

d'autres fonctions au Service des postes, ont été interviewés. Ceci a contribué à faire ressortir le côté humain de l'histoire du service postal ferroviaire. Des archives ont également été consultées, à la fois celles du ministère des Postes (aujourd'hui la Société canadienne des postes) et celles de la Société des chemins de fer nationaux. Le dernier chapitre est consacré à la philatélie. Y sont reproduits une grande quantité

de cachets de timbres dateurs utilisés dans les bureaux de poste ambulants.

À *fond de train* constitue un ouvrage aussi agréable qu'enrichissant qui saura plaire tant au grand public et aux philatélistes auxquels il est destiné qu'à tous ceux qui s'intéressent à l'histoire des communications, de la poste, des chemins de fer et de la culture matérielle.

**ROM Far Eastern Department,
*Homage to Heaven, Homage to Earth:
Chinese Treasures of the Royal Ontario Museum***

**Jessica Rawson, ed.,
*The British Museum Book of Chinese Art***

**Craig Clunas,
*Superfluous Things. Material Culture
and Social Status in Early Modern China***

CATHERINE PAGANI

Royal Ontario Museum Far Eastern Department. *Homage to Heaven, Homage to Earth: Chinese Treasures of the Royal Ontario Museum*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. 284 pp., ill. Cloth \$95.00, ISBN 0-8020-5876-0.

Rawson, Jessica, ed. *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993. 396 pp., 255 illus., 12 in colour. Paper \$33.95, ISBN 0-500-27700-1. Available from Douglas & McIntyre, 585 Bloor Street West, 2nd floor, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1K5; and 1615 Venables Street, Vancouver, British Columbia V5L 2H1.

Clunas, Craig. *Superfluous Things. Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992. 219 pp., 8 illus. Cloth U.S. \$39.95, ISBN 0-252-01930-X.

As tangible reminders of what has been, artifacts bring the past into the present. They act as a bridge between the recent and familiar, and

the distant and unknown, but rely on interpretation to give voice to them. For the field of Chinese art, three recent publications give voice to the long and varied material culture of the Middle Kingdom, each taking a different approach to the subject, appealing to generalists as well as scholars.

One of these is the long-awaited catalogue of the Chinese collections of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). In *Homage to Heaven, Homage to Earth*, the staff of the Far Eastern Department has selected from its outstanding holdings approximately 300 objects to include in this large, lavishly illustrated book. Indeed, these choices must have been difficult. Arranged by material, the topics include jades and hardstones; ceramics; bronzes and oracle bones; burial figures and models; sculpture; applied arts; and painting, with short essays introducing each section. The book also provides a short history of the collections and the department, recognizing the important contributions of the many people whose vision, enthusiasm and patronage made possible the acquisition of

artifacts for the museum. Curiously (and conspicuously) absent, however, are items from the ROM's extremely fine collection of Chinese costume and textiles.

Much of what has been chosen for this book has already appeared in print. Even so, there are some surprises. A painted ceramic attendant tomb figurine, dated to the sixth century and at one time identified as female (Sherman E. Lee, *A History of Far Eastern Art*, Fig. 343, p. 260), is now revealed to be male. A particular treat are two, previously unpublished, unglazed ceramic tiles with lively human figures in very fine relief, which come from a Buddhist pagoda dating to the seventh century. The pagoda itself was only recently discovered in China and has since been restored. The ensuing Chinese publications aided in the identification of these tiles. The ROM has six such tiles, part of the more than 3700 that faced this unique structure. Such a history makes one wish that a photograph showing this building, either pre- or post-restoration, had been included here.

The book is organized into three sections. The large first section contains the essays, photographs and descriptive texts for the artifacts. This is followed by the "notes," and then by the "catalogue," which contains details on the measurements and previous publication information of the pieces. This tripartite arrangement, although undoubtedly intended to separate the different levels of information, makes specific details awkward to find. This is most frustrating for the bronzes, where some rubbings of inscriptions are included in the first section with the colour photographs, while others are found only in the catalogue. Adding to the confusion are the apparently transposed rubbings for entries 43 and 45.

These minor problems aside, this beautifully illustrated catalogue showcases one of the finest collections of Chinese art in the West. While the texts themselves are aimed at the non-specialist reader, the descriptions are interesting and well written, providing a pictorial record of the collections of the ROM.

The smaller-format *British Museum Book of Chinese Art* is also organized by material, but is much broader in its treatment of Chinese art. This publication was written to coincide with the autumn 1992 opening of the Joseph E. Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities at the British Museum and to complement the "re-assessed" displays therein. Both the book and the gallery show a conscious decision to utilize a material culture approach. In her preface,

Jessica Rawson writes that the objects in the gallery are "either works of great art or of great craftsmanship, but they are also products of a particular society at a particular time; their technologies, functions and designs illustrate aspects of that society" (p. 7).

The book's organization shows this emphasis on the roles these objects played in society, as revealed by the chapter topics: jades and bronzes for ritual; calligraphy and painting for official life; sculpture for tombs and temples; decorative arts for display (which include silk, lacquer, carvings, gold and silver, cloisonné, painted enamels, glass, dress, and interiors); ceramics for use; and luxuries for trade. Such a treatment reveals "both [the objects'] original contexts and their aesthetic qualities" (p. 7).

This is an invaluable book for the scholar, connoisseur, student, or anyone with an interest in the arts of China. The texts are detailed and well written, and the illustrative material is both pertinent and pleasing to the eye. Beautiful colour photographs of items in the British Museum's collection are shown along with well-known examples from other collections. Included here are useful maps not only of the main political divisions, but of the trade routes both by land and sea, and the archaeological sites. Adding to the book's appeal are the authors' clever use of objects. A stone sculpture of a civil official, for example, is used to show the dress worn at the court in the eighteenth century. The illustrations are not just of Chinese art objects: included in the section on the effects of trade between Europe and China is one particularly entertaining satirical cartoon dated 1816, by George Cruikshank, entitled "The Court at Brighton à la Chinese!!" Here, the Prince Regent, who had built the chinoiserie-style Brighton Pavilion, is shown as a chubby Chinese emperor, attended by members of the Royal Family dressed as Chinese officials (Fig. 217, p. 287).

This book also has a series of supplements that comprise nearly 100 pages of text, line drawings, and maps. Included here are brief summaries of the history of each dynasty, major archaeological sites, Buddhist sites and reliquary deposits, tombs, biographies of painters, and an extensive glossary of terms. The comprehensive bibliography is subdivided according to the book's chapters, prefaced by a useful general list of sources. In all, the supplementary material provides a wealth of information quickly and succinctly.

The British Museum Book of Chinese Art is perhaps the best publication of its kind avail-

able. It provides up-to-date scholarship on a wide variety of topics, as well as their historical context. Extensively illustrated, this is a source book that no one with an interest in Chinese art should be without.

Craig Clunas' experience in working with both artifacts and historical Chinese texts on connoisseurship as deputy curator of the Far Eastern Collections at The Victoria and Albert Museum is evident in his *Superfluous Things*, a work that examines Chinese objects in conjunction with contemporary literature within a social and cultural context. Clunas states very clearly at the outset that this is not a book about "things," but of ways of looking at things, specifically items from the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644).

This is a fascinating study that examines in detail treatises on connoisseurship and the role they played in late-Ming dynasty society. The title of this book comes from one of these works, the early seventeenth century *Treatise on Superfluous Things* by Wen Zhengheng. These "superfluous things" include paintings, jade carvings and metalwork. Clunas' focus on "things" is evident in his chapter titles: books about things; ideas about things; words about things; things of the past; things in motion (this refers to luxury objects as commodities); and anxieties about things, which deal with class and consumption.

Clunas devotes much of his introduction to discussing material culture and cites many of the current theoreticians. Oddly, though, he does not attempt to define the term, nor does he mention the pioneering writings of Ameri-

can material culturalist Thomas Schlereth or the recent work being done at the University of Leicester by Susan Pearce and her colleagues.

This book shows one of the more interesting and unusual approaches to the use of texts in understanding artifacts within their social and cultural milieu, revealing the attitudes of the scholar class toward collecting and the hierarchy of collectables. In addition to vessels, furniture and clothing, birds and fish are also included in Wen Zhengheng's treatise. "Parrots," he states, "are capable of speech and, thus, must be taught short poems and harmonious phrases ... however, these birds ... are all categorically things of the women's quarters; they are not among the necessities of value" (p. 42). Clunas is quick to point out that these writings need to be viewed as having severe limitations, as they reveal largely the attitudes of upper-class male society.

This is the most scholarly of the three books here reviewed. While none of these publications contains a glossary of Chinese characters, this would have been of particular value here not only for the titles of these treatises but for the discussion of the terminology of aesthetics.

Clunas assumes little prior knowledge on the part of the reader, and thus provides clear and succinct explanations of Sino-specific terms and concepts. His comparisons of Ming dynasty China with contemporary Europe places the book's appeal beyond the sinologist, to include all cultural historians. *Superfluous Things* is one of the more interesting books to appear recently and is particularly valuable in its approach of linking artifact with text.

Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914–1918*

JACK ENGLISH

Rawling, Bill. *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914–1918*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. 325 pp., 17 illus. Cloth \$55.00, ISBN 0-8020-5017-4. Paper \$19.95, ISBN 0-8020-6002-1.

Canada's greatest military historian, the late Colonel C. P. Stacey, maintained that the Second World War was the second-greatest event

in Canadian history. The greatest event, in his view, was the Great War, with the "creation of the Canadian Corps ... [being] the greatest thing that Canada had ever done." Though the passage of time has left others less convinced, and some have even argued that Canada's 1914–18 effort was not worth the candle, the Great War remains by at least one important measure Canada's greatest war. The conflict cost the