created in 1957 by the German Federal Law and subordinated to the Federal Government and the German States, except to govern ownerships of important collections, is to 'acquire and preserve the cultural legacy of the former State of Prussia', and the Foundation stays active to carry out cultural tasks of 'national interest'¹⁵⁶. In the UK, a similar administrative structure can be found in the British Museum. This world's first 'national public museum' based on the British Museum Act 1963 is governed by the Trustees of the British Museum, which as a corporate body with the legal duty to hold the Museum's collection is financed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport; its 25 board members are made by the Queen for one trustee, by the Prime Minister for 15, by the Trustees for five, and by the secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport for four¹⁵⁷. The fact that the majority of these members have high profile economic and financial backgrounds from academia, politics or industry suggests that the British Museum is a business oriented public institute of arts and culture. In any case, whether to embrace the global market, to 'radiate'¹⁵⁸ national culture, or confront the increasing demand for repatriation, all these major Western museums have started to emphasize their 'free access for the public' to strengthen their global role which has been made into their mission statements, as shown by the British Museum, the Louvre and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. New education programs have been invented as well to reach global audiences—for example, the world tour of important collections sent by the British Museum in 2006¹⁵⁹ and the broadcasting program launched by MacGregor in 2010¹⁶⁰.

To their citizens, they are 'national museums' to guard national interests; to the rest of the world, they are 'universal museums' to keep the memory of all mankind. This seems to suggest, from a pragmatic viewpoint, that the tangible interests of the former (built on the tangible loss of the latter) should remain so to benefit the intangible interest of the latter—who are fenced away at the

154 "Missions: Rayonnement de La Culture."

155 "Museum Curator: Conservation, Archives, and Lecturing."

156 Stiftung Preubischer Kulturbesitz, "About Us."

157 British Musuem, "Appointing the Board of Trustees."

158 As the mission statement of the French Ministry of Culture called it 'rayonnement de la culture'.

159 Boyd and MacGregor, "Museum of the World for the World: London, United Kingdom and beyond. British Museum Review. April 2004-March 2006."

160 MacGregor, "A History of the World - Home."

borderlines of the former. This fact alone may darken the theoretical debates on justifying the legitimacy of universal museums and deepen the question ‘whose antiquity, culture or heritage?’

3.3.2 Reality Talks: Guns and Wealth

Although ICOM has suggested to change the name ‘universal museums’ to ‘encyclopaedia museums’ and so be rid of the connotation of religious universalism, the conceptual content remains intact. Options towards the Elgin (Parthenon) Marbles and arguments alike could be divided into two groups, one represented by academicians¹⁶¹ who tend to sympathise with the ‘countries of origin’ and another led by directors and curators of the major museum in the West¹⁶² who support the *Declaration*. A most extreme criticism about the universal museums was made by Flynn, who pointed out their fear that ‘their institutes would be emptied, people impoverished, and tourism seized if collections that contributed to the legacy of Enlightenment shall fall into the hands of nations driven by radical nationalism without curatorial skills and museological expertise to care for their material of culture.’ Besides, returning the Marbles to Greece was first proposed by the British Government instead of Greece, in 1941, as a way to thank Greece for fighting the Axis with the opinion given by the British academics as ‘wherever the Marbles should be installed the knowledge making of it would not be affected’¹⁶³. However, this proposal was soon forgotten with Britain becoming one of the Big Five after WWII and the civil war with Communism broke out in Greece. Similar cases have occurred to China, which as a non-European semi-colonised country in Asia, tells a reality of guns and wealth.

3.3.2.1 *Returning Colonial Collections to China after WWI and WWII*

As described, returning the spoils of war was originally a European tradition and the rest of the world was excluded. Nevertheless, as the scale of war increased in the 20th century, during WWI and WWII China was involved and became part of the Allied Powers and therefore has received certain ‘colonial collections’ returned by the defeated Germany and Japan. After WWI, as regulated by the Treaty of Versailles (Act 131), the ‘astronomical observatory’¹⁶⁴—built in 1442

161 Gill, “The Universal Museum”; Sowole, “The Bizot Group & the Universal Museum”; Flynn, *International Colloquy-Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles*.

162 Boyd and MacGregor, “Museum of the World for the World: London, United Kingdom and beyond. British Museum Review. April 2004-March 2006”; Cuno, *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage*; Cuno, *Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopedic Museum*.

163 BCRPM, “Position of the Foreign Office in 1941.”

164 Published by *Nature* (1889-1890) Vol. 41, it is stated that two of these instruments ‘are the most ancient of the kind in the world, having been made by order of the Emperor Kublai Khan in the year of 1279. They are exquisite pieces of bronze work, and are in splendid condition, although they have been exposed to the weather for more than 600 years’. The other eight instruments were made by the Jesuit Fahter Verbiest in 1670, during the reign of the Emperor K’ang His.

AD at the southeast corner of the Peking city wall (demolished in 1957)—was returned to China by Germany. These artefacts were plundered under the order of the German First Allied Supreme Commander, Alfred Count von Waldersee (1832-1904), during the 1900 Eight-Nation Alliance in Peking. The bronze equipment of the Observatory contained an equatorial armilla, an astronomical sextant, an azimuth theodolite, an altazimuth, etc. (see Figure 3.7). With the other half looted by French troops, Waldersee's acquisition was transported back to Germany under the mandate of the German Emperor, Wilhelm II, to be displayed at the garden of the Emperor's summer palace in Potsdam¹⁶⁵. However, as discussed earlier, although the Treaty of Versailles decreed this 'German colonial collection' be returned to China, it also gave the 'German colony (concession)' in the Shandong Province of China to Japan—which in turn resulted in the May Fourth Movement, an anti-imperialist movement growing out of student protests in 1919, that indirectly drew back the Chinese support for Sven Hedin's fourth expedition to the northwest China.

After WWII, China also became one of the Big Five. Nevertheless, due to the objection of the United States¹⁶⁶ and under the negligence of the Far Eastern Advisory Commission (which became later the Far East Commission based in Washington), although the Japanese colonies in China including Manchuria and Taiwan were returned, only about 5.29 percent (158,873 items) of the 'Japanese colonial collections' gathered during the long years of military aggressions and invasions of China (officially from 1931 to 1945) were returned to the Republic of China. According to an incomplete governmental survey after the War, the Japanese spoils of wars from China with proper records and documentations included 3,607,074 items and 1,870 boxes of paintings, drawings, stone rubbings, antiques, instruments, samples, maps, artworks and so on. A total of 741 historic buildings and monuments had been plundered. In the city of Nanking alone, 28,400 ancient works of painting and calligraphy and 7,300 valuable antiquities were plundered by the imperial troops of Japanese Empire¹⁶⁷. However, with the rise of the Communist Party in China the United States forced the Nationalist Party, which ruled the Republic of China, to sign off the right to demand the return of these cultural objects and for any financial compensation from Japan in the Treaty of San Francisco in 1951.

165 Chang, *Remembering the Lost Chinese Artefacts over the Century* (百年中國文物流失備忘錄).

166 Zhang, *Connoisseur of Antiquities: Biography of Wang Shining* (文博玩家王世襄傳). Page 23-27.

167 Wang, "The Detriment of Chinese Culture by Japan in Wars of Invasion (侵華戰爭中日對中國文化的摧殘)"; Gao and Tang, *Blood Debt: Record of Compensation from Japan* (血債:對日索賠紀實).

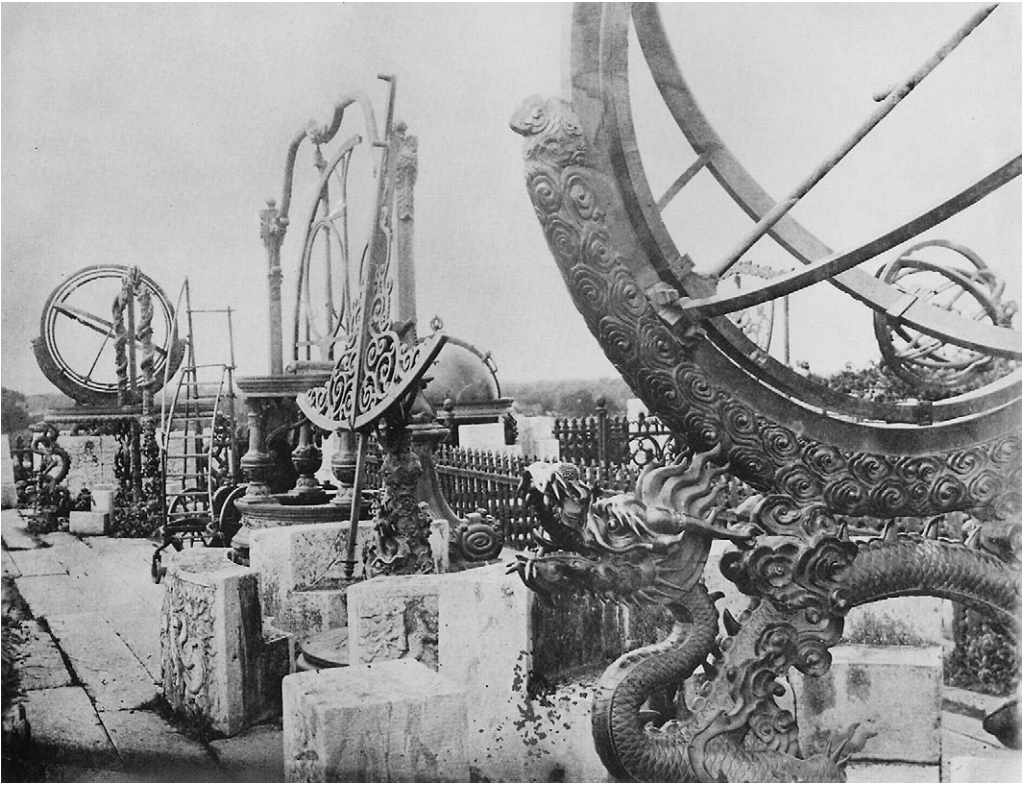


FIGURE 3.7 *The Observatory in Peking, photo by Thomas Childe 1877 (Wikimedia Commons)*

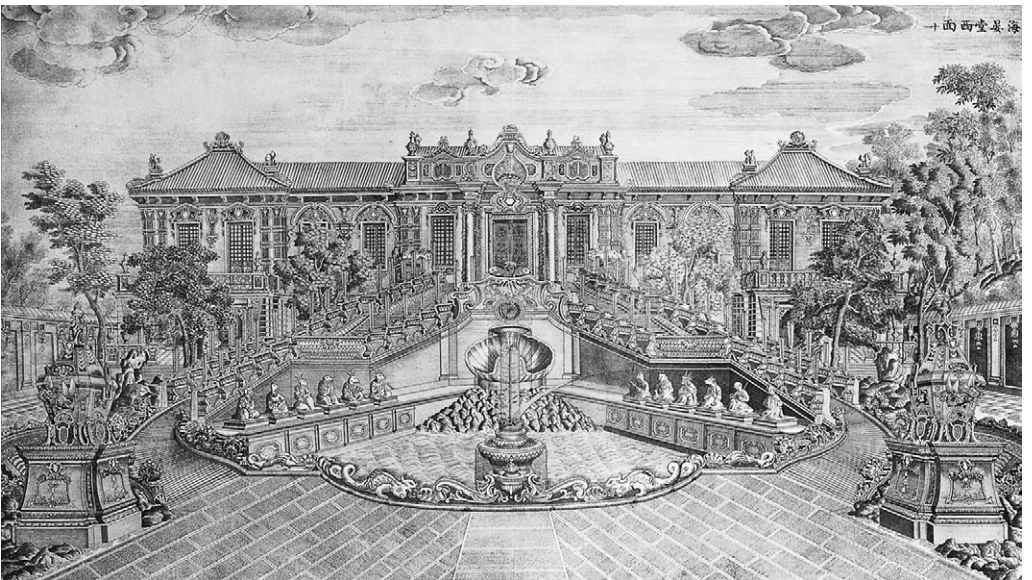


FIGURE 3.8 *Drawing of European gardens and pavillions in the Xiyang Lou at Yuanming Yuan (where the 12 bronze zodiac animal heads were installed originally) (Wikimedia Commons)*

3.3.2.2 *Buying Back Important Collections Lost during the Century of Humiliation*

With the end of Cold War, China¹⁶⁸ started to engage with the West and the international organisations, including those affiliated to the ICOM-UNESCO-UN relating to cultural heritage preservation and management. In 1989 China ratified the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Presenting the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, in 1997 accepted the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (a complementary instrument to the 1970 Convention), and in 2000 joined the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The idea to retrieve significant cultural heritage lost during the ‘century of humiliation’, as described earlier, started to emerge in the late 1990s and became pronounced in the new millennium. Although sympathising with other ‘countries of origin’ in the Third World of similar experience, China did not submit any formal demand to the UNESCO or major museums in the West until 2009, as stated above, at the 64th Session of the General Assembly of UN in New York. The Chinese declaration there represented China’s official position towards such an issue using the Christie’s auction sales in Paris as an example.

The sale as mentioned concerned two pieces from a series of 12 bronze Chinese zodiac animal heads which were originally installed around a fountain of water clock in front of the pavilion Haiyan in the Old Summer Palace (Yuanming Yuan) and were plundered by the French army during the Second Opium War (1856-1860). Prior to this auction, several of the other 12 animal heads had already been purchased by the Chinese new rich, brought back to China and donated to and displayed at Chinese museums, for example at the Poly Art Museum¹⁶⁹ and the Capital Museum. To stop the sale, for the very first time a team of Chinese lawyers¹⁷⁰ collaborated and wrote to Christie’s. This intervention was in vain, as the owner Pierre Bergé had documents to prove that the pieces were possessed legally. Based on the UNIDROIT Convention the team then filed a court case with the Global Aixinjueluo Family Clan¹⁷¹ to be the plaintiff. The cost was covered by a 58,000 USD sponsorship from a Chinese private company in Shenzhen. However, the Tribunal de Grande Instance in Paris ruled against stopping the sale and ordered the plaintiff to pay compensation to the defendant. A few months later, another auction sale was organised and both bronzes were sold through a telephone bid by Cai Mingchao, a collection advisor of the above mentioned National Treasure Fund of China, for 31.49

168 This China was the People’s Republic of China established in 1949 by the Communist Party with the Republic of China being cast out to the island Taiwan. In 1971, the PROC was recognized by the West and took the place of ROC in the UN.

169 The Poly Art Museum belongs to the China Poly Group Corporation, a ‘private company’ specially authorized and partially funded by the State Council and the Central Military Commission of China.

170 Mallesons, “China’s Lost Treasures: Retrieval of Looted Cultural Relics.”

171 The royal family of Qing dynasty, original in Chinese as ‘愛新覺羅氏’

million euros which was refused to be paid in the claim that the buyer (bidder) was simply motivated by patriotic passion and not wanting to see the pieces disappeared again. Pierre Bergé then attempted to donate them to the National Palace Museum in Taipei, which was rejected with the Museum explaining that they should not accept objects that are ‘controversial, stolen or with unknown origins’. In 2013, Christie’s obtained the two animal heads from the Pinault family—who owns high-end design houses that targets the Chinese market—and donated them back to China. They are now in permanent display at the National Museum of China in Beijing¹⁷².

3.3.3 Debates in Law, Ethics and Morality

As complex as the legitimate ownership of colonial collections can be, relevant theoretical debates can be divided into three categories—law, ethics and morality. As seen in the above discussion, the development of a legal system or the change of norms¹⁷³ against plundering artworks coincides with the emergence of international organisation for peace building in the aftermath of war—first the Napoleonic Wars, then the WWI and WWII. The concept and practice of prohibiting war spoils, protecting historical buildings and returning looted heritage collections become ‘conventional’ first within Europe after WWI through the IMO-ICIC-League of the Nations and then worldwide after WWII through the ICOM-UNESCO-UN. Just as the content of cultural heritage has expanded from portable cultural property to immovable monuments, and from tangible artefacts to intangible traditions¹⁷⁴, what prompts the demand for restitution has also grown from war trophies to human remains¹⁷⁵ and from colonial objects to indigenous cultural relics¹⁷⁶. Following the increasing attention worldwide on the Elgin (Parthenon) Marbles and the *Declaration of Universal Museums*, an abundant literature has appeared in recent years, of which the majority has focused

172 Richards, “The Christie’s Auction Fiasco of 2009: The Zodiac Bronzes and Chinese Nationalism.”

173 Wayne. Sandholtz, *Prohibiting Plunder: How Norms Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

174 This expansion is demonstrated by those international conventions, charters, and laws about protecting cultural heritage: for example, the Roman principle of ‘booty size’, the Vattel’s Law of Nations in 1793, the Lieber Code of 1863, the Hague Convention 1899, 1907, and 1954, the 1970 UNESCO Convention, the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 1977 added Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Convention to expand the concept of protecting cultural heritage, artwork and religious site, the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention, the European Union Regulation on the Export of Cultural Goods 1992, 1996, 2001, 2003, the European Union Directive on the Return of Cultural Objects 1993, and the 2003 Convention of the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, etc.

175 Cook and Russell, “Museums Are Returning Indigenous Human Remains but Progress on Repatriating Objects Is Slow.”

176 Smith and Akagawa, *Intangible Heritage*.

on the legal aspects¹⁷⁷, and China started to explore legal approaches to recover its lost cultural relics as well¹⁷⁸. In fact, prior to the aforementioned Christie's auction, while preparing for the Dunhuang centenary in 1998, Chen Juyu¹⁷⁹, the chairman of Xiehe Group Inc., engaged an American lawyer, Malcolm S. McNeil, to inspect the 'feasibility and the legal principles relating to the return of Dunhuang manuscripts'¹⁸⁰. By far, it seems that retrieving colonial collections from the major museums tends to be most challenging in the legal perspective¹⁸¹, because 1) such art 'crime' occurred in a remote past, 2) official documents are difficult to find or non-existent, and 3) current international legal instruments made posthoc are of little avail. Since the aforementioned Committee in UNESCO was established in 1978, to promote the return of important collections to the 'countries of origin', the *Plea* remains mainly as a plea—though new progress might be made following the French President Macron's promise to return the Benin Bronzes to Nigeria in 2018¹⁸². Although the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention and those EU regulations have remain effective to supplement the 1970 Convention with a focus on the end of 'buyer' instead of 'seller' in prohibiting illegal trafficking of cultural heritage and in returning illegally obtained objects, they are not retroactive, are subject to time limitation (within 50 or 75 years) and are strictly evidence based¹⁸³. The cases of the Marbles and the bronze zodiac animal heads are the best examples. After a long lasting campaign through diplomatic events, public relations and academic promotions, in 2016 the *Parthenon Sculptures (Return to Greece) Bill 2016-17* was sent to the British Parliament¹⁸⁴—with Britain being locked in Brexit talks in 2018, inter-governmental negotiations between the two countries might be opened¹⁸⁵.

In relation to China, as the concepts of 'the nation' and 'national property' were just introduced to China around the time when the Dunhuang collections

177 Vrdoljak, *International Law, Museums and the Return of Cultural Objects*; Merryman, *Imperialism, Art and Restitution*; Fincham, "The Parthenon Sculptures and Cultural Justice."

178 Yen and Tien, "Reflections on Cultural Plunder during Wars: Restitution and Protection of Looted Cultural Objects (對戰爭中文物掠奪的省思：文物歸還與文物保護)"; Chang, "Choice of Methods and Practical Development on Restitution of Cultural Property in the Perspective of International Law (國際法規下海外流失文物追索的路徑選擇及實踐突破)"; Liu, *Case for Repatriating China's Cultural Objects*.

179 Original in Chinese as '陳巨餘'.

180 Rong, "Meeting on the Centenary of the Discovery of the Dunhuang Manuscript Cave."

181 In the legal perspective, there are five types of cultural objects concerning repatriation: 1) restitution of stolen cultural objects, 2) restitution of cultural objects taken during World War II, 3) restitution of illicitly excavated and/or illicitly exported cultural objects, 4) repatriation of tribal and indigenous cultural objects, and 5) the return of cultural objects removed during colonial occupation. See Ray, "The Restitution, Repatriation, and Return of Cultural Objects: When Objects Go Back."

182 Harris, "President Macron, African Art and the Question of Restitution."

183 Although it is specified that the UNIDROIT Convention 'does not in any way legitimize any illegal transaction of whatever which has taken place before the entry into force of this Convention' and does not 'limit any right of a State or other person to make a claim under remedies available outside the framework' of the Convention. (See the Art. 10.3)

184 *Parthenon Sculptures (Return to Greece) Bill 2016-17*.

185 Stone, "Greece Demands UK Open Negotiations over the Return of the Elgin Marbles."

were made (as discussed above) and the process or practice in the 'state succession of cultural property' has not matured¹⁸⁶, the discussion on the legal aspects of such case appear to be rather ungrounded. However, it was not entirely blank in the Qing law in governing those 'collecting activities' similar to archaeological excavation and alike. According to the Ta Qing Leu Lee (the Fundamental Laws of China)¹⁸⁷ established in 1646 AD, in the Article on Money and Debt it was specified that:

*Objects excavated in public or private territories without owners can be collected and used; however any extraordinary artefacts such as antique, bronze, or seal that are not from common people should be sent to the government within 30 days, anyone violates the law will receive 80 strikes and the objects found will be confiscated.*¹⁸⁸

In addition, Article 254 says that it was considered 'treason' to 'destroy religious shrine, temple, mountain or government building'¹⁸⁹. Article 257 notes that 'one will be decapitated if he or she steals any equipment or artefacts that are used in grand ritual of worshipping heaven and earth'¹⁹⁰ and Article 276 concerning 'tomb excavation' states:

*Those who dig the tombs of the others—will receive 100 strikes and be sent in exile to a remote borderland 3,000 miles away, if the coffin is exposed; will be hung, if the corpse is exposed; will receive 100 strikes and sent away for three years, if to help by watching; will be less punished, if the tomb contains only personal effects of the deceased; will receive 90 strikes and sent away for two and half years, if the tomb is naturally ruined by age...will be considered and punished as theft and robber, if stealing any burial objects....*¹⁹¹

186 Jakubowski, *State Succession in Cultural Property*.

187 Original in Chinese as 大清律例; it was translated into English in 1810 by Sir George Thomas Staunton and into French in 1812.

188 Original in Chinese as '《大清律·錢債律》規定:若於官私地內,掘得埋藏無主之物者,並聽收用。若有古器、鐘鼎、符印異常之物,非民間所宜有者,限三十日內送官。違者,杖八十,其物入官'。

189 Original in Chinese as '254.00謀反大逆凡謀反不利于國謂謀危社稷及大逆不利于君謂謀毀宗廟山陵及官闕'。

190 Original in Chinese as '257.00盜大祀神御物凡盜大祀天日神地日祇御用祭器帷帳等物及盜飡荐玉帛牲牢饌具之屬者皆斬'。

191 Original in Chinese as '276.00發冢凡發掘他人墳冢見棺槨者杖一百流三千里已開棺槨見尸者絞監候發而未至棺槨者杖一百徒三年招魂而葬亦是為從減一等若年遠冢先穿陷而未殯埋而盜尸柩尸在柩未殯或在殯未埋者杖九十徒二年半開棺槨見尸者亦絞雜犯其盜取器物24石者計贓准凡盜論免刺'。

About ‘the pillage of royal palaces or the plunder of royal belongings,’ Articles 260.01 and 260.02 defined them as ‘capital crime’¹⁹². However primitive these Qing laws may appear, the ‘national (imperial) ownership’ over ‘cultural heritage’—things valuable that can be inherited and passed on to future decedents¹⁹³—was made explicit there in spite of the fact that the Qing court was too weak to maintain these laws. Besides, it seems that it was in the transference of ‘cultural property’ from the Qing monarchy to the Chinese Republic that questions have occurred. The concept took time to change: that all things under Tian-Xia (within the borders of the Qing dynasty) no longer should belong to the Tian-tzu (emperor and son of heaven) but to the people of the modern nation-state. And to cope with the shifting socio-political paradigm for heritage enterprise, an adequate legal system concerning private and public property should be developed, as seen, for example, in the ‘trustee model’ of Britain¹⁹⁴ and the ‘nationalisation’ process of France¹⁹⁵—both were established based on the ‘law of nation’¹⁹⁶, which in fact coincided with the emergence of the institution of the modern museum. This may explain why to the Chinese people today ‘whose heritage’ is rather an issue of ethics and morality than law.

Current debates on the repatriation of cultural heritage in academia are mostly based on ethics—specifically, the ethics of collection, preservation and interpretation. In the development of cultural heritage protection led by ICOM-UNESCO over the second half of the 20th century, various ‘codes of ethics’ in the domain of the museum profession¹⁹⁷ as well as in archaeology¹⁹⁸ and anthropology¹⁹⁹ have been created, and the discussion about the ethical concern of cultural heritage²⁰⁰ has thrived. As the aforementioned *Plea* and the *Declaration* have shown, it is difficult to find a common ground between the countries of origin and the universal museums. As stated, the opinions are usually labelled as ‘cultural nationalism’ or ‘cultural internationalism (or cosmopolitanism)’²⁰¹. The former emphasises ‘cultural identity’ or ‘national dignity’, as the *Plea* revealed,

192 Original in Chinese as ‘260.01凡盜內府財物系御寶乘輿服御物者俱作實犯死罪其餘銀兩錢帛等物分別監守常人照盜倉庫錢糧各本例定擬；260.02凡偷竊大內及圓明園避暑山莊靜寄山莊清漪園靜明園靜宜園西苑南苑等處乘輿服物者照例不分首從擬斬立決’.

193 Selicato, “Cultural Territorial Systems: Landscape and Cultural Heritage as a Key to Sustainable and Local Development in Eastern Europe.”

194 Nassau, *On National Property, and on the Prospects of the Present Administration and of Their Successors*; Houghton, *The National Property: Facts for the Public Also a Few Words to the Liberation Society Adn to the Members of the London Conference on Working Men and Religious Institutions*.

195 Beaumont, *Les Aventures d'Émile Guimet (1836-1918): Un Industriel Voyageur*.

196 Vattel, *The Law of Nations, Or, Principles of the Law of Nature, Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns* (London, 1797).

197 ICOM, *Museums, Ethics and Cultural Heritage*.

198 Green, “Code of Ethics of Professional Archaeologists”; Scarre and Scarre Geoffrey, *The Ethics of Archaeology: Philosophical Perspective on Archaeological Practice*.

199 Meskell and Pels, *Embedding Ethics*.

200 Ireland, *The Ethics of Cultural Heritage*.

201 Derek Gillman, *The Idea of Cultural Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

and the latter highlights the ‘Enlightenment spirit’ as the *Declaration* expressed. Both are vague and logically imprecise. To the former, it is obvious that ‘cultural identity’ is crafted and shaped by a specific ideology and can be manoeuvred by political parties²⁰². To the latter, as Flynn argued, ‘the core Enlightenment concept to create universal aspiration and shared goal has denounced regional specificities and ancient lineage and has dismissed them as dangerous nationalism’²⁰³. In fact, both rationales are ‘romantic’: cultural nationalism wants to maintain ‘cultural dignity’ and so restore national dignity; and cultural internationalism aims to collect the world under one roof and so recover the glory of lost empire. In addition to the ethics of collecting or acquisition, the ethics of preservation is contested as well. As a ‘source state’, China has a problematic record in protecting cultural heritage—Mao’s policy to destroy the old town of Beijing and the Tibetan heritage²⁰⁴, the catastrophic Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and the rapid urban development in the 1980s and 1990s—and these have raised concerns on its capability to retain cultural heritage in the future. Besides, the physical condition of conservation, the curatorial skill and expertise, as well as the illegal antique market in China are contributing factors to such concerns²⁰⁵. Most of all, as described above, the lack of proper legal system and tools to govern or administer private and public cultural properties have set challenges for returns²⁰⁶. Nevertheless, these worrisome situations seem to be improving in the 21st century, as made explicit by the Director of the Palace Museum in Beijing at the Sino-German Museum Forum in 2016: expert knowledge of heritage conservation and management has been transferred from the West to China through the platform of ICOM-UNESCO-UN, architectural design has largely improved museum conditions, and the public were enthusiastic to become museum-goers. Besides, the economic success of the past two decades has brought forth another museum boom all over the country in company with the thriving domestic art market. The simple schism between ‘source state’ and ‘market state’, or between ‘cultural nationalism’ and ‘cultural internationalism’ as Murphy has suggested, seems to be no longer valid. Viewing the increasing demand for the return of cultural heritage²⁰⁷, the actual practice of restitution has been put under the new light of digitisation²⁰⁸ instead of ‘referring to international legislation and conventions’ like suggested in 2000 by the British Museum and Galleries Commission—which has published the *Restitution and Repatriation: Guidelines for Good*

202 Xu, “Nationalism, Internationalism, and National Identity: China from 1895 to 1919.”

203 Flynn, *International Colloquy-Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles*.

204 Harris, *The Museum on the Roof of the World: Art, Politics, and the Representation of Tibet*.

205 Murphy, “The Imperilment of Cultural Property in the People’s Republic of China.”

Page 80.

206 Schmidt, “The Confuciusornis Sanctus: An Examination of Chinese Cultural Property Law and Policy in Action.”

207 Gill and Chippindale, “From Malibu to Rome: Further Developments on the Return of Antiquities”; Gill, “The Returns to Italy from North America: An Overview”; Nhean, “Return Cambodia’s Treasures, Repair Our People’s Souls”; Us, “United Kingdom Return 600 Ancient Antiquities to Afghanistan Wish - Shopping Made Fun.”

208 Tythacott and Arvanitis, *Museums and Restitution: New Practices, New Approaches*.

*Practice*²⁰⁹ to provide a step-by-step instruction on how to proceed the requests of reasons such as ‘cultural identity, aftermath of war and conquest, theft or wrongful taking, illegal excavation, illegal field collecting, status of acquisition, and care and spiritual well-being of material’. Furthermore, the discussion on the ‘ethics of interpretation’ also supports the return. The fact that about ‘80 percent of the colonial collections are in the basements, uncatalogued and never displayed’²¹⁰ and that ‘cultural objects are best understood in their original cultural context’ as seen in the immediate emergence of Dunhuangology in the beginning of the 20th century in China, are the best examples.

In terms of the discussion about the morality of removing cultural heritage from the ‘Others’, Byron’s poem *The Curse of Minerva* (1811) has provided a proper annotation:

*For Elgin’s fame the grateful Pallas pleads,
Below, his name – above, behold his deeds!
Be ever hailed with equal honour here
The Gothic monarch and the Pictish peer:
Arms gave the first his right, the last had none,
But basely stole what less barbarians won.*

It is also from such a moral standpoint that those personages such as Stein, Pelliot, Le Coq or Oldenburg in some Chinese writings were represented as ‘thief, plunderer, raider, looter or demonic liar of imperialist spirit’²¹¹. However, there is another level of moral consideration on such an issue as expressed in the ancient Chinese legend about the ‘bow of Chu-state’ in 221 BC.

The Emperor of Chu-state lost his bow while hunting and decided to leave it, because he thought that it would be recovered anyway by a fellow-countryman of the Chu-state. Confucius heard the news and commented that ‘it suffices to think that the bow would be recovered by “man” regardless of his origin’. Then Lao-Tzu heard about both statements and further commented that ‘it suffices with two words “lost” and “found” [as it is the mind-state which matters]’²¹².

No matter whether the arguments are based in law, ethics or morality, cultural heritage as ‘property’ or ‘asset’ will always remain as the ‘object of desire’ especially in a time of neoliberalism. Flynn has pointed out that the real reason not to return the Marbles and objects alike was ‘revenue generation’. Of course, this could also be the real reason for the ‘source state’ or ‘country of origin’ demanding their

209 Legget, *Restitution and Repatriation: Guidelines for Good Practice*.

210 Flynn, *International Colloquy-Reunification of the Parthenon Marbles*.

211 Sha, “Pelliot, the Sinologist Who Plundered the Treasure of Dunhuang (劫宝的汉学家—伯希和).”

212 Title of the legend in original Chinese as ‘楚弓楚得’, the original text: ‘荆人有遗弓者, 而不肯索, 曰, 荆人遗之, 荆人得之, 又何所焉? 孔子闻之曰, 去其荆而可以。老聃闻之曰, 去其人而可以。故老聃则至公已’.

return²¹³, considering that ‘cultural tourism’ has been regarded by the leading international bodies of heritage preservation and management agencies affiliated to ICOM-UNESCO-UN as the sole remedy or incentive to promote the protection of world heritage since the past decades²¹⁴. Besides, the hard and soft power struggle of political economy in the realm of international relations shall stay as the only decisive factor for the question ‘to return or not to return’. The performance of museum diplomacy after the turn of the last millennium provides a solid reference that will be further explored in the next Chapter, with a focus on museum exhibition and display.

Sub-Conclusion: The Political Lives of Dunhuang Collections

Right after the collections were made, the Dunhuang objects started their political lives both in the West and China. In the West, they were a jewel in the crown of colonial empires; in China they were affected with nationalism for the building of a modern nation-state. Regarding Dunhuang (objects) as a ‘contact zone’—where the ‘rencontre’ or the ‘clash’ of Western and Chinese cultures or civilisations took place—the phenomenon of acculturation, deculturation or transculturation in the anthropological sense can be identified. For example, before this meeting point in Dunhuang, the heritage processes in the West and China, though sharing a certain similarities, remained rather different due to various social paradigms and cultural systems. This was manifested in the West’s scientific culture and the Qing’s literati cultivation. The making of the Dunhuang collections in a way has signalled the transformation or modernisation or Westernisation of Chinese heritage practice. And it also contributed to the question ‘who owns the past’, which has become more and more critical with China’s growing economic power and national force over the century.

213 Collections like the Dunhuang manuscript is with extremely high value in the art market. For example, in a winter auction held by the Chinese local auction house Shanghai Hosane Auction Co. Ltd. in 2013, the lot number 3599 ‘Script on the virtue in the protection of all Buddhas, Part II (佛說不思議功德諸佛所護念經卷下)’, a Dunhuang manuscript on paper, size 63.1x26.1cm, length 9.5 meters, with scroll, connected by 15 pages, with 36 lines per page, 16 words per line. The estimated price is 300,000 RMB (49,180 USD).

214 ICOM, “Keynote Speakers at 2016 ICOM Conference.”

PART II.
DISPLAYING POWER

4 Exhibiting Objects, Shaping Politics

‘The object of power is power’, said George Orwell famously in 1984. To museums and the heritage sector, this is surrealistically true because the word ‘object’ here can act as a pun to mean both the ‘purpose’ and ‘artefact’ of collection-making. But where does this ‘power’ of the object come from? Not from the divine entity since the Scientific Revolution, nor from Mother Nature as ‘things’ do not have intentionality. It can only come from us, from humankind, who desire to own such an ‘object’, demonstrate our power to own it and so to make the image of our ‘Self’ bigger and stronger to surpass the ‘Others’. This simplistically described relationship in the perspective of evolutionism between object, people and power had been substantially embodied in the early urban design of the capital cities of ancient Greece and the Han dynasty, where the highest ruling power was closely connected to the ‘objects on display’ for the purposes of religion, daily necessities and public education. Apparently, the politics of ‘the gaze’ or ‘ways of seeing’ was enabled or activated by the visual epistemology of (cultural) artefacts, and the modern museum institution has exploited this social function of cultural heritage through a well-defined grammar of exhibition-making, which provided not only a tool for museum professionals but also a framework for critical understanding. Museum (exhibition) being a medium, a communication channel or a language, in this light, is thoroughly political. Displaying the Dunhuang collections in such a context thus has become a performative text to be read, deciphered and reacted to, especially in the case of international exhibitions touring abroad apart from the temporary or permanent exhibitions held on grand occasions domestically at national museums. As described in Chapter 2 the making of the Dunhuang collections was a result of international politics under the shadow of New Imperialism, the exhibiting of Chinese cultural objects in touring exhibitions hosted by the capital cities of Western colonial powers (namely Britain, Russia and the United States) was assigned with diplomatic missions to solicit, bargain or negotiate political backing, military alliance and financial support. This specific genre of cultural diplomacy—differing from the heritage diplomacy used to signify mainly the international activities of heritage preservation and management driven by UNESCO—I shall argue, can be termed as ‘museum diplomacy’. In the 21st century, under the pragmatism of globalized neoliberalism, this has acquired a new

role played from the West to China by ‘universal museums’ (this time instead of fulfilling any colonial agenda it is for negotiating direct foreign investments) and from China to the West by national museums as seen in the cultural programmes to promote the Belt and Road Initiative and the China Dream.

4.1 Linking Subjectivity¹, Material Culture and Power

From a philosophical perspective, prior to considering the ownership over cultural heritage a prerequisite should exist and that is the granted correlation between subjectivity, material culture and power. And displaying cultural heritage is particularly built on this presumption. Visual perception yields reasons for belief². Though specific mannerisms tend to affect our awareness of external things, as seen in the debate between direct-realism and indirect-realism³, it is primarily and essentially through displaying and seeing, that a ‘bodily knowledge’ about the outer world is acquired, including the significance of cultural heritage—a material witness of the past and the ‘Others’—which is often made to form a consensus of collective memory or cultural identity for political ends.

4.1.1 Phenomenology of Architecture: Temple, Museion, Agora

In *Museum in Motion* Edward Alexander⁴ traced the origins of the museum back to Greek mythology, the temple of Muses, the institute of Alexander the Great and the library of Plato⁵. Apart from collection, the public display and exchange of ideas is one of the core criteria in defining the museum. As a matter of fact, in Ancient Greece as well as in Ancient China, the public awareness of ‘the meaning of things on display’ was included in the fundamental design of the capital city. In introducing the history of Greek art⁶, Stansbury-O’Donnell reconstructed a map of the early Ptolemaic Alexandria in Egypt of the 3rd century BC (see Figure 4.1). The urban design of this ancient city had surrounded the Agora (market square) with temples, theatres, gymnasium and museion-bibliothek. Similarly, in Ancient China, for example, the capital of the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) built in Chang-An (now Xian) and according to a map drawn in 1776 by Bi Yuan⁷ (1730-1797) included the botanical and zoological garden Shang Lin Yuan⁸ and

1 The term is used here to denote a philosophical concept relating to consciousness, agency, and reality (or truth), as a person’s subjectivity (perspective, feeling, belief, or desire) determines how he or she can ‘know’ reality.

2 Millar, “How Visual Perception Yields Reasons for Belief.”

3 Kennedy, “Visual Awareness of Properties.”

4 Alexander, Alexander, and American Association for State and Local History., *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*.

5 The Figure 4.1 is a reconstructed plan of the Alexandria in Egypt to show the close physical relations between agora, temple, museion (bibliothèque) in Ancient Greece.

6 Stansbury-O’Donnell, *A History of Greek Art*.

7 Original in Chinese as ‘畢沅’

8 Original in Chinese as ‘上林苑’.

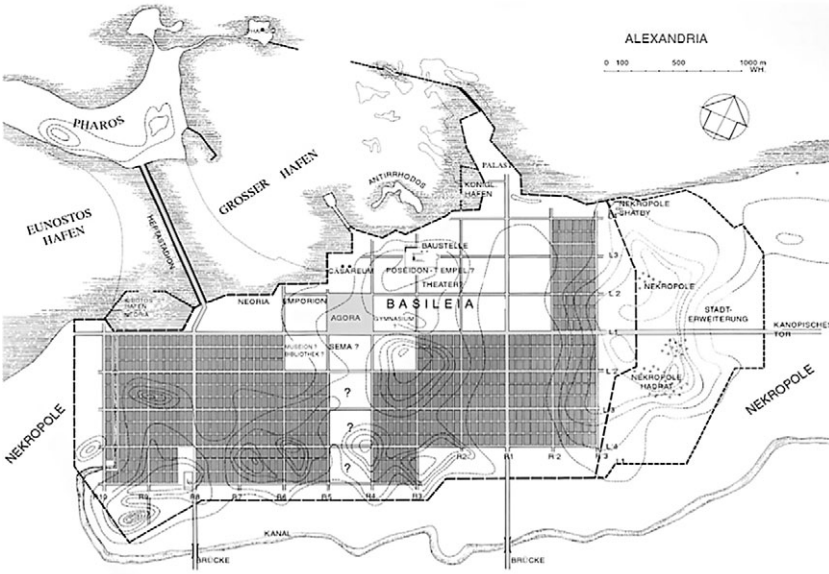


FIGURE 4.1 Plan of early Ptolemaic Alexandria Egypt 3rd Century BC by W. Hoepfner and E.-L. Schwandner, Haus und Stadt im klassischen Griechenland (München 1994) Abb. 225 (DAI)

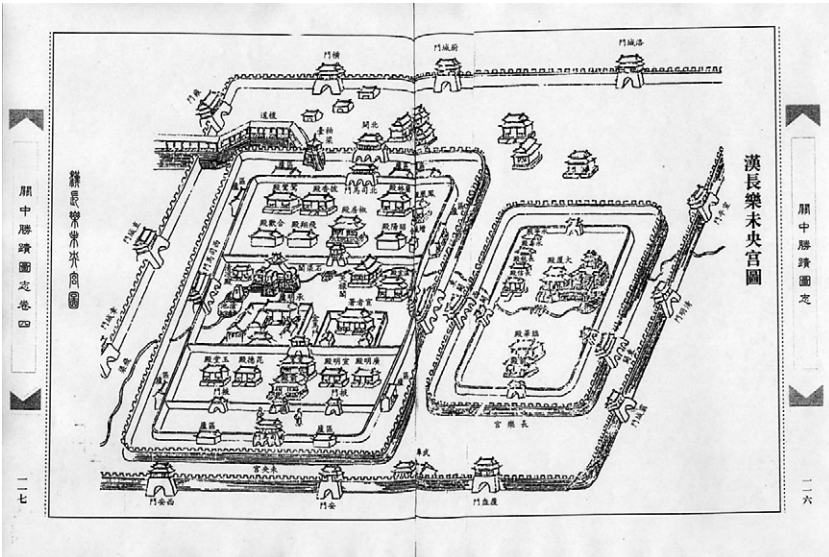


FIGURE 4.2 Chang Le and Wei Yang Gong (206 BC-220 AD) by Bi Yuan (1730-1797) (Wikimedia Commons)



FIGURE 4.3 *The Power of Display Evolved in the History of Museal Exhibition in General*

the university Tai Xue⁹ right next to the royal palace Chang Le Wei Yang Gong¹⁰ (see Figure 4.2).

These two ancient urban designs of capital cities under powerful sovereignties of Greece in the West and of China in the East have demonstrated the symbolic and spatial relationship artificially made and specifically rendered to connect ‘people, things (on display), and power’ in the physical and architectural arrangement of marketplace (for physical needs), temple (for religious and spiritual life), and museion (for education) that fulfilled the created needs of citizens’ quotidian life. This ontological connection since ancient times has provided a prototype for displaying cultural heritage that served political ends. In Figure 4.3, I have illustrated a conceptual map about the ambiguous correlation between the social functions of the modern museum (such as learning and entertainment) which are reflected in the ancient urban planning of the museion-agora-temple compound standing as a political, economic and cultural centre of a country. This building group was to fulfil our physical and mental needs with ‘exhibition’ being the essential and natural approach to realize the social life of us homo sapiens—a social animal by nature. What is worth noticing is that ‘things being viewed’ in museion, agora and temple were processed without much fundamental difference in the sense that they are all consumable, interchangeable and are some sort of ‘objects of desire’—desired by our physical and spiritual being. What makes them different is the power behind what holds their ‘exhibitions’, be it of a merchant, artisan, politician or priest or all at once. And this has been made explicit in modern museum institutions and world fairs as well as the ethical or unethical relationships between the museum and art market.

9 Original in Chinese as ‘太學’.

10 Original in Chinese as ‘長樂未央宮’.

4.1.2 Visual Epistemology of Cultural Heritage

As exhibitions are made to carry out social functions, the visuals of ‘the things on display’ become essential. The early studies on epistemology in the 1940s shed light on the visual contact between our bodily agency (vision or sight) and the outer world in the formation of ‘knowing’¹¹. It was specified that any instance of perceiving (knowing) takes place within a perspective, and the object-of-perception (knowledge) is emergent within that perspective. Such a perspective has two foci, the subjective focus or the subject of knowing and the objective focus or the object of knowing. Between the two there are time-space coordinates and media. This illuminates the theoretical foundations of museum exhibition being a way of communication, mediation or education.

4.1.2.1 *Exhibiting Power: the Politics of Gaze*

The phenomenology of architecture in ancient times, illustrated above, demonstrated the social function of ‘display’—to proceed a visual communication and evoke an ‘expected reaction’ from the viewers. This has also featured in the previous Chapter 3 while discussing that in the ancient Rome the ‘tropaeum’ was built in the city centre as a permanent monument together with the spoils of war to show its political power, and that in ancient China the bronze cauldrons were installed at the Zhou court to represent its legitimate ruling status. Apart from the princely cabinets of curiosity and the royal art collections being opened to the public, the convention of exposition universelle¹² was formed exactly on such displaying tradition. Naturally, collecting and exhibiting are two sides of the same coin in the history of museum-making by the powerful and have become incorporated into the credentials of a modern museum—as a public institute of arts and culture. In the post-colonial era when critical thinking emerged from within archaeology or anthropology, a rich literature appeared and instigated studies of material culture as museology and heritage studies. Except rethinking how museum collections were made in relation to colonialism and imperialism, exhibition interpretation has become a focused area considering various ideologies, social norms, and political systems behind the scenes.

Generally speaking, the studies on museum exhibition can mainly be divided into two groups, one looked into the methodology and techniques of exhibition making¹³ and another into the interpretation and representation of exhibition performance¹⁴.

11 Fitch, “An Experimental, Perspectival Epistemology.”

12 Lemaire and Blanchard, “Exhibitions, Expositions, Media Coverage, and the Colonies (1870-1914).”

13 Duncan, “A Viewpoint: The Museum as a Communications System and Implications for Museum Education”; Shettel, “Exhibits: Art Forum or Educational Medium?”; Kavanagh, *Museum Language: Objects and Texts*; Dean, *Museum Exhibition*; Ferguson, Greenberg, and Naime, *Thinking About Exhibitions*.

14 Karp and Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*; Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*; Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*; Macdonald, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*; Handerson and Kaepler, *Exhibiting Dilemmas: Issues of Representation at the Smithsonian*.

The former, in addition to giving practical guidance to museum professionals in preparing, installing and evaluating exhibitions, provides a conceptual framework (a semiotic grammar) for the latter to further analysis and criticism, where linguistic and media theories are often applied to help explain the communication, mediation or education of museum exhibitions. The first grouping of scholarly literature, which appeared earlier, made it explicit that the museum is a communication system¹⁵, an educational medium¹⁶ and a language¹⁷. And the second group has elaborately explored the intrinsic connection between museum, culture and politics. In addition to criticising the colonial background of museums and exhibition making¹⁸, this literature also examines how museum exhibition can serve as a tool or instrument for governments to engage with identity politics and to 'civilize' or educate its citizens¹⁹. For example, in the anthology entitled *Exhibiting Cultures* (resulting from the conference *The Poetics and Politics of Representation* held by the Smithsonian in 1988) and a follow-up edition entitled *Exhibiting Dilemmas*²⁰, important topics discussed include 'culture and representation', 'art museums, national identity, and the status of minority cultures' and 'other cultures in museum perspective'.

Thanks to these studies, the 'political nature' of museum display has become widely acknowledged though it seems those curators of 'universal museums' tended to deny it and call such critical thinking 'fantasy'²¹. The notions that 'exhibitions are never, and never have been, above politics' and that through museum exhibition 'technologies of display and ideas about science and objectivity are mobilised to tell stories of progress, citizenship, racial and national difference'²² thus have become a common knowledge.

4.1.2.2 *The Grammar of Exhibition Communication, Mediation or Education*

Such critical reflection on the power struggle of exhibition communication, mediation or education²³ became a focused study area in art and the relationships between art history, museum exhibition and contemporary art production has been examined²⁴. In light of the wide spectrum of museum genres, art museum (especially the curatorship), in addition to anthropology museum,

15 Duncan, "A Viewpoint: The Museum as a Communications System and Implications for Museum Education."

16 Shettel, "Exhibits: Art Forum or Educational Medium?"

17 Kavanagh, *Museum Language: Objects and Texts*.

18 Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*.

19 Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside the Public Art Museums*.

20 Handerson and Kaeppler, *Exhibiting Dilemmas: Issues of Representation at the Smithsonian*.

21 Cuno, *Museums Matter: In Praise of the Encyclopedic Museum*.

22 Macdonald, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*.

23 The term preferred in France (since New Museology) is 'mediation' instead of 'education', which is commonly used in the United States, to be rid of the one-way and top-down communication model of museum exhibition.

24 Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*; Ashford, "The Exhibition as an Artistic Medium"; Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh, *Post Critical Museology: Theory and Practice in the Art Museum*; Boersma and Van Rossem, *Rewriting or Reaffirming the Canon? Critical Readings of Exhibition History*.

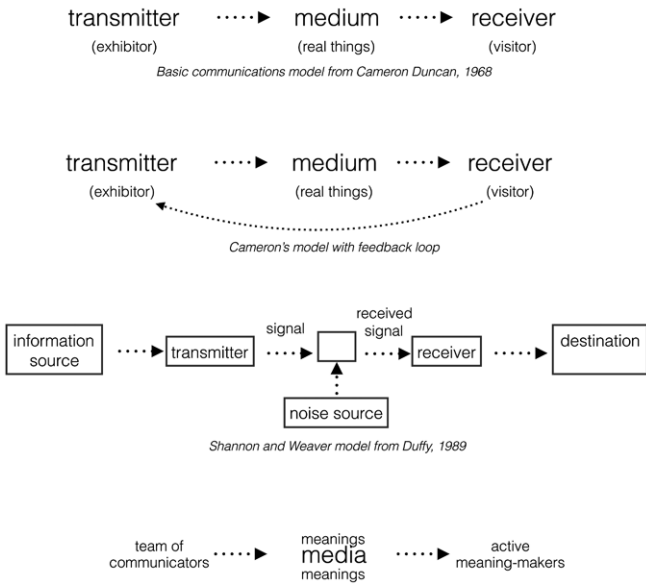


FIGURE 4.4 Hooper-Greenhill's model of museum communication (Hooper-Greenhill 1991, pp 49-61)

was considered to be in need of ‘decolonization’²⁵. A contributing factor for this thinking is that the role of ‘artist’ or the ‘maker of object in display’, unlike in other kinds of museum, is far more present and pronounced in the contemporary art exhibition. Besides, before the current trend to make museums more inclusive, an upsurge of interest in the role of visitors appeared in the 1970s, as seen in the literature of New Museology²⁶ in France proposed by the professionals from natural history museums and science centres. Since then, the ‘visitor’ started to replace the ‘object’²⁷ as the centre of museum communication. This has provided a foundation for the development of exhibition assessment or evaluation. Following McLuhan’s idea that ‘the medium is the message’²⁸, Duncan suggested that museum is a communication system²⁹ and built a model of museum communication and an improved version of it with a feedback loop. This model, based on the ‘Shannon-Weaver model of communication’, has been redefined by many other museologists such as Sless³⁰ and Hooper-Greehill³¹ and integrated with theories such as semiology (Figure 4.4).

25 Tlostanova, *Decolonizing the Museum. Postcolonialism and Postsocialism in Fiction and Art: Resistance and Re-Existence*.
 26 Vergo, *The New Museology*.
 27 Simon, *The Participatory Museum*; Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh, *Post Critical Museology: Theory and Practice in the Art Museum*; Villeneuve and Rowson Love, *Visitor-Centered Exhibitions and Edu-Curation in Art Museums*.
 28 McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Exhibitions of Man*.
 29 Duncan, “A Viewpoint: The Museum as a Communications System and Implications for Museum Education.”
 30 McManus, “Making Sense of Exhibits.”
 31 Hooper-Greenhill, “A New Communication Model for Museums.”

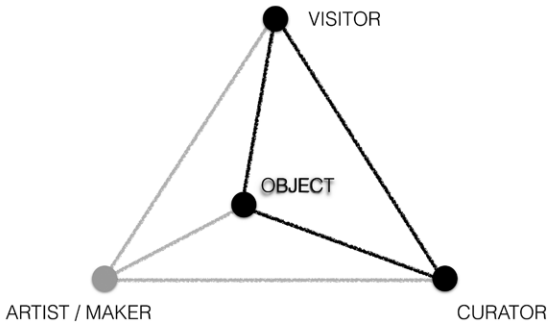


FIGURE 4.5
Pyramid Model of
Exhibition Communication

In fact, as described previously, since the epoch of New Museology (where ‘visitor’ as the ‘receiver of message’ in the milieu of museum exhibition replaced the core status of ‘object’ and become a focused study area), the ‘visitors behaviours studies’ emerged and precluded the development of an exhibition design that emphasized the ‘experience’ of visitors and incorporated interactive, multimedia or reflective exhibition design with new media technology³². Following this line of thinking, I shall argue that a fourth actor-agent, ‘artist or maker’ (Figure 4.5), should be added into the communication model of museum exhibition, as illustrated above in Figure 4.4—where only object, visitor and curator were addressed. The role of ‘artist’ or ‘maker of object’ was often neglected or invisible in museum display³³. In those linear models, the ‘object’ was a passive and silent signifier through which a meaning or message was composed by ‘curator’ (the ‘message sender’) and delivered to ‘visitor’ (‘message receiver’), whose role was at first considered to be passive too and then active, to offer interpretation and feedback. In fact, advanced media technology³⁴ has made the ‘object’ no longer passive and silent, especially after the study of ‘biography of objects’ in which the transaction of ownership between different collectors, museums or cultures can be revealed. Also, the role of ‘artist or maker’ can be visible and shown with the new media of modern display in the milieu of museum exhibition. Today the walls of the museum can be easily broken via digital platforms, and the communication reality of (interactive) exhibition can be approached from four dimensions: 1) artist-object-visitor, 2) artist-object-curator, 3) artist-curator-visitor, and 4) curator-object-visitor. Each of these dimensions can be explored, analysed and studied or measured qualitatively or quantitatively in the virtual world.

Besides, in the case of Dunhuang exhibitions, such a pyramid model of museum communication can provide a conceptual framework to highlight the importance of ‘original cultural context’, which shall play a key role in the meaning-making procedure of objects in terms of ‘curator’ and ‘visitor’. Eventually,

32 Macdonald, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*.

33 Except in certain museums of contemporary art, where the ‘artist statement’ can be included and revealed to the audience.

34 This shall be further discussed later in Chapter 6.

the ‘authenticity’ of the object on display can be best understood if the original context is present—be it ethnographical, social or cultural—as in the ‘country of origin’. It is self-evident that museum communication would be most efficient³⁵ should all of the four actor-agents belong to the same ‘cultural system’. For example, the original cultural context owned by the ‘artist-maker’ and the ‘object’ of Dunhuang collections, though in constant evolvement, could be ‘inherited’ by the future generations as the ‘intangible cultural heritage’ of the ‘country of origin’ (China) at least to a certain degree. However, it is difficult or even impossible to be ‘translated’ into the Western cultural system, to which the ‘curator’ of ‘universal museums’ belong. This has further supplemented a theoretical ground for the ‘ethics of interpretation’ while discussing the question of ‘who owns cultural heritage’ (as seen in Chapter 3.3.3) between ‘universal museums’ and the ‘countries of origin’ as well as between ‘cultural cosmopolitanism (internationalism)’ and ‘cultural nationalism’

4.2 Dunhuang Collections in (Dis)play

Although not specified in the mission statements of those scientific expeditions (see Chapter 2), one fundamental purpose of ‘making the Dunhuang collections’ was to display them to the public for ‘empire building’, as exhibition is a primary definition of their hosting institute, the museum. Learning from the West about the idea of ‘nation-state’, the rest of the collections (including the site of Mogao Grottos and those artistically reproduced wall paintings) also became important objects on display for the ‘nation building’ in China. Viewing the history of Dunhuang exhibitions over the past 20th century, it has been made explicit that the meanings, definitions or interpretations of Dunhuang objects have changed along with the shifting of their cultural contexts.

4.2.1 Ways of Seeing the ‘Others’: Decolonizing Archaeology into (Fine) Art

Removing from the Mogao Grottos under the care of the Taoist abbot to the national museums of the West, the Dunhuang collections have ceased to play their original role as religious artefacts or sacred relics of Buddhism and become ‘scientific specimens’ in archaeology, anthropology and art history. Such change of identity imposed on Dunhuang objects is surely Eurocentric, and as a way of seeing the ‘Others’ it has become an important topic in the discourse of decolonization. The muséographie of the ‘white-cube’ applied in the exhibitions of Chinese art in the West, for example in Paris, London and Berlin, has furthered

35 This explains the problem of exhibition communication in the ‘universal museums’, where the ‘cultural systems’ that the four actor-agents belong to are often different. We will further discuss this in the following Chapter 4.2.1.2 entitled *A Phenomenological Description at the White-Cube of ‘le Salon Pelliot.*

this shift. And the ‘archaeological artefacts’ have been evolved or elevated into ‘works of (fine) art’ with their colonial past (as discussed in Chapter 2) completely erased in the exhibition milieu. Aesthetic features have become the only norms or value, that have been ‘universalized’ to the globe over including the objects’ ‘country of origin’, China.

4.2.1.1 *From Ethnographic Exhibition to Art Exhibition*

On arrival in France, the acquisitions of Pelliot became the permanent collections of Louvre than transferred to the Musée Guimet, which was nationalized from private ‘museum of religion’ to, first, the Asian Department of Louvre and subsequently the independent Musée nationale des arts asiatiques Guimet (MNAAG). In the earliest days, except being shown at Louvre, the Dunhuang objects were displayed in temporary exhibitions held by the Grand Palais and the Maritime Museum to mount a glorious scene of the French colonial achievement overseas, as well as by the Musée national d’histoire naturelle and the Bibliothèque nationale de France to illustrate the scientific discovery of Chinese Central Asia. Among these institutes that the French Dunhuang exhibition was related to, the Musée Guimet’s history of exhibition-making since its inception until this date can best demonstrate how Asian collections as such have changed in definition and value from archaeological artefacts to works of (fine) art. As stated, the Musée Guimet was at first a private museum founded by Émile Étienne Guimet (1836-1918)—a typical Western white elite male inherited a family fortune gathered during the First Industrialisation—in Lyon, and was inaugurated by the Minister of Public Instruction in 1879. In 1885, according to ‘la loi du 7 août 1885’ and the ‘convention’³⁶ the Deputy Chamber ratified the contract between Guimet and the Minister (de l’instruction publique) saying that with the conditions that the government built a new premise in Paris, gave an annual subsidy of 45,000 francs, and let Guimet be the first curator for life, the collections of the private Musée Guimet shall become nationalized and on permanent display in the new national Musée Guimet. In 1889, this new Musée Guimet of Paris was opened by the President of the Republic, Sadi Carnot³⁷. During this early phase of Musée Guimet’s existence (from 1879-1920s), the way of displaying the Asian collections was rather ‘ethnographic’—as seen in the mise-en-scène kind of stage reproduction of an exhibit of religious ceremony from China. Authenticity was the only consideration of exhibition-making, following the original idea of Guimet in creating a ‘museum of religion’. In a public speech of his later days, Guimet said:

*Si j’ai fait de l’industrie, c’était pour être utile au peuple, si j’ai fait de la musique, c’était pour le distraire et lui donner le goût de l’art; si j’ai fait des écoles, c’était pour l’instruire ; si j’ai subventionné des sociétés de secours mutuels, c’était pour le soulager dans ses tristesses, et je vais vous expliquer que si je me suis occupé de philosophie, si j’ai fondé le **Musée des Religions**, c’était **pour donner aux***

36 Ministre de l’instruction publique, “Musée Guimet.”

37 Francotte, “Emile Guimet, Une Entreprise Muéale Hors Du Commun.”

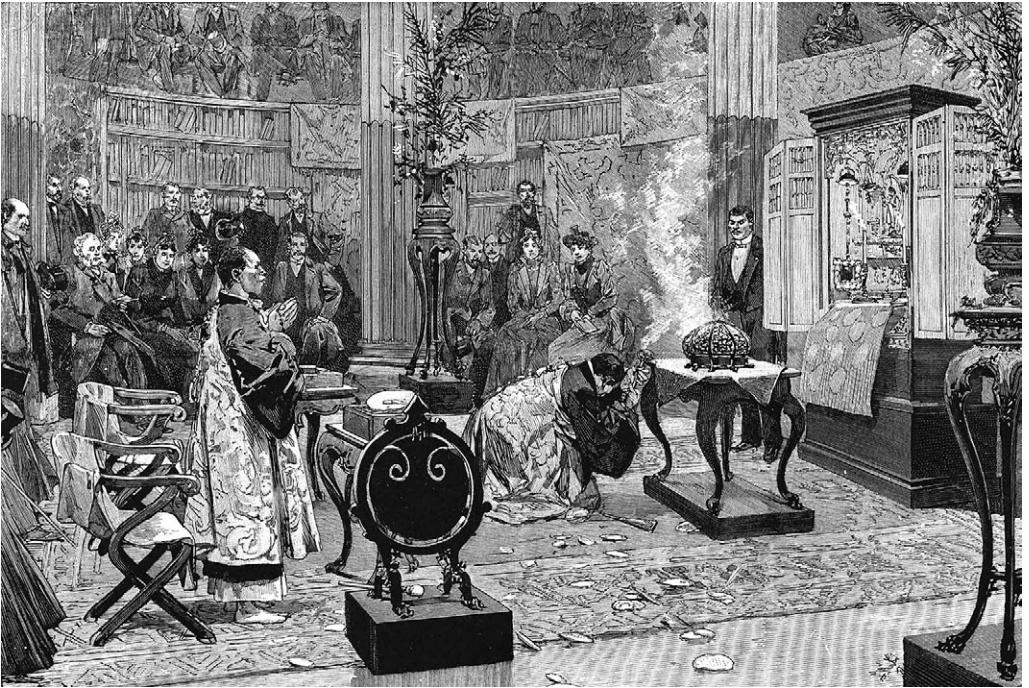


FIGURE 4.6 *Authentic Buddhist Ceremony at Musée Guimet* by P. de Haenen 1899, *Paris Known and Unknown*, vol. 1, by William Walton (1843-1915), p 287. (Digitised by Google, Original from University of Minnesota, Hathi Trust Digital Library)

*travailleurs le moyen d'être heureux. Pour obtenir ce résultat, j'ai consulté l'histoire des civilisations, j'ai recherché dans tous les pays, quels hommes avaient voulu faire le bonheur des autres, et j'ai trouvé que c'étaient tous les fondateurs de religions*³⁸.

It was declared by this successful businessman, a philanthropist, a composer and an amateur orientalist, that his collections were built out of his personal curiosity concerning the world religions. Based on this, he created the museum so to provide 'a means for workers to be happy'. To meet this end, he said he 'consulted the history of civilizations and researched in all countries to find who will make the happiness of the others' and the only result were those 'founders of religions'. To actively communicate this 'museum of religions', 'live performances (authentic rituals)' were also held in the milieu of museum for visitors to participate and observe (Figure 4.6), in addition to exhibition-installations. However, such a museum mission was overturned after the Musée Guimet became nationalized into an 'art museum' in Paris.

In the 1930s, all the national museums of France were reorganized—the 'ethnographic' part of Guimet's collections were relocated to the anthropology

38 Beaumont, *Les Aventures d'Émile Guimet (1836-1918): Un Industriel Voyageur*.

museum and the objects of ‘archaeologic art’ have remained and joined with other similar collections, like the Dunhuang objects of Pelliot from the Louvre³⁹. At the same time, a renewal of exhibition design occurred and the exhibition narrative thence became ‘art historic’ instead of ‘religious’ or ‘ethnographic’. And that has since defined how Pelliot’s collections from the Mogao Grottos should be understood, interpreted and valued—as works of (fine) art.

Such alteration of muséographie has materially illustrated a theoretical development of ‘archaeology and art’⁴⁰. In fact, the initial study interest of those orientalists in the late 19th century about the ‘Others’ was based on Darwin’s evolutionism and thus was overloaded with racial prejudices⁴¹, as seen in the *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* published in 1871⁴². Elements of Eurocentrism, racism, and orientalism can be identified in Guimet’s work as well⁴³. During his life time as the curator of the Musée, 180 seminars or conferences were organized to discuss the history of religion⁴⁴. For the ‘live performance’ he invited monks from Japan and Sri Lanka to hold authentic Buddhist rituals, and he also let the Dutch dancer Mata Hari (1876-1917)⁴⁵ interpret a ritualistic erotic-exotic dance on the premise of the Musée. As stated, after Guimet’s time his ‘museum of religion’ was transformed into ‘museum of (Asian) art’ due to the nationwide museal institutional reorganization. This phenomenon actually explains how some of the modern subjects were formed. For example, the idea of ‘fine art’ was exactly initiated from such ‘institutionalization’⁴⁶ in the 18th century. As mentioned in Chapter 3.2.1, the establishment of the Royal Society of Arts in 1754 in London changed the way to produce and consume ‘art’: from patronage or commission to an anonymous art market. Besides, ‘art history’ as a subject matter was founded by Winckelmann in linking ‘historical texts’ with ‘historic monuments’ of Rome while discussing the changing styles and national characteristics in different times. Nonetheless, while dealing with the cultural objects of the ‘Others’, it became ambiguous to draw the line between archaeological artefact or craftwork and artwork. The criteria used in Western art, such as ‘the level of skill, aesthetic sensibility and artistic characteristic’, were found unfit to non-European articles. To solve such conceptual incoherence, the idea of ‘family

39 Héron, “Raisons et Conséquences Des Transformations Du Musée Guimet Dans Les Années 1930.”

40 Corbey, Layton, and Tanner, “Archaeology and Art.”

41 For example, the studies in anthropology were often featured with racism in considering the ‘Others’ as ‘savage’ or ‘lower race’.

42 Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom*.

43 Guimet, *Promenades Japonaises*.

44 Héron, “Raisons et Conséquences Des Transformations Du Musée Guimet Dans Les Années 1930.” Page 94.

45 She is Guimet’s mistress, and her performance was exactly what Saïd would criticize in his Orientalism.

46 Corbey, Layton, and Tanner, “Archaeology and Art.”

resemblance' was applied and so the 'archaeologic art' was defined to denote the artefact-craftwork-artwork of the 'Others', such as the Dunhuang objects.

*The intentionally produced, repeated objects or patterns, which could be sacred or profane, private or public... deliberately express and communicate to others, beliefs and values, or affective meanings, which may be multiple, unstable, ambiguous, contradictory, and vary according to context and receiver... embody, contain, or depict ancestor, spirits, or gods, either appeasing them, evoking them, or narrating their accomplishments... made with skill and imagination, and are often aesthetically pleasing to the makers*⁴⁷.

This very broad definition of 'archaeologic art' substantiated the status of Musée Guimet as an 'art museum', rather than an 'anthropology museum'. In fact, such a conceptual transition is not dissimilar to what happened to the Louvre. After the Revolution, the National Assembly claimed that the collections of the Louvre should become the 'biens nationaux', which would need a space (museum) to be displayed chronologically and systematically so to be 'neutral and free from their significance of religion, monarchy, and feudality'⁴⁸. The 'artworks' that were redistributed to the Musée Guimet, including Pelliot's collections, instead of Musée de l'Homme in the 1930s, in consequence were less prompted by the 'self-reflection and self-criticism' of anthropology or archaeology with regard to decolonisation in the post-colonial era—which has led many museums to change their names of institutions or collections into 'museum of cultures (or civilisations)' or 'department (or collections) of world cultures' so to be rid of the evolutionist connotation.

Besides, institutionalization has encouraged the academic development of archaeology and art. A prominent case also happened on the other side of the English Channel. In London, in 1935 the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* was held at the Royal Academy of Arts with a muséographie similar to white-cube. It was initiated by a group of British collectors of Chinese antiques led by Sir Percival David (1892-1964), and it took about three years to prepare with Pelliot being commissioned to Peking for a crucial loan of important collections from the Nanjing branch of Palace Museum⁴⁹. Sir Percival David persuaded the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to send the warship HMS Suffolk for transportation. Loaned to the Exhibition was also a unit of exhibits (under the title 'Pelliot collection'), which included the personal collections of Pelliot acquired from his expedition and the permanent collections (including the Dunhuang

47 Corbey, Layton, and Tanner.

48 Shaer, *L'invention Des Musées*. p 51.

49 Wood, "Paul Pelliot, Aurel Stein and Chinese Opposition to the Royal Academy's International Exhibition of Chinese Art 1935–36." According to Wood, a total of 760 artefacts in 93 cases (without insurance as the expense was too high to the organizers) were shipped to London. Prior to the show, some of them were displayed in a 'preliminary exhibition' at the 'old Bank of China' in Shanghai for a local audience. We will further discuss this later in Chapter 4.3.1.1.



FIGURE 4.7 *Amitabha Buddha in the Central Hall for the Exhibition of Chinese Art 1935 (Royal Academy of Arts, London)*

objects) of the Louvre, the Musée Guimet and the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The Exhibition was a great success in Europe: in total 401,768 entrance tickets were sold, in addition to 108,914 exhibition catalogues, 3,486 illustrated brochures, 2,196 exhibition handbooks, and 33,600 copies of *The Royal Society of Arts Journal*⁵⁰. More than a hundred media reports were published in several languages with headlines about the Exhibition's popularity. During the Exhibition, leading art historians and archaeologists presented their papers to a wide international audience. And by the Exhibition, the so-called 'Chinese art' was redefined as 'fine art' instead of 'minor arts' like pottery or porcelain made by craftsmen or artisans. Being considered as an ground-breaking event to 'inaugurate the modern era of Chinese art history' in Europe⁵¹, this Exhibition publicly acknowledged China to be 'an influence comparable with Greece and Italy, not only in what is patronizingly called the applied arts, but the fine arts as well', according to Sowerby⁵². On the Chinese side, this loan of 'national treasures'

50 Jan-Erik Nilsson, 'International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London 1935-36', Gotheborg.com.

51 Elliott and Shambaugh, *The Odyssey of China's Imperial Art Treasures*.

52 Guo, "Art Historical Narrative in Exhibitions: The Shanghai Preliminary Exhibition of Chinese Art (1935)."

was rather a political move (this will be further explored in Chapter 4.3.1.1), yet on the British side it was commercial. Indeed, this event can be understood as a ‘heritage process’ through commodifying significant cultural objects, as seen in the fact that behind the Exhibition there appeared to be an elaborate market manipulation of high-end Chinese antiques operated by private collectors and dealers, in collaboration with public museum institutions around Europe and the world. As a matter of fact, a huge amount of Chinese cultural objects started to circulate in the international art market after the collapse of Qing dynasty⁵³, and the establishment of the Palace Museum in Peking in 1925 has furthered such a trend, as it helped familiarize those foreign art collectors with the exquisite royal collections of Qing court (now national treasure of China) on display⁵⁴. Besides, also loaned to the Exhibition were the exquisite objects exactly owned by those private collectors and dealers who participated in organising the event. For example, the initiator of the Exhibition Sir Percival David (an aristocratic banker in British India in Bombay and a big collector of Chinese ceramics) lent 314 items from his own collection⁵⁵; another private collector George Eumorfopoulos (1863-1939)⁵⁶ lent 187 pieces (which later on were sold and became the permanent collection of British Museum)⁵⁷; and ‘the most celebrated dealer in Chinese artefacts of his generation’⁵⁸ C.T. Loo (1880-1957)⁵⁹ by loaning his collections had his name mentioned and specifically thanked in the preface of the exhibition catalogue⁶⁰. Other known dealers of Chinese antiques who participated in a similar manner (as a way of promotion) included Sadajiro Yamanaka, Bluett and Sons, Peter Boode and Spink and Son⁶¹.

Back to continental Europe. in Germany, white-cube has become an authorized way of presenting art. In 1923, Walter Gropius (1882-1969) founded the Bauhaus school and thereby defined a physical form for ‘modernity’—an exhibition environment that was abstract, vibrant, and free from historicism. Although the Bauhaus school was considered by Nazi Germany to be degenerate, the muséographie of ‘white-cube’ was officially employed to build the Haus der Kunst in

53 For example, the collections of Duan Feng were dispersed to the market as mentioned in Chapter 3.2.2.1

54 Fan, “The 1935 London International Exhibition of Chinese Art: The China Critic Reacts.”

55 Sir Percival the 2nd Baronet was born into a Jewish family in British India in Bombay that originated in Baghdad, his father founded the Bank of India. Currently his Chinese ceramics are on permanent loan (from the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art) to the British Museum, on display at the Room 95 since 2009.

56 He also collected Greek or classical materials.

57 Eumorfopoulos, “George Aristides Eumorfopoulos 1863-1939.”

58 Pilling, “C.T. Loo: Champion of Chinese Art...or Villain?”

59 C. T. Loo was based in Paris, he had a grand townhouse transformed into a commercial gallery which became the most important conduit of Chinese treasures to Europe.

60 Llewellyn, *Catalogue of the International Exhibition of Chinese Art 1935-36 (Patrons His Majesty the King, Her Majesty the Queen Mary, The President of the Chinese Republic)*.

61 Steuber, “The Exhibition of Chinese Art at Burlington House, London, 1935-36.”



FIGURE 4.8 *House of German Art, First Great German Art Exhibition 1937* (akg-images)

Munich in 1937 for the *Great German Art Exhibition*⁶². In *The Function of Architecture* Daniel Buren said:

*The history still to be made will take into consideration the place (the architecture) in which a work comes to rest (develops) as an integral part of the work in question and all the consequences such a link implies. It is not a question of ornamenting (disfiguring or embellishing) the place (the architecture) in which the work is installed, but of indicating as precisely as possible the way the work belongs in the place and vice versa, as soon as the latter is shown.*⁶³

This comment is relevant not only for works of fine art but also, and particularly, archaeological objects such as the Dunhuang collections which, as stated, were elevated and turned into works of (fine) art. Such a practice of exhibition design for Chinese antiques became conventional in the West and then worldwide. One of the ‘universal museums’ that hold the Dunhuang collections, Musée Guimet, was the most avant-gard in this way (see Figure 4.9). Furthering the exhibition

62 O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*; Cain, “How the White Cube Came to Dominate the Art World?”

63 Filipovic, “The Global White Cube.”



FIGURE 4.9 *Muséographie of Musée Guimet* (Courtesy MNAAG)

design after the War⁶⁴, Musée Guimet at the turn of the last millennium with a thorough renovation⁶⁵ designed by Henri Gaudin⁶⁶ has exploited this standard *muséographie* for art exhibition—white-cube—to an extreme: tall ceilings, screened natural light, concrete floors, white walls, white display stands, a minimum of panels, small sized labels (exactly the same as for contemporary art exhibition). Not only the background information about the historicity of objects on display was erased, but also such ‘whitening’ has transformed Guimet’s religious objects and Pelliot’s archaeological artefacts into purely ‘works of (fine) art’. As ‘the context becomes content’⁶⁷, the definition of these cultural objects from the ‘Others’ became whitened as well: except for universally understood visual aesthetics, all other religious, historic or cultural meanings were ‘whitened’ away.

4.2.1.2 *A Phenomenological Description on the White-Cube of ‘Salon Pelliot’*

Standing inside the white-cute of Musée Guimet, including the Salle Pelliot (Figure 4.9), it was evident that the ‘storyline’ was an art historic one. The spatial arrangement of exhibition rooms enabled the audience to physically ‘sense’ and ‘know’ the geographical evolution of art history—(from Egypt and Greece as deployed in the Louvre⁶⁸) India, and Central Asia through the Silk Roads to the Far East⁶⁹. The universal museums’ ideal—seeing the world’s cultures under one roof—was thus performed. However, from an empirical viewpoint, it is questionable how such idea could be conveyed to the audience. According to the statistics⁷⁰, Paris was the most visited tourism city in the world in 2013 (32.3 million tourists), with the most part of foreign visitors coming from Britain and then the United States, Germany, Italy and Asia (881,000 people) while the

64 Stern, “Muséographie Au Musée Guimet.”

65 Jarrige, “La Rénovation Du Musée Guimet.”

66 Gaudin and Gaudin, “Henri Gaudin Musee Guimet.”

67 O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*.

68 “Interactive Floor Plans.”

69 MNAAG, “Gallery Maps.”

70 “Move over London...Paris Named as the World’s Top Tourist Destination.”



FIGURE 4.10 *Salle Pelliot 'trésors de Dunhuang' au Musée Guimet (Courtesy MNAAG)*

number of domestic tourists was in decline⁷¹. As to museum visits, in 2016 the total visits of Musée Guimet was 340,000 (in 2002 440,000) and the majority of visitors were between 35-77 years old, of higher socio-professional and educational backgrounds⁷², and thus categorized as 'upper class'⁷³. In addition, a recent study focused on the Chinese tourists in France found that the average age was 34 and 97 percent of them would visit museums. Based on this a recommendation was made to the Musée Guimet to 'translate the label' and 'improve mobile guide service'⁷⁴.

If it was already difficult for a contemporary Chinese visitor to further understand the Chinese cultural objects on display in Musée Guimet, the challenge might be greater for audiences coming from non-Eastern countries like Britain, the United States, Germany or Italy. Especially since a visitor would spend no more than 45 seconds on average in front of an exhibit⁷⁵ and that the helping devices were very limited within the modern Western museographic framework of the white-cube: small sized labels, a minimum number of panels, a rented audio-guide, brochure, and a few touch screens. This empirical understanding from the perspective of visitor behaviour studies in addition to the long known symptom of 'museum fatigue'⁷⁶ (which was difficult to avoid by an 'active meaning maker' of exhibition) could shed some new lights on the argument between universal museums and the countries of origin. As analysed previously in Chapter 4.1.2.2, discussing the grammar of exhibition communication, the white-cube display of Dunhuang objects (as in Figure 4.9 and 4.10) has made all the four dimensions of museal communication between artist, curator, object and visitor invalidated and only one single message was delivered: the aesthetic value of object.

71 "Move over London...Paris Named as the World's Top Tourist Destination."

72 Artkhade, "Sophie Makariou: A 'New Impetus' for Guimet."

73 Eidelman, "From a Non-Public of Museums to Publics of Free Admission."

74 Estrada, "A Fresh Perspective on Chinese Museum Visitors."

75 Milekic, "Multimodality and Interactivity: Promoting Human(e) Access to Cultural Heritage."

76 Gilman, "Museum Fatigue."

4.2.2 Ways of Seeing 'Self': from National Wound to Soft Power

Yet in the 'country of origin' how were the Dunhuang objects displayed in the milieu of museum exhibition? As stated, although the small exposition of Pelliot in 1919 in Peking initiated the Chinese Dunhuangology, the concept of preserving and exhibiting the cultural heritage as the standard museum praxis had not yet been established. In 1920, the government of Xinjiang Province even designated the site of Mogao to host 900 soldiers of the White Army defeated by the Red Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War (1917-1922) and numerous remaining frescos and statues suffered severe damages caused by these 'guest-residents.' It was not until WWII, while the central government of China was retreating from Peking to Chongqing together with functionaries and scholars, that the opportunity turned up to re-estimate the importance of the Mogao Grottos. Among these war refugees the Chinese painter Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) (as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2.1.3) was informed in 1938 that the site of Mogao was not completely spoiled and decided to run a field survey so to better study the techniques of ancient artists by imitating, copying and transcribing (or reproducing) the wall paintings on to silk papers. From 1941 to 1943, he lived at the site of Mogao Grottos with his students, assistants and family. And he 'reproduced' or 'copied'⁷⁷ 276 pieces of the murals and investigated the ages and styles of them in all of the 309 grottos that he numbered⁷⁸. Since then, for a long period of time in China, 'preserving' the art of Dunhuang was achieved in this way initiated by Zhang Daqian⁷⁹—'copying' or 'transcribing' the murals with the equipment and materials of traditional Chinese art (brush, pigment, ink and silk paper) unto portable silk papers. Such artistic 'copies' then formed the main body of 'Dunhuang exhibitions' held in modern China (as seen in Figure 4.11 between 1943 and 1945)⁸⁰. In 1944, the Ministry of Education established the Dunhuang Research Institute of Art (the predecessor of the Dunhuang Academy), which was not a 'site museum' but an 'art institute' whose heads were all professionally trained artists—for example, Chang Shuhong (1904-1994), a Chinese artist trained in Paris the

77 The traditional way of learning Chinese painting (ink and silk paper) is called Lin-Muo (臨摹): putting the half-transparent silk paper on top of the original work (of the pupil's master or any masterpiece to be studied) and use the brush to copy it so to learn the structure, shape, and strokes of it. As such, good student work can be almost identical to the original piece, and often to be considered as 'forgery' in the eyes of Western art critique. Zhang Dacqian in this way was regarded as a gifted master 'forger' of the 20th century.

78 There are altogether six numbering systems for the Mogao Grottos given by Paul Pelliot, Dunhuang county, Gao Lianzhuo (高良佐 1907-1968), Zhang Daqian, Shi Yen (史岩 1904-1994), and the Dunhuang Academy.

79 Nevertheless, as described in Chapter 2.1.1.3, Zhang Daqian's 'preservation work' was witnessed by the members of the Expedition to the Northwest of China on Art and Artefacts in 1940 as 'destroying' the original murals in many ways: pilling off the top layers of the murals without proper documentation, drawing and commenting directly on the murals, traces of ink soaked into the murals through the silk paper while copying, etc.

80 For example, in those Dunhuang exhibitions held in the 1940s in China in the cities of Lanzhou, Chongqing, Shanghai, and Nanjing

Time	Special Exhibiton on the Theme of Dunhuang	Location
1909	Pelliot's exposition of Dunhuang manuscripts	Beijing Hotel of Wagon-Lit
1925	Exhibitions for the bi-centenary of the Academy of Sciences	St. Petersburg Asiatic Museum
1935	International Exhibition of Chinese Art	London Royal Academy of Art
	Preliminary exhibition of international exhibition of Chinese art in London	Shanghai German Club
1938	Les Arts de l'Iran: L'Ancienne Perse et Bagdad	Paris Bibliothèque Nationale de France
	Manuscripts of Dunhuang, Mogao	London John Ritblat Gallery British Library
	Chinese antiquities	London British Museum
1942	He Zhenghuang and Lu Shangqun Dunhuang art exhibition	Chongqing Central University
1943	Art Institute of Dunhuang (Site Museum)	
	Zhang Daqian Dunhuang art exhibiton	Lanzhou
1944	Zhang Daqian Dunhuang art exhibiton	Chongqing
1945	Exhibition of Dunhuang Murals	Chongqing Sino-Russian Culture Association
1947	1906-1909 Collection de la BNF et du Musée Guimet	Paris
1951	Exhibition of Dunhuang artefacts	Beijing, Wu Men, Palace Museum
	Exhibition of Dunhuang artefacts	India
	Exhibition of Dunhuang artefacts	Berma
1955	Dunhuang art exhibition	Beijing Palace Musuem
1957	Dunhuang art exhibition	Poland
	Dunhuang art exhibition	Czechoslovak
1958	Dunhuang art exhibition	Japan
1959	Dunhuang art exhibition	Beijing Palace Museum
1962	Dunhuang art exhibition	Shanghai
1976	La Route de la Soie, les arts de l'Asie centrale ancienne dans les collections publiques francaises	Paris Grand Palais
1979	Trésor de Chine et de Haute Asie: centième anniversaire de Paul Pelliot	Paris BNF
1982	中國敦煌壁畫展 commemoration of the 10 th anniversary of normalizing teh Sino-Japanese relations	日本
1983	敦煌藝術摹品展覽	法國巴黎自然史博物館
	Manuscripts of Dunhuang	Japan Kyoto co-organized by Britihs Library and British Museum
1985	中國敦煌展	日本(東京、福岡、長野、靜岡)
1988	敦煌西夏王國展	日本
1990	On paper: the history of art	New York public library Gottesman exhibiton hall

FIGURE 4.11 List of Selected Special Exhibition of Dunhuang 1900-1991⁸¹

81 Ji, *Dictionary of Dunhuangology* (敦煌學大辭典).

École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, as well as Duan Wenjie⁸² (1917-2011), a graduate from the Department of Chinese Art in the China Academy of Art.

In 1949, the newly established government of the People's Republic of China (PROC) forced the local Buddhists and Taoist monks and nuns in Dunhuang to return home and ordered Chang Shuhong to stop his preservation work—which he was allowed to resume in 1950 when the Institute was reopened to 'study the art of Dunhuang "critically" in the Marxist manner'. In the April of 1951, to celebrate the birth of PROC, a grand 'Dunhuang exhibition' was held in Beijing at the Wu Men⁸³ of the Forbidden city (the Palace Museum) with a total of 3,655 Dunhuang objects on display, including the duplicated mural paintings, photographs, statues and artefacts. The Premier of PROC, Zhou Enlai, has even visited the show in person. Then again in 1955, 1959 and 1961, the Dunhuang exhibitions were held at the Palace Museum in Beijing. The one in 1959 (for the 10th anniversary of PROC) was coincided with two other Dunhuang exhibitions held by the History Museum⁸⁴ and the National Museum⁸⁵ in Beijing. Nevertheless, the physical conditions to preserve the Mogao Grottos were not much improved (electricity and cars came to Dunhuang only in the 1960s). The grottos were not much damaged during the Cultural Revolution, thanks to Zhou Enlai who thought that 'cultural relics of the past cannot be completely discarded because they are part of Chinese history'⁸⁶. It is worth noting that museums in China were regarded as tools for government propaganda, as declared in a conference for national museums held in the 1960s in Beijing—museum professionals should study the thoughts of Marx, Lenin and Mao so to use museums as a means to promote socialism and communism⁸⁷.

In the 1980s, with the opening-up policy, heritage enterprises in China have greeted a new era. The Dunhuang collections became a window to be reached out to by the West, namely the international body of ICOM-UNESCO-UN. In 1981, Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) visited Dunhuang in person and a special fund of 3,000,000 RMB was given to the preservation and restoration of Mogao Grottos⁸⁸. In 1984, Sir Run Run Shaw (1907-2014) the Hong Kong entertainment mogul and philanthropist donated 10,000,000 HKD to the Dunhuang Academy for conserving the site⁸⁹. The art of Dunhuang again became a recurrent theme of grand exhibitions in celebrating important occasions in China. In 1996, 2000 and 2003 exhibitions of Dunhuang art were held in Beijing at the History Museum

82 Original in Chinese as '段文杰'.

83 Original in Chinese as '午門'.

84 Chang, *Fifty Years of Guarding Dunhuang: Memoire of Chang Shuhong* (守護敦煌五十年：常書鴻自述).

85 "A Hundred Years of Life, Traces of a Master: The Dunhuang Dream of Duan Wenjie (百年人生，宗師足跡：段文杰先生的敦煌夢)."

86 In Beijing, the Palace Museum was reopened in 1971 and the History Museum in 1972.

87 Wang, *The Basis of Chinese Museology* (中國博物館學基礎). Page 124.

88 "A Hundred Years of Life, Traces of a Master: The Dunhuang Dream of Duan Wenjie (百年人生，宗師足跡：段文杰先生的敦煌夢)."

89 Qi, "Colleagues in Dunhuang Academy Morned over Mr Shaw Yifu (敦煌同人沈痛哀悼邵逸夫先生)."

and the Revolution Museum. In 2008, to greet the Olympic Games in Beijing the grand exhibition entitled *Inspired by the Murals—Masters and Dunhuang*⁹⁰ was organized by the National Art Museum of China⁹¹.

As described earlier in Chapter 3.2.2.3, Dunhuang became a symbol of a ‘national wound’ in the eyes of Chinese Dunhuangologists and common public as marked by the stone stele installed at the entrance of the exhibition room in the grotto number 17 (where the ‘medieval encyclopaedia’ was removed by Stein and Pelliot to London and Paris) and the ‘emptied’ spot at the grotto number 328 labelled to point out an absent statue taken by Warner to the United States. This way of seeing cultural heritage was also present in the display of historic remains in the Yuanming Yuan (Old Summer Palace, relentlessly destroyed by the Anglo-French expedition force in the Second Opium War): instead of ‘recovering’ the war ruins by reproducing the originals (like in Berlin in the aftermath of WWII) the site was kept exactly as how it was, to remind the Chinese people of ‘conquering and survival’⁹². This narrative was criticised as a way to ‘enjoy the national wound’⁹³. In fact, seeing the ‘Self’ as a victim of New Imperialism through cultural heritage was specifically emphasised by the Communist Party since its early days. As noted in Chapter 2.1.1.3, in the documentation regarding the first Chinese expedition to Dunhuang in 1940, a sentiment of nationalism was already revealed. In January 1949, when Peiping was ‘liberated’ and renamed as Beijing to be the capital of PROC, Mao Zedong (1893-1976) followed the opinion of Soviet consultants instead of Chinese architects and urban planners like Liang Sicheng⁹⁴ (1901-1972) and decided to locate the central government at the centre of Forbidden City but not the western suburb. A great deal of ancient architecture and many historic monuments were therefore demolished in 1952, 1958 and 1964⁹⁵. During the Cultural Revolution, the connection between cultural heritage and feudalism was a core concern, and everything royal or traditional was suggested to be destroyed. As mentioned earlier, under the protection of Zhou Enlai, the Dunhuang objects were spared, as they were irrelevant to things ‘royal’ and, on the contrary, were a material witness to the life of labour class in the old times so were worth to be preserved and exhibited. In an article published in 1957 written by Chang Shuhong⁹⁶, it was stated:

90 Original in Chinese as ‘盛世和光：敦煌藝術大展’.

91 Ma, “Insight of Dunhuang Exhibition (敦煌藝術大展的啟示).”

92 Wu, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture*.

93 Lee, “The Ruins of Yuanmingyuan.”

94 Original in Chinese as ‘梁思成’.

95 Wang, “Lu Dingyi Saved the Palace Museum (陸定一衝冠一怒保故宮).”

96 Chang, “Art Treasure of the People in China: Introduction of Mogao Grottos (敦煌莫高窟：中國人民的藝術寶庫).”

[Dunhuang was] an unprecedented discovery in the history and culture of human-kind in the 20th century and has interested the colonial powers of New Imperialism of the West. From 1907 to 1924, under the failing rule of Qing dynasty and the rebellion of Nationalist Party, those cultural spies from the US, Britain, France and Japan were let free to pillage thousands of ancient manuscripts, paintings, murals and statues from the grottos. These creations out of the wisdom of ancient craftsmen were most appreciated by and endeared to the patriotic labouring people of China, the country of our fathers. Fuelled by the anger against the looting and plundering over and again by the villainous imperialists, the people in Dunhuang could not tolerate anymore. In 1925 when the American imperialist Warner and his lackey Horace Jayne 'visited' the Mogao Grottos again with a great plan of another pillage, they finally encountered the undaunted resistance of the labouring crowd and were repelled with their shameless complot destroyed⁹⁷.

In the great art tradition of our fathers' country the Mogao Grottos of Dunhuang are the treasure of an art heritage, which can best represent the people in realism. Inheriting the perfected art technique and vivid tradition of the Han dynasty, they tell rich Buddhist stories and mythological legends gracefully and vigorously in different historic styles and with local colours. [...] Their great achievement in art is not on the rhetoric of storytelling itself, but on depicting the ideologies of the ruler and the deprived labour classes of a feudalist society and providing us an empirical experience of understanding history. Besides, in terms of the Chinese art history, this outstanding heritage has demonstrated all various phases of a long evolution, development and growth of national art during one thousand and five or six hundred years, and has enabled us to apply such rich and exquisite creative experience of classic art, a national cultural heritage, to establish a best condition for making a new art of social realism⁹⁸.

The art of Dunhuang also reflected the great and coherent accomplishment of peace making and cultural exchange between the different ethnic groups in China, between China and foreign countries and between the East and the West over the past one thousand years. Not only is it the artistic heritage that

97 Original in Chinese as '是20世紀人類文化歷史上一個空前的發現，因此引起各國帝國主義份子的垂涎；從1907到1924年中間，在昏庸的清政府與反動的國民黨統治下，讓英、美、法、日文化間諜在上述藏經洞和石窟中擷取了數以千萬計的文書古畫和石室的壁畫彩塑等。但是這些古代藝術匠師們智慧的創造，也就是熱愛祖國的中國勞動人民所最珍惜與愛護的，在無可容忍的帝國主義份子卑鄙的一再劫奪之下，人起了敦煌人民憤怒的火焰：當1925年美帝華爾納和他的走狗霍雷斯傑尼再度“光顧”莫高窟，企圖大舉劫奪的時候，終於遭受到勞動群眾堅決的反對，並把他們驅逐出去，摧毀了帝國主義份自無恥的陰謀。'

98 Original in Chinese as '敦煌莫高窟是祖國偉大的藝術傳統中最富有人民性和現實主義的藝術遺產的寶庫；他們繼承了漢代藝術成熟的經驗和生動活潑的傳統，把豐富的佛教故事與神話傳說細緻曲折、生動活潑地用不同時代風格和鄉土色彩體現出來。[...]他們偉大的藝術上的成就，在於布袋時雄辯地說明的故事的本身，而且是及其父有感染力的刻劃了個時代封建社會的統治者與被剝削的勞動人民的意識形態，使我們對歷史的認識有了更現實的體驗。此外在中國藝術史方面，通過這些傑出的遺產，展示出一千五、六百年民族藝術的演變成長和發展的各個階段，使我們有可能運用古典藝術優秀而豐富的創作經驗，為集成民族藝術遺產，推陳出新創造社會主義現實主義的新藝術提供有利的條件'.

can best represent national characteristics among the great art traditions in our fathers' country, it also is an inseparable part of the entire culture and history of humankind in peace building. It is not only loved by the Chinese people but also by all peoples of the world who support peace and democracy. It is the pride of creating peace in human culture. In this moment of great socialistic construction, Dunhuang has become the most precious treasure of art to the Chinese people⁹⁹.

This article has clearly explained how Dunhuang heritage was viewed from the perspective of a patriotic artist, conservator and curator from the Communist Party of China in the 1950s during the Cold War. And such a narrative or ideology has remained until this date. In Chang Shuhong's discourse, the Dunhuang heritage was a reminder of a 'national wound' (as it bears witness to the invasion of Western empires), a treasure of Chinese art for its artistic features and a symbol of peace-making (since it was a result of cultural exchange over a long period of time). Similar to the West, the original connotation of Dunhuang objects as sacred artefacts or religious relics in Buddhism was erased, as relevant rituals and especially Buddhism as a religion was not permitted to be practiced in the communist regime. Also just like in the West, the Dunhuang objects in modern China after 1949 have become a pure 'art'—which by definition¹⁰⁰ could mean and incorporate almost anything—particularly the one that was 'non-elite, non-royal, anonymous, ethnographic and folklore' except 'religious'. As implied in the last part of the quote above, being the best representative of 'national art' the Dunhuang heritage, supposedly appreciated by all mankind, was suggested to be the best candidate for diplomatic (dis)play of modern China's soft power for 'peace making' in international relations and politics. This can be seen in the fact that the Dunhuang art exhibitions were frequently sent abroad by China to its allies and to the West during and after the Cold War.

99 Original in Chinese as '敦煌藝術還反映了千餘年來一脈相傳的中國人民在民族與民族、中國與外國、東方與西方之間和平相處的文化交流活動中輝煌的成就，因此他不僅是祖國偉大的藝術傳統中最富有民族個性的藝術遺產，而且是人類整個文化和平創造的歷史中不可分割的組成部分，他受到中國人民的珍惜與愛護，同時也受到全世界和平民主人士的珍惜與愛護，他是人類文化和平創造中的驕傲。在偉大的社會主義建設時代，敦煌早已成為中國人民最為珍貴的藝術寶庫'.

100 By the Oxford Dictionary, the term 'art' means: the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.

4.3 The Cultural, Heritage and Museum Diplomacy of Dunhuang

Museum exhibition serves as an ‘advertisement’¹⁰¹ as a museum can be a medium or a language, as explored in the previous Chapter 4.1.2.2. To the Parisians or Londoners in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, those national exhibitions, colonial exhibitions and universal exhibitions were the best windows to have a glimpse of exotic foreign cultures. In 1878, at the *Exposition de Paris*, the pavilions of China and Japan roused increasing interest of the public towards orientalism, of which articles of Chinoiserie and Japonisme¹⁰² became popular collectables. From randomly displaying the acquisitions of curiosities to systematically and chronologically exhibiting the royal art collections of Louvre and the world exposition, the milieu of the exhibition has become a place to define the ‘Others’ in addition to forging the cultural identity and collective memory of the ‘Self’¹⁰³. This development has enabled the diplomatic role of the museum in international and intercultural dialogues. In the 1940s, the Republic of China (ROC) sent prestigious collections to be exhibited in allied countries like Britain and Russia, for military, economic and political support. Such cultural diplomacy was continued with the United States in the 1960s, after the ROC retreated to the island of Taiwan. Similarly, the PROC also applied such soft diplomacy to fight the ‘cultural Cold War’¹⁰⁴ by sending ‘cultural troops’ with the Dunhuang exhibition to the Southeast Asia, East Europe and Japan. In the latter part of Cold War, in the 1980s, the heritage diplomacy of UNESCO started to reach out to China via the Silk Roads and Dunhuang became a perfect target. Enlisted as a World Heritage Site in 1987, Dunhuang became China’s best cultural diplomat to ‘communicate’ with the West and the ‘free China’ including Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. Coming into the 21st century, where globalized neoliberalism now prevails, the ‘universal museums’ started to employ a ‘museum diplomacy’ with China to help negotiate important trade agreements and foreign direct investments, and in China the concept of Silk Roads was reinvented with historical connotation as seen in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for the China Dream. Meanwhile, Taiwan started to re-employ such soft diplomacy with the West especially during the crises with China.

101 Davallon, *L'exposition à l'oeuvre: Stratégies de Communication et Médiation Symbolique*.

102 Pinot de Villechenon, “L’Amérique Latine Dans Les Expositions Universelles.”

103 Pearce, *Interpreting Objects and Collections*; Wallis, “Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy”; Kaplan, *Museums and the Making of “Ourselves”: The Role of Objects in National Identity*.

104 Zhai, *Crisis and Conflict in the Era of Cold War: The Reaction of China* (冷戰年代的危機和衝突: 中國的反應). Page 22.

4.3.1 The ROC's National Treasures to Solicit Western Supports 1930s-1960s

Following France and Germany, the ROC decided to turn the royal palace the Forbidden City into a public museum. Accordingly, the Palace Museum in Beijing was inaugurated in 1925. To escape from Japanese military aggression, the Museum together with other cultural institutes moved their important collections (including the Dunhuang objects) to Shanghai in 1933 and so the Nanjing branch of Palace Museum was built in 1936. With the eastern coastal cities occupied by the Japanese Empire, these prestigious collections were again transported to Chongqing in 1937. Although after WWII they were sent back to Beijing, the collections were shipped to Taiwan after the Communist Party took over China in 1949 and the National Palace Museum in Taipei was created in 1965¹⁰⁵. During these warring years, these heritage collections were not 'inactive' but being displayed constantly to elevate the spirit of the public and, most importantly, were used by the Chinese government as a cultural diplomat to negotiate for foreign aid from the West, namely Britain, Russia and the United States.

4.3.1.1 *International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London 1935*

As introduced previously in Chapter 4.2.1.1, in 1932 while the idea to organise the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* was raised by the British India Baronet Sir Percival David, Japan has just occupied Manchuria and started to bomb Shanghai. The Chinese government appealed for help to the League of Nations and Lord Lytton (1876-1947) was sent to Manchuria to investigate. In spite of the high status of Japan in the League (together with Britain and France) as one of the Mandate Powers¹⁰⁶, the League of Nations concluded that Japan should return Manchuria to China. Japan refused. According to the Covenant, the League then should have placed economic sanctions or gathered an army to declare war against Japan. However, it was at a time of the Great Depression and the idea of a 'united states of Europe'¹⁰⁷ behind the League was challenged by fascism and Nazism, which were rising to power. As a result, dictatorships were replacing democracies in many member states with another world war being brought to the brim of explosion¹⁰⁸. As seen in the Treaty of Versailles (as discussed earlier in Chapter 3.3.1.1), the imperialist Mandate Powers of the League still wanted to keep intact their colonial interests overseas, including their concessions on the east coast of China. Instead of leaving Manchuria, Japan left the League in 1933 and the invasion of China continued with all its might.

It was under such circumstances that Sir Percival David's proposal was received through Pelliot by the Chinese government, which considered it an opportunity to use culture to win the heart of the European public, so to get help

105 "Hisotry (歷史沿革)."

106 There were 14 mandate territories divided up among six mandate powers of Britain, France, Belgium, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan.

107 Harriet, *The United States of Europe*.

108 Brett, *European History 1900-1960*.

in the fight against the Japanese Empire. As stated, a warship was sent by Britain, not to fight Japan, but to escort the loan of prestigious collections of cultural heritage from Shanghai to London. Eventually, a total of 93 boxes full of ‘treasures from China’ arrived at Portsmouth on the HMS Suffolk, including 1,022 artefacts of bronze, ceramics, paintings, jade, archaeological artefacts, manuscripts, furniture, cloisonné, textile, lacquer and fans. Certain ‘unfavourable’ conditions were agreed by the Nationalist Chinese government, for example the insurance was cancelled and the right to curate the show was deprived¹⁰⁹. Prior to departure, during the preliminary exhibition held at a German bank in Shanghai, a protest was evoked by the ‘left wing’ opinions led by the Qing Hua University. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the Exhibition was a great success in many ways. As discussed previously, the Exhibition effectively elevated the Chinese art to be the equal of the ancient Greek and Roman art. Before that the general impression was that Japanese art, like the Ukiyo-e (woodblock prints and paintings), was the true heir of Oriental art and Chinese art was merely the kind of kitsch chinoiserie either exported from the Canton Province or forged and manufactured in Holland. The commercial success of the Exhibition was also significant, as seen in the fact that (in addition to the ticket and catalogue sales) the price of Chinese antiques afterwards sky-rocketed in the art market, due to the fact that the market at that time was dealer-led and almost all leading private collectors and dealers have participated the show, including Sir Percival himself, George Aristides Eumorfopoulos¹¹⁰ and C. T. Loo. In fact, the exhibition milieu—the Royal Academy of Arts—since its creation in 1768 proposed by the artist-members of the ‘Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce’ has always been strongly connected to commodifying artworks. Its establishment changed the way art was produced and consumed with an emerging art market. A century after, such feature was continued by creating an annual event of summer exhibition in the milieu. Coming into the 20th century these summer exhibitions became big ‘international affaire’¹¹¹: in 1920 artworks from Spain were exhibited, in 1923 from Australia, in 1927 from Belgium and Finland, in 1929 from the Netherland, in 1930 from Italy, in 1931 from Persia and in 1932 from France.

Coinciding with this economic achievement, the political success of the Exhibition was also significant: not only His Majesty the King George V and Her Majesty the Queen Mary as well as the Chinese President Jiang Kai-Shek (1887-1975) became the patrons but also the high-level government officials on both sides joined the chair of organizing committee, including Ramsey MacDonald (1866-1937), Stanley Baldwin (1867-1947) and Wang Zhao-Ming¹¹² (1883-1944).

109 Wu, “China in Display: The Case Study of the 1961 Chinese Ancient Art Exhibition in the USA (展覽中的中國: 以1961年中國古藝術品赴美展覽為例).” Page 63.

110 Eumorfopoulos, “George Aristides Eumorfopoulos 1863-1939.” His collection of Chinese antiques were divided between the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, for which a public subscription was launched in 1934 to raise the required 100,000 pounds due to the financial crash and the Great Depression.

111 Smith, “Work of Art: An Interview with the Chief Executive of the RA.”

112 Original in Chinese as ‘汪兆民’, also named as Wang Jingwei ‘汪精衛’.

A total of 3000 exhibits were displayed and 14 countries (including the Empire of Japan) agreed to loan their collections of Chinese art. The show was praised as ‘art of peace’ and Britain too was praised in the press, since it ‘got the world to cooperate’. While the Japanese intelligence was alerted, the ROC’s cultural diplomacy to promote Chinese art and literature in Britain was successful. One of the reasons was that such a strategy befitted to the anti-fascist political trend of the time in Europe. Since fascism was considered to be the enemy of culture, and culture was the core of a nation’s resistance¹¹³, under the endeavours of the Chinese government and the British ‘left wing’ an image of Japan making a ‘totalitarian war’ against Chinese culture—the real heir of Oriental art and a peer to ancient Greece and Rome—was efficaciously built. In the end, the political and financial support solicited by Jiang Kai-Shek to fight against the Japanese invasion was obtained. And the popularity of the show caused a frantic interest from other countries, like the United States, Russia and even Japan. The curator of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Herbert Eustis Winlock (1884-1950), presented an attempt to tour these ‘national treasures’ to New York before they were returned to China. But the communications with the Chinese Embassy by the American Parliament and even the President Roosevelt brought little result due to the ‘complicated diplomatic and political situation’¹¹⁴ of the time. Another attempt was made again in 1938 to show them in the *World Exhibition in New York* (1939-1940), yet the negotiation with the Chinese Embassy was stalled indefinitely because the world was on the brink of WWII.

4.3.1.2 *Exhibition of Chinese Art in Moscow and Leningrad 1940-1942*

Though the ‘complicated diplomatic and political situation’ of the time hindered the Chinese loan of ‘national treasures’ to the United States, it was nevertheless possible to send them to Russia. China accepted the abrupt request of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1940. Unlike Britain or the United States, which still tended to reconcile with Japan and retain their concessions in China¹¹⁵, USSR was eager to provide financial and military assistance knowing that the Second United Front between China’s Nationalist Party and the Communist Party was established in 1937 (the First United Front was built in 1923 also under the influence of Russia) when the Second Sino-Japanese War (part of WWII) started in full-scale.

However, this ‘international exhibition of Chinese art’ in Russia was much less known as little documentation was kept both in Russia and China. The exact title of the exhibition is unknown, no catalogue or brochure has been found and news or reports are scarce¹¹⁶. In the spring of 1939, the Department of Art under

113 Buchanan, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925-1960*.

114 Wu, “China in Display: The Case Study of the 1961 Chinese Ancient Art Exhibition in the USA (展覽中的中國: 以1961年中國古藝術品赴美展覽為例).”

115 It was not until 1943, after the Pacific War broke out, that the UK and the USA started to turn against Japan and abrogated those ‘unequal treaties’ with China.

116 Song, “International Art Exhibition in Russia and the Return of the Collections (路曼曼其修遠兮: 記抗戰時期故宮參加之蘇聯「中國藝術展覽會」及其文物歸運).”

the People's Committee of Russia decided to include Chinese ancient art in an exhibition which was to be held in September, so to take the opportunity to introduce the Russian people to China's war with Japan¹¹⁷. The Russian Association of Foreign Cultures established an organizing committee and a total of 11 museums and galleries (including the National Museum of Oriental Cultures in Moscow, the State Historical Museum, the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, and the State Hermitage Museum) agreed to lend their collections (totalling about 1,500 items) for the show. The committee asked Sun Ke¹¹⁸ (1891-1973), who happened to be on a mission to Russia to sign the Sino-Russian Trading Agreements, for the loan of 'national treasures' like those shown in London in 1935. On the 30th of April, Sun Ke wrote to the Prime Minister of Executive Yuan¹¹⁹ saying that important collections of the Academia Sinica and the Palace Museum must be included, items should be separately noted as 'gift' or 'loan' and shipping should be completed by July with all the expenses covered by Russia. However, for security reasons¹²⁰ and the strong opinion held by scholars that 'important archaeological artefacts must not be given away', the Russian request was compromised to 80 photographs of the archaeological finds in Anyang¹²¹, 20 articles of prehistoric oracle bones, fragments of stone weapon, artefacts and chariot from the Academia Sinica together with 50 ancient paintings on paper and textile, 40 jades and ten bronzes. The collections arrived in Moscow through Chinese Central Asia in September and the exhibition was inaugurated on the 2nd of January in 1940 at the Museum of Oriental Cultures. A total of 25,000 visits occurred within a month, and news were reported in local papers such as *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. The two Chinese commissioners sent by the Palace Museum except holding seminars and publishing articles on local journals, also helped to study Kozlov's collections acquired during the Great Game (as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2).

In the internal discussions of the Chinese government between different ministries and departments, the purpose to lend these 'national treasures' was more than clear as revealed in an official correspondence¹²² between Ren Hungjun¹²³ (1886-1961) and Fu Sinian¹²⁴ (1898-1950):

117 Chen, "Introduction to the International Exhibition from the Palace Museum during the Period of Republican China (國史館館藏國民政府時期故宮海外展覽史料介紹)."

118 Original in Chinese as '孫科'.

119 An administration in the Chinese government, similar to 'cabinet of the United Kingdom'.

120 Route and ways of transportation were changed, the collections were sent via the Chinese Central Asia instead of by sea (Japan was attacking from the cost areas of China).

121 Original in Chinese as '安陽'.

122 Wang, Pan, and Wu, *Letters of Fu Sinian* (傅斯年遺札).

123 Original in Chinese as '任鴻雋', the general secretary of Academia Sinica.

124 Original in Chinese as '傅斯年', the head of the department of history and language in the Academia Sinica. Fu Sinian was against the idea to send important collections for this exhibition. In responding to Ren Hungjun he said that 'Russia is a country who sold his own "national treasures" so cannot be trusted with other countries' "national treasures". Eventually this exhibition proposal was not officially from the Russian government (and the Chinese communists' opinions were involved) and that was why the Chinese Executive Yuan decided not to follow entirely Sun Ke's suggestion.

The question we face today is but that under the current international circumstances are we willing to sacrifice a bit of 'treasures' and labour for an exchange of international support. If so, we can pick some items that are less important and do our best to pack them carefully. Indeed it would be an extraordinary joy if they can come back intact in the future, given that it is their destiny to suffer the road trip which is so long. In the worse scenario, what we could loss is but a few not-so-important antiques that are not much influential to our future studies and research¹²⁵.

The 1935 exhibition had established a successful precedent in using museum collections for diplomatic purposes. However, in contrast to the British organizers, who not only covered the entire expense, sent a warship for the transportation and all the loaned objects were returned safely in time, the Russian party of the 1940 exhibition showed several signs that they intended to keep the 'treasures'—the Chinese commissioners were forced to leave the exhibition and sent back to China right after the opening¹²⁶, the exhibition time in Moscow was extended without prior notice from two months to six months, the objects were transferred to the Hermitage Museum in 1941 for another exhibition without discussion with the Chinese party and it remained unclear whether the collections would be safeguarded together with the holdings of the Hermitage when the Siege of Leningrad occurred in 1941. After much effort paid by the Chinese government, the loaned 'national treasures' were finally returned in September 1942 to Chongqing¹²⁷.

4.3.1.3 *Tour Exhibition of Chinese Art Treasures in the USA 1961*

After WWII, the attempt from the United States to have a similar exhibition as London's in 1935 was brought up again by the vice-director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Horace Jayne (1898-1975). Though the Chinese government was in favour of sending important collections, the programme was interrupted due to the Civil War and after the PROC took over the mainland China in 1949 all movable 'national treasures' were shipped to Taiwan escorted by naval fleets. The following Korean War (1950-1953) gave reason to the United States for supporting the ROC in Taiwan. In 1953, the American magazine magnate who created *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*, Henry Luce (1898-1967), proposed to the President Jiang Kai-Shek and the exhibition plan should be resumed. The contract was signed in 1960 after issues were set regarding insurance, transportation and possible court cases by the PROC claiming to own the property right over these collections. In

125 Original in Chinese as '今日之問題，乃是在目下國際情形環境中，吾人是否願意犧牲一點『寶貝』與勞力，來換取一點國際好感耳。如果決心如此，我們即選擇幾件不十分重要的古物，儘力裝置妥當，送登長途，隨他們的命運去碰，將來如無災害，完璧歸來，固是天下好事。如其不然，我們所損失的，不過是幾件不甚重要的東西，於我們學術及研究的前途，想亦無多大影響'。

126 One of their duty was to closely watch what happened to the loaned objects.

127 Song, "Chinese Artefacts Exhibited in Russia during the Second Sino-Japanese War (再探抗戰時期中國文物赴蘇聯展覽之千迴百折)."



FIGURE 4.12 Installation view on the Chinese Art Treasure in the National Gallery of Art Washington DC 1961 (Courtesy of Gallery Archive of National Gallery of Art)

1961, 250 exquisite artworks were selected and shipped under the safeguard of the naval fleet Bryce Canyon from Taiwan to New York. The curatorial focus was decided by the American art historians to present specific characteristics of Chinese art, though the Chinese party wanted to show the ‘great Chinese civilization’ with the added implication that the legitimate heir of Chinese culture was ‘free China’ rather than ‘communist China.’ The exhibition toured the five biggest art museums: the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, Museum of Fine Art Boston, Art Institute of Chicago, MH de Young Memorial Museum San Francisco and National Gallery of Art Washington. The President of the United States was the ‘advocate in honour’ and the Chinese government was listed as ‘co-organizer.’ This exhibition was regarded as a manifestation of Sino-American diplomatic ties, especially against the background of the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958, for which, the United States decided to extend its defence of Taiwan’s territory¹²⁸.

However, in 1961, Kennedy became the President of the United States and the American foreign policy towards China started to change—the independence of Mongolia was recognized by the United States despite the rejection of Taiwan, while the Vice-President of ROC was sent to confirm the Sino-American Mutual Defence Treaty (1954-1980). In 1971, the ROC in Taiwan withdrew from the UN and the PROC took its place. In 1979, the United States broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan and recognized the PROC. Since that date, ‘national treasures’ have been kept and exhibited only in the National Palace Museum in Taipei¹²⁹ except for a few items that have been occasionally loaned to participate the *World Expositions* in New York in 1964, in Osaka in 1970, and in Seoul in 1973. It had to wait until the post-Cold War era, in the mid-1990s, while the tension between China and Taiwan across the Strait rose again, that such ‘cultural diplomacy’ of ‘national treasures’ with the West by the Taiwanese government was resumed.

128 Wu, “China in Display: The Case Study of the 1961 Chinese Ancient Art Exhibition in the USA (展覽中的中國：以1961年中國古藝術品赴美展覽為例).”

129 Chen, “Exhibitions of the National Palace Museum 1925-2001 (國立故宮博物院的展覽動向).”

4.3.2 The PROC's Soft Diplomacy during the Cold War

Similarly, the 'important collections' of arts and culture were used by the PROC to advance public diplomacy with the 'allies' in Southeast Asia and the East Europe, as well as with the 'enemies' such as Japan and the United States. At first, these 'important collections' were those conventional ones of high art and high culture—such as a total of 399 prestigious artworks which, after showing at the Palace Museum in Beijing in 1950, were sent to participate the *Chinese Art Exhibition* in Russia¹³⁰. Soon with the PROC's 'cultural Cold War'¹³¹ the connotation of 'important collections' was replaced by folklore and peasant culture because according to the 'dialectical materialistic and historical materialism' the 'objects that are in feudalistic or colonialist nature without historic, scientific or artistic value' should be discarded¹³². This was seen in 1951 in the exhibitions of the Palace Museum (*Comparing the Life of Emperor and Peasants*¹³³, *Historic Documents of Revolutions in the Qing Dynasty*¹³⁴ and *History of Imperialist Invasion in China*¹³⁵) and History Museum (*History of Social Development in China*¹³⁶). In light of such political ideology, Dunhuang became the best candidate as a cultural diplomat of PROC.

4.3.2.1 International Dunhuang Exhibition in the 1950s

In 1951, the artist-reproduced paintings of Dunhuang grottos (as mentioned above) were sent to India and Burma for 'cultural exchange to increase mutual understandings and friendship'¹³⁷. A group of 30 scientists and experts were also sent with the exhibition, who had been well trained in Beijing for two months prior to departure. The Premier Zhou Enlai told Chang Shuhong that:

*With this expedition of the art of Dunhuang to India and Burma, you are going to not only 'show' the treasure but also 'learn' the lesson. You have to correctly deliver the message that freedom of religion is our policy after liberation. Your mission will not be any less than the one of the venerated monk of Tang dynasty, Xuan Zang*¹³⁸.

130 *Catalogue of Chinese Art Exhibition in Russia* (參加蘇聯中國藝術展覽會古代藝術品目錄).

131 Zhai, *Crisis and Conflict in the Era of Cold War: The Reaction of China* (冷戰年代的危機和衝突:中國的反應).

132 Wang, *The Basis of Chinese Museology* (中國博物館學基礎). Page 116.

133 Original in Chinese as '皇帝農民生活對比'.

134 Original in Chinese as '清代革命史料'.

135 Original in Chinese as '帝國主義侵華史料'.

136 Original in Chinese as '中國社會發展史'.

137 Chang, *Fifty Years of Guarding Dunhuang: Memoire of Chang Shuhong* (守護敦煌五十年:常書鴻自述).

138 Original in Chinese as '你这次带着敦煌艺术去印度、缅甸访问,既要献'宝'也要取'经',要正确宣传我们解放后的信仰自由的政策。看来你的任务不会比唐代高僧玄奘西游轻多少呀'.

This 'expedition' lasted three months from October 1951 to January 1952 with exhibitions and public seminars held in New Delhi, Mumbai and Mandalay. Chang Shuhong¹³⁹ reported what the chair of the Bureau of Archaeology in India told him:

It is enviable that you still have more than 400 grottos in Dunhuang and they are well preserved, the frescos are in perfect shape and the colours of statues are still vivid. As to ours, though the Ajanta Caves are world renowned, there are only 29 grottos left and their frescos are all fragmented. Under the British crown, in the name of preservation they covered these already broken mural paintings with Varnish (a transparent finish). With time, they all became in a colour of dark brown. He continued with an anguish: 'this tells that India being a colonized country, when everything was controlled by foreigners we couldn't even protect our national treasure'¹⁴⁰.

According to Chang Shuhong, this conversation ended up with the Indian chair admiring how the preservation of Dunhuang has been well developed under the rule of Mao:

In the long history of feudalism splendid culture was created in the ancient times. To develop a new national culture and to increase our national confidence, it is absolutely necessary to analyse the ancient culture in a critical manner so to keep the democratic element and rid off the feudalist trash. [...] This should be the right way to study the artefacts of cultural heritage and to use them constructively in creating a new culture after the past one'¹⁴¹.

This diplomatic mission of Dunhuang exhibitions was a breakthrough of the PROC's international relations towards the non-communist countries. In 1950, India became the first country outside the Iron Curtain to build diplomatic ties with China. After this high-level cultural exchange, in 1954, the leaders of both countries paid visits to each other and jointly declared the Panchsheel Treaty (Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence). However such amical relationship was broken in 1959 when India supported the Tibetan Uprising (1959-1962). After the

139 Chang, *Fifty Years of Guarding Dunhuang: Memoire of Chang Shuhong* (守護敦煌五十年：常書鴻自述). See Chapter 7.1.

140 Original in Chinese as '你们至今还完好地在敦煌保存着自4世纪到14世纪的四百多个洞窟，完美的壁画、彩色塑像，他们的色彩还是如此鲜明、完整，真是令人羡慕。至于我们，虽然有阿旃陀那样世界闻名的佛教艺术宝库，但却只有29个洞窟，保留了一些残破的壁画。就是这些残存的壁画，在英国人统治时期，以保护为名，把大多数的壁画都涂上了凡纳西（一种普通清漆），逐年变色，至今一部分壁画变成深褐色了。'说到这里，他摊开双手，露出了十分感伤的表情，愤慨地说：“这说明我们印度过去受人摆布，样样都听外国人的话，连自己的国宝都保存不好！”

141 Original in Chinese as '中国长期封建社会中，创造了灿烂的古代文化。清理古代文化发展过程，剔除其封建性的糟粕，吸收其民主性的精华，是发展民族新文化，提高民族自信心的必要条件，但是决不能无批判地兼收并蓄...使古代文物在承前继后、创造新文化的工作中起到积极的建设作用'。

guerrilla war was controlled by the Chinese government, the 14th Dalai Lama went into exile in India until this date.

In addition, similar cultural diplomacy of Dunhuang objects was employed with East European countries, such as Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1957¹⁴², and furthermore to Japan in 1958 with the contract signed in 1955¹⁴³. The show included a total of 326 artefacts from the Research Institute of Dunhuang Artefact (the name was used from 1951 to 1984) with 24 photographs of the grottos, eight tomb-bricks covered with paintings dated in the Han dynasty, 56 Buddhist states, 237 reproduced mural paintings on papers and the real-size model of the grotto number 285. The exhibition was toured to Tokyo and Kyoto with a total of 100,000 visitors and 30,000 copies of the catalogue being sold. A special issue of *Buddhist Art* was published dedicated to the theme of Dunhuang with nine research articles included, including one written by Akira Fujieda, the leading figure of Dunhuangology at the time¹⁴⁴.

4.3.2.2 *Alternative 'National Treasure' for Public Diplomacy*

During the Cold War, the soft diplomacy of PROC has played an important role in 'normalizing' its foreign relations with the West. A clear example, as discussed above, was Sino-Japanese relations¹⁴⁵. In the 1950s, after the Peace Treaty of San Francisco (where both the ROC and PROC were excluded), non-official events of cultural exchange under the lead of the Premier Zhou Enlai became the main way of maintaining public diplomacy with Japan¹⁴⁶. As stated, because high art and culture was regarded unfit to represent Chinese culture, items used in such soft diplomacy became extended to include alternative choices and Dunhuang objects were found to be ideal. The 52 cultural expeditions sent by China and 257 cultural groups received from Japan in the fields of education, sports and religion were effective in maintaining a certain level of bilateral communication.

By 1949, the 'Japanese-China trading association' had been established in Japan to proceed a series of cultural exchange programs. In 1950, a touring exhibition of photography about the new China was held in Japan and a project of literary translation was launched. In 1952, for the first time, a high official of the Japanese government visited China privately, and in 1954 the Chinese Red Cross visited Japan. In 1955 a Japanese academic group visited China and the Chinese Academy of Sciences visited Japan. At the same year the Japanese ballet *White Hair Girl*¹⁴⁷, a remake from the Chinese movie of the same title, was performed in Tokyo and received a grand success, and in 1958 it toured China

142 "Protecting Dunhuang Grottos (保護敦煌石窟)."

143 Chang, *Fifty Years of Guarding Dunhuang: Memoire of Chang Shuhong* (守護敦煌五十年: 常書鴻自述). pp 174-198.

144 Akira, "A Scene of Vimalakirti (維摩變の一場面)."

145 Tian, "Cultural Diplomacy to Normalize Sino-Japanese Relationship (文化外交對中日邦交正常化的作用)."

146 Tian.

147 Original in Chinese as '白毛女'. The ballet by the Matsuyama Ballet, founded in 1948 in Tokyo, was made from a Chinese movie of the same title of which a copy was given in 1952 to the visitors from Japan of high officials.

for two months and thereby became an important cultural 'brand'. Another known example of using performing art for cultural diplomacy was the visit of a Kabuki dance troop to China in 1955 and the visit of Mei Lanfang's¹⁴⁸ (1894-1961) Chinese opera to Japan in 1956. At the end of the 1950s, all private trading and cultural exchanges between the two countries were abruptly stopped because of the Flag Event of Nagasaki¹⁴⁹. To break the ice, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai¹⁵⁰ and Vice-Premier Chen Yi¹⁵¹ proposed to the Japanese Senator Matsumura Kenzo (1883-1971) during his visit to China in 1959 to launch a series of cultural exchange programs claiming that the 'Go game, ping pong, calligraphy or orchid flower can all become the subjects of exchange, we only talk about friendship but not politics'¹⁵². Thereby in 1962, the first Chinese Go game team was sent to Japan with a personal message of the Chinese Premier brought to the Senator Matsumura: 'welcome to visit China and to suggest about how to improve the Sino-Japanese relations and develop long-term trading programs'. In 1963, Matsumura invited China to send a cultural expedition of 'orchid flower' to Japan together with a secret mission to visit the high-level officials of the Japanese government in private, for further negotiation of trade agreements regarding industrial equipment for nylon production. In 1964, a total of 29 professional Japanese players of Go game launched a petition, which collected 30,000,000 signatures, to appeal for the 'normalization' of Sino-Japanese relations. In the same year, 'ping pong' became another cultural theme for the governmental communication with Japan, and in 1971 it was used again, this time with the United States.

The development of Sino-Japanese relations described above reflects China's increasing distance from the USSR and increasing proximity with the United States at the end of the Cold War. In 1968, Russia extended the military bastion against the Xinjian Province with 25 divisions, 1200 aircrafts and 200 missiles while establishing an agreement with Mongolia to install military bases in the southern borderland of the latter and sending a messenger to Taiwan proposing to jointly invade the mainland. In 1969, the Sino-Soviet border conflict occurred in Zhengao Island (on the border between the Primorsky Krai of Russian and the Heilongjiang Province of China) as well as in Tielieketi (a city adjacent to the Chinese border with Kazakhstan) though the proposal to provide weaponry for Taiwanese troops was rejected by the Taiwanese government¹⁵³. In 1972, the

148 Original in Chinese as '梅蘭芳'.

149 In 1958, the Embassy of ROC protested the presence of the PRC in an exhibition of postal stamps in Nagasaki and a Japanese right wing group member demolished the PRC's national flag. Considering that the PRC was not recognized by Japan the assailant only obtained a fine of 500 Japanese yen.

150 Zhai, "Zhou Enlai and Matsumura Kenzo's Five Visits to China (周恩來和松村謙三的五次訪華)."

151 Original in Chinese as '陳毅'.

152 Tian, "Cultural Diplomacy to Normalize Sino-Japanese Relationship (文化外交對中日邦交正常化的作用)."

153 Dai, "Soviet Union Proposed to Help Taiwan Regain the Mainland China (蘇聯提議助台灣反攻大陸)."

US President Richard Nixon visited China to gain more leverage over China's relations with the Soviet Union, thus ending the 25 years of non-communication with China. After the Vietnam War, China allied with the West and supported Cambodia. In 1978, China continued to back the United States against the Russian invasion in Afghanistan. Coming into the 1980s, after Deng Xiaoping's opening-up policy and the Soviet Union's military retreat from the Sino-Soviet and the Sino-Mongolian borders as well as from Afghanistan and Cambodia, Sino-American relations became largely improved until the Tiananmen Square protest occurred in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union afterwards.

4.3.3 Post-conflict Heritage Diplomacy between the West and China

It was under the circumstances of geopolitics that the 'heritage diplomacy' of UNESCO-UN reached out through the Silk Roads to Dunhuang in the 1980s, and China's cultural policy, branded with the 'art of Dunhuang', started to engage with Taiwan and Hong Kong in the 1990s. Meanwhile, Taiwan resumed its own cultural diplomacy to obtain diplomatic support from the West, while the exhibition economy of cultural industry, based on the 'special exhibitions of important collections' from major museums of the West, started to boom on the island. After the turn of the last millennium, China became the second biggest world economy, and the national (universal) museums of the West started to employ museum diplomacy to facilitate negotiations for major projects of investment. With the Belt and Road Initiative, Dunhuang again became the best candidate to play the role of cultural diplomat to enact the sharp power of China.

4.3.3.1 *Silk Roads to Approach China and Dunhuang to Connect Taiwan*

Since the post-War era and during the long years of Cold War, the intergovernmental or international platform of heritage enterprise ICOM-UNESCO-UN was established. This originally Eurocentric platform of soft powers became globalised with the divided world being reconnected, and for which it has continued to play a contributing role. In 1982 the Chinese Museums Association¹⁵⁴ of the PROC was re-established in Beijing, and in 1983 it replaced the original one of the ROC (re-established in Taipei in 1964) as the national member of ICOM-UNESCO. In 1984, an UNESCO office was established in Beijing to increase the exchange of science and technology between the West and China¹⁵⁵. It was also to implement UNESCO's programs in the cultural sphere and to work in close collaboration with the Chinese government through its affiliated international heritage preservation and management agencies. As a matter of fact, in the 1970s the UNESCO started to promote intensive training of diplomats for 'international cultural cooperation'¹⁵⁶ and, as mentioned in Chapter 3.3.3, a 'heritage

154 Chinese Museum Association, "80 Years of Chinese Museums Association (八十年的跨越: 中國博物館協會回眸)." The original Chinese Museums Association was founded in 1935 and stopped functioning since 1949 due to the Civil War.

155 Du, "UNESCO Support for Cultural Conservation in China."

156 Köchler, *Cultural Self-Comprehension of Nations*.

diplomacy' was formed together with those international heritage protection charters, conventions and laws¹⁵⁷. In return to China's acknowledging, recognizing or ratifying these legal instruments, UNESCO provided various programs of heritage preservation with financial aid and expert knowledge. In 1987, the Mogao Grottos of Dunhuang entered the World Heritage List¹⁵⁸, and in 1988 the UNESCO launched the Silk Road Project (1988-1997)¹⁵⁹ to 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance, reconciliation and peace through dialogue'¹⁶⁰ as declared in the UNESCO Mandate. The results of this Project of 'heritage diplomacy' were presented in exhibitions in Paris, such as the *In Search of Sinbad: the Maritime Silk Routes* at the Musée National de la Marine in 1994 and the *Sérinde, Terre de Buddha: Dix siècles d'art sur la Route de la Soie* at the Grande Palais in 1995. Although withdrawing from UNESCO, the United States' Getty Research Institute was included by this Project and, starting in 1988, it launched a project to collaborate with the Dunhuang Academy by sponsoring and participating the work of restoration and preservation in the Mogao Grottos¹⁶¹. So did Japan with the Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage from Tokyo¹⁶².

Dunhuang, being polished by advanced conservation and exhibition techniques provided by Western heritage preservation and management agencies, became the main theme for China to culturally reconnect with Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1990s. Prior to such an operation, China's main concern was the return of Hong Kong and Macau. The former was officially finalised in 1984 when the *Joint Declaration of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Question of Hong Kong* was signed in Beijing; and for the latter, a similar declaration was signed with Portugal in 1987. In the same year the ROC in Taiwan declared the lifting of martial law (which was in practice since 1949) and started to communicate with the PROC. After the Tiananmen Square protest of 1989, in 1992 the *Exhibition of Chinese Ancient Art and Technology from Dunhuang* co-organized by the Chinese Association of Science and the Dunhuang Academy was displayed in Taipei and Kaohsiung. And in 1995, the *Heavens' Embroidered Cloths: One Thousand Years of Chinese Textiles* from Dunhuang was exhibited in Hong Kong. In 1996, the *Pearl In the Desert: Dunhuang Caves* was shown in the National Museum of Natural History and Science in Taichung, and in 1999 the *Illustration of Buddhist Cannons* from Dunhuang was exhibited again in the National Palace Museum in Taipei.

157 Winter, "Heritage Diplomacy."

158 "Mogao Caves."

159 UNESCO, "Projet 'Les Routes de La Soie': Étude Intégrale Des Routes de La Soie: Routes de Dialogue, 1988-1997."

160 Sharpley and Telfer, *Tourism and Development: Concept and Issues*. Page 414.

161 Lin, "Destroying Dunhuang Speaks up after Becoming World Heritage Site (敦煌莫高窟申遺成功後破壞加速霉變腐蝕嚴重)."

162 "The Fifth Phase of Japan-China Joint Study for Protection of the Dunhuang Murals (敦煌壁畫の保護に関する日中共同研究第5期事業)."

As such, Dunhuang became a popular exhibition theme worldwide. Like shown below in Figure 4.13, during the 1990s and 2000s about 40 special exhibitions of Dunhuang were displayed first in the ‘free China’ and then in Europe, Japan and countries like Thailand and Turkey.

4.3.3.2 Taiwan’s ‘National Treasures’ Travelled to the West Again

While ‘cultural exchange’ increased rapidly and the Taiwanese investments in China have grown exponentially, tensions around the Taiwan Strait rose as well. With the economic boom which transformed China into a rising world power, the diplomatic relations of Taiwan with other countries have dwindled. Under such circumstances, those ‘national treasures’ kept by the National Palace Museum in Taipei were again assigned with diplomatic missions to solicit political backings from the West and Japan against China. The first expedition took place when the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis broke out in 1995¹⁶³ and the exhibition entitled *Splendours of Imperial China* was toured to New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Washington from 1996 to 1997¹⁶⁴. In the following years the ROC also sent the *Trésors du Musée National du Palais* to Paris the Galerie nationale du Grand Palais in 1998¹⁶⁵ and to Berlin the Alte Museum in 2003¹⁶⁶, the *Taoism and the Arts of China* to Chicago and San Francisco in 2000 and 2001, the *Genghis Khan and His Heir* to Bonn and Munich in 2005 and 2006¹⁶⁷, the *Les très riches heures de la cour de Chine: chef-d’oeuvres de la peinture impériale des Qing 1662-1796* to Paris in 2006¹⁶⁸, the *Collections of National Palace Museum* to Vienna in 2008¹⁶⁹ and the *Treasures of the National Palace Museum* to Tokyo and Fukuoka¹⁷⁰ in 2013.

However, compared with the international exhibitions of Chinese art with Britain, USSR and the United States as discussed above, these contemporary endeavours of museum diplomacy were of little avail to improve the international relations and politics of Taiwanese government. In Taiwan, the leading status of Nationalist Party in government was replaced by the Democratic Progressive Party¹⁷¹, which tends to deny the legitimacy of ROC by playing an identity

163 Risen, “U.S. Warns China on Taiwan, Sends Warships to Area.”

164 “Splendours of Imperial China: Treasures from the National Palace Museum, Taipei.”

165 *Trésors Du Musée National Du Palais, Taipei*.

166 “German Media Said the ‘treasures of Emperor’ Are Looted (德國媒體媚中，稱「天子之寶」為掠奪品)”；Yang, “Taiwanese First Lady Visits Germany, Italy and Vatican (台總統夫人歐洲行訪德意梵).” This exhibition was sent by the government led by the Democratic Party of Taiwan and was compared with the 1935 London exhibition (as described in Chapter 4.3.1.1) and the First Lady of the ROC has attended the opening ceremony in Berlin.

167 “Genghis Khan and His Heirs - The Empire of the Mongols.”

168 Rey and Giès, *Les Très Riches Heures de La Cour de Chine: Chef-d’oeuvres de La Peinture Impériale Des Qing, 1662-1796*.

169 “Chronology (2001-2011).”

170 “Treasures of Natinoal Palace Museum Displayed in Toykio and Fukuoka (国立故宫博物院「神品至宝」展が来年東京と福岡で開催).”

171 In 2000 (until 2008) the Party for the first time became the ruling party of Taiwan, and in 2016 for the second time.

Time	Special Exhibition on the Theme of Dunhuang	Location
1991	Mogao Grottos: An exhibition of Buddhist cave painting from China	New Delhi Matighar IGNCIA India
1992	中國敦煌古代科學技術展	台灣(台北、高雄)
	Le Bouddhisme	Paris Musée Guimet
1994	In Search of Sinbad: the Maritime Silk Routes	法國巴黎Musée National de la Marine (UNESCO Silk Roads Project 展覽)
1995	Sérinde, Terre de Buddha: Dix siècles d'art sur la Route de la Soie	法國巴黎大皇宮 (UNESCO Silk Roads Project 展覽)
	敦煌藝術展	香港中國文物展覽館
1996	沙漠中的美術館:永恆的敦煌	日本(東京、福岡、神戶)
	敦煌藝術攝影站	日本梶尾市美術館
	敦煌展	北京中國歷史博物館
	沙漠中的明珠:敦煌石窟	台灣台中科博館
1997	敦煌藝術展	日本長崎、大分
	Masterpieces from Dunhuang	Beijing History Museum
1998	Les Maitres de L'encre	Paris BNF
	The Lotus Sutra and its world: Buddhist manuscripts of the Great Silk Roads	Tokyo Japan Soka Gakkai Josei Toda International Centre
1999	中國文化週莫高窟275窟元大複製洞窟展	法國巴黎UNESCO總部
	沙漠中的明珠敦煌石窟特展	台灣台中科博館
	CG Mannerheim in Central Asia 1906-1908	Helsinki
	Illustration of Buddhist Canons	Taipei National Palace Museum
	Visible traces: rare books and special collections from the National Library of China	New York Queens Borough Public Library
2000	敦煌藝術大展:紀念敦煌藏經洞發現既敦煌學一百週年	北京中國歷史博物館
	中國文化美國行莫高窟275窟原大複製洞窟參展	美國紐約
	The Lotus Sutra and its world: Buddhist manuscripts of the Great Silk Roads	Hwolfenbuttel Germany Herzog-August Bibliothek
	The Lotus Sutra and its world: Buddhist manuscripts of the Great Silk Roads	Wien Austria Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek
2001	敦煌2001廣東特展	廣州廣東美術館
	敦煌藝術展	上海徐匯區龍華旅遊城
	敦煌美術展	日本山陽新聞社
2003	世界遺產在中國:敦煌展	北京國家博物館
	敦煌展	中國革命博物館
2004	絲綢之路展	英國圖書館
	中法文化年項目:中國敦煌藝術展(敦煌佛教藝術與絲綢之路:遺產保護)	法國尼斯市亞洲藝術館
2005	荒漠傳奇璀璨再現:敦煌藝術大展	台北市歷史博物館、高雄市立美術館
	中國敦煌藝術展	泰國曼谷國家博物館
2008	盛世和光:敦煌藝術大展	北京中國美術館
	絲路放歌情繫奧運 2008天津敦煌大展	天津
2010	莫高窟北區發現的敘利亞亞文聖經赴比利時展出	比利時
	敦煌韻絲路情:敦煌藝術展	上海世博會紀念館
2011	博蘊華光敦煌藝術展	關山月美術館
	敦煌韻絲路情 敦煌藝術展	
2012	印象敦煌:中國文化大展	土耳其

FIGURE 4.13 List of Selected Special Exhibition of Dunhuang 1991-2012

politics under the excuse of seeking worldwide recognized independency. Such an intricate situation was highlighted with a local media in Germany while greeting the First Lady of Taiwan (attending the vernissage of the said exhibition in 2005 in Berlin) by saying that those ‘national treasures’ were looted to Taiwan¹⁷². In 2014, Japan specifically established a law forbidding the confiscation of any objects of international exhibition loaned from overseas, and so the collections from Taipei could be toured to Tokyo and Fukuoka without concerns¹⁷³. Nonetheless, on the exhibition poster the word ‘national’ was purposefully omitted while denoting the National Palace Museum, in order to avoid a possible protest from China¹⁷⁴. All these are indications that owning cultural heritage is a matter of political legitimacy and Taiwan has seemed to lose its status as the original heir of Chinese culture to China.

4.3.3.3 *Universal Museums’ Diplomacy with China¹⁷⁵ and Business with Taiwan*

As mentioned earlier, with China growing into a new world power in the 21st century, the previous cultural diplomacy of ping pong or Go game has evolved into a demonstration of ‘soft power’ through museum exhibition and especially via the language instruction network of the Confucius Institute¹⁷⁶. This, together with the promotion of China Dream, was regarded by the West as a performance of soft diplomacy with ‘sharp power’¹⁷⁷. As a matter of fact, the West like the United States and especially those former colonial powers have been doing so ever since the post-War era¹⁷⁸. For example, France with its Alliance française and Germany the Goethe Institute. The cultural diplomat training provided by UNESCO since the 1970s was intended to reach out to countries behind the Iron Curtain¹⁷⁹ with the purpose of conveying the universal norms such as democracy and human (cultural) rights. However, at the turn of the last millennium, such heritage diplomacy of the West has been replaced by a ‘museum diplomacy’ of those universal museums towards Asia and Africa for major interests of political economy, important trade agreements or direct foreign investment. The former ideological and political agenda behind such soft diplomacy was replaced by financial and economic gains in this age of globalised neoliberalism.

172 “German Media Said the ‘treasures of Emperor’ Are Looted (德國媒體媚中，稱「天子之寶」為掠奪品).”

173 “Treasures of Natioanal Palace Museum Displayed in Toykio and Fukuoka (国立故宮博物院「神品至宝」展が来年東京と福岡で開催).”

174 Lin, “Taipei Palace Museum to Call off Exhibitions in Japan Due to Question of Poster (台北故宮因海報問題威脅日本撤展).”

175 Part of this section was included in the article published by the author. See Wang, “Museum Diplomacy: Exploring the Sino-German Museum Forum and Beyond.”

176 “Worldwide Confucius Institutes”; Palit, “China’s Cultural Diplomacy: Historical Origin, Modern Methods and Strategic Outcomes.”

177 Nye, “China Turns Soft Power into a Sharp Tool.”

178 Maack, “Books and Libraries as Instruments of Cultural Diplomacy in Francophone Africa during the Cold War”; Blanchard et al., *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution*.

179 Köchler, *Cultural Self-Comprehension of Nations*.

This new trend was pioneered by France, the world leading country in international cultural politics since the late 19th century. In 2000, a contract to organise the so-called ‘cultural year’ was signed by the Chinese Premier and the French President for a series of cultural exchange programmes including museum exhibitions and performances. This agreement was interpreted by China as meaning ‘both countries favoured multiculturalism against the world domination of United States’¹⁸⁰. Nevertheless, behind such friendly and prosperous scenery of cultural exchange, a series of important deals were concluded regarding aircraft, TGV, nuclear energy and weaponry¹⁸¹ signifying that France became China’s most important trading partner in the EU¹⁸². Very soon, this model was learnt by other Western countries, shown by the way that *Chinese Culture Year* was held in Russia and Italy in 2006, in Spain in 2007, in Australia and Germany in 2011 and in Britain in 2014¹⁸³. The last country of this list, Britain, was absolutely not the last in such an endeavour. On the contrary, Britain was practicing a bolder strategy with a ‘(universal) museum diplomacy’ with China. In substantiating the 2002 *Declaration* (as discussed in Chapter 3.3.1.1) the Director of the British Museum (BM), Neil MacGregor, in addition to initiating a new education programme (*A History of the World in 100 Objects*) to make BM a ‘museum of the world and for the world’¹⁸⁴, has unprecedentedly toured the ‘important collections’ of the world outside the museum walls. In 2004, for the first time in more than 250 years of BM’s existence, the prestigious collections were let out of this oldest national museum in the world and toured in Asia. In 2006, a total of 272 exquisite artefacts arrived in Beijing and Shanghai for the exhibitions *Treasures of the World’s Cultures* and *Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum*¹⁸⁵. For that the exhibition contract was signed earlier in 2005, in Beijing, by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair in the company of Neil MacGregor. Following such amicable cultural relations, achieved or performed by BM’s ‘(universal) museum diplomacy’, the total of Chinese foreign direct investment in Britain has grown from 35 million USD in 2006 to over 500 million USD in 2007¹⁸⁶. Similar tactics were learnt by Germany. In 2011, the exhibition *The Art of the Enlightenment* toured Beijing with the important collections gathered from Berlin, Dresden and Munich. Although the contract was signed already in 2005 in the presence of the Chinese Premier and the German Chancellor at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, this high-level cultural exchange program was called off by China in protest of Merkel receiving the Dalai Lama in Berlin in 2007. It had wait to until

180 Liang, “中法關係起起伏伏四十年.”

181 “Sino-French Economic Collaboration.”

182 Soon, this model of employing cultural exchange to facilitate international relations agenda in pursuing political economy with China, was learnt by many other Western countries as we saw the ‘Chinese culture year’ happened again with Russia and Italy in 2006, Spain in 2007 (Wu 2005), Australia and Germany in 2011, and UK in 2014.

183 Donaldson and Elliot, “A Golden Future for China and the UK?”

184 Boyd and MacGregor, “Museum of the World for the World: London, United Kingdom and beyond. *British Museum Review*. April 2004-March 2006.”

185 IACASS, “Major Collaborations between Top Museums in China and UK.”

186 Burghart and Rossi, “China’s Overseas Direct Investment in the UK.”

2009 the exhibition plan was resumed by Merkel and Wen and a new contract was signed at the German Chancellery in Berlin.

It is worth noticing that simultaneously on the other side of the Taiwan Strait, the ‘important collections’ of universal museums were also loaned for special exhibitions. However, the nature of these ‘cultural exchange programs’ were merely commercial, private and non-diplomatic in small scale with an extraordinarily high ‘lending fee’. Such a cultural enterprise of ‘special exhibitions’ based on important art collections from the West was initiated in 1993 by the *Special Exhibition of Monet and the Impressionism* held at the National Palace Museum. The Exhibition comprised 66 impressionist oil paintings from France with a total cost of more than four billions NTD (including loaning fee, transportation and insurance)¹⁸⁷, which was covered mainly by the private sponsor-investor—one of the two biggest media companies in Taiwan, the China Times Newspaper Group¹⁸⁸. The return of investment turned out to be profitable because the relevant products of creative industry were well-received by the local public in addition to the expensive price of entrance ticket. The China Times later on established an independent business unit¹⁸⁹ in particular to run this kind of high-end art exhibition business. Such a business model has attracted many followers and since then the ‘important collections’ from the major museums of the West started to come to Taiwan one after another¹⁹⁰ with the public museums involved as collaborators¹⁹¹.

4.3.3.4 *Dunhuang on the Belt and Road Initiative of Sharp Power*

As mentioned earlier, the theme of Dunhuang has become indispensable geographically and symbolically as a cultural diplomat for the BRI—a historic concept and a direct translation of the ‘inland and maritime silk roads’ used in China. As a matter of fact, it was not China but the West (UNESCO) which has reinvented this term (as seen in Chapter 4.3.3.1) during the later period of the

187 Chen, “Visitor Studies and Analysis on the Monnet Exhibition of the Palace Museum (故宮莫內展的觀眾調查與分析).”

188 Original in Chinese as ‘中國時報集團’, it has become the Want Want China Newspaper Group since 2009.

189 The original name in Chinese for this branch is ‘時藝多媒體傳播股份有限公司’ (Media Sphere Communications, Ltd) and it was established in 1998 specifically for such high-end art exhibition curating, marketing and management business.

190 For example, in 1995 the ‘special exhibition of oil painting masterpieces from Louvre’ was held in the National Palace Museum, in 1997 the ‘golden impression: masterpieces of Musée d’Orsay’ was held in the National History Museum, in 1998 the ‘world exhibition of Picasso’ was held in the National Palace Museum, in 1999 the ‘important collections of Musée de l’Orangerie’ was held in the Modern Art Museum of Taipei, in 2000 the ‘special exhibition of Dali’ was held in the National Palace Museum, in 2001 the *De Poussin À Cézanne: 300 Ans de Peinture Française* was held in the National Palace Museum, and at the same year the ‘important collections of Mesopotamia from Louvre’ was held in the National History Museum, etc.

191 Liu, “我國公立博物館委外特展營運管理機制之探討以國立故宮博物院為例 (Management of Special Exhibitions Commissioned by Public Museums: Case Study of the National Palace Museum).”

Time	Special Exhibit on the Theme of Dunhuang	Location
2013	絲路梵音 龜茲 敦煌石窟壁畫	敦煌研究院老美術館
	煌煌大觀 敦煌藝術展	浙江美術館
	香港書展「人間淨土走進敦煌莫高窟3D特展」	香港書展
	垂衣裳：敦煌服飾文化展	北京服裝學院
	絲路佛光：敦煌的佛教藝術	紐約曼哈頓華美協進社
	中歐城市博覽會	北京
2014	敦煌與現代生活之奇思妙想海報設計比賽	香港文化博物館
	敦煌：說不完的故事	香港
	莫高窟文化展	香港文化博物館
	絲路梵相：新疆和田達馬溝佛教遺址出土壁畫藝術展	上海博物館
	原真記憶：浙大敦煌合作成果展	浙江大學
	絲綢之路文物展	北京國家博物館
	高校巡展	天津美院
	絲路拾珍：中國敦煌文化藝術展	蒙古烏蘭巴托
	絲綢之路上的記憶：中國甘肅省與日本秋田縣締結友好關係30週年紀念文化交流展	日本秋田美術館
2015	看不完、講不盡的敦煌	香港文化博物館
	古塞奇珍甘肅古代簡牘暨漢簡書法展	北京中華世紀壇
	花開敦煌常沙娜藝術研究與應用展	台北
	學藝融通饒宗頤百歲藝術展	北京國家博物館
	敦煌：生靈的歌 Dunhuang: Song of Living Beings	上海喜馬拉雅美術館
	大夢敦煌張大千臨摹敦煌壁畫作品展	旅順博物館
	莫高窟六字真言	焦山
2016	敦煌莫高窟：中國絲綢之路上的佛教藝術 Cave temples of Dunhuang: Buddhist Art on China's Silk Road	Getty Museum
	Ways of Knowing and Recreating Dunhuang	Princeton University Museum
	絲綢之路敦煌國際文化博覽會	Dunhuang
	敦煌壁畫藝術精品高校巡展	天津城建大學
	敦煌卷子珍品	上海
	朝聖之路聖蹟從敦煌到利比亞半島	北京塞萬提斯學院
	高校巡展	武漢大學
	絲路之魂敦煌藝術大展暨天府之國與絲綢之路文物特展	成都博物館
2017	敦煌絲綢之路上的東西文化交融	布萊頓大學
	絲路秘寶阿富汗國家博物館珍品	北京故宮、敦煌
	一帶一路文化藝術交流合作國際學術研討會	敦煌
	敦煌風華再現 Dunhuang sojourns of the caves	台中科博館
	神秘敦煌	廣東深圳
	百年名校相約千年敦煌：敦煌壁畫藝術精品	東南大學
	如是敦煌	台北
	跨越千年的相遇：絲路之魂	

FIGURE 4.14 List of Selected Special Exhibition of Dunhuang 2013-2017

Cold War (1947-1991), ‘reconnecting with the Far East, Central Asia, the Indian sub-continent, Iranian and Anatolian plateaus, the Caucasus, the Arabian peninsula and the Mediterranean region and Europe’ embodied by the aforementioned Silk Road Project (1988-1997)¹⁹². In a similar way, like said, the Dunhuang heritage was used by China to reach out to Taiwan and Hong Kong since the 1990s, and now, with the new foreign policy for the China Dream of the 21st century, it was applied again to reach out to the world in picturing the ‘peaceful rising’ of China with the ‘socialism of Chinese characteristics,’ as restated in the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China¹⁹³.

With economic success, in addition to enjoying a prosperous art market and museum boom, China started to be active as well in the international forums of arts and culture as seen in the fact that China became the first-time host of important cultural events of long European traditions¹⁹⁴. Dunhuang was not absent from this trend. As stated, since the turn of the last millennium and especially with the promotion of BRI, Dunhuang exhibitions were held on these important occasions in China and abroad. For example, in 2000 a grand exhibition of Dunhuang was held in Beijing to celebrate the centenary of Dunhuang¹⁹⁵. In 2001, the Dunhuang objects (including archaeological artefacts, artistically reproduced mural paintings and simulated grottos) were displayed in Guangzhou, Shanghai and toured Japan. In 2003, the objects were shown in Beijing at the National Museum of China and the National Museum of Revolution. In 2004, as part of the Chinese Culture Year in France they were displayed in Nice at the Asian Arts Museum. In 2005, they went to Taiwan and Bangkok. In 2008, they were displayed in Beijing for the Olympic Games. In 2010, the ancient bible written in Syriac found in Dunhuang was shown in Belgium. And in 2011, the objects were presented in Shanghai as a following event of the 2010 Shanghai Expo.

In 2013, when the BRI was proclaimed by Xi Jinping¹⁹⁶, the China Institute¹⁹⁷ in New York —an institute founded in 1926 by Hu Shi and John Dewey (1859-1952) located at the Manhattan island with an aim to advance a deeper understanding of China through programs in education, culture, art and business—

192 ‘Reviving the Historic Silk Roads: UNESCO’s new Online Platform’, UNESCO.

193 Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era: Delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.”

194 For example, the Olympic Games (the modern version of which started in Athens in 1896) were held in Beijing in 2008, with the Games’ 4th Cultural Festival also held in Beijing in 2006. The World Exposition (which began in London in 1851) took place in Shanghai in 2010, together with the triennial General Conference of the International Committee of Museums (ICOM) (which began in Paris in 1948). And the CIHA quadrennial Congress (which began in Brussels in 1930) was organised in Beijing in 2016.

195 Counted from the time when the Chinese Taoist monk Wang Yuanlu discovered the ‘medieval encyclopedia of Central Asia’ at the Mogao Grottos in Dunhuang.

196 In 2013 September and October during the diplomatic visits of Xi Jinping to countries of Central Asia and Southeast Asia, the idea of collaborating in building the ‘connected economic areas along the Silk Roads’ and the ‘maritime silk road of the 21st century’ was proposed for the first time.

197 China Institute, “About Us since 1926.”

organized an exhibition titled *Dunhuang: Buddhist Art at the Gateway of the Silk Road*¹⁹⁸ to mark the ‘Dunhuang Year’. In Guangzhou at the China Europa Forum, where the declaration of *Sino-Europa Partnership on Urbanization*¹⁹⁹ was signed, an exhibition of Dunhuang was also presented. In 2014, China employed a heritage diplomacy to promote the BRI by taking the leading effort to register the Silk Roads into the World Heritage List together with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan²⁰⁰. A touring exhibition of Dunhuang murals was launched in the higher education institutes around China²⁰¹ and several special Dunhuang exhibitions were sent to Hong Kong at the Museum of Cultures, Shanghai at the Museum of Shanghai, and Beijing at the National Museum of China as well to Ulaanbaatar of Mongolia and to Japan²⁰². In 2016, the Getty Research Institute of the United States held the *Cave Temples of Dunhuang: Buddhist Art on China’s Silk Road*²⁰³, and at the same time in the *Seventh Chinese Museums and Relevant Products and Technologies Exposition*, held in Sichuan, an entire section was dedicated to the theme *National Museums along the Belt and Road—Treasures from the Silk Roads*, where a total of 63 exhibitions from 14 countries along the Silk Roads of Central Asia were presented. Here, the President of ICOM-UNESCO delivered a keynote speech, in which she said that ‘museums are places of reconciliation as much as they are of collecting or education’²⁰⁴. Further, the very first *International Cultural Exposition of the Silk Roads in Dunhuang* was organized during the same year, in 2016, and the President of the Dunhuang Academy said that the BRI has brought new opportunities for the cultural heritage of Dunhuang²⁰⁵.

*Dunhuang, located in the Gansu Province of China, was once upon a time the place where the four major world civilizations had met together. Following the projects of China’s Belt and Road Initiative, it has again become the place where the Chinese culture and the Western cultures meet. The Mogao Grottos resulted from international cultural exchanges in ancient times. The construction of BRI signifies a new opportunity for the development and promotion of Dunhuang. Commerce needs the support of culture. To the BRI Dunhuang is its cultural support, bridge and connection which will contribute to building platforms for dialogue*²⁰⁶.

198 “Past Exhibitions-2017-2010-China Institute.”

199 “2013 Sino-Europa Partnership on Urbanization (中歐城鎮化夥伴關係).”

200 Svensson and Maags, “Mapping the Chinese Heritage Regime Ruptures, Governmentality, and Agency Critical Heritage Studies and China.”

201 Such as Zhejiang University, Tianjin Academy of Art, Jilin Academy of Art, Wuhan University or Southeast University.

202 “Exhibition and Display.”

203 Agnew, Reed, and Ball, *Cave Temples Dunhuang Buddh. Art China’s Silk Road*.

204 ICOM, “Successful Mission to Chengdu for ICOM President.”

205 Zhao, “President of the Academy of Dunhuang: Belt and Road Brings New Opportunities for Dunhuang Culture (敦煌研究院院長：一帶一路給敦煌文化帶來新機遇).”

206 Original in Chinese as ‘曾為“世界四大文明匯流之地”的甘肅敦煌，隨著中國“一帶一路”戰略構想的逐步落實，再次成為中西方文化的交流融通之處。莫高窟是古代國際文化交流的結晶。“一帶一路”建設對敦煌文化的發展與傳承，是新的機遇。敦煌研究院院長王旭東指出，商業的背後必須要有文化的支撐。對於“一帶一路”建設，敦煌文化是支撐，是紐帶和橋梁，將搭建對話平台’。

As such, using Dunhuang to reach out to the neighbouring countries along the Belt and Road has continued. In 2017, the treasures of the Silk Roads from the National Museum of Afghanistan came to exhibit in Dunhuang and Beijing, and the *Belt and Road: International Conference on the Exchange of Arts and Culture* was held in Dunhuang for the very first time²⁰⁷. Besides, the international network of Confucius Institute—a sharp tool for the soft power of China²⁰⁸—started to promote BRI with Dunhuang exhibitions²⁰⁹. In fact, since 2013 (until 2017) the total number of temporary exhibitions on the theme of Dunhuang has surpassed the one of the previous two decades (1991-2012), which was equal to the one of the long period of time from the beginning of the 20th century until the end of Cold War. With the BRI continuing, Dunhuang will remain a protagonist of cultural diplomacy to (dis)play the sharp power of China for the China Dream of peaceful ascendancy in the new century.

Sub-Conclusion: The Diplomatic Lives of Dunhuang Collections

Right after the collections were created, the Dunhuang objects started their political lives both in the West and China. In the West, they were a jewel in the crown of colonial empire; in China, they were affected with nationalism as part of the process of building of a modern nation-state. Regarding Dunhuang (objects) as a 'contact zone'—where the 'rencontre' or the 'clash' of Western and Chinese cultures or civilisations took place—the phenomena of acculturation, deculturation or transculturation in the anthropological sense can be identified. For example, before this meeting point in Dunhuang, the heritage processes in the West and China, though sharing certain similarities, remained rather different due to each's unique social paradigm and cultural system, as seen in the scientific culture of the West and the cultural practice of Qing literati. The making of the Dunhuang collections after this meeting point can be understood as a sign for the transformation or modernisation or Westernisation of the Chinese heritage process. This makes the question 'who owns cultural heritage' more ambiguous though according to history it is a question that can only resort to hard power struggle. And this hard power in the post-conflict and neoliberal era is manifested in economics, which leads the research to the following Part III, which explores the economic and digital lives of the Dunhuang collections after the Cold War and in the Digital Age.

207 Wang, "2017 One Belt and Road: International Conference on the Cooperation of Arts and Culture (2017一帶一路文化藝術交流合作國際學術研討會在敦煌召開)."

208 Nye, "China Turns Soft Power into a Sharp Tool."

209 Wang and Xie, "First Digital Dunhuang Exhibition Presented in Briant University (全美首次數字敦煌展在布萊恩特大學隆重開幕)."

PART III.

ATOMS AND BITS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

5 Economics of Dunhuang Heritage

The money power preys upon the nation in times of peace and conspires against it in times of adversity. It is more despotic than a monarchy, more insolent than autocracy, and more selfish than bureaucracy. It denounces, as public enemies, all who question its methods or throw light upon its crimes.

—Abraham Lincoln, 1865

The concept and practice of cultural heritage, as discussed earlier, have evolved throughout history from the war booties of ancient times to the cultural commons¹ of all mankind today. The Dunhuang collections are a result of and have demonstrated such a shift, but in a much more complex intercultural or cross-cultural context in terms of the West and China. Transforming from the ‘sacred objects’ of religious Buddhist rituals to the ‘cultural properties’ of national institutes worldwide, the Dunhuang objects are nevertheless of substantial ‘economic value’ though often neglected. One of the significant origins of such monetary value comes from the market (of art and antiquity), as seen at first with those ‘art collectors’ of Qing literati (as well as the new rich in contemporary China); with how Stein or Pelliot has dealt with the Taoist abbot for their inquiries; and with the way exhibition operation greatly contributed to the economic activities of private dealers and collectors in the 1930s². On top of this are the elaborately built systems of ‘cultural tourism’ involved with museum economics in various ecosystems of socio-political cultures since the 1970s. The Eurocentric international cultural actor-agents affiliated to ICOM-UNESCO-UN have played an important role in promoting heritage enterprise worldwide. The heritage diplomacy they enacted to reach out to the Third World is constructed on a logic that preserving cultural heritage can help the tourism industry prosper, and this can be a sustainable way to achieve developmental work guided by the universal norms of democracy or human (culture) rights. However, over a few decades this pursuit has engendered negative impacts, to which no valid or effective solution

1 The idea of ‘commons’ will be future explored in the following Chapter 6.

2 As mentioned previously in Chapter 4.2.1.1 and Chapter 4.3.1.1., the International Exhibition of Chinese Art in London in 1935.

has been found yet. Dunhuang, after the turn of the last millennium has joined the ‘heritage game’³ as well and it seems to be a way of no return especially with the Belt and Road Initiative now driving the China Dream at full speed.

5.1 The Neoliberal Turn of Cultural Heritage

The triumph of democracy and free-market capitalism after the end of Cold War, marked by the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of Soviet Union in 1991, has ended the prime time of ideological performance in cultural heritage. This can be seen in ‘commercial exhibitions’ from the West operated by entertainment companies (as mentioned in Chapter 4.3.3.2). Such a neoliberal turn of heritage sector was also seeded by the UNESCO’s world culture politics, which was established on linking heritage preservation and tourism consumption of profitable cultural economics for social and economic development in the Third World of the ‘Others’, the countries of origin.

5.1.1 International Cultural Politics and Heritage Mechanism of UNESCO

Succeeding the International Committee of Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations after the WWI, UNESCO was founded after WWII in London. In the pamphlet *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*, the first Director-General of the Organisation Julian Huxley (1887-1975) wrote: ‘since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed’⁴. Accordingly, the purpose of the Organisation was defined as:

To contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms with care affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.

Except the subject of ‘science’, which was insisted by Joseph Needham (1900-1995) to be included to the mandate of UNESCO, ‘education’ and ‘culture’ were regarded from the beginning as the best tools to reach out to ‘the minds of men’ for ‘peace construction’. As a result of industrialism and nationalism, ‘(public) education’ since the early 19th century was firmly believed to be the main means of enabling all the people to use resources, mother nature and acquire the freedom to direct their own affairs. Together with science and education, ‘culture’

3 Peacock and Rizzo, *The Heritage Game*.

4 Huxley, *UNESCO: Its Purpose and Its Philosophy*.

was designated to help solve the ‘international problems of cultural nature’⁵. Being increasingly applied in the 19th century, the term ‘culture’ here refers to the ‘high culture’ as exemplified by Matthew Arnold and the ‘primitive culture’ as proposed by Edward Tylor⁶. The social evolutionists as such believed that culture has universal characteristics and different societies could be arrayed from savage to civilized judging by the various valorisation of their cultures⁷. As a consequence, the international politics of UNESCO was anchored and the projects in the heritage sector were designed and taken into effect with a vast array of intergovernmental sub-organisations such as ICOM, ICOMOS or WHC⁸.

Under such circumstances, the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage⁹—originated from the merge of two previously separate movements in conserving built monuments and natural environments—created the mechanism of the World Heritage List. To be enlisted, member-states (especially those developing countries) need apply to the World Heritage Committee and, once successful, they can access the World Heritage Fund as a ‘benefit of ratification’¹⁰ and if the intended site falls into the List of World Heritage in Danger a speedy response can be pursued¹¹. In fact, this working model was derived from several experiences, such as the rescuing project of Nile (1960-1980) which involved the dismantling, removing, and reassembling of the cultural heritage (for example the Abu Simbel and Philae temples) of the ancient Egypt and ancient Nubia in the large stretch of the Nile valley inundated by the Aswan High Dam¹². Another notable source was the 1965 White House Conference, where a proposal was presented to establish a ‘world heritage trust’ to ‘stimulate international cooperation to protect the world’s superb natural and scenic areas and historic sites for the present and the future of the entire world citizenry’. In 1968 the International Union for Conservation of Nature also had a similar proposal. Thus far, this mechanism of World Heritage List has been

5 Article 1, Charter of the United Nations, signed on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco and came into force on 24 October 1945.

6 Spencer-Oatey, “What Is Culture?”

7 As a matter of fact, between WWI and WWII, ‘cultural relativism’ was proposed by Franz Boas (1858-1942) in the United States to reject this Eurocentric idea of culture and dismissed its value judgement as high and low or civilized and savage.

8 UNESCO, “The Soft Power of Culture.”

9 UNESCO, “UNESCO World Heritage Centre - The World Heritage Convention.”

10 Three international non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations are named in the Convention to advise the Committee: the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM).

11 UNESCO, “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.”

12 As a token of gratitude, the government of Egypt donated four temples: the Temple of Dendur to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Temple of Debed to the Parque del Oeste in Madrid, the Temple of Taffeh to the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Amsterdam, and the Temple of Ellesia to Museo Egizio in Turin.

practiced in Italy on the Venice Lagoon, in Pakistan on the archaeological ruins of Mohenjo-Daro, and in Indonesia on the Borobudur temple compounds.

Thence in the heritage sector direct money transaction and financial concern were brought up to the agenda, and the Committee was requested to seek ways to increase the World Heritage Fund and 'shall take all useful steps to this end'¹³. In 1975 when the 1972 Convention came into force, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) was established in Madrid to replace the International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO), which was established in 1946 after WWII (in succeeding the International Union of Official Tourist Propaganda Organizations created in 1934). The original mission of IUOTO was composed by a combination of national tourist organizations, industry, and consumer groups to 'not only promote tourism in general but also to extract the best out of tourism as an international trade component and as an economic development'¹⁴. This originally rather 'simple' and 'commerce-oriented' goal became joined with the political agenda of UNESCO¹⁵. In addition to the tasks of IUOTO, the WTO was set to negotiate with the Development Programme of UN¹⁶ as exemplified by the Resolution of the First General Assembly taken place in Madrid:

Convinced that the implementation of the aims of the Organization can be further accelerated if the interests of the developing countries are fully taken into account,

Aware of the vital contribution of international tourism in the economic, social, cultural and educational advancement of all peoples, particularly those of the developing countries,

Acknowledging that the promotion and development of tourism in developing countries, especially those most in need of it, requires intensive national efforts with due consideration to the states of their economic and social development, and the full support and cooperation of the international community, especially the developed countries.

Decides that while determining the location of the Headquarters of the Organization, it shall pay particular attention to the interests of the developing countries in accordance with Article 3(2) of the Statutes¹⁷.

13 UNESCO, "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage." See Article 13 item 6.

14 "The Postal History of ICAO: ICAO and the World Tourism Organisation."

15 For example, in 1967 the UN followed the IUOTO's initiation and declared the 'international tourism year' with the slogan 'tourism: passport to peace', and in 1975 the founding Resolution of WTO while defining membership it announced to follow the UN resolution to restore all its rights to the People's Republic of China and to expel the diplomatic representatives of Chiang Kai-shek 'from the place which they unlawfully occupied at the United Nations and in all organizations related with it'

16 Although the official affiliation of WTO to UN did not take place until 2003, this close connection has existed since its inauguration in 1975.

17 UNWTO: General Assembly-First session.

In 1976 the WTO became an executing agency of UN's Development Programme (UNDP) to carry out technical cooperation with local governments¹⁸. Although tourism has been closely linked with historic and scenic sites, to officially connect the 'tourism industry' and 'heritage preservation' with 'cultural tourism' was not made manifest until after the Cold War by the pioneering programme of European Cultural Routes—a programme launched by the Council of Europe in 1987 in cooperation with the European Travel Commission, the (UN)WTO, and other international partners within the framework of European Commission¹⁹. Thereby, the logical relation was fabricated between the three independent areas of 'heritage protection, tourism industry, and economic development' with the understanding that the soft power of culture shall facilitate spreading the universal values and norms of UN, such as democracy or human rights for peace building. The economic benefits of 'cultural tourism' became an effective incentive for the actor-agents of ICOM-UNESCO-UN to promote heritage enterprise round the world. In 1992, the World Heritage Committee was expanded to World Heritage Centre and this heritage, tourism and development mechanism was believed and practiced in the rest of the world as noted by the WHC:

The prestige that comes from being a State Party to the Convention and having sites inscribed on the World Heritage List often serves as a catalyst to raising awareness for heritage preservation.

A key benefit of ratification, particularly for developing countries, is access to the World Heritage Fund. Annually, about 4 million USD is made available to assist States Parties in identifying, preserving and promoting World Heritage sites. Emergency assistance may also be made available for urgent action to repair damage caused by human-made or natural disasters. In the case of sites included on the, the attention and the funds of both the national and the international community are focused on the conservation needs of these particularly threatened sites.

Today, the World Heritage concept is so well understood that sites on the List are a magnet for international cooperation and may thus receive financial assistance for heritage conservation projects from a variety of sources.

Sites inscribed on the World Heritage List also benefit from the elaboration and implementation of a comprehensive management plan that sets out adequate preservation measures and monitoring mechanisms. In support of these, experts offer technical training to the local site management team.

Finally, the inscription of a site on the World Heritage List brings an increase in public awareness of the site and of its outstanding values, thus also increasing the tourist activities at the site. When these are well planned for and organized respecting sustainable tourism principles, they can bring important funds to the site and to the local economy²⁰.

18 UNWTO, "History | World Tourism Organization UNWTO."

19 "Cultural Tourism - European Commission."

20 UNESCO, "UNESCO World Heritage Centre - The World Heritage Convention."

Outside Europe, UNESCO launched the aforementioned Silk Roads Project in 1988, and the Salve Route in 1994 following many other initiatives in Arabia, Caucasus, Central Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean under the theme of ‘routes of dialogue’²¹. Further, in 1994, a joint meeting of (UN)WTO and UNESCO took place in Uzbekistan and the Samarkand Declaration on Silk Road Tourism was adopted. Afterwards, four other declarations on the theme of Silk Roads appeared one after another: 1) the 1999 Khiva Declaration on Tourism and the Preservation of Cultural Heritage supported by (UNN)WTO, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe has emphasized the importance of culture in guaranteeing peace, prosperity and the understanding between cultures in Central Asia; 2) the 2002 Bukhara Declaration on Silk Road Tourism listed specific steps to outline how to stimulate cultural and ecological tourism to Silk Road destinations with local and international stakeholders invited to invest; 3) the 2009 Astana Declaration facing the world economic and financial crisis was to appeal to the UNDP and UNESCO for further support on the Silk Road activities; and 4) the 2010 Shiraz Declaration has been adopted in the 5th Silk Road Mayors Forum hosted by the Municipality of Shiraz and the Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization, where representatives of 48 cities from 26 countries have attended with the support of (UN)WTO, UNESCO and the Silk Road Global Alliance²².

5.1.2 Fragmented Studies of Heritage Economics

The above discussion of the historic and conceptual background of ICOM-UNESCO-UN was ignored in most of current literature about the political economy of cultural heritage, cultural economics or heritage economics. This has been an emerging field in the heritage sector since the mid-1990s, which was a time characterised as a post-Cold War or post-conflict era during which the dichotomy of political thinking began to fade and the free-market capitalism or neoliberalism started to prevail the globe over. It was also a time when ‘cultural heritage suddenly was everywhere’²³ and the economic and financial dimension of cultural heritage ‘suddenly’ interested many economists²⁴. From a macro point of view, it seems that the vacuum of political ideology has invited such a neoliberal turn within heritage enterprise. In the West, the cultural policy makers²⁵, funding parties, and heritage practitioners became in need of new reason to justify the making, preservation and maintenance of cultural heritage facing increasingly shrinking budgets, while the necessity to use it as a vessel for universal norms and values to appease ‘the rest of the world’ has seemed to disappear. In the former communist regimes behind the now-removed Iron

21 UNESCO, “Routes of Dialogue | Culture.”

22 UNWTO, “Declarations | UNWTO Silk Road Programme.”

23 Lowenthal, *Possessed by the Past : The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*.

24 Peacock, “A Future for the Past: The Political Economy of Heritage.”

25 Peacock; Throsby, “2006-Paying for the Past: Economics, Cultural Heritage, and Public Policy.”

Curtain such as Russia²⁶ or Poland²⁷, the state-controlled public sphere of cultural heritage thrived to mitigate ideological rupture, modify political mandates and embrace a market economy. However, in China the rationale to use the past to forge collective memory and cultural identity for the evocation of patriotic sentiment appeared to be persistent amidst this neoliberal turn.

As stated, the boom of heritage enterprise in the 1990s was accompanied by an upsurge of economics studies in the heritage sector, which has attracted the attention of a wide range of readers, including the public and private spheres involved in providing and manufacturing the ‘products of cultural heritage’ for consumers (visitors and citizens)²⁸. Notwithstanding this feverish interest, the research topic of heritage-centred cultural economics remains challenging, with the opinions of a wide array of multidisciplinary studies in social sciences and humanities contradicting each other. The most obvious reason for this, I shall argue, is that most research has failed to consider the historic facts of world cultural politics as described above. The initial purpose of the ‘heritage game’, conceptually designed and pragmatically constituted by the leading actor-agents relating to heritage and tourism in the framework of UNESCO-UN,²⁹ was not to ‘make money’ (at least not directly) but to ‘communicate politics’ and universal norms and values, such as democracy and human rights. Prior to the end of Cold War, the main public usage of cultural heritage was for shaping identity and promoting ideology rather than stimulating economics and increasing finance—a fundamental drive of human society upon which was constructed the liberal economic system of Western democracies. Looking back to the history of the Dunhuang collections, it has been made explicit that the ‘need’ of cultural heritage was created by political authorities in a top-down rather than grass-roots way. This conflict of the inner logic between the needs of ‘heritage preservation’ and the needs of ‘heritage market’ was forcibly reconciled within the said mechanism of ICOM-UNESCO-UN. That has rendered ‘heritage economics’, especially the monetizing of heritage value, an unapproachable myth rather than a comprehensible subject-matter³⁰. Another reason is that the content of ‘heritage’ is as wide as the definition of ‘culture’ itself. The development of the concept of ‘cultural heritage’, can be reflected by the history of UNESCO’s normative tools (such as heritage charters, conventions and laws) which evolved from movable artefacts to immovable monuments, natural environments, and the intangible or

26 Breidenbach and Nyiri, “Our Common Heritage: New Tourist Nations, Post-Socialist Pedagogy, and The Globalisation of Nature.”

27 Lipowski and Kaczynski, *Towards Normality: Overcoming the Heritage of Central Planning Economy in Poland in 1990-1994*.

28 Throsby, “2006-Paying for the Past: Economics, Cultural Heritage, and Public Policy.”

29 Bertacchini and Saccone, “Toward a Political Economy of World Heritage.” This mechanism did not go without criticism, which however mainly focuses on the technical problems. For example, it is noted that those countries that are involved more in the World Heritage Committee are more likely to get their sites succeed to be listed.

30 Most studies on the economics of cultural heritage have appeared to be rather ‘fragmented’, because what can be measured in the economics has to be precisely defined and it is difficult to translate the cultural value into the market value of cultural heritage.

immaterial cultures during the period of time from the 1970s to the 2000s³¹. How to approach, identify and measure the 'economic benefit' of such a widely defined 'cultural heritage', which ranges from the cultural to the natural, from the tangible to the intangible and from underwater to outer space³²? Especially when the stakeholders involved in such a 'heritage game' can be as diverse as international agencies, public services, private businesses, and individual users or consumers³³. This explains why most published work on culture or heritage economics are by nature theoretical and mainly for the purpose of policy-making consulting³⁴. Currently, there are primarily three types of studies on the topic since the 1990s: 1) site-specific or country-specific³⁵ case studies, of which the majority concern developing countries that have received financial aid from the World Heritage Funds (for example, Honduras in Mesoamerica, Nigeria in Africa, and Indonesia in Southeast Asia); 2) theoretical analysis from a political economic perspective on the role that cultural heritage plays in an economic system of a specific country, with heritage-relevant industries being identified such as tourism³⁶, built environment, museum, creative industry³⁷ and digitisation³⁸; and 3) attempts to apply tools or methods of economics, such as contingent valuation³⁹, cause-benefit analysis⁴⁰ or choice modelling⁴¹, in identifying and measuring the 'value' of cultural heritage, as well as to determine how to monetize the worth and calculate the return of investment in the preservation, restoration and tourism exploitation of cultural heritage⁴².

As previously discussed, China has become more active in engaging with the world through its 'soft power', as seen performed in the platform of ICOM-UNESCO-UN. In addition to acknowledging and ratifying heritage conventions,

31 Vecco, "A Definition of Cultural Heritage: From the Tangible to the Intangible."

32 UNESCO, "UNESCO Astronomy and World Heritage Webportal."

33 Rizzo and Mignosa, *Handbook on the Economics of Cultural Heritage*.

34 Peacock, "A Future for the Past: The Political Economy of Heritage"; Graham, Ash worth, and Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage: Power, Culture, and Economy*; Rizzo and Mignosa, *Handbook on the Economics of Cultural Heritage*; Towse, *Advanced Introduction to Cultural Economics*.

35 Rizzo et al., *The Economics of Heritage: A Study in the Political Economy of Culture in Sicily*.

36 Lyon and Wells, *Global Tourism: Cultural Heritage and Economic Encounters*.

37 Victor A Ginsburgh and David Throsby, *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture, Handbooks in Economics*, 1st ed (Amsterdam ; Boston [Mass.]: Elsevier North-Holland, 2006).

38 Katsoni, Upadhyya, and Stratigea, "Tourism, Culture and Heritage in a Smart Economy: Third International Conference IACuDIT, Athens 2016."

39 Tuan and Navrud, "Capturing the Benefits of Preserving Cultural Heritage."

40 Báez and Herrero, "Using Contingent Valuation and Cost-Benefit Analysis to Design a Policy for Restoring Cultural Heritage."

41 Choi et al., "Economic Valuation of Cultural Heritage Sites: A Choice Modeling Approach."

42 Rizzo et al., *The Economics of Heritage: A Study in the Political Economy of Culture in Sicily*; Báez and Herrero, "Using Contingent Valuation and Cost-Benefit Analysis to Design a Policy for Restoring Cultural Heritage"; Kuhfuss, Hanley, and Whyte, "Should Historic Sites Protection Be Targeted at the Most Famous? Evidence from a Contingent Valuation in Scotland."

charters and treaties, China has also started to play an important role, for instance, in promoting the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In the spirit of 1972 World Heritage Convention, the *Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage* were published since 2008 by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was established in 2006. Ratifying this Convention in 2004, the State Council of China⁴³ declared a national strategy in 2015:

Rescuing [those intangible cultural heritage that are in danger of extinction] is to be put as the first goal then utilizing them reasonably and bequeathing them to future generations. The working principle is that the government should take the lead and the members of society should participate, both sides should have clearly defined and segregated responsibilities to form a cooperation under a plan that is long term, step by step, full scale and time efficient⁴⁴.

This ‘national strategy’ was immediately carried out by a network of government agencies, universities, private businesses and non-profit associations. The *Intangible Cultural Heritage Law* was proposed in 2007 in China and came into effect in 2011. The public fund allocated to this end during 2003-2008 reached 236,000,000 RMB. In addition, internationally, prior to 2018 China was elected twice as member states of the said Committee, and the International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia Pacific Region under the auspices of UNSECO was inaugurated in Beijing in 2012⁴⁵. Unlike those developing countries in the Mesoamerica, Africa or Southeast Asia that received financial aid from the World Heritage Fund, accepted the guidance of Western expert knowledge and followed the suggested blueprints for the development projects based on heritage tourism (which often involved diverse social and political factors in infrastructure building and property management), the Chinese government not only has remained as the sole authority for the Chinese heritage enterprise in the identification, interpretation, reutilisation and consumption⁴⁶ of cultural heritage, but also was keen to play a leading role in influencing its neighbouring countries (like Cambodia). In contrast to the 1972 List of tangible heritage, which was based on the nation-sponsored nominations, this 2013 List of intangible heritage was based on the direct applications of local communities⁴⁷. The 1972 List was criticised on the ground that it was composed under the dominance of the European ‘authorised heritage discourse’ within the UNESCO, and therefore was ‘a list of that which is not indigenous, not minority, and not non-

43 Lee, “Intangible Cultural Heritage (非物質文化遺產).”

44 In Chinese as ‘保護為主、搶救第一、合理利用、傳承發展：政府主導、社會參與、明確職責、形成合力，長遠規劃、分步實施，點面結合、講求時效’.

45 The plan was proposed in 2006 by China’s Vice Minister of Culture to the Director-General of UNESCO Koichiro Matsuura.

46 Maags and Svensson, *Chinese Heritage in the Making: Experience, Negotiations and Contestations*.

47 Smith, “Intangible Heritage: A Challenge to the Authorised Heritage Discourse?”

Western, though no less intangible⁴⁸. The comment may indicate that the 2013 List means that the European ‘authorized heritage discourse’ did not succeed in penetrating into China, riding on the back of a market economy. As described above, the ‘Chinese’ authorized heritage discourse has continued over from the Cold War era⁴⁹, though the heritage enterprise has completely opened its arms towards the globalised neoliberalism⁵⁰.

5.2 The Political Economy of Dunhuang

In the mid-1990s, the Getty Conservation Institute launched a research project to study the question of ‘value’ in the economics of cultural heritage. In the report published in 2002⁵¹, four types of value were identified: the cultural, social, environmental and economic. In 2006 while proposing the concept of ‘cultural capital’ Throsby suggested to classify them into two groups: the direct use value (market value) and the non-use value (cultural value)⁵² although the list of categories included in the latter can be very long, for example the religious, spiritual, anthological, ethnographic, archaeological, educational, nationalistic, internationalist, folklore, linguistic, literary, artistic, aesthetic, etc. To explore the economics of Dunhuang heritage, the identification of its ‘value’ is essential. Instead of applying economic or sociological approaches, I shall propose to pinpoint them according to the history and process of its ‘value creation’ or ‘value adding’, from the late 19th and early 20th century to this date.

5.2.1 Value Creation of Dunhuang Objects

The definition of ‘value’ varies from discipline to discipline. According to the Oxford dictionary and the Merriam-Webster dictionary, in addition to specific usages such as in mathematics or music, the term ‘value’ most commonly signifies two categories of ‘the signified’: one is the regard that something is held to deserve, the importance, worth, or usefulness of something; and another is the monetary worth of something. In either categories, to determine if something is valuable or not, and how much value it should have depends, on its owner or holder. The value of a ‘thing’, be it an antiquarian object, a tree, a rock or star, is not innate but generated from the ‘interaction’ under certain circumstances be-

48 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production.”

49 Yin, “China Being Elected as Member States of the Intergovernmental Committee of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (中国当选联合国教科文组织保护非物质文化遗产政府间委员会委员国).”

50 Breidenbach and Nyiri, “Our Common Heritage: New Tourist Nations, Post-Socialist Pedagogy, and The Globalisation of Nature”; Huibin et al., “Conceptualizing A Sustainable Development Model for Cultural Heritage Tourism in Asia”; Svensson and Maags, “Mapping the Chinese Heritage Regime Ruptures, Governmentality, and Agency Critical Heritage Studies and China.”

51 De la Torre, “Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage: Research Report.”

52 Throsby, “2006-Paying for the Past: Economics, Cultural Heritage, and Public Policy.”

tween ‘it’ and the others (which can be also things or people). Such ‘interaction’ is subject to the influence of various intentional and unintentional forces. And such processes of value creation explain why the history of the Dunhuang collections plays an important role in determining its value creation and accumulation. From being a ‘thing’ of the past to being a permanent collection of national or universal museum, as well as being an item of the World Heritage List, the value of Dunhuang heritage has augmented drastically. According the history of the Dunhuang collections, there are four phases of value creation that can be marked out: 1) before 1900, when the ‘medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia’ was discovered by the Chinese Taoist abbot, 2) from 1900 to 1949, when the PROC was established, 3) from 1949 to 1991 when the Cold War ended, and 4) after 1991 to this date, a Global Age featured with hyper networked societies.

Prior to 1900, the first ‘value creation or proposition’ of Dunhuang heritage—including murals, statues, sculptures or holy scripts—is related to the ‘authentic’ usage of these objects. As seen in Chapter 2.1.1 about the Wang Yuanlu’s miraculous unearthing, the Mogao Grottos were still used as ‘temples’ where rituals of Buddhism or Taoism were held. This primary and ‘direct use value’ was created or proposed by these sacred objects’ makers and believers (users) ranged from the Former Qin period (351-294 AD) until the early 20th century before Dunhuang became a cultural contact zone with the West. In fact, the grottos, following the Buddhist convention, originated from northern India were meant for the Buddhist followers to revere and worship Buddha and for the practitioners and monks to retreat from the worldly world to attain solitary meditation in order to be ‘awaken’ and reach ‘nirvana.’ The grottos built in the earlier times for the former purpose were called ‘chaitiya (temple)’ in a ‘U’ shape centred with a stupa, those that made for the latter purpose were named ‘vihara (abbey)’ in a square shape with small niches on the walls for the meditators to sit in. Merging into the Chinese culture since the Tang dynasty, the grottos of Dunhuang were mixed with features of Chinese architecture. According to traditional beliefs, paying efforts to construct, decorate or maintain the grottos was considered as a merit that could be attributed to ‘sattva (living beings)’ and ‘dharmadhatu (the phenomenal world)’; and such religious conduct was called ‘parinama.’ However, coming into the 20th century when the Dunhuang objects were collected into public museums or libraries, such ‘direct use value’ in religious practice was stopped abruptly.

Between 1900 and 1949, the ‘non-direct use value’ was added to the Dunhuang heritage while being regarded by Western explorers as ‘scientific specimens’ to be used in the studies of archaeology, art history, anthropology, ethnography, folklore, history, architecture, etc. As discussed earlier, the expeditions of Stein, Pelliot or Oldenburg sent by Western colonial powers, intellectually, were resulted from the European tradition of scientific culture engendered in the Enlightenment. Since the Dunhuang collections were made in this ‘Western way’, which has been applied in China as well (see Chapter 2), the ‘scientific value’ of the Dunhuang objects in China was established and, through scientific methods, their value multiplied ensuring that they contributed to the knowledge-making process in a diverse range of academic disciplines, from non-religious or

secular perspectives. The value creation has grown continuously and forms the main body of their ‘cultural value’ (or the ‘non-use value’ as called by Throsby⁵³). Although some of these ‘values’ may appear to be ‘rhetorical’, most of them are grounded within ‘scientific theories’. Besides, it is exactly by such ‘value identification’ or ‘value production’ that the ‘economic value’ of the Dunhuang objects in the art market is based.

The third type of value assigned to Dunhuang heritage is the ‘political’ one as seen especially during the period of time from 1949 to 1991 in the context of the Red China⁵⁴ and the Cold War. Under the Communist Party, the value of Dunhuang was fused with an ‘anti-imperialist’ or ‘anti-colonial’ ideology together with ‘patriotic sentiments’ and ‘socialistic interpretation’. Such Chinese ‘authorized heritage discourse’ has been consistent throughout the second half of the 20th century, especially during the Cold War. As discussed in Chapter 4, this ‘political value’ has been most clearly demonstrated in the Dunhuang art exhibitions held domestically and abroad. This political value becomes an ideological umbrella under which has been put all the other types of value for the ‘patriotic education’ of the people and for the display of Chinese soft power abroad. Nevertheless, this political value is essentially rhetorical and the relationship between the signifier (Dunhuang objects) and the signified (such as ‘the greatness of our fathers’ nation’⁵⁵) is surely arbitrary and subjective. After the Cold War ended, such a value statement has continued to exist and has seemed to be reinforced by the economic prospect of cultural tourism and cultural diplomacy, as seen in the Belt and Road Initiative—in which the Dunhuang heritage has become a sharpened soft power to reach out westwards to the neighbouring countries along the Silk Roads. In addition, the Dunhuang collections in the possession of universal museums are not neutral in political signification either. Eventually, they function in a similar way as they do in China, becoming a materiality of the ‘national (soft) power’ or the ‘civilizational glory’ of the West from the colonial and imperialist past.

The fourth type of added-value is ‘economic’. This market value (direct use value) in fact has existed as long as since the Dunhuang objects were found. As mentioned in Chapter 2, in 1907 Stein paid 200 units of silver for 24 boxes of manuscripts and five boxes of artefacts; in 1908 Pelliot paid 600 units of silver for more than 10,000 pieces of manuscripts; and in 1914 Stein paid 500 units of silver for 570 manuscripts. Although these deals were ‘indirect’ because Stein and Pelliot were given these sacred objects to worship by the abbot in exchange for their ‘donations’, they are nonetheless one of the earliest records of the ‘monetization’ of Dunhuang objects. In fact, transactions such as these are an ancient practice as old as the history of the art market itself. The close relationship between culture

53 Throsby.

54 The communist-controlled China was established already since 1927 during the Republican era and the Chinese Civil War with Nationalist China. The attitudes towards the Dunhuang heritage could be seen different in the two camps as early as in the 1930s (see Chapter 2.1.3).

55 Shen, “Thoughts about Dunhuang Exhibition (敦煌文物展覽感想).”

and the market also seems to be revealed in the spatial arrangement of ancient urban design, as seen in Chapter 4's discussion the agora and the museum-library of the Ptolemaic Alexandria in Egypt. A modern example of such 'closeness' has been exemplified in Paris. At the heart of this world capital between the universal museum of Louvre and the Conseil d'Etat was located *Le Louvre des Antiquaires*⁵⁶—a mall of about 250 antique stores well-known by the private dealers and collectors of antiquarian objects worldwide⁵⁷. In addition, as stated, in the 1935 London *International Exhibition of Chinese Art*, the remarkable contributions of the antique dealer C. T. Loo and of the private collectors like Percival David and George Eumorfopoulos has implied the intimate connection between museum institute and art market⁵⁸. Out of the need to regulate such a connection was born the 1970 *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural*⁵⁹. It is worth noticing that France did not ratify the Convention until 1997, and Britain until 2002. Due to heritage protection efforts, the idea of 'value exchange' between important collections and the art market has been considered 'unethical'. It is widely believed that important collections should not be commodified after being 'nationalized' into the 'public properties' of the country or the 'cultural commons' of all mankind. The only legitimate 'economic value' of heritage collections therefore can be achieved mainly through 'cultural tourism' and relevant industries.

5.2.2 The Myth of Cultural Capital

As discussed earlier, the invented conceptual link between heritage protection, cultural tourism, and sustainable development was generated from the world cultural politics of UNESCO-UN and embodied with Western norms and values during the Cold War from the end of the 1960s to the early 1970s. It was a time when 'value' recognition had mainly two rather different approaches, which were based on or featured with 1) the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and the *Wealth of Nation* by Adam Smith (1723-1790), and 2) the *Communist Manifesto* and the *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx (1818-1883). These two intellectual traditions have divided the world into the camp of capitalism and communism, on different sides of the Iron Curtain. The former, led by the United States, was joined by most former colonial powers which struggled to restore or maintain their colonial interests interrupted by the world wars—for example, Britain had attempted to restore its interests in Ghana, Malaya and the Middle East⁶⁰ and France in Africa, Algeria

56 "Le Louvre Des Antiquaires."

57 In 1855, Napoléon III ordered to build the Grand Hôtel du Louvre to host visitors for the Exposition Universelle at the same year. This hotel became the Grand Magasins du Louvre, one of the oldest department stores in Paris. In 1974, it was converted to an antiques mall, the Louvre des Antiquaires. In 2015, the antique business ended and the building is under renovation to become a luxury shopping mall.

58 As seen in Chapter 4.3.1.1 International Chinese Art Exhibition in London.

59 UNESCO, "1970 Convention | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization."

60 Darwin, "Britain, the Commonwealth and the End of Empire."

and Indochina (this has evolved into the long-lasting Vietnam War 1955-1975)⁶¹. And the latter, led by the Soviet Union, was supported by most of the countries in East Europe and those former colonies since the previous centuries. UNESCO-UN became an important instrument of the West (especially France under the Gaullism) to perform its 'soft power' for 'peace-building'—which means to use culture to approach and to convert the political ideology that prevailed on the other side of the Iron Curtain⁶². This historic-political precondition of the conceptual link between heritage culture, economics and politics has made it challenging to find out 'how exactly heritage culture can be translated into economic benefits,' which as a research question becomes imperative for the policy maker and budget planning for most governments in the new century.

The difficulties in quantifying the economic interest of heritage culture is reflected in the unsettled 'exchange rate' between 'direct use value (monetized economic value)' and 'non-use value (cultural value)'. Like said, it needs numbers to support the decision making of cultural policy in state budgeting⁶³—a typical rationale of democracies where policies need 'scientific evidence' to persuade the voters. The concept of 'cultural capital' therefore becomes useful and with it the terminology of economics such as stock, commodity, consumption, investment and asset are introduced to the heritage sector⁶⁴. Since the last millennium, various data regarding heritage enterprise have been produced. In the (UN)WTO *Tourism Highlights 2017 Edition*, on the first page entitled 'tourism—key to development, prosperity and well-being' it was noted:

*Tourism has boasted virtually uninterrupted growth over time, despite occasional shocks, demonstrating the sector's strength and resilience. International tourist arrivals have increased from 25 million globally in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000, and 1,235 million in 2016. Likewise, international tourism receipts earned by destinations worldwide have surged from US\$ 2 billion in 1950 to US\$ 104 billion in 1980, US\$ 495 billion in 2000, and US\$ 1,220 billion in 2016. Tourism is a major category of international trade in services. In addition to receipts earned in destinations, international tourism also generated US\$ 216 billion in exports through international passenger transport services rendered to non-residents in 2016, bringing the total value of tourism exports up to US\$ 1.4 trillion, or US\$ 4 billion a day on average. International tourism represents 7% of the world's exports in goods and services, after increasing one percentage point from 6% in 2015. Tourism has grown faster than world trade for the past five years.*⁶⁵

61 Ward, *The Vietnam War*.

62 France was the first country in the world to establish a 'ministry of culture' in 1959, as well as the first Western country to admit the People's Republic of China in 1964. Both under the leadership of Charles De Gaulle (1890-1970).

63 Peacock, "A Future for the Past: The Political Economy of Heritage."

64 Throsby, "On the Sustainability of Cultural Heritage."

65 UNWTO, *UNWTO Tourism Highlights: 2018 Edition*.

These dazzling numbers appear to appeal to most governments, although ‘the politics of tourism statistics’⁶⁶ has become an emerging topic. A fundamental question can be asked: is it a myth to connect heritage protection with tourism economy for sustainable development? These statistics seem to suggest otherwise. However, the findings of the emerging academic field of ‘tourism and politics’⁶⁷ and of the developmental and environmental studies may shed some new light. The former has mainly focused on the relationships between the tourism industry and changing world politics and the latter has incorporated abundant critical reviews⁶⁸. For example, the little known study *Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism* previously published on the website of UNEP in 2015 points out several serious drawbacks of tourism development in the developing countries: 1) change or loss of indigenous identity and values due to commodification and standardization, loss of authenticity due to staged authenticity, and adaptation to tourist demands; 2) culture clashes—economic inequality, local habitants’ irritation due to tourist behaviour, job level friction, and income inequality; 3) physical influences causing social stress—depriving local people of access; and 4) ethical issues—crime generation, child labour, prostitution and sex tourism⁶⁹. In statistics provided by the UNEP it has been reported that ‘tourism income’ has become the main source of foreign exchange for more than one third of the developing countries. That said, another little known study about ‘tourism leakage’ has shown that an ‘estimated 70 percent of all money spent by tourists ended up leaving the country via foreign-owned tour operators, airlines, hotels, imported drinks and food’ and ‘estimates for other developing countries range from 80 percent in the Caribbean to 40 percent in India’⁷⁰. Moreover, the environmental damage of the tourism industry entails an invisible cost in the form of the construction and management of infrastructure, which can cause soil erosion, air and marine pollution, natural habitat loss and fresh water resource loss. In addition, any world recession generates fatal impacts on these countries that are overly dependent on tourism industry. A statistic of 1997 has indicated that the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain and France account for over half of all tourist spending around the world. In 2017, nine out of the top ten countries for

66 Pratt and Tolkach, “The Politics of Tourism Statistics.”

67 Mostafanezhad et al., *Political Ecology of Tourism : Community, Power and the Environment*; Butler and Sontikul, *Tourism and Political Change*.

68 Simon Osborne, ‘Is UNESCO Damaging the World’s Treasures?’, Independent (London, 29 April 2009); Elizabeth Betsy Keough, ‘Heritage in Peril: A Critique of UNESCO’ s World Heritage Program’, Washington University Global Studies Law Review, 10.3 (2011), 593–615; ‘Living Treasure: UNESCO Is Better at Naming Enemies than Finding Friends’, The Economist, 14 June 2012.

69 Bogahawatte, “Negative Socio-Cultural Impacts From Tourism.” The original text on the UNEP website (<http://www.unep.org/resourceefficiency/Business/SectoralActivities/Tourism/FactsandFiguresaboutTourism/ImpactsofTourism/Socio-CulturalImpacts/NegativeSocio-CulturalImpactsFromTourism/tabid/78781/Default.aspx>) has been removed but the exact content was shared on the website of Sustainable Tourism Alliance.

70 Boz, “Leakages and Value Added in International Tourism Revenues; Tourism Satellite Account as a Measurement Method.”

outbound tourism were from Europe and the North America⁷¹. Although more studies needed to be done in this field, there are notable signs to contradict the said logic of UNESCO in asserting a connection between heritage preservation and development work through cultural tourism.

In response, the perspective of sustainable development was taken into consideration in 2015, by the *World Heritage Convention*⁷². However, the result of such improvement remains to be observed. As stated, following in the footsteps of UNESCO, China has applied the reinvented historic concept of Silk Roads in its BRI. And of which the environmental problems seem to be a least concern—as seen, for example, in the heritage project under BRI developed by the Chinese investors in Cambodia. In 2018 April, the Ministry of Culture in China changed its name into the Ministry of Culture and Tourism⁷³ under the decision of the 13th National People's Congress⁷⁴. Business, seemingly, is surpassing 'culture' by all means. Although Kirshenblatt-Gimblett warned us already in 1998 that 'when there is business, there is no culture'⁷⁵, this thriving development of heritage tourism worldwide has seemed to be just a way of no return and at all costs (as seen in the fact that, for example, the Australia's Department of the Environment requested the UN to remove all the references of climate change's impacts on Australian world heritage sites so to protect its tourism industry⁷⁶).

5.3 Market and Industry of Dunhuang Heritage

Embracing a market economy often means structural change in a political system. This was embedded UNESCO's idea to offer 'heritage diplomacy' during the Cold War, linking heritage protection with economic development through cultural tourism. Eventually, it is the upper structure of an economic-political system that decides the cultural life of people. In a comparative perspective, the model of heritage economics can vary according to different socio-political ecosystems such as the planned economy (controlled economy or command economy), the market economy (pure capitalism or laissez-faire capitalism), and the mixed economy. In the aforementioned neoliberal turn of cultural heritage in the 1990s, entailing shifts from either the command economy or the mixed

71 Seth, "Countries Whose Citizens Travel The Most."

72 UNESCO, "Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention."

73 This has been practices already in the West, for example in UK and in Greece. In the latter, the Archaeological Receipts Fund was specifically created under the Hellenic Ministry of Culture responsible of generating income from the cultural tourism of archaeological sites, see: David W J Gill, 'Cultural Tourism in Greece at a Time of Economic Crisis', *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies*, 1.3 (2013), 233.

74 Yu, "Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China (文化和旅游部正式挂牌)."

75 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, 1998.

76 "Australia Removed from UN World Heritage Climate Report."

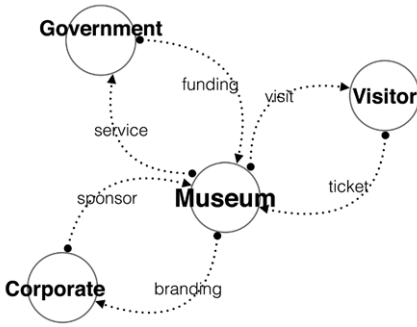


FIGURE 5.1 State controlled museum economics

economy⁷⁷ towards a more liberal market oriented one, challenges have presented themselves to the managerial structure of heritage institutes and the visitor (consumer or user) culture. To better comprehend the economics of Dunhuang heritage, it is necessary to explore the relevant museum enterprise and tourism industry. Especially now that Dunhuang has entered the centre stage of the BRI, this basic analysis may provide some new insight to verify whether the UNESCO’s universal norms and values can eventually prevail in China.

5.3.1 Museum Economy

5.3.1.1 From State Controlled to Non-State Controlled Museum Economics

Looking into the national or universal institutes that hold the Dunhuang collections, two types of administration structure can be identified. One is directly controlled by the central government, as mostly seen in continental Europe and Asia; and the other is the foundation-owned private model, as seen in the United States. That said, such a distinction is suggestive rather than normative because some foundation-owned museums are in actuality owned by the government, for example in Britain. The degree of state intervention in museum economy and heritage enterprise is reflected by where the country stands on the spectrum from the state controlled economy to the liberal market economy. As most countries adopt a mixed economy system with a various degree of government control or intervention, most museum management structures are negotiated between the top-down state authority and the grass-roots social relevance⁷⁸.

The ‘state controlled museum economy’ as seen in Figure 5.1 illustrates the relationship between the government, the sponsoring corporation and the visitors that museum institutions rely upon. The ‘value exchange’ network in this model among various stakeholders of heritage enterprise is rather straightforward. This type of museum management system can be identified, for example, in France or Germany where a mixed economy is applied (and in the former Soviet Union

77 Wang, “Turning Right/Turning Left? A Neoclassical Socioeconomic Query of the Arts Signaled by Museum and Branding in Finland.”

78 This is relating to the nature of museum as being a milieu of informal education which is to shape collective memory and cultural identity as well as being a place to focus on the needs of the people as seen in the New Museology (See Chapter 3).

and China—without the role of the ‘corporation’—where the command economy is practiced). The ‘service’ that the museum provides to the government often is to implement the leading polity’s cultural policy and identity politics⁷⁹ where ‘visiting’ a museum offers some kind of ‘education’ to the visitor⁸⁰. For example, in Germany, Le Coq’s collections from the Dunhuang area are owned by the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, which is overseen by the Stiftung Preubischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) established in 1957 according to the German Federal law to acquire and preserve the cultural legacy of the former State of Prussia. In France, cultural heritage has traditionally served political ends and museum enterprises often mark the names of leading politicians like Pompidou, Mitterrand or Chirac⁸¹. The Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN) was created in 1896 in an attempt to enrich the ‘national collections’ of France, and under the direction of the Ministry of Culture it was to provide services for museums. The RMN was given the legal status as ‘*établissement public à caractère industriel et commercial* (EPIC)’ in 1990—a sign of the said neoliberal turn and a degree of leeway was given to develop commercial activities of cultural heritage under state-control (as the EPIC means the public agencies acknowledged by the Tribunal des Conflits in 1921 according to the French Constitution article 34) according to special laws instead of private company law. This is a compromise for the commercial role of national museums out of the consideration from the perspective of economic interventionism that it should be guaranteed the public service of cultural heritage without being overly challenged by free market competition. This neoliberal turn is looking to the British model. In the foundation owned British Museum (as discussed earlier in Chapter 3) though most members of the Board of Trustee are appointed by the Prime Minister through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, it is more flexible in engaging for-profit commercial activities. These few cases have illustrated the heritage enterprise of mixed economics with various degrees of state intervention. In such a model, the value exchange network between corporations or business and museums is rather limited because the heritage sector is traditionally regarded as a public service that is supposed to be provided by the government and freely accessed by the public (as seen especially in the welfare countries of northern Europe).

Located on the other end of the spectrum is the free market model as seen in the United States. Illustrated in Figure 5.2 is the value exchange network between various stakeholders of museum institutions. Instead of being administered directly by the central government, the museum business is run by the non-profit foundation which can independently decide its missions and goals as well as take the full responsibility for its budget and finance (though a limited amount of government subsidy is granted for specific projects occasionally). In this model, the relationships between various stakeholders are more dynamic. The fund raising programmes such as museum’s ‘friend’s club’ or ‘voluntary program’ and

79 Wang, *The Basis of Chinese Museology* (中國博物館學基礎).

80 Yen and Zheng, *Museum Education in Social Perspective* (社會化視野下的博物館教育).

81 Bodenstein, “National Museums in France.”

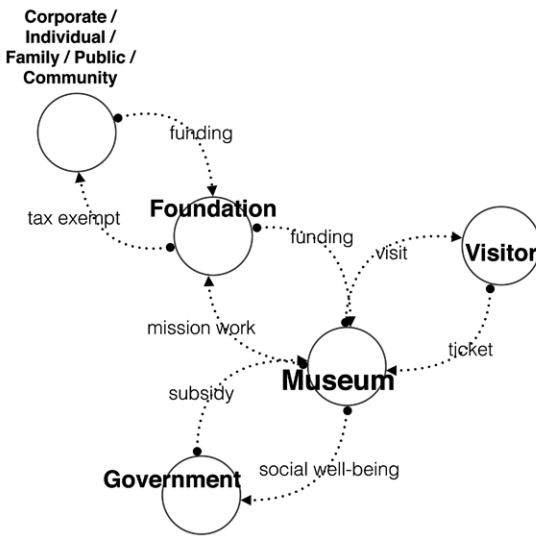


FIGURE 5.2
Non-state controlled
museum economics

commercial activities like the ‘museum shop’ are vigorously developed through powerful marketing strategies with advanced product development and sales plans. Visitors are regarded as clients, consumers or users rather than citizens, as the collections are privately owned and the establishment of foundation to open a museum is a philanthropy enterprise which enjoys a special tax exemption granted by the government. The self-sustained financial system, the cost-efficient management, and the high dynamism between various stakeholders to promote heritage enterprise; these merits of this model do catch the world’s eyes, despite the fact that the line between private and public or between for-profit and non-profit is rather thin—for the fact that most foundations have donors or donor’s family members involved in the management and the governance bodies in addition to owning the shares, and this may cause ethical concerns especially that foundations (private and charity) do not have legal requirements and reporting responsibilities while soliciting funds from the public. Although historically, museum management in the United States was learned from Europe⁸², the idea to establish ‘national museum’ like in Europe was hotly debated in the mid-19th century. For example, the ‘national status’ of the Smithsonian institutes was once considered against the donor’s will to ‘increase and diffusion of knowledge among men’⁸³. And this had long precluded the different traditions of employing arts and culture in the political economy of the New World compared to the Old World of Europe, as seen in the said different ‘foundation cultures’ of both continents—which was reported in the *Theory of Foundation* published by the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors and the Marshall Institute inspired by Peter Drucker’s *Theory of the Business*⁸⁴.

82 Cook, “Our Mismanaged Museum.”
 83 Brinton and Powell, “The Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum.”
 84 Teacher, “Theory of the Foundation: European Initiative 2016.”

5.3.1.2 *Dunhuang Heritage under 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'*

The above discussion has provided a background to understand the new development of Dunhuang heritage in China. After the opening-up policy, the 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' was invented to address the turn of China's command economics towards a market one. This turn has also involved the heritage sector, including Dunhuang. As described in Chapter 2, in 1944 the Research Institute of Dunhuang Art (with an archaeology unit and an administration office) was created under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education of the ROC. This institute ceased to exist in 1945, restarting in 1946 under the supervision of the Academia Sinica and was then transferred to the Ministry of Culture in 1948. After the Civil War in 1950 it was renamed as Research Institute of Dunhuang Artefact (with an art unit, a conservation unit, an documentation unit, and an administration office) under the direction of the Ministry of Culture's State Bureau of Cultural Relics, and in 1959 it was put under the Gansu Province's Bureau of Cultural Relics. In 1961, Dunhuang was ranked as a 'heritage site of national importance' which should be safeguarded and protected by the State Council. However, in 1966, the scale of the Institute was reduced to having only a department of research, a department of conservation and an administration office due to the drastic Cultural Revolution. In 1979, the Institute was recovered to having six offices for administration, conservation, archaeology, art, documentation and reception and, in 1980, an office of manuscripts was added. In 1984, the Institute was renamed as the Dunhuang Academy and the scale of it was enlarged to having ten operation unites, including four institutes in conservation, research, art and manuscripts, one office of music and dance, one information centre, and three departments in reception, photography and publishing. In 1986, an institute of Yulin Grottos conservation was created to be temporarily managed by the Academy. In 1987, Dunhuang was enlisted as a World Cultural Heritage site. In 1994 the 'conservation, research and exhibition centre of Dunhuang grottos and artefacts' was constructed. In 2017, the Dunhuang Academy was ranked as 'the first class (most important) national museums of China' by the Chinese Museums Association, which had joined ICOM-UNESCO in 1983 under the permission of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This brief institutional history has revealed the shifting focus of Dunhuang heritage from art and archaeology to conservation science and museum business. The enlargement of the institute in terms of the management structure also reflects the expansion of heritage enterprise in China. However, due to the neoliberal turn of heritage sector in the new century, the institution seems to suffer from a problem of oversizing and unlimited expansion. Currently, the Academy⁸⁵ has a President-Party Committee Secretary, a vice President, a Party Committee Secretary, two Party Committee Member-vice presidents; four committees (Party member committee, Academy affair committee, research committee and construction committee); six research institutes (conservation institute, fine art institute, archaeology institute, manuscript institute, heritage digitization institute,

85 "Introduction of Dunhuang Academy (敦煌研究院简介)."

and folk religion and culture institute); two departments (editing and publishing department and reception department); six centres (Dunhuangology information centre, centre of conservation research and exhibition of Dunhuang grottos and artefacts, exhibition centre of digital Mogao Grottos, centre of internet and web, monitor centre of Dunhuang grottos, and research centre of culture and creative industry); eight administration offices and bureaus ranged from finance, human resource, security, international cooperation and exchange (Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan), etc.; five affiliated research institutes on nearby grotto-sites including Maijishan Grottos⁸⁶, Bingling Caves Temple⁸⁷, Northern Caves Temple, Yulin Grottos, and Western Caves of a Thousand Buddhas; and five commercial businesses—including a travel agency (and tourist centre)⁸⁸, a technology centre of artefact conservation, a limited company for digitizing murals, 3D modelling, animation as well as retailing product design and development⁸⁹, an architectural consulting and design company for Mogao site and archaeology preservation⁹⁰, and an education centre of Dunhuang art⁹¹.

In addition, in 1995, under the support of Dunhuang Academy (governed by Gansu Province's Bureau of Cultural Relics), the China Dunhuang Grottos Conservation Research Foundation was registered to the Ministry of Civil Affairs under the jurisdiction of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (established in 2003 to replace the State Bureau of Cultural Relics set in 1988 to supersede the State Cultural Relics Enterprises Management Bureau established in 1973)—the encompassing agency for conservation of Chinese culture and heritage under the Ministry of Culture (now the Ministry of Culture and Tourism). The mission statement of this Foundation⁹², registered in 2006, is to preserve, research and promote Dunhuang grottos with its central responsibilities including: fund raising from private individuals, legal entities or any other organization; sponsoring scientific conservation and restoration; sponsoring research and publication as well as international exchange and training; giving grants for co-organizing Dunhuang related conference or seminar; and providing research material, result and information related to Dunhuangology⁹³. The few listed activities published by the Foundation prior to 2017 were mainly focused on providing scholarships and subsidies for organizing tour exhibitions. In 2017, the French luxury brand

86 Original in Chinese as '麥積山'.

87 Original in Chinese as '炳靈寺'.

88 Title in Chinese as '敦煌莫高窟旅遊服務公司' (Dunhuangtour.com), established in 2000.

89 Title in Chinese as '甘肅恆真數字文化科技有限公司', established in 2012. By far 33 digitized images from the murals and 2 3D scanned status in color have been provided (for sale by order).

90 Title in Chinese as '甘肅莫高窟文化遺產保護設計諮詢有限公司'.

91 Title in Chinese as '甘肅鴻文敦煌藝術研修中心'.

92 Yang, "China Dunhuang Grottos Conservation Research Foundation (中国敦煌石窟保护研究基金会)."

93 Original in Chinese as '接受关心和支持敦煌保护、研究事业的自然人、法人或其他组织的自愿捐助;资助敦煌石窟的科学保护与修复;资助有关敦煌学的科研项目和科研成果的出版;资助国内外敦煌保护、研究的学术交流和人才培养;同国内外有关团体、研究机构或个人合作举办与敦煌有关的讲座、学术研讨会等活动;为国内外有关团体、研究机构或个人提供敦煌学研究资料、科研成果、信息咨询等服务'.

Hermès has donated 750,000 RMB to the Foundation for digitizing four coloured statues from the grotto number 57, 46, 205 and 275; and the Italian luxury sports car manufacturer Ferrari donated 400,000 RMB as well for the digital projects of the grotto number 402 and 375, linked with a mega marketing event *Driven by Emotion—A Tribute to 70 years of Glory: Ferrari Red Rally Returns to Silk Road* which involved 50 Ferraris sport cars roaring over 1,700 kilometres on the ancient route marched by Marco Polo in the 13th century⁹⁴.

Another foundation dedicated to the Dunhuang Academy is the Friends of Dunhuang (Hong Kong) Limited—supposedly a non-profit organization established in 2010 to raise funds for the Dunhuang Academy to enhance the grotto conservation and staff development as well as to promote the art and culture of Dunhuang both nationally and internationally. As mentioned earlier, donations coming from Hong Kong played an important role in the early 1980s. In addition to the generous funding provided by Sir Run Run Shaw GBM, CBE (1907-2014) in 1984, the Hong Kong based sinologist Jao Tsung-I GBM (1917-2018) also contributed greatly in the development of Dunhuangology after the Cultural Revolution and that became the initiative for establishing this foundation in 2010. By 2015, about 14,000,000 RMB had been raised to fund the grotto's digitization projects. This is an example of investments or financial aids coming from foreign partners over the past decades to help restoring and constructing the Dunhuang heritage of China. Other notable cases of the sort have included the finance, technology and expert assistance provided by the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI), the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, the former Australian Heritage Commission, the Tokyo University of the Arts, the Courtauld Institute of Art in the United Kingdom, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Northwest University in the United States. Among them the Getty Conservation Centre not only has established a standard methodology for the grotto conservation but also has enabled the Dunhuang Academy to establish a National Research Centre for Conservation of Ancient Wall Paintings and Earthen Sites in 2009, which is responsible for the conservation of other sites in Tibet, Xinjian, Mongolia, Shanxi, Hebei and Shandong⁹⁵.

The discussion above has demonstrated how the Dunhuang heritage, based on the assistance solicited from the West, has developed from a provincially managed archaeological site of regional and then national importance to a World Heritage site with modern museum functions and beyond. The heritage enterprise being introduced to China through Dunhuang encompasses not only conservation science but also the museum concentrated activities such as cultural tourism, creative industries and digital humanities⁹⁶. However, with the neoliberal turn of cultural heritage in China the expanding business areas have brought up various challenges too, as seen in the confusing administration and management system described above. For example, the overwhelming responsibility,

94 "Ferrari Celebrates 70th Anniversary with a Thrilling Rally."

95 Agnew, Dumas, and Wong, "GCI's Enduring Collaborations in China (Feature) 1989-2016."

96 We will come to this in the following Chapter 6.

authority and power given to a research based or originated ‘academy’; the non-transparent accounting and financial report especially with such a large amount of donation coming from overseas; and some seemingly overlapping missions, tasks and work contents run by various departments, units and affiliated organizations. The most challenging and also ambiguous aspect is the relationship between such a publically funded national institute and those private commercial businesses administered underneath⁹⁷.

5.3.2 Destination Dunhuang

5.3.2.1 *The Magic Wand: Cultural Tourism of World Heritage*

As mentioned in Chapter 4.3.3.1, in 1983 the Chinese Museums Association of PROC replaced the original one of ROC in Taiwan as the state member of ICOM-UNESCO and, in 1984, UNESCO set up an office in Beijing. Through this direct connection, China ratified the 1972 Convention in 1985 and the Mogao Grottos was registered into the World Heritage List in 1987 and became included in the UNESCO’s Silk Road Project (1988-1997), as stated. This collaboration served as a bridge between the Dunhuang Academy and the Getty Conservation Institute with the memorandum signed in 1989 by the then State Bureau of Cultural Relics and the Getty⁹⁸. This was at a time when the opening-up policy has been in place for just a decade, and Dunhuang, a remote rural town in the borderlands of the Chinese Central Asia, was poor in many ways. Working on the site often meant retreating from urban conveniences, like the monks or Buddhist followers did in the medieval times. For this reason, those early Chinese on-site (artist-trained) conservators were admired by the people for their ‘sacrifice’, despite their primitive and sometimes harmful intervention to the site preservation due to the lack of proper training in concept and practice.

Conservation was believed to comprise only ‘treatment’ and to be based on scientific and technological know-how. Monitoring and maintenance were not commonplace, and the idea of preventive practice had not yet permeated policy. Values—expressed in heritage law as artistic, historic, and scientific—were assumed to be self-evident, not subject to discovery through detailed research and analysis, whereas site management was viewed as an entirely separate activity from conservation. Moreover, the emphasis was on materials used in conservation and the ‘formula’ rather than the process.⁹⁹

The very first task which the Getty started in 1992 in Dunhuang was to provide professional training. Then 1995, the focus shifted to the conservation of murals, management planning and policy design of the site. In 1997, the Getty together with the Australian Heritage Commission helped to develop the national guide-

97 Liu, Fan, and Han, “Feature: When AI Meets the Silk Road.”

98 Agnew, “Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road (1997).”

99 Agnew, Dumas, and Wong, “GCI’s Enduring Collaborations in China (Feature) 1989-2016.”

lines, *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*¹⁰⁰. The standard heritage methodology such as ‘value assessment’ is required to reach reasonable management and decision making policies on how to conserve, present and interpret the site, and especially how to develop a planning process that fits the ‘international concepts and procedures long established in China’. The application of the Principle at Mogao has resulted in master plans of ‘mural conservation’ and ‘visitor management’. For the former, cave number 85 was chosen as case study due to its historic value (the construction was finalised in 867 AD), artistic value (incorporating 350 square meters’ high quality mural paintings), and typical problems of deterioration (such as the exfoliation of paint and plaster detachment from the bedrock)¹⁰¹. The project was finished in 2010 and became a learning example for the conservation of other caves¹⁰².

The conservation work laid the foundation for further development of cultural tourism in Dunhuang, a prefecture-level city of Jiuquan county with a population of about 200 thousand people located in the westmost end of Hexi Passage¹⁰³ next to the Provinces of Qinghai and Xinjiang. Amongst the 241 sites of historic value in the region, the Mogao caves became the most famous one. Combined with the landscapes of sand dunes, Gobi deserts, oases, mountains and lakes, it became a popular tourism destination for the Chinese and foreign tourists. After the opening-up policy, already in 1979, Dunhuang was listed by the State Council as one of the first batch of cities to be opened for tourism, in 1986 by the State Council as one of the ‘nationally famous historical and cultural cities’, and in 1998 by the China National Tourism Administration as one of the ‘China excellent cities for tourism’. Coming into the 21st century, it has been promoted as one of the 29 most celebrated ‘tourism brands that touch the world’, one of the eight ‘name cards of China tourism’, the ‘most satisfying cities for tourists’, the ‘best ecotourism city’, the ‘2008 most charming city of China’, the ‘best tourist destination in commemoration of the nation’s 60 anniversary’, the top ten ‘2010 best tourist destination’, the ‘most influential tourist sites of China’, the top 10 ‘2011 most popular tourist destination’, the ‘best examples of eco-farm and country tourism development’, etc.¹⁰⁴ Corresponding to these tourism promotions, the number of visitors has soared to an unprecedented level.

According to statistics, prior to being a tourist destination between 1949 and 1959, the visits of Dunhuang mainly came from local residents and the total number for the decade as a whole was merely 146,500 (including 195 overseas visitors). In 1979, the year when Dunhuang was opened up for tourism, the number of visits was still only 24,701. In 1984, it grew to 100,000. In 1987, the number became 130,000 (with 2,3000 foreign visitors). And the number continued to increase, radically, from 200,000 in 1999 to 300,000 in 2001, 300,000 in 2004,

100 ICOMOS China, *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*.

101 Wong and Agnew, *The Conservation of Cave 85 at the Mogao Grottoes, Dunhuang*.

102 Agnew, “Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road (2010).”

103 Original in Chinese as ‘河西走廊’.

104 “Introduction to Dunhuang (敦煌市概况).”

500,000 in 2006 and 800,000 in 2012¹⁰⁵. In 2016, more than 1.34 million tourists visited the Mogao Grottos—a growth of 70 percent from 2014¹⁰⁶. In addition to the attraction of the heritage sites, one of the main contributing factors is the infrastructure construction. Already by 2015, an investment of five billion RMB in total covering 20 tourism projects (such as high-end hotels and the infrastructure network of scenic tourist spots including transportation and tourism service agencies) was installed to make the city of Dunhuang a modern international tourist destination. Besides, the improvement of transportation has played a key role as well, for example, the rail links from Beijing and Yinchuan and the airways from Chengdu to Dunhuang. In 2013, with the BRI the exhibitions of the grotto replica were displayed at home in Dunhuang and abroad to further promote Dunhuang tourism¹⁰⁷.

The economic result of such a tourist boom was significant. The development of the ‘wide wild west’ of China by cultural tourism has proved successful. A report in 2011 pointed out that tourism has replaced agriculture, becoming Dunhuang’s main industry accounting for nearly 55 percent of the local gross domestic product¹⁰⁸. According to the Gansu Statistical Yearbook, in 2016, a total number of 191 million domestic tourists came to Dunhuang with an income totalled of 121.9 billion RMB in addition to 71,500 of foreign visitors with 19.1 million USD¹⁰⁹. In 2017, Dunhuang’s GDP reached 10.64 billion RMB with the fixed assets investment reached 20 billion RMB and the paid-in investment totalled 17.84 billion RMB. The eight million tourists brought about 7.8 billion RMB to this city. The added value of the cultural industry counted to its GDP has increased to 10 percent with 1.54 billion RMB, and the per capita disposable income of the urban and rural residents of Dunhuang has increased by 64 percent and 76 percent¹¹⁰ (while the average of per capita disposable income surged nine percent according to the National Bureau of Statistics¹¹¹).

These stunning numbers have boosted the confidence of the Chinese government in using ‘cultural tourism’ as a catalyst for economic development. The ‘bureau of tourism’ was elevated to the ministry level, and as stated the Ministry of Culture has been reorganized into Ministry of Culture and Tourism. As ‘tourism is business’, the unspoken message behind this alteration is the expending territory of ‘economics’ in the field of arts and culture. Although the cultural site of Mogao Grottos—as ‘public art’ and ‘public spaces’¹¹²—seems to become accessible only by paid client-tourists, the ancient city of Dunhuang now once again has become a meeting point of cultures due to BRI. In 2016, the first *Silk*

105 Shi, “Opening Up-World Famous Tourist Site (莫高窟创建1650周年系列报道之九:开放篇——名扬四海的游客‘圣地’)”

106 “China Focus: Record Tourist Numbers Threaten World-Renowned Grottoes.”

107 “Mogao Caves Set Record Tourist Numbers.”

108 Chang, “Tourism Industry on a High in Dunhuang.”

109 “Gansu: Market Profile.”

110 Ogunsina, “Dunhuang: China’s Flower In The Desert.”

111 “China’s per Capita Disposable Income up 9.0 Percent in 2017.”

112 Agnew, Dumas, and Wong, “GCI’s Enduring Collaborations in China (Feature) 1989-2016.”

Road International Cultural Expo was held in this ancient city with delegates coming from 85 countries, five international organizations, and 66 foreign cultural institutions. In the Expo were presented more than 8,000 prestigious artefacts and artworks from the national museums and private collections of over 60 countries, including France, Mexico, Nepal, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Italy, Germany, Greece and Iran. At least ten trading contracts and 90 cultural cooperation agreements with a total value of 100 billion RMB were signed at the Expo. The archaeological city of Dunhuang, which had once seen foreign commodities such as the silver dishes from Rome, the spices from India, and the brocades from Persia, now started to be an active actor-agent of cultural and creative industry in collaboration with the neighbouring countries along the Belt and Road¹¹³. The magic wand of the UNESCO's World Heritage List does seem to have turned this previously marginal city of Dunhuang into a gold mine, where all those who intended to join the 'gold rush' of cultural tourism in the 'wide wild west' of China have gathered. The Expo (being an annual event) was held in 2017 as well, and over 50 countries participated. In 2018, it was held in two parts: the *Silk Road International Exposition and the Investment* and the *Trade Forum for Cooperation between East and West China*. A total of 230 delegations from 73 countries participated, with Britain and Malaysia as the honoured state-participants. In addition to cultural activities and tourism business, also included in the event were the China-UK Forum on Regional Economic Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative Infrastructure Cooperation Roundtable, and the China-Malaysia Economic Cooperation Meeting¹¹⁴. World heritage and international economics found a perfect meeting point in Dunhuang.

5.3.2.2 *Environmental Concern and Heritage Development*

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's claim that 'tourism is business and when there is business there is no culture'¹¹⁵ is perhaps questionable, because the definition of 'culture' can be as wide as the 'way of life'. However, the environmental deterioration over the past 30 years in Dunhuang has caused serious concern. It was noticed by the Getty that the explosion of tourism has become one of the greatest problems facing the Mogao Grottos. How to 'sustainably use the site' has become the most urgent question, as the murals are threatened and the visitor experiences degraded by the overcrowding within the very limited spaces of caves and the very narrow access walkways. Since 2001, it began to be understood how to best preserve the murals and what were the causes of deterioration from nature and from visitors¹¹⁶—which has been proven to be a crucial factor in 2016, because the crowds of visitor could increase the temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide levels inside the caves so to damage the well-preserved but fragile murals¹¹⁷.

113 Cao and Zhang, "China's Dunhuang Takes Center Stage in Silk Road Rejuvenation."

114 "Silk Road Expo Boosts International Ties."

115 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, 1998.

116 Demas, Agnew, and Fan, *Strategies for Sustainable Tourism at the Mogao Grottos of Dunhuang, China*.

117 "China Focus: Record Tourist Numbers Threaten World-Renowned Grottoes."

Although the caves are closely monitored, and the Getty has suggested to cap the number of visitors at 3,000 a day, pressure coming from the overly large number of requests has elevated the limit to 6,000 ‘regular (reserved) tickets’ a day plus an extra of 12,000 ‘temporary (urgent) tickets’. Visitors now have to register in advance in order to enter the site and while waiting there onsite there are two 20-minute movies made for them to watch in the Visitor Centre (which was opened in 2014 with cutting-edge digital technology) before embarking on the walkways to see the 40 selected grottos within a limited time without photography. Nevertheless, it is questionable if these strategies can suffice. Next to the Visitor Centre only nine miles away from the grottos, a private tourist complex was built containing a theatre, shopping centres and hotels. Inside the city of Dunhuang, a construction project with the budget of 250 million RMB including a conference centre and a large theatre has been built to house the said annual Silk Road Cultural Expo. Besides, the airport has been expanded as well with an investment totalled 150 million RMB. Neville Agnew, the leading researcher of the Getty said:

*There is enormous commercial pressure. The growth of the city of Dunhuang depends ultimately on the Mogao Grottos. They are going to have their work cut out to control visitation, and, of course, I think you'd find many people who are interested in development of the region want more visitors.*¹¹⁸

What Agnew feared in 2017 appears to have become reality in 2018 with the ‘national strategy’ revealed via the elevation of tourism to a ministry level. The tourism bureau of Dunhuang has even included the section of ‘investment’ alongside the introduction of the region’s history and the directorate work of the Party¹¹⁹.

In fact, not only the Mogao Grottos but also the entire Dunhuang city is at risk of becoming a second Loulan—also known as Krorān, a disappeared ancient kingdom of the 2nd century BC and an important oasis city along the Silk Road in the north-eastern edge of the Lop Desert. The Crescent Lake, a tourist attraction featuring camel riding, in the southern Dunhuang serves as an indicator. The Lake is now only 218 meters long and 54 meters wide. Naturally formed by fresh spring water, it is now being refilled by tap water¹²⁰ for the depth of it has shrunk from eight meters in the 1960s to zero in 1999 (and then was ‘saved’ by the government to 1.5 meters by such refilling). But how to save the greater region of the Dunhuang oasis is more challenging. Compared to 1950, by the mid-2000s the level of underground water has reduced by 10.77 meters, the areas of swamp, river and lake have shrunk by 23 percent, about 20 percent of steppe has disappeared, more than half of wetlands gone, and the area of desertification has enlarged by about 15 percent with increased sand dune, Gobi desert, saline-alkali

118 Denyer, “China’s Ancient Buddhist Grottoes Face a New Threat — Tourists.”

119 “Introduction to Dunhuang (敦煌市概况).” This practice has become common in many countries around the world.

120 “Crescent Lake: Tiny 2,000-Year-Old Oasis in China That Keeps City Alive Is Saved from Being Swallowed by Desert.”

land, bare area and bare rock gravel¹²¹. In 2013 it was confirmed that the environmental deterioration has worsened. Comparing to the 1970s, the area of wetlands has been reduced by 50 percent, the river and lake by 73 percent and the swamp by 34 percent, and the desert has been approaching Dunhuang in an increased speed of between two and four centimetres per year. And compared to 1950, the area of forest has shrunk by 40 percent, the steppe by 77 percent, the wetlands by 28 percent, the amount and varieties of wild animals such as monkey, puma and camel have become extinct¹²².

The most recent and direct cause for the desertification of Dunhuang is the detriment of forest started in the mid-1990s when the cultural tourism of Mogao Grottos began to boom¹²³. This has exacerbated the already severe situation caused by the increasing population and farmland in the area—from about 30,000 inhabitants in 1950 to 200,000 in the 2000s (with more than a million tourists coming to visit per year) and the farm area increased from 130,000 acres in 1949 to 400,000 acres now. In addition, dams built in the 1960s in the nearby rivers originated from the ice rivers of Qilian mountains also contributed to drying out the Dang river—which was the main water resource that irrigated Dunhuang. Meanwhile, the air pollution has degenerated as well. By analysing the data gathered from aerosol observations conducted in 2012 and comparing it to the previous data collected in 1999, 2004 and 2007, the Institute of Atmospheric Physics in the Chinese Academy of Sciences has concluded that the increasing contribution of human activities is the reason for the deteriorated air quality in Dunhuang as instead of dust there is a mixture of coarse and fine particles being identified in the air¹²⁴.

In 2007, the Gansu Province launched the ‘agenda 2020 in protecting the Dunhuang ecological environment and cultural heritage’ with a total budget of 1,933 million RMB and 20 various construction projects to limit the area of irrigation by 100,000 acres, to reduce the farm area by 500,000 acres and to close 318 mechanical wells so to save the underground water for 50,000,000 cubic meters¹²⁵. In 2011, the State Council announced the ‘master plan for water usage and environment protection’¹²⁶, and in 2015 the regional law to protect the sustainability of Dunhuang heritage has been included in the agenda of

121 “Multiple Reasons for the Deterioration of Mogao Grottos (陆浩:莫高窟壁画大面积脱落是综合因素造成).”

122 Hu, “Reflecting on the Environmental Crisis of Dunhuang (对敦煌生态环境问题的反思).”

123 Bai, “Detriment of Forest, Dunhuang Heritage and the Crescent Lake (伐木沙化、敦煌古蹟毀、月牙泉斷流).”

124 Ma et al., “Optical Properties and Source Analysis of Aerosols over a Desert Area in Dunhuang, Northwest China.”

125 “Gansu Strives to Improve Dunhuang Ecological Environment by 2020 (甘肃力争到2020年使敦煌生态环境逐步修复).”

126 Feng, “Dunhuang New Water Policy to Stop Environmental Deterioration (敦煌灌区实施节水改造 遏止生态环境恶化趋势).”

legalisation¹²⁷. Nevertheless, still very little report was found for the following-ups and instead endless campaigns mushroomed everywhere with the promotion of BRI—claimed by China to be the ‘most ambitious development plan to shape our century¹²⁸ and further unite the world after the Marshall Plan (1947-1952)¹²⁹ (which has divided the world and constructed the battle lines of Cold War¹³⁰)—and Dunhuang as the centre stage would continue to thrive in tourism.

Sub-Conclusion: The Economic Lives of Dunhuang Collections

With the times of wars ended and the times of peace arriving in the second half of the 20th century in most parts of the world, the public uses of Dunhuang heritage shifted from the realm of politics to economics—although the two were often intertwined and closely related as seen in the studies of ‘political economy’. Retracing their diplomatic lives in the previous Chapter 4 provides a clue that the neoliberal turn of cultural heritage was propelled by the invented idea of UNESCO to link heritage preservation and development work by tourism industry. After the end of Cold War, political ideology gave room to economic development and both in the West and China thrived to foster heritage tourism. Cultural economics became a welcomed subject preoccupied in the museum world despite the fragmented studies. Investigating the value creation and proposition of Dunhuang objects with various models of political economy, involving museum praxis and heritage enterprise, can provide a vivid illustration. One alarming and urgent call is the environmental crisis caused by overdeveloped heritage-based tourism economy. This tertiary industry which used to be considered a ‘sustainable way’ to reutilize cultural heritage, now needs to find a solution for its ‘sustainability’ not only in the environmental but also in the social and cultural domains. And riding on this neoliberal turn is the digital turn of cultural heritage around the mid-1990s as presented in the following chapter. Instead of providing solutions to the atoms of cultural heritage, the bits have brought forth a new set of questions such as copyright, the ‘digital divide’ and entertainment oriented inclination under the utopic idea of ‘cultural commons’.

127 Gansu: Sustainable Protection of Dunhuang Heritage to the agenda of legalisation (甘肅歷史文化名城保護提上立法議程).

128 “Our World 2017 China New Silk Road.”

129 “Free Exchange Xi vs Marshall: Will China’s Belt and Road Initiative Outdo the Marshall Plan?”

130 Steil, *The Marshall Plan: Dawn of the Cold War*.

6 Dunhuang in the Digital Land

The information revolution enabled by computing technology has transformed the era of postmodernism or postcolonialism to posthumanism¹. As predicted by Nicolas Negroponte² from the Media Lab of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1995, in the belief to make a better world through ‘decentralizing, globalizing, harmonizing and empowering’, now telephone calls have gone through the air and information over cables (Negroponte Switch), interfaces of touch-screen technology and voice recognition software have replaced mouse, virtual newspapers customized for individual readers have replaced conventional press and media, and everything that could have been digitised has been, including cultural heritage. Under the auspices of digital technology in collection management systems, interactive and immersive exhibition design and online education programmes, ‘digital heritage’ or ‘digital humanities’³ are emerging and so is ‘digital Dunhuangology’. That, I argue, can be examined by tracing how ‘being digital’ can transform Dunhuang collections’ 1) cataloguing and dissemination, 2) exhibition presentation and experience and 3) education programs in mobile and web environments. Amidst this upsurge of digital museology, the question of ‘ownership’ re-emerges. The concept and practice of the ‘cultural commons’, following the ‘digital commons’, is explored with a new question ‘who owns digital heritage?’ Guarded by laws of intellectual property rights and economic potential, ‘digital repatriation’ becomes a potent solution—though one associated with concerns of another looting or plundering of cultural property from the ‘Others’ in the virtual world, since ‘digital divides’ do exist in the realm of digital cultural heritage or digital humanites and especially between the West and China. The ‘Heritage game’ in the world of atoms can extend to this virtual world of ‘bits’ as well, as seen in the emerging digital innovation economy, the experience economy or attention economy in the heritage sector. This ground-breaking investigation of the cutting-edge development of digital Dunhuangology or digital

1 Braidotti, *The Posthuman*.

2 Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

3 A specialised area in academia mostly led by media (technology) departments, as seen in the academic communities during the past two decades such as ICHIM, Museum and the Web, NODEM, Digital Heritage, Museum Next, etc.

museology is calibrated with a futuristic envisioning of an inclusive museum and a philosophical reflection—on the notions such as aura and authenticity, simulacrum and the black-box as well as post-humanism in digital huminites.

6.1 Towards a Digital Dunhuangology

The digitisation of GLAM institutes worldwide embodied in the collection management, exhibition interpretation and online education of Dunhuang collections has brought forth a ‘digital Dunhuangology’. Of which, the pioneering International Project of Dunhuang (IDP), initiated in 1995 led by the British Library, represents one of the earliest examples, unifying dispersed important collections in virtual space. With advanced virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) computer imaging technologies and the pervasive applications of handheld tablets, the ‘experience economy’ of interactive and immersive exhibition design on the Mogao Grottos has been a success. Especially with the smartphone, which has become more and more user friendly and powerful, the ways to communicate cultural heritage have been revolutionised, as seen in the virtual museum, mobile exhibition tour guide, podcasts, digital book and social media, which have substantially made Malraux’s idea of ‘museums without walls’⁴ come true.

6.1.1 Cataloguing and Digitisation

6.1.1.1 *Cataloguing the Dunhuang Collections*

The uncatalogued and inaccessible heritage collections are unavailable for knowledge making, although that does not stop them being used as a token of value or a symbol of power (as discussed in Chapter 4). The journey for the Dunhuang collections from being simply unknown artefacts to meaningful objects is long. One of the main reasons is that their displacement or relocation from their ‘country of origin’ to dozens of GLAM institutes worldwide have created certain barriers for needed studies, such as national borders, different languages, various methods of inventory making, and diverse organisational cultures. As revealed in Chapter 2, the early Chinese Dunhuangologists often complained about how difficult it was to access the collections ‘(safe)guarded’ by, for example, the British Museum (or the British Library⁵) and the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Although media technologies such as glass plate photography and microfilm have been widely used to communicate the collections in the first half of the 20th century and digital media since the 1960s (in collection management), it has

4 Malraux, *The Psychology of Art, Vol. I: Museum without Walls*.

5 The British Library became independent from the British Museum in 1973 administratively, and in 1997 spatially.

taken until the era of World Wide Web⁶ in the 1990s⁷ that cultural heritage collections like the Dunhuang objects, scattered across dozens of memory institutes around the world, could become accessible for distant curator, researcher, and audiences across borders.

From the perspective of knowledge-making, the ‘institutionalisation’ of Dunhuang collections in the early 20th century signifies a systematic process through which a material object of an archaeological find is identified and registered into an ‘information system’ configured by a certain ontological infrastructure, so to become an abstract subject of knowledge. In the pre-Internet age, this information or documentation system was built by different methods of inventory making, composed by for example the accession number, accession register, card catalogue and location system⁸. In the early 20th century, when the Dunhuang objects arrived at their respective hosting GLAM institutes, they were registered into such inventory systems with catalogue cards marked with accession numbers and the names of their collector (as discussed earlier, for example in France they were registered as the ‘Pelliot collections’ and in Britain the ‘Stein collections’⁹). Such inventory systems can vary from institute to institute and their purpose was designated solely for curatorial management and research inquiries.

As a matter of fact, proper cataloguing requires a certain degree of research on the object. The characteristics noted in the ‘catalogue card’—such as genre, age, material, size, author, provenance, date of entry, location of preservation, loan history, restoration history, content description, etc.—resulted from intensive antiquarian studies, which is not only time consuming but can also be language or culture specific. For instance, as the ‘cultural heir’¹⁰ of the Dunhuang manuscripts, Qing literati like Luo Zhengyu and Wang Guowei were the first to publish the ‘catalogue of Dunhuang objects’ (based on the small exposé presented by Pelliot). Although Pelliot himself was a sinologist, the work of cataloguing

- 6 The (World Wide) Web is an information space in which the items of interest, referred to as resources, are identified by global identifiers called Uniform Resource Identifiers (URI). The first web browser, server and webpage was written in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee. The technologies used to construct the Web are URLs, HTTP, HTML, etc. However, the Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that exchange data by packet switching using the standardized Internet Protocol Suite (TCP/IP). The origins of the Internet date back to research projects commissioned by the federal government of the United States in 1960s.
- 7 The Web is based on the Internet developed since the 1960s, and contributes to the so-called Third Industrial Revolution. See Rifkin, *The Third Industrial Revolution: How Lateral Power Is Transforming Energy, the Economy, and the World*.
- 8 Avaro, *Documentation of Museum Collection: Why, How, Practical Guide*.
- 9 Wang and Perkins, *Handbook to the Collections of Sir Aurel Stein in the UK*.
- 10 Roberts and Vander Linden, *Investigating Archaeological Cultures: Material Culture, Variability, and Transmission*. ‘Cultural ancestry and descendant’ is a contested topic in anthropology over the 20th century, the work of ‘historical linguistics’ shows that it is possible to trace the ancestry of languages and the concept of ‘cultural transmission’ following the Darwinism views cultural systems as evolutionary (see page 68). It is based on such notion that I assume the Chinese scholars are the cultural descendant of the Dunhuang collections.

the ‘Pelliot collections’ of the Bibliothèque nationale de France could not be accomplished without the help of Chinese or Japanese¹¹ Dunhuangologists from across the sea, simply because most of the ‘medieval encyclopaedia of Central Asia’ were written in classic Chinese. These Dunhuangologists included Naba Toshisada and Wang Chong-Min (1903-1975)¹² in the 1930s¹³, Wu Chi-Yu in the 1950s, Dzo Chingchuan in the 1960s, Ikeda On and Zhang Guang-Da in the 1990s¹⁴, and Françoise Wang-Toutain in the 2000s¹⁵. As to the Stein collections in Britain, such tasks seem to have been more challenging due to the lack of such collaboration. Stein meanwhile, lamenting his ‘total want of Sinologist training with reference to those masses of Chinese manuscript which formed the preponderating bulk both of the hidden library and of what (he) was able to bring away from it’, had to send over 440 manuscripts¹⁶ to Pelliot in Paris for help in 1911¹⁷. These were out of a total of over 9,000 Chinese items, of which under a rapid scrutinization, Pelliot found that about one-third of them consisted of complete text scrolls and two-thirds were detached records and fragmentary texts. The latter were specifically stressed by Pelliot to have the greatest importance for the advance of Sinology, because they were mostly about the secular life with historic, geographic, and legislative information. However, in 1913, Pelliot had to admit that he was not able to produce the catalogue as requested. Unlike Pelliot, who kept an amicable relationship with the sinologists of Peking, almost immediately after founding his Dunhuang collection, the Sino-British collaborations of the sort did not occur until much later¹⁸. As a result, these ‘important collections’ of Stein were found uncatalogued, unpublished and inaccessible until the 1980s¹⁹. The situation was reported as well in a paper of 2005 while introducing the ground-breaking International Dunhuang Project:

- 11 It is worth noticing that the early development of Japanese Dunhuangology was largely based on the contribution of the Qing literati as Luo Zhengyu and Wang Guowei who were invited by Otani to Kyoto in 1913 for a long stay to study his collections from Dunhuang (as seen in Chapter 2).
- 12 Original in Chinese as ‘王重民’, in French as ‘Wang Tchong-Min’.
- 13 Wang, *Catalogue Des Collections Pelliot A et B 2*; Pelliot, Wang, and Wu, *Catalogue Des Manuscrits Chinois de Touen-Houang 1, Nos 2001-2500*.
- 14 On, Zhang, and Trombert, *Les Manuscrits Chinois de Koutcha: Fonds Pelliot de La Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.
- 15 Wang, *Catalogue Des Manuscrits Chinois de Touen-Houang VI Fragments Chinois Du Fonds Pelliot Tibétain de La Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.
- 16 Wood, “A Tentative Listing of the Stein Manuscripts in Paris 1911-1919.”
- 17 Wood; Sims-Williams, “Aurel Stein’s Correspondence with Paul Pelliot and Lionel Barnett.”
- 18 The preliminary cataloguing of the Stein’s Chinese collections in Britain was carried out in the 1910s by Edward Denison Ross and in the 1920s by Lionel Giles.
- 19 Rong, *Account on Foreign Collections of Dunhuang and Turfan Manuscripts* (海外敦煌吐魯番文獻知見錄). The excuse given by the British Library was that ‘it was difficult for conservators to process such a big amount of materials that were antique, fragile and unique’.

*The Chinese Section at the British Library has been collaborating with Chinese scholars for three decades to make material more accessible. As a result, the previously unconserved and uncatalogued fragments from Dunhuang (Or.8210/S.6981 onwards) were all conserved in the 1980s and cataloguing taken on by Professors Rong Xinjiang (non-Buddhist material) and Fang Guangchang (Buddhist fragments). The first catalogue was completed in 1999 and Professor Fang's is nearing completion. Professor Sha Zhi has also recently completed his catalogue of Chinese fragments. Dr Jake Dalton and Dr Sam van Schaik's catalogue of the Tibetan tantric material is now online and will be published next year, Professor Tsuguhito Takeuchi has catalogued other non-Buddhist Tibetan material, and Professor Oktor Skjaervø has catalogued the Khotanese fragments. Work is now starting on the Sanskrit material. These are just some of the major projects on the British Library manuscripts.*²⁰

As a matter of fact, in 1910 a Qing literati Chang Yuanji (1867-1959)²¹, a media baron who was acquainted with those early Chinese Dunhuangologists, travelled to Paris and London to negotiate publishing the Pelliot and Stein collections in China with the Commercial Press²²—one of the earliest Chinese modern publishing houses founded in 1897 in Shanghai. The results he acquired from Paris and London were completely different²³. In London his approach to Stein was seemingly denied, yet in Paris he was able to 'have a glimpse at the storage which was located in secretive dark basement locked by several metal-doors under the personal supervision of Pelliot, who held the keys on his waist belt' and attained an agreement for further cooperation²⁴. During this period of time, while the comprehensive catalogues were unavailable, the only way for the Japanese or Chinese Dunhuangologists²⁵ to study the collections was to travel by sea, apply to the host institutions, hand-transcribe the contents of selected manuscripts within limited time if permissions were granted, and bring their notes home for further studies and publications. Errors occurred every so often, and have become an obstacle for those that could not afford to access the original materials in person²⁶. Such unsatisfying accessibility of the Dunhuang collections in the West, has fuelled the patriotic sentiment in China as described previously²⁷.

20 Whitfield, "The International Dunhuang Project."

21 Original in Chinese as '張元濟'.

22 Original in Chinese as '商務印書館'.

23 Rong, "Chinese Dunhuangology and International Perspective (中國敦煌學研究與國際視野)."

24 Liu and Meng, *A Hundred Years of Dunhuang*.

25 For example in the earlier times Dong Kang, Liu Fu, Hu Shi, Fu Sinian, Zheng Zhengduo, and Xiang Da (original in Chinese as 董康、劉復、胡適、傅斯年、鄭振鐸、向達).

26 Pan, *New Dunhuang Tanjing* (敦煌壇經新書).

27 This also contradicted the later claim of 'universal museum' that the important collections as such belong to all mankind. It also caused the fundamental question about the 'ethics' of owing the cultural objects from the 'Others'—of whom the 'cultural right' has been deprived.

6.1.1.2 *Dunhuang Collections Online*

The situation described above was significantly improved by the digital technology as claimed by the IDP²⁸, which resulted from a conference in 1993, held in order to address the problem of ‘preserving’ and ‘accessing’ the collections. Although the directorate of IDP was established at the British Library, the initial funding came from Taiwan and until now most of the budget necessary relied on external sponsorships. The Project was to collaborate with other GLAM institutes around the world to work together ‘by reuniting all these artefacts through the highest quality digital photography, by coordinating international teams of conservators, cataloguers and researcher to ensure the objects’ preservation and cataloguing, and by pushing the limited of new web technologies to make this material access to all. Putting the digitised images of Dunhuang objects into an interactive online archive, including the manuscripts, paintings, textiles, artefacts and sites, the IDP enabled free access on the Internet so to encourage Dunhuangology and facilitate educational and research programs²⁹. Officially starting the digitisation work in 1997, the IDP launched an ‘interactive web database’ in 1998 containing over 20,000 manuscripts and over 1,000 images. In 2002, a century after the Chinese abbot’s miraculous discovery, the Dunhuang collections overseas could finally be accessed by the Chinese people freely and easily online with the Chinese website of IDP being established in 2002 based on the collaboration built in 2001 between the IDP and the National Library of China in Beijing³⁰. In the following years, other mirrored websites were established in the main hosting institutes in France, Russia, Germany, Japan and Korea. Almost all of the major holders of Dunhuang objects, including the Institute for Oriental Manuscripts of Ryukoku University, the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Science and Humanities, the British Museum, the Musée Guimet and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, participated to provide data and host the multilingual website and database of IDP. This Project therefore was acclaimed to be:

*...an amazing example of the importance, power and potential inherent in digital collaboration. This project provides resources to all levels of users from school-children to post-doctoral researchers. It offers a springboard for collaboration and is an inspiration for other cross-cultural, multidimensional library-related websites.*³¹

In fact, the database software of IDP was purchased in 1994 and the data structure designed and implemented by a programmer (Michael Kaye) and a Dunhuangologist (Susan Whitfield). The ontological structure was constructed based on the Dunhuang manuscript and various artefacts including paintings, textiles,

28 Whitfield, “The International Dunhuang Project”; Falconer and Whitfield, “International Dunhuang Project: Working on Stein’s Archaeological Legacy.”

29 Whitfield, “The International Dunhuang Project: The Silkroad Online.”

30 Although the initial funding was provided by Taiwan, the Chinese IDP website was built in Beijing (and Dunhuang) instead of Taiwan.

31 Beasley and Kail, “The International Dunhuang Project.”



FIGURE 6.1 Image search with details on IDP (British Library Board and The Trustees of the British Museum)

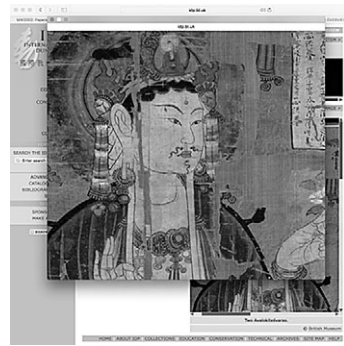


FIGURE 6.2 Image search on IDP (British Library Board and The Trustees of the British Museum)

photographs, maps and the grottos. The targeted users were 1) the staff of holding GLAM institutes, including curators and conservators who manage the collections, 2) scholars and researchers who need to consult the collections, and 3) the wider audience wishing to learn about the collections. As stated, in 2002 the Chinese website of IDP was established with an added data synchronization system to show the newly uploaded data from the main server in London³². To meet the needs of the three types of users, the search engine of IDP functioned by pressmark, pre-defined values, and free text³³. For example, Figure 6.1 demonstrates a search result defined by ‘painting’: the image was selected at random out of 1,245 items found in this category from the British Museum. The left side of the image shows the information of host institute, provenance, form, material, size, and a short and long catalogue entry, to explain and interpret the content of the chosen painting from the perspective of art history in subject, style, date, and significance. Clicking on the option ‘large image’ from the header bar produces a higher definition image, in order to show the details of the painting (as seen in Figure 6.2).

Being the earliest project of the sort, like said the IDP has become a leading example in digitising the dispersed ‘important collections’ of universal museums. The other collections of a similar nature started to apply the same method, as seen in the fact that the professional team of IDP located at the British Library began to provide similar services for external projects in consultancy, digitisation, image management and website design. Such projects included the Mongolian manuscripts at Cambridge University and the historical photographs of the Hunza Valley at the Ismaili Centre and SOAS³⁴. By 2018, two decades after launching the IDP, the total number of entries from all the host GLAM institutes involved reached 143,205 with the total images accounting for 518,755³⁵ (as seen

32 Whitfield, “IDP Technical.”

33 IDP, “IDP Advanced Search.”

34 Whitfield, “IDP Services.”

35 IDP, “IDP Statistics.”

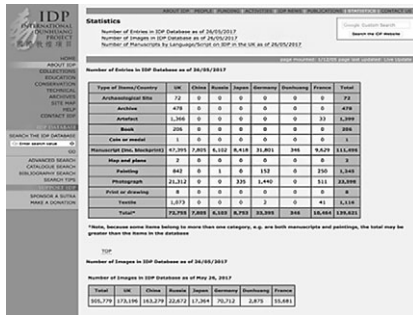


FIGURE 6.3 IDP Statistics 2018 June (British Library Board)

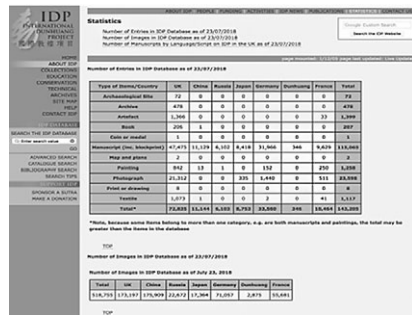


FIGURE 6.4 IDP Statistics 2017 June (British Library Board)

in Figure 6.3). However, comparing this chart of statistics with one from a year earlier (as seen in Figure 6.4) shows that the increased numbers were produced only by Britain, China and Germany but not from Russia or France—the two major hosting institutes of Dunhuang collections in the West.

Currently, the webpage design of this revolutionary Project seems to be outdated, in terms of functionality and usability—without adopting the latest UI and UX technology or considering the need of multimodality befitting all screens, some of the major GLAM institutes that hold the Dunhuang collections have built their own websites with all these features in addition to integrating with the cutting-edge collection management system and free-to-access online collection databases³⁶. In terms of ‘usability’, these websites are rather satisfying judging by their performances in site organisation, operability, readable content, error-free information, readily identifiable links, reliable access and quick page loading. After a preliminary assessment in 2018 June, based on the guidelines of ‘website evaluation’³⁷ targeted at the items (in addition to the above mentioned ones) including the purpose, structure, interaction and navigation, I would rank the websites as follows: the Freer Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian³⁸, the British Museum³⁹, the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin⁴⁰, the Musée Guimet⁴¹, the Hermitage Museum⁴², and lastly the Dunhuang Academy⁴³. It is worth noticing that the websites of GLAM institutes in the United States and Britain are in general superior to the rest. This is also a reflection of the various economic models of cultural heritage, as discussed in Chapter 5. Eventually, in a neoliberal market

36 Sully, “Inventory, Access, Interpretation: The Evolution of Museum Collection Management Software.”
 37 “IT Accessibility: Website Evaluation.”
 38 Smithsonian, “Open Collections.”
 39 British Museum, “Collection Online.”
 40 SMB, “SMB-Digital: Online Collections Database.”
 41 “Collections.”
 42 Hermitage, “Collection Online.”
 43 “Digital Dunhuang.”

system, the capacity to catch up with the (digital) market of heritage enterprise (while keeping the museum's social responsibilities integral) is greater than in the other systems as seen in France, Russia or China where the state intervention or interference in cultural heritage remains remarkable.

6.1.2 Systems of Communication in the Milieu of Exhibition

The abstract representations or signs of material things are fundamental in communication. Language, signs, sounds, objects and images are all positioned within a certain 'system of communication' in the milieu of museum exhibition, as discussed in Chapter 4. Being one of the essential functions of museum institutions, exhibitions are intended to carry out education or mediation and these tasks are achieved through these representations or signs. Inspecting the Dunhuang exhibitions, it is evident that the development of a tangible representation system in the milieu of museum exhibition started from handcrafted devices to digital media technology. And both have created various exhibition economies, for example in the art market and in the creative and digital economy (as discussed in Chapter 6.3.3) of Dunhuang heritage.

6.1.2.1 *The Art and Craft of Early Dunhuang Preservation and Exhibition*

Prior to the digital era, the 'meaning making and message delivering' occurred in the enclosed space of museum exhibition relied on conventional media, such as print, slides, diorama, panorama, photography, film, etc. And later digital technologies became employed also in the exhibition communication. From desktop computer booths to touchscreen stands and portable tablets, from the conventional audio guide using a rented or borrowed device, to the downloadable guide application using one's own smartphone, the interactive or immersive experience of museum exhibition has become a new frontline for young start-ups of digital innovation to implement their products⁴⁴. The claim that media technology is turning museums into a booming industry has been made, especially in the United States and Britain. The former has Silicon Valley as the driving force of world leading digital enterprises, and the latter has recognized the trend and elevated 'digital innovation' to the secretary department for the arts, as seen the renewal of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in 2017⁴⁵.

As discussed in Chapter 4.2.2, the art of Dunhuang has been a major theme for exhibition events on important occasions in China and abroad since the post-War era. Due to the simple fact that the important collections of Dunhuang have been removed overseas and the murals of the grottos were immovable, the exhibitions were limited in what they could display—such as those artistically copied murals on silk papers. As stated above, this was regarded as a proper

44 Song, "How Technology Is Turning Museums into a Booming Industry"; Furness, "Art Galleries Must Embrace Digital Technology as Teh Battle against Phones Is Lost."

45 This Department was originated from the Department of National Heritage, which created in 1992 and was renamed to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 1997.

way to ‘preserve’ the fragile wall paintings in China from the 1940s to the 1980s. According to the ‘report of preparatory work’ for establishing the ‘national art institute of Dunhuang’ (Dunhuang Academy) dated on the 17th of August in 1942⁴⁶, Article 10 ‘Start Photograph and Reproduction’ states:

*All frescos and statues in the grottos that are of recognisable forms and features and are valuable for further research should be photographed...as to their colours, which cannot be authentically recorded by photography, we should seek proper materials (i.e. pigment and silk paper) to ‘imitate and copy or reproduce’ the original ones. The preliminary results by far are rather satisfying, and from now on we will make plans to set the priorities of chosen frescos and continue the ‘copy-paintings’, which can be used as well in national museum exhibition or in print reproduction. For this art treasure of a remote borderland to be appreciated by the common public, the current funding is insufficient as it is difficult to mass manufacture the fresco’s copy-painting due to the fact that the materials needed, such as paper, textile, silk, or brush, are extremely expensive. It is necessary to apply for a significant amount of funding from the government so to promote this art of our nation that can represent the Eastern culture.*⁴⁷

In addition, it was specified that such ‘preserving’ should include tasks such as copying the facades of the grottos, making three-dimensional models out of them, measuring and mapping their architectural structures, and copy-painting the representative frescos from various dynasties (entirely or partially in real, smaller or bigger size) so to record or document the development of artistic technique, motif and colour. The working principle should be ‘objective’ so to authentically copy the original form and colour, and ‘subjective’ so to recover the broken image to its original state. By far, more than 2,300 pieces of copy-paintings of the murals have been completed and the entire frescos of 15 grottos transcribed. Examples are many. For example, the artistic duplicates of a Tang dynasty mural from the cave number 130 by Duan Wenje, and the life sized reproduced model of the cave number 158 (displayed in 2008 in Beijing at the National Museum of China during the Olympic Games). These works of ‘artistic-preservation’ of the Dunhuang art have become display objects of Dunhuang exhibitions in China and abroad (as discussed in Chapter 4) and have formed a solid foundation for the digital restoration and conservation of the Mogao Grottos since the end of the 1980s, under the auspices of Getty Conservation Institute.

46 Shi, “On Copying the Frescos (莫高窟创建1650周年系列报道之十一：临摹篇—与千年前的画工对话).”

47 Original in Chinese as ‘洞窟壁画图案塑像其外貌形式及内藏有供研究价值之材料均拟一一摄制照片……其色彩部分，有非摄影所能为力者，本会拟应用能觅得之材料（颜料及纸张等）逐一临摹依原色绘制，现已开始试作，成绩尚佳，此后拟即按照计划分门别类择优继续摹制，作为战后国家美术馆之陈列品或复制印刷，此俾偏处一隅之艺术宝藏，得为一般人所共赏，为所需材料纸、布、绢、笔等均极昂贵，按照目前经费情形甚难做大规模之制作，为发扬我国艺术集东方文化计想，当局定能拨发巨款促成此举也。’



FIGURE 6.5 *Pure Land 360* (2012) by Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw, City University of Hong Kong



FIGURE 6.6 *Pure Land AR* (2012) by Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw, City University of Hong Kong

6.1.2.2 *Digital Media Technology for Immersive Virtual Reality of Dunhuang*

Applying digital media in conservation and to create virtual experiences of the Mogao Grottos has become a specialised area in the past decade⁴⁸. In 2011, the research project ‘applying digital technology to Dunhuang art’ was launched by the Academia Sinica and the National Taiwan University, with sponsorship coming from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation⁴⁹. The Dunhuang Academy provided the Mogao Grottos cave number 61 and 254 for this experimental study and the results were presented in 2013—including an animation program of two Buddhist stories depicted on the murals of the cave number 254, a restoration of a few female portraits on the southern wall and the centrepiece statue of the cave number 61. And an interactive virtual tour navigating system was developed with an interface to be operated by doll-look device, hand gesture, tablet and mobile.

In addition, another digital project (Figure 6.5) to create an ‘immersive virtual reality experience’ of Mogao Grottos was undertaken by a team in Hong Kong⁵⁰, the results of which have been presented in 2012 at the Sackler Gallery of the Smithsonian Institute and in 2016 at the NSW Gallery (Figure 6.6). The programme developed was called *Pure Land* and the said two exhibitions showed two different editions developed from high-resolution photographs and laser-scanned data acquired from the cave number 220. Augmented reality computer imaging technology was employed to reveal details of the murals to an unprecedented level. This programme included much work on animation, 3D modelling, pictorial re-colouring, digital enlargement, and sound design. The multi-layered multimedia environment created could be interactively explored and provided an immersive visual experience that was said to ‘bring new life to the aesthetic, narrative and spiritual drama of the cave painting and sculpture’⁵¹.

48 Lutz and Weintke, “Virtual Dunhuang Art Cave: A Cave within a CAVE”; Wei, Liu, and Pan, “Using Hybrid Knowledge Engineering and Image Processing in Color Virtual Restoration of Ancient Murals”; Peternier et al., “Practical Design and Implementation of a Cave Environment”;

49 Huang, “Research Project on Digital Dunhuang (敦煌石窟藝術與數位整合研究計畫).”

50 The production team was led by Sarah Kenderdine and Jeffrey Shaw in the Applied Laboratory for Interactive Visualization and Embodiment of the City University in Hong Kong.

51 Kenderdine, “Pure Land: Inhabiting the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang.”



FIGURE 6.7 A virtual immersive experience at the Getty Centre 2016 by yU+co

Following this VR and AR trend, the grand exhibition *Cave Temples of Dunhuang: Buddhist Art on China's Silk Road*, held in 2016 by the Getty Centre to celebrate the collaboration between the Getty Conservation Institute and the Dunhuang Academy, further explored the immersive exhibition with the Oculus virtual reality system (Figure 6.7). In addition to dozens of authentic artefacts borrowed from the British Museum and the Musée Guimet, as well as the life-size replicas of the caves number 275, 285 and 320, this Oculus-ready immersive exhibit was created of the murals in grotto number 45. A visitor experience was reported:

*Visitors first watch a montage of nature scenes from the caves projected on large screens before putting on 3D glasses and going into a separate room where the cave is rendered in lifelike size and detail. There, a narrator highlights and explains individual elements....*⁵²

For the AR production the Getty Museum commissioned a private media content producer⁵³ (specialising in motion graphics for TV programs and movies). The budget was provided by the Dunhuang Foundation US, which was established in 2010 by Mimi Gates⁵⁴—an art historian and the spouse of Bill Gates the co-founder of Microsoft. The award winning⁵⁵ show took two years to produce with photographs taken directly from the site and then texture-mapped onto a 3D framework to be displayed on a curved screen in a circular space.

As to the Mogao Grottos 'archaeological site museum', administered by the Dunhuang Academy, the collaboration with the Getty Conservation Institute has continued (following the previous project which focused on the conservation of grottos and was accomplished in 2005) to study how to best present the grottos with adequate lighting, adjustable platform, proper interpretation and panel setting. In order to control the overcrowded visitors, a visitor management strategy was implemented in 2014 (in reaction to the booming cultural tourism as discussed in Chapter 5)⁵⁶. In order to prepare the onsite visitors with better

52 Pressberg, "LA's Getty Center Blends Oculus-Ready VR With Ancient Chinese Art In Virtual Reality Museum Exhibit."

53 "The Getty Cave Temples of Dunhuang."

54 "Our Role: Dunhuang Foundation"; Gates et al., "The Dunhuang Heritage: Digital Preservations and Challenges."

55 AAM 2017 MUSE Award Gold for Multimedia Installation.

56 "Wall Paintings Conservation at Mogao Grottoes."



FIGURE 6.8 Snapshot of British Museum Website in the 1990s (Internet Archive and The Trustees of the British Museum)

understandings prior to the short visit (due to the environmental concern the time of visit has been limited, as discussed) a ‘Visitor Centre’ was constructed to show a planetarium movie of Dunhuang and a documentary film of Dunhuang⁵⁷. These digitally reproduced images of the murals and grottos have been put online since 2016 for the common public⁵⁸ to access from distance.

6.1.3 Museum Without Walls in the Mobile and Web Environment

6.1.3.1 Virtual Museums for Dunhuang Objects

The ideal of André Malraux (1901-1976), a ‘museum without walls’⁵⁹, has acquired a new meaning in the 21st century. The mobile and web environment, made ready and available by the Internet and the handheld personal computer (smartphone), has put the ‘virtual museum’ in our pocket, available to be accessed ‘at anytime from anywhere’⁶⁰. In fact, the term ‘virtual museum’ was generated from applying the digital technology and the Web to communicate the contents of cultural heritage. In a broader sense, it means ‘a collection of digitally recorded images, sound files, text documents, and other data of historical, scientific, or cultural interest that are accessed through electronic media’⁶¹. And in a narrower definition, it indicates ‘a digital entity that draws on the characteristics of a museum, in order to complement, enhance, or augment the museum through personalisation, interactivity, user experience and riches of content’⁶². Since the mid-1990s, the GLAM institutes worldwide have strived to not become obsolete in a virtual world: from having a text based website to advertise exhibitions and to provide visitor information (as seen in Figure 6.8) to progressively including more functions (such as multilingual webpage options and Mac or PC specific interfaces) and now striving to build a Web 2.0 version with further improved webpage design—which can increase the usability and interoperability of the site and can

57 “The Visitors’ Centre at Dunhuang.”

58 “Digital Dunhuang.”

59 Malraux, *The Psychology of Art, Vol. 1: Museum without Walls*.

60 The launch of Apple’s App Store in 2008 precluded the development boom of the so-called ‘ubiquitous and pervasive computing’ of smartphone. ‘Access by anyone from anywhere at any time’ has quickly become a must-have commercial slogan for the smartphone product advertiser, marketer, developer, programmer, sales, etc. See Symonds, *Ubiquitous and Pervasive Computing: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications*.

61 “Virtual Museum.”

62 Polycarpou, “The ViMM Definition of a Virtual Museum.”

allow the user or visitor to generate content, interact and collaborate with each other through social networking sites and social media sites. By establishing online presences and applying multimodal applications to engage the interest of visitors, the GLAM institutes also have endeavoured to explore and to generate more incomes from e-commerce.

By far, most of the GLAM institutes holding Dunhuang collections have created their own 'virtual avatars' online either with inhouse webmasters, programmers and graphic designers or with commissioned private Internet companies to outsource the tasks. In addition to these 'virtual universal museums' there are other third-party provided platforms built by private commercial companies to legitimately 'host, display and mediate' the digitised Dunhuang collections of these museums for free or with various marketing deals, such as the Google Arts & Culture⁶³ (formerly Google Art Project⁶⁴), the Internet Archive, the Wikimedia⁶⁵, and the Europeana Collections⁶⁶. These can also be understood as some kind of 'virtual museum' for the Dunhuang collections, although the amount of objects being displayed is often limited as they are selectively chosen to be uploaded by the hosting GLAM institutes for the purpose of marketing and publicity. Both the 'virtual universal museums' and the third-party hosted heritage platforms can have education, communication or mediation programs implemented through various digital media and social media.

Now a simple click on the search engine like Google or Bing can enable netizens from all over the world to visit the 'virtual displays' of Dunhuang collections from the most used sources. For instance, with the google search keyword set to 'Dunhuang collections' in English on a search mode preconditioned to be 'default' and 'non-commercial', 421,000 results were generated on the 26th May 2017 and 485,000 results were generated on 29th July 2018. For the former search, among the 30 entries listed on the first three pages of results, more than half were generated from non-commercial publishers, with the first few organisations found to be the IDP (British Library), Wikipedia, British Museum, Washington University, Getty, the Dunhuang Academy, etc. For the second search the situation remained more or less the same, except the order changed to Wikipedia, IDP, Dunhuang Academy, British Museum, and the Getty. In addition, the 'image' search results (Figure 6.9 and 6.10) showed: in 2017, most of the images produced by Google were provided by those 'virtual universal museums' of Dunhuang collections, especially the IDP of British Library, and in 2018 by the third-party platforms such as Wikipedia or Flickr. The order of Google search results is determined by a link analysis algorithm called PageRank, which functions by counting the 'number' and 'quality' of the links to a searched result and

63 'Google Arts & Culture', *Google.Com* <<https://artsandculture.google.com/>> [accessed 26 November 2018]. Launched in 2011, the Google Art & Culture (originally the Google Art Project) by mid-2012 had partnerships agreements signed by 151 museums from 40 countries already.

64 Proctor, "The Google Art Project: A New Generation of Musums on The Web."

65 Wikidata, "Wikidata: Wiki Project Built Heritage."

66 Europeana, "Europeana Collections."



FIGURE 6.9 Screenshot of Google Image Search 26.5.2017



FIGURE 6.10 Screenshot of Google Image Search 29.7.2018

so determine how important this webpage is. In addition to its vulnerability to manipulation, one of the major criticisms towards PageRank is that it is ‘the structure of network (extend of connectivity)’ rather than the ‘semantic contents’ or the ‘relevancy’ of the searched webpage that decides the page’s page rank⁶⁷. However imperfect, the accessibility to the digital Dunhuang collections online has made it possible to reconcile with the complaint of those early Dunhuang-ologists in China, as mentioned earlier.

6.1.3.2 Mobile Interpretation of Dunhuang Collections

Viewing the fast growth of smartphone users, smartphone penetration rates⁶⁸ and mobile applications⁶⁹, the portable and wireless devices have become a prioritized choice for the GLAM institutes of Dunhuang collections to engage with the audiences⁷⁰ (and vice versa⁷¹). In addition to the aforementioned tablet-operated ‘interactive and immersive exhibition’ of VR and AR technology, it has become important for cultural institutes to transform their websites into a up-to-date Web 2.0 version with a mobile friendly design (as shown in Figure 6.11) or a responsive design (as seen in Figure 6.12), where the mobile site was separated from the desktop site) to include desktop, laptop, tablet and smartphone users⁷². Many ‘virtual museums’ of Dunhuang collections mentioned above have established a digital strategy for such adaptation, for example the Musée Guimet and the British Museum. The former has incorporated a simplified way of navigation with smaller image display while the static content remained unchanged and could be operated by all operating systems. Yet the latter created a responsive site

67 “Criticism on PageRank – Axis of Evil in the Spam-Crowded Web?”

68 Statista, “Number of Smartphone Users Worldwide 2014-2020.”

69 As seen in the App Store (now iTunes) of Apple for iOS system and in the Android Market (now Google Play) for Android system. Both were launched in 2008, the former in July and the latter in October.

70 Tallon and Walker, *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience: Handheld Guides and Other Media*.

71 By January 2018, about 49.7 percent of webpages are accessed by smartphone and tablet users and from 216 to 2021 the mobile internet usage will grow sevenfold. See Statista, *Mobile Internet Usage Worldwide*, 2018.

72 The former A link to a ‘mobile website’ is often seen during such transition. See British Museum, “Mobile Site: Welcome to the British Museum.”



FIGURE 6.11
Musée Guimet
website accessed
by smartphone
30.7.2018
(MNAAG)

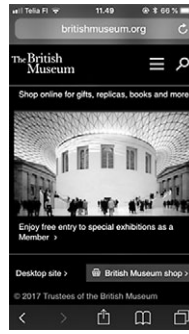


FIGURE 6.12
British Museum's
mobile site
30.7.2018
(The Trustees
of the British
Museum)

that contained dynamic content, condensed navigation and optimized images that could be used only by mobile operating systems.

The increasing use of 'mobile media' (for music, films, applications, podcasts, books, games as well as music videos and audiobooks) is also encouraging for the GLAMs institutes to explore various ways to carry out their education programs and to communicate with the public. Museum mobile guide applications have become a competitive market for mobile app developers and marketers. The audio contents which previously were made for the acoustiguide provided by museums for their visitors to borrow or rent at the entrances, are now made for mobile applications that can be downloaded from the app stores of iOS or Android to one's own smartphone or tablet together with a much richer content, such as text, image, film, sound, etc. In addition to digital books, GLAM institutes have also started to produce specific contents for podcasts. For example, in 2015, to mark the 90 year anniversary of the Palace Museum in Beijing, a series of podcasts⁷³ was produced for the audiences in China and Hong Kong. In 2016, the British Museum started to podcast curator interviews and talks with audiences⁷⁴ and museum visitors⁷⁵. And in the same year the Getty Museum launched the *Getty Art and Ideas* audio podcast featuring talks hosted by the president of the J. Paul Getty Trust, James Cuno, and the very first episode the *Cave Temples of Dunhuang*⁷⁶ was published together with the grand exhibition of Dunhuang held by the Getty Museum.

It seems that incorporating innovative technologies of handheld personal computer in the heritage sector for better mobility, connectivity and usability has become mainstream. However, to digitize the collections in most cases is foundational to such development⁷⁷ yet it is time consuming and costly. This struggle has been reflected by the market of museum apps since recent years. As a niche market created mainly by the start-ups, it appears that the users or

73 Liu and Chang, "Podcasts: Palace Museum 90 (故宫九十)."

74 British Museum, "The Suicide Exhibition (Part 1)."

75 British Museum, "The British Museum Membercast."

76 Getty, "Getty Art + Ideas."

77 Din and Wu, *Digital Heritage and Culture: Strategy and Implementation*; European Commission, "Cultural Heritage Digitisation, Online Accessibility and Digital Preservation"; Borowiecki and Navarrete, "Digitization of Heritage Collections as Indicator of Innovation."

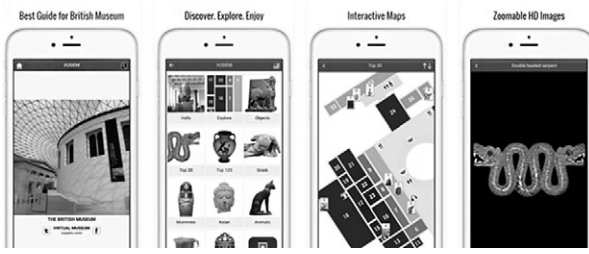


FIGURE 6.13 *British Museum Guide apps by Museum Tour Guide Ltd. 30.7.2018 (The Trustees of the British Museum)*

customers of ‘cultural tourism’ rather than the visitors or audiences of museums are the main clients of such apps⁷⁸. This has illustrated the connection between the public heritage service and the private creative and innovative digital industry. Although museums do hold prestigious ‘contents’ that are ideal for private innovative companies to explore new business developments and opportunities in the mobile and web environment, the ‘right’ to use this digital cultural heritage has limited such a possibility.

6.2 Cultural Commons and Digital Repatriation (or Digital Plundering?)

As a matter of fact, it is ‘intellectual property right (IPR)’ or ‘copyright’ that plays the key role in developing the ‘digital cultural heritage’ rather than technology or finance, because the question of copyright directly links to the ‘monetization’ of digitised heritage contents. This can serve as an important incentive for the developers of digital service products⁷⁹. In the world of digital heritage, the optimistic and utopic-sounding claims, such as ‘access from anywhere at any time by anyone’, ‘museum without walls’ or ‘sustainable (digital) preservation’, are often revealed as delusional coming faced with the reality of ‘ownership’ over the ‘bits’ (data) of cultural heritage. Judging by the current developments of digital heritage, it seems that the IPR (copyright) on the one hand can open a treasure box of ‘digital economy’ and on the other risk to pave an encrypted path to deprive the potential profits of ‘world cultural heritage’ from the ‘countries of origin’ in the mobile and web environment. Providing free online access does not make digitised collections a ‘commons’, sharing copyright does and that may be an alternative solution to the argument over the repatriation of important

78 Xu and Xue, “Dunhuang: On the Silk Road with Smart Tourism and Big Data.”

79 By far, unlike music, movies, literature or design, the digitalization of cultural heritage mostly took place in a top-to-down manner in the GLAM institutes for preservation and education purposes or other political ends. Depending on public funding yet somehow lacking a public interest, this task have progressed rather slowly in most countries. This can be seen for example in the Europeana project. See: Europeana, “A Call to Culture: Strategy 2020 Update.”

collections (as discussed in Chapter 3), especially with advancing computer imaging technologies like AR, VR, 3D scanning and 3D printing. Although the ‘bits’ of cultural heritage of GLAM institutes can largely improve the communication or mediation of the ‘atoms’, due the physical limits of the latter, they might not be as fulfilling as expected by the digital heritage practitioners because a series of other structural challenges seem to have followed (for example, the ‘digital divide’). Regarding the ‘bits’ of cultural heritage as ‘property’, just like the ‘atoms’ of cultural heritage or as a ‘commons’ following the original ideal of Internet technology in the 1960s, remains a core question being argued in the century old dilemma between different economic systems (as discussed in Chapter 5).

6.2.1 Who Owns Digital Cultural Heritage?

6.2.1.1 *The IPR (Copyright) of Digitized Antiquities*

In his column for the magazine *Wired*, Nicholas Negroponte has pointed out the confusing question about the ‘ownership’ over the bits (bytes):

...bits are bits, but all bits are not created equal... a bit of Gone with the Wind cannot be priced the same as a bit of e-mail.

Furthermore, we are clueless about the ownership of bits. Copyright law will disintegrate. In the United States, copyrights and patents are not even in the same branch of government. Copyright has very little logic: you can hum ‘Happy Birthday’ in public to your heart’s delight, but if you sing the words, you owe a royalty. Bits are bits indeed. But what they cost, who owns them, and how we interact with them are all up for grabs.⁸⁰

This comment from 1995 (half a decade after the Internet which was invented in 1989) vividly depicts the situation of ‘digital cultural heritage’. Although, as discussed, ‘digitization’ has made it possible to reunite the dispersed Dunhuang collections in virtual space, to turn the bits of reunited collections into a substantial ‘world heritage’ or ‘cultural commons’ that are supposed to be shared by all peoples like declared by the UNESCO (and the ‘universal museums’) is facing the same old question—ownership. Although the International Dunhuang Project (IDP) initiated in 1995 did not aim to be and was not a practice of ‘digital repatriation’ but (as stated in its mission statement) simply an ‘interactive online database’ designed and built for curators, researchers and then visitors, a digital project as such does generate a certain expectation from the ‘country of origin’ to have some kind of ‘alternative solution’ for the matter. In the introduction of the Mellon International Dunhuang Archive⁸¹—a major digital archiving project to photograph the Dunhuang grottos and everything that was originally contained within them—that intends to reunite the dispersed Dunhuang manuscripts and preserve them forever, an expectation was addressed by the president of the

⁸⁰ Negroponte, “Being Digital: A Book (p)Review.”

⁸¹ “Artstor: The Mellon International Dunhuang Archive.”

Dunhuang Academy, Wang Xudong⁸², that before the final repatriation of dislocated objects a ‘digital repatriation’ could be a temporary goal:

Of course, we hope that when the world truly becomes a big family, they can come back to the Mogao caves and become reunited with the remaining relics here... But the reality is quite cruel sometimes. If we can get them back to the ‘virtual family’ on the Internet through digitalization, that is good enough as a target to be achieve for now.⁸³

What does it mean by ‘get them back to the virtual family on the Internet through digitization’? What would be the cost to get the bits of Dunhuang collection ‘back’? Who owns these bits and how to negotiate with the producers or owners? Does the ‘interactive online database’ (like the one of the IDP or the Mellon Foundation that provides open access for the public) suffice to be defined as ‘digital repatriation’? Are these bits equal to the atoms of the Dunhuang objects and could also enter the ‘world heritage list’ or could become a ‘tangible cultural property’ of the ‘universal museums’? The technical infrastructure of the IDP, may shed some light on these questions.

IDP is an international collaboration with a directorate and technical support team based in the British Library, London, UK and with digitisation, cataloguing and research centres at libraries and museums worldwide. All these institutions host their own IDP database and website in their local language.

In addition, there are several other organisations that do not host their own server but whose data is hosted by one of the IDP hosts. For example, data from the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Chester Beatty Library etc. is hosted on the British Library IDP server. IDP China holds data on other Chinese collections etc. In this way, the IDP Centres act as local hubs.

Each IDP Centre has read — write access to its own, and its hosted — data, and read-only access to data from other Centres. Changes/additions to the data are immediately synchronised automatically to the other servers, and changes/additions made on the other servers are synchronised in. In this way, each Centre has a complete and up-to-date dataset.⁸⁴

This structural explanation has made it explicit that the ‘interactive online database’ of IDP is a milieu of online exposition. Users (curator, researcher and common audience) are welcome to visit and interact with the objects on display but the ownership (copyright) over the digitized items belong to their hosting institutes. The atoms of the Dunhuang collections are the ‘cultural property’ of those (national) universal museums of former colonial powers, so are the bits

82 Original in Chinese as ‘王旭東’.

83 Denyer, “China’s Ancient Buddhist Grottoes Face a New Threat — Tourists.”

84 IDP-British Library, “IDP Technical Infrastructure.”

of the collections. The copyright declaration on the online collections of Musée Guimet provides another example.

Conformément au Code de la propriété intellectuelle, tout auteur bénéficie du droit au respect de son nom et de l'intégrité de son œuvre. En conséquence toute utilisation de contenu protégé en tant qu'œuvre par le Code de la propriété intellectuelle devra être fait sans modification et comporter le nom de son auteur et du cessionnaire des droits le cas échéant.

Ce code concerne l'intégralité du contenu du site internet du musée Guimet. Toute utilisation de la reproduction des éléments qui y sont présentés est interdite exception faite pour une consultation individuelle et privée.

La reproduction et/ou la représentation de tout ou partie du site pour des exploitations autres que l'usage privé sont interdites.⁸⁵

It is clear that digitization and free online access are not enough to make a 'digital repatriation' from the perspective of copyright. The term 'digital repatriation' lacks a comprehensive definition, though by far it has been used by certain museums while dealing with the demands of returning human remains, religious objects or cultural artefacts that belonged to the indigenous communities, as seen in those post-settler countries such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia⁸⁶. A research project of Penn State University in 2010 entitled 'digital repatriation' endeavoured to define it:

This digital repatriation of artifacts allows Native Americans to have access to their own artifacts and cultural heritage items, that they would be previously not have access to. These items range from anything from family photographs to sacred and religious items. There are currently no protocols put in place on the issues surrounding digital repatriation and how religious or sacred items can be repatriated digitally without infringing on the privacy of the tribes. Currently, anthropologists, museum workers, and different Native American tribes are trying to work together to achieve a positive resolution to these issues, while preserving both the sanctity and cultural significance of these artifacts.⁸⁷

Here, similar to the IDP or the Mellon International Dunhuang Archive, 'getting back' the artefacts in question to those who made them means 'online access' but not 'transferring or sharing the ownership (copyright)'. Another case of 'digital repatriation' can be found with the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, which in addition to working closely with the Iwi and Hapū peoples to ask for returning their ancestral remains from the cultural institutions around the world

85 MNA, "Guimet: Mentions Légales."

86 Tythacott and Arvanitis, *Museums and Restitution: New Practices, New Approaches*.

87 Timothy Powell, 'Digital Repatriation and Virtual Exhibition-Digital Partnerships with Indian Communities', Penn Arts & Sciences, 2010 <<https://www.sas.upenn.edu/dpic/Drum/Welcome/VirtualMuseum>> [accessed 3 August 2018].

back to New Zealand⁸⁸, has included the aboriginal communities in the curatorship in addition to providing free online accesses to the digitised collections⁸⁹.

Nonetheless, in terms of the Dunhuang collections, not aiming to digitally return but simply to encourage the online use of them, the British Museum has been pioneering in applying the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence⁹⁰. This license states:

BY (Attribution): Copy, distribute, display and perform our copyrighted work – and derivative works based upon it – but only if you give us credit in the way we request: © Trustees of the British Museum.

NC (Non Commercial): Copy, distribute, display, and perform our work – and derivative works based upon it – but for non-commercial purposes only.

SA (Share Alike): Distribute derivative works only under a licence identical to the licence that governs our work.

In addition, the definition of ‘commercial use’ is further clarified as well.

Creative Commons defines commercial use as ‘reproducing a work in any manner that is primarily intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or monetary compensation’. For the avoidance of doubt, the British Museum considers the following to be commercial activities (this list is not exhaustive): anything that is in itself charged for, including textbooks and academic books or journals; an individual’s website or blog that is used as a platform to promote or conduct commercial activities (for example, to sell products created by or services provided by such an individual); a commercial organization’s website or blog, including trading arms of charities; freely distributed leaflets or merchandise that promote goods or services; corporate stationery or any business communications such as annual reviews; free-entry events, presentations or lectures promoting a product or a service; displays in public places offering or promoting a product or service, such as use in a shop, restaurant, hotel, public bar or property showroom.

The British Museum considers the following to be non-commercial activities (this list is not exhaustive): use in free-entry, educational lectures (or in activities promoting free-entry lectures); promotion of any non-commercial activity, such as a poster advertising a bursary; one-off classroom use; reproduction within a thesis document submitted by a student at an educational establishment (an electronic version of the thesis may be stored online by the educational establishment as long as it is made available at no cost to the end user); use in websites as long as they are informational, academic or research-oriented and not linked to any commercial activity; display within a free-entry public space (including museums

88 “Repatriation Karanga Aotearoa.”

89 Williams and Lai, “Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Statement of Performance Expectations.”

90 British Museum, “About the Collection Online.”

and galleries), as long as the use is not promoting a product or a service; educational and classroom use within an educational establishment or in the course of formal instruction.

This form of copyright license is therefore a compromise to the dilemma between protecting commercial advantage generated from IPR (copyright) and encouraging non-profit use and appreciation of artworks. Except for objects that belong in the public domain, non-commercial usage becomes the consensus and guiding principle for the heritage enterprises such as Wikipedia and the Europeana—a digital platform (to share data of cultural heritage across Europe) financed by the European Union and launched in 2005 following the initiation of the former President of France, Jacques Chirac, and five other European national leaders with the purpose of shaping a collective cultural identity for the common future of Europe⁹¹.

In any case, either the online collections of universal museums or the open databases of IDP, Wikipedia and Europeana, or the commercial site like Google, copyright over the ‘bits’ of heritage collections are held tight to the owners of the ‘atoms’ of them.

6.2.1.2 *Conflicting Nature of Museum and the Web in the Commons*

With the rise of digital culture, studies on the ‘commons’ including the topics such as the public domain, public property, open source, free content and IPR (copyright) have drawn much attention not only in computer science but also in cultural anthropology, sociology and jurisdiction. The privatization of common lands from the 15th to the 19th centuries (for example in England) was the first ‘enclosure movement’ and the privatization of creative and intellectual realms through intellectual property laws in the 20th century the second⁹². The first enclosure was counterbalanced by the law of ‘everyman’s right’—a legal protection of the right of people to access the public or privately owned lands (as seen in the welfare societies of Scandinavia), and the second enclosure on the rights of arts and culture (including pattern, copyright, trademark, etc.) was negotiated by the aforementioned ‘creative commons licence’, which was a by-product of ‘digital commons’—a movement initiated in the 1980s prior to the ‘privatization of Internet’ with the goal to improve computer software through mutual help and to encourage the use and distribution of free software⁹³. Thanks to the rapid growth of ‘digital commons’, it has become possible for organizations and individuals to share software, photos, general information and ideas⁹⁴. In fact, the ‘creative commons licence’ was initiated by a non-profit organisation entitled ‘creative commons’ founded in 2001 to expand the range of creative

91 “Digital Single Market: Timeline of Digitisation and Online Accessibility of Cultural Heritage.”

92 Halliburton, “The Invention and Expansion of Intellectual Property.”

93 Bollier, *Viral Spiral: How the Commoners Built a Digital Republic of Their Own*.

94 Ghosh, Malina, and Cubitt, *CODE: Collaborative Ownership and the Digital Economy*.

works available for people to use legally and to share⁹⁵ following its predecessor 'free content licences', as recommended by the Open Content Project in 1998. This took place about a decade after the American government handed over the backbone of Internet to the commercial Internet service providers (in the early 1990s), which resulted in a monetization race of digital innovation technology.

In parallel to the legal concept of 'creative commons', the rather philosophic term the 'cultural commons' has appeared, which is still under the inspection of jurisprudence⁹⁶. Unlike the 'digital commons' which was created and promoted by a group of public-spirited programmers and developers for a clearly defined purpose and operation framework, the 'cultural commons', which developed from the sociological concept of 'commons' to denote 'a shared resource capable of yielding collective benefits to people', remains rhetorical. The idea of cultural commons was expanded from the implication of 'natural commons' (as mentioned above) to cover the collectively owned cultural property with expectation to elicit 'the main factors and social dilemmas affecting the production and evolution of cultural expression'⁹⁷. Just as the 'natural commons' covers the environmental resources such as water, air, forest or grassland, the 'cultural commons' encompasses literature, art, music, dance, film, information and heritage sites. Semantically, the concept of 'world heritage' promoted by the UNESCO and implied by the claim of 'universal museums' (on important collections—which shall belong to all mankind) can be related to the concept of 'cultural commons', if the objects that both the UNESCO and universal museums refer to can be in the pool of 'public domain'—creative works or artefacts that are out of copyright protection because copyright has expired, been forfeited or waived or simply that they were made prior to the existence of copyright laws. However, such an understanding of the 'commons' is compromised by the concept and practice of 'public property'—a property dedicated to public use that is collectively 'owned' by the population of a state. The Dunhuang collections therefore could belong to the 'public domain' (as the archaeological site of Mogao Grottos are made before the copyright concept was born), could become a 'cultural commons' (as Dunhuang has been enlisted to the World Heritage List and the Dunhuang collections are the important collections of universal museums), and could be a 'public property' (as the collections of Stein or Pelliot have been nationalised and custodied by their national museums).

Nevertheless, it is debatable whether ownership over the bits should remain identical as the atoms. The question about IPR (copyright) of digital cultural heritage has been raised in sociology, cultural economics, and the legal system. Although copyright laws are intended to prevent unfair competition and to protect the commercial advantage of the rightsholder, the negative side is that they also restrict the reproduction and sharing of digitised data of heritage artefacts so

95 Bollier, *Viral Spiral: How the Commoners Built a Digital Republic of Their Own*.

96 Bruncevic, "Fixing the Shadows: Access to Art and the Legal Concept of Cultural Commons."

97 Bertacchini and Saccone, "Toward a Political Economy of World Heritage."

that the wider society can enjoy them (this is what the creative commons licence tries to negotiate), as seen in the aforementioned copyright declaration of Musée Guimet. In this light, copyright laws have become an obstacle which hinders the application of digital media and the reproduction and dissemination of digital cultural heritage, and they therefore present 'a problem and not a solution, a barrier and not a protection, dissuasion or creation and not encouragement and incentive'⁹⁸. It is worth noticing that the National Palace Museum in Taipei has established a pool of 'open data' where the images of the digitized prestigious collections can be freely searched, downloaded and used for all purposes, including commercial use, according to the *Open Government Data License 1.0* since 2015⁹⁹. It is to be observed how this would benefit the heritage relevant creative industry and innovative digital economy.

Essentially, the value of the atoms of the Dunhuang collections depends on their 'materiality' and 'uniqueness', but this does not apply to the bits. To preserve and manage the atoms of Dunhuang collections may be costly, considering the requirements of architectural space, equipment or human resources, but this may not be the case for the bits. Curating the atoms for exhibition needs expensive insurance and transportation, but displaying the bits online does not. What is more, the tangible collections (atoms) of cultural treasures such as the Dunhuang objects can be owned only by a single legal entity at a given time and space, but the intangible collections of digital heritage (the bits) can be owned by as many legal entities as possible without specific constraints on time and space. For example, technically speaking the 'interactive online database' of IDP can be reproduced and installed at far more than seven national institutes round the world and can even be 'decentralized' to exist without any 'main datacentre', established under the roof of a specific national institute or universal museum with advanced technology like the 'cloud' or 'block chain'. If the ideal of world heritage site and cultural right promoted by UNESCO or the claim on important collections made by universal museums—to be shared by all mankind—shall be more than a mere rhetorical statement, putting the bits of prestigious colonial collections like the Dunhuang objects into the public domain may be considered as an alternative solution. Eventually, the emerging 'digital cultural heritage' has crystalized the conflicting nature of museum and the Web. The former is constructed in the world of atoms to be a centralized and authoritative guardian of state or public property, yet the latter is configured in the world of bits to be a decentralized and open network for the public to freely exchange ideas, information and thoughts. How to combine and manage the various social, political and economic ecosystems of the atoms and bits has become an urgent question in the digital and Global Age, especially facing the neoliberal turn of cultural heritage (as previously discussed in Chapter 5) and the hyper-liberal culture of digital economy, of which 'disruption' is an important feature.

98 Sullivan, "Cultural Heritage and New Media: A Future for the Past."

99 NPM, "The National Palace Museum Open Data Platform."

6.2.2 Digital Divides of Cultural Heritage

A book review of Negroponte's *Being Digital*, published on the New York Times¹⁰⁰ in 1995, articulated a common opinion shared by many scholars from social sciences and humanities (and even the early internet technologists):

I find all of this technically fascinating but psychologically somewhat sinister. Do we really want slave machines organizing our lives? According to the view from M.I.T.'s Media Lab, these developments—for reasons that I totally fail to grasp—are supposed to make for a better world, ‘decentralizing, globalizing, harmonizing and empowering.’

‘Being Digital’ celebrates information while disparaging the material world and those sluggish, heavy old atoms that go to make it up. But when I finished this instructive, fanciful, yet strangely disturbing book, I was moved to reaffirm my bond to the world of atoms—to real things, like furniture and freight trains, concert halls and books. And people.

Two decades later, in *The Internet Is Not The Answer*, Andrew Keen¹⁰¹ affirmed such a suspicion that ‘being digital’ cannot ‘decentralize, globalize, harmonize, or empower’ people. On the contrary, far from being an open and democratizing force in society, the Internet has amplified global inequalities and made our life dysfunctional, inegalitarian, and comprehensively surveilled. Since 1989, when the World Wide Web was ‘fathered’ by Tim Berners-Lee, the Internet has experienced a rapid growth due to privatization. This enabled the Third Industrial Revolution (Digital Revolution or Information Revolution) and created a group of ‘nouveau riche’ composed of the digital elite and moguls—predominantly young, white, American and male technologists, working in digital conglomerates such as Apple, Facebook, Google, Amazon, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Netflix or Uber. In this ‘privatization’ or ‘commercial transition’ of the Internet, a ‘digital divide’ appears in many ways. Conventionally, the term denotes social inequality in accessing digital devices and technology. Yet it could be understood as well as a divide in perceiving or employing digital services between technologists and humanists. Within the digital world itself, a divide also occurs between the current hyper-liberal generation of computer scientists and the previous public-spirited generation who has inherited the ideal or zeitgeist of the post-War and Cold War era—to invent, innovate for national security or for the common good of the public. The trinitarian faith of this younger generation of computer scientists—in democracy, the free market and individualism—from Silicon Valley has dominated the field since the 1990s and has driven and globalized the ‘neoliberal turn’ of economic systems—which has encompassed the field of cultural heritage (see Chapter 5) where digital technologies have been applied to increase cultural tourism and exhibition economy (see Chapter 6.1.3.2). While ‘being digital’, as

¹⁰⁰ Forman, “He Has Seen the Future and It Works.”

¹⁰¹ Keen, *The Internet Is Not The Answer*.

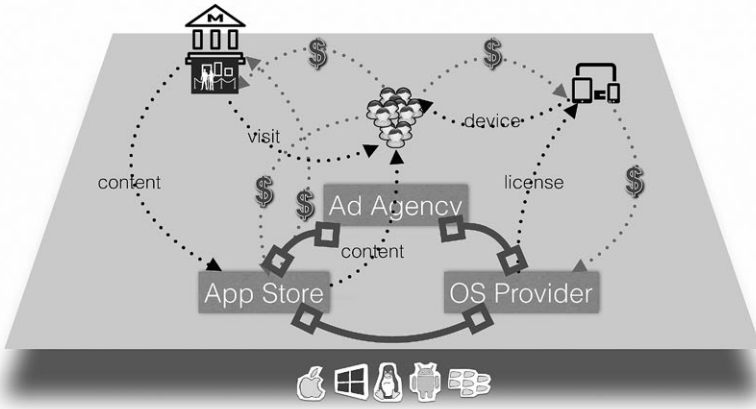


FIGURE 6.14 Business ecosystem of digital heritage in the mobile and web environment

predicted, has disrupted almost every aspect of our life including communication, entertainment, education, health care, transportation, finance, retail and manufacturing, digital enterprises have become a ‘winner takes all’ monopoly model, which has also reached out to the heritage sector—conventionally a realm of non-profit business, or a public sphere of government support loaded with missions in civil education, identity politics and cultural diplomacy. Such a conflict has been radicalized with the emerging ‘digital humanities’¹⁰², of which the demand to recover ‘humanist leadership’ has started to resonate¹⁰³.

In fact, following the hyper-neoliberal turn of ‘being digital’ under the belief of ‘democracy, liberation and empowerment’, the ‘macroeconomic ecosystem’ (existing in various economic models as seen in Chapter 5.3.1.1) has influenced the growth, use and monetising of both the atoms and bits of cultural heritage. If the ‘digital divide’ between different generations of computer scientists can be termed a ‘techno-intellectual’ or ‘techno-ethical’ divide, the economic pursuit of digital innovations applied in the heritage sector inevitably result in another type of digital divide, the ‘technoeconomic’ divide, which is born with the formation of digital business ecosystem (see Figure 6.14). This divide is mostly created purposefully due to the competing marketplace for various manufacturers of digital devices (desktop, laptop, tablet and smartphone), providers of corresponding operating systems, developers of software and applications, and advertisement agencies. The target audiences in this business ecosystem are often divided into different segments according to age, gender, race, region, or social status elaborately defined for corresponding specific marketing strategies. This business knowledge has also been used by the GLAM institutes in designing their digital strategies. For instance, in order to reach out to different user groups the British Museum operates on various social media sites

102 Svensson and Goldberg, *Between Humanities and the Digital*.

103 Muñoz, “Recovering a Humanist Librarianship through Digital Humanities.”

and applications, including Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Soundcloud, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, and RSS¹⁰⁴.

In addition, there is another kind of ‘digital divide’ underneath the surface of ‘technoeconomic divide’, and that is the ‘technopolitical divide’—existing, for example, between the West and China. Meanwhile firewalling most American digital service products—such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp and MSN— within Chinese digital territory, the Chinese government supports developing local digital products that are against those American ones featuring modifications and even improvements. For example QQ and Tianya BBS were established in 1999, Baidou in 2000, Taobao in 2003, YouKu, Douban and Tudou in 2005, Sina Weibo in 2009 and WeChat in 2011¹⁰⁵. The main reasons for this are market competition but particularly for ‘national security’, as claimed while implementing the Great Firewall of China (including portal, search, social, news, archive, publication, sharing, VPN, NGO, streaming, media, blog, etc.¹⁰⁶). It is more than obvious that the real intention for the vast scale of digital blockage is politics¹⁰⁷, though under the pretext of ‘cybersecurity’. This has even become a sensitive issue affecting US-China relations¹⁰⁸, as the digital technology has brought the national military defence of China to an unprecedented level¹⁰⁹. Under such circumstances, the digital Dunhuang collections published as ‘creative commons’ or ‘open source’ on the various platforms outside the Great Firewall of China, like on the online databases of the IDP, the British Museum or Musée Guimet, and especially the third-party websites like the Wikipedia or Google Arts & Culture, are actually inaccessible to the Chinese public. Likewise, those ‘virtual universal museums’ are not able to reach out to the Chinese netizens.

Lastly, coming back to the conventional connotation of ‘digital divide’¹¹⁰, the social divide of digital cultural heritage exists as well between the North and South, the digital literate and illiterate, the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’¹¹¹, and the industrialized and under developed. The ethnographic divide resulting from the differences of language, history or culture has been mirrored to the virtual world too, and it is much easier to digitally strengthen the segregations of various users or opinion groups. For example, when the Google search engine was used in French, searching with the keyword ‘Dunhuang collections’, the first few results produced were the IDP, Wikipedia, British Museum, Musée Guimet, and Bibliothèque Nationale de France¹¹²; searching in traditional Chinese generated links to

104 British Museum, “Welcome to the British Museum.”

105 Wang, “The Social Media Landscape in China.”

106 “Websites Blocked in Mainland China.” The dynamic list composed in Wikipedia is incomplete and can change anytime. However most of the Western digital companies mentioned in this Chapter had been blocked for more than half a decade by 2018.

107 Schroeder, “Media Systems, Digital Media and Politics.”

108 Harold and Rand Corporation, *Getting to Yes with China in Cyberspace*.

109 Medeiros et al., “The Digital Triangle: A New Defense-Industrial Paradigm?”

110 Norris, *Digital Divide*.

111 Natriello, “Bridging the Second Digital Divide: What Can Sociologists of Education Contribute?”

112 These results are based on the author’s operation dated the 6 August 2018.

Wikipedia, Art iFeng¹¹³, Sohu Portal, Dunhuang Hanji Library¹¹⁴, Baike Baidu¹¹⁵, and Xinhua Net. Although different, the results of both lists were more or less ‘linked’ and could be all found while rolling down the page. However, the results gathered by the Chinese Baidu search engine with the same keyword in simplified Chinese were the Douban, Baike Baidu, Huaxia Collecting¹¹⁶, iqiyi streaming, Sohu Portal, and Sina¹¹⁷. This simple account shows how digital tools are still far from perfect to be used to reconcile the ‘divide’ of Dunhuang collections.

In reality, the bits of world cultural heritage are created and held by various power centres, which are more diverse than those authoritative GLAM institutes. To improve the situation, Keen has wrote *How to Fix the Future*, proposing ‘competitive innovation, government regulation, consumer choice, social responsibility by business leaders, and education’¹¹⁸. Even if this could reverse the hyper-liberal turn of private digital economies towards a more socialistic or humanitarian direction, it remains to be verified in the coming decades to see if the *Brave New World* published in the beginning of the 20th century (out of the misery resulted from the First Industrial Revolution) shall repeat itself in the 21st century (out of the possible results of the Third Industrial Revolution).

6.2.3 Digital and Creative Economy of Heritage Enterprise

The hyper-neoliberal capitalism advanced by technologists in Silicon Valley has started to draw objections in Europe. Instead of a total blockage as China opted for, the European Union has endeavoured to restrain digital companies like Google and Facebook on the grounds of monopoly or user privacy. In fact, this acts to reflect the standing of economic systems on the wide spectrum of various models (as discussed in Chapter 5.3) ranging from liberal capitalism represented by the United States to the mixed economic system in Europe and the state controlled economics of China—where a ‘national capitalism’ has been coated with the so-called ‘socialism of Chinese characteristics’. This difference of macroeconomics is also reflected by the definition of ‘the commons’ (as noted in *The Wealth of the Commons*¹¹⁹). The nationalized cultural heritage like the Dunhuang collections seems to be caught in a dilemma between different extremes. On the one hand, they are regarded as the ‘content’ of high art and high culture which can be used to create innovative digital products. On the other hand, they are in the legal custody of the government as a public property or service. It may shed some new light on this phenomenon to observe how the Dunhuang exhibi-

113 “Calligraphy of Dunhuang Manuscript (敦煌藏经洞中的书法).” A report published by ifeng.com, an art newspaper belonging to the Phoenix New Media group in Shanghai.

114 “Digital Library of Dunhuang Manuscripts (敦煌文献数字图书馆).” A digital archive of Dunhuang manuscripts (from all over the world) completely in simplified Chinese built by the Sanxi Normal University Publishing in 2016.

115 A crowd sourcing encyclopedia hosted by Baidu.

116 An online auction house specifically for arts and antiques.

117 These three lists are gathered by the 5th of August 2018.

118 Keen, *How to Fix the Future*.

119 Bollier and Helfrich, *The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market and State*.

tions of, for example, the J. Paul Getty Museum, British Museum, Musée Guimet and Dunhuang Academy (the site museum of Dunhuang) have engaged various digital strategies and have developed a digital heritage economy.

In the following table (Figure 6.15) a brief check list is presented to indicate how much ‘thinking and going digital’ these four museum institutes have been within their own socio-political environments and macroeconomic systems. Hosting a grand exhibition of Dunhuang in 2016 (as described in Chapter 6.1.2), the Getty Centre¹²⁰ located in Los Angeles being the wealthiest art institution of the world has built one of the most advanced ‘digital museums’¹²¹. Aimed to ‘contribute broadly to the diffusion of artistic and general knowledge’¹²², the Getty has pioneered in adopting an up-to-date collections management system, Web 2.0 (integrated with various social media and blogs like the Iris and the Getty 360) and Web 3.0 (semantic web), mobile application and digital marketing strategy. In addition to opening an online shop, The Getty Store, with flawless functionality and usability (in terms of branding, variable searches, customer service, cross promotion within the institution, and social media sharing), Getty publications can also be found on other digital marketplaces like Amazon or Tmall. It is worth noticing that Mark Getty, the grandson of J. Paul Getty cofounded Getty Investments LLC when he established Getty Images in 1995, a commercial ‘digital warehouse’ of photographs (later added with video and music too) for the business of copyright management and licensing with the target market set to focus on the users of creative, media, and communication professionals, companies and corporates¹²³. This has drawn a strong contrast to the projects like the IDP or the Europeana.

Although, as discussed earlier, the British Museum has the status of ‘national museum’, the trustees management structure makes it more flexible to procure commercial revenue. In 1973, the Trustees founded the British Museum Company Limited to ‘advance the education aims of the museum’ (mainly by developing museum products and improve museum shop management). Coming into the Digital Age¹²⁴, this Company has been able to offer the affiliate website owners a percentage of the sales that they generate as commissions¹²⁵ and to hire a digital marketer¹²⁶ to bring the British Museum’s products to the Chinese market at Tmall (previously named Taobao)¹²⁷.

120 Built by the J. Paul Getty Trust (previously the J. Paul Getty Museum Trust established in 1953) to host the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, the Getty Foundation, and the J. Paul Getty Museum.

121 Cuno, *Visions of Digital Culture: The Future of Museums*.

122 Valentiner et al., “Trust Indenture.”

123 Lenzner, “The Getty Genius Moves On From Oil To Digital Media.”

124 “The Digital Transformation of The British Museum.”

125 Lake, “British Museum Promotes Online Shop via Online Affiliate Marketing System | UK Fundraising.”

126 Awini, “About Us.” Awini was merged by Affiliate Window and Zanox and started to function as one company since 2014.

127 Zheng, “British Museum Opens Online Shop on China’s Tmall.”

	Getty USA	BM UK	Guimet FR	DA CN	Note/Source
Comprehensive digital strategy	v	v			-BM's digital strategy is a part of 'museum strategy' ¹²⁸
Institution specific			v		
National digital strategy				v	
Specific strategy (social media)					
<i>Online collections database</i>	v	v			
<i>Immersive exhibition</i>	v			v	
<i>Mobile tour guide application</i>	v	v		v	
<i>Mobile web</i>	v	v			Guimet: mobile friendly site
<i>Podcast</i>	v	v			
<i>Blog, social media, etc.</i>	v	v			Getty 'iris' ¹²⁹ , Getty 360°
<i>Gamification/Edu-game</i>					
Online museum shop	v	v			Guimet: under a collective RMN-GP online shop
Institutional shop			v		
National centralized shop				v	
Sub-company					
<i>Branding</i>	v	v			
<i>Search variables</i>	v	v			
<i>Customer service</i>	v	v	v		
<i>Cross promotion</i>	v	v	v		
<i>Links to social media</i>	v	v			
<i>Quality over pricing</i>	v	v	v		
Affiliated business units	v			v	
Third party digital marketer		v			Getty has inhouse marketer
Others (Amazon, Tmall, etc.)	v	v	v	v	

FIGURE 6.15 Digital engagement of the Getty, British Museum, Musée Guimet and Dunhuang

128 British Museum, "Towards 2020 The British Museum's Strategy."

129 "About The Iris: The Iris behind the Scenes at the Getty."

However, this landscape of museum business seen in the USA and the UK changes in the continental Europe. As seen in the cumbersome website of Musée Guimet, instead of an institutional online shop of the Museum there is a link which directs the visitors or users to the website of the ‘boutiques de musées’ developed by the Réunion des Musées Nationaux-Grand Palais (RMN-GP), which is noted as what follows:

La Réunion des musées nationaux (RMN) a été créée en 1895 pour recueillir et gérer les fonds nécessaires à l'acquisition d'œuvres d'art destinées à enrichir les collections nationales [...]. Depuis 1991, la RMN est un établissement public national à caractère industriel et commercial (EPIC) placé sous la tutelle du ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (Direction des musées de France). [...] Depuis mars 1999, une sélection de ces produits est proposée sur Internet sur le site boutiquesdemusees.fr. En 2011, la RMN-GP naît de la fusion de la Réunion des musées nationaux et du Grand Palais, afin de constituer un opérateur culturel de niveau international, bénéficiant d'un monument emblématique et prenant appui sur l'expertise et la complémentarité des activités des deux établissements¹³⁰.

This brief account tells how a ‘national cultural institute’ like the RMN-GP (defined as responsible for ‘l’acquisition d’œuvres d’art’, ‘l’accueil du public’, ‘l’organisation d’expositions temporaires’ and ‘la diffusion Culturelle et l’édition’) has endeavoured to make a ‘neoliberal turn’ (as discussed in Chapter 5). Although the digital business design of this collective online shop of RMN is rather up-to-date in terms of functionality and usability, the collective management structure somehow poses limitations on the development of individual museum (collection). In addition, not only could a comprehensive digital strategy of Musée Guimet not be found, also the ‘content’ online and onsite of the museum shop remains rather limited.

The model represented by the Dunhuang Academy provides another extreme. After the opening-up policy in 1978, the Academy grew from a remote archaeological art research institute with poor resources to a gigantic heritage enterprise that has started to engage with for-profit commercial business (as seen in Chapter 5.3.1.2). In the simplified Chinese version of the Academy’s website, the links are integrated to divert the users to the other three sub-websites: the Dunhuang grottos (public.dha.ac.cn), Dunhuangology news (dh.dha.ac.cn), and Dunhuang tourism with a booking page (mgk.org.cn), that also has an English translated site (en.dha.ac.cn) which shows the least information available. In addition to selling entrance tickets, the usual revenue related programmes such as museum friend’s club or museum shop do not exist. However, there are commercial businesses being established under the Academy, such as the travel agency (tourist

¹³⁰ RMN-GP, “Boutiques de Musées: Qui Sommes-Nous ?”

centre)¹³¹, the digital company (responsible for digitizing the murals, 3D modelling, animation, and heritage product design and development)¹³², and the education centre of Dunhuang art. In recent years, the Academy has been regarded as a ‘business brand’ and the president (Wang Xudong) an ‘entrepreneur’¹³³, though it is still defined as an academic, museum-like, public cultural institute (administratively in the provincial level yet is responsible for the national level of conservation and restoration work, as discussed in Chapter 5). Although like the Musée Guimet, there is no specific museum shop in the Academy, the Mogao murals relevant creative and cultural products could be found in a ‘Silk Roads (Dunhuang) tourist souvenir shop’, located in the ‘Dunhuang international exposition centre’ built in 2017¹³⁴ and co-owned by several provincial and municipal authorities¹³⁵. Besides, a series of museum commodities (such as duplicated mural paintings, notebook, magnetic, home décor, accessory, etc.¹³⁶) under the brand name of ‘Dunhuang Academy’ can be found on the major Chinese digital marketplace, the Tmall¹³⁷ (previously Taobao¹³⁸). In 2016, the ‘Dunhuang cultural creative research centre’ was established to govern the heritage related creative product development, issues relating to copyright and the licensing business¹³⁹.

- 131 Original in Chinese as ‘敦煌莫高窟旅遊服務公司’ (Dunhuangtour.com), established in 2000.
- 132 Original in Chinese as ‘甘肅恆真數字文化科技有限公司’, established in 2012. By far 33 digitized images from the murals and 2 3D scanned status in color have be provided (for sale by order).
- 133 “Exposition on China Indigenous Brand (中国自主品牌博览会: 甘肅恆真數字文化科技有限公司).”
- 134 Chang, “Dunhuang International Exposition Centre Awarded in 2017 (敦煌国际会展中心获2017中国会展产业金手指奖).”
- 135 Na (秦娜) Qin, ‘Silk Roads (Dunhuang) Tourist Souvenir Shop Centre (丝绸之路(敦煌)旅游商品中心荟萃丝路文化精品)’, *China Gansu Tourism Committee*, 14 December 2017. The stakeholders of this souvenir shop center included the Gansu tourism and development committee (甘肅省旅遊發展委員會), Jiuquan city government (酒泉市政府), Dunhuang city government (敦煌市政府), and Gansu electricity investments group (甘肅省電力投資集團).
- 136 These creative commodities are developed by a little known small private company called ‘Land studio (北京蘭德坊藝術品有限公司)’ which has stations in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Dunhuang and is specialized in developing and retailing museum creative and cultural products focused on the silk roads. A direct shop of this company is located in Dunhuang.
- 137 ‘Dunhuang Academy Official Flagship Shop on Tmall (敦煌研究院旗舰店-天貓)’, Tmall [accessed 10 August 2018].
- 138 ‘Dunhuang Mogao Grottos Official Shop on Taobao (敦煌莫高窟官方店-淘宝网)’, Taobao [accessed 10 August 2018].
- 139 Shi, “Dunhuang Academy Developing Cultural Brands in Full Scale (敦煌研究院:全方位多角度弘扬敦煌文化品牌).” For example, until September 2017, copyright of 50 digitized grottos were registered together with about 100 trademarks related to the heritage enterprise of Dunhuang Academy.

6.3 Futuristic Perspectives: (De-)Linking the Past to the Future

With advanced digital technology being applied in all dimensions of our lives, it is necessary to speculate on a foreseeable future for the digital heritage or digital huminities and consider whether it is a valid method to convey our past to the future. Technically speaking, establishing a ‘musée imaginaire’ of digital Dunhuang collections that is open, inclusive and participatory does not require much imagination. The only reason that stops it happening is the question of power, represented for example by the IPR of digitized images of the collections as discussed. Under the rule of general economic principles, it is likely that the value of the atoms of cultural heritage will continue to increase at the hands of the few while the value of the bits shall decrease as the reproduced images can multiply without limit.

This actually contradicts the utopic and optimistic statement of technologists, who promised a better digital future for humankind. Hundreds of years ago our ancestors wondered about the afterlife and imagined them in a religious language, image and imagination, as shown by the artefacts, manuscripts and frescos in Dunhuang. Now we still fantasize it, but in a digital way expressed as transhumanism or posthumanism. The atoms of the Dunhuang collections link us to the past on earth in an authentic way. In the future, would the bits of them link back to us now?

6.3.1 Inclusive Heritage

6.3.1.1 *The Digital Trends for Museums*

Facing the fast speed of ‘going digital’ in almost all aspects of our life, detecting the digital trends and prospects for the future of museums has become the task of professionals¹⁴⁰. Before exploring how the digital trends would possibly affect the future of GLAM institutes, a closer look at them is necessary. According to the digital marketer CMO of Adobe¹⁴¹, the top 10 technology trends are:

- Marketing budgets will increase
- Cryptocurrency will pave way for blockchain-based exchange
- Social echo chambers will intensify debates and discourage diversity of thought
- Automation will re-level workforce for consumer personalized service demand
- Automation adoption will increase due to positive sentiment
- VR entertainment will heat up quickly
- Traditional media will stabilize for a while
- Podcasts take the stage (as in China being a paid-for-medium)

¹⁴⁰ Sexton, “Exploring Key Trends in Digital Experience beyond the Museum Sector”; Tzanaki et al., “Museum Trends and Prospects for 2018”; Visser, “Futureproofing the Digital Museum.”

¹⁴¹ Abramovich, “Top 10 Predictions For The Digital Future.”

- Influenced media will demand respect
- Experiences will be a drain

Besides, the vision of technology drawn by one of the leading digital business consulting agencies Accenture¹⁴² has suggested:

- AI is the new UI
- Ecosystem power plays
- Workforce market force
- Design for humans
- New industries and set new standards

From the perspective of the museum visitor, it is necessary to consider the questions of 'simplified interfaces, personalization, contextual interactions, empathetic content, and the persistent, blended, and sensorial experiences'¹⁴³ in terms of 'experiencing' the GLAM institutes. However, I shall argue that examining the current development of collection management, interactive and immersive exhibition, and online education (through the digital native media or the digital versions of traditional media) can help predict the future of digital heritage and see whether the digital technology would contribute to link or delink the past with the future.

» *Transbordering UI of Semantic Web to Linked Heterogeneous Collection Databases*

As mentioned earlier, Web 2.0 is transforming into Web 3.0 using Semantic Web technologies, such as Resource Description Framework (RDF), RDF Schema (RDFS), Web Ontology Language (OWL), Uniform Resource Identifier (URI), XML, and SPARQL¹⁴⁴, which can enable a web that presents information in a precise and machine interpretable form ready for software agents to process, share and reuse as well as to understand what the term that describes the data actually means. These technologies have been applied to access various museum collection management systems¹⁴⁵, as they can enable the interoperability of the extremely heterogeneous data-structures of different collection databases with advanced mapping and vocabulary integration. Following this technological trend, it is foreseeable that in a near future a user interface of semantic web that can link the various databases (each with its own standard, ontology and mechanism of construction) of the GLAM institutes can be built, to access a synthetic body of 'nationwide (instead of institution specific) collections'¹⁴⁶ or

142 Accenture, Technology Vision 2017, 2017.

143 Sexton, "Exploring Key Trends in Digital Experience beyond the Museum Sector."

144 Lowndes, "Museums and the Web 2006: Lowndes, An Introduction to the Semantic Web for Museums."

145 Hyvönen, *Publishing and Using Cultural Heritage Linked Data on the Semantic Web*.

146 For example, in Sweden an interface of nationwide heritage collection built by semantic web technologies is called the 'Swedish Open Cultural Heritage (SOCH)'; in Finland, an interface called 'FINNA' is gradually replacing the different user interfaces of all Finnish GLAM institutes.

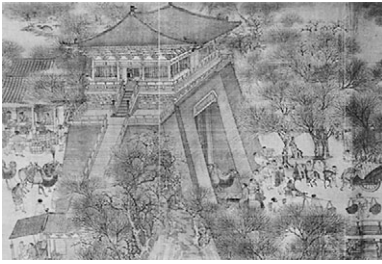


FIGURE 6.16 Original (part) of the Riverside Scene during the Festival of Qingming (Wikimedia Commons)



FIGURE 6.17 Digital version at Shanghai Expo 2010 by Cristal CG (Wikimedia Commons)

‘regionwide collections (like the Europeana¹⁴⁷)’ and even ‘worldwide collections (like the IDP¹⁴⁸)’.

» *Experience Economy of Interactive and Immersive Exhibition*

In terms of exhibition, the most recognisable social functions of museum institutions, the interactive¹⁴⁹ and immersive¹⁵⁰ exhibition design will continue to thrive with developing computing imaging technology (like the VR and AR) as well as wearable technology. In fact, the ‘experience economy’ of museum exhibition created on the basis of the atoms of cultural heritage is also ‘going digital’ and is adopting more elements of the entertainment business. As mentioned earlier, to compensate the onsite visitors for the limited time allowed in the Mogao Grottos, the Dunhuang Academy has built a planetarium theatre at the new Visitor Centre¹⁵¹. Those who are in a queue or cannot obtain entrance tickets can ‘experience’ the art of Dunhuang there in a virtual way. Clearly, such a theatre could be built in any city other than Dunhuang for the ‘virtual experience’ provided does not rely on the physical heritage site or artefacts. In fact, a digital exhibition economy (with or without the authentic artefacts together on display) in this light has been created in China. In the Shanghai World Expo in 2010, the digital interpretation of an important Chinese painting from the Song dynasty, the *Riverside Scene during the Festival of Qingming*¹⁵² (Figure 6.16), was presented. Painted by Chang Zherui¹⁵³ (1085–1145) to depict urban life of the southern capital of Song China, Bian Jing¹⁵⁴, this artwork preserved at the National Palace Museum in Taipei was digitized, enlarged and animated by a Chinese exhibition design company Crystal CG. This production (Figure 6.17)

147 Isaac and Haslhofer, “Europeana Linked Open Data – Data.Europeana.Eu”; Europeana, “Europeana Semantic Elements Documentation.”

148 Downie et al., “Linking Scholars and Semantics: Developing Scholar-Supportive Data Structures for Digital Dunhuang.”

149 Verma, “How Technology Is Transforming the Museum Experience.”

150 Kenderdine, “Pure Land: Inhabiting the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang.”

151 “The Visitors’ Centre at Dunhuang.”

152 Original in Chinese as ‘清明上河圖’, 24.5 x 528.7 cm, ink on paper.

153 Original in Chinese as ‘張擇瑞’.

154 Original in Chinese as ‘汴京’.

has won several awards¹⁵⁵ and toured Hong Kong, Macau and Taipei to great success. It has since become an independent work from the original painting, just like those artistically-copied murals (as mentioned in Chapter 4), and has engendered a new experience of museal exhibition. In 2018, an updated version of the digital painting the *Riverside Scene during the Festival of Qingming 3.0* was exhibited in the Palace Museum in Beijing. Described as a high tech¹⁵⁶, interactive and immersive art exhibition that could be ‘watched, touched, listened, felt and played’ in an exhibition hall of 1,600 square meters, the show comprised the digital painting installation, an immersive front-projected holographic display (on a life-size architecture model with ancient street smell, shadow and sound), a planetarium theatre and an ancient study room of a Song literati¹⁵⁷. The visitor numbers reached 80,000 within a month and with 13,000 on the holiday of the Dragon Boat Festival¹⁵⁸. It is worth noting that this exhibition was co-organized with the Phoenix New Media Limited¹⁵⁹—a sub-unit of the Phoenix Publishing and Media Inc¹⁶⁰ specialising in (art) newspaper, new media, and cultural industry—and sponsored by the Foxconn Technology Group¹⁶¹, one of the world’s leading manufacturers of the 8K screens.

This exhibition serves as an example of how the high tech could not only transform the museum experience¹⁶² but also encourage the digital creative economy, which can be a mainstream of future heritage enterprise. In the 14th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industry Exposition, representatives from Xinjiang signed six contracts for mega cultural industry projects totalling 2,989 billion RMB, covering almost all sections of heritage enterprise ranging from cultural tourism, creative industry, youth art centre, ecotourism, themed hotel, cultural retreat centre, and a digital creative base that would be expected to be a ‘silicon valley’ of VR, AR and MR (with business development in industrial design, brand strategy, moving picture, animation, new media service, exhibition planning, and digital application) located in the core area on the economic belt of Silk Roads¹⁶³.

155 Such as the awards from IVCA (the International Visual Communication Association) and TEA (the Themed Entertainment Association in Britain).

156 For example, the 8K high resolution interactive images and the 4D moving pictures.

157 Xu, “Interactive Exhibition at the Palace Museum (故宫高科技互动展演《清明上河图3.0》开幕下周可免费预约体验).”

158 Gu, “Riverside Scene during the Festival of Qingming at Palace Museum (故宫《清明上河图3.0》热中国画启蒙势在必行).”

159 Art ifeng, “About Us (关于我们).”

160 “Phoenix Publishing and Media Network (凤凰出版传媒网).” A rather typical ‘national enterprise’ in China which covers an extended range of business areas from real estate to publishing and press and media.

161 “Foxconn Sponsorship for Culture Heritage (《清明上河图3.0》8K视界 富士康夏普助力文化传承).”

162 Verma, “How Technology Is Transforming the Museum Experience.”

163 Yin, “Ulimuqi Signed Heritage Development Project of 2,989 Billions RMB (文博会首日乌鲁木齐代表團簽約29.89億元創九年新高).”

» *Edu-gamification for Museum Mediation and Education*

The trendy mobile media applied in museum education includes the aforementioned podcasts and edu-gamification or edutainment. The former is becoming a popular term for describing museum users' consumption of audio or rich media content for the purpose of learning and entertainment both in the West and in China (where it has become a paid-for media for trustworthy curated content¹⁶⁴). Its popularity has encouraged more and more museums to become content providers, as seen in the Getty and the British Museum, as stated previously. The term edutainment, which denotes serious game, game based learning, gamification or edutainment, has been experimenting in the education sector¹⁶⁵ and is becoming a welcomed option in the field of cultural heritage¹⁶⁶. Viewing that the 'video game industry' is booming thanks to the advancing mobile phones that can rival Nintendo or PlayStation (which are becoming 'smarter', faster and with greater computing capacity, and with features of location service, camera and social media sharing), museum institutes are endeavouring to develop 'serious games' to reach out to school children¹⁶⁷ and young visitors¹⁶⁸. For example, the Tate Gallery had *Race Against Time*, the Smithsonian had *Neanderthal*, and the Boston Science Museum had *Launchball*¹⁶⁹. Together with the immersive experience of museum exhibition provided onsite and online, edu-gamification can be an effective way for museums to win the eyes of younger generations who are born Internet natives¹⁷⁰.

6.3.1.2 *Musée Imaginaire: A Participatory Virtual Universal Museum of Dunhuang*

When André Malraux published his essay *Le Musée imaginaire* in 1947, having an ideal museum art collection of one's own, that fits his or her intellectual inclination, specific taste and personal preference, could only be imagined¹⁷¹. However, with the progression of digital technology now such a 'lieu mental' can totally be visualised and realised on the Internet, not only for oneself but also for the others to see and participate¹⁷². In fact, the aforementioned examples—such as the online collection database which reunites the dispersed Dunhuang collections (IDP), the semantic web technology of a central portal to access linked

164 Chen, "A Closer Look at China's Paid Audio Content Boom."

165 Barker, Georgopoulos, and Shelter, "Does Gamification Increase Engagement with Online Programs? A Systematic Review."

166 Pantile et al., "Storytelling, Gamification, Interactivity: A New Museum Experience"; Visser, "Games, Gamification and the Optimal Conditions for Learning"; Barker, Georgopoulos, and Shelter, "Does Gamification Increase Engagement with Online Programs? A Systematic Review."

167 "Royal Ontario Museum: Games and Apps."

168 Pontz, "Now a Museum Visit Can Be Fun and Games."

169 Rodley, "Reviews: Museum Game Apps."

170 Shu, "Van Gogh vs. Candy Crush: How Museums Are Fighting Tech with Tech to Win Your Eyes."

171 Belouet, "Musée Imaginaire."

172 Tate, "Tate: Make Your Own Imagined Museum."

heterogenous GLAM databases (FINNA), the concept and practice of putting digitised prestigious collections as ‘open data’ or ‘open source’ (the National Palace Museum in Taipei), the digital heritage artwork created by the immersive and interactive exhibition design (the Riverside Scene during the Festival of Qingming), and the podcasts and edugamification programs of museum heritage (Neanderthal or Launchball)—have already drawn the contours of a ‘musée imaginaire’ for a ‘virtual universal museum of Dunhuang collections’ in this Digital Age for future netizens, who would live in a ‘smart world’ constructed by VR and AR, hologram, artificial intelligence, internet of things, cloud, robotic technology, wearable, quantified health care, automatized car and home, etc.

This imagined virtual museum can be inclusive, and not only in basic ways, including free online access or open data and IPR for the public, but also allowing users to have the opportunity to participate in ‘curatorship, research and even management’. For open curatorship, inspirational cases can already be found in the aforementioned project of ‘digital repatriation’ in Australia for indigenous communities—for which aboriginal groups were invited to participate in the exhibition planning and preparation¹⁷³. Besides, in 2016, the Tate held an exhibition entitled *Imagined Museum* with an education program *Make your own Imagined Museum*.¹⁷⁴ This invited visitors to present their own ‘memories’ about 60 artworks displayed from the Centre Pompidou, Tate and MMK für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main by uploading and sharing his or her own choices and self-generated content to the exhibition’s online platform. All these have provided insights for such a virtual universal museum of Dunhuang objects.

As mentioned earlier, the interactive online database of IDP was built first for curators, researchers and then the wider audience. As discussed, one of the reasons that some of the comprehensive catalogues of Dunhuang collections were not accomplished until the late 20th and early 21st centuries was the lack of native experts to work with. In fact, a great amount of those works digitised and uploaded to the IDP database are still awaiting further studies. Only a limited number of works from Dunhuang have been researched thoroughly as seen in the works’ annotation, translation or bibliography¹⁷⁵, the majority of the collections are simply noted with basic information, such as ‘institution, site, form, material and size’ (see Figure 6.18). Understandably, this information is resulted from expert scrutiny—which shall exist outside academia or museum as well. With the shrinking budget for the study of humanities, the emerging concept and practice of ‘public archaeology’ or ‘citizen and community archaeology’—an archaeology by the people for the people—might provide an alternative solution. This new form of archaeology making with the help of digital media¹⁷⁶

173 Powell, “Digital Repatriation and Virtual Exhibition-Digital Partnerships with Indian Communities”; Williams and Lai, “Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Statement of Performance Expectations.”

174 Tate, “Tate: Make Your Own Imagined Museum.”

175 For example, the 66 works contained in an exhibition of Stein’s collections held in 1982. Whitfield, *The Art of Central Asia: The Stein Collection in the British Museum (Volume 1)*.

176 Bonacchi, “Digital Media in Public Archaeology.”



FIGURE 6.18 *Research in need seen in the archive of IDP (British Library Board and The Trustees of the British Museum)*

should be growing in a digital society of ‘open knowledge’, while the traditional university concentrated training and learning are being democratized by the open education platforms, such as the Khan Academy or the MOOCs that offer high quality free online courses worldwide on diverse subjects. In this light, it is not unthinkable to conceive a ‘public museology’ or ‘public art history’ (as the aforementioned ‘virtual universal museum of Dunhuang collections’) on the basis of, for example, the database of IDP or the Mellon Archive with the help of digital media for ‘crowd sourcing’ in terms of research and curatorship as well in addition to fund raising.

As stated, being national cultural institutes with important collections to forge and shape a collective memory and cultural identity, the GLAM institutes that hold the Dunhuang objects are powerful and centralised authoritative organisations with hierarchical administering structures (see Chapter 3). But it is questionable whether their ‘virtual avatars’ shall stay identical in the digital world. From a futuristic perspective in a Global Age of networked societies, it might be insightful to consider an ‘open management’ knowledge system with available digital technology. This idea has been implemented in the fields of business management and computer science, with the former known as ‘open book management’ which indicates ‘transparency’ and ‘equalised’ company culture where employees are regarded as partners¹⁷⁷ and the latter an ‘open management infrastructure’ which has been published by, for example, the Microsoft to ‘remove all obstacles that stand in the way of implementing standards-based management so that every device in the world can be managed in a clear, consistent, coherent way and to nurture and spur a rich ecosystem of standards-based management products’¹⁷⁸. The current heated debate on the future of the (formal) education system is relevant as well. Thanks to digital media technology, the emerging concept and practice of ‘open academia’ (related to ‘public information for the common good’ or ‘knowledge commons’) also starts to apply such a management model. In addition to ‘participatory research’ conducted by citizens, an open heritage management system might be a powerful way to make digital cultural heritage, such as the Dunhuang collections, a true ‘world heritage of all mankind’, of ‘universal museums’ by the people and for the people.

177 Davis, “Open-Book Management: Its Promise and Pitfalls.”

178 Snover, “Windows Server Blog: Open Management Infrastructure.”

6.3.2 The Atoms and Bits of Cultural Heritage

6.3.2.1 *The Aura of Authentic Object*

Ever since the 1940s when the Dunhuang Academy was established to ‘preserve the grottos’, the removed ‘objects’ on display at those Chinese national (or international) Dunhuang exhibitions were mainly the ‘unauthentic objects’—the artistically-made duplicates of the murals (see Chapter 4). Back then, the number of people able to visit the site of Mogao and see ‘the originals’ was very limited¹⁷⁹. Coming into the mechanical age of photography, re-printable photographs (either from the original murals or the artistically-made duplicates) have largely appeared and become available to reach out to the common public. Now in the Digital Age, with the VR and AR computer imaging technologies, high definition pictures with details far exceeding what our naked eyes can perceive are made. The exhibitions like the aforementioned immersive digital installation of *Pure Land*, or the animated scroll painting of *Riverside Scene during the Festival of Qingming*, have established a new standard of heritage exhibition. But would these first manually then mechanically and digitally reproduced ‘images’ of Dunhuang objects increase or decrease the attraction or the value of the originals in the universal museums and the site of Mogao? Would they change our way to interact with the heritage collections of Dunhuang? Judging by the increasing number of tourists visiting the originals at the Mogao Grottos (see Chapter 5), the answer seems to be negative, for now. Yet it remains questionable whether this means the ‘aura of authentic artwork’ are more charming than the manually, mechanically, and digitally reproduced images of Dunhuang objects. In the early 20th century, between the Wars, the critical theory of Frankfurt School already asked a similar question regarding the ambiguous relationship between the authentic artwork and its mechanical reproductions. Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*¹⁸⁰ suggested the concept of ‘aura’ to argue that ‘even the most perfect reproduction of an artwork is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be’. He further stated that the sphere of authenticity was lost in the technical reproduction, and the action of mechanical reproduction diminished the original artwork by changing the cultural context.

Following this thinking, John Berger in *Ways of Seeing*¹⁸¹ (published in 1972) claimed that without this ‘aura’ the reproduced (analogue) images of artwork would become ‘ephemeral, ubiquitous, insubstantial, available, valueless and free’. In discussing the impact of ‘reproduction’ and the relationship between ‘reality’ and ‘simulation’, Jean Baudrillard¹⁸² in 1981 went further to describe our time as the ‘end of history and meaning’ because in the digital hyper-reality ‘all is composed of references without referents’. He also outlined his ‘simulacrum’,

179 Shen, “Thoughts about Dunhuang Exhibition (敦煌文物展覽感想).”

180 Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*. Pages 19-55.

181 Berger, *Ways of Seeing*.

182 Baudrillard, *Simulacres et Simulation*.

being the product and model of mass production which could be reproduced endlessly with itself to be reproduced as well. Coming into the Digital Age, similar philosophical reflection on the visual reproduction of authentic artwork has continued. To claim the legitimacy of digital information, a concept of ‘digital being’¹⁸³ from the perspective of phenomenology initiated by Heidegger and Husserl has been proposed to address that the ‘digital being’ should be a third category (*res digitalis*) in addition to the normative ‘thingly-being’ (*res cogitans*) and ‘non-thingly-being’ (*res extensa*). Although not belonging to the realm of objective time and space (as Benjamin argued), the digital-being can provide us Heidegger’s ‘substantiality, extension, and thing-totality’ as well as Husserl’s ‘perceivedness or universal passible pre-givenness’ and can extend Heidegger’s ‘dasein as being-in-the-world’ to ‘digi-sein as being-in-the-world-wide-web’. In addition, the actor-agent network theory suggested by Bruno Latour has furthered such thinking, as the digital interface can be regarded as simultaneously actor and agent because while mediating information it also contributes to shaping our received and reused experience¹⁸⁴.

Attaching to the world of atoms, art historians celebrated ‘aura’, authenticity, and the ontology of thingly-being while regarding the ‘hyperreality’ (in Baudrillardian sense) simply as a new way of seeing, though one which might generate new paradigms for the aesthetic evaluation of an artwork. Access to the authentic and original collections held by the GLAM institutes plays a key role to avoid the misleading ‘reproduction of bad reproduction’ as thought by certain curators, who regarded digital portals as supplementary and as a reference only to the real thing¹⁸⁵. In this school of thinking, the sensational difference between the atoms and the bits of heritage collections has been emphasised. For example, encountering the original murals inside the Mogao Grottos is different from perceiving them in an immersive exhibition installation. The pure existence of a Dunhuang object—the handmade thingly-being of the artefact being collected, conserved and displayed—can generate around itself an ‘aura’ that is a worm-hole, like a swirling channel, that can draw the viewer into it with a ‘indescribable’ feeling of penetrating the spatial and temporal memories imprinted on the object. Our ‘meaning-making’ on things in the world is triggered by the contact that our bodies make with the world. This contact forms a perception perceived and generated by our body-and-mind, a living apparatus—a realm still to be understood by cutting-edge research, for example in neurological and cognitive sciences¹⁸⁶. While walking through the exhibition room and being surrounded by those ‘real things’ on display, our perceiving body-and-mind is provided with a chance to be in direct contact with ‘the past’ memorised and embodied within the ‘aura’ of them. It is in this contact, in this perceiving, that between ‘the sentience of our bodily and mindly sensorium’ and ‘the sensed lifeworld’ a borderless and limbo-

183 Kim, “Phenomenology of Digital-Being.”

184 Manovich, *The Language of New Media*.

185 Proctor, “The Google Art Project: A New Generation of Museums on the Web.”

186 Levent and Pascual-Leone, *The Multisensory Museum: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Touch, Sound, Smell, Memory, and Space*.

like space is born and expended to hold our 'being-in-the-world' that knows not anymore what is inside and outside, 'Self' and the 'Others', or I-the-(wo)man and the (life)world. It is at this very (transcending) moment that an inter-subjectivity is projected from our perceiving body-and-mind and the 'it' embodied by the artefact is born, and that our 'perceiving Self' can penetrate to a past-and-now space (the essence of the lifeworld) where the temporal and spatial notion is nowhere to be found. This limbo-like space can be created only in such direct physical contact. Otherwise than knowing, understanding and reasoning, this perception of our body-and-mind is a direct path to reach, merge and expand our 'Self' from within this I-the-(wo)man to the universe of (life)world and become part of it (in one). This meditation on 'knowing' from the perspective of phenomenology, can be achieved most certainly in the world of atoms.

6.3.2.2 *The Dunhuang Simulacrum in Black-Box*

This phenomenology of perception¹⁸⁷ in the milieu of museum exhibition has an ontological challenge in the world of bits. What can be provided by the 'natural presence' of authentic objects on display to our body-and-mind cannot be reproduced by those digital images streamed on or projected to various screens in a 'black-box theatre' of the exhibition. The 'aura' of an archaeological artefact can be understood as a collective existence of the physical beings composed by the nanoscale particles that can mutate, metamorphose or transform through time and space. Therefore the 'simulacrum' of Dunhuang objects remains as a simulacrum which can deliver a simulated reality however augmented this reality can be. This phenomenological rationale can explain how the 'aesthetic experience' given by the original artwork and its digital replica can be different, and such understanding seems to be lost in the translation from the atoms to the bits of cultural heritage and becomes an obsolete topic buried deep in the 'digital divide' between the humanities and the computer science (as mentioned earlier) as seen in those optimistic reports or marketing documents of implementing digital innovations in the heritage sector and the forum of digital cultural heritage or digital humanities.

As mentioned earlier, the digital version of a prestigious collection is actually an (digital) artwork independent from its original model and has its own fate and destiny, as seen in the aforementioned *Riverside Scene during the Festival of Qingming*. Such digital (replica) artwork can exist only in an enclosed exhibition space similar to the conventional 'black box theatre'—with or without a screen inside a dark exhibition room. It has its own charm but will never be able to replace the original object, of which the 'value' will simply increase as it gets older regardless of the increasing numbers of its digital replicas. For example, in 2018, a (Turfan) Dunhuang manuscript on ink and paper from the Tang dynasty with the provenance known as from the Otani collections was sold by the Rong Bao Auction House in Beijing for 22,425,000 RMB (at the same auction there were

¹⁸⁷ Merleau-ponty, "The Visible and The Invisible: The Intertwining - The Chiasm."

also several other manuscripts of Tang dynasty and every one of them was sold for a few million RMB)¹⁸⁸.

Besides, the digital simulacra of Dunhuang collections—as seen in the AR installation of *Pure Land*, the Dunhuang guiding system of ‘i-m-Cave’¹⁸⁹ sponsored by the Microsoft, or the grand exhibition of Oculus virtual reality system at the Getty Centre¹⁹⁰—have an inclination towards being ‘entertaining’ rather than ‘educational’. This ‘Disneylandization’ of heritage enterprise has developed fast after three decades since the Hollywood movie *Jurassic Park* thrilled the world. The upsurge of digital heritage not only competes with other heritage tasks for the already shrinking budget from the government but also provokes new challenges, as Buist claims that netizens might be tempted to dwell on the limits of ‘experience’ because running up against virtual barriers can become more intriguing than the seeing of the original artwork itself¹⁹¹. Following the prediction of Negroponte, that bits would revolutionise the world of atoms and create a new form of digital economy featured with unlimited reproduction, speed and short lifespan, it is foreseeable that current AR imaging applications or holographic projections would become outdated very soon¹⁹² and the business model of such creative digital cultural industry is inevitably becoming the one of popular culture and entertainment business.

6.3.2.3 *Post-Humanism in Digital Humanities*

The futuristic setting of the aforementioned exhibition, *An Imagined Museum* at the Tate Liverpool in 2016, presented the following in its exhibition preface:

[...] the year 2052. At this point in the future, the public display of visual art and culture is in question. Museums are under threat of closure, reducing opportunities for artists to exhibit their work, and leaving fewer occasions for the public to experience art. Art is being stripped out of public life: we urgently need to find a way to preserve this shared heritage for future generations. Without art, human society would become immeasurably poorer. We would no longer be able to see the world through the eyes of artists or experience how art can make us think differently and reflect critically about our own experience of being in the world. Our ability to decode images would be compromised. No longer would we be exposed to artworks that alter our perceptions, and shift our understandings of the everyday. [...] we need you to help us preserve these artworks by keeping them in your memory, to become vessels for these works so that they can be taken into the future. The artworks highlight what we will lose if we fail to preserve

188 “Beijing Rong Bao Auction Spring Auction Success (北京荣宝2018春季艺术品拍卖会总成交额以6.4亿圆满收官).”

189 Huang et al., “I-m-Cave: An Interactive Tabletop System for Virtually Touring Mogao Caves.”

190 Pressberg, “LA’s Getty Center Blends Oculus-Ready VR With Ancient Chinese Art In Virtual Reality Museum Exhibit.”

191 Buist, “Google’s Art Project and the Uncanny Museum.”

192 Ala-Kurilkka, “Lifespan of Consumer Electronics Is Getting Shorter, Study Finds.”

*them in our memories. We invite you to join our community, experiencing these artworks so that you, our visitors, can remember them, carrying their arguments, their meanings, and their importance into the future with you here and in your memory [...].*¹⁹³

This hypothetical setting is inspirational to consider the purpose, economic value and social function of digital heritage. Standing in the seemingly bleak and desperate future of the year 2052, according to aforementioned ‘digital trends’ of today it is possible that the ‘universal museums’ will not be at risk of closure but may fall into the hands of the few, the rich one percent of the West (Silicon Valley), while the rest of the world can only enjoy their virtual avatars and the unlimited digital copies of the prestigious collections that they preserve. Unlike what was predicted in this presupposed scenario, nothing will be forgotten by the year 2052 because to keep memory forever has been one of the primary goals for those pioneering computer scientists of the 1960s to build a computer, which was meant to be a ‘remembering machine’¹⁹⁴. In 2052, all of our thoughts, events and things will be remembered by this ‘remembering machine’, which has been evolving to become a ‘thinking (learning) machine’. The task of ‘knowledge-making’ will be fulfilled not by curators or researchers but by AI, which has already started to work as education curator or exhibition guide as seen in the project *XiaoIce* developed by the Microsoft for the Dunhuang Academy¹⁹⁵. Call the correct number, you will hear a sweet voice saying: ‘hello, this is XiaoIce in Dunhuang, your cutie AI (artificial intelligence) chatbot. You are free to discuss anything with me and I’ll help you explore the world’s cultural heritage as best I can’¹⁹⁶. This AI girl XiaoIce, a 24-hour online Chinese chatbot, not only can provide a tireless tourist service but also can compose poetry in modern Chinese based on images.

*Winds hold rocks and water lightly
In the loneliness
Stroll the empty
The land becomes soft*¹⁹⁷

It seems that there will be no human needed in the digital humanities of the future, and this has raised concerns. However, there had been no human needed either for the existence of Dunhuang objects during the long period of time before they were unearthed by the Chinese abbot. They have been existing inside the dark room of the cave number 17 of Mogao for hundreds of years, while outside many generations of humankind have perished. Understandably, the thingly-

193 Tate, “Tate: Make Your Own Imagined Museum.”

194 Keen, *The Internet Is Not The Answer*.

195 Liu, Fan, and Han, “Feature: When AI Meets the Silk Road.”

196 Linn, “Microsoft The AI Blog: Like a Phone Call-XiaoIce, Microsoft’s Social Chatbot in China, Makes Breakthrough in Natural Conversation.”

197 inventiva, “Microsoft’s AI Can Convert Images into Chinese Poetry Microsoft Recently Taught Its XiaoIce Chatbot.”

things once being created will start to live their own destinies beyond the control of human hands, as described by Roland Barthes (1915-1980) in *The Death of The Author* in 1967. Similarly, the digitally reproduced Dunhuang collections will be existing and living their own economic, social and political lives in the future.

In a certain way, the current flourishing of ‘digital humanities’¹⁹⁸ is fuelling the bleak scene envisioned above, which is related to the concept of ‘posthumanism’¹⁹⁹. In fact, the pessimistic speculation on ‘AI takeover’ or post-human²⁰⁰ is derived from the good-willed human-centre design (for digital innovations to create a smart life for mankind) and ‘transhumanism’ which is to eliminate aging and to enhance human intellectual, physical and psychological capacities. In 1971, the father of formal languages, Noam Chomsky (whose syntax of languages contributed greatly to the development of computer science), had a debate with Michel Foucault (1926-1984) about ‘human nature’²⁰¹. The question they debated was ‘whether we are the product of external factors or in spite of our differences we have a common human nature by which we can call each other human beings’. Chomsky thought that the innate ideas and innate structures represent a creativity which could be specifically owned by humans only, while Foucault avoided answering but went on to address his methodological analysis on the formation and usage of ideas composed by language within specific historical context. Without any conclusion, the question remained open. After half a century, now AI has acquired more features resembling our ‘human nature’²⁰². Can such ‘human nature’ exist outside of us? Figure 6.25²⁰³ is a mural about the ‘pure land’ (land of bliss or paradise) of Amitabha, where only extreme joy and happiness could be found. However divine it may appear, such a ‘heavenly scene’ is nevertheless rather ‘earthly’ because the ‘extreme joy and happiness’ that the anonymous artist of medieval Central Asia could imagine is based solely on his memory, knowledge and experience on earth—such as the dance, music, silk cloth, jewellery, golden sand, glass floor, fine architecture, beautiful nature, and lovely animals like the parrot and peacock, etc. Such longing for the supreme joy of an afterlife is our ‘human nature’. Although the mechanism of art making can be learnt by the ‘thinking machine’ thanks to Chomsky, this longing however belongs to us human beings only and may not be found in the world of post-humanism in the year of 2052.

198 Besser, “The Past, Present and Future of Digital Libraries”; Svensson and Goldberg, *Between Humanities and the Digital*; Muñoz, “Recovering a Humanist Librarianship through Digital Humanities.”

199 Braidotti, *The Posthuman*; Follow, “Summary of Rosi Braidotti’s *The Posthuman* (Part 1).”

200 Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*.

201 Chomsky and Foucault, “Human Nature: Justice vs Power (1971) A Debate Between Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault.”

202 Knight, “A Computer Program That Learns to Imagine the World Shows How AI Can Think More like Us.”

203 *Animated Amitabh Story from the Dunhuang Grotto 220* (繪動敦煌 220窟 阿彌陀淨土繪動經變圖); *Dunhuang Mogao Grotto 220* (敦煌莫高窟第220窟阿彌陀經變初唐).

Sub-Conclusion: The Digital Lives of Dunhuang Collections

Although the time is ripe to define a digital Dunhuangology considering how 'being digital' is applied to almost all dimensions of Dunhuang heritage, including collection, exhibition and education, it is rather doubtful whether digital technology can free the Dunhuang collections from their caves, storages or institutes and 'decentralize, globalize, harmonize and empower' them in the many worlds in which they live. Eventually, it is those who own, care and use them that get to decide. And for this reason, the phenomenon of the 'digital divide' in the heritage sector—though rarely discussed—not only exists but is also being enlarged due to the complicated interrelation between technology, economics and politics in the deep structure of digital world. After the neoliberal turn of cultural heritage (as explored in the previous Chapter 5), the cultural capital of Dunhuang objects is found to have a new source in addition to tourism industry: the digital innovation economy and experience economy, where development tends to be not only market oriented but also entertainment inclined. This risks to delink the serious knowledge about the past from the light gamification of the digital future, and together with the 'digital divide' it risks to cast a 'darker side' of digital heritage under the shadow of the techno-optimism held by those Western-white-elite-male technologists from Silicon Valley. With this in mind, in the following concluding chapter, I will further discuss the notions of coloniality and decoloniality as well as (ac-/de-)culturation and transculturation embodied in the public lives of Dunhuang objects from 1900 to this day.

7 Discussion and Conclusion

The Conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to....

—Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

The Emperor of Chu-state lost his bow while hunting and decided not to look for it, considering that it would be found anyway by another man from Chu-state. Confucius commented: it would be fairer to not suppose that other man is from Chu-state too. Lao-Tzu further remarked: what matters is the 'lost' and 'found', and that is all.¹

—Lü Buwei (291-235 BC), *Lüshi Chunqiu*, Guei Gong (239 BC)²

This research journey—tracing the biographical lives of Dunhuang objects from the caves of Mogao on the southern Silk Road in the Chinese Central Asia to both the West and the Sinosphere world, traversing different fields such as politics, economics and digitisation throughout the Belle Époque, the Wars, the Cold War and the post-conflict neoliberal era—is unique and important. It is the very first research to examine such important collections of universal museums obtained from the 'Others' during the time of orientalism and New Imperialism, from the perspective of museology and heritage studies in an analytic and critical manner. It is also the very first research to investigate the heritage process of such collections from the cultural tradition of the 'country of origin', Qing China, to the Western originated model of museum praxis and heritage enterprise, and from the point of archaeological discoveries to the extensive application in the

1 Original in Chinese as '呂不韋，呂世春啾，貴公'：'荊人有遺弓者，而不肯索，曰，荊人遺之，荊人得之，又何所焉？孔子聞之曰，去其荊而可以。老聃聞之曰，去其人而可以。故老聃則至公已！'

2 Original in Chinese as '呂不韋，呂世春啾，貴公'。

digital arena of mobile and the web. In addition, it is as well the very first research to inspect the complex relationships between such important heritage and people(s) in an entangled world history characterised by both conflict and cooperation. The journey has resulted in many novel discoveries. The most important ones are that it has clearly elucidated how important cultural heritage, such as the Dunhuang objects, can be used for nation and empire building, for heritage and museum diplomacy, for cultural tourism and for creative and digital economy. To explore the many lives of the Dunhuang objects in these dimensions, I also invented conceptual or theoretical tools for the convivence of navigation. For instance, the visualised 'knowledge network' of Dunhuang heritage; the pyramid-shaped museum communication model with four nodes (object, curator, visitor and maker); and the concept of 'digital Dunhuangology' composed by the practices of digital applications employed in collection management, immersive and interactive exhibitions and online education. The comparative approach engaged throughout the entire research journey brings forth abundant materials to offer a macro-analysis on the cultural phenomenon of (de-)coloniality and (ac-/de-)culturation or transculturation through Dunhuang heritage between the West and China. This is a bold and unique endeavour, which lead to further building of comparative museology or comparative heritage studies and comparative Dunhuangology.

7.1 About the Journey

Just as the murals of Mogao caves illustrate the many reincarnated lives of Siddhārtha Gautama (563-483 BC) and his teachings thousands of years ago, this dissertation presented the many performative lives of the Dunhuang collections, as constituted by their imposed identities, definitions and meanings after being institutionalised in the West and China. Although both are 'biographical', the former is about a historical figure, a 'persona', and the latter about 'objects'. Intentionality, the fundamental difference between the two, can illuminate the main subject of this research, which is not on objects nor on people but on the divergent relationships between objects and people(s). These relationships are not arbitrary but intentionally made by those people(s) who made, own and use the objects. And it is exactly these various relationships that define Dunhuang objects as religious items, historical artefacts, scientific specimens, works of (fine) art, colonial acquisitions, public property, national treasures, symbols of cultural identity, cultural diplomats, targets of heritage diplomacy, destinations of tourism, contents of digitisation, sources for creative industry, materials for experience economy, etc. Naturally, this list can go on so long as the objects continue to exist and be in public use as predestined by the authorised heritage discourse which declares that, as world cultural heritage, they are to be safeguarded for future generations of all mankind.

The findings of this research resonate with the critical anthropological view of an object's biography: 'objects' do not have real, innate or fixed identities, their

meanings are sociocultural constructions and thus are in flux and contextual³. However, such an object-centred perspective, though powerful in highlighting the potency of heritage collections, risks overlooking the decisive role played by the primary, active and purposeful contributing factor of the meaning-making process—people(s), and their embodied intellectual and cultural traditions. People are the ultimate coding systems who give definitions, interpretations and implications to the outer world of things, where cultural heritage belongs. In a way, the biographical view that regards objects as protagonists in their lives tends to treat inclusively all of the potential significances of objects equally, and this gives the impression that all those people(s) involved in their meaning-making processes have equal rights to use these objects for their own purposes and according to their wishes. To evaluate or judge which of the imposed meanings or identities should surpass the others or be prioritised is a question to be answered by ‘philosophy of history’ and thus beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, it is worth considering such a question while composing the biographies of cultural objects such as the Dunhuang collections—the cultural heritage acquired from the ‘Others’ during colonial era—as it could shed some light on the unexplored territory in the ‘ethics of cultural heritage’⁴ (which by far is mostly concerned with preservation science) and provide new thoughts for the future development of heritage enterprise on a global level.

Trying to be as thorough as possible, it is however not possible for this research journey to cover every single sight worth exploring while traversing such an immense landscape, be it temporal, spatial and cultural. Having headed towards a predefined yet empirically unknown destination, the inspector at times may have seemed to wander away unfocused or remain at some particular spots for too long. But to have integral and in-depth understandings about the potentials and meanings of a veritable ‘world cultural heritage’ like the atoms and bits of Dunhuang collections from a cross-cultural angle, it is like trying to comprehend the potentials and meanings of life: no detour is really meaningless and details do matter.

Despite the uniqueness of the Dunhuang objects in the world, this research can be applied to many other ‘important collections’ of similar history—being taken away from ‘Others’ in the rest of the world during the times of colonisation and becoming permanent collections of ‘universal museums’ and public cultural properties in the West. For example, the African, American or Asian cultural objects of Egyptology, Mesopotamia, Maya, Aztec, Gandhāra or Angkor Wat that have filled many grandiose exhibition rooms of the royal, national or universal museums in London, Paris, New York, Berlin or St. Petersburg. The only

3 Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*; Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things.”

4 Hilary A Soderland and Ian A Lilley, ‘The Fusion of Law and Ethics in Cultural Heritage Management: The 21st Century Confronts Archaeology’, *Journal of Field Archaeology*, 40.5 (2015), 508–22; Tracy Ireland, *The Ethics of Cultural Heritage* (New York: Springer, 2015); *Cultural Heritage Ethics: Between Theory and Practice*, ed. by Constantine Sandis (Open Book Publishers, 2014).

difference seems to be the different ‘destinies’ of their ‘countries of origin’—the adversaries of major Western museums in the argument of cultural repatriation. Unlike the other ancient civilisations that are collected into the departments of ‘world cultures’ in the West, China with its longstanding historic-cultural continuum not only survived the New Imperialism of the West but is becoming a new world power, from its opening-up policy at the end of Cold War, under ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ to the China Dream initiated by the BRI after the turn of the last millennium. This may be a potent and decisive factor to change the future destinies of China’s important collections lost to the West during the ‘humiliating century,’ including Dunhuang objects. In addition to ‘using the past to change the future’⁵, to benefit from the added value of important collections in cultural tourism, creative industry and digital economy can be the real reason to fight for ‘ownership’ or ‘cultural right’⁶ between the West and China.

7.2 On the Findings

The above-mentioned findings of this research are reported in a quasi-chronological way with two parallel narrative lines (the West and China), and mainly three focuses (collection, exhibition and education) throughout the entire dissertation, from the birth histories of the Dunhuang collections to their political, diplomatic, economic and digital lives. Part I Object, Knowledge, Politics consists of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, which respectively described the birth histories of Dunhuang collections and their political lives for nation and empire building at the beginning of the 20th century during the Belle Époque where the world history was much entangled. Part II Displaying Power has a lengthy chapter, Chapter 4, which recounts the diplomatic lives of Dunhuang collections starting from the historical and theoretical structure of public display and power in telling their performative and diplomatic function throughout the past century in the divided world. Part III Atoms and Bits of Cultural Heritage incorporates Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, which individually report the economic and digital lives of Dunhuang objects since the second half of the 20th century after the Cold War in the neoliberal Digital Age. Resulting from the scientific culture of the Enlightenment tradition, the museumification of Dunhuang objects from a macro point of view are made through a potent knowledge and power network of New Imperialism. Through which, it was introduced to the Sinosphere world the scientific intellectual and cultural convention together with the socio-political paradigms needed for modern museum praxis and heritage enterprise. After being institutionalised into public property, these collections of archaeology, anthropology or art history are given new identities first in the West and then in China too. To the former,

5 Ferguson and Dellios, “Timeless: Using the Past to Change the Present.”

6 For example, the return of the bronze animal heads looted from the Summer Palace during the Opium War in the new millennium has created direct and indirect economic impacts on popular culture (movie making) and museum exhibition.

they shine as a gem on the crown of colonial empire and are labelled as world heritage after the War; to the latter, in the process of ‘modernisation’ these religious objects become splendid national art treasures inherited from the Tang dynasty yet darkened by Qing’s failing rule and serve as political tokens to evoke nationalistic sentiment as well as to balance foreign policy.

In addition to knowledge making, these collections are performative and instrumental to their ‘(collective) owners’ in different times who tend to utilise them to shape and show their own cultural, social and political identities and proceed diplomatic dialogues. It is under such circumstances that dissonances occur between the objects’ different identities or meanings accrued over time. In a historical light, these cultural objects of Dunhuang are heterogeneous and alien to the West but homogeneous and inherent to the Sinosphere world because of the simple fact that the foundation of the Western cultural system, social values and norms is Christianity and of Sinosphere Taoism and Buddhism—which are the main theme that Dunhuang objects were made for in the first place. The purpose of these objects’ existence, given by the West, is first ‘scientific’ and then ‘artistic’ while the science of studying the ‘Others’ becomes critical in postcolonial studies and tends to be replaced by the discourse of art. In such discourse is brought forth the seemingly universal and ideology-free aesthetics of ‘world cultures’. Aesthetic experience becomes the main thing to be shown in the milieu of Western museum exhibitions. China, being the country of origin of the Dunhuang objects and the ‘cultural heir’ of the culture they represented, through these objects of cultural heritage could recover not only its historical memory from the medieval times⁷ but also its lost traditions in arts and religion—especially after the Cultural Revolution⁸. Besides, to China, approaching the Dunhuang objects is not only an intellectual process of knowledge making as in the West, but also a sentimental engagement of looking into its own past. This is rarely mentioned in the current debates of cultural repatriation, and is reflected in Chapter 2 The Political Use of The Past.

In addition, through the intergovernmental heritage platform of ICOM-UNESCO-UN formed after the WWII, with its predecessor IMO-ICIC-League of Nations made after the WWI, the West attempted to build peace under a new world order through world cultural politics. While resolving the spoils of war within Europe, the concept and practice of museum praxis and heritage enterprise has been standardised and globalised, or universalised, through a series of international heritage protection charters, conventions and laws. During the Cold War in the 1980s, a heritage diplomacy endeavoured by UNESCO reached out to China behind the Iron Curtain through the Silk Road projects and the gateway of Dunhuang heritage. The same heritage diplomacy, which linked

7 Rong and Galambos, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang*.

8 Buddhism continues to be the main belief in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau after 1949. Although under the communist regime religions are under strict censorship, a restoration of Buddhist faith can be observed after Cultural Revolution and especially in the new century, see Louise Tythacott, ‘Future Lives: Liverpool or China’, *The Lives of Chinese Objects*, 2011.

heritage preservation with development work by cultural tourism, has precluded the neoliberal turn of cultural heritage and this had a strong influence on China's heritage process in the post-conflict era. Eager for further modernisation and economic success, China not only accepted or ratified these charters and conventions but also became active in the international forum of cultural heritage. Before any sign that the aforementioned platform's embedded universal norms, like democracy or human rights, had been successfully delivered, China started to engage this platform to advance its own heritage diplomacy with the BRI to attain its China Dream and Made in China 2015⁹. From this perspective, it seems that the neoliberal turn, which shifts cultural heritage's main tasks from strengthening identity, stimulating solidarity and defending territory to invigorate economics and increase financial revenue, has a reverse development¹⁰. Besides, digitisation and mobile and web technology are seen to encourage the neoliberal turn creating new economic forms, such as the digital innovation economy and experience or attention economy. Meanwhile, advancing the atoms and bits of cultural heritage towards 'Disneylandisation', the 'disruptive, decentralising and empowering' digital technology also brings new insights to a participatory and inclusive 'museum without walls'—should the risk of a 'digital plundering of world heritage' be avoided, in addition to the 'technoeconomic divide' and 'technopolitical divide' in the digital arena between the North and South, the haves and the have-nots, as well as between the West and China.

7.3 Epilogue and Future Directions

The general discussion on the findings presented above leads to the following concluding sections and suggestive future direction for work based on this research. The holistic view of the entire biographic lives of Dunhuang, on their public uses in politics, diplomacy, economics and digitisation both in the West and China, provides firm grounds to discuss the cultural phenomenon of (de-) coloniality and (ac-/de-)culturation or transculturation between the two distinctively different worlds. In the Sinosphere world, China is actually the 'present' Oriental in orientalism while embracing the Western scientific culture and socio-political system; and in the West, things oriental are not only prestigious cultural artefacts but also the oriental religion and philosophy they embodied.

7.3.1 Transculturation through Cultural Heritage

From the miraculous unearthing of Buddhist relics in 1900 to the nationalist survey on traditional art in 1940, the changing view on Dunhuang objects in China represents a complicated cultural phenomenon that from a macro point

9 Made in China 2025 (中國製造2025).

10 This remains to be further explored as its just a beginning with the BRI projects spreading along the inland and maritime Silk Roads.

of view could be tagged with the critical terms of postcolonial cultural studies or anthropology such as modernisation, Westernisation, coloniality¹¹, acculturation, deculturation, enculturation and transculturation. As ambiguous as it can be, this change enabled by a transbordering knowledge network of orientalism under the support of imperialistic powers is a manifestation of China adopting the Western form of museum praxis and heritage enterprise together with necessary socio-political paradigms. However, any change resulting from some kind of cultural contact should be mutual. Scrutinising postcolonial critiques¹², it seems that the Oriental influence received by the West in orientalism remains little explored.

7.3.1.1 *China: The Present Oriental in Orientalism*

Saïd assumed that the distorted image in the discourse of Western empires was made on purpose so that the colonial could have complete dominance and control over the colonised. The term 'Others' in this light takes on pejorative meaning, designating a state of being inferior and monolithic and reinforcing a hierarchy of 'centre versus periphery'¹³. Such one-way perception or representation of the 'Others' held by the West as Saïd described about the Islamic world, is also seen in the analysis of Inden about India¹⁴. Studying the literature of natural science on Africa and the Americas, Pratt tackled 'transculturation' or 'mutual acculturation-deculturation' with the concept of 'contact zone'¹⁵. This theory explains that imperialistic metropolis and periphery actually determine each other and in fact Gellner's notion 'world-levelling unificatory epistemology' is a continuing process to date. Opposing postcolonialism, MacKenzie¹⁶ argues that Saïd held an overcomplicated opinion on the basis of an anti-humanity imperialism by assuming that 'all western scholarship involving representations of other peoples is tainted by its viewpoint of political dominance'. He supported Pratt's committed 'intellectual decolonisation' or the 'decolonisation of knowledge' and 'demystification of imperialism', which could overthrow the 'totalising momentum' of the ahistorical orientalism¹⁷.

As seen in this research journey especially Part I and II, these postcolonial arguments can apply to China as well. After all, similar to the rest of the world this old culture too has suffered rampant invasions of colonial powers since the mid-19th century. But not being completely conquered by the West, the semi-colonised late Qing dynasty and early modern China with an independent

11 Walter D. Mignolo, 'Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity', *Cultural Studies*, 2007, 39–45; Walter D. Mignolo, 'Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, The Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality', *Cultural Studies*, 21.2 (2007), 449–514; *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, ed. by M Morana, E Dussel, and C A Jaurequi (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

12 Saïd, Spivak, and Bhabha, "Post Colonial Studies Reader."

13 Saïd, *Orientalism*.

14 Spencer, "Orientalism without the Orientals."

15 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Routledge, 2007).

16 MacKenzie, "The Orient: Culture and Imperialism."

17 MacKenzie. p 21.

sovereignty (however partial or impotent it may appear to be) does not share exactly the same destiny with those that were discussed in the Subaltern Studies of Indian Subcontinent, the settler and indigenous complex of North America or the (de)coloniality of Latin America and Africa. In receiving Western political, economic and cultural influences, China has not been inert or passive. Likewise, to the depiction of Chinese cultural image in the West, China did not stay inactive but has played a comparatively active role to give an authentic voice as seen in its presentations at expositions universelles and participation in the orientalist conferences as well as in sending its finest ‘national treasure’ to exhibit in Europe—as described in Chapter 4 in recounting Dunhuang objects’ diplomatic lives. In fact, while the West regarded the Dunhuang collections as scientific specimens, the Qing literati viewed them as artworks already from the traditional perspective of Chinese art making and elite-collector’s connoisseurship. In a retrospective view, the fact that this value judgement of art emerged in the West in the early 20th century is not without the efforts paid by Chinese art dealers, academics and diplomats, as revealed by the international art exhibition of China in London in 1935 (Chapter 4.3.1.1). Being ‘elevated’ to fine art the equivalent of Greek or Roman relics, Chinese archaeological objects have mostly distinguished themselves from objects displayed in anthropology or ethnography museums, as seen in the case of Musée Guimet where Pelliot’s collection are exhibited.

In addition, the general pejorative image drawn by Western Orientalists¹⁸ seems to become an inner motivation or stimuli (purposefully) for modern China to strive for ‘progress’ and ‘modernisation’¹⁹. On the one hand, China embraces European political philosophy and proceeds socio-economic reform and cultural reform; on the other hand, it holds tight on the idea to redeem and recover the ‘shame’ or ‘guilt’ of lost national dignity or cultural confidence—which is embodied in its cultural heritage—from the West, and this has become the basic tone of China’s national development to this day²⁰.

7.3.1.2 *Sinology, Chinese Art and Buddhism in the West*

Accompanying the colonial ambition of the West is the systematic knowledge of the ‘Others’. A good example is France’s establishment of L’École spéciale des langues orientales in 1795. The School originally had three departments—literary and oral Arabian, Turkish and Tatarian of Crimea, and Persian and Malay—and its existence was primarily to serve a French colonial agenda. Three years after its creation Jean-Michel de Venture de Paradis (1739-1799) took his best students to work as interpreters for the French army to Egypt. The evolution of the School and the augmentation of languages taught (including Chinese) in the following 19th and 20th centuries have mirrored the country’s colonial expansion, as seen also in the change of School’s name from ‘spéciale’ to ‘royale’, ‘impériale’ and then

18 Rupert, *The Yellow Peril (The Orient vs the Occident)*.

19 (柏楊), *Ugly Chinese* (醜陋的中國人).

20 Xiao, “The Road of No Return (必由之路).”

‘nationale’²¹. It was here that Pelliot was cultivated to serve the French colonial government of Indochina and became the able sinologist acquiring the best part of Dunhuang manuscripts (as described in Chapter 2.1.2.1).

Yet as stated, as one of the last countries to be incorporated into Western colonial agendas, China seems to hold a certain ‘droit de parole’ to its cultural knowledge in the West outside the colonial literature criticised by Saïd²². In fact, before the late 19th and early 20th centuries’ zest in translating Chinese classic poetry and novels, appropriating Chinese opera and putting up authentic mise-en-scène museum exhibition (as illustrated in Chapter 4.2), those important philosophers of German Enlightenment tradition such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and especially Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)²³ and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) to varying degrees all explored China’s Confucianism, Taoism or Buddhism in their writings or lectures. This signifies that coming to the West were not only the cultural objects but also the cultural and intellectual traditions they embodied. Three decades after the Cold War, China with its newly established economic power started to consciously and actively ‘export’ its soft power through language instruction, arts and culture as seen by the creation of Confucius Academy following the examples set by former colonial powers like France, Germany and the United States.

Amidst various cultural subjects, religion remains critical to not only the West²⁴ but also to Red China. Originating from the Indian subcontinent in the 5th century BC, Buddhism took the trade route of Central Asia and arrived in China during the Han dynasty. Together with Taoism and Confucianism it became a main religious belief in the Sinosphere world. Although the ancient reigns of Indo-Greek kings had introduced Greco-Buddhism to the Hellenic world with the Gandhara art between the conquest of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC and the Islamic conquests of the 7th century AD, there was little contact between the West and Buddhism during the long Dark Ages. It had to wait until the modern epoch with Christian missionary work, mercantilism and especially the European colonisation of Asian Buddhist countries that Buddhism was re-introduced to the West. In fact the aforementioned German interest in Oriental religion and philosophy was based on the introductory works of Jesuit missionaries. However, both Christian missionaries and Enlightenment intellectuals held rather negative views on Buddhism. The former considered it demonic or evil, and the latter nihilistic or pessimistic. With the arrival of direct evidence and primary materials such as the Dunhuang manuscripts and artefacts of Buddhist sutras and deities, together with other Buddhist objects amassed by orientalists to major museums during the Belle Époque²⁵, it seems that the prejudiced or misinterpreted Buddhist teaching has been given a chance to be re-evaluated or

21 Inalco, “Une Histoire Riche.”

22 Saïd, *Culture and Imperialism*.

23 Stewart, *Hegel's Interpretation of the Religions of the World: The Logic of the Gods*. p 61.

24 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate.*; Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

25 Francotte, “Emile Guimet, Une Entreprise Muéale Hors Du Commun.”

re-learned by the West. Such an argument surely needs further studies, but phenomenologically speaking it is undeniable that the Buddhist faith has been growing in the West over the past century while diminishing in Asia and this trend is likely to continue in the coming future, as predicted by the studies of PEW²⁶.

7.3.2 Utopia and Dystopia of World Heritage

One important contributing factor in globalising modern Western museum praxis and heritage enterprise across the rest of the world, including China the country of origin of Dunhuang objects (as seen in Chapter 4.3.3), comes from the infrastructure of international cultural politics composed by the aforementioned intergovernmental platform of ICOM-UNESCO-UN, which after the WWII succeeded the mission of International Museums Office (IMO)-International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC)-League of Nations built after WWI (as discussed in Chapter 5.1.1). The origin of such a ‘network’ (however loosely they connect to each other with their respectively rather different missions and tasks) in the international realm of arts and culture is a design by the West—the leading world powers that are former colonial empires—to use ‘soft power’ to help building peace and a new world order. This deep power structure of UN-UNESCO-ICOM remains little changed to this date.

7.3.2.1 *Soft Power of Culture for New World Order*

It is claimed that after the most appalling wars of mankind that awakened many from the Age of Optimism ‘the world wanted peace’²⁷, so UN was created in 1945 to make a new world order. Since ‘peace must be established on the basis of humanity’s moral and intellectual solidarity’, UNESCO was built to be ‘an incubator for ideas’ and to ‘set standards in formulating global agreements on ethical challenges’²⁸. In conformity with the charter of UN and pursuant to the authority of UNESCO²⁹, ICOM was founded in 1946 to work for society and its development in 1) establishing standards of excellence, 2) leading a diplomatic forum, 3) developing the professional network, 4) leading a global think tank, 5) collaborating with UNESCO, INTERPOL, the World Customs Organization (WCO), etc.³⁰ This conceptual link between ICOM, UNESCO and UN illustrates the seemingly unconnected subjects: cultural heritage and a new world order.

The idea of having the world order maintained by an intergovernmental organization came already in Kant’s philosophical sketch on ‘perpetual peace’ while promoting Germany’s unification in the late 18th century. In 1889 in the aftermath of Napoleonic wars the Inter-Parliamentary Union was established for

26 PEW, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.”

27 UN, “About the UN.”

28 UNESCO, “Introducing UNESCO.”

29 Chauncey J Hamlin, ‘A Letter to Leaders in Museum Work in Various Countries throughout the World’ 1946, in *History of ICOM 1946-1996*, ed. by Sid Baghli, Patrick Boylan, and Yani Herreman (Paris: ICOM, 1998).

30 ICOM, “ICOM Missions.”

such a task. Broken by WWI, the Union was followed by the League of Nations where ‘soft power’ was acknowledged and so the ICIC and IMO were created. In this light, the soft power of culture has long been regarded as a crucial force no less important than hardcore military power. Subsequently, in addition to being regulated by armed conflicts the world order can also rely on some kind of ‘culture order’ as stated in the philosophy of UNESCO written by Julian Huxley in 1946. This philosophy was based on a ‘world scientific evolutionary humanism’, which aimed to shape the direction of evolution for human progress. Such ‘human evolution’, unlike the inorganic or organic evolution, was manifest in social organizations, machines and ideas. Higher evolution means more complexity in man’s tools and social structure. It considered Hegelian philosophy and Marxist ‘reconciliation of opposites’ too exclusive to rely on social principles instead of biological evolution; and it was simply too early for these two schools of thought to undertake a vast superstructure. So the comprehensive philosophy of ‘scientific evolution’ could be favourable as it helped to build a common pool through collaborations of education, science and culture to familiarise the world with the implications to the transfer of full sovereignty from separate nations to a world organization (UN) of political unification and absolute authority. In this design, international enterprise shall be encouraged to demonstrate that nationality and nationalism can be transcended in shared activity; birth should be controlled to ensure quality evolution progress; and food and health governed to prevent any nation resorting to isolationism or war. Unquestionably, such a philosophy positions man as the centre of universe and the sole trustee of Earth’s future. Being the heir and the highest end of evolutionary progress, man should be free from guilt of the anthropocentric domination towards nature and other species. It was said that this philosophy of UNESCO ‘never got off the ground’ due to the resistance from major political poles and intellectual criticism³¹, and the idea of ‘scientific humanism’ sounded ‘oxymoronic’ today³² (in Blue’s words). But apparently most projects of UNESCO have followed Huxley’s design including the museum praxis and heritage enterprise which constructed an infrastructure for prevailing cultural political power.

7.3.2.2 *Museum Praxis and Heritage Enterprise vs. Culture War*

The brief exploration on the historical and philosophical origin of ICOM-UNESCO-UN helps to understand the deep structure of heritage diplomacy played through Dunhuang between the West and China, as discussed in Chapter 4.3. It also provides an understanding on the so-called ‘culture war’—a term often used by French intellectuals to denote the ‘export’ of American popular culture to the rest of the world—which, in a way, can be used to understand a certain dimension of the biographical lives of Dunhuang objects. The coherent

31 Blue, “Scientific Humanism at the Founding of UNESCO.”

32 Berg, “A Symposium on New Imperialism at UNESCO, A Philosophical Reflection.” The current Director General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, has proposed a ‘new humanism’ which Berg thought was simply a revived version of scientific humanism.

operational philosophy as mentioned above in the organisations like ICOM, UNESCO, UN in fact is very little mentioned in the field of museology or heritage studies. Apart from tracing back to Greek Muses and being criticised as a modern temple to conserve artefacts, create knowledge and civilize citizens, the museum in this light is actually an efficient instrument to implement UNESCO's constitutional mandate as 'maintaining, increasing and diffusing knowledge'³³. As discussed in the section on heritage diplomacy (4.3.3.1), the platform of ICOM-UNESCO-UN was used to pave a way to reach out to China with its universal norms embodied in those heritage protection charters and conventions. This linking heritage preservation and development work through tourism has brought certain result. For example, countries like Thailand or Cambodia have been 'socialized' into this democratic heritage network. However, it remains questionable whether such a strategy can be successful with China³⁴. Although the Silk Road Project of UNESCO has reached Dunhuang, and China has been standardising³⁵ its museum praxis and heritage enterprise, an attempt was expressed to have 'a museology of national characteristics'—an idea firmly denied by ICOM-UNESCO with the excuse that 'museum science is universal, thus no regional difference should exist'³⁶.

In exploring intangible cultural heritage, Byrne³⁷ pointed out that the social value of non-Western heritage was mostly ignored or simply diminished as 'authentic' by those UNESCO heritage charters and conventions, which were born out of a disenchanted worldview evolving from Protestant Reformation to rationalism or secularism (as the 'scientific humanism' described above). This 19th century doctrine has ensconced all societies at various stages in a ladder ranging from bottom to the top, where sits the modern civilization of north-western Europe. As the theory of coloniality has revealed, the path to modernity should differ from place to place. He concluded that the inadequacy of these charters in terms of social value originates from their presumptuous and naïve terms on the national and international level, wherein the rich history and anthropology research on the complex reality of peoples' interaction with cultural heritage are not consulted. Although alternative models for heritage practitioners employed by international heritage preservation and management agencies are possible, it is difficult as the former are trained by the latter with a knowledge which goes against traditional way of using heritage—which 'often causes radical replacement of the built heritage fabrics' and is 'condemned as superstition and obstacle of modernisation, social development and economic progress'³⁸. Simpson noted that museum activities in the 19th and 20th centuries have contributed to a

33 Mayer, "Editorial."

34 Lynch, *Rising China and Asian Democratization*.

35 Lu, *Museum in China: Power, Politics and Identities*.

36 Su, "Chinese Museums' Tradition and Changes."

37 Byrne, "Chartering Heritage In Asia's Postmodern World."

38 Byrne, *Counterheritage: Critical Perspectives on Heritage Conservation in Asia*.

‘cultural decline’ experienced by indigenous peoples³⁹. In this light, the globalization of heritage practice through the knowledge network of ICOM-UNESCO-UN may well continue such a decline (which may be experienced by the ‘Others’ in the rest of the world). To Byrne, it is perhaps surprising to see that Asian governments were willing to ratify those charters and follow international heritage preservation and management agencies. However, in addition to the incentives like financial aid provided by the heritage diplomacy of UNESCO and the profit of cultural tourism, the fundamental reason can be to use museum praxis and heritage enterprise to attain ‘modernity’ and especially to proceed an identity politics to ‘harmonise’ different sociocultural opinions within the country.

The claim of Focillon on creating IMO to ‘increase mutual understanding’⁴⁰ could mean well. But museum being a ‘medium’ is a ‘message’ itself. The ‘vitrine effect’ that objectifies or commodifies the ‘Others’ (as seen in Chapter 4.2.1) can be powerful way to fight the ‘culture war’. Although ICOFOM (the think tank of ICOM) suggested that the museum is an instrument for unity and diversity⁴¹, cultural heritage has become the new frontline in the post-conflict era. The unspoken message delivered through the network of ICOM-UNESCO-UN could be that: the museum mechanism as a Western democratic and capitalist crusade is to conquer, convert, domesticate or modernise the world⁴² with an (inter-)national identity politics based on scientific humanism to familiarize the ‘Others’ with the implications of a world organization with absolute authority to prevent full-scale war and create peace following the design of UNESCO by Huxley. As ‘oxymoronic’ as this reasoning may sound, to borrow Blue’s words, the cultural heritage infrastructure of national museum-ICOM-UNESCO-UN does contribute to ‘assimilate’ the ‘Others’ into the Western model of modernity and progress. Like Freud and Einstein suggested in their conversation about ‘why war’ in 1932⁴³ (as discussed in Chapter 1.2.2.1), this absolute authority needs every nation to surrender its liberty of action and sovereignty and obey international laws. Freud explained that right (law) and might (violence, war) are the same thing. ‘Right’ is but ‘*l’union fait la force*’ of the weak, and thus is the ‘might’ of a union. It is still violence, ready to be directed against any individual who resists it. Freud suggested cultivating emotional ties (identification) among members of this union to counteract our biological instinct to death and to decrease our propensity for war; he also presumed an evolution of human culture (civilization) where ‘reason’ stands in the end to restrain sexual function so to prevent the ‘uncultivated races and backward strata of the population’ multiplying more rapidly than highly cultivated ones. It is beyond the scope of this research to judge the morality of such proposition, yet the museum mechanism is indeed

39 Moira G Simpson, *Making Representations: Museum in the Post-Colonial Era* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

40 UNESCO, “UNESCO Archives AtoM Catalogue.”

41 Viereggs et al., *Museology: An Instrument for Unity and Diversity*.

42 ICOM, “Keynote Speakers at 2016 ICOM Conference.”

43 Freud, “Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents (1930) German Title: Das Unbehagen in Der Kultur (The Uneasiness in Culture).”

the best milieu for fighting the ‘culture war’ as it provides the ‘other technique’ that Freud suggested to settle ‘conflicts of opinion.’ The biographical lives of Dunhuang objects in the West and China throughout the 20th century can be an important source for future exploration on the relationship between museum praxis or heritage enterprise and culture war.

7.3.2.3 *Museum Objects, Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*

The critical analysis above explains how culture war and soft diplomacy are attended on the international heritage platform of ICOM-UNESCO-UN, for instance between the West and China during (and after) the Cold War. However, one fundamental means for this to happen is the conceptual link between museum objects, collective memory and (national) cultural identity.

Furthering the idea of social memory proposed by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) and the theory of iconic or image memory suggested by the art historian Aby Warburg in the 1930s, the Egyptologist Jan Assmann established a concept of cultural memory in the 1980s⁴⁴. According to him there are three levels of memory—personal, social and cultural. Personal memory is pinned with subjective time and inner identity; social memory with social time and social roles; and cultural memory with historical time and cultural identity. In addition to personal memory which is a matter of our neuro-mental system, the social and cultural memories rely on communication and social interaction. Although psychologists like Freud and Jung have endeavoured to develop theories of collective memory in the unconscious depth of human psyche, Halbwachs and Warburg successfully diverted the discussion to the consciousness and socialisation and thus it has been widely acknowledged that communication is the dominant factor to associate personal identity with social life and culture. Concerning identity building, personal memory is knowledge with identity-index about oneself, one’s own diachronic identity. Social memory is communicative within a time frame of three generations (about 80 to 100 years) that one can associate with. And cultural memory is an institution, that is figurative with a fixed point in the past and is enacted upon cultural symbols such as language, pictures, rituals, artefacts, etc.

Looking at how the Dunhuang collections were used to attain political purposes in the West and China in forging a collective knowledge of a (universal or national) cultural identity at the beginning of the 20th century, it is probable that Red China could be reached out through the said international heritage platform by the West during the Cold War. But instead of being assimilated into democracy, the recent heritage diplomacy played by China in the new century through the good old Silk Roads seems to suggest otherwise. While, in the West, the Dunhuang objects were ‘decolonised’ from being a ‘scientific specimen’ of archaeology or anthropology into an ‘art collection’ of world cultures; in China they were a symbolic reminder of the humiliating century since after the War

44 Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity”; Assmann, “Communicative and Cultural Memory.”

to date so to boost national growth with the China Dream on the BRI, which is based on the reinvented historical idea of the Silk Roads just like the West did in the 1980s. In the past 70 to 80 years—about three generations after the War—the colonial identity of empires in the West has gradually been erased from the collective memory constituted through formal and informal education systems and public memory site, but in China the collective memory of suffering from the West's New Imperialism kept being revigorated constantly. This is reflected in the heritage interpretation of Dunhuang objects. An important topic worth of further inspection could be that whether such an ideology is embodied in the heritage diplomacy of China with the megaprojects including cultural tourism being implemented under the scheme of BRI in the neighbouring countries along the Silk Roads.

7.3.3 Emerging Phenomenon and Issues of Heritage Enterprise

In addition to the macro scale of discussion on the global cultural landscape and international cultural politics of Dunhuang heritage, as discussed above, three important subjects within the framework of museology and heritage studies worthy of further exploration are: ethics of objects, the heritage divide, and museum and the religions of the 'Others'. Although they are faced by Dunhuang objects and so are mentioned in the previous chapters, to have a comprehensive investigation is beyond the scope of this research. Considering that the globalisation has gathered pace, I argue, they represent some of the most significant issues that will need further consideration and new solutions.

7.3.3.1 *Ethics of Object, Cultural Commons and Global Citizenship*

As stated, 70 years after the War and the organisational practice of 'scientific humanism' of UNESCO, it is perhaps time to reconsider the role of cultural objects in this post-truth era. Resulting from the First Industrial Revolution, the anthropocentrism of scientific humanism has appeared to be unfit as demonstrated by severe environmental crisis and climate change. At the moment, we are undergoing the Fourth Industrial Revolution, through which a 'transhumanism' or 'post-humanism' is taking shape. Instead of discussing what people should remember about a museum collection, it is perhaps sensible now to ask what (and how) an 'object' can remember from its own past? The premise of an object's biography is based on the fact that objects do not have intentionality, so their biography is in actuality a history of what people have done to them over time. However, with advancing technology it may be possible to decode or install a memory inside an object. And this will be against what is believed by Assmann, who thought that an 'object (artefact) does not carry memory'. Besides, in the realm of philosophy, according to Heidegger 'things are being-in-the-world by themselves with their self-referential-ness'. He suggested a notion of world which is not human-centred and things are not just being-for-us but are simply being-as-such. Benso⁴⁵ noted

45 Benso, *The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics*.

that this view of Heidegger and the opinion of Levinas which redefined things as not object-oppose-to-subject in nature, have contributed to building an ethics that is non-utilitarian, non-deontological and non-virtue-oriented. Introna⁴⁶ from the field of computer science has discussed the ‘ethics of things’ by saying that things are beyond their instrumental possibilities for us because they are inscribed and embodied with particular values and interests on their proper materiality that can enrol us into particular programmes of action. Similar thinking has been explored to refute the ecological anthropocentricity⁴⁷ in claiming that animals, flowers, chairs, magnets and landscapes are more than mere objects; they act, withdraw, make demands and connect.

Different from an object’s biography, which focuses on the historical usages or changing definitions given by those who used the object, this line of thinking investigates the innate memory the object physically carries with it and thus brings forth a non-anthropocentric ‘ethics of objects’ that may be applied on the objects of cultural heritage. In fact, such an ethics of objects is worth exploring together with the emerging possibilities for a substantialised ‘cultural commons’ enabled by digital technology (as discussed in Chapter 6.2). In a globalised world with hyper-networked societies, the moving of objects becomes much easier than decades ago. It took Pelliot three months to ship his findings from Dunhuang back to Paris and it required a British warship to escort the national treasure of China sent from Shanghai to London to be exhibited. Now it takes only about ten hours to fly the important collections of the British Museum from London to Beijing to display for the Chinese audience. In actually, not only the meaning or the virtual representation of heritage collection are in flux, their physical existences per se can be so as well.

As heritage practitioners in Europe have considered how museum can help refugees in recent years,⁴⁸ and the idea of ‘global citizenship’ has continued to gain importance in the international forum⁴⁹ amidst pressing issues such as environmental crisis, human rights, innovative technology and political mobilization, it is worth exploring if the important collections of so-called world cultures in the West can be of any service to this end. It seems to be not enough today to define citizenship simply as the nationality of a person, as the term ‘citizenship’ is often deterritorialized and fragmented into individual discourse on rights, participation and responsibility. The concept of ‘global citizenship’ was invented based on the fact that individual citizens of a country need to be members of the globalised world too. In a way, it is proper in this time of environmental crisis to think of oneself first as a member of the global world and then a country or a region. In this light, to connect ‘cultural commons’ with ‘global citizenship’ might shed some new light on this topic. Although this remains an unexplored field, a roadmap can be found in the recent project of Europeana⁵⁰—proposed by Chirac under a

46 Introna, “Ethics and the Speaking of Things.”

47 Cohen, *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral: Ethics and Objects*.

48 Vlachou, *The Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees: The Role of Cultural Organisations*.

49 Bachelet, “Global Citizenship: A New and Vital Force.”

50 Europeana, “Europeana Collections.”

blueprint of an economically and politically unificatory EU to use (digital) cultural heritage to craft and forge a collective (European) cultural identity.

7.3.3.2 *Cultural Heritage to Reconciliate or Further Divide?*

In a way, the heritage diplomacy of UNESCO towards China through the Silk Roads and Dunhuang (as discussed in Chapter 4.3) has achieved a great success. The site of the Mogao Grottos has been restored and conserved to a modern standard thanks to the expert knowledge and techniques provided by international heritage preservation and management agencies⁵¹. And their cutting-edge digital technologies have made it possible to digitise the fragile wall paintings inside the grottos. This further enabled the cultural tourism of Dunhuang as well as encouraging a booming experience economy⁵².

However, the old divided world during the Cold War seems to re-emerge one decade after the turn of the last millennium, between China and the West. After the opening-up policy in 1978, though China has embraced the free-market oriented capitalism did not forsake the Leninist political praxis and Marxist socioeconomics. In spite of being rhetorical, the so-called 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' proposed by Deng Xiaoping has been continued to date in the mainstream discourse of the Communist Party. This political keynote resonated in the field of arts and culture too, including or especially the museum praxis and heritage enterprise, as seen in the proposition of a 'museology of Chinese characteristics'⁵³. In actuality, such Chinese characteristics are made substantial by the fact that museums in China, whatever their themes, receive strict censorship and are used for nationalistic and patriotic education to the common public⁵⁴. The Cold War thinking of anti-imperialism or anti-Westernism⁵⁵ continues to play an important role in the museum interpretation of cultural heritage in China, including the site museum of Dunhuang⁵⁶.

51 Du, "UNESCO Support for Cultural Conservation in China"; ICOMOS China, *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*.

52 Wenqi (朱文琪) Zhu, 'Dunhuang Exhibition at the Getty Center and the 25 Years Collaboration (蓋蒂藝術中心敦煌文物大展追溯與敦煌25年合作之緣)', Art News Chinese Version, 2015 <<http://www.kaogu.cn/cn/gonggongkaogu/2015/0724/50950.html>>.

53 Su, "Chinese Museums' Tradition and Changes."

54 Hongjun (王宏鈞) Wang, *The Basis of Chinese Museology (中國博物館學基礎)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Arhive Publishing, 1990); Hungbin (嚴宏斌) Yen and Zhi (鄭智) Zheng, *Museum Education in Social Perspective (社會化視野下的博物館教育)* (Beijing: Wenwu Publishing, 1998); Edward Vickers, 'Museums and Nationalism in Contemporary China', *Compare*, 37.3 (2007), 365–82.

55 Guangqiu Xu, 'Anti-Western Nationalism in China, 1989-99', *World Affairs*, 163.4 (2001), 151–62; Jianwei WANG, 'The Chinese Interpretation of the Concept of Imperialism in the Anti-Imperialist Context of the 1920s', *Journal of Modern Chinese History*, 6.2 (2012), 164–81.

56 The site of Mogao Grottos has been designed in 1996 September as the 'base for patriotic education for all elementary and junior high school students (全國中小學愛國主義教育基地) by the National Committee of Education, the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Culture, the National Bureau of Cultural Heritage, etc. See: Chang, "Dunhuang Academy Endeavours to Disseminate Heritage and Shortens Distance Between Anticent Dunhuang Culture and the Youth (敦煌研究院致力教育傳承拉近古老敦煌文化與青年距離)."

In observing whether domestic reform⁵⁷ and foreign policy like BRI and China Dream of Xi Jinping will outdo Deng Xiaoping's opening-up policy and Marshall Plan⁵⁸, it becomes questionable (as mentioned earlier) that whether the universal norms and value embodied in modern museum praxis and heritage enterprise are also received by China.

7.3.3.3 *Museum and Religion*

Although the Buddhist population is growing in the West, it is diminishing in Asia. And the situation is in reverse with the Christian population⁵⁹. This seems to resonate with the phenomenon of 'world-levelling unificatory epistemologies'⁶⁰ as mentioned earlier. In spite of the fact that secularism has become pervasive because of the universalised scientific culture from the Enlightenment tradition—where reason stands at the top of human evolution—most of the prominent cathedrals or churches or synagogues in Europe have remained functional while being also popular tourism destinations. However, it is still rare that such consecrated places in the West change their purposes and become museums. In those few cases, the reasons were not that 'God is dead' as claimed by Nietzsche but that the original faith worshiped in the milieu has been converted into another by the conquerors⁶¹ or immigrants⁶² of non-Christian cultures. In most Western countries, cathedrals or churches⁶³ although have contributed to the formation of modern museum⁶⁴, they are not replaced by the latter to admiring or worship the religious collections they hold.

The situation in Asia is different. Similar to the Christian tradition, offering worldly treasures to worship deities had been practiced in the Buddhist tradition in the Sinosphere world since before medieval times. In one of Pelliot's acquisitions—the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Purvapanidhana Sutra⁶⁵ written in an extinct Tangu language—it is clearly said that offering precious objects such as gold, silver or jewellery to venerate Ksitigarbha and as well as manoeuvring the image or sculpture of Ksitigarbha could bring blessing in return. This resulted in a rich material manifestation of Buddhist faith that unfortunately has caused

57 Xi, "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era: Delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China."

58 "Free Exchange Xi vs Marshall: Will China's Belt and Road Initiative Outdo the Marshall Plan?"

59 "The Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population."

60 Gellner, *Relativism and the Social Sciences*. p76.

61 Simons, "Neglected Churches Are Given New Use In the Netherlands"; Gusten, "The Church That Politics Turned Into a Mosque."

62 Simons, "Neglected Churches Are Given New Use In the Netherlands."

63 There is a separate issue about the Protestant churches (like in northern Europe) that were not elaborately decorated.

64 Alexander, *Museum in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*; Alexander, Alexander, and American Association for State and Local History., *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*.

65 This specific Sutra has been doubted by some Buddhist scholars to be a forgery written by some Chinese Buddhist because the original version could not be found in Sanskrit.

severe detriments since the medieval times to this day. In the early centuries of the Christian era⁶⁶, the Greek craftsmen who followed the troops of Alexander the Great and settled down in the area of Gandhara had given the Gautama Buddha a physical form with fine sculpting—although it was strictly forbidden to make any visual or material representation of Buddha in the beginning of Buddhism. Then in the late medieval times, there came the Islamic settlers and a radical iconoclasm started⁶⁷. Afterwards, the region received the Christian missionaries and scientific explorers to collect and ‘rescue’ those remaining Buddhist relics to Western museums⁶⁸. And lastly in places like Chinese Central Asia, the extreme political secularism held by a totalitarian regime after 1949⁶⁹ advocated the total destruction or ‘modification’ of Buddhism and all other faiths. Thus, those ‘important collections’, including the Buddhist artefacts and architectural components from Central Asia, are shown the same way as in the departments of ‘world cultures’ in Western museums and Chinese ones. The Mogao Grottos no longer function as a Buddhist temple or shrine or sanctuary, but a site museum of Buddhist art.

It was not until rather recently that a trend emerged in museology to explore the function of the modern museum as a church-like sacred place⁷⁰, which could be particularly meaningful in terms of the religious collections of ‘Others’. In fact, the museum as a modern temple has been a metaphorical description in the field for decades. Yet it was not always merely metaphorical as revealed in Chapter 4.2.1.1 while describing the Buddhist rites being performed authentically at Musée Guimet. Being a private ‘museum of religions’ before it was nationalised, these Buddhist ceremonies were held in the milieu in addition to other mise-en-scène anthropologic exhibition installations. Transforming into a ‘museum of art’ due to secularism and the decolonisation of knowledge, such a practice has vanished in the West since between the Wars. Facing demands for repatriation, Western museums seem to have re-accentuated the similarity between the museum and temple⁷¹. Dedicated to making a museum for the world⁷², the British Museum re-explored the relationship between object and belief⁷³ in different regions and with different peoples over the past 40,000 years—as seen in the program of *A History of the World in 100 Objects*. In the meantime, Buddhism

66 Huntington, “Early Buddhist Art and the Theory of Aniconism.”

67 Crossette, “Taliban Explains Buddha Demolition”; Elverskog, *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road*.

68 Hopkirk, *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia*; Jacobs, “Longdon Warner at Dunhuang: What Really Happened?”

69 Xueyu (學愚), *The Socialist Transformation of Chinese Buddhism* (中國佛教的社會主義改造).

70 Paine, *Religious Objects in Museums: Private Lives and Public Duties*; Sullivan, *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums*; Roberts, “Altar as Museum, Museum as Altar: Ethnography, Devotion, and Display.”

71 Tythacott, *The Lives of Chinese Objects: Buddhism, Imperialism and Display*.

72 Museum and Street, “A Museum for the World.”

73 MacGregor, *Living with the Gods*.

appears to have undergone a revival in East Asia⁷⁴, especially in China⁷⁵. It is worth considering whether it is possible to see again that the Buddhist artefacts like the Dunhuang objects can be used for or perform their original purposes in Buddhist rites in their hosting Western museums—should the claim that ‘museums are the new churches’⁷⁶ be substantial. Just like is commonly practiced in those cathedrals, churches or mosques that are all at once popular tourism destinations, important world heritage and sacred religious places. Why not one day see Buddhist-travellers from afar offered cushions in a corner, or in front of their deities, at a certain time in the British Museum or Musée Guimet or Hermitage Museum? Just like in the Sistine Chapel or Notre Dames. They could freely kneel down or sit mediating in front of their lost cultural heritage, the serene Buddha or Bodhisattvas sacredly displayed in these universal museums of the West. In this way, to return or not might become a question of opinion only as apart from the public uses of them in knowledge making, nation and empire building, heritage and museum diplomacy, tourism industry and digital economy—to restore the initial life purpose of the Dunhuang objects may truly contribute to a humanism of global equity.

74 Huang, “Present Revival of Buddhism in East Asia and Its Impacts on Socioeconomics (當前東亞佛教的復興情況及其對社會經濟的影響).”

75 Morris, “China’s Atheist Communist Government Is Embracing a Very Capitalist Form of Buddhism”; Yang, “Life in Purgatory: Buddhism Is Growing in China, But Remains in Legal Limbo”; Desai, “Three Times as Many Buddhists as Communists in China: Dalai Lama’s Tibet Wish Many Require Rapprochement with Former Adversaries”; Chang, “Xi Jinping and China’s Religion Reviving (習近平和中國的宗教復興).”

76 Farago, “Why Museums Are the New Churches.”

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Abstract

The Dunhuang objects, preserved now at dozens of GLAM institutes worldwide, including the universal museums in Western metropolises and in the country of origin China, raise a series of rich issues. Unlike the Parthenon Marbles, Rosetta Stone and Benin Bronzes, these issues are still rarely discussed in the international forum of museology or heritage studies. This extensive research is intended to bridge this knowledge gap by providing a comprehensive understanding, in a comparative and analytic perspective, of the lives of these cultural objects shaped by the entangled world history. Building on the concept of object biography, this research, anchored in collection, exhibition and digitisation, presents a holistic view on the destinies of the Dunhuang objects, altered through decontextualisation and recontextualization. Mainly applying historical methods, this thesis reports the findings drawn from original data collection and secondary data analysis of the public uses of Dunhuang objects in the West and China through specific time periods: colonisation, decolonisation, WWI and WWII, Cold War, post-conflict era and the Digital Age.

From 1900, after being found by a Chinese Taoist abbot in Chinese Central Asia and removed by Western orientalist supported by the colonial powers during the Great Game, new identities are imposed on the Dunhuang objects: scientific specimens (in archaeology, anthropology or art history), works of (fine) art, colonial acquisitions, public property, national treasures, symbols of cultural identity, targets of heritage and museum diplomacy, tourism destination and digital content for the creative industry and experience economy. Removed from the Buddhist altars in Dunhuang, these religious objects are potent still in affecting peoples' political, economic and cultural lives. The display of these objects—from sombre grotto-shrines to the white-cube of decolonised *muséographie* and the black-box of immersive exhibition with virtual and augmented reality—can reflect how Dunhuang objects perform in a transbordered knowledge network through globalised museum praxis and heritage enterprise. This heritage process resonates with questions of coloniality and transculturation, facilitated by the international cultural political platform ICOM-UNESCO-UN. Linking heritage preservation with development work thus impairs delinking coloniality.

Coming into the 21st century, Dunhuang becomes a flagship to promote the China Dream by the Belt and Road Initiative. Carrying foreign direct investments of China in megaprojects of infrastructure and cultural tourism, this UNESCO certified world heritage site has become a brand to export China's soft diplomacy and sharp power. Although internet technology enables the reunification of Dunhuang collections in the mobile and web environment, the digital divide between the West and China is deepened due to the power struggle of neoliberal world politics. This thorough investigation of the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural fields of the biography of Dunhuang objects makes significant contribution not just to the histories of collections but also a range of important issues such as representation, reception and positioning in broader institutional, social and political contexts. This research is unique and original especially because of the exploration on the Western and Chinese cultural traditions and systems that resulted in the making and uses of Dunhuang objects, from heritage to cultural heritage and digital cultural heritage, as well as from regional to national and world heritage.

KEYWORD: Dunhuang Objects, Entangled World History, Comparative Museology, Museum Diplomacy, Cultural Tourism, Digital Economy

The Dunhuang collections, discovered from the Silk Roads of Chinese Turkestan during the Great Game, are rarely discussed in museology or heritage studies. This book bridges this knowledge gap by exploring their uses in knowledge making, empire and nation building, heritage and museum diplomacy, cultural tourism and innovation economy. Based on the concept of object's biography, the author reconstructs the lives of Dunhuang collections from the Belle Époque to the Digital Age in both the West and China. As material witnesses of rich cultural exchange that are (de-/re-) contextualized into dozens of GLAMs worldwide, they are the very first to be reunited in virtual space. Whether being scientific specimens, works of (fine) art, colonial acquisitions, public property, national treasures, token of diplomatic ties, tourism destination or digital content for the experience economy, their lives shaped by entangled history will continue, as seen in the Belt and Road Initiatives of China Dream and beyond.

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