XANADU
Encounters with China

A NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA EXHIBITION
FOREWORD

The creation of the National Library of Australia’s major Asian Collection in the years following World War II is one of the success stories of Australia’s engagement with the Asia-Pacific region. From the 1950s, the Library has built major research collections on East Asia and South-East Asia, and we also have significant holdings on other countries of the region, such as India. Today, the National Library houses the largest developing research resource on Asia in Australia, with holdings of over half a million volumes.

_Xanadu: Encounters with China_ is a very special exhibition for the National Library of Australia, drawing as it does on the Library’s maps, pictures, rare books and, most notably, its Asian material. This is the first time in many years that the Library has featured its Asian Collection in a significant exhibition.

_Xanadu_, of course, focuses only on our material relating to China, primarily by Westerners who either imagined or visited the nation from the sixteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century. One of the Library’s treasures, a map of the eastern and western hemispheres of the world executed by the Jesuit priest Ferdinand Verbiest in Peking around 1674, is on display, as are lithographs of Martin Frobisher and John Franklin. Hardy Wilson’s expressive drawings of China and Stanley Gregory’s photographs of Shanghai in the 1930s are also included. Through this diverse material, covering some 450 years of engagement, the exhibition reveals the way Western perceptions of China have evolved, moving from stereotypes to a more expansive understanding of the culture, society and people of that nation. It also demonstrates the important role of the National Library in collecting and maintaining a major cultural resource that facilitates cross-cultural knowledge and intellectual engagement with our region.

Jan Fullerton
Director-General
Johannes van Loon
(c.1611-1686)

*Imperii Sinarvm nova descriptio*

col. map; 45.0 x 49.9 cm
Amsteladami: P. Schenck,
[c.1709]
In two lines of poetry, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) summarised China for a nineteenth-century audience:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree

*Xanadu* is not an exhibition about the history of China. Rather, it is a tale of how the country has been perceived by Western observers, viewed through the perspective of the Library’s collections. The 150 or so items on display are drawn from the Asian, Pictures, Manuscript and Map collections and relate mostly to the imperial era, with a small selection of photographs reflecting Australia’s re-engagement with China in the 1970s.

In 1959, the collections of the National Library of Australia, as it was later to be called, were scattered across a number of buildings in Canberra, ‘like shepherds huts on a station with no homestead’. The population of the city numbered about 39,000. There was no Lake Burley Griffin. In these provincial circumstances, and after lengthy negotiations, a startling acquisition was concluded—the purchase of the library of one of the world’s foremost scholars of Chinese art, Walter Perceval Yetts (1878–1957). Even today it seems bewildering; the titles are mostly Chinese and the number of Australians then interested in Asian art must have been small. Professor Yetts had wanted his books—numbering about 4000—to be acquired by ‘a library in the British Empire’, but perhaps the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library was quietly looking ahead of him?

The strength of this collection was enhanced by another purchase, in 1961, of 700 books, tracts and pamphlets that had belonged to the London Missionary Society (LMS). Founded in 1795, the Society had sent the first foreign missionary to China, Robert Morrison (1782–1834), who arrived in Guangzhou (Canton) in September 1807. For 100 years, mostly through a theological prism, the LMS was an almost unrivalled observer of Chinese affairs. As well as publishing religious works in Chinese, it collected widely in that language. Many of the translated Bibles, dictionaries and other items on China’s history, language, literature and culture acquired from the society are now rare and valuable and constitute a fascinating time capsule of China in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Apart from its scholarly value, the London Missionary Society Collection also had symbolic significance. It confirmed the Library’s credentials in the field of Asian studies, but it was also politically interesting. Australia has not always been as welcoming as it is now. The communist Chinese Government was then unrecognised, and there was a general unease at the possibility of being overwhelmed by Asiatic hordes—the ‘yellow peril’.

Written in 1798 but not published until 1816, Coleridge claimed that *Xanadu* was ‘a sort of vision brought on by two grains of opium taken to check a dysentery’. While appearing as part of a dream, Xanadu was a real place.
that Coleridge had read about in travel accounts. It was to Shangdu, north-east of Beijing, that Venetian merchants Marco Polo (1254–1324), his father Nicolò and his uncle Maffeo came in 1275, though it was only with the invention of moveable type 150 years later that a description of ‘Xanadu’ became widely available. The first account was published in Nuremberg in 1477; the first attempt at Marco’s biography was made by Giovanni Ramusio (1485–1557) in his Delle navigazioni et viaggi ... published between 1554 and 1606.

From Roman times, intrepid merchants had made the journey along the ‘Silk Road’ to trade with China. This long-standing trade had been ruined by Genghis Khan (1162–1227) whose pony-riding horde had sacked the beautiful cities upon whom the commerce had depended. The road to the east had become a lonely one, and the Polos had few predecessors.

In Elizabethan times, the compilation of encyclopedic travel accounts became, like the portrait miniature, a particularly English art form. The most important of these accounts, Richard Hakluyt’s Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation, published in 1599–1600, contained the ‘rare and memorable journals of two friars, who were some of the first Christians that travelled furthest that way’ [east]. Giovanni del Pian de Carpini’s mission for Innocent IV to the Mongols (1245–1247), thought Hakluyt, ‘surpasses that of Alexander the Great’, while a few years later (1252–1255) Willem of Rubruck, travelling for Louis IX, suffered great privation at the hands of Genghis Kahn’s successor, and reported on ‘their bestial lives, their vicious manners, their slavish subjection to their own superiors, and their disdainful and brutish inhumanity unto strangers’.

In the sixteenth century, China began to take graphic form as well, appearing for example in Sebastian Munster’s monumental atlas of the world, Cosmographiae universalis (1550) and in the 1584 map of China by the Dutch geographer, Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598). Encouraged by these maps, Europeans began to seek the elusive north-west passage as a way of shortening the journey to China. Martin Frobisher was the Elizabethan mariner in the forefront of this quest, which culminated 250 years later in the loss of an 1845–1848 expedition, led by Sir John Franklin until his death in 1847.
The seventeenth century is notable for the presence in China of Jesuit missionaries. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) had been in the vanguard. Early in the century he wrote, with the assistance of Li Zhicao, a description of Western astronomy, and produced an influential world map. This in turn was amended by his successor Giulio Aleni (1582-1649) in his *Wanguo quantu* (Complete Map of All Nations). There was a subversive nature to these maps for they were a reminder, perhaps a disagreeable one, that China was not alone in the world, and not particularly at its centre either.

With the overthrow of the Ming dynasty in 1644 by Manchu-led forces from the north, Jesuit influence really began to flourish. The Jesuit mission at mid-century was an audacious attempt to convert the court, and through the court the empire, to Christianity. To China came architects, engineers, mathematicians and astronomers. Astronomy was particularly significant. The Emperor was the medium between Heaven and Earth, and the correct calculating of eclipses, and other celestial events, was important to the stability of the empire. The observatory built inside the south-east corner of the walled city of Beijing was modernised, but today the astronomical instruments are all that remain of a century of Jesuit endeavour. At the high point of this modernising interest are world maps produced at the direction of Ferdinand Verbiest SJ (1623-1688). Time has treated these works of art—for that is what they surely are—somewhat unkindly, and today they possess
A Double Trussed Bridge in the Chinese Taste
plate 28
in William Halfpenny (d.1755)

Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste: Being Designs Entirely New for the Decoration of Gardens, Parks, Forests, Insides of Houses &c. on Sixty Copper Plates with Full Instruction for Workmen; also a Near Estimate of the Charge, and Hints Where Proper to Be Erected
London: Printed for Rob't Sayer ..., 1755

8 a certain ruined beauty. Yet along with the incongruous appearance of a giraffe, a ghost-image of Australia as known from Dutch discoveries is still discernible.

Among the remarkable achievements of the Jesuits was the embellishment of the north-east corner of the Yuan Ming Yuan, the 'Garden of Perfect Brightness', with an astonishing group of pavilions used as the main home of the imperial court for most of the year. Engravings published in 1720 after drawings by Giuseppe Castiglione show images of a fantasy world—a strange hybrid land of European baroque transported to the East. The remains of the palace, north-east of Beijing, constitute the most visible legacy of that extraordinary era.

Castiglione (1688–1766), another Jesuit, arrived in China in 1715, leaving soaring angels and hovering putti behind in Italy. Adopting the name Lang Shining, his style in China becomes sleekly illustrative, his subjects are the here and now. Although this was at variance with the more tranquil style of the Chinese scholar-artists, his work was appreciated in court and sometimes emulated by the court painters. Castiglione portrayed the Emperor's favourite horses, his birds of prey, or now-unknown breeds from the imperial kennels.

The British East India Company was granted its Charter by Elizabeth I on New Year's Eve, 1600. Establishing itself in India, it began trading with China, which permitted it and its numerous competitors to set up a small island compound at Guangzhou in the south of the country. Luxury goods such as silk and lacquerware began to flow to Europe. Blue and white porcelain became ubiquitous, with the trade dominated from the early 1680s by the only real rival to the British, the Dutch East India Company. Chinoiserie became à la mode, dominating Western taste for over a century. Louis XIV built a trianon de porcelaine at Versailles, and a century later the taste for Chinese architecture culminated with William Chambers building, at Kew Gardens in 1761, a soaring pagoda—painted blue and red, with gilded dragons—for Princess Augusta.
Europeans eventually solved the secret of how to make ceramics, but there was one product in which China continued to enjoy a monopoly, and that was tea. Tea, 'black and green, lyson, gunpowder, pekoe, pouching and souchong', was responsible for most of the profits of the British East India Company, and so important was it to English consumers, the company had to keep a year's supply in store in case there was a catastrophe.

The eighteenth century concludes with the diplomatic mission led by Lord Macartney. This was to prove a triumph of style over substance. The British hated being confined to Guangzhou with their competitors and wanted their own base. Similarly they wanted trade to be liberalised and ambassadors to be exchanged. All their requests were declined. 'The celestial Empire ... does not value ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your Country's manufactures,' decreed the Emperor. This lofty dismissal of the worldly Macartney and his treasure trove of beautiful presents effectively kept foreign powers at bay for the next 50 years.

Trading or evangelising required the rudiments of the language. The Reverend Robert Morrison, Samuel Williams, and later Sir Walter Hillier promoted the learning of Chinese by Europeans. The London Missionary Society was also influential, publishing handy pocket-sized dictionaries and phrasebooks. Inevitably however, out of necessity, a Guangzhou jargon, or pidgin, evolved from several European and Asian languages. Gods were joss, markets were bazars, lunch was tiffin, workers were coolies. A document was a chop, an urgent one a chop-chop.

Certain clichés about the Chinese developed that were to prove remarkably enduring. While, for example, the Chinese were ingenious and hard-working, they were also imitative, crafty, servile and casually violent.

There were two issues above all that seemed to distinguish the Chinese from Western societies at the time. The first was the hobbling of women by foot binding.
While not a Manchu practice, it was a Chinese custom stretching back to the Tang dynasty in the tenth century. Apart from aesthetic and cultural effects, foot-binding made women more house-bound, and dependant upon their husbands. ‘Golden lilies’ were ideally to be three inches long, so the shoe pattern that appears in the
London Missionary Society’s book *Mo bao jiao ge* (Stop Foot Binding), is actual size. Erotic glances also fell upon those crippled feet.

The difficulty with the tea trade was that there was a trade imbalance, and while the Emperor may have thought China wanted for nothing, there was one thing it needed and liked. In 1977, couturier Yves Saint Laurent launched what was to become his most popular fragrance, *Opium*. With its tassel and crimson-coloured flask, it evokes Manchu décor and decadence; but for the masses, opium was an inexpensive, though addictive, calmative. It came from India and Turkey, but it was British attempts to industrialise China’s dependence upon the drug, that led to opposition. The British East India Company sheltered behind intermediaries in this trade, but by 1825 it was a more profitable import than Indian cotton. In 1839 the Chinese burnt an opium shipment on the Guangzhou docks, the acrid smoke blowing back towards the foreign hongs. The Opium Wars—there was to be a second one as well—had begun. The two sides were unequally matched from the start. The Chinese lost, and reparations were exacting. Hong Kong was ceded to Britain, which was also to lease the neighbouring New Territories for 99 years in 1898.

While the Opium Wars did little for the addicted Chinese, the country became more open to foreigners and from this period come a number of beautifully...
Festering in the background, in faraway provinces where Europeans never ventured, a quasi-religious nationalist movement grew—the Taiping ‘Great Peace’ Rebellion—led by Hong Xiuquan. Christian literature was in part responsible for his rising influence, as Hong was an avid reader of translated tracts and, in the mid-1850s, Pilgrims Progress, by John Bunyan. Being China, this was no small-scale movement. At its zenith, it attracted millions of adherents. The high point was the capture of Nanjing in 1853 by the Heavenly Army. Hong died in 1864, and the rebellion was finally suppressed.

The National Library holds some extremely rare pamphlets and proclamations—originally collected by the London Missionary Society—from this period.

In early October 1860, at the conclusion of the Second Opium War, the Yuan Ming Yuan, which contained the fantastical Sino-European structures designed by the Jesuits, fell to an Anglo-French force. ‘All the big-wigs have fled’, wrote Lord Elgin. ‘It is really a fine thing, like an English park—numberless buildings with handsome rooms, and filled with Chinese curios, and handsome clocks, bronzes etc. But, alas! Such a scene of desolation ... There was not a room that I saw in which half the things had not been taken away or broken to pieces ... Plundering and devastating a place like this is bad enough, but what is much worse is the waste and breakage ... War is a hateful business. The more one sees of it, the more one detests it.’

This may have been stated for the record, for several days later Elgin sanctioned the razing of the palace and the numerous gardens and villas in the area, one of the worst cultural atrocities of the nineteenth century.
While Britain was hard-pressed by the Boers in southern Africa at the time of the 1897 Diamond Jubilee, there was a feeling that its imperial destiny lay in China. Francis Younghusband, a crony of Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India wrote, for example: "The earth is too small ... to permit the Chinese keeping China to themselves." However, Lord Salisbury cautiously advised an enthusiast wishing to annex the country, that faced by the 'defiance of the vast mass of the Chinese and all the European powers [it] would be too exhausting a task for England'.

As Westerners travelled to China, the Chinese of course travelled abroad. Australia was part of this diasporic movement, with Chinese being prominent on the goldfields, and later in the pearling industry.

In *India, China, Australia: Trade and Society 1788–1850* James Broadbent and others advanced a compelling case for the Australian colonies to be in the vanguard of countries with an interest in the East. Alison Broinowski, in *The Yellow Lady*, by contrast, offers a frequently
disheartening chronicle of how Australia discarded its early advantages in the areas of trade and diplomacy for a strident pro-Empire stance, that by 1888, the centennial year of European settlement, had become corrosively xenophobic. Despite this mood,
adventurous Australians did travel to the region. From 1883, ships of the China Navigation Company steamed between east coast ports and Hong Kong and Fuzhou (Foochow). This route was taken over in 1912 by the Australian–Oriental Line, and Darwin and Thursday Island were added to the itinerary. As tourists travelled north, Chinese emigrants, and tea, came on the return journey, although colonial immigration acts were to become progressively more restrictive.

The symbol of China abroad, and the focus of oriental difference, was Chinatown. From San Francisco to Sydney, Chinatown became a place apart, in architecture and cuisine but also as the home of gambling and opium dens.

An influential observer in the 1890s and the first two decades of the twentieth century was an Australian, George Morrison, known as ‘Chinese’ Morrison. Bored with Melbourne, he walked across China to Rangoon in 1894. His resulting book, *An Australian in China*, was well-received, although the tone is sardonic and somewhat anti-missionary. Based on its success, Morrison returned to China in 1897 as a journalist for the London *Times*, which, because of its multiple correspondents in different parts of the world, was able to exert inordinate influence upon British foreign policy. Morrison was advised by his predecessor, Valentine Chirol, to forego local colour. ‘We are a very long way off and only want to look through the big end of the telescope.’

Morrison’s frequent scoops, however, were due in part to living that ‘local colour’ outside the foreign compound, and dressing like the Chinese—although he never really mastered the language.

Morrison observed the Qing (Manchu) dynasty, which had
ruled China for 250 years, in its death-throes. The event which was to symbolise the demise of the regime was the Boxer Rebellion. Angry at China’s lack of sovereignty, most recently demonstrated at the hands of the Japanese in 1894 when China was forced to give up Taiwan, the Boxers, or Yi he quan (Righteous and Harmonious Fists), founded a secret society on the belief that they were bullet-proof. The random killing of missionaries, such as the Australian William Fleming of the China Inland Mission, murdered in November 1898, flared into a broader rebellion that in June 1900 saw the foreign legations in Beijing and the Christian Chinese in the city under siege. Presiding over this was the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908), a ruthless survivor whose longevity rivalled that of Victoria, the Queen Empress. For 50 years Cixi was arguably one of the most powerful women in the world and in 1898 she placed her nephew, Emperor Guangxu, under house arrest in the Forbidden City for displaying dangerous signs of modernism and plotting to reduce her influence.

Late in 1900 an international rescue mission was launched to free the besieged diplomats. The Australian soldiers and sailors who took part in this conflict were the first Australians to see China proper in large numbers. After terrible hardships, the siege was lifted in August 1901, leaving the diplomatic quarter and sections of the
city in ruins. A number of survivors wrote accounts of their experiences. There was the Reverend Forsyth’s *The China Martyrs of 1900*, and *Indiscreet Letters from Peking*, a racy chronicle of events edited by B.L. Putnam Weale. Returning Australians carried numerous trophies of war, such as the temple bell given to Scotch College, Melbourne by Commander Frederick Tickell.

On the pretext of carrying out a tour of the western reaches of the empire (xi xun), the Empress Dowager Cixi had absented herself from Beijing during the inevitable sack of the city but she returned in 1902. Oddly, for someone who was deeply suspicious of modern technology—steam trains and telephones—she had an intuitive grasp of the power of photographs. Her mask-like visage, sitting above magically endowed robes, gazes at the reader of books such as Princess Der Ling’s *Two Years in the Forbidden City*. Photography in that era required a lengthy exposure, and she was used to sitting still. The Empress was persuaded to have her portrait painted for the St Louis Exposition, and there were several other encouraging signs of a rapport with the technological West. A courtier bought her a motor car—a Benz—but it was unusable as the chauffeur was not allowed to sit in her presence. The Empress Dowager and the Emperor Guangxu finally died in the same year—1908—and the hapless boy Puyi was made the heir, only to be overthrown in 1911 by the Nationalist leader, Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen).

Around this time, Western scholars and art-lovers showed an increased interest in Chinese painting and decorative art. Many beautiful publications started to appear, one example being W. Perceval Yett’s *The Cull Chinese Bronzes* of 1925. The influence of these books was felt in Australia in the collecting of its most important art museum at the time, the National Gallery of Victoria. In October 1921, its director, Bernard Hall, travelled to Sydney and spent more than £800 on 42 pieces from the collection of a Captain Eady. ‘The taste for these things is growing’, Hall wrote to his trustees, ‘certainly in Sydney, and a good deal is coming to Australia’. (In 1929, the quality of its Chinese collection was challenged, and the NGV sent a number of pieces to R.L. Hobson at the British Museum for authentication, something that was largely forthcoming.)

The archaeological artefacts for which China is today renowned, terracotta warriors and jade princesses, are comparatively recent discoveries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the attention of Western collectors was focused upon western China and the remains of the oasis cities of the Silk Road. It was a reprise of the Great Game, where European powers had struggled for dominance in the mountainous regions between India and southern Russia. Sir Aurel Stein (1862–1943) was perhaps the strangest and most tenacious of the collectors. He worked for the Archaeological Survey of India, which had been revived by Lord Curzon primarily as a cover for keeping an eye on the Russians. Like T.E. Lawrence, the Hungarian-born Stein was one of those people who is at perfect ease in the desert, and appear quite resistant to discomfort. From 1900, accompanied by his dog Dash, he led four expeditions across dangerous mountains to western China, recovered lost cities from the sand, recorded Buddhist sanctuaries, and took everything he could find. He was almost pathologically rapacious, returning from his 1913–1916 mission, for example, with 182 packing-cases of loot. Once the archaeologists had made off with everything portable, attention swung to dinosaur hunting, and then to hominids, culminating in the discovery in 1929 of the top of the skull of ‘Peking’ Man (*Homo erectus*) near Zhoukoudian, which lies 40 kilometres south-west of Beijing.

With the fall of the Qing dynasty, Beijing became something of a backwater. Books documented its decline. One of the most affecting is the *Pageant of Peking* of 1921, containing magnificent photographs by Donald Mennie. He was working in the pictorialist or tonal tradition, reflected in such titles as *Along the Sunlit Dusty Street*, and *When the Evening Shadows Fall*. One of the most attractive books of the period was *The Calls, Sounds*
PUCCINI'S GREAT OPERA, "TURANDOT"

Produced for the first time in Sydney by J. C. Williamson Ltd.
at Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney, on Saturday, 9th August, 1928.
Maestros Conducitores Giustino Basagnoli

Turandot
in Souvenir,
Grand Opera Season,
Her Majesty's Theatre
Sydney 1928
Presented by
J.C. Williamson Ltd &
Dame Nellie Melba
and Merchandise of the Peking Street Peddlers, privately published by an American student, Samuel Constant. Mennie and Constant were to capture a Beijing that was disappearing. More cars were present and the streets were being widened to accommodate them. A tramway system also led to changes, not least for the rickshaw drivers who rioted in 1929 and were brutally put down.

A number of travel books were also published around this time, with titles such as *Tramps in Dark Mongolia*, *Camps and Trails in China*, and, by Mrs Archibald Little, *Round My Peking Garden*. These were all inexpensive editions, usually featuring a map and a handful of photographs. W. Somerset Maugham’s work is a useful antidote to these chatty volumes. He travelled to China in 1920 and through his cool, disengaged tone we meet the bitter missionary, the washed-up expatriate; the mutual disaffection between the English and the Chinese is palpable. A year later, Australian architect Hardy Wilson arrived in the country. Pre-dating the work of Australian artist Ian Fairweather, his large drawings of China’s imperial architecture are the most important Australian studies of the East during this decade, although they are melancholy and largely free of the Chinese themselves. Wilson was to return to Australia, one of the few to promote understanding of our Asian neighbours.

The opera *Turandot*, composed by Giacomo Puccini, had its Australian premiere in 1928 with seasons in Melbourne and Sydney. While the introduction to the libretto advised that ‘the China to which the composer takes us is the China of legends and fantasy’, it is really a more bloodthirsty Gilbert and Sullivan view of the Orient. The Melba Williamson Company staged the production with Gaetano Bavagnoli conducting, and Giannina Lombardi singing the lead. The critic for Sydney’s *The Sunday Times* wrote, ‘in the gorgeousness of its scenic effects, the superb splendour of its gowning, and polychromatic orientalism of the staging, *Turandot* is the most sumptuous and superb production ever staged hereabouts’.

Open to the West since the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, Shanghai was China’s most cosmopolitan city until it was attacked by Japan in 1937. In 1912 the Madrolle travel-guide described how Jing’ansi Lu (Bubbling Well Road) ‘with its fine houses on each side, is thronged by smart turn-outs, riders, and motor-cars [which] whiz past taking elegant Chinese ladies, rouged and flower-decked to the tea-gardens in the neighbourhood’. Later, with smart jazz-age buildings such as the Park Hotel (built in 1934) fronting Jing’ansi Lu and Wai Tan (The Bund), it came to symbolise all that was decadent in China. The magazine *Liang you* (Young Companion) captures this mood with an unnerving mixture of gossip about movie stars and news about armaments production.

A mysterious Australian appeared on the scene during the 1930s. W.H. Donald, ‘of China’, was first of all advisor to the Manchurian warlord Zhang Xueliang—a notorious drug addict, whose mistress was Countess Ciano, Mussolini’s daughter—and then to the Nationalist leader Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek). In 1938, Donald met the English authors W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood: ‘This morning we went to meet Mr Donald ... a red-faced, serious man, with an Australian accent and a sensible nose ... We told him of our proposed journey to the north. He looked dubious and shook his head: “Well, I wish you luck. But it’s a hard road. A hard road.” He paused, then added, in a lower, dramatic tone: “You may have to eat Chinese food”.’

The main part of the *Xanadu* exhibition concludes in 1937 when fierce fighting at the Lugou Qiao or Marco Polo Bridge heralded the Japanese invasion of North China. In the same year, Hardy Wilson published his *Grecian and Chinese Architecture*. 

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During the gestation of the People’s Republic of China after World War II, a silence developed between the West and China. It was not until 1973, a year after US President Richard Nixon had paved the way, that Australia’s own Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, was able to officially visit and re-establish ties with Asia’s most populous nation. Writing shortly after these events, Simon Leys, the noted Canberra-based Sinologist, speculated that the new appeal of China lay in its capacity to provide ‘a nostalgic escape into the past: a world before industrialisation, the ultimate retro-utopia’.  

Today, in its great cities, there is little that seems ‘retro’ about China apart from the heritage buildings in Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing which so appeal to tourists. While for early travellers the Great Wall and the imposing gates and ramparts of the Forbidden City symbolised all that was inward-looking about the country, today its cities are characterised by a buccaneering capitalism and striking contemporary architecture. Australia is contributing to this with increasing trade and cultural contacts.

Water still occupies an important role in Chinese mythology, for that is where the dragons dwell. Fittingly, the Australian firm PTW, with Arup Australasia, has designed the aquatic centre for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. This shimmering water cube will help symbolise a meeting of East and West, and serve as a reminder of that long-ago encounter between the Great Khan and the Polos in fabulous Cathay.

Martin Terry  
Curator

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4 Cyril Pearl, Morrison of Peking. [Sydney]: Angus and Robertson, 1967, p. 84.
5 ibid., p. 79.
Bibliography


Yung Ting Men,  
*Elevation of the Inner Tower*  

fig. 47 in Osvald Siren  
(1879–1966)  
*The Walls and Gates of Peking*  
London: Lane, [1924]
PICTURES

Rakesh Ahuja
[Gough and Margaret Whitlam Accompanied by Vice Prime Minister Deng Xiaoping on a Visit to the Long Corridor at the Summer Palace in Beijing, November 1973] gelatin silver photograph; 20.0 x 14.0 cm nla.pic-vn3068780

Rakesh Ahuja
[Gough and Margaret Whitlam Attending a Reception with Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai in Beijing Airport, November 1973] gelatin silver photograph; 18.2 x 14.8 cm nla.pic-vn3069161

Rakesh Ahuja
[Gough and Margaret Whitlam Visits the Great Wall in Beijing, 1973] gelatin silver photograph; 19.7 x 14.1 cm nla.pic-vn3069145

Rakesh Ahuja
[Herman J. Asmus In That Old Potter's Shop c.1930 b&w photograph; 19.7 x 26.3 cm nla.pic-vn3080800

Herman J. Asmus
A Lotus Pond & a Pagoda on the Outskirts of Kianfu City, Kiangsi Province, China 1920 b&w photograph; 20.0 x 26.3 cm nla.pic-vn3080091

Herman J. Asmus
Poor Chinese Woman 'Winnowing' Grain Dropped from Bags during Loading into Ships at Nanking [1920s] sepia-toned photograph; 20.0 x 25.4 cm nla.pic-vn3080737

Herman J. Asmus
A Priest at Worship in a Temple at Kanchowfu 1921 sepia-toned photograph; 26.4 x 21.2 cm nla.pic-vn3080633

Herman J. Asmus
Two Men Sawing a Plank of Wood [1920s] sepia-toned photograph; 20.2 x 25.4 cm nla.pic-vn3080785

Herman J. Asmus
A Young Coolie near Changsha, 850 Miles from Shanghai 1925 sepia-toned photograph; 30.3 x 22.3 cm nla.pic-vn3080704

George Chinnery (1774–1852)
Praya Grande, Macao Bay hand-col. lithograph; 22.8 x 43.5 cm London: Published by Smith, Elder & Co., [1830s] nla.pic-an10130988

George Chinnery (1774–1852)
The Redoubt of St. Peter, Praia Grande, Macao [c.1830] pen and ink and pencil drawing; 22.1 x 32.3 cm Braga Collection nla.pic-an7096083

Stanley O. Gregory
[Bamboo Fence Construction, China]
c.1930
digital print; 29.5 x 21.0 cm
nla.pic-vn3095531

Stanley O. Gregory
[Basket Making, China] c.1930
digital print; 29.5 x 21.0 cm
nla.pic-vn3095503

Stanley O. Gregory
[Bubbling Well Road, Showing Park Hotel, Shanghai, China] c.1930
digital print; 29.5 x 21.0 cm
nla.pic-vn3095540

Stanley O. Gregory
[Buddhist Temple between Shanghai and Soochow, China] c.1930
digital print; 29.5 x 21.0 cm
nla.pic-vn3095493

Stanley O. Gregory
[Fortune Telling, China] c.1930
digital print; 21.0 x 29.5 cm
nla.pic-vn3095528

Stanley O. Gregory
[Junks, China] c.1930
digital print; 29.5 x 21.0 cm
nla.pic-vn3095510

Stanley O. Gregory
[Shop with Fans, China] c.1930
digital print; 21.0 x 29.5 cm
nla.pic-vn3063985

Stanley O. Gregory
[Still Picture Show, China] c.1930
digital print; 21.0 x 29.5 cm
nla.pic-vn3064001

Stanley O. Gregory
[Summer Palace Bridge, Peking, China] c.1930
digital print; 29.5 x 21.0 cm
nla.pic-vn3095562

Louis Haghe (1806–1885)
*Portrait of Sir John Franklin*
lithograph; 34.6 x 25.4 cm
[London?: s.n., 1840s]
Rex Nan Kivell Collection
nla.pic-an9579248

Barthelemy Lauvergne (1805–1875)
*New-China Street à Canton*
lithograph; 19.2 x 29.3 cm
Paris: Arthus Bertrand; London: Ackermann, [1840s]
Plate no. 66 in: *Voyage autour du monde exécuté pendant les années 1836 et 1837 sur la corvette La Bonite commandée par M. Vaillant*, by Auguste Nicolas Vaillant
nla.pic-an10395029

Barthelemy Lauvergne (1805–1875)
*Procession chinoise à Macao*
hand-col. aquatint; 28.8 x 37.7 cm
[Paris]: Finot imp., [1835]
Plate. no. 44 in: *Voyage autour du monde par les mers de l’Inde et de la Chine de la corvette de sa Majesté La Favorite*. *Album historique*
nla.pic-an9351478

Don McMurdo (1930–2001)
Images from various Australian productions of the opera, *Turandot* 10 x A3 size digital prints made in 2004
Don McMurdo Performing Arts Collection
nla.pic-an23501910

Donald Mennie
*China North and South: A Series of Vandyck Photogravures Illustrating the Picturesque Aspect of Chinese Life and Surroundings* 2nd rev. edn
Shanghai, China: A.S. Watson & Co., [1920s]
PIC Album 544

Donald Mennie
*The Pageant of Peking* 2nd edn
Shanghai, China: A.S. Watson & Co., [1920s]
PIC Album 554

Vicente Pcia (1880–1940)
*Macau*, 1937

watercolour; 31.8 x 153.0 cm
Braga Collection
nla.pic-an9897765

Baron von Reichenau
*Entrance to the Pearl River on the Way to Canton* 1940
perspective drawing; 58.0 x 58.4 cm
Braga Collection
nla.map-brscl48

Unknown artist
Gambling House, Canton
watercolour; 25.3 x 26.1 cm
in ‘Travels in China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, etc.’ [assembled] by Benjamin Greene (1866)
nla.pic-vn3081495

Unknown artist
[Navigator’s Flag Chart] [1830s]
watercolour and ink drawing; 54.4 x 73.7 cm
Braga Collection
nla.pic-an10153918

Unknown artist
*St. Martin Frobisher, Knight*
engraving; 19.1 x 12.1 cm
[London?: s.n., 18th century]
Rex Nan Kivell Collection
nla.pic-an9548264

Unknown photographer
*Photographs of Japan and China* [1881–1918]
nla.pic-an10939759

George Robert West
*Macao Passage, Canton [i.e. Pearl] River 1847*
hand-col. lithograph; 25.2 x 39.6 cm
London: Maclure, Macdonald & Macgregor, [1847]
Braga Collection
nla.pic-an10131034

Thomas Whitcombe (1763–1824)
The East India Company’s Ship Cabalava, 1257 Tons, Captain James Dalrymple
Lost in Cargados Shoal, near Mauritius, 7th July, 1818, on a Voyage to China 1820
MAPS

Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville
Nouvel atlas de la Chine, de la Tartarie chinoise, et du Thibet

Hardy Wilson (1881–1955)
Dragon on the Winter Palace Screen at Peking [c.1925]
pencil drawing; 45.8 x 35.6 cm
nla.pic-an2772609

Hardy Wilson (1881–1955)
The Great Wall of China [c.1925]
pencil drawing; 52.9 x 39.7 cm
nla.pic-an2791834

Hardy Wilson (1881–1955)
Lion at the Italian Legation in Peking [c.1925]
pencil drawing; 45.7 x 35.5 cm
nla.pic-an2772585

Hardy Wilson (1881–1955)
Meeting of East and West 1948
pencil drawing; 47.3 x 36.0 cm
nla.pic-an2438443

Hardy Wilson (1881–1955)
Phoenix and Cedar at Peking [c.1925]
pencil drawing; 45.8 x 35.6 cm
nla.pic-an2772622

Hardy Wilson (1881–1955)
The Potter’s Workshop [c.1925]
pencil drawing; 45.9 x 35.5 cm
nla.pic-an2771903

Hardy Wilson (1881–1955)
The Temple of Green Jade Clouds [c.1925]
pencil drawing; 53.0 x 39.6 cm
nla.pic-an2791880

Hardy Wilson (1881–1955)
The Temple of Heaven at Peking [c.1925]
pencil drawing; 45.9 x 35.6 cm
nla.pic-an2770349

Johannes van Loon (c.1611–1686)
Imperii Sinavm nova descriptio
col. map; 45.0 x 49.9 cm
Amstelodami: P. Schenck, [c.1709]
MAP RM 288

Sebastian Munster
Cosmographiae universalis lib. vi
Basileae: apud Henrichum Petri, 1550
MAP Ra 4

Sebastian Munster (1489–1552)
La table de la region orientale comprenant les dernières terres & royaumes d'Asie
col. map; 25.5 x 34.5 cm
[Basel: s.n., 1552–1568]
MAP RM 2541

Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598) et al.
[Collection of Sixteenth-Century Maps with Latin Texts]
[Italy?]: s.n., 1560–1608
MAP Ra 9

Postal Map of Shanghai Showing Sectional Divisions
map; 23.0 x 30.6 cm

MAPS

Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville
Nouvel atlas de la Chine, de la Tartarie chinoise, et du Thibet

MAPS

Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville
Nouvel atlas de la Chine, de la Tartarie chinoise, et du Thibet
Quan di wu da zhou nu su tong kao
Shanghai (Women in All Lands or China's Place among the Nations)
Shanghai: Guang xue hui, 1903
LMS 204

John Bunyan (1628–1688)
Tian lu li cheng: Tu hua (Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come), translated by George Piercy
Canton: Liang Yue jidu jiao shu hui, 1921
LMS 115

Collection of Calligraphical Copybooks
[s.l.: s.n., 19th century?]
LMS 408

Augustus De Morgan (1806–1871)
Dai shu xue Dimegan zhuan (De Morgan's Algebra)
Shanghai: Mo Hai, Xianfeng ji wei [1859]
LMS 1

John Frederick William Herschel (1792–1871)
Tan tian Houshile yuan ben (Herschel's Outlines of Astronomy) 2nd edn
Shanghai: Tongzhi jia xu [1874]
LMS 4

Gai zheng hui tu zi xue liang zhi (Primer of Reading), illus. Liang Qiutian
Yancheng: Tong yi ju, Guangxu jia chen [1904]
LMS 231

Mo bao jiao ge (Stop Footbinding)
Hanzhen: Ying Han shu guan, 1898
LMS 378

Qi ya chu jie (Book for Teaching the Chinese Deaf)
[s.l.: s.n., 20th century]
LMS 386

Quan jie shi ya pian yan (Quitting the Opium Habit)
[s.l.: s.n., 19th century]
LMS 293

Shen jiang ming sheng tu shuo (Drawing on the Beautiful Scenery of Shanghai)
Vol. 2
[s.l.]: Guan ke shou zhai, Guangxu 10 [1884]
LMS 233

Song zhu sheng shi (Hymn Book)
Hankou: Sheng jiao shu ju, Guangxu jia wu, [1894]
LMS 104

'Tian wen tu shou' [19th century?]
[Manuscript about Astronomy]
LMS 576

Alexander Williamson (1829–1890)
Ge wu tan yuan (Natural Theology and the Method of Divine Government) Vol. 1
Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1876
LMS 335

Yesu zai lai li: you yin ze chu (Hikayet Isa: kaluar deri dalam Indjil; History of Jesus: Extracted from the Gospels) Vol. 1
Batavia [Jakarta]: s.n., 1839
LMS 411

Zhen tian ming Tai ping tian guo ... wei guo yu si min ge an chang ye shi ... (The cingdom of Heavenly Peace, with a True Heavenly Mandate, Proclaims to the People about the Mission to Banish Evil and Save the World ...)
sheet; 96.0 x 204.0 cm
[Nanjing?]: Tai ping tian guo gui hao 3 nian 5 yue chu 1 ri [1 May 1853]
Original wall poster from the Taiping Rebellion
LMS 629

ASIAN COLLECTION BOOKS

William Roberts Beach
Visit of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, K.G., K.T., G.C.M.G., to Hongkong in 1869, photographed by John Thomson
Hongkong: Govt. Printer, 1869
Braga Collection
BRAq 3095

Robert Coventry Forsyth (ed.)
The China Martyrs of 1900: A Complete Roll of the Christian Heroes Martyred in China in 1900 with Narratives of Survivors
London: Religious Tract Society, 1904
Braga Collection
BRA 2517

Dian shi zhai hua bao (Dianshizhai Pictorial)
Taibei: Tian yi chu ban she, Minguo 67 [1978]
A lithographic magazine originally published in Shanghai, 1884–1896 by Dianshizhai Books
OCS 9200 6310

Liang you (Young Companion), nos 70 and 92
OCS 9200 3400A

Mortimer Menpes (1855–1938)
China, text by Sir Henry Arthur Blake
London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909
Braga Collection
BRA 4478

BOOKS

Thomas Allom (1804–1872)
The Chinese Empire, illus. Rev. G.N. Wright
Vols 1–2
q 915.1 ALL

Fred Henry Andrews
Wall Paintings from Ancient Shrines in Central Asia
London: Oxford University Press, 1948
ef 751.73 AND

Juliet Bredon
Chinese New Year Festivals: A Picturesque Monograph of the Rites, Ceremonies and Observances Thereto
Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1930
q 394.20951 B831
Juliet Bredon
Peking: A Historical and Intimate Description of Its Chief Places of Interest
Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1922
915.11 BRE

Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766)
Palaces, Pavilions and Gardens in the Imperial Grounds of Yuan Ming Yuan at the Summer Palace in Peking ...
[Paris]: Jardin de Flore, 1977
RBef 722.1 C351

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)
The Poems of S.T. Coleridge
London: William Pickering, 1844
RB DNS 655

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Other Poems, wood engravings by Hans Alexander Mueller
[Mt. Vernon, N.Y.]: Peter Pauper Press, [1950s]
N 821.7 C693

Samuel Victor Constant (b.1894)
Calls, Sounds and Merchandise of the Peking Street Peddlers
Peking: The Camel Bell, [c.1936]
658.850951156 C757

Princess Der Ling
Two Years in The Forbidden City by the First Lady in Waiting to the Empress Dowager
New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1911
915.1156 DER

Field Museum of Natural History
Archaic Chinese Jades Collected in China by A.W. Bahr
New York: Priv. Printed for A.W. Bahr, 1927
736.24 FIE

Roger Fry (1866-1934) et al.
Chinese Art: An Introductory Review of Painting, Ceramics, Textiles, Bronzes, Sculpture, Jade, etc.
London: Published for the Burlington Magazine by B.T. Batsford, 1925
q 709.51 C539

Richard Hakluyt (c.1552-1616)
The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation, Made by Sea or Overland, to the Remote and Farthest Distant Quarters of the Earth, at Any Time within the Compass of These 1600 Yeres ... Vol. 1
London: Imprinted by George Bishop, Ralph Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1599-1600
RBq 910.8 H156

Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674-1743)
Description geographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise Vols 2-4
A La Haye: chez Henri Scheurleer, 1736
RB 951 DU

William Halfpenny (d.1755)
London: Printed for Rob't Sayer, 1755
RB CL1 5914

Isaac Taylor Headland (1859-1942)
Court Life in China: The Capital, Its Officials and People 2nd edn
New York: Revell, 1909
951 HEA

Robert Lockhart Hobson (1872-1941)
A Catalogue of Chinese Pottery and Porcelain in the Collection of Sir Percival David, bt
London: The Stourton Press, 1934
RBef 738 D249

Sir Reginald Fleming Johnston (1874-1938)
Twilight in the Forbidden City, Preface by The Emperor
New York: Appleton, 1934
951 JOH

Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680)
La Chine d'Athanase Kirchere de la Compagnie de Jesus ...
A Amsterdam: ches Jean Jassson a Wesberge, & les herititiers d'Elizze Weyerstrac, 1670
RBq MISC 43

Berthold Laufer (1874-1934)
Chinese Baskets
Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1925
q 745.58 LAU

George Henry Mason
The Punishments of China
London: Printed for W. Miller, 1801
RBl 364.60951 MAS

Donald Mennie
The Grandeur of the Gorges: Fifty Photographic Studies with Descriptive Notes, of China's Great Waterway, the Yangtze Kiang
Shanghai: A.S. Watson, 1926
RB MISCf 82

Arnoldus Montanus (c.1625-1683)
Atlas Chinensis: Being a Second Part of a Relation of Remarkable Passages in Two Embassies from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Vice-Roy Singlanong and General Taising Lipovi and to Konchi, Emperor of China and East-Tartary ... translated and illustrated by John Ogilby
London: Printed by Tho. Johnson for the Author, 1671
RBl 915.1 MON

George Ernest Morrison (1862-1920)
An Australian in China: Being the Narrative of a Quiet Journey across China to Burma 2nd edn
London: Horace Cox, 1895
915.1 MOR

Robert Morrison (1782-1834)
A Dictionary of the Chinese Language, in Three Parts (Zi dian wu che yun fu). Vol. 1
Macao: Printed at the Honorable East India Company's Press by P.P. Thoms,
1815-1823
RBq ALS 1322

Johannes Nieuhof (1618–1672)
An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham Emperor of China, translated by John Ogilby
London: Printed by John Macock for the Author, 1669
RBq 915.1 NIE

Marco Polo (1254–c.1323)
The Most Noble and Famous Travels of Marco Polo, Together with The Travels of Nicolo de’ Conti, edited from the Elizabethan translation of John Frampton
London: Argonaut Press, 1929
RB 915 POL

Samuel Purchas (c.1577–1626) et al.
Hakluytvs Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World, in Sea Voyages, & Lande-trauells, by Englishmen and Others ...
London: Imprinted for Henry Fetherston ..., 1625
RBf CLI 4124-8

Giovanni Battista Ramusio
(1485–1557)
Delle navigazioni et viaggi in molti Ivoghi corretta ... 2nd edn Vol. 2
Venetia: Nella Stamperia de Givnti, 1554–1606
RBq 910.4 R184

Victor Segalen (1878–1919)
Mission archéologique en Chine (1914) 2 vols
Paris: Geuthner, 1923–1935
f 913.31 SEG

Osvald Siren (1879–1966)
Les palais impéraux de Pekin 3 vols
Paris: Librairie nationale d’art et d’histoire, 1926
q 725.17 SIR

Osvald Siren (1879–1966)
The Walls and Gates of Peking
London: Lane, [1924]
No. 37 of a limited edition
q 951.156 S619

P. de Tanner (comp.)
Chinese Jade, Ancient and Modern Vol. I
Berlin: D. Reimer [etc.], 1925
q 736.24 TAN

Arthur Waley
An Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting
London: Ernest Benn, 1923
q 750.951 WAL

Hardy Wilson (1881–1955)
Grecian and Chinese Architecture
Melbourne: H. Wilson, 1937
SRf 722 WIL

Walter Perceval Yetts (1878–1957)
The Cull Chinese Bronzes
London: University of London Courtauld Institute of Art, 1939
RBq MOD 258

MANUSCRIPTS

[Chinese Woman—with Bound Feet—and Man, Sitting]
black photograph; 13.9 x 10.0 cm
in Christopher P. Metcalfe
‘Notes and Photographs, 1900–1905’
Manuscript Collection MS 2577

Chiang Kuo Chang (Book of River Maps)
in Christopher P. Metcalfe
‘Notes and Photographs, 1900–1905’
Manuscript Collection MS 2577

[Christmas Day at Chunking] 1903
in Christopher P. Metcalfe
‘Notes and Photographs, 1900–1905’
Manuscript Collection MS 2577

Kinga—Japan, June 26th 1874
in Charles James Norcock
‘Diaries 1863–1875: Private Journal 24.4.1874–14.3.1875’
Manuscript Collection MS 5897

Sketch in the North Wantung Island, Canton River March 20th 1873. The Boque Forts Destroyed by the English 1842–1857
in Charles James Norcock
‘Diaries 1863–1875: Private Journal 20.7.1870–24.4.1874’
Manuscript Collection MS 5897

EPHEMERA

Burns, Philp & Co. Ltd.
China by Way of the South Sea Islands & Manila: Time Table, 1936

Burns, Philp & Co. Ltd.
China, Salamaua, Rabaul, Cebu, Manila, Hongkong, Saigon, Sandakan

Elizabethan Trust Opera Company
Grand Opera 1967

J.C. Williamson Ltd & Dame Nellie Melba
Souvenir, Grand Opera Season, Her Majesty’s Theatre Sydney 1928

J.C. Williamson Ltd & Dame Nellie Melba
Souvenir, Grand Opera Season, His Majesty’s Theatre, Melbourne, 1928

A-O Line: The Connecting Link between Australia & China
Sydney: Designed and Printed by Bloxham & Chambers Ltd., [1930s]
Xanadu: Encounters with China is a very special exhibition for the National Library of Australia, drawing as it does on the Library’s maps, pictures, rare books and, most notably, its Asian material.

Two of the Library’s treasures, a map of the eastern and western hemispheres of the world executed by the Jesuit priest Ferdinand Verbiest in Peking around 1674, and a 1550 atlas by Sebastian Munster are on display, as are expedition accounts from John Cabot, Martin Frobisher and John Franklin. Hardy Wilson’s delicate drawings of Chinese architecture and Stanley Gregory’s photographs of Shanghai in the 1930s are also included.

Through this diverse material, covering some 450 years of engagement, the exhibition reveals the way Western perceptions of China have evolved, moving from stereotypes to a more expansive understanding of the culture, society and people of that great nation.