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University of Delaware (Winterthur Program), 1987
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WEST MEETS EAST: 
EXHIBITIONS OF CHINESE MATERIAL CULTURE 
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

by

Charlotte Elizabeth Smith

Approved: Richard L. Bushman, Ph.D.  
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: James C. Curtis, Ph.D.  
Director of the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture

Approved: Richard B. Murray, Ph.D.  
Associate Provost for Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

When the first American ship, the "Empress of China," arrived in Canton in August 1784, it marked a turning point not only in the commercial development of the newly independent republic but also in American interest in and attitudes towards the Chinese people and their culture. During the colonial period, few Americans gave serious thought to the land that produced the luxury goods they so coveted. Those who did were encouraged by contemporary writings to view China as a land of ancient wisdom, social harmony, grace, and splendor. As a result of direct trade, however, Americans' idealized image of China came under attack from the increasingly derogatory remarks found in later published reports. Americans were confused: Were the Chinese a civilized or barbarian people?

Museums in America, the earliest of which was founded only about a decade before the "Empress of China's" landmark voyage, quickly assumed the task of presenting and interpreting the artifacts of everyday Chinese life and culture to both scholars and the general public. Four distinct phases marked the progression of public exhibitions of Chinese art and artifacts in America from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. These phases were represented by cabinets of curiosities, the Chinese Museums of Nathan...
Dunn and John Peters, world's fair exhibitions, and museums of anthropology and of art. Despite the apparent simplicity of this schema, the different phases often overlapped. Furthermore, although the progression of Chinese exhibitions usually corresponded to the development of museums in general, it diverged in some instances.

Basically, changes in the nature and content of Chinese exhibitions occurred in accordance with the evolution of Sino-American relations and of Chinese scholarship in America, and reflected shifting emphases in the generally ambivalent American attitudes towards the people and culture of China. By the beginning of the twentieth century, although many Americans remained critical of the backward nature of Chinese society, they were so impressed by the superior ability and taste represented by Chinese art—clearly the work of a once advanced civilization—that they made a place for it in America's best art museums.
INTRODUCTION

Located halfway around the world and declared off-limits to American merchants by British trade legislation, China nonetheless had a significant impact upon the tastes and social customs of colonial Americans. Being dependent upon Britain culturally, as well as economically and politically, Americans naturally adopted a great admiration and desire for the Chinese porcelains, silks, lacquerwares, and other luxury goods carried to the London market by British East India Company merchants. Those Americans with sufficient means eagerly acquired these exotic imports to decorate their homes. They also purchased furniture and furnishings featuring the fanciful Chinoiserie designs created by European craftsmen and imitated by their American counterparts. On the social scene, the British developed an elaborate ritual centered around the drinking of Chinese and Indian teas, which became increasingly popular in American society, too, during the course of the eighteenth century. Clearly, for Europeans and Americans alike, the ownership of Chinese export artifacts and the drinking of Chinese teas were important symbols of status and refinement.

During the colonial period, few Americans gave serious thought to the people and the culture that produced the goods they so coveted. Those who did were encouraged by the writings of Catholic missionarīes...
and Enlightenment philosophers to view China as a land of ancient wisdom, social harmony, grace, and splendor. The arrival of the first American ship, the "Empress of China," in Canton in August 1784, however, marked a turning point not only in the commercial development of the newly independent republic but also in American interest in and attitudes towards the Chinese people and their culture. As a result of direct trade, Americans' consumption of Chinese exports rose significantly, while their idealized image of China came under attack from the increasingly derogatory remarks found in the published journals and travel accounts of American and European diplomats, merchants, and Protestant missionaries. Americans were confused: Were the Chinese a civilized or barbarian people? On the one hand, their ingenuity was responsible for the invention of gunpowder, the compass, paper, and moveable type, as well as for the production of beautiful porcelains, silks, lacquerwares, and other prized items. On the other hand, however, the Chinese people worshipped idols, practiced such bizarre and inhumane customs as binding the feet of infant girls, and often succumbed to the scourge of opium addiction.

Museums in America, the earliest of which was founded only about a decade before the "Empress of China's" landmark voyage, quickly assumed the task of presenting and interpreting the artifacts of everyday Chinese life and culture. Although written accounts of China were available, exhibitions enabled illiterate Americans and those seeking an afternoon's entertainment, as well as serious scholars, to gain a better understanding of this remote and "curious" civilization.
While political and economic circumstances sometimes caused the public to focus upon those aspects of Chinese culture that they found most distasteful, most exhibitions reflected the ambivalent attitude towards China that generally persisted among Americans throughout the nineteenth century.
Chapter 1
CABINETS OF CURIOSITIES

Private Cabinets and Early Museums in Europe

During the intense intellectual, artistic, scientific, and cultural inquiry of the Renaissance, many prominent Europeans formed private collections of natural specimens, works of art, scientific instruments, and other objects that attested to their wide-ranging interests. These collections were often called "cabinets," specifically "cabinets of curiosities," because the haphazard collecting process and the strangeness and rarity of many items tended to make the collections difficult to classify. Royal cabinets, which existed in almost every European country by the end of the eighteenth century, were particularly incoherent, since rulers would obviously not refuse items that were presented as gifts or tribute. Travelers and scholars, on the other hand, were more likely to base their collecting on a specific plan of research or set of ideas, and some even published catalogues of their collections.

Inspired by the strange and exciting tales of voyages through previously uncharted waters, collectors especially coveted the natural and artificial curiosities brought back by explorers from the New World, Africa, and the Indies. Many of these voyages took place in an
effort to find a Northwest Passage to the East Indies, and, in particular, the fabled Cathay, which had fascinated Europeans ever since the return of Marco Polo from that land in the late thirteenth century. The rare and exotic curiosities of Chinese origin that were collected not only provided insights—often skewed unfortunately—into this remote culture, but also testified to the wealth and power of the men who acquired them either by purchase or as tribute. Many of the best collections could be found in London, Amsterdam, and other centers of foreign trade.

The revival of collecting inspired by the Renaissance and worldwide explorations led, during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to the foundation of some of the great museums of Europe, including the Ashmolean Museum of Oxford University (1683), the British Museum (1753), Spain's National Museum of Natural Sciences (1776), and the Natural History Museum of Paris (1793), to name but a few. These museums carried on several of the functions connected with the royal cabinets of curiosities, such as the protection of learning, the preservation of objects, the obligation of accepting all gifts even if unasked for or unwanted, and the symbolic function of being a national treasury or shrine. Admission was restricted, but, like the private cabinets, museums became fashionable places for upper class travelers to visit while touring England or the Continent.

Early Museums in America

The earliest museums in America were also based on the
collections amassed by a single individual and shared many of the characteristics of the European cabinets of curiosities.

**Peale's Museum and Its Imitators**

One of the first and most noteworthy American museums was that founded by Charles Willson Peale in Philadelphia in 1784, which James Silk Buckingham, a British traveler, recognized "as being quite equal to many of the best in Europe."\(^3\) In fact, in many ways, Peale surpassed the keepers of these European museums in his ideals and practices. For example, while Peale, like his fellow museum operators in America, capitalized on the popularity of displays of the curiosities of the natural and artificial world for financial gain, his main effort was aimed at promoting the "diffusion of knowledge" among the general public, rather than just among the cognoscenti as in Europe. He saw his institution not merely as a place either for entertainment or for communicating facts, but instead as a place of "rational amusement," meaning enjoyment while learning.\(^4\)

Peale's primary scholarly interest was in the natural world, and he systematically researched, documented, and arranged the specimens which he owned. Although he apparently had at least a general acquisitions plan to guide his purchasing and the field collecting he commissioned, such as that carried out by William Whiteman Wood in China, he also encouraged donations, which, in the tradition of the royal cabinets of curiosities, he accepted without discrimination. However, he often exchanged unwanted gifts and inferior duplicates for
more desirable specimens from other collectors. On February 1, 1790, Peale issued a call for donations which appeared in the newspapers and in a broadside he sent to friends and men of influence:

With sentiments of gratitude, Mr. Peale thanks the friends to the Museum, who have beneficially added to his collection a number of precious curiosities, from many parts of the world;—from Africa, from India, from China, from the Islands of the great Pacific Ocean, and from different parts of America; some whereof are the more curious, as they have been but very recently discovered, even by the great voyagers of Europe.

He respectfully asks a continuance of their favors and the assistance of all persons who may be possessed of things curious, that they can spare; whether they be of America, or any other part of the world.

While a record exists of many of the gifts to, but not of the purchases of, Peale's Philadelphia Museum, it seems likely that most of the Chinese artifacts were donated, especially by sea captains. Peale generally limited his purchases to objects which he thought might attract enough additional visitors to cover their cost. Furthermore, he was primarily interested in acquiring "utensils, cloathing, arms, dyes and colours, or materials for colouring or for physic, from amongst the Indian, African, or other savage people." He did not seem to consider China to be a "savage" culture; the numerous items from that country reflected the growing American trade with the Orient. Although far from comprehensive, the Chinese collection included a number of natural specimens as well as many different types of man-made artifacts: clothing and footwear, personal and household accessories, musical instruments, weapons, written documents, navigation instruments, tools, religious objects, and so forth (see...
Appendix, p. 98). Of the man-made artifacts, ladies' slippers and models of ladies' feet were represented in greatest quantity (see Figures 1 and 2, pp. 9 and 10). Footwear from foreign countries, in general, made popular souvenirs, but the small size of Chinese ladies' footwear especially intrigued Westerners.

Visitors to the Philadelphia Museum were very interested in the displays of artifacts of different human cultures, although they did not represent the same level of scholarship as the natural history exhibits. Unlike natural science, ethnology was not an established academic field in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. While contemporary descriptions of Peale's Chinese exhibits are rare, the 1805 Guide, published just a few years after the museum moved to new quarters on the second floor of the Old State House, shows the man-made Chinese artifacts displayed in the Model Room along with artifacts of the American Indians and other foreign cultures. The featured attraction seems to have been the two cases containing:

... models in wax, the size of life, of the following characters, drest in their real and peculiar habilments, viz.—Chinese Labourer and Gentleman; Inhabitants of Oonalaska; a Kamskadle; an African; a Sandwich Islander; an Otaheitan; a South American; and Blue-Jacket and Red-pole, celebrated Sachems of North America."

The faces of the Chinese figures are thought to have been based upon those of servants who arrived from Canton in 1796 (a year before the figures were completed), in the retinue of Andreas Everardus Van Braam Houckgeest, former representative in Canton of the Dutch East India Company and then of the Dutch government. Van Braam made several loans

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Figure 2. Label from Peale's Museum or Kimball's Boston Museum. [Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, acc. file 99-12B]
and gifts to the museum, including the appropriate clothing for the wax figures. This arrangement of wax figures as well as that of "the beginning of a collection of Models of useful foreign and domestic Machinery—such as the Chinese Plough and Wheel-barrow; Cottage's Thrashing Machine; a Dry Dock; improved spinning-wheel, &c." suggest that Peale presented the objects by type rather than according to country of origin.

When anthropology and ethnology began to emerge as fields of study during the first half of the nineteenth century, the question of the use of a "typological" versus a "geographical" system of display soon became a divisive issue. The recognized spokesman for each camp was a European. E. F. Jomard, conservator of the King's Library in Paris from 1828 on, developed a "Plan d'une Classification Ethnographique," in which he recommended a comparative system of "classes," "ordres," "espèces," and "variétés." The first included ten functional categories, such as food, clothing, and building materials; the next two were divided according to type of activity (agricultural tools, weapons, etc.; weapons of the chase, weapons of war, etc.); and finally the last category introduced a geographic criterion. In contrast, the Dutch diplomat, traveler, and geographer, P. F. B. von Siebold, who donated his large collection of antiquities and curiosities to the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde at Leiden, favored the arranging of artifacts according to racial or cultural groupings. To some extent, the "typological" or "comparative" approach was more conducive to the development of theories of evolutionism. It is
unclear whether or not Peale organized the majority of his ethnographic collections according to this system or more haphazardly. Regardless of his intentions, however, it must have been difficult to establish and maintain coherent displays considering the frequency and unpredictability of donations.

While Charles Willson Peale was developing his museum, a number of other individuals in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and other cities and small towns were seeking their fortunes by following—and corrupting—his example. As James Silk Buckingham observed during his visit to Philadelphia in February 1840:

In America, . . . Museums are almost always the property of some private individual, who gets together a mass of everything that is likely to be thought curious—good, bad, and indifferent—the worthless generally prevailing over the valuable. The collections are then huddled together, without order or arrangement; wretched daubs of paintings, miserable wax-work figures, and the most trifling and frivolous things, are added; and there is generally a noisy band of musicians, and a juggler, belonging to the establishment, to attract visitors. . . and mere amusement, and that of the lightest and most un instructive kind, is the only object sought in visiting them.17

Although no catalogues seem to exist for these museums to indicate the extent or nature of their Chinese collections, such collections were probably rather small and haphazardly arranged with a focus on the oddities of the Chinese culture and its environment. A number of museums featured wax figures, and some at least included ones in Chinese attire. For example, in an 1813 advertisement, Jesse Sharpless, who had established a Museum of Wax Figures in Philadelphia six years earlier, listed among his collections "An elegant Chinese
As is evident both from these imitators and from the later history of the Philadelphia Museum itself, when Rubens Peale featured science purely as entertainment, Charles Willson Peale's vision of museums as primarily educational institutions did not hold. In the early nineteenth century, most museums had to rely solely on their admissions receipts for their financial well-being. The competition from the increasing number of urban amusements, including the theater, giant panoramas of cities and historical events, touring artists, and small circuses, was intense. Museums found that the only way they could keep up was by highlighting the oddities in their collections and by using their lecture halls, not for scholarly presentations, but rather for dramatic productions and variety acts. Many people whose religious convictions prevented them from going to theaters, which were considered rowdy and vulgar, could justify visiting museums despite the transparence of the guise of education and public enlightenment.

**Barnum's American Museum**

Of course, the ultimate showman in this theatrical approach to museums was Phineas Taylor Barnum, who opened his American Museum in New York in 1841. Ironically, considering Peale's museum ideals, when his Philadelphia Museum folded in the late 1840s, Barnum and his friend Moses Kimball were the ones who purchased Peale's entire collection at the sheriff's sale. Half of the collection went to Barnum's Museum in New York and the other half to Kimball's Boston Museum.

Barnum was clearly not particularly interested in or impressed by Chinese culture. He haphazardly displayed his Chinese artifacts in cases with miscellaneous other foreign and American natural and artificial curiosities. For example, An Illustrated Catalogue and Guide Book to Barnum's American Museum, probably published in the 1860s, listed among the contents of Case No. 794:

Ball of Hair found in the stomach of a sow; Indian collar, composed of grizzly bear claws; the sword of a sword fish penetrating through the side of a ship; an Algerine boarding pike; African pocket-book; Chinese pillow; a petrified piece of pork, which was recovered from the water after being immersed for sixty years; fragments of the first canal-boat which reached New York City through the canals; wrought metal Mexican stirrup; Turkish shoes; African sandals. . . .

Another case included, among other items, Buddhist images from the Far East, about which Barnum commented:

However uncouth these unsightly and miserable attempts at sculpture appear to the inhabitants of civilized nations, they are highly revered and valued at home, where they receive the worship and adoration of millions of ignorant Heathen.

Barnum did not give up the museum business after the American
Museum burned down in 1865. That same year he leased an old building on the west side of Broadway between Spring and Prince Streets, known as the Chinese Museum, the origin of which will be discussed later. It is impossible, unfortunately, to determine what, if any, Chinese articles appeared in the New American Museum. The Chinese collection was most likely very small and would have burned along with everything else in the fire that swept through the building in 1868. That fire brought an end to Barnum's museum career.

**East India Marine Society Museum**

Concurrent with the rise of the independently-operated, profit-seeking museums was the establishment of museums or "cabinets" by various learned and vocational societies. Since the 1770s, even before Charles Willson Peale had conceived of his museum, the American Philosophical Society and the Library Company in Philadelphia as well as the Charleston Library Society in South Carolina had maintained cabinets of natural and artificial curiosities from America and around the world. Many other organizations followed suit, collecting and displaying similar types of objects, in an effort to aid scholarship. Admission to most, if not all, of these cabinets was free of charge; however, the hours had to be limited for financial reasons and, in some cases, visitors had to be sponsored by a member.

The contents of the cabinets of these private societies were generally determined by the generosity and interests of members and friends. Few purchases were made and no gifts were turned down, so
there was great variety both in the quality and the types of objects acquired. Nevertheless, as in the commercial museums, the collections of most non-profit museums in this country in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries featured primarily natural history specimens and/or Native American artifacts. The cabinet of the East India Marine Society in Salem, Massachusetts, is a special exception and deserves particular attention because of its relatively large and varied Chinese holdings.

The East India Marine Society was established on August 31, 1799 when twenty-two seafaring men met in Salem and signed an agreement "to form an association to consist of such Ship Masters only as have had a Register from Salem and who have navigated those Seas at or beyond the Cape of Good Hope" or Cape Horn. Such distant travel was a recent development for Salem ships, as it was for those from other American ports, so that the number of people who could qualify for membership in this new society was small. After all, only thirteen years earlier Elias Hasket Derby's ship "Grand Turk" had been the first Salem vessel to reach China. Wanting perhaps to memorialize their daring adventures as well as to inform others about the places they had visited, the Society's founders established as one of the organization's primary purposes the formation of "a Museum of natural and artificial curiosities, particularly such as are to be found beyond the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn." Not only were they concerned about finding, as soon as possible, "proper apartments for the Books, Papers, Charts, Curiosities, and such other things as the Society may collect"
Members and non-members alike donated a wide variety of natural specimens and man-made artifacts from China, India, the East Indies, the Pacific islands, the Northwest Coast, and elsewhere around the world, that were of good, bad, and indifferent quality. It is unclear whether the Society ever took much advantage of opportunities to exchange or purchase objects, even though an 1824 vote made possible such activity. As can be seen from the Appendix (p. 98), the Chinese objects in the Museum of the East India Marine Society fell basically into the same categories as those in Peale's Philadelphia Museum, except that apparently only the East India Marine Society Museum included examples of Chinese painting and sculpture. Clothing and footwear, along with natural specimens, dominated both collections. Both also featured costumed figures. The Salem museum, for example, had several figures, modelled in clay, which were dressed in authentic Mandarin attire and one which wore "an original dress of Yamqua, a Hong merchant at Canton" (see Figure 3, p. 18). Unfortunately, it is impossible to assess exactly what influence Peale's Museum had on the collecting and arranging of artifacts by the East India Marine Society Museum, although similarities did exist and it is known that some Salem sea captains and merchants had seen and contributed to Peale's Museum.
Figure 3. Figure of Yamqua, a Hong merchant, in his original attire. [Ellen Paul Denker, *After the Chinese Taste: China's Influence in America, 1730-1930* (Salem, MA: Peabody Museum of Salem, 1985), p. 30.]
Thanks to the generosity of members and friends, the East India Marine Society's collection grew quickly, so that the Society was forced to move into larger quarters first in 1804 and again in 1825 (see Figure 4, p. 20). The continual expansion of the collection often brought chaos to the museum displays. By 1820, the members had become sufficiently concerned about this situation that, at their January meeting, they appointed a committee to consider the preparation of a catalogue and the rearrangement of the collection. Nathaniel Bowditch submitted the committee's report the following July, which stated:

The elegant arrangement which had been made in the Museum, soon after it was placed in the present Hall, had been considerably broken in upon by the great accumulation of articles since that period, and which, for want of room had been stowed away wherever a spot could be found to place them in, so that things of a similar nature, instead of being collected together, were scattered about all over the Museum, and it became therefore absolutely necessary to make a thorough alteration in every part of it.

The fact that "things of a similar nature" had originally been "collected together" suggests that the East India Marine Society, like Charles Willson Peale, had adopted the typological rather than the geographical system of display. The former system undoubtedly prevented visitors from recognizing which objects represented which cultures and from understanding each culture as a whole, especially since there seem to have been few, if any, labels.

Fortunately, as a result of Bowditch's report, even though the objects were put back in typological order after being cleaned, the newly-hired first Superintendent of the Museum, Dr. Seth Bass, was charged to prepare a complete catalogue of the collection. This

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Figure 4. East India Marine Hall as it was arranged from 1824/5 to 1867, from a sketch by J. H. Emmerton. [Mary Malloy, "Sailors' Souvenirs at the East India Marine Hall: 'Gathered, with Cost and Pains, from Every Clime,'" The Log of Mystic Seaport 37 (Fall 1985), p. 98.]
catalogue, which was published in 1821 and distributed to members, friends, and learned societies around the country, briefly identified each object and its country of origin, assigned it a number, and indicated the name of the donor (if known). Apparently, corresponding numbers were placed in the cases alongside the objects so that the catalogue could also serve as a guidebook. Of course, the process of looking up each object would have been very tedious and probably deterred all but the most avid viewers. Nevertheless, it did give visitors a chance to identify at least the items that most interested them.

By 1838, the displays had again fallen into disarray and the then Superintendent, Dr. Henry Wheatland, took on the task of restoring order. He perpetuated the typological displays by trying:

... to bring together such articles as bore a resemblance to each other or were used for the same purpose in the economy of life by different nations, such as the cooking utensils, shoes, hats, warlike instruments, etc., etc.\textsuperscript{33}

However, he admitted:

This... was very imperfectly done, owing partly to the nature of the articles themselves, which compelled me to make several miscellaneous cases, & partly to the great length of time requisite for the accomplishment of this object. ... I have followed no plan but have arranged as would best please the eye of the casual visitor.\textsuperscript{34}

The 1821 catalogue must have been well received, because in 1831 the Society published a revised edition, which included 4,281 objects compared to the former's 2,269. An 1837 supplement added 434 more objects. Of this total of 4,724 objects, only about a hundred can be
identified as having been of Chinese origin. This may seem like a rather small Chinese representation, but, of course, Westerners were very restricted in terms of their movement and activities in China. Peale's Chinese collection seems to have been only about half the size of that of the East India Marine Society.

Visitors came in large numbers to see the collections of the East India Marine Society. An 1834 recommendation to begin charging admission was preceded by the comment that, "The Museum from a small cabinet of curiosities has become one of the largest collections in the country and has obtained a celebrity that strangers from all parts of the world visit to gratify their curiosity." Even though admission remained free, people interested in visiting the museum were required to apply to a member for a pass, a formality which does not seem to have presented a significant obstacle. In 1831, the Society agreed to hire an assistant superintendent particularly to help with visitors during the summer, and an 1859 report stated that the average annual visitation was 10,000 people. While, the East India Marine Society's admission policies were not as open as those of Peale's Museum, especially since from 1833 to 1865 the Marine Society prohibited "persons of colour" from entering unless they were serving visitors, the Society did take a relatively popular approach to its collections. For example, at each annual meeting, for the first twenty year's of the Society's existence, except during the Embargo and the War of 1812, and on special occasions thereafter, the members paraded through the streets displaying "the dresses and instruments which have been brought
from the distant regions they have visited, and which in some measure inform us of the customs, manners and arts of their inhabitants."^A person dressed in Chinese habits and mask passed in front," followed by the Indian palanquin, "borne by negroes dressed nearly in the Indian manner."^39

The people of Salem were delighted by these processions and seemed to very much enjoy and appreciate the East India Marine Society's Museum. An 1825 article in the Essex Register observed that:

This admirable collection of curiosities, principally, but by no means exclusively, from the Asiatic continent and the islands of the Pacific, has long been a subject of wonder and pride to our citizens. We have believed it to be superior to any European collection with a like design, but we have now the satisfaction of recording the testimony upon this point, of a distinguished scientific traveler, [Giacomo Constantino] Bettrami, recently on a visit to this place, and who has seen and studied the most celebrated collections in other countries. He pronounced that of Salem, to be without question, the first in the world.40

The British author and traveler, James Silk Buckingham, who wrote so favorably about Peale's Museum, was also very impressed with the East India Marine Society Museum:

I made several visits to the Museum, and was on each occasion abundantly gratified. The articles are well arranged, and kept in excellent order, and there is never so great a crowd of visitors as to prevent the careful and uninterrupted examination of any article at leisure. . . . it cannot fail, therefore, to furnish abundant information and amusement to visitors of all classes, from the venerable navigator and hydrographer to the holiday pupil, as there is as much to entertain as to inform.41

The mystique of the Orient that inspired all of this collecting was certainly felt by one "holiday pupil," who visited the Society often in the 1830s. Several years later, Caroline Howard King reminisced:
As far back as I can remember the museum had a mysterious attraction for me. And indeed it was an experience for an imaginative child, to step from the prosaic streets of a New England town, into that atmosphere redolent with perfumes from the East, warm and fragrant and silent, with a touch of the dear old Arabian Nights about it. From the moment I set my foot in that beautiful old hall, and greeted and was greeted by the solemn group of Orientals, who, draped in eastern stuffs and camel's hair shawls stood opposite the entrance, until the hour of closing came, ... the hours were full of enchantment, and I think I came as near fairy-land as one ever can in this work-a-day world.  

From the collecting by Renaissance Europeans for their personal cabinets of curiosities to the collecting by Peale's Philadelphia Museum, the East India Marine Society Museum, and other early nineteenth-century American museums, natural and artificial curiosities of Chinese origin played a small but significant role. Cognoscenti and laymen of all ages seem to have been fascinated by the exotic nature of these objects, which highlighted the differences between East and West. Unfortunately, the typically haphazard collecting process and the random or typological displays prevented viewers from seeing Chinese culture as a whole, distinct from other Asian cultures. However, in 1838-9, two events occurred which focussed attention specifically on China and the nature of its people and culture: the Opium War and the opening of Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum in Philadelphia.
Chapter 2
THE CHINESE MUSEUMS OF NATHAN DUNN AND JOHN PETERS

Mid-Nineteenth-Century Sino-American Relations

The Opium War (1839-1842) was an Anglo-Chinese conflict but it had important repercussions for American relations with China, too. The Chinese government had been concerned for years about the harmful effects of the widespread consumption of opium and had unsuccessfully tried to halt the importation of the drug. Finally, in 1839, the government issued an edict not only prohibiting further opium imports but also demanding the immediate surrender of all stocks then in Canton. British merchants, who had a great deal invested in the opium trade, refused to acknowledge China's right to confiscate their goods, and, breaking off commercial relations, withdrew from Canton to Macao. The British government supported this stand, for underlying the opium issue was the basic controversy over China's refusal to deal with foreigners on terms of equality. Britain immediately dispatched a powerful force of naval vessels and troop transports to Canton, and although war was never formally declared, fighting began and continued until the Chinese sued for peace in 1842.

As news of the opium controversy reached the United States, Congress for the first time shifted from its long-standing laissez-
faire approach to the China trade and began to take a real interest in the status of American merchants in Canton. These merchants and their home offices submitted memorials urging Congress to take some action to protect American trade. It was first suggested that the United States adopt measures in cooperation with Great Britain and other nations to compel the Chinese to establish formal relations. However, as tension mounted, Congress was warned against any policy that might lead the Chinese to associate Americans with the British in the impending war. After all, since Great Britain had a monopoly on all opium grown in India, the primary producer of the drug, the American share of that trade amounted to a mere three percent. Under such circumstances, it was in the American merchants' best interests to comply with the Chinese demand for the cessation of opium imports in order not to disrupt their very lucrative trade with China in other goods. By maintaining a neutral position in the Anglo-Chinese war, American merchants were able to reap great profits from the opportunities opened up by the interruption of the British China trade. Finally, at the conclusion of the war, marked by the signing of the Treaty of Nanking on August 29, 1842, the United States began to take steps to uphold the interests of its merchants in China, so that they would not lose out to their British rivals. In the Treaty of Nanking, the British government compelled the Chinese imperial government to recognize the equality of Great Britain; allow British merchants full trading privileges in Canton, Amoy, Ningpo, Foochow, and Shanghai; accept in each of these treaty ports the appointment of consuls for the protection of British interests; pay a heavy indemnity; and cede Hong Kong.
Not surprisingly, the Opium War inspired greater curiosity than ever before about the distant land that produced the fine teas, porcelains, silks, lacquerwares, and other goods so coveted by American consumers. The opening of Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum in Philadelphia in December 1838 could not have been more opportune. At a time when ethnology and anthropology were just developing as fields of study, this museum provided a remarkably comprehensive view of the life and customs of the Chinese people.

**History of Dunn's Chinese Museum**

Nathan Dunn (1782-1844) was a Philadelphia Quaker (although he had been read out of meeting, he continued to use the title "Friend") who first went to China in 1818 as the supercargo on the ship "Hope." Except for one brief visit back to the United States in the early 1820s, he remained in Canton until 1831 to act as agent for a consortium of business partners and a few other Philadelphians. Even though the American merchants' involvement in the opium trade was necessarily limited, Dunn was probably one of the few who, for moral reasons, refused to import the drug at all. The hong merchants respected him very highly for this stand. Since Dunn, like his compatriots, was restricted in his contact with China and the Chinese to the confines of the hong section of Canton, he undoubtedly relied heavily upon his friendly associations with the Chinese merchants to amass his huge collection of native clothing and accessories, household furnishings, musical instruments, and other artifacts.
Dunn's original intentions for his collection are difficult to determine. He may have developed it simply for his own enjoyment and for the edification of his friends back in the Philadelphia area. The idea of a public display of some sort would have been familiar to him, however, as a result of the work of Charles Willson Peale and the many other museum operators in his native city. Furthermore, when Andreas Everardus van Braam Houckgeest, the aforementioned representative in Canton of the Dutch East India Company and then of the Dutch government (1790-1795), arrived in Philadelphia in 1796, he brought with him a large collection of Chinese paintings, porcelains, furniture, and silks, as well as five Chinese servants and a Malay housekeeper. Americans were very intrigued by Van Braam, popularly known as the "Chinese Ambassador," and his collection, part of which was exhibited in Philadelphia during the summer of 1796. After his fifteen-room house, named "China's Retreat," was completed near Bristol, Pennsylvania, seventeen miles up the Delaware River from Philadelphia, and his collection was installed there, Van Braam received visits from many friends and acquaintances who were anxious to hear about his experiences and to learn about Chinese life and culture by examining the native artifacts. It is quite likely that Nathan Dunn saw or was at least aware of Van Braam's collection before departing for China, and it may have even been his chief source of inspiration.

Dunn began actively to develop plans for publicly exhibiting his Chinese collection when he joined the board of the Philadelphia Museum Company (descendent of Peale's Museum) in 1836. He spearheaded the
drive for a new building which would hold both the Philadelphia Museum and his own collection. Construction of a suitable two-story edifice on the northeast corner of Ninth and George (now Sansom) Streets was financed by the sale of Museum Company stock at $100 per share, a bank loan of $132,000, and a loan of $20,000 from Dunn himself. As a result of this arrangement, the Chinese collection was housed rent-free on the first floor, adjacent to the Philadelphia Museum's lecture hall.52

The Philadelphia Museum opened to the public on July 4, 1838, and, almost six months later, on December 22, the Chinese Collection, also known as the Chinese Museum, opened (see Figures 5 and 6, pp. 30 and 31).53 The latter, in its size and comprehensiveness, was unlike anything the American public had ever seen. William Langdon, the curator, estimated that from the end of December 1838 through the summer of 1841 approximately 100,000 people visited the Chinese Museum,54 which was open everyday except Sunday, from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m.55 Tickets cost 25 cents per person, which was the standard admission fee for museums in Philadelphia at that time.56 For an additional charge, visitors could purchase either A Peep at China, in Mr. Dunn's Chinese Collection, by the Philadelphia minister and social reformer Enoch C. Wines, or Ten Thousand Chinese Things: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Collection in Philadelphia, both published in 1839. The former is a narrative-style guide to the Museum, while the latter provides similar descriptive information supplemented by an enumeration of 1,075 objects. However, Ten Thousand Chinese Things, of which about 50,000 copies were sold,57 does not list all of the items.
Figure 5. Advertisement for Nathan Dunn's Chinese Collection.
(Philadelphia: A. M'Elroy, 1839), n.p.]
in Dunn's collection nor even all of those on exhibit, since that "would have swelled the pamphlet to an inconvenient size."  

Although an accurate and instructive portrayal of China was Nathan Dunn's goal, he also recognized the role of museums as places of entertainment and tried to make his presentation as dramatic as possible:

The visitor finds himself, as it were, transported to a new world. It is China in miniature. The view is imposing in the highest degree. The rich screenwork at the two ends of the saloon, the many-shaped and many-colored lamps suspended from the ceiling; the native paintings which cover the walls; the Chinese maxims adorning the columns and entablatures; the choice silks, gay with a hundred colours, and tastefully displayed over the cases along the north side, and the multitude of cases crowded with rare and interesting sights, form a tout ensemble, possessing a beauty entirely its own, and which must be seen before it can be appreciated.

To add to the atmosphere, a young Chinese man in native costume greeted the visitors and walked around the hall "explaining things . . . in bad English, and with a most amiable manner that shows he is gratified in being useful."

Aside from one case of export goods, a few scale models, and paintings commissioned by Westerners, all of the man-made objects in the Museum were originally intended for use in China. There were also some natural history specimens which Dunn had commissioned William Whiteman Wood to collect. Of all the displays, the "life groups" depicting everyday scenes were the undisputed highlights of the Museum. As the diarist Sydney George Fisher wrote shortly after the opening:

Figures of natural size, admirably executed in a species of
fine clay, all of them portraits of individuals, are there to be seen, dressed in the appropriate costume, engaged in their various avocations, and surrounded by the furniture, implements and material objects of daily existence. The faces are expressive, the attitudes natural, the situations & grouping well conceived, and the aspect of the whole very striking and lifelike.

There were a total of eleven different scenes, featuring in order of appearance: high-ranking mandarins (see Figure 7, p. 34), low-ranking mandarins, literary gentlemen (see Figure 8, p. 35), ladies of rank (see Figure 9, p. 36), actors, teachers of the main Chinese religions, itinerant craftsmen (see Figure 10, p. 37) and boatwomen, a merchant and his customers (see Figure 11, p. 38), a man being carried in a sedan, visitors to the residence of a wealthy Chinese man, and farmers. The inspiration for these figures and their arrangement probably came from the myriad of waxwork exhibits on view in Philadelphia and other American cities from the late eighteenth century. In some of these exhibits, the wax figures formed "life groups" depicting historical scenes from such events as the Grand Inquisition, the French Revolution, and the American Revolution.

In addition to the "life groups," the Chinese Museum included numerous small cases of miscellaneous objects. The strangeness of some of these objects, arranged sometimes by type and sometimes haphazardly, must have been somewhat reminiscent of the earlier cabinets of curiosities, although at least the whole collection came from China rather than from many different Asian countries mixed together. In contrast to the "life groups," which everyone could readily appreciate, the contents of these small cases, which were numbered but not
(Courtesy of the Essex Institute)
labelled, frequently required reference to the catalogue in order to be understood. Probably only the most knowledgeable and interested visitors lingered over these cases and were able, using their imaginations, to place the objects in a meaningful context.

Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum was a great step forward in terms of its display methods and of public knowledge about life in China. Although many missionaries, merchants, and diplomats had published accounts of their experiences in China, the country remained a remote and imprecise vision for the majority of Americans. Another travel book would have had little impact, but an exhibition inspired great excitement and even attracted people with no previous interest in the subject, who ventured in because they had come to expect a certain level of entertainment from anything calling itself a museum. Once inside, visitors were confronted by "a representation of a distinct country and remarkable people, in which amusement is most skilfully and philosophically made subservient to practical instruction." Joseph Sturge, a British Quaker merchant, went on to explain that:

... by spending a few hours in his [Dunn's] museum, with the aid of the descriptive catalogue, one may learn more of the Chinese than by the laborious perusal of all the works upon them that have ever been written.65

Unfortunately, after enjoying great success, the Chinese Museum and the Philadelphia Museum encountered serious financial problems. Although popular, neither museum earned enough to pay for the new building, the construction of which had run $30,000 over budget.
Furthermore, a financial panic in the late 1830s made it very difficult for the Museum Company to sell its stock. By 1841, Dunn decided that he would move his collection to London. His decision may have been prompted not only by the desire for a new, larger audience, but also by the hope of promoting a better understanding among the British of the true character of the Chinese people, which might in turn lead to the cessation of the opium trade. Although it did not bring an end to the opium trade, the collection, renamed "The Chinese World in Miniature," was a great success in London, where it was exhibited in a two-story pagoda at Hyde Park Corner from June 1842 until the end of 1846. Then the collection toured various towns and cities around Britain for several years, sustaining some losses in a train accident en route to Edinburgh in 1849. P. T. Barnum wrote in his memoirs that in June 1850 he "added the celebrated Chinese Collection to the attractions of the American Museum." His omission of further details may be indicative of his lack of enthusiasm for the collection and/or its limited success in New York. By the following year, the collection was back in London, and after being exhibited briefly in a building known as China House, in Albert Gate, Knightsbridge, it was dispersed through auction by Christie and Manson.

**History of Peters's Chinese Museum**

On September 8, 1845, while Dunn's collection was still riding high in London, another resourceful American, John R. Peters, Jr., opened a remarkably similar Chinese Museum in the Marlboro' Chapel, Washington Street, Boston (see Figure 12, p. 42). Peters, a New
Yorker, never lived in China, but he visited there in 1844 as a member of Caleb Cushing's mission to negotiate a treaty establishing political and commercial relations, on a most favored nation basis, between the United States and China. The Treaty of Wangshia was signed by Commissioners Cushing and Kiying on July 3, 1844 and later ratified by both governments. Anticipating even greater American interest in China and its people as a result of this new development, Peters enlisted "the aid of Chinese, and of American Missionaries, who have resided a long time in the country, and who are well acquainted with the language, manners and customs of this curious people." "Without reference to labor or expense," they formed a huge collection of natural specimens and man-made artifacts used by the Chinese.

Peters's Chinese Museum was very enthusiastically received by the public in Boston, just as Dunn's had been almost seven years earlier in Philadelphia. As the Boston Post reported on opening day: "The collection is beautifully arranged, and makes a gorgeous show. This is the place, at present." Considering the many similarities between Dunn's and Peters's Museums, in terms of objects and display methods, it seems very likely that Peters had visited the former and almost certain that he had read the catalogue to that collection. He displayed "upwards of sixty figures, of the full size of life, likenesses of individual Chinese dressed in the costumes appropriate to the situation and employment in which they are represented." Many of the "life groups" closely resembled those displayed by Dunn, except for the addition of a courtroom scene and a man smoking opium, and the
omission of literary gentlemen, actors, and a sedan scene. Peters also presented cases filled with a variety of objects, only a few of which had been made for export. In the catalogue, entitled *Miscellaneous Remarks upon the Government, History, Religions, Literature, Agriculture, Arts, Trades, Manners, and Customs of the Chinese: As Suggested by an Examination of the Articles Comprising the Chinese Museum*, Peters described and enumerated 786 of the objects in his collection.

Like other successful museum owners, Peters recognized the role of museums as places of entertainment as well as of instruction. He hired, therefore, two Chinese assistants, including a professor of music who was a reformed opium addict. Professor Kaw-hing would "occasionally favor visitors with a Chinese Song, accompanying himself on some of his original and curious instruments," while T'sow Chaoong spoke English and would "give visitors any information in his power."76

The Chinese Museum remained in Boston for almost a year and a half—open daily except Sunday, from 9 a.m. until 10 p.m.—before Peters moved his collection to Philadelphia. Every day, from September 4, 1845, four days before the Museum opened, through February 8, 1847, two days after it closed, an advertisement for the Chinese Museum appeared in the Entertainment section of the *Boston Post*. The fact that the size of these ads gradually decreased, from forty-six lines originally to twenty-seven lines after October 5, 1845, and fourteen lines after December 9, 1845, suggests that either the Museum did not
need or could not afford the more extensive publicity. In either case, when six months later Peters reduced the price of individual adult admission from fifty cents to twenty-five cents, and of three-month passes from two dollars to one dollar, the Museum was undoubtedly facing attendance problems. Then, on September 10, 1846, Peters notified the public that the Museum would close in a few weeks. It did not actually close, however, until five months later. Clearly, the public was not anxious to bid farewell to such an attractive and entertaining presentation. Several notices appeared in the Boston Post during January and February 1847 urging people to visit the Museum before it was too late. On February 6, 1847, for example, one journalist wrote:

To-day is the last of the Chinese Museum in Boston; the last "Feast of Lanterns" comes off to-night, and Professor Kaw-Hing sings his last song to a Boston audience. Go and satisfy the eye with seeing and the ear with hearing, for it may be done at this beautiful collection, if anywhere."

Although the Post announced that Peters's Chinese collection would be exhibited in New York after leaving Boston, other evidence suggests that it spent over a year in Philadelphia first. In 1847, Peters had a Philadelphia company publish a new edition of his Miscellaneous Remarks upon the Government, History, Religions, Literature, Agriculture, Arts, Trades, Manners, and Customs of the Chinese, which, the cover indicated, was "corrected for Philadelphia." In addition, that same year, an abridged version of Peters's original work was printed in Philadelphia under the title, Catalogue and Programme of the Chinese Museum Exhibition. The scarcity of further
details pertaining to the Museum's sojourn in Philadelphia is not entirely surprising. Although Peters's Chinese Museum probably lasted as long as Dunn's Museum, the former may not have received the same fanfare as the latter, which it so closely resembled and which the public had seen only six years earlier.

New Yorkers, whose city was the first in America to send a ship to China, finally had the opportunity to view "China in miniature" when Peters's Chinese Museum opened at 539 Broadway, between Spring and Prince Streets, on New Year's Day 1849. According to the New York Herald:

The long and anxiously expected introduction of a Chinese Museum—amongst the many other natural curiosities that form a feature in our city enjoyments—was received with enthusiasm on their opening.

The newspaper commentary drew attention to the educational as well as the entertaining aspects of Peters's collection, which clearly had the power to change at least some of the public's negative impressions of the Chinese people and their culture. In an early review, a Herald reporter wrote:

We shall not anticipate, by any description, the immense variety of characters, civilized or otherwise, that this collection develops, but we recommend the public to judge for themselves, and pay a visit to what we consider an highly intellectual and rational scene of amusement, eminently calculated to illustrate the manners and habits of those whose peculiarities have been more traditional than historical.

A few days later, another review stated:

There is no place of amusement in this city where an hour can be more pleasantly or profitably passed—for here have been brought together, from all parts of the Celestial empire,
beautiful representations of the inhabitants and elegant specimens of their handiwork, which conclusively prove that they are not behind any nation in matters of taste and ingenuity.82

These enthusiastic critiques of the Chinese Museum, together with the advertisements that appeared regularly in the "Amusements" column of the New York Herald, undoubtedly drew many visitors to 539 Broadway. Nevertheless, on November 3, 1849, ten months after opening, the Museum closed with no mention of future plans for the collection.

Like blockbuster exhibitions today, Dunn's and Peters's Chinese collections were never on view in one place for more than a brief period—a few years at most—yet they had a long-term impact on their public. The evidence for this can be found in the fact that the name "Chinese Museum" often continued to be used in reference to the exhibit sites long after the Chinese collections had been removed. For example, the building in Philadelphia which Dunn's Museum had once shared with Peale's Philadelphia Museum served many different purposes in subsequent years, but it was still called the "Chinese Museum" at the time of the fire in 1854 which destroyed it. Contemporary newspaper reports recalled Dunn's exhibit as the source of the building's name.83 Similarly, in 1865, when P. T. Barnum leased the building on Broadway which had housed Peters's collection sixteen years earlier, the name "Chinese Museum" was still in use.84

Images of China and the Chinese

Both Nathan Dunn and John Peters clearly captured the public's
attention and imagination with their grand and colorful exhibitions. For the majority of Americans, who had never been to China nor even seen any natives of that country, the so-called "Celestial Empire" seemed as remote, geographically and culturally, as another planet. Their first opportunity to come face to face, so to speak, with the Chinese people and their way of life was by examining the "life groups" in the Chinese Museums. Although, obviously, no one could deny that many differences existed between the two cultures, these displays together with the commentary provided in the accompanying catalogues must have made China and the Chinese seem at least somewhat less alien and more understandable. Certainly, that was Dunn's and Peters's intention.

Since the Chinese Museums were designed to attract and teach both the literate minority and the illiterate majority, an examination of both the visual displays and the catalogue descriptions should provide useful insights into the images of China and the Chinese developed by many Americans in the mid-nineteenth century, and into the tension between the negative and positive images of Chinese civilization.

**Chinese Museums: Displays**

The format, as well as the content, of Dunn's and Peters's displays played an important role in visitors' efforts to learn about Chinese culture. The "life groups," which were the most popular features of the two Chinese Museums, enabled viewers to actually see
the cultural connections instead of having to synthesize them in their minds from an array of objects and labels. Even without reading the catalogues, Americans examining the "life groups" in the Chinese Museums should have noted the hierarchical nature of Chinese society, as reflected in the juxtaposition of figures and in their dress. According to Dunn, "the dress of every grade of society in China is fixed by usage." Visitors should also have observed in these displays an emphasis on urban society, especially of the upper class, which is not surprising considering that foreigners were confined to Canton and generally only had contact with merchants and mandarins. Of course, since in reality China was primarily an agrarian society, the displays were somewhat misleading on this subject.

Although the "life groups" had their origins in the early waxwork museums, Dunn's Museum represented their first use in an ethnological museum. Unfortunately, neither Dunn nor Peters are recognized for their pioneering role. A recent article points to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago as the scene for the introduction to America of the "life group," which had been adopted by European museums decades earlier.

The objects displayed in small cases in the Chinese Museums were undoubtedly much more difficult to understand and appreciate than the "life groups," although they, too, would have suggested the richness and diversity of Chinese culture. Frequently the cases contained random groupings of objects but sometimes they were ordered according
to material, function, or other theme. The categories included: porcelains; textiles; paper, books, and other printed matter; personal accessories; shoes; musical instruments; tools; natural history specimens; foodstuffs; etc. Of course, these typological displays would not have allowed the sort of comparisons possible in museums featuring artifacts from several different cultures. Even a comparison of the material culture of the different classes within Chinese society would have been difficult, since few of the objects seem to have been of lower class origin. However, some differences between socio-economic classes would have been obvious from the "life groups."

**Chinese Museums: Catalogue Descriptions**

Despite the fact that Dunn wrote the official catalogue for his museum just prior to the Opium War and Peters wrote his following the signing of the Treaties of Nanking and Wangshia, the two catalogues are remarkably similar in content and point of view. Both men reported primarily on pre-War China. Dunn undoubtedly gained most of his information first-hand during his residence in Canton in the 1820s, although in some instances he quoted directly from the writings of C. Gutzlaff, J. Davis, Sir George Staunton, and others. Peters's only known visit to China, in 1844, was too brief for him to become an expert on the subject, and so, as he gratefully acknowledged, much of his information came from the *Chinese Repository*, E. C. Bridgman's *A Chinese Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect* (1841), and the works of W. H. Medhurst, J. Davis, Barrow, Sir George Staunton, Timkowski, S. Kidd, and C. Gutzlaff. Of course, as a member of Caleb Cushing's mission,
Peters was very much aware of the significance of the Opium War. Therefore, while his overall view of China and the Chinese was positive, he indicated his sense of superiority by his frequent use of the mildly derogatory terms "celestials" and "Chinamen," and by his sarcasm. He also found more to criticize than did Dunn, who was generally even-handed, if not openly inclined in favor of the Chinese. Dunn's catalogue had almost a scientific tone to it, due to his frequent use of the terms "species" and "specimen," even for inorganic objects.

The two catalogues cover a wide range of issues pertaining to the Chinese people and Chinese institutions, including: the character and appearance of the people, the treatment of women, leisure, work (agriculture, artisanry, industry, commerce), religion, the arts, government and education, the military, and the legal and penal systems. Dunn and Peters rarely openly contradicted one another in either their information or their stated opinions, but their omissions and inclusions are sometimes telling. As will be seen, both authors often gave their American readers a favorable perspective on Chinese culture by pointing out that China was not only superior to other Asian nations but that it was an advanced civilization when the West was still steeped in barbarism, by comparing Chinese customs to those of ancient Greece and Rome, by acknowledging the West's debt to China, by noting the similarities as well as the differences between East and West, and by making their readers aware that Westerners often seemed as strange to the Chinese as the Chinese appeared to Westerners.
Nathan Dunn was clearly familiar with and incensed by the criticism that his contemporaries were leveling against the Chinese:

The Chinese have been, repeatedly, denounced in terms savouring little of Christian forbearance and charity. In their business transactions, they have been presented to our imagination as a nation of cheats; in their bearing towards foreigners, as scornful and repulsive to the last degree of supercilious self-complacency; and in their own social relations, as bereft of every noble sentiment and generous sympathy.

Although he claimed that he would not "take up the gauntlet on the general question of Chinese respectability and worth,\(^9\) that is exactly what he seems to have done throughout his writing. Both he and Peters pointed out that the Chinese, on the whole, were "mild, peaceful, obedient, cheerful, and industrious."\(^{90}\)

In terms of appearance, Dunn and Peters both admitted that the Chinese ideal of female beauty was certainly very different from the Western ideal. Similarly, Chinese women would not have been favorably impressed by American and European women:

The costumes of both nations [Chinese and Tartar], 'though amongst the higher classes, as splendid as the most exquisite silks and embroidery can make them, are always extremely modest; and what we choose to call dress, they would regard as little short of nudity, and all close fitting to the form as only displaying what it affects to conceal.'\(^{91}\)

On the other hand, Dunn saw much to commend the traditional costume of Chinese men:

Their dresses, which are light and free, contrast advantageously with those tight and high-collared garments with which fashion obliges us to encumber ourselves.\(^{92}\)

However, in a rare unmitigated criticism that revealed his Quaker upbringing, he remarked:
The wealthier Chinese are extravagantly fond of showy dresses, and a well-provided wardrobe is an object of great pride. A deficiency of clean body-linen is not regarded as a calamity by a Chinaman. A fair outside is what he mainly covets, being little heedful of either the quality or condition of what is underneath.

Peters's lengthy description of the poor treatment of women in China seems to have allowed little opportunity for positive comment.

However, Dunn pointed out:

The women in China, as in all other countries not blessed with Christianity, occupy a rank in society far inferior to that of the men. Nevertheless, their place on the social scale is higher, their influence greater, and their treatment better, than can be predicated of the sex in any other Asian nation.

Furthermore, while Dunn, a confirmed Sinophile, said that Chinese women made "devoted wives and tender mothers" and that "the working wives of Kiang-see" were held in high esteem throughout the provinces, Peters spoke critically of a Chinese woman "drudging for her lord." From his long acquaintance with China, Dunn was probably aware of the advantages enjoyed by many women of the lower classes as compared with those of the upper classes. Nevertheless, he obviously preferred not to dwell on the controversial subject of women's rights and omitted entirely any mention of the infanticide of females that Peters pointed to with horror. Highlighting his ability to put the idiosyncracies of Chinese custom into perspective, Dunn commented on the "golden lilies," sarcastically referred to by Peters as "this perfection of beauty." As the former explained:

The bandaging [of feet] is continued for several years, during which the poor child suffers the most excruciating tortures. This is, no doubt, an absurd, cruel, and wicked
practice; but those who dwell in glass houses should not throw stones. It is not a whit worse, nay, we maintain that it is less irrational and injurious, than the abomination of tight lacing. No vital part is here attacked, no vital functions disordered; and on the score of taste, if the errors of nature are to be rectified, and her graceful lines and proportions improved, we see not why the process of amendment may not be as reasonably applied to the feet as to the waist. 8

Nathan Dunn's omissions are even more glaring concerning leisure activities, if that is how the opium-smoking obsession prevalent among the Chinese should be classified. Both Dunn and Peters lamented the gambling habits of the lower classes, but the former ignored opium-smoking, except for displaying several opium pipes, including a lady's opium pipe, in a couple of his exhibit cases. Unlike Peters, who featured an opium addict in one of his "life groups," Dunn presented only tobacco-smokers in his displays. Dunn was an ardent opponent of the opium trade and obviously preferred not to stain the character of the Chinese people by dwelling upon their addiction to the drug. However, considering the timing of his publication, Peters could hardly avoid the subject, even though he, too, seems to have been opposed to the trade and praised the Emperor for "his laudable endeavors to stop the growing evil."99 Unlike many Westerners, Peters does not seem to have thought less of the Chinese because of their opium addiction. He pointed out, "The Grecians appear to have been acquainted with the soporific powers of opium; and as a medicine it has been employed for many centuries by all civilized countries." Furthermore, he put the current problem into perspective by referring to an English opium addict and suggesting that opium was not unlike
alcohol, in that its operation "upon the constitution greatly depends . . . upon the quantity and frequency of its being administered; the age, temperament, and habits of the individual, and the climate of the country in which he resides."\textsuperscript{100}

Both Dunn and Peters claimed that Western merchants and missionaries had primarily themselves to blame for the travel restrictions that the Chinese had placed upon them. The missionaries should not have interfered in government affairs and the merchants should not have abused their trading privileges by importing opium illegally, among other transgressions. As Peters pointed out, "with a climate so various, that everything they wish for is produced by themselves, they need not and care not for foreign commerce."\textsuperscript{101} Nevertheless, trade was profitable business and the Chinese were good merchants. As Peters described:

They are systematic, obliging to customers, and indefatigable in the pursuit of money. The word of the large dealers is entirely to be depended upon and the Hong merchants are noted for their honor in mercantile transactions. So much cannot be said of the generality of small traders, with whom foreigners come in contact, who are as great rogues as can be found anywhere.\textsuperscript{102}

While ignoring the question of the merchants' honesty, Dunn, who was a good friend of many of them, also praised Chinese merchants and claimed that they were better businessmen than other Asians, the Spanish, the Italians, and the Portuguese.\textsuperscript{103}

Dunn and Peters praised Chinese workers in general for their industriousness, ingenuity, and skill, despite their "simple" and
"rude" tools and machinery. In reference to their carpenters' tools, Peters even speculated that "the work done with them although not equal to that of our mechanics, made with more perfect instruments, is probably much superior to what they could produce with similar ones." Furthermore, Dunn pointed to at least two areas where Westerners could learn from the Chinese. First, the Chinese were the only people to have developed the "art of repairing cast iron vessels when injured." Second, "the Chinese understood well the enriching effect of frequent ploughings," a principle which should have been "turned to greater account by the Europeans." While Dunn and Peters both found much to praise in terms of Chinese agriculture, industry, and artisanry, Peters was particularly frustrated by the Chinese ignorance of and disinterest toward modern technology and was anxious to see change:

Educated to reverence antiquity, and to think the usages and productions of the Celestial Empire perfection, the force of custom on the mind of the Chinese is a great bar to their improvement.107

Both Dunn and Peters were highly critical of the content of education in China, due to its focus upon the past. Peters wrote very emphatically on this subject:

'To pass the examinations it is not necessary for the candidates to explore the realms of nature. Geography, astronomy, chemistry, anatomy, and mechanics are little known, and the celestials are still ignorant of the laws of electricity, galvanism, and magnetism, the theories of light, heat, and sound, the use of gas for illumination and the giant powers of steam. The highest excellence consists in closely imitating the ancients who are their paragons of excellence, and to attempt to surpass them in virtue or intelligence would be the height of presumption. The sacred
four books and five classics, compiled by the Chinese sage, Confucius, and his disciples ages ago, are the text-books of the student of the present day [author's emphasis].

On the other hand, they were both very impressed that the Chinese placed such emphasis on education, making it the prerequisite for public office and opening up the civil service examinations to the majority of the lower classes. As Dunn explained:

Strange as it may seem, there is probably no other country on the globe where cultivated talent exercises its legitimate sway to an equal extent. Wealth, and titular nobility, and purchased rank, have their influence, no doubt; but, unless accompanied by personal merit, and, above all, by education, their power is comparatively limited and feeble. The Emperor chooses for his officers none but men of the highest attainments and most commanding abilities.

Dunn called the whole empire a "university, a mighty laboratory of scholars," while Peters claimed, "All persons acquire some knowledge of letters; and learning, such as it is, is more common in China, than in any other part of the world."

Even though Dunn may not have been impressed by the content of school education in China, he felt that the West should take note of the "early, constant, vigorous, and efficient training of the disposition, manners, judgment, and habits both of thought and conduct" that was part of growing up in China. Writing prior to the Opium War, he suggested that the emphasis on selecting educated talent for public office together with the "enforcement of the doctrine of responsibility" was "the true secret of the greatness and prosperity, the stability and repose of the Celestial Empire." Despite Dunn's positive attitude, he did reveal a certain concern about the extreme
absolute power held by the Emperor, the "self-styled 'Son of Heaven."" He wrote somewhat skeptically:

> It is well known that the civil institution of China claim [author's emphasis] to be framed and fashioned upon the exact model of a wise family government.\(^{114}\)

During the course of the text, he pointed out the government's restriction on the carrying of arms except by soldiers on parade,\(^{115}\) the prohibition against people holding office in their native province, and the requirement to change an official's area of jurisdiction with some regularity.\(^{116}\) He specifically blamed despotism for the characteristic sameness of mind and body apparent among the Chinese.\(^{117}\) Peters, however, insisted that "the 'Son of Heaven,' notwithstanding the immense power conferred upon him, is careful of his reputation amongst his children," as Dunn would probably have agreed.

Furthermore, Peters pointed out:

> It would indeed be strange, if in a country of such vast extent as China, abuses of power did not sometimes occur; but a happy, contented, and industrious population is a pretty sure indication that the government is, on the whole, well administered.\(^{118}\)

Unfortunately, China's effectiveness in its civil affairs could not be matched by its ability in military matters. Using remarkably similar wording, both Dunn and Peters acknowledged that:

> Letters are held in higher esteem than arms, and the civil officers of course outrank the military. This may be set down to their credit, as it is certainly a mark of social advancement.\(^{119}\)

Writing on the eve of the Opium War, Dunn was especially critical of the Chinese army, which he considered "little better than a rabble
rout, mere men of straw, destitute of discipline, bravery, science, skill, and every other soldier-like quality," and of its limited and primitive resources. Nevertheless, pointing to the Emperor's edict of March 18, 1839, he seemed mysteriously convinced that:

... the Chinese government has the power, and will use it, cost what it may, to put a stop to the abominable traffic in opium, hitherto carried on in defiance of the laws of China, by men calling themselves Christians.

Peters, writing after China's severe defeat, was, of course, aware of the fallacy of Dunn's optimism, for, "the whole of their defenses seem to have been incapable of arresting the progress of a mere handful of British soldiers." He mocked the ridiculous tactics employed by the Chinese soldiers, such as the use of a rattan shield with "the face of a hideous monster [painted on it], the object of which, is to strike terror to the hearts of the enemy." Nevertheless, Peters felt that, despite the "cowardice of the mass", "they are not naturally cowards," and that "discipline was all that was wanting to make good soldiers of them."

In his brief discussion of the Chinese penal system, as in his remarks on the Chinese system of government, Dunn does not seem to have been convinced that the end justified the means. He reluctantly admitted:

If we go upon the principle of judging the tree by its fruits, and look at this code in connexion with its results, we shall be compelled to allow that it is wisely framed and efficiently administered.

He then went on to point out some of the defects of the penal code, and to comment that "it is impossible to read the recital of some of these
punishments, so abhorrent to humanity and justice without a sentiment of indignation as well as of sympathy." Peters, who devoted a whole "life group" to the Chinese legal and penal systems, was also critical of their severity. He concluded, nevertheless, by praising their superiority relative to the systems employed in other Asian countries. Surprisingly, Dunn went even further by quoting "an able writer in the Edinburgh Review," who stated:

> The most remarkable thing in this [penal] code is its great reasonableness, clearness, and consistency . . . It is a clear, concise, and distinct series of enactments, savouring throughout of practical judgment and European good sense . . . we scarcely know any European code that is at once so copious and so consistent, or that is nearly so free from intricacy, bigotry, and fiction.¹²⁶

Dunn's inclusion of this passage, despite his own criticism of the Chinese penal code, highlights his open-mindedness and even-handedness.

Neither Dunn nor Peters could find much, if anything, to say in favor of Buddhist or Taoist doctrines or priests. Peters's comparison between Buddhism and Roman Catholicism was obviously not a compliment. Both authors were clearly critical of the superstitiousness of the Chinese people. The only Chinese "religion" that they found worthy of respect was the philosophy of Confucius. They agreed that many Confucian maxims were "just in sentiment, wise in policy, and admirably suited to the genius of the people" and, as Dunn added, that they had "done more for the stability of the empire than all other causes combined."¹²⁷ Peters seems to have focussed much more attention than Dunn on the paganism of the Chinese and displayed a large number of their idols. He was obviously particularly anxious to see them
converted, but as Dunn observed, Christians were often their own worst enemies in this effort:

Alas for missionary effort, so long as the grasping avarice of the countries whence the missionaries go, sets at naught every Christian obligation before the very eyes of the people whom it is sought to convert.

Dunn evidently felt that there was a connection between Christianity and artistic taste and ability, for he commented:

The fine arts in China are undoubtedly far from having reached the perfection that belongs to them in the enlightened nations of Christendom; yet an examination of the paintings in this collection, will satisfy every candid mind that great injustice has been done to Chinese artists, in the nations hitherto entertained respecting their want of ability and skill.

Dunn and Peters both admired the taste, beauty, and skill of Chinese painting, carving, embroidery, and other fine and decorative arts. However, they recognized the limitations of the Chinese, such as in the decoration of porcelain, which Europeans could apparently do better. Furthermore, just as the quality of porcelain produced had been on the decline for several centuries, "'their music at present is far inferior to what it was in the golden ages of antiquity'" and the "brilliant epoch in Chinese letters was during the eighth century of our era."

Dunn and Peters pointed to positive features of Chinese music and literature, but they had to acknowledge that, in some cases, they found the Chinese taste to be quite different, although neither better nor worse, than their own. The terms "curious" and "peculiar" appear throughout their texts.
Dunn and Peters both concluded that China deserved great respect for its longevity and many accomplishments, for "the most powerful modern kingdoms of Europe are but of yesterday compared with China." Although he did not always adhere to his own principle, Peters very magnanimously recommended: "They live on the past, we on the future, and consequently they are not to be judged by our standards." Of course, the Chinese typically saw themselves as the only civilized people in the world. Dunn recognized the fallacy of this view, but it did not irritate him as it did Peters. While the former wrote simply, "It is true that a smile is excited by the overwhelming national vanity it [Emperor's edict of March 18, 1839] betrays," Peters harangued:

'From him [the Emperor] emanate all power and authority; the whole earth it is ignorantly supposed (and it is the policy of such as are better informed to perpetuate the ignorant notion) is subject to his sway; and from him as the fountain of power, rank, honor, and privilege, all Kings derive their sovereignty over the nations. It is in conformity with these haughty pretensions, that China has ever refused to negotiate with "outside barbarians" until compelled to do so by force stronger than her own.'

Clearly, the China that Dunn and Peters had experienced and that they presented for the entertainment and edification of the American public was destined to change. As a writer for the Art-Union lamented after seeing Dunn's Chinese Museum in London in 1842, Dunn portrayed:

China as it was five years ago, but, most probably, as it will never be again—for the European has entered into its sanctuaries, and, the privacy of the Chinese once violated, they must become more assimilated to us in all things.

However, this assimilation occurred neither quickly enough nor completely enough to satisfy many Americans, judging from their reactions to both the influx of Chinese immigrants and the Chinese
displays at the world's fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
Chapter 3

CHINA AT THE WORLD'S FAIRS, 1876-1915

Prior to the 1876 Centennial Exhibition

The Chinese Museums established by Nathan Dunn and John Peters were unique for, and in some ways ahead of, their time. They were both products of the personal efforts of unusual individuals and had no institutional foundation. Consequently, they did not survive, nor did they have any direct successors. Between the closing of Peters' Museum in the late 1840s and the next major public display of Chinese artifacts in America, at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, there was a gap of a quarter century. In the interim, however, neither the Chinese people nor their arts and manufactures were forgotten, even though some attention seems to have been diverted from them due to increased curiosity about Japan following Commodore Matthew Perry's opening of that country to the West in 1854.

Although at different times Americans focused greater attention upon either the more civilized or the more primitive aspects of Chinese culture, most seem to have maintained a basically ambivalent view of China throughout the nineteenth century. On the one hand, they regarded the Chinese people as untrustworthy, immoral, and essentially barbaric. On the other hand, while some Chinese manufactures reflected
the most backward technology, Americans were generally very impressed by the remarkably beautiful and refined porcelains, lacquerwares, and other goods that the Chinese were able to produce.

Private Collecting of Chinese Porcelains

During the second half of the nineteenth century, not only did Americans continue to purchase modern Chinese export goods, but some began collecting older Chinese porcelains and other items which had been made for native domestic or religious use. Dealers, such as the one who presented a small display of Chinese and other eastern articles at the 1853 New York Crystal Palace exposition, played an ever larger role in the exchange of Chinese goods. Sales in Paris, in 1861 and 1862, of the treasures recovered by the Anglo-French troops who sacked the old Summer Palace near Peking in 1860 quickly established the rarer examples of Chinese craftsmanship as something for which the richest collectors competed. These collectors viewed their acquisitions as works of art worthy of high admiration rather than as mere curiosities or ornaments. Several prominent men began forming personal collections of Chinese art and antiquities, especially porcelains, in the 1860s, including Anson Burlingame (1820-1870), United States Minister to China during the 1860s and leader of the official Chinese delegation which toured Europe and America at the end of the decade; Samuel Wells Williams (1812-1884), secretary and interpreter of the American legation to China from 1856 to 1876; and William T. Walters (1820-1894), the Baltimore merchant and railroad executive. Writing twenty years later, in 1884, Walters commented:
Regarding the Ceramic Art from the standpoint of true decorative principles, whether in its strongest characteristics, or in the more subtle refinement and delicacy of treatment both of color and general manipulation, there can be no question that the Chinese have established their preeminence in this artistic development...

Since the major art museums in America were not established until the 1870s, the issue of whether or not to include Chinese art and antiquities among their collections did not arise until the end of the century.

**Chinese Immigration Problem**

While Chinese art that appeared on the Western market during the third quarter of the nineteenth century attracted an increasing number of admirers, the many Chinese people who emigrated to America during this period were not so well received. Magazine articles published in America during the 1830s and '40s suggest that Americans were generally sympathetic towards the Chinese in their conflict with the British over the opium trade. However, Americans changed their tone when they had to live and work side by side with Chinese people. There had been Chinese in Mexico and California since as early as the late sixteenth century, but it was not until the 1840s that large numbers of Chinese began to be imported to work in the California gold mines. By the 1860s, thousands of Chinese laborers were arriving every year. They played an important role not only in mining, but also in building the transcontinental and western railroads, establishing the California fishing industry, maintaining the vegetable and fruit growing industries, carrying out civic improvement projects, and so forth.
Many eventually opened private businesses, including laundries, stores, and restaurants, with their hard-earned savings.\textsuperscript{140}

The incredible industriousness of the Chinese laborers and their willingness to work for "sweat-shop wages" inspired great hostility among white Americans, many of whom feared losing their jobs. As Bret Harte satirized in his poem, "The Latest Chinese Outrage," written in the 1870s, "Shall we stand here as idle, and let Asia pour/Her barbaric hordes on this civilized shore?" Not surprisingly, when the Panic of 1873 left hundreds of thousands unemployed, violent anti-Chinese riots broke out, which continued to erupt at intervals for many years. In prints, cartoons, books, articles, poems, and songs, Americans spoke out against the "yellow peril" and ridiculed the strange appearance and manners of the Chinese. Americans clearly resented the tendency of the "heathen Chinee" to "keep to themselves" and to shun the language and customs of their host country, especially considering America's assumed cultural superiority.\textsuperscript{141} As the \textit{Philadelphia Inquirer} explained, "'From a plaything and curiosity John [Chinaman] has become a vexing problem.'"\textsuperscript{142} While American hostility towards the Chinese people was obviously particularly strong on the west coast, the negative feeling spread to the east coast, too. In 1882, Congress finally acceded to the demands of American workers and passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which temporarily suspended the immigration of Chinese laborers. (From 1904 until 1943, all Chinese, except scholars and diplomats, were forbidden to enter this country.)\textsuperscript{143}
Treatment of the Chinese at the World's Fairs

Considering the strong anti-Chinese sentiment voiced in the popular press during the 1870s and subsequent decades as a result of the immigrant problem, it was inevitable that Americans would take advantage of the world's fair expositions to criticize and ridicule the Chinese. The Chinese people who attended the fairs or worked on the exhibits were particularly vulnerable to attack. Although the newspapers reporting on the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia tried to give the impression that foreigners were "treated with the utmost respect and courtesy," a contemporary noted that the Chinese, as well as the Turks, Egyptians, Spaniards, and Japanese, "were followed by large crowds of idle men and boys, who hooted and shouted at them as if they had been animals of a strange species." One Chinese official was practically stripped of his robes, while another was threatened with having his queue cut off. After the passage of the immigrant exclusion acts, the treatment of the Chinese worsened dramatically. Although Congress granted the Chinese merchants and their assistants special dispensation to enter the country and set up exhibits, the process they had to submit to was grueling. The Chinese headed for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, for example, were detained for days, or even weeks, in a shed "lacking every facility for cleanliness and decency." Understandably, some merchants decided to turn back at San Francisco rather than undergo the humiliation of detention, questioning, and the posting of the required $500 in gold bond. Those who continued on to the fair found their movement severely restricted. Each person was registered, tagged,
photographed, and ordered to report daily. The purpose of all of these procedures was to ensure that the Chinese returned to their homeland at the close of the fair, although in reality few did.

**Chinese Exhibits at the World's Fairs**

Despite the poor treatment of the Chinese people at the fairs and the criticism that was leveled against their manners and manufactures, the Chinese exhibits were generally not designed to encourage such negative feeling. On the contrary, the Chinese and Western merchants who planned and mounted these exhibits wanted to impress American viewers in order to encourage trade. The catalogues written specifically for the Chinese exhibits as well as those written for the world's fairs as a whole were generally even-handed and sometimes outright positive towards Chinese culture and Chinese products. Exposition officials were probably comfortable with this approach, since, unlike their lower class compatriots, they were not personally threatened by the large-scale immigration of Chinese labourers. In fact, American industrialists and business leaders had actually encouraged Chinese immigration as a source of cheap labor for their projects.

At the world's fairs prior to the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, the main Chinese exhibits were prepared under the direction of the the Imperial Maritime Customs Service. This organization had its origins in the foreign inspectorate of customs established by the British and American authorities in China.
in the 1850s. It provided the Chinese government with its most reliable source of revenue during the last third of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.147 The Western representatives of the Customs Service collected most of the material for their displays in the treaty ports, much to the dismay of one observer, Edward C. Bruce, historian of the Centennial Exhibition, who wrote:

China's exhibit cannot be accepted as by any means a full or even a fair one as far as it goes. The contributions are chiefly from the coast, where the influence of commerce has wrought changes in the methods and industries of the people. The vast interior of the empire . . . remains unrepresented. A population dwelling in all the climates and outnumbering all Europe must have more to show, could it be got at, than can be seen or inferred in this little corner of a single building.148

On the other hand, as the Public Record pointed out, many Americans regretted that the Chinese manufactures did not reflect greater Western influence:

'Cut off from the rest of the world by its great wall, and isolated behind her old feeling of distrust and apathy toward the peoples of Europe, the old empire of China has received but little benefit [author's emphasis] from western civilization and advancement, and as a consequence, makes a display at the exposition which is curious, rich and rare.'149

Judging from the catalogues that exist for the Chinese exhibits at the Centennial and at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, a wide range of materials were displayed. The Chinese collection at the Centennial fell into six different categories: mining and metallurgy, manufactures, education and science, art, machinery, and agriculture. The collection presented in St. Louis was even broader, representing: education, art, liberal arts, manufactures, machinery, electricity,
transportation, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, mines and metallurgy, fish and game, anthropology, social economy, and physical culture. Most of the Chinese objects were grouped together in one area of a building rather than being dispersed among the different special subject buildings. At the Centennial, for example, the Chinese exhibit, enclosed by an ornamental screen with an imposing portal, took up the relatively small space of 7,504 square feet in the west wing of the Main Building (see Figure 13, p. 71). The Louisiana Purchase Exposition featured a Chinese Pavilion, which included a reproduction of the country home of Prince Pu Lun and two smaller buildings set around a courtyard and surrounded by a high wall with a pagoda at the entrance (see Figure 14, p. 72). Some artifacts were displayed there, but most of the commercial exhibits were housed in the Palace of Liberal Arts, with some arts and crafts installed in the Education Building. The exhibition catalogues served mainly as checklists, although detailed descriptions of some objects, customs, and technical processes were provided. These descriptions were generally straightforward and unbiased, although in a few instances the author pointed out the superiority or inferiority of Chinese methods and products.

Beginning with the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, a new type of Chinese exhibit began to appear at the fairs. In these exhibits, which recreated native settings, the Chinese people themselves and their customs, rather than their arts and manufactures, were the featured attractions. Such "living" exhibits, representing

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Figure 13. The Chinese Department in the Main Building at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. [Edward C. Bruce, The Century: Its Fruits and its Festival. Being a History and Description of the Centennial Exhibition, with a Preliminary Outline of Modern Progress (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1877), p. 143.] (Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Delaware Library)
Figure 14. The Chinese Pavilion at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis. [David R. Francis, The Universal Exposition of 1904, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Louisiana Purchase Exposition Company, 1913), p. 139.]
China as well as other Asian and European countries, were located along a broad avenue adjacent to the main exposition site (see Figure 15, p. 74). They were not part of the official exposition, and, being arranged by showmen, were intended more as sources of amusement than of serious study. Visitors were charged an additional fee to enjoy many of these concessions, and, therefore, it was important for exhibitors to make their presentations as entertaining and intriguing as possible. As one contemporary pointed out:

... it was strangeness rather than excellence and novelty rather than entertainment that drew the people but strangeness and novelty are the greater excellence when people come to see wonders. 153

Unfortunately, this focus upon the strange and unusual aspects of Chinese culture made the Chinese villages an easy target for Sinophobes.

At the Columbian Exposition, China was represented only on the avenue referred to above, known as the Midway Plaisance. Deeply resentful of the Geary Act of 1892, which renewed and expanded the restrictions established under the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the Chinese government refused to send a commissioner or to set up an official exhibit at the fair. 154 However, America was anxious to include China in some way in order to have a truly international exposition. Consequently, the Wah Mee Exposition Company stepped in and set up a Chinese theater, temple of worship (joss house), tea-garden, and bazaar, all housed within a Chinese-style building featuring "two towers rising in successive but diminishing stories,
Figure 15. The Midway Plaisance at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago. The Chinese Building can be seen in the foreground to the left. [Reid Badger, The Great American Fair: The World's Columbian Exposition and American Culture (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1979), n.p.]
their corners tipped with bells and their summits bearing the Chinese flags" (see Figure 16, p. 76). According to a contemporary magazine, *Halligan's Illustrated World's Fair*, a museum, containing "artistic wax figures and Chinese designs from human models, and relics from the time of Confucius," was also planned. It seems, however, as if that feature may have been absorbed within the temple, because, according to both a later article in the same magazine and contemporary guidebooks, the temple walls were lined with groups of wax figures illustrating historical scenes, religious beliefs, modes of punishment, and social customs (see Figure 17, p. 77).

The Wah Mee Exposition Company evidently went to great effort and expense in preparing their exhibit. With regard to the theater, for example, while the interior was basically rather plain and crude, the curtain, manufactured in China, was considered to be exceptionally rich and beautiful. Furthermore, the plays, featuring celestial subjects, gave "rare opportunities for rich costuming and dazzling scenic investitute, opportunities which are skillfully and effectively improved by playwright and stage director." For this engagement, the Wah Mee Company recruited "many of the most gifted artists" in China, forming what some considered to be "the best company ever seen outside of their native country" (see Figure 18, p. 78). Despite the beauty of the scene, however, some viewers were very critical of the underlying cultural significance of what they saw. For example, Hubert Howe Bancroft, a contemporary exposition historian, wrote of the plays presented in the Chinese theater:
Figure 17. Interior of the Chinese temple at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago. ["China at the World's Columbian Exposition," Halligan's Illustrated World's Fair 5 (June 1893), p. 569.] (Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Delaware Library)
Figure 18. Interior of the Chinese theater, with a few of the actors, at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago.  
[Chicago Times, Chicago Times Portfolio of the Midway Types, Part 10 (Chicago: The American English Co. Publishers & Printers, 1893), n.p.] (Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Delaware Library)
... the pervading tone is morbid and ultra pessimistic, virtue in woman and honor in man being conceded only to a few. China is a country where the seat of honor is the stomach; where the roses have no fragrance and women no petticoats; where the laborer has no sabbath and the magistrate no sense of integrity.\(^{159}\)

Another reviewer who described the theater and the temple concluded:

> The comicality of the place was in the rendition in temple and theatre of antediluvian legends by people whose written history antedates all others, a native whose civilization should excel the 'open board' governments of the world. The Midway was just the spot for such a temple, for it was the abiding place of the incongruous in everything.\(^{160}\)

At most of the world's fairs of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth, Chinese exhibits appeared both in the main exposition areas and along the avenues, referred to by such names as "Midway," "Vanity Fair," "Zone," and "Pike." In attempting to relate these exhibits to those seen in Dunn's and Peters's Chinese Museums half a century or more before, it seems as if the Chinese villages were like living versions of the so-called "life groups," while the official world's fair exhibits were similar to the latter's small cases of artifacts. Of course, there were also significant differences between the Chinese Museums and the world's fair displays. Dunn and Peters recognized the entertainment value of their "life groups," but their primary purpose was to inspire among the American public a greater understanding and appreciation of the Chinese people and their culture. In contrast, the organizers of the Chinese villages at the world's fairs were pure showmen, anxious to earn a profit from their labors. They sought to amuse their public, by exaggeration if need be, rather than to help them to evaluate the
strengths and weaknesses of Chinese society, although, of course, some viewers used the villages as evidence in their criticisms of the Chinese anyway. The official Chinese exhibits at the world's fairs were intended to provide the real forum for judging China. Organized more systematically than the cases in the Chinese Museums, the former focussed attention especially upon artifacts pertaining to industry and agriculture rather than to everyday life and art. Despite the different emphases, both Dunn and Peters and the official exhibitors at the fairs were generally equitable in their appraisal of the abilities and products of the Chinese. It was individual Americans, viewing these displays, who chose to be more critical.

While mixed reviews of China and the Chinese were a continuing feature of the world's fairs, when the Panama-Pacific International Exposition took place in San Francisco in 1915 it was clear that China's status was improving. A major turning point seems to have been the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911 and the coming to power of a group of leaders anxious to modernize their country. Not only did this development make America more favorably disposed to the China, but it led the latter to seek friendlier relations with America, despite the continuing restrictions on Chinese immigration. The San Francisco exposition marked the first time that China participated in a world's fair "as a nation, on a basis of Chinese nationality." Instead of relying upon Western officials of the Imperial Maritime Customs Service, China appointed an exposition commission composed exclusively of Chinese people. The Commissioner General, Mr. Chen Chi,
set the tone of friendliness and gratitude toward the United States at the dedication ceremony for the Chinese Pavilion:

'It is an historical fact that the United States has stood in closer friendly relations to its transpacific neighbor than any other Occidental nation. China does not forget the $26,000,000 indemnity fund which the United States, under John Hay, returned to her after the Boxer troubles. That fund now serves to educate Chinese lads in the schools and universities of this country.'

In return, American fair officials showed their desire to please by agreeing to close one section of the Chinese village known as "Underground Chinatown," which was "a sort of chamber of horrors" where "visitors received awful visual warnings of the fate of the opium smoker and the drug fiend." This concession, operated by theater executive Sid Grauman, had come under attack from members of the local Chinese business community and the Chinese consul.

At the San Francisco fair, the Chinese not only set up a pavilion, but they also took up 69,000 square feet of exhibit space in the various exhibit palaces. Chinese materials appeared in the Palaces of Education, Liberal Arts, Varied Industries, Mines and Metallurgy, Transportation, Agriculture, Food Products, and Fine Arts. The Chinese Pavilion featured recreations of the palaces of the Forbidden City, somewhat reduced in scale, and of a Chinese home, all fully furnished (see Figures 20 and 21, pp. 82 and 83). Despite her desire to modernize, these displays showed that China was proud of her heritage:

All this teak and ivory and sandalwood and lacquer, and these embroidered pictures, gave the Asiatic atmosphere unmistakably, without a taint of Occidental
Figure 19. The Chinese Pavilion at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco. [Frank Morton Todd, The Story of the Exposition, Being the Official History of the International Celebration Held at San Francisco in 1915 to Commemorate the Discovery of the Pacific Ocean and the Construction of the Panama Canal, vol. 3 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1921), opp. p. 290.] (Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Delaware Library)
Figure 20. Interior of the Hall of Audience, part of the Forbidden City recreation in the Chinese Pavilion at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco. [Frank Morton Todd, The Story of the Exposition. Being the Official History of the International Celebration Held at San Francisco in 1915 to Commemorate the Discovery of the Pacific Ocean and the Construction of the Panama Canal, vol. 3 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 1921), opp. p. 290.] (Courtesy of Special Collections, University of Delaware Library)
sophistication.166

Even the things displayed in the exhibit palaces were designed to suit the native Oriental needs rather than being adapted for foreign commerce. Nevertheless, the "calculation for foreign commerce was in evidence and the potentialities revealed in some of the exhibits were overwhelming in their significance."167

The ideas and ideals of the Chinese were obviously undergoing tremendous change. Of particular note were the Chinese exhibits in the Palace of Education and the Palace of Transportation. The former revealed that China had completely replaced its traditional system of education, which had been much criticized by Dunn and Peters, by the western system, in which western science and art were taught using western methods.168 Needless to say, China had much to learn about western science and technology, but considering the natural resources of that vast country, Americans were very enthusiastic about its potential. A map in the Palace of Transportation showing plans to lay a continuous railway route from Peking all the way to Constantinople held particular interest. As the official historian of the San Francisco exposition explained:

What this might mean in world commerce, in gathering up the product of the mineral resources of one of the most heavily mineralized regions on the globe, manufactured by modern industrial organizations with the potencies of disciplined Chinese labor, and pouring it into the trade of the Mediterranean and Western Europe, is staggering.169

Of course just as the modernization of China would take time,
Americans could not be expected to change their often negative attitudes about the Chinese people and their culture overnight. Nevertheless, the new political and economic developments which were destined to make China and the United States more dependent upon one another were bound to increase their mutual respect. As the following chapter will reveal, Americans' knowledge and appreciation of Chinese art and antiquities had begun to increase significantly even before the nationalist revolution brought about the establishment of the Republic of China. The fact that in San Francisco, for the first time at a world's fair, a major Chinese display appeared in the Palace of Fine Arts was no accident; it was part of a general trend.
Chapter 4
ETHNOLOGY VERSUS ART

In the late nineteenth century, at about the same time as the world’s fair expositions were being presented to the American public, some of the earliest major American museums of anthropology and of art were being established. One question that arose for these museums was how and where Chinese culture should be represented. The anthropology museums were generally designed to focus upon the cultures of primitive peoples, and, in the eyes of many Americans, the Chinese were indeed primitive. Yet China was an ancient civilization which had reached an advanced state when the West was still in the Dark Ages. Furthermore, many Americans, some of whom had begun their own private collections, greatly admired the skill and beauty of Chinese art. Under such circumstances, perhaps America’s art museums should assume primary responsibility for collecting the products of Chinese culture. To fully understand the outcome of this debate requires an examination of the development of museums of anthropology and ethnology and of late nineteenth-century archaeological discoveries in China.

Despite the fine example set by both Nathan Dunn and John Peters in terms of careful, comprehensive collecting and instructive display, the establishment of anthropology and ethnology in American museums
proceeded in a very slow and amateur fashion. One of the earliest institutions to become involved in the field of anthropology was the Smithsonian. In 1858, it acquired the natural history specimens and man-made artifacts brought back from around the world by the U.S. Exploring Expedition (1838-1842), and the U.S. National Museum was formed. Since China was not on the Expedition's itinerary, the few Chinese items among the collections must have been acquired by purchase or exchange from merchants and sailors at other ports of call. In any case, because the man-made artifacts had been collected primarily as curiosities and as evidence for the prevailing evolutionary view of culture, detailed information about the origin, manufacture, and function of each object had rarely been recorded. Such negligence was typical of early anthropologists. Referring to the men who established anthropology in the National Museum, historian Curtis M. Hinsley, Jr. explained:

... they called themselves scientists, but theirs was as often an aesthetic and religious exercise, and always a moral service to the nation. By displaying order in the tangible works of man through all ages and places, they would confirm cosmic purpose.

Even in 1880, when William J. Rhees published a Visitor's Guide to the Smithsonian Institution and National Museum, the anthropological collections were "still in great part a congeries of archaeological relics, ethnological curiosities, and historic Americana badly in need of definition."

Typical of early museums in America, the U.S. National Museum of the Smithsonian focussed primarily upon the wonders of the natural
world. The first specifically anthropological museum in the United States was the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1866. Like many of the museums of anthropology or departments of anthropology within natural history museums that were established subsequently, the Peabody Museum was charged to collect and preserve objects relating to the American Indians and earlier races on the continent of America. Of course, some artifacts of Asian, African, and Oceanic origin entered those institutions either by design—meaning purchase or expedition—in order to allow a comparison of primitive cultures, or through donations. In 1885, for example, the Chinese government gave the Chinese exhibits from the World Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans to the Museum of Anthropology at the University of Michigan.

An early exception to the preoccupation with native America, however, was the Peabody Academy of Science, established in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1867. This institution took over the ethnological and natural history collections of the East India Marine Society as well as those of the nearby Essex Institute. When Edward S. Morse, the newly-appointed Director, presented his plan of action to the trustees in 1880, he urged that the museum concentrate on enlarging and perfecting both the:

... 'unrivalled ethnological collections, the result of the intelligent interest of Salem sea captains, who during the height of Salem's commerce, founded the East India Marine Society, and the collections of animals and plants of Essex County... '175

The trustees accepted this recommendation and supported his subsequent
proposal that the ethnological collections be rearranged according to country of origin (see Figure 22, p. 90). Increasingly, the geographical system took the place of typological arrangement in American museums, particularly as "life groups" began to appear and won popular appeal.

Beginning in the early twentieth century, institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History (1869) in New York City, The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania (1887), in Philadelphia, and the Field Museum of Natural History (1893) in Chicago, to name but a few, began to actively collect Chinese artifacts. What they collected, however, was generally very different from that which Dunn and Peters had collected fifty years earlier. Rather than illustrating contemporary Chinese culture, these museums tended to focus upon China's past. As a case in point, the Chinese collection of The University Museum, Philadelphia, consists primarily of objects—namely, porcelains and other ceramics, paintings, textiles, jades, bronzes, and especially sculpture—dating from before A.D. 1000, which were acquired through purchase, donation, and, to a lesser extent, expedition. Events in China, such as the 1899 sacking of Tientsin and Peking by Western troops attempting to put down the Boxer Rebellion and subsequent excavations in conjunction with the laying of railways, made possible such a collecting emphasis. Significantly, the interest of The University Museum, Philadelphia, and other museums of anthropology in Chinese antiquities often seems to have stemmed as much from their aesthetic qualities as from their role as documents of everyday life.
and religious worship in China.

The role of ethnology in museums was problematic. While museums of natural history were designed to present instructive exhibits and museums of art were expected to show things of beauty, there was controversy about the place of ethnology. Some ethnologists argued that their collections were not at all beautiful and should serve only to enlighten viewers about the everyday lives of the people who had produced them. However:

... many pieces, especially those from sophisticated material cultures [such as China] fell into already well-established classes of artistic production—statuary, vases, bas-reliefs. Such objects seemed clearly to be born of aesthetic intentions, since they were decorative, formal, stylized, and unmistakenly the products of careful labor and technical skill.\textsuperscript{177}

Furthermore, in the case of China, while its people were often considered strange and barbaric, their arts had been assimilated into European sensibility through periodic vogues of "chinoiserie." Consequently, many people considered it inappropriate for Chinese artifacts to be studied within the context of ethnology, which usually dwelt upon the primitive world. As one historian recently observed, by the early twentieth century, it was apparent:

... that an unspoken schism existed in scholars' minds about the history of mankind. Art and culture were an obvious near-monopoly of the Western world and the highest civilizations from which our Western world derived ... Of course, to the East one could not quite exclude the Indians, Chinese and Japanese. The artifacts of these peoples belonged in art museums, although they rested on a different plane of culture. Their civilizations had crossed some invisible threshold, and objects from these cultures were revered as true art, to be cherished in some cases as part of our own true antecedent culture and in other cases to be
admired as being worthy of the accolade of true aesthetic appraisal.178

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many art museums began forming collections of Chinese art. They sponsored expeditions to China, made purchases through dealers and auction houses, and sought donations from private collectors. Some private collectors, however, held on to their treasures in order to establish specialized museums, such as the Freer Gallery of Art, which features the arts of China and Japan acquired by Charles Lang Freer of Detroit around the turn of the century. The Freer collection nominally came into the possession of the Smithsonian in 1906, but the Gallery did not finally open to the public until 1923. One of the pioneering art museums was the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, which, in the 1890s, recruited the scholar and connoisseur Okakura Kakuzo to lead its first ambitious efforts to assemble a collection of Chinese art. This collection is now the largest of its kind in the Western world. Clearly, while anthropology and ethnology have continued their studies of primitive cultures, finally settling upon the university as their primary institutional base, art museums have captured the market on Chinese art and artifacts.
CONCLUSION

As the chapter titles of this thesis suggest, four distinct phases marked the progression of public exhibitions of Chinese material culture in America from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century. These phases were represented by cabinets of curiosities, Dunn's and Peters's Chinese Museums, world's fair exhibitions, and museums of anthropology and of art. Despite the apparent simplicity of this schema, the different phases often overlapped. Furthermore, although the progression of Chinese exhibitions usually corresponded to the development of museums in general, it diverged in some instances. Basically, changes in the nature and content of Chinese exhibitions occurred in accordance with the evolution of Sino-American relations and of Chinese scholarship in America, and reflected shifting emphases in the generally ambivalent American attitudes towards the people and culture of China.

Cabinets of curiosities, which predominated during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, characterized the first phase in the history of museums and of Chinese exhibitions. During this period, Americans were just beginning to take a serious interest in Chinese culture, but were restricted in their collecting of native artifacts by the Chinese authorities, who prohibited foreign traders

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from traveling beyond Canton. Consequently, Chinese collections only played a minor role in the early museums. Furthermore, artifacts of Chinese origin were often difficult to distinguish from other exotica due to the display methods used. Clearly, these cabinets of curiosities were designed more to awe and entertain than to instruct. They perpetuated Americans' tendency to jumble the cultures of the Far East and the South Pacific together as one strange and "curious" mass.

Although cabinets of curiosities remained on the scene at least through the middle of the nineteenth century, the Opium War of 1839-1842 inspired Americans to develop a particular interest in the Chinese people and their culture. The Chinese Museums established by Nathan Dunn and John R. Peters, Jr. at about this time catered to, and, in turn, fostered this new interest. Unlike the operators of the cabinets of curiosities, Dunn and Peters were as anxious to teach and interpret Chinese culture to their visitors as they were to entertain them. Their lengthy exhibition catalogues together with their comprehensive and systematic displays attested to this fact. Considering that anthropology and ethnology only emerged as fields of study in the early nineteenth century and that even by 1866, when the first specifically anthropological museum was founded in the United States (Peabody Museum of Archeaology and Ethnology),\textsuperscript{179} most people still approached these subjects in a rather disorganized and unscientific manner, Dunn's and Peters's Museums were certainly advanced for their time.
After the Chinese Museums closed, there were no new developments in the history of Chinese exhibitions until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when the situation suddenly became much more complex. That period can be divided into two major phases—world's fair exhibitions, and museums of anthropology and of art—which were roughly concurrent. While neither the fairs nor the museums followed consciously the example set by Dunn and Peters, the Chinese displays at the American world's fairs more often perpetuated elements of the earlier exhibitions. They, too, focussed upon contemporary Chinese culture and included both an array of varied objects and scenes from everyday life (the latter beginning at the 1893 Columbian Exposition). Of course, there were also significant differences in the nature of the world's fair and Chinese Museum exhibits as well as in the public's reaction to the culture they represented. For example, even though direct trade with China led many Americans to become more critical of its people and culture, contemporaries of Dunn and Peters tended to favor China's rights in the opium conflict with Britain. Consequently, visitors to Dunn's and Peters's Museums wrote primarily positive reports about what they saw there. In contrast, many, although not all, visitors to the world's fairs, biased by the problems surrounding Chinese immigration, took advantage of the Chinese displays to ridicule the Chinese people and their culture.

The museums of anthropology and ethnology, which seemed likely to be the natural successors to Dunn's and Peters's Chinese Museums, generally put very little emphasis on the collecting and exhibiting of
Chinese artifacts, favoring instead native American artifacts, primarily, as well as items from Africa and the South Pacific. Furthermore, although some of the world's fair collections of contemporary Chinese objects were deposited in anthropology museums in America, most of these museums evidently preferred to collect objects of ancient origin, which only became known and available to the West during the latter half of the nineteenth century due to political and economic developments within China. Although anthropology museums appreciated the aesthetic value of their collections, they were most interested in their cultural significance; and being preoccupied primarily with primitive cultures, they sometimes found it difficult to place Chinese objects. Chinese wares found a much more comfortable home in the newly emerging art museums, which highlighted the artistic ability and taste represented by the finest porcelains, bronzes, and other creations of the Ming and earlier dynasties. Although China had stagnated while the West had progressed, these items were clearly the works of art of a once advanced civilization.

Many Americans remained critical of the Chinese people and their customs despite this appreciation for their art. However, the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, which was anxious to modernize with the aid of American technology and capital, helped gradually to reduce American hostility. While China would always be surrounded by a certain aura of mystery, Americans had made great progress over the course of a hundred years in their knowledge and recognition of Chinese culture. During the eighteenth century,
Americans placed their made-for-export Chinese wares on figurative pedestals as the ultimate in status and refinement. At the end of the nineteenth century, once again Americans looked to China for art and beauty, but now it was the art and artifacts designed and used by the Chinese themselves which found their way to the pedestals of American art museums.
APPENDIX

CHINESE "CURIOSITIES"¹

East India Marine Society Museum²

Clothing, Figures, and Personal Accessories

Carved statue of a Chinese Mandarin, in his proper costume (#232)
Chinese Mandarin, modelled in clay and painted, Canton (#233)
Wife of Chinese Mandarin, modelled in clay and painted, Canton (#234)
Very fine model of a Chinese Mandarin, clay, painted (#235)
Figure modelled in clay, and wearing an original dress of Yamqua, a Hong merchant at Canton (#237)
Figure modelled in clay and painted of a Chinese labourer, packing tea (#238)
Figure modelled in clay and painted of a Chinese porter, carrying 2 chests of tea in the manner commonly practised (#239)
Figure modelled in clay and dressed, of a Chinese Mandarin of a low order (#241)

Chinese cap (7 Aug. 1821)
2 Chinese hats (27 Oct. 1821)
Chinese hat (Sept. 1840)
Large Chinese fan, called Punkah (19 Nov. 1807)
Chinese Fan, made out of a very large leaf of a tree, handsomely ornamented (20 Sept. 1813)
Chinese pipe (29 March 1819)
Chinese wooden comb (8 May 1828)
Chinese Umbrella (Sept. 1840)

Peale's Museum³

Chinese Fancy Figure (1837, #4485)
Blue Silk Robe, worn by Mandarins of the 4th order (#1591)

Silk Frock-coat, China (#3516)

Pair of Crape Breeches, China (#3521)

5 beautiful Silk Scarfs, China (#3524-8)

Opium pipe, Chinese (#197)

Chinese Fan (#426)

Tobacco pipe, Canton (#574)

Fan, made of the feathers of the Argus Pheasant, Canton (#2629)

**Footwear and Feet**

Model of the foot of a Chinese lady of fashion, 3 3/4 inches long (#242)

Pair of Chinese slippers, worn by men (#336)

Pair of Chinese slippers, worn by females (#337)

Shoe that had been worn by a Chinese Lady, 70 years old (#1563)

Pair of Men's Shoes, Canton (#1699)

Men's Shoes, partly worn out, China (#3505)

Pair of Silk Boots, worn by men in China (#3506)

Model of the Foot of a Chinese Lady of rank (#3507)

Shoe for the Foot of a Chinese Lady of rank (#3508)

Pair of China shoes (16 March 1808)

Just representation of an Ankle and Foot of a Chinese Lady 19 years old. The shoe was made on the same last her wedding shoes were, and of the same materials, as also the dress of the ankle (21 July 1813)

Chinese Ladies Shoe (22 June 1815)

Chinese slippers (30 Aug. 1815)

Pair of Chinese Ladies Shoes, from Canton (16 May 1819)

Pair of Chinese Slippers (8 July 1819)

Chinese slippers (17 Dec. 1821)

Chinese Childs Shoes (25 May 1825)
Chinese Ladies Shoes (19 July 1828)

Chinese Ladies Shoe (15 Dec. 1828)

Pair of Chinese Ladies shoes (1 April 1829)

**Household Accessories**

Chinese Candles (#520)

Two elegant bowls, made for Benjamin Hodges, Canton (#552 and 554)

Large China bowl, brought from Canton by the Grand Turk, with a correct painting of the Ship, and the date "Canton, 1786" (#553)

2 large Turreens, in the form of Swans, Canton (#648 and 649)

Chinese Tinder Box (#1062)

Chinese Chop-sticks, &c. in a case (#1065 and 1066)

Ornaments for window curtains, &c., China (#3531 and 3532)

2 Chinese candles, highly ornamented with flowers &c. (15 Aug. 1806)

Chinese wooden bellows, from Canton (7 July 1807)

Chinese chopsticks (29 July 1811)

4 wax candles, ornamented, from China (5 Oct. 1812)

Very handsome Chinese chop-knife & sticks (16 Dec. 1813)

Chinese teapot (27 Oct. 1821)

Chinese pillow (27 Oct. 1821)

Chinese knife and chopsticks (16 Nov. 1827)

Chinese pincushion (10 Aug. 1829)

**Books, Documents, and Writing Materials**

Chinese Ink-pallet and letter (#498)

Chinese Art of Curing Diseases, by assuming and maintaining for a length of time certain attitudes of the body and limbs—illustrated by 24 figures and descriptions by a Chinese Author,

2 octavo pamphlets containing the first principles of the Chinese language (20 April 1811)

Wooden block, containing part of the New Testament translated into the Chinese language (1 Aug. 1813)
with a Latin translation by a Jesuit Priest (#1419)
Chinese Grand Chop, or Custom House clearance from Canton (#1561)
Chinese Almanack, or Register, Canton (#1701)
Chinese complimentary cards, Canton (#2086)
Chinese Bill of Lading (#3749)
Chinese Pamphlet (#3999)
Book of Exodus, in Chinese (1837, #4382)
Chinese Passport, for the Ship Sumatra, 1831 (1837, #4500)
Chinese Magazine, and Letter, and its translation into English (#4619)

Copy of the last will and testament of the late Emperor of China (7 Aug. 1821)
Chinese autographic letter written on Palm leaf (1 July 1833)

Navigation Instruments; Equipment; and Tools

Chinese Swanpan, or Abacus, used by most Asiatic nations in making Arithmetical calculations (#455)
Chinese Compass and Box (#546)
Chinese Compass and Calendar (#617)
Dotchin or Ballance, for weighing gold in China (#618)
Joiner's Plane, China (#1041)
Chinese Lock (#1059)
Chinese Padlock (#1060)
Chinese Rasor (#1093)
Model of a Machine for raising water in China (#2376)

Set of Chinese barbers instruments (27 Oct. 1821)
Chinese Lock (21 July 1828)
Mariners compass, China (13 Aug. 1829)
Compass and sundial, China (13 Aug. 1829)

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Chinese Lock and Key (#3537)

Dotchin, or Chinese steel-yard, for weighing goods (#3618)

**Weapons**

- Chinese Bow and two arrows, of excellent quality (27 March 1819)
- Chinese bow and 8 arrows (20 March 1828)
- Mandarin sword, mounted with silver and tortoise shell scabbard (17 Oct. 1834)

**Religious and Art Objects**

- Chinese "Jos" or Foe, figure in Alabaster (#236)
- Small ornaments of sculptured stone, Canton (#244-7)
- Portrait of Eshing, a Silk Merchant in Canton, by a Native artist (#387)
- Beautiful model of a Chinese Pagoda (#650)
- Painting of the Emperor of China, surrounded by his Family, done by a Chinese artist (#1090)
- Ivory Globe, containing 12 concentric spheres all carved from a single ball of Ivory, Canton (#3682)
- Painting of Napoleon's Tomb at St. Helena, on the Leaf of a Tree, done at Canton (#4370)
Root of the Banian Tree, fantastically wrought and used as an object of idolatry by the Chinese (#4400)

Musical Instruments

Chinese Flageolette (1837, #4566) Chinese gong (20 Oct. 1821)
Chinese flute, Canton (13 Aug. 1829)

Miscellaneous

Specimen of Gold Stone, from China, artificial (#1430)
Chinese Kites, one resembling a butterfly (1 Sept. 1817)
Chinese Coin, A.D. 1520 (#1585)
Chinese hooker (Sept. 1840)
Chinese Coin, coined 215 years before Christ, very rare (#1586)
Hammock in which people of rank are carried in China (#2827)

1. Natural history specimens have been omitted.

2. Unless the date 1837 is specified, all items are quoted from Salem East India Marine Society, The East-India Marine Society of Salem (Salem, MA: Palfray, Ives, Foote & Brown, 1831). The 1837 items are quoted from Salem East India Marine Society, Supplement to the Catalogue of the Articlae in the Museum, Journals, &c. of the East India Marine Society of Salem (Salem, MA: William Ives & Co., 1837).

3. All items are quoted from "Records of the Philadelphia Museum: Memoranda, 1804-1842," Peale Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA. The dates in parenthesis represent the date of gift.
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7. Charles Willson Peale, "To the citizens of the United States of America" [February 1, 1790], Broadside, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

8. Richardson, Hindle, and Miller, p. 129.

9. Richardson, Hindle, and Miller, p. 146.

10. Peale, "To the citizens of the United States."

11. Richardson, Hindle, and Miller, p. 129.


22. Harris, pp. 165-166.

23. Harris, p. 166.


27. Whitehill, p. 179.

28. Whitehill, p. 5.


31. Sellers, p. 29.

32. Whitehill, p. 36.
33. Whitehill, p. 49.
35. Memorandum from Records of the Salem East India Marine Society, p. 2.
37. Memorandum from Records of the Salem East India Marine Society, p. 4.
38. Whitehill, p. 21.
40. Whitehill, p. 44.
44. Dulles, p. 22.
45. Dulles, p. 21.
47. Caplan, pp. 113-114.
48. Caplan, p. 76.
51. Sellers, pp. 271-274.
52. Caplan, p. 21.


56. Caplan, p. 50.

57. Langdon, p. ii.


59. Caplan, p. 82.

60. [Dunn], p. 54.

61. Caplan, p. 86.

62. Caplan, p. 27.


64. Scharf and Westcott, pp. 950-957.

65. Caplan, p. 75.


70. Caplan, p. 25.

71. Boston Post, 4 September 1845.


74. *Boston Post*, 8 September 1845.

75. *Boston Post*, 4 September 1845.

76. Peters, p. 7.

77. *Boston Post*, 6 February 1847.

78. *Boston Post*, 13 January 1847.


83. Caplan, p. 25.


85. [Dunn], p. 9.

86. Caplan, p. 88.


88. Peters, p. 4.

89. [Dunn], p. 110.

90. [Dunn], p. 103.

91. Peters, p. 23.
92. [Dunn], p. 11.
93. [Dunn], p. 10.
94. [Dunn], p. 15.
95. [Dunn], p. 32.
96. Peters, p. 82.
97. Peters, p. 22.
98. [Dunn], pp. 15-16.
100. Peters, p. 66.
102. Peters, pp. 72-73.
103. [Dunn], p. 26.
105. [Dunn], p. 23.
106. [Dunn], p. 32.
109. [Dunn], p. 7.
110. [Dunn], p. 12.
112. [Dunn], pp. 12-13.
113. [Dunn], p. 27
114. [Dunn], p. 7.
115. [Dunn], p. 8.
116. [Dunn], pp. 96-97.
117. [Dunn], p. 33.
118. Peters, p. 17.
119. [Dunn], p. 97.
120. [Dunn], pp. 9, 48, and 90.
121. [Dunn], pp. 117-118.
122. Peters, p. 70.
123. Peters, p. 95.
124. Peters, p. 100.
125. [Dunn], pp. 97-98.
126. [Dunn], p. 99.
127. [Dunn], p. 21.
128. [Dunn], p. 119.
129. [Dunn], p. 77.
130. Peters, p. 126.
131. [Dunn], p. 13.
133. Peters, p. 185.
134. [Dunn], p. 117.

141. Denker, p. 39.


143. Denker, p. 39.


145. Rydell, p. 31.


151. Bruce, p. 99.

152. Cortinovis, p. 63.


154. Rydell, p. 49.


159. Rydell, p. 51.
164. Rydell, p. 228.
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175. Whitehill, pp. 88-89.


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The Chinese Museums of Nathan Dunn and John Peters


Christie and Manson. *Catalogue of the Celebrated Assemblage Which Formed the Chinese Exhibition, Collected by the Late Nathan Dunn.* London, 1851.


China at the World's Fairs


Art Versus Ethnology


