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Paul Houo 霍明志, A Dealer in Antiquities  
in Early Twentieth Century Peking\*\*

*Résumé — Paul Houo (Huo Mingzhi 霍明志, 1880?-1949?), catholique chinois éduqué dans une institution de langue française, fit carrière comme marchand d'antiquités à Pékin. À travers les services fournis à ses clients, mais aussi ses écrits et les objets qu'il procura à des acheteurs étrangers pendant les décennies troublées des années 1900 aux années 1940, Houo devint un des protagonistes du débat interculturel qui s'engagea alors sur l'art chinois, la notion d'authenticité, et le passé chinois. Prenant pour point de départ l'œuvre-clef de Houo, Preuves des antiquités de Chine, cet article tente de situer la vie de Houo et la place qui fut la sienne sur le marché de l'art, des antiquités et des curiosités de Pékin. Nous examinons plus en détail les statues de divinités en tuiles vernissées liuli (琉璃神像) dont il fournit la description afin de reconstituer la provenance et le parcours ultérieur des objets qu'il avait réunis.*

The hero of our story was an orphaned youth from Tianjin who was educated by French Catholic missionaries and who created a new career for himself as a seller of antiquities in Peking. Through these transactions, his writings, and the goods that found new homes

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\*\* This essay on a man who was a bridge between Chinese and French cultures has been written as a small present for Pierre-Étienne Will. I do not intend to work further on the subject, and I hope that this sketch will invite further research by others on Paul Houo, and on the cosmopolitan marketplace in curios and antiques in early twentieth-century Peking. My thanks to the organizers of this celebratory project, to the editors of *Études Chinoises*, and to the anonymous reviewers.

outside China, he became part of an international conversation in the decades between 1900 and 1940, unstable times when much was possible. His name was 霍明志, which we would currently romanize as Huo Mingzhi; he wrote it as Houo-Ming-Tsé. In the multi-cultural environment in which he lived and with which we are concerned here, he called himself Paul Houo, and that is the name that I will use. Figure 1 shows him as he presented himself to French-reading foreigners in Peking in 1930 at the age of 51.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1. Paul Houo (Huo Mingzhi)<sup>2</sup>

1. Houo's account (Huo Mingzhi 1930a, hereafter, *Preuves*) is contradictory about dates, and he used as equivalents the Chinese *sui* 歲 (age one at birth) and the French *an* (age one twelve months after birth). I have here reconstructed the most plausible chronology by assuming that he was fifty-one *sui* in 1930 and using 1880 as the year of his birth, but I consistently give his age in *sui*. His name has also been rendered Ho Ming-chih. See the list of his known publications at the end of this essay.
2. After *Preuves*.

## Paul Houo

We know about Huo Mingzhi's early years only from the story he chose to tell at mid-life.<sup>3</sup> He grew up in Tianjin, a city that had been opened to foreign missionaries and international trade in 1860. In 1869 the French Lazarists<sup>4</sup> and affiliated Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul had built a church (Église Notre-Dame des Victoires 天津聖母得聖堂) at a central location by the Grand Canal. This church, its nuns, and the nearby French consulate became the targets of popular fears and mob violence in 1870 during the bloody incident that came to be called the "Tianjin Massacre."<sup>5</sup> Subsequent Qing government protection for missionaries throughout the empire (promised under duress) did not dissipate active suspicion on all sides, but in Tianjin the Catholics used indemnity funds to rebuild and expand in the protected area designated as a French Concession.

It was in this environment of vulnerability and exposure to new people and ideas that Huo Mingzhi was born in 1880. By age thirteen he had lost both parents. His mother's sister took him in, and a Mr. Hou Shangzhi (侯尚之) arranged for him to attend a Catholic church school, probably the Lazarist Zizhulin Shengluoyi Tang 紫竹林聖路易堂, built in the concession in 1872 and under the authority of the fathers at the North Cathedral (Beitang 北堂) in Peking.

Given a new chance in life, the orphan became a Catholic, learned French, and was given the name "Paul," Paul Houo (as he spelled it). Intelligent and hard-working, by the age of nineteen, he had been sent to study in a school—also run by French Catholics—in the city of

3. *Preuves*. The first ten (unnumbered) pages are a kind of autobiography consisting of large photographs accompanied by brief texts in French and Chinese. Eight images show Houo in his early years, and the one about his cart accident (see below) indicates that at age twenty-eight he was already carrying a camera on his buying trips. All Chinese and French quotations come from Houo himself; all English translations are my own.
4. These were men, sometimes called Vincentian Fathers, from the Congrégation de la Mission founded by St. Vincent de Paul in 1625.
5. For the wider context, see Ernest P. YOUNG, *Ecclesiastical Colony: China's Catholic Church and the French Religious Protectorate*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Baoding 保定, west of Tianjin. There he continued his education in French (with a Frère Denis<sup>6</sup>) while also being tutored in Classical Chinese by one Wu Kui(?)zao 吳蕙藻, a holder of the lowest examination degree. After a year, with foundations in these two languages and cultures, he returned to Tianjin to be a teacher in the new Lazarist middle school. In Baoding, Paul Houo had been taken up by Father Stanislas Jarlin (Lin Maode 林懋德, 1856-1933), an energetic new missionary in the city. Jarlin himself had a patron in Father Pierre-Marie-Alphonse Favier (Fan Guoliang 樊國梁, 1837-1905), who had been in China since 1862, and by the 1880s was a powerful presence in Peking, fluent in Chinese, comfortable in court attire, and a spokesman for his community during the diplomatic crises of those decades. These connections assured young Paul close ties with the Lazarists in the capital, and he would remain lastingly grateful and devoted to Jarlin.<sup>7</sup>

And thus by 1898, Paul Houo had gone from a scrawny boy with an uncertain future to a man increasingly at home in three worlds. Already familiar with life on the urban margins of northern China, he was learning to manage in the society of French Catholic missionaries and converts while also mastering the culture of classically educated Chinese men. These were the basic tools for a life as a broker between different and changing worlds, and they helped Paul Houo find a niche that would sustain him for the next forty years. His photograph from this era shows the young teacher with a traditional queue and shaved forehead, pale scholar's robe and Chinese shoes, seated on a stool at a European-style desk, writing with a brush.

The anti-foreign and anti-missionary whirlwind of the Boxer (Yihequan 義和拳) movement gathered velocity in 1899, and in the spring of 1900 a wave of violent conflicts swept the north. In April and

6. Most likely André-Alexandre Denis (Di Desui 狄德綏, 1858-1927); see Joseph VAN DEN BRANDT, *Les Lazaristes en Chine 1697-1935*, Peking: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1936, no. 271.

7. It was said in 1900 that "Paul Houo, âgé d'une vingtaine d'années, a été, depuis sa tendre jeunesse et est resté par pure reconnaissance, le plus dévoué et le plus intime serviteur de Mgr. Jarlin, qu'il suivra partout." LÉON HENRY, *Le Siège du Pé-t'ang dans Pékin en 1900: Le commandant Paul Henry et ses trente marins*, Peking: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1921, p. 159.

May, ugly confrontations with Christians took place south of Peking, including Baoding and Tianjin. In a series of now well-known events, increasingly organized and self-conscious bands, armed with simple weapons, charms, spells, and martial arts, converged on the capital, "united in righteousness" and intent on expelling or killing foreigners and their converts. With imperial support, they besieged the foreign community in the Legation Quarter southeast of the Forbidden City between June and August of 1900.

The Catholic North Cathedral, located within the Imperial City at some distance from the Legations, was isolated, separately surrounded, and intensively attacked. Paul Houo was one of those who had taken refuge in the church compound. Bishops Favier and Jarlin, with forty-some soldiers, held the enclave and protected its several thousand Chinese (mostly women and children) against round-the-clock assaults:

Cette défense de quatorze cents mètres de murs, organisée avec rien par un jeune enseigne et trente matelots; cette résistance de plus de deux mois contre les milliers de tortionnaires qui déliraient de fureur, au milieu de l'énorme ville en feu.<sup>8</sup>

During this time of constant bombardment, ever-present danger and increasing hunger, Houo survived and further demonstrated his evident usefulness and devotion to the Catholic community. Attentive to the needs of Mgr. Jarlin, he impressed the French with his eagerness to help, making the rounds of the defenders' positions, bringing sustenance to those on duty, and giving encouragement to frightened fellow Chinese: "Il a constamment montré un dévouement à toute épreuve."<sup>9</sup> In mid-August 1900, an eight-nation allied expeditionary force marched on Peking, relieved the sieges, and occupied both Peking and Tianjin for more than a year.

After the Empress Dowager and Guangxu Emperor returned to the Forbidden City in early 1902 from their flight to Xi'an, a new era began of institutional reform, military modernization, formal friendliness

8. Pierre LOTI, *Les Derniers jours de Pékin*, 1901, reprint ed., Paris, Balland, 1985, p. 158. Loti (Julien Viaud) arrived in October of 1900 and here repeated what Favier had told him. Paul Houo was not mentioned.

9. See HENRY, *Le siège*, p. 159.

toward foreign powers, and increased tourism. Paul Houo remained in Peking to serve as translator and secretary at the North Cathedral, his bonds with the Catholic community further strengthened by the shared ordeal. His patrons soon sent him off on an unusual mission. In early 1902 the newly appointed provincial commander-in-chief Ma Yukun 馬玉昆 was dispatched to Chaoyang 朝陽 county (some 500 km to the northeast) to deal with a simmering conflict between aggressive Boxers, Catholic missionaries and their converts, and angry locals. Specifically, Ma was to put an end to an two-year-old anti-foreign and anti-government uprising while also preventing further missionary objections and complaints. Before leaving Peking, Ma met in person with Favier, Jarlin, and the French ambassador, and they agreed to help him deal with the Catholics. As a result, Paul Houo was sent along as part of the commander's staff (*mufu* 幕府).<sup>10</sup> His responsibilities were probably to handle the translation of conversations with, and documents for, the aggrieved foreigners, but it also gave him a chance to travel to frontier county well beyond the Great Wall. This military and diplomatic expedition was successful, and Houo's handling of his responsibilities were apparently so satisfactory that he was rewarded with an honorary title as fifth-rank expectant county magistrate—only honorary, but surely pleasing to its recipient. A studio photograph shows him seated in profile in an official robe and a hat with knob and feather.

The Qing dynasty examination system was abolished in 1905, however, and the future of the dynastic system looked increasingly doubtful. Paul Houo chose not to pursue a career as a diplomatic middleman, but in the decades to come he continued to be active in the

10. The uprising was led by one Deng Lanfeng 鄧嵐風 in Huazigou 花子溝 (Hwa-tse-keou). Two missionaries seem to have been involved, but only their Chinese names are known to me: Guo Mingdao 郭明道 and Pastor Ye 葉主教. See Du Chunhe 杜春和, et al., "Ma Yukun deng zhenya Huazigou renmin juyang kangguang douzheng shiliao" 馬玉昆等鎮壓花子溝人民拒洋抗官鬥爭史料 (Documents on the suppression by Ma Yukun and others of the anti-foreign anti-official struggle by the people of Huazigou), *Lishi dang'an*, 1985, no. 3, pp. 35-44, especially pp. 37-38. These were probably French-speaking Belgian Scheut missionaries; see note 39 below. No mention is made of Huo Mingzhi in these government sources.

Peking Catholic community. In keeping with the goals of the Lazarists, he devoted his time and resources particularly to helping the poor and needy of his adopted city. In 1917, remembering his own childhood and by then "bien connu pour son esprit de zèle et de charité," he arranged for abandoned boys who lived on the streets to be taken in, fed and clothed by the Daughters of Charity. And then he went one step further and opened a carpet factory where they were employed as apprentices and so learned a trade. More than one hundred boys were enrolled as of 1919.<sup>11</sup> These activities gave Houo stature in the Peking community as a generous Catholic man of conscience. He was able to afford such philanthropy because he had made a success of himself in a new career.

The increasing presence of foreigners in Peking had seemed a more promising trend than the faltering Qing state, and by 1905 Paul Houo was already changing direction. Two years later, at the age of twenty-seven, he became an antique and curio dealer. We do not know what prompted this move—interest? opportunity?—but his Catholic friends may have been his initial backers and prospective customers. In any case, he quickly settled into this new business and spent the next thirty years of his life acquiring, explaining, and selling Chinese collectables.

For Houo, it may have been the disorders of 1900-1902 that suggested this path. Once the Boxers had been expelled and foreign soldiers and officials settled into their zones of occupation, he would have seen first-hand their appetite for Chinese "souvenirs." In those years, things were removed more or less with impunity, and not simply from wrecked and ruined buildings, but from the temples and palaces of the Forbidden City, Imperial City, imperial tombs, and other parts

11. Sr. REYNAL, "Ouvroir de garçons," *Le Bulletin catholique de Pékin*, 1919, no. 6, pp. 3-5. Paul is probably one of the men on the first row of the photograph here that shows the boys neatly lined up in their modern uniforms. See also *Les Missions catholiques: Bulletin hebdomadaire illustré de l'Oeuvre de la propagation de la foi* (Lyon), no. 49, 2 Nov. 1917, p. 521. Chinese Catholics were involved in the rug industry; for more on actual conditions, see C.C. CHU and Thos. C. BLAISDELL, Jr., *Peking Rugs and Peking Boys: A Study of the Rug Industry in Peking*, Peking: Peking Express Press, 1924.

of Peking where the occupiers could go almost at will. Previously familiar only with the French Catholics in Tianjin and Baoding, Paul Houo not only discovered the rather different tastes of diverse and unpredictable foreign soldiers, he may also have seen for the first time the private collections of the capital's wealthy inhabitants.

### Art, Antiques, Antiquities, and Curios

Shopping in late Qing Peking involved diverse consumers and a wide range of goods. Art, antiques, antiquities, and curios were emerging and shifting categories that appealed particularly to the different desires of rich local Chinese and Manchu families, visitors and sojourners from the south, as well as many kinds of foreigners. Overlapping factors drove their preferences, including European understandings of their own artistic past as exhibited in homes and museums and in the Chinoiserie mediated through eighteenth century ship captains and traders at Canton; Chinese literati (*wenren* 文人) taste embodied by elites of Jiangnan; the ostentatious preferences of wealthy urban Chinese generally; and the collecting and consumption habits of the imperial family.<sup>12</sup> In the West, the notion that "art" involved imagination, originality, and aesthetics competed with older emphases on skill and craft production, while "antiques" and the "antique" were subjects of lively social interest and activity. The concept of "Chinese art," however, was only just coming into being in the late nineteenth century as Western buyers interacted with Chinese and Japanese collectors, each with their own evolving ideas about what constituted valuable cultural products.

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, the antiquities market for foreigners was fluid and diverse, tastes varied by class,

12. The topics of Chinese taste, Chinese art, and the acquisition of Chinese objects by foreigners in the early modern era are unevenly researched but of increasing scholarly interest. For starters, readers could consult the works of Stanley Abe, Györgyi Fajcsák, Patrizia Jirka-Schmitz, Lara Netting, Nick Pearce, Vimalin Rujivacharakul, Jason Steuber, Minna Törmä, and the periodic articles on museum collections in *Orientalisms* and *Arts of Asia*.

gender, and nationality, and there was limited consensus about what was valuable and why. Porcelain had long been acclaimed a remarkable contribution of Chinese civilization, and certain wares were prized as displayable collectables. Other, less expensive goods had been sold in Canton as examples of Chinese workmanship and admired abroad, but with no special value given to age or authorship. With the opening of the first treaty ports and the explosive growth of Shanghai in the mid-nineteenth century, these habits and expectations may have shifted along with the expanding foreign presence.<sup>13</sup> As China began to participate in regional and world expositions, many more foreigners were exposed to Chinese products as both commodities and symbols of the country. All these diverse tastes competed in the marketplace.

In Peking, stores that catered to wealthy sojourning Chinese businessmen, officials on short- or long-term stays, and the ennobled Manchu clans of the city were concentrated in the Outer (Chinese) City, along the great street that stretched south from the Front Gate (Qianmen 前門). These establishments sold new luxuries in great variety, mostly imported to the city. The Imperial Household (Neiwufu 內務府), whose off-limits workshops and storerooms occupied much of the Inner (Manchu) City, had special access to rare materials (jades, pearls, furs, porcelain) and produced unique creations for the use and pleasure of the emperor and his family. Some of these circulated in the wider marketplace. A whiff of such imperial taste had reached France and England in 1860s in the accounts of and loot from the recent destruction of the Summer Palaces by the allied forces.

The Chinese had, of course, their own history of collecting old objects (*gudong* 古董), preferences that map imperfectly onto today's Chinese art. The imperial collection of treasures handed down from previous dynasties (early porcelains, paintings, calligraphy, ancient bronzes and jades) was held inside the Forbidden City. The Chinese elites of the empire, educated men and students of the classics and history, had their own traditions and prized old bronze vessels, books, paintings and calligraphy by identified masters, and rubbings of texts on stone stelae. In Peking, a city through which educated scholar-offi-

13. Scholarship on the Shanghai antiquities market is relatively underdeveloped.

cials from all over the empire constantly circulated, the neighborhood of Liulichang 琉璃廠, in the Outer City, already had an established reputation as the best place for scholars to browse and search for rare items. Here, "books are piled to the rafters and precious goods fill the streets (圖書充棟, 寶玩填街)." <sup>14</sup> Turnovers in the fortunes of the city's rich households may have provided a ready supply. "Péking est à la Chine ce que Paris est à la France; on peut s'y procurer les produits de toutes les provinces." <sup>15</sup>

Before 1900, when the Qing state still insisted on controlling the presence of foreigners, most Westerners in Peking were there for government, business, or missionary purposes, and they shopped primarily for household necessities. After 1900, rather than discouraging travel to Peking, the famous siege had made the city more glamorous and attractive. <sup>16</sup> First-hand information about the fabled treasures of the imperial palaces was repeated in numerous books and articles. At the same time, China was becoming an imaginable destination for adventurous and wealthy world travelers. Steam and rail saved time, new hotels and tourist outfits smoothed the way, and guidebooks in many languages designated the sights to see. Early shoppers in Peking bought exotic furs, second-hand silk robes, modern embroideries, precious stones, pearls, porcelain, and a variety of "curios." By 1920, Chinese- and foreign-run stores, some of them on Morrison Street (today's Wangfujing 王府井), specialized in the sale of new textiles, rugs, and jewelry.

At the same time, the establishment of museums in Europe, North America, and Japan initiated a collecting boom that extended to East Asia. The most active museums of the era were eclectic in their interests; some were shaped by the developing of field of ethnography, others

14. PAN Rongbi 潘榮陸, *Dijing suishi jisheng* 帝京歲時紀勝 (Famous sights of the annual calendar of the capital), 1758; reprint ed., Taipei: Guting, 1969, p. 2. See also YE Zufu 叶祖孚, *Beijing Liulichang* 北京琉璃廠, Peking: Beijing Yanshan Chubanshe, 1997, especially chapters 5-8.

15. A. FAVIER, *Pékin: Histoire et description*, Peking: Imprimerie des Lazaristes, 1897, p. 418.

16. For guidebooks to the city and early twentieth-century nostalgia for Old Peking, see Susan NAQUIN, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1900*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

by the idea of applied arts, and most by a desire for the commanding comprehensiveness that accompanied imperial expansion to the Far East. Before 1900, museums in St. Petersburg, Munich, New York, Boston, Tokyo, Oslo, Hamburg, Philadelphia, Paris, and Chicago began to acquire Chinese things, and they were then joined by institutions in Berlin, Budapest, Washington D.C., and Toronto. Nations, cities, universities, and individuals took up collecting. Some museums sent agents on buying missions to China and Japan. But these collectors had few guidelines about what to buy, or where, and they sought help from their local foreign contacts. Some members of the missionary and embassy community with long postings in China learned to read Classical Chinese, and they studied the Chinese past and talked with educated local counterparts. A few such foreigners became interested in antiquities, they wrote pioneering scholarly works, and their privately assembled collections ended up in museums.

The soldiers of 1900-1901 had taken home what they liked, what looked valuable to them, and what they could carry. But during the next decade, the Qing government was still in control. When Berthold Laufer went to Peking and Shanghai in 1901-1902 and 1908-1910 on buying trips for two U.S. museums, <sup>17</sup> he needed official assistance and had endless difficulties despite his expertise. He wrote, "Please do not think that making collections in this country merely means to go shopping; it is an awful hard task which requires a great deal of good nerves, the self-control of a god and an angel's patience." <sup>18</sup> Like others, he had to rely on embassy assistance in storing his purchases and shipping them home.

When Édouard Chavannes and Vassilii Alekseev travelled together in 1907, <sup>19</sup> they started in Peking but could not find what they wanted

17. For the American Museum of Natural History in New York and the Field Museum in Chicago, respectively.

18. Berthold LAUFER Collection, online letter no. 24, Laufer to Boas, February 28, 1902, American Museum of Natural History (New York), Laufer Collection.

19. Édouard CHAVANNES, "Chine," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 1907, no. VII, pp. 436-439. Serge ELISSÉEFF, "Review of the publication of the 1907 journals of Vassilii M. Alekseev concerning his travels in China with Édouard Chavannes," *Toung Pao*, 1963, no. 50, pp. 475-492. The interests of Alekseev (Василий Михайлович Алексеев) were less historical than Chavannes', and

there. Instead, they followed the well-worn routes of Chinese collectors, going to Shandong (Mount Tai, Qufu, and the "célèbre" Wuliang shrines 武梁祠), across Henan (Kaifeng, the Buddhist grottos at Longmen, Mount Song) to the famed city of Xi'an, then north through Shanxi back to the capital. Chinese speakers, they bought or commissioned stelae rubbings at historic sites, looked at private collections of jades and bronzes, and purchased books and prints. Of necessity, they met with officials en route, trying to impress them with their knowledge of Chinese history and culture. When Chavannes found some Han stelae and proposed to buy them for the Louvre, the owner was agreeable but "la population commence à protester," so he gave it up.<sup>20</sup> The stirrings of interest in Buddhist sculpture by Japanese collectors and dealers (and their American buyers) led them on similar travels but with better success in making acquisitions.<sup>21</sup>

After the collapse of the Qing in 1911, it became far easier for foreigners to go where they wished and acquire as they could. The era of Shopping in China had begun. With the demise of the old regime, goods were even more frequently spilling onto the Peking market from impoverished or fearful Manchus and departing sojourners. Moreover, security at palace halls and storerooms weakened after the deaths of the Emperor and Empress Dowager in 1908. As ardent buyers increased, entrepreneurial suppliers emerged, and anyone with connections to the eunuch and Imperial Household bondservant staff was probably able to make stealth purchases. Railroad building and construction in north China had, moreover, led to the unearthing of graves and the discovery of objects of some antiquity. Knowledgeable Chinese dealers with wide networks now had a much freer hand in acquiring goods for sale. The three-colored glazed (*sancai* 三彩) tomb figures of the Tang period found an audience, and the latest finds of what would be known as inscribed oracle bones (*écriture ossécaille*) prompted excited searches in Henan by scholars and dealers, Chinese and foreign.

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he made a point of visiting centers for the printing of popular woodblock prints.

20. See ELISSÉEFF, "Review," p. 482.

21. OKAKURA Kakuzō 岡倉覺三 (1862-1913), for example.

As a result of these and other developments, China's once admired workmanship was no longer sufficient grounds for scholarly foreign appreciation, and a perceived divide between artist and artisan was increasing. To Chinese elites, such a distinction was already well established and essential, even if the line could be blurred. Meanwhile, what was a curio to an outsider was being reclassified by some Chinese as a handicraft (*gongyi pin* 工藝品).

On October 10, 1914, northwest sections of the Forbidden City were "thrown open to visitors and a magnificent State Museum opened for the public." The contents of this Chenliesuo 陳列所, as it was called, were characterized coolly by a guidebook from Thomas Cook and Son in 1920 as "Chinese curios and works of art upon which a minimum value of thirty million dollars has been placed."<sup>22</sup> As a new understanding developed of the cultural value of this collection, however, it was redescribed in 1924 as a "wonderful and priceless collection of porcelains, cloisonné ware, bronzes, etc., from the Imperial households of past Dynasties [that] should on no account be omitted by the visitor."<sup>23</sup> The creation of the Palace Museum (Gugong Bowuyuan 故宮博物院) in 1925 would further shape the emergence of a canon of Chinese Art in which neither curios nor handicrafts had a place.

In the 1910s and 1920s, therefore, the exploding market for antiquities became more diverse and more stratified. With more tourists and expert buyers, more objects left Peking; with increasingly informed collecting abroad, more public and private displays, more auctions and exhibitions in foreign cities. Enhanced demand encouraged and sustained dealers in China and overseas, but supply was uneven, competition could be intense, and success was uncertain. At the same time these activities generated a need for connoisseurship, scholarly expertise, and forgery detection.

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22. Thos. Cook and Son, *Information for Travellers Visiting Peking*, Peking, 1920, p. 17.

23. Thos. Cook and Son, *Cook's Guide to Peking, North China, South Manchuria, Korea*, 5th edition, Shanghai, 1924, p. 16.

## Dagu Zhai

Paul Houo stepped into this world of circulating goods in 1906. He chose, seemingly from the beginning, to cater to foreigners' tastes and to sell objects from China's past and unusual things that one could only find in Peking. He termed his new store, unpretentiously, a "magazin [*sic*] de Curios" (in Chinese, a *guwanpu* 古玩舖), a place that sold a wide variety of old or used goods at a range of prices. But following the custom of other retail establishments, he also gave it a more elegant and learned name, Dagu Zhai 達古齋, an appellation that he translated variously as "Cabinet où l'on pénètre l'antiquité" and "Studio où l'on arrive à l'intelligence de l'antiquité." This Studio Where One Arrives at a Knowledge of Antiquity advertised Houo's concern with (and pretensions to) knowing about *gu* 古, antiquity, the period irrefutably associated with value in both Chinese and European cultures.

Although he was already embarked on the task of educating himself about China's material past, at the outset the entrepreneur was still in his twenties and so he "engaged" (*pin* 聘) two specialists (older men?) to testify to the quality of his wares and to provide himself, the store, and its customers with more expert knowledge. Wu Duanfu 武端甫 was (Houo said) an authority on jade and Su Ruiting 蘇瑞亭 on "antiques" (*guwanhang zhuanjia* 古玩行專家). Su acted as store manager (*puzhang* 舖長), but Paul Houo was increasingly the boss. The building itself was probably rented from his friends at the North Cathedral, for it was located behind the church, near the Daughters of Charity's school (the Jen-Tse-Tang 仁慈堂), a neighborhood with which he would have been quite familiar.<sup>24</sup>

Although this location was convenient for Catholic visitors to the Cathedral community, and may even have facilitated a flow of resalable goods from the nearby palace warehouses, it was far from ideal. The site was inside the western wall of the Imperial City, an area more or less closed until the end of the dynasty. Although not too far from the relatively lively West Four Pailou (Xi Si Pailou 西四

24. For the location of the shop, see *Peking Utility Book*, Peking, 1921, p. 164.

牌樓) intersection, the Dagu Zhai was rather distant from the most active commercial sections of the city, inconvenient to the Legations and new hotels, and out of the way for most tourists.

For visiting foreigners, few of whom knew Chinese, shopping in Peking in the first decades of the twentieth century could be a challenging experience. The program for guided sightseeing offered by Thomas Cook's travel company in 1913 proposed two destinations: One was the busy business district of the Outer City south of the Front Gate. The other was "Great Curio Street" (Liulichang) where one might buy "jadestones, curios," and paintings.<sup>25</sup>

"Curio" (a descendant of "a curiosity") was coming into use in a Far Eastern context in the later nineteenth century as a term for unfamiliar, memorable, and entertaining objects that a traveler could acquire through "curio-hunting" in a "curio shop" and use to astonish or amuse friends back home. In Peking, it encompassed a variety of distinctively Chinese products. The strange furnishings of a princely palace were understood as curios,<sup>26</sup> all kinds of carvings in stone, ivory, and wood were curios, so were snuff-bottles, lacquerware, cloisonné enamels, and paintings.<sup>27</sup> Water pipes, spectacle cases, padlocks, "small footed shoes" — none of which could be found in the West — these too were curios.<sup>28</sup>

Such things derived their value from being previously used by local people and thus being authentically Chinese, but many shops mixed in the new and the pseudo-old, offered only casual guarantees of age, and allowed the buyer little guidance. Prices were entirely negotiable. Visitors made hasty purchases at inflated prices, while discerning long-time residents searched carefully for buried treasures. In her enthusiastic book about Peking, Juliet Bredon called the city's curio shops, "a never failing source of interest and amusement." "They are," she explained,

25. Thos. Cook and Son, *Cook's Tourist's Handbook of Peking, Tientsin, Shan-Hai-Kwan, Mukden, Dairen, Port Arthur, and Keijyo (Seoul)*, 2nd ed., London, 1913, pp. 10-12, 25. The handbook had to explain what a jade stone was.

26. Juliet BREDON, *Peking: A Historical and Intimate Description of its Chief Places of Interest*, 2nd ed., Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1922, p. 71.

27. Gilbert COLLINS, *Extreme Oriental Mixture*, London: Methuen, 1925, p. 101.

28. Cook, *Cook's Tourist Handbook*, 1913, p. 24.

the happy hunting ground of the collector in search of things Chinese, beautiful or bizarre. Few strangers can resist the temptation to bargain for old porcelains, bronzes, embroideries, or whatever appeals to individual taste, and in the resident this habit, sooner or later, develops a special mentality. We shamelessly examine the pictures on each other's walls, turn over our host's dishes at table in search of marks to prove their origin, pick up his lacquer after dinner to feel its weight, boldly inquire the price of his latest acquisition.<sup>29</sup>

This was the audience Paul Houo seems to have targeted, and he had entered the market at a time when there were no more than a handful of curio shops dedicated to foreign customers.<sup>30</sup> "Paul's Place," as it came to be called, may have begun with a primarily French clientele, people who knew and trusted Houo because of his closeness to the Lazarist fathers. Although Bredon, a long-term British resident, praised it as "one of the largest and best-known places" for buying curios, "Paul's" certainly had rivals in the competition for status, customers, and a market niche.<sup>31</sup>

One was Grosjean's Gallery, owned by a "French connoisseur," a place that did not necessitate "poking in dusty corners to unearth doubtful treasures."<sup>32</sup> It was, rather, a more elegant establishment in the Inner City, conveniently located close to the Legation Quarter, which advertised "High-Class Chinese Antiques and Treasures of the Old Dynasties are on view, consisting of sculptures, pictures, bronzes, porcelains, lacquers, carpets, jades, necklaces, etc. Many rare and

29. BREDON, *Peking*, 1922, p. 410.

30. Stores catering to Chinese were numerous and made up the preponderance of the total of 171 shops that belonged to the "Peking Curio Dealers' Guild" in 1921. See Sidney D. GAMBLE, with John Stewart BURGESS, *Peking, a Social Survey*, New York: George H. Doran, 1921, p. 462; see also BREDON, *Peking*, 1922, p. 275. It is unclear to me how much the tastes of the growing foreign community affected the shops that catered to Chinese tourists and sojourners.

31. Juliet BREDON, *Peking: A Historical and Intimate Description of its Chief Places of Interest*, Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1920, pp. 375-76. The store was not included in the British *Peking Who's Who* of 1922, Alex. RAMSAY, comp., Peking: Tientsin Press.

32. BREDON, *Peking*, 1922, p. 144.

beautiful objects of art have gone from this collection to the famous museums of America and Europe."<sup>33</sup> And only one lane away was the store of T. C. Fitz Hugh (a veteran of the 1900 campaign). Perhaps more similar to the Dagu Zhai, it sold "Chinese Curios, Embroideries, Pictures, Potteries, Bronzes, Furniture, etc. Specific articles not on stock obtainable from dealers and private houses at a few days' notice. Authenticity guaranteed and prices moderate. Packing and shipped to anywhere undertaken."<sup>34</sup> There were also Chinese shops that advertised in Western guidebooks, such as Fu Te Jung 富德潤 ("Jade, Amber, Necklaces, Pendants. Soochow Lacquer, Curios, Old Glasses, Porcelain, Jade Trees").<sup>35</sup> Yue Bin 岳彬 (1896-1959, an ambitious local man who took up the antique business in the 1920s) had a shop (the 彬記 [Binji]) near the Legations and utilized his foreign connections to sell large desirable pieces, some dubious, to overseas buyers.<sup>36</sup>

Approaching the Chinese market from the different but knowledgeable perspective of Japan, Yamanaka Sadajiro 山中定次郎 (1865-1936) positioned himself outside China and had already set up offices in Osaka, New York, Boston, London, and Paris before opening one in Peking in 1917; he worked directly with deep-pocket buyers in North America and Europe. C. T. Loo (Ching Tsai Loo 盧芹齋, 1880-1957), another orphan (from central China), also came to the art trade through a French connection, one that took *him* to the Chinese embassy in France in 1902. He began with a store in Paris, then expanded to Peking (1908) and Shanghai, and found clients among the elegant, the educated, and the expert (H. d'Ardenne de Tizac, V. Segalen, É. Chavannes, P. Pelliot). Once he was also established in New York, Loo became a major supplier to many museums and serious collectors.<sup>37</sup> In

33. COOK, *Cook's Guide*, 1924, advertisement.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

36. Yue also had a French connection; his reputation is controversial. See YE Zufu, *Beijing Liulichang*, pp. 78-80. There is a new book about him that I have yet to see by a scholar of the Peking antique world: CHEN Zhongyuan 陳重遠, *Lao gudong shang* 老古董商 (An antique merchant), Peking: Beijing Chubanshe, 2008.

37. For more, see Yiyu WANG, "The Louvre from China: A Critical Study of C. T. Loo and the Framing of Chinese Art in the United States, 1915-1950," Ph.D.

the lawless decades of the 1910s and 1920s, as early Buddhist sculpture emerged as a new category of important Chinese art in the eyes of foreigners, stone carvings, mural paintings, and bronze images were being removed and exported for sale. Men such as Yue, Loo, and Yamanaka acquired just such very large and old objects from temples, caves, and tombs. They were definitely not curio dealers. Nevertheless, even they could not shake the suspicion of fraudulence that hovered over all the dealers and made establishing trust and demonstrating expertise so important.

With these competitors, and more emerging with each year, Paul Houo attempted to build a regular clientele. He positioned his store modestly as a combination of interesting and inexpensive curios with old and historically significant antiquities, and aimed at buyers on the ground in Peking. At the same time, he kept his distance from the periodic temple fairs where the adventurous or experienced buyer could look for surprises among the countless inexpensive goods set out on makeshift tables or on mats spread on the ground. As Houo acquired more objects, the shop near the North Cathedral grew larger. At some point, he expanded into a large "dépôt (*huofang* 貨方)," a Western style brick warehouse-cum-display room, located within a large walled compound that appears to have once been a mansion with rock gardens, pavilions, and Chinese-style buildings.<sup>38</sup> This setting evoked the disappearing life of Peking elites while emphasizing the huge volume of goods that became characteristic of Houo's store.

Hedda Morrison's photographs of "Mr. Huang, the doyen of the dealers in antiquities, a very courteous old gentleman with a great knowledge of Chinese art history," show a delicately featured gentleman with a wispy beard; Paul Houo, by contrast, presented himself in 1930 as a substantial man with a brushy Western-style mustache and round modern glasses (see Figure 1). Moreover, the Dagu Zhai

dissertation, College of Fine Arts of Ohio University, 2007; and Géraldine LENAIN, *Monsieur Loo: Le roman d'un marchand d'art asiatique*, Arles: Éditions Philippe Picquier, 2013.

38. Presumably nearby. Houo's use of the plural in 1930 ("Propriétaire des magasins de Curios Ta-kou-Tchai") suggests more than one property, but the photographs in *Preuves* do not show a separate shop.

rooms were packed with all kinds of objects, filling the shelves and tables, hanging from the walls and the ceiling, and taking up much of the floor. A portion of one of his display rooms is shown in Figure 2. By contrast, Mr. Huang's premises were more store than warehouse, elegantly uncluttered, with porcelains and paintings cleanly on display; most of his stock was out of sight, to be brought out piece by piece for knowing buyers.<sup>39</sup>

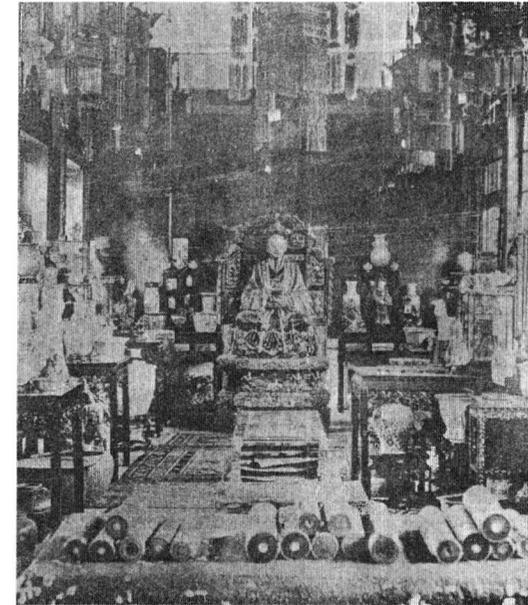


Figure 2. "Dépôt d'Antiquités I" (detail).<sup>40</sup>

39. Hedda MORRISON, *A Photographer in Old Peking*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 186-187 (photographs probably taken in the 1930s). For the inside of the Dagu Zhai, see also Arthur SEGERS, *La Chine: le peuple, sa vie quotidienne et ses cérémonies*, Antwerp: De Sikkel, 1932, no. 245. (The store was not identified by Segers but the assistant and some of the objects also appear in the *Preuves* photographs.) Arthur Segers was a French-speaking (presumably Belgian) Scheut missionary, active in 1904-18 in Chaoyang county, where Paul Houo had been sent with General Ma, and thus a likely acquaintance.

40. *Preuves*.

Paul Houo may have begun by acquiring his materials from other dealers in the city, but as early as 1907, judging himself proficient (*jingtong* 精通) in this field, he went looking in person. He began by buying ceramics in nearby Shanxi province, transporting them back over the mountains to Peking. (A dreadful accident with a loaded cart once nearly cost him his life.) On the road in the same years as Laufer and Chavannes, he was following different routes but also established practices. In 1887 an American had already noted that dealers at Mount Wutai 五台山 had told him “that everything of any worth went to Peking, that curio dealers from the capital constantly came here and scoured the whole of north China, and that Peking was the only place where good curios could be bought.”<sup>41</sup> In the years to come, Houo’s familiarity with Shanxi and its ample supply of old things would allow him to sell some antiquities that other competitors—focused on more established categories—did not carry. Philanthropy and connections with the French Catholic community probably helped Paul Houo’s reputation for trustworthiness, but he was also determined early on to distinguish himself for an honesty based on knowledge. He explicitly used his unusual facility in both Chinese and French, and his aspirations to the status of man of letters, to educate his buyers, to teach them about the objects that he sold, and to show them openly how to identify the authentic (*le vrai*). He would be not only a storekeeper but an expert; not only a businessman but a scholar.

### Scholar and Author

Already by 1912, when he was photographed without his queue and wearing the long blue gown of the new intellectual, Houo had had enough confidence in his understanding of antiquities to start writing. In 1914 he published (himself) a small, soft cover, Chinese-style book, the *Dagu Zhai bowu huizhi* 達古齋博物彙誌 (Collected essays on the

41. William Woodville ROCKHILL, “A Pilgrimage to the Great Buddhist Sanctuary of North China,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1895, p. 766.

world of things from the Dagu Studio).<sup>42</sup> In the preface, he explained that the goal of this guide to antiques (*guwan zhinan* 古玩指南) was to help distinguish the true from the fake (*zhen wei* 真偽). In sixty-nine pages, amply illustrated with line drawings, he began with ceramics (three *juan* 卷) and moved on to metals (one *juan*), then statues and stone and jade objects (one *juan*), and finally, altogether, calligraphy, paintings, lacquer, carpets, cloisonné, and the even more miscellaneous glassware, horn, clay, and ornamental iron.

Houo’s eclecticism, breadth, and superficiality match what we know of his stock, as does his earnest desire to instruct. The various emerging areas of prestige collecting (porcelain, Buddhist statuary, ancient bronzes, paintings) are given no special emphasis. For each of his categories, the drawings established familiar shapes and decorative patterns, and the text expanded, with occasional quotations from historical sources, on materials and manufacture and color. By contrast with the disdain of traditional elites for production processes, Houo’s interest in how things were made was evident throughout.

Ceramics (*tao* 陶), it was already clear, were a major intellectual interest for Houo, although most of his presentation was already conventional if detailed in its coverage: early earthenware, tomb statuary, Song and Yuan classic wares, Ming and Qing porcelains. He also included, however, certain post-Song ceramics that he knew from Shanxi and Henan. Such wares did not then, and do not now, play a significant role in Chinese ceramic history; the best known today are the non-porcelain Fahua wares (*fahua yao* 法花窯) and the low-fired lead-glazed so-called Liuli tiles (*liuli wa* 琉璃瓦). Houo’s goal was to describe the bodies and glazes of these finely differentiated ceramic products, with information on the history of the type; half a dozen Shanxi prefectures were named as evidence of his on-the-ground experience. Throughout the entire text, moreover, he made a point of establishing exemplars and explaining how fakes were made. Chinese readers could thus learn to make fine distinctions themselves and so

42. Huo Mingzhi 1914. The text is in Chinese, and Houo identified himself as “霍明志 保祿氏 [Huo Mingzhi, Paul].” I have seen the physical copy belonging to the University of Michigan.

identify the authentic. This frank attention to fakes and forgeries would become a characteristic of Houo's public persona.<sup>43</sup>

Thinking (or hoping) that such useful advice could find a wider audience if it were written in French and concentrated on problems of knowing what to buy, Houo published a second version of this work in 1919, this time printed by the North Cathedral's Imprimerie des Lazaristes du Pei-Tang. The Chinese title on the outside of the book was the same, but inside a new title page had been added and the contents were different. The French title was *Comment Éventer les Faux? Études sur Quelques Antiquités Chinoises*. And the author was advertised prominently as "Le Propriétaire de la 'Da Kou Tschai' (Cabinet où l'on pénètre l'antiquité)." The discussions about how to avoid buying fakes had been consolidated, and the Chinese text was now interleaved with a thoughtful French translation.<sup>44</sup>

The unknown French translator supplied a warm if slightly patronizing preface, stating that this work filled in a gap left by handsome books on Chinese art. Calling Houo the proprietor of "la plus importante maison d'antiquités de Pékin," and a person devoted to helping "le collectionneur" go beyond existing works, he further explained:

Le but de ce petit livre, très modestement présenté, est justement celui de prendre par la main le monsieur enthousiaste au point où l'ont laissé les splendides albums dont nous venons de parler, et de lui dévoiler les petits trucs du métier, les particularités inimitables, que les contrefacteurs ne réussiront jamais à refaire, et qui sont le sceau de la pièce authentique.

Translating the technical terms in such a work posed significant problems, and so a seventeen-page glossary with Chinese characters, French romanization, and a French explanation was added, together with five useful pages on the processes that produced changes in the surfaces of objects (oxidation, patinas, glazes, lacquers). Then came Paul Houo's 1914 six-*juan* Chinese essay, more professionally typeset,

43. A view echoed in R. H. VAN GULIK, *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur*, Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958, pp. 468, 488.

44. Huo Mingzhi 1919. The title page coyly says "Traduction par X..."

with fewer but better illustrations, and its matching French text.<sup>45</sup> The titles of some of the short sections on paintings are illustrative of Houo's emphasis on authenticity: "One cannot use the paper or the silk to authenticate an ancient painting," "Differences among the silks of ancient paintings," "How old paintings are faked," "How the old is used to recreate the old," "How old paper is erased to make a base for paintings," and so forth.

The respect given in China to copying practices ranging from the faithful to the interpretive, compounded by still loosely standardized dating, a long history of deliberate counterfeiting, and the increase in eager but uninformed buyers all made "distinguishing true from false" a serious problem for serious collectors, Chinese and foreign. And the early twentieth century (like the early twenty-first) was a golden era for such confusions and misrepresentations. Although the existing books on Chinese art were indeed mounting up, their authors faced the same problems Paul Houo did: How to be an expert when the field of possible objects was so large and unstudied? What authorities could be trusted? What standards should be applied?

*Comment Éventer les Faux?* does not appear to have circulated outside China, but works from the North Cathedral press seem to have been available in Peking for those who could read French or Chinese.<sup>46</sup> To buyers, Houo's concern with authenticity may have sounded too familiar to be persuasive. Juliet Bredon observed wryly that Paul,

a Chinese Christian, gives a guarantee of the genuineness of all the pieces in his collection, which includes quaint tiles and clay figurines from tombs. Many of the tiles are labelled as dating from such great antiquity that, but for his assurance, we might be inclined to doubt.<sup>47</sup>

It was obviously not easy for a dealer to establish a position not just as a cultural translator but also as a reliable and honest authority,

45. I have not compared the 1914 and 1919 Chinese texts word for word.

46. Fewer than ten copies were listed in WorldCat in 2015.

47. BREDON, *Peking*, 1922, pp. 411-412. In the earlier edition, she had begun more caustically: "Paul is a Christian, though you would never guess it from his prices" (BREDON, *Peking*, 1920, pp. 375-376).

a man who truly wanted to educate his buyers as well as sell to them. Paul Houo's next step, a decade later, was likewise unconventional: an enormous, annotated, illustrated introduction to his wares and to the field of Chinese antiquities in book form.

### China's Material History on View

In 1930 Paul Houo published the bilingual *Preuves des antiquités de la Chine* 達古齋古證錄. He identified himself this time as "Paul Houo-Ming-Tse, Propriétaire des magasins de Curios Ta-kou-Tchai (Expert Spécialiste en Antiquités)," and he began straightaway with the autobiographical account organized around photographs from his past that is the foundation for what we know about his early life. In a book about things, this highly personal story of his rise from Tianjin orphan is unusual to say the least, but it created and promoted the image of a serious, successful, educated, cosmopolitan, Catholic scholar and businessman.

This Western-style book is large (40 × 26 cm), with 745 pages, in French but interspersed with Chinese terms, and profusely illustrated; it was privately printed, but the skills of the Imprimerie des Lazaristes are evident in the professional bilingual text, ornamental details, and excellent copy-editing. (No French translator was mentioned this time.) It appeared in paper covers, although most editions that survive today have been hard-bound to protect and secure the fragile and unwieldy contents. The hundreds of black-and-white photographs of uneven quality showed actual objects mixed in with other pictures and text intended to provide a wider explanatory context. The book thus gave a panorama of Houo's intellectual interests and his commercial stock as of the late 1920s, loosely organized within the framework of China's long material history.

The whole work was ostentatiously instructive. Each of the fifty-five sections took up a class of objects and then offered introductions to their history, manufacture, and varieties. The pictures juxtaposed the real, the imagined, the doubtful, and the fake. A great many came from unknown publications, but a significant number showed objects that were "conservés à Ta-Kou-Tchai," "dans notre musée," or "dans notre galerie." Declaring himself to be up-to-date on "les découvertes les plus

récentes," Houo wrote to tell foreign readers about China's rich past. References to legendary culture heroes were combined (indiscriminately) with quotations from historical sources, and photographs were mixed with drawings and modern re-imaginings. The book was also interspersed with echoes and amplifications of Houo's earlier concerns about authenticity: "Comment on contrefait les monnaies antiques," "Voulez-vous vous assurer s'il y a fraude?," "Distinctions entre les vrais et les faux," "Méthode pour distinguer les vrais des fausses peintures et calligraphies." Throughout, he advocated close inspection of the real and the fake, side by side, a process guaranteed, he believed, to reveal meaningful differences to the informed eye and touch.

Houo began with oracle bones, seals, and an "Étude critique sur l'évolution des caractères" (thirty-eight pages), and then moved to ancient money (thirty-one pages). Old bronzes, already a fixation of many Chinese and foreign collectors, were illustrated with twenty-two examples plus a helpful contemporary photograph of two men (seemingly at the Dagu Zhai) pouring a hot metal coating on a bronze vessel in order to demonstrate "Comment on brosse les articles du cuivre." A tailor-made painting illustrated the "Fabrication des articles en cuivre" (one of many purporting to show Qing-era production processes).

Proceeding in ever smaller sections, the *Preuves* then took up established collectors' categories of stone statues, tomb bricks, and jades, but drowned them in material much closer to the curio and the ethnographic: weapons (bows and arrows, axes, swords, shields, banners), musical instruments, and funeral paraphernalia. The section on wood and bronze statues (fifty pages) included "Comment furent découvertes les premières statues en bois" and an essay that told of what was apparently Houo's own discovery of Liao dynasty Buddhist images in Shanxi.<sup>48</sup> Clothing, head-gear, shoes, hair ornaments; puppets, games, snuff bottles, mirrors, candles, lanterns; none were too trivial. A living female Manchu shaman ("Madame Sa-Mouo 薩魔太太") was photographed in two costumes, each element of which was then shown separately.<sup>49</sup> Ten pages contained information on ceramic

48. *Preuves*, p. 289. The discovery was made in Lingshi 靈石 county, where he had been on his first excursion in 1907.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 365-376.

cups and bowls, the same on old books ("Nous avons à notre portée plus de 130 espèces des livres classiques des imprimeries des Song, Yuen, et Ming"<sup>50</sup>), then twice as much on painting and calligraphy. A section on religion introduced various kinds of Buddhist and Daoist statues (and information about how to add fake gilding), followed by wood furniture (especially the inlaid and ornate), and carpets from the Ming and Qing (ten pages). Han dynasty roof tiles were followed by fortune-telling devices, and finally by twenty-five pages on ceramics, a subject on which there were numerous small essays reflecting Houo's long-standing interest. The book, like the warehouse, was stuffed full.

*Preuves* closed with a separately titled thirty-five page "Chronique des Dynasties Chinoises" by "Paul M. T. Houo" that described each reign in turn, providing conventional information, imaginatively illustrated. Throughout, Houo's emphases on chronology, the dynastic sequence and the demonstrable developments in form and style over time all had the effect of making it clear that buyers needed to know, absorb, and appreciate China's long and varied material history if they were to become connoisseurs. Considering the general ignorance about China among Westerners at this time and the powerful stereotypes about its unchanging or declining culture, Houo's concerns with rich chronology can also be seen as part of a Republican era (1912-1949) effort to create a proud past for a new nation. More unusually, he was arguing that this history was more than a textbook list of dynasties, but rather something visible through an ordered sequence of material objects—China's "antiquities"—and embodied in their physical and stylistic changes over time.

A one-page conclusion pulled together the sprawling book with Houo's other unifying theme and purpose, that it is possible to distinguish true from false in any and all materials, despite the dangers of (other) sellers who want only to deceive. He did not hide his indignation at such dishonest merchants, and "c'est ce qui nous a porté à décrire les méthodes de falsification les plus courantes, et le moyen d'en découvrir les fraudes."<sup>51</sup>

50. *Ibid.*, p. 460. A photograph in the unpaginated part of this work shows a room with shelves piled high with books.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 676.

It is difficult to evaluate the impact of this publication.<sup>52</sup> I can identify at least twenty-five copies in libraries outside China today (two-thirds in Europe) and an equal number that circulate in the rare book market inside and outside China.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps one hundred copies were printed. *Preuves des antiquités de Chine* has rarely been cited by art historians of China, perhaps understandably given its eclectic approach and relative rarity, and it has only occasionally been used by museum curators to trace the provenance of an acquisition. Nevertheless, R. H. van Gulik, the Dutch diplomat and sinologist who came to Peking sometime in the 1930s and shared Houo's serious interest in dating and authenticity, knew and acquired his books.<sup>54</sup> I hope that this article can invite further research by situating Houo's works where they belong, in the histories of collecting, of Chinese art as a conceptual category, and of Chinese material culture broadly understood.

Paul Houo himself seems to have believed that there was now a Chinese-reading audience for his publications. As he had previously turned his slight 1914 Chinese book into a 1919 French-Chinese one, he now set about converting and compressing the enormous *Preuves* in the other direction. The result was the 1935 *Dagu Zhai guzheng lu* 達古齋古證錄 (the same as the Chinese half of the 1930 title), in soft cover, opening in the old Chinese style from right to left. Smaller (35 x 24 cm) and somewhat shorter (476 pages), it was only a partial

52. In 1930 Father Ildéphonse Klapusterghem "translated" this French-Chinese text, condensed it into 160 pages of French (and a fifteen-page Chinese glossary), and published it in the *Bulletin de la Société des Études Indochinoises*, thus introducing Houo to the French community in Indochina. See Houo Mingzhi 1930b. I have not seen a physical copy of this work.

53. I have no information on the price.

54. He called the 1914 edition "rare," translated several passages from Houo's works, and commented that "Ho Ming-chih was not a scholar but his experience in the antique trade had given him a comprehensive practical knowledge while he was familiar with the tricks practiced by old and modern forgers." See VAN GULIK, *Chinese Pictorial Art*, pp. 106, 134, 391, 488. Van Gulik seems to have gone to Peking from Tokyo, where he was serving in the Dutch Embassy between 1935 and 1942; I see no evidence that they met. See Janwillem VAN DE WETERING, *Robert van Gulik: His Life, His Work*, Miami Beach: Dennis McMillan Publications, 1987.

re-presentation of the earlier work. The first 100 pages were a compact version of *Preuves*, with illustrations that were more selective and sometimes different. The table of contents omitted pagination after page 469 but indicated that translations of many more of the *Preuves* categories were intended but not completed (they would certainly have added another hundred pages). Inserted instead, somewhat improbably in connection with Divination and taking up nearly 400 pages (84 percent) of the existing book, were the texts of the third-century scholar Wang Bi's 王弼 annotations to the *Daode jing* 道德經 and the *Yi jing* 易經, each with further "simple annotations" (*qianjie* 淺解) by Houo himself.<sup>55</sup> This peculiar, unfinished hybrid seems to have been published in Shanghai (for reasons unknown) and sold for ten dollars (*Dayang shi yuan* 大洋拾元).<sup>56</sup>

The incongruous combination of humble added annotations to ancient texts framed by the mélange of traditional material history from *Preuves* reflects, I think, Paul Houo's continuing attempts to distinguish himself as a traditionally educated and cultured scholar, not just a French-speaking shop-keeper (and certainly not a radical intellectual, of whom there were more and more in the 1930s). Despite an earnest two-page preface in Houo's own hand and the addition of two seals and a literary name (here, he was "宗傑 霍明志" [Zongjie Huo Mingzhi]), I would not call this attempt very successful. But perhaps Houo was distracted at the time by his attempts to become a more cosmopolitan dealer, for in 1932 he had gone abroad to sell his work more directly to foreign buyers.

## Foreign Sales

It is not clear what prompted this new development. Yamanaka and Loo, among many others, could cultivate European and North American buyers through their offices in those countries. Such a network

55. I do not know which editions these are.

56. Huo Mingzhi 1935. The publisher was Liangyou Wenhua she 良友文化社; no place given. I have personally inspected only the volume in the Columbia University Library.

seems to have been well beyond Paul Houo's financial capabilities or personal predilections. There were, however, precedents for special auctions abroad of "collections" of Chinese objects put together by dealers, and this was the method he followed in early 1932, first in Paris and then in New York City.

The key person in Paris, and perhaps the man behind the entire enterprise, was Henri d'Ardenne de Tizac (1877-1932), curator of the Musée Cernuschi (since 1905) and author of half a dozen books on the arts of China.<sup>57</sup> That museum, opened in 1898, housed the collection of Henri Cernuschi (1821-1896), who had started buying in East Asia in the 1870s. A close study might reveal whether or not material from Dagu Zhai had made it into the museum before 1932, but Houo did take advantage of its place in French social circles.

In his warm preface to the sale catalogue, Ardenne de Tizac called Houo a "connaisseur . . . dont le magasin de Pékin est connu de tous les Européens résident ou voyageant en Chine." Moreover, he stressed the value of both Chinese expertise and critically-minded foreign research, and delicately noted the significant re-dating of old objects that had been occurring in recent decades. Houo's material was thus made to seem an "instructive" perspective in the lively field of collecting as well as a private collection of "objets d'art."<sup>58</sup>

The sale was a "vente au enchères," held in two parts at the Hôtel Drouot auction house. The catalogue announced it as:

I. Collection Paul Houo-Ming-Tse de Pékin. Objets d'art de la Chine des époques archaïques au xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle. Poteries Archaïques, Dynasties: Tcheou, Han, Souei, Tang, Song, Ming; Belle suite de divinités en grès Ming. Importantes Sculptures en Bois, Dynasties: Wei, Souei, Tang, Song, Yuen. Jades de Fouille. Verres Archaïques. Stèles en Pierre. Bronzes de Hautes Époques. Émaux cloisonnés des dynasties Ming et Tsing. Peintures et Broderies des dynasties Song, Yuen et Ming. II. Appartenant à M. F... Divinités en Grès Ming. Sculptures archaïques en bois sculpté.

57. Ardenne de Tizac died in December 1932; the auction had been held in February.

58. Huo Mingzhi 1932a, préface.

Three hundred and sixty-eight objects—many of them quite large—were listed, each with a short description but no suggested price. Some were illustrated using the photographs taken for *Preuves*.

The materials offered were unevenly distributed across the advertised categories. The most numerous were paintings (nos. 266-366), bronzes (Tang or earlier, nos. 170-230), "Poteries Archaiques" (Song and earlier, nos. 1-45), wooden sculptures (nos. 63-102) and jades (nos. 106-149). The remainder consisted of the more miscellaneous stoneware statues, textiles, cloisonné enamels, stone sculpture, glass, ivories, and carpets. Of these, only 130 sold (35 percent), surely a disappointment for all concerned, considering the cost and worry of their transportation halfway around the world. However, some pieces not purchased during the auction do seem to have found private buyers in Paris.<sup>59</sup>

Three months later, in May of 1932, another sale was held in New York City. At this time, 235 remaining objects were offered as "Chinese Ancient Art: The Collection of Paul Houo-Ming-tse of 'Ta-Kou-Tchai,' Peking, China." There being no established local auction house specializing in Asian art, the host was the J. C. Morgenthau & Co., a lower Manhattan firm best known for its stamp sales; the foreword to the catalogue was written by a local dealer-collector with no particular connection to China.

But someone was helping Paul Houo. Advertisements in two New York newspapers assured readers that "Paul Houo-Ming-Tse's reputation as a connoisseur assures the genuineness of this collection. Among the rarest objects are Wei and Han Sculptures, T'ang Carvings, Shang and Chou Bronzes. There is also a superb lot of Roll Paintings."<sup>60</sup> And the catalogue confidently stated that Houo's "handsome shop in Peking filled with rare and beautiful objects of art, collected by him in

59. One that can be traced was a standing bodhisattva of wood (no. 96) that was acquired by the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* in Brussels. Nathalie VANDEPERRE, "Collecting the Far East: Chinese, Korean and Japanese Art in the RMAH," *Arts of Asia*, no. 42:4, 2012, pp. 83-93. Information on what was sold comes from comments written on the Ohio State University Library copy of *Huo Mingzhi 1932a*.

60. Small advertisements ran in the *New York Herald Tribune* and *New York Times* on May 8, 10, and 11, 1932.

more than twenty-five years' research and excavations, is well known to many travelled American connoisseurs."<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, to accompany (and promote) the sale, the Morgenthau gallery printed a fifteen-page English translation of passages on provenance from the *Preuves* as "Selections from Proofs of Antiquity of Objects of Ancient Chinese Art by Paul Houo-Ming-Tse, Proprietor of the Ta-Kou-Tchai Curio Store, Peking, China."<sup>62</sup> The catalogue added reassuringly:

Every piece has been carefully and accurately described by Mr. Houo, who guarantees dates and attributions to be correct, thus giving confidence to the intending buyer who may be reasonably certain that he can exercise the widest choice, knowing that he can make no mistake.

In order to make clear the differences between the real and the fake, along with the exhibition of objects for sale there would be more!

[A]n innovation is proposed never before offered to the Amateur Collector or the Expert. SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE ORIGINALS IN BRONZE, WOOD, PORCELAIN AND CLOISONNE ARE SHOWN CLEVER forgeries. These forgeries, of course, are not for sale, but are exhibited in the interest of the collector, so that he may compare the imitation with the original, and thus prove for himself the genuineness of the antiquity of the original pieces. [Emphasis in the original.]

A brave innovation indeed.

The catalogue included mostly smaller, lighter objects. Almost 60 percent were hanging scrolls ("roll paintings") dated to the Song through early Qing periods, including landscapes, bird-and-flowers, and ancestral portraits.<sup>63</sup> The rest were a typical Paul Houo mix: weapons, musical instruments, ancient money, and cloisonné, along with stone (nos. 56-57) and wood sculptures (nos. 58-61), and old bronzes (nos.

61. *Huo Mingzhi 1932b*, foreword by Lenore Y. Turnbull. I have seen no evidence for Houo's involvement in "excavations."

62. *Huo Mingzhi 1932c*.

63. Fifteen were illustrated.

63-83). Houo's usual chronological range and emphasis on change over time was justified (in the foreword) as a way of drawing attention to the depth and variety of the Chinese past as seen through "the evolution of Chinese Art . . . from the dawn of history to the present day."

Paul Houo accompanied his treasures in person, seemingly his first trip abroad. There are no obvious sources to tell us where he went, or who he met, or what impact New York and Paris made on him. Perhaps he was received in Paris by clergy or laypeople associated, as he was, with the Société de Saint-Vincent de Paul; certainly he went to the Musée Cernuschi.<sup>64</sup> In New York, did he visit the Department of Far Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, then under the direction of Alan Priest (1898-1969)? Both the Yale and Princeton Libraries have copies of his 1930 book, donated as personally inscribed gifts, so he may have met with scholars there.<sup>65</sup> It is hard to know whether he was treated with condescension, amusement, or respect. It seems likely that he felt out of his element (he was), especially in the United States. He was not obviously part of any of the networks of scholars, politicians, and immigrant Chinese who were the more visible faces of China in the U.S. at this time, nor does he seem to have previously done business directly with any North American museum.

Without knowing how much of his material he had ultimately been unable to sell or whether the prices justified the expense, it is difficult to know how satisfied Paul Houo was when he returned to Peking. He would have seen, I suspect, that his place in the hierarchy of value in the field of Chinese collecting was no higher abroad than at home, but the attention, the flattering words, the chance to see the wider world, these surely would have offered unusual gratification.

64. At present, I can place Houo only in New York, but surely he went to Paris first.

65. The Metropolitan Museum of Art copy may also have been acquired at this time; I have not inspected it or the one at Yale. The Princeton copy, inscribed "To Princeton University Library. With my compliments. P. Houo," was acquired on May 6, before the auction, probably through the good auspices of the art historian George Rowley (1892-1962), then on the faculty of the Department of Art and Archaeology.

## Lead-glazed Ceramic Statues

A full-length study of the impact of Paul Houo would necessitate an extensive search for those of his objects that might have survived in museums and collections inside and outside China. A closer look at only one example can nevertheless allow us to see something of how he procured, described, explained, displayed, and sold his antiquities, and thus better evaluate his role in writing the history of Chinese material culture and identifying its exemplars. What are today usually called lead-glazed wares (*liuli yao* 琉璃窯, *liuli wa*) occupy an unstable and marginal place in the study of Chinese ceramics. The phrase *liuli* is an old one and once described a glassy material, but the term has come to be applied more specifically to the low-fired stoneware objects with lustrous lead-based glazes that were being produced in north China during the last millennium. The golden-yellow roof-tiles of the Forbidden City are the best known examples, and most scholarship has concentrated on the use of such ceramics in architecture, where they were also employed to build impressively large, brightly colored pagodas adorned with diverse figures.<sup>66</sup> Liuli objects were not, however, made from porcelainous clay, they did not come from the porcelain center at Jingdezhen, their hues were not subtle or subdued, and they were not prized by emperors or scholars. They did not figure among China's classic wares. Moreover, the Ming and Qing dynasty statues of gods made in this fashion, of the sort sold by Paul Houo, were (and are) too closely associated with commonplace religious practices to be put in the same class with the more admired stone, wood, or bronze Buddhist art of earlier centuries. They fit poorly into the new idea of "Chinese sculpture." These Liuli god-images can therefore also provide some insight into the still unstable edges of the constructed category of Chinese Art in the early twentieth century.<sup>67</sup>

66. The two indispensable works are CHAI Zejun's 柴澤俊 classic *Shanxi liuli* 山西琉璃, Peking: Wenwu, 1991; and Clarence ENG, *Colours and Contrast: Ceramic Traditions in Chinese Architecture*, Leiden: Brill, 2014.

67. This discussion has been informed by my own on-going research, research that has benefitted from the presentations and discussions at the 2010 workshop

The technology of firing stoneware with brilliant lead-based glazes, while it has an early history, reached a high level of development in the Ming period and was a specialty of the Taihang mountains 太行山, where most of the raw materials were available, and especially the western flanks in southern Shanxi province. Statues of gods were a small fraction of the output of such manufacturers. Compared with other media, these hardy glazes could withstand the damages of dust, damp, and scratching and, because the products were made in parts and assembled without glue, they had a certain portability. Nonetheless, such images were a specialized taste and a local product of the Taihang region, not known empire-wide.

As we have noted, the ceramics of this area were of interest to Paul Houo from as early as 1907. In the section on ceramics in his 1914 essays on authentication he wrote confidently of the differences between the glazes of one Shanxi county and another.<sup>68</sup> In *Preuves*, this technology was discussed under the category Roof-tiles, and characterized as a method of producing the “tuiles à glaçure vitrifiée faites de grés recouvertes de diverses couleurs” that emerged under the Yuan and developed to include large religious statues during the Ming. The colors were “inimitables”: the yellow “unie, épaisse et brillante comme la couleur de l’ambre doré du temps antique.” A painting elsewhere in *Preuves* shows the production process for Liuli wares, while other details are included (in a confusing fashion) in a discussion of porcelain.<sup>69</sup> Photographs of six statues made with these Taihang glazes were scattered in the text, another reflection of a continuing conceptual and terminological indeterminacy that, in the absence of scientific testing, Houo had not resolved.<sup>70</sup> In Paris in 1932, those six Liuli statues and as many more (there called *grès émaillés*, glazed pottery) were put up for sale and apparently sold.<sup>71</sup>

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at Princeton University on “An Investigation of Late Imperial Liuli Glazed Ceramics,” and conversations since with Eileen Hsu.

68. Huo Mingzhi 1914, *juan* 2.

69. *Preuves*, pp. 611, 626, 652.

70. Four with Religion and two in connection with Architecture; see *ibid.*, pp. 548, 555 (where they are called *tuiles*), and pp. 620, 621, 638, 639 (*terre cuite émaillée*).

71. Huo Mingzhi 1932a, nos. 46-57.

The catalogue stated that they had come from Lu'an 潞安 prefecture in Shanxi (the area of today's Changzhi 长治 city).<sup>72</sup>

The religious images still intact in Houo's time had been made centuries earlier by special order for the altars of temples or monasteries, where they remained living objects of worship, too sacred (and too large) to be casually removed. The European practice of collecting and displaying old religious images as art was foreign to China, and although new ideas had made Buddhist gods of the first millennium marketable and fair (?) game for entrepreneurial dealers, consumer desire was weak for later god-images made of clay. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century traditional religions were under formal and rhetorical attack as “superstitious practices,” and temples were being summarily converted into primary schools and other public buildings needed by modern governments, so their deities were more likely to be discarded or sold.

Paul Houo was unusual in his interest in such statues, but he may have recognized that foreigners would buy things that Chinese did not regard as commodities or collectibles. As a Catholic, he may have felt comfortable negotiating with clerics, and may have been untroubled by buying up statues of “gods” and selling “holy” objects. I imagine that during the 1910s and 1920s, when he travelled to Shanxi to accumulate stock, he identified likely images and offered to buy them from financially distressed Buddhist and Daoist clerics. The quality of his objects suggests to me that the sellers were once well endowed monastic communities, not small village temples. A deal having been concluded, the images would be disassembled, packed in straw, placed on wooden carts (and later, trains), and sent off on the 600 km trip to Peking. There, washed down, these large gleaming figures were displayed prominently in Houo's warehouse-cum-salesroom, but mixed in chaotically with all manner of other goods, as Figure 2 shows.

Paul Houo was not the only Peking dealer who bought and sold in these statues, but there were not many likely purchasers. Judging

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72. Unlike many Liuli objects (including smaller statues that have come on the market in the last decade or so), as far as I know, none of Houo's pieces have fired-in inscriptions and so do not carry texts about their own history. They cannot therefore be straightforwardly connected with the known workshops traced by Chai Zejun and others.

from those that survive today, some shops were satisfying a demand for Liuli statues of visually arresting gods of hell (Yanluo Wang 閻羅王)<sup>73</sup> or of seated, monk-like Arhats (Luohan 羅漢).<sup>74</sup> Arhats were an established trope of Buddhist representation, admired by elites in both Japan and China, and three of those for sale by Paul Houo in Paris (nos. 52, 56, 57) were part of a set, pieces of which were apparently sold by other Europe-based dealers.<sup>75</sup>

The god in Figure 3 was called a Dragon Mother in 1930 and sold at Houo's 1932 Paris auction for FF66,000 (£370); then it disappears from view.<sup>76</sup> One Buddha was sold in 1932 to the "Maison des Bambous" of Perret-Vibert, which kept it into the 1950s; in the early 1970s it was acquired for the Avery Brundage Collection of what is now the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.<sup>77</sup> Still others god-images from 1932 have reappeared more recently.<sup>78</sup>

73. The ones in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, acquired through the Tianjin dealer George Crofts, were said to come from a Henan temple (ROM 918.21.290-292). Other images supplied by Crofts but since de-accessioned were reportedly from Taiyuan in Shanxi (author's visit to ROM, 1995).
74. For some fifteenth century figures, see Nick PEARCE, "A Group of Chinese Stoneware Buddhist Figures Reunited," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, no. 58, 1993-94, pp. 37-50; "From Collector to Connoisseur: Sir William Burrell and Chinese Art, 1911-57," n.d., website of CARP: Chinese Art—Research into Provenance. Most seem to have been sold in the 1930s through Europe-based dealers (e.g., John Sparks in London).
75. See Patrizia JIRKA, "Ein Keramik-Lohan im Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Berlin," *Pantheon, International Art Journal*, 1973, pp. 122-129. The movements of all these images through the marketplace is too complex to spell out here.
76. *Preuves*, p. 639; Huo Mingzhi 1932a, no. 49. It is 140 cm high. The identification is plausible, but she may actually be Houtu Shengmu 后土聖母. The Ohio State University Library copy of 1932a has the penciled-in price in Francs. Gerald REITLINGER, *The Economics of Taste*, vol. II, London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1965, p. 314, recorded the price in British currency and called her an "enamelled stoneware statue of an empress." Between Peking and Paris, a wooden stand had been added and the drip on her forehead removed. Such drips, remnants of the kiln firing, can be seen on many Liuli religious figures.
77. *Preuves*, p. 548; Huo Mingzhi 1932a, no. 48. Jules Pierre van GOIDSENHOVEN, *La Céramique chinoise*, Brussels: Éditions de la Connaissance, 1954, p. 138 and frontispiece. Asian Art Museum (San Francisco) B60P139+.
78. The image on *Preuves* p. 638 was advertised on the A&J Speelman website in



Figure 3. Dragon Mother.<sup>79</sup>

One particularly fine example that we can also track is shown in the center of Figure 2. There he is called "Lao-tse 老子,"<sup>80</sup> but we would identify him as one of the Sanqing 三清 (Three Pure Ones), the three high gods of religious Daoists. This bearded Liuli figure is seated cross-legged on a high pedestal, with an elaborate tripartite screen behind him. It was taken to Paris, where it was advertised as an "important statue" of Laozi seated on a lotus with glazes of aubergine, yellow, green, blue, and turquoise, 210 cm high, from the early Ming. The largest Liuli figure in the sale, it sold for (the equivalent of) £305.<sup>81</sup> It reappeared sixty-six years later at a Christie's auction in London in 1998, where it was lavishly described in English and Chinese as a "Magnificent and massive Sancai seated figure of Yuanshi Tianzun (元始天尊)," the work of skilled artisans and "a classic example of the lead-glazed ware produced in Shanxi Province during the Ming dynasty." The Christie's illustration (Figure 4) showed the undiminished colors, the creamy white of the face contrasting with the many shades of green and gold, but the screen behind the god, present in 1932, is gone. Although art historians had not yet accepted such objects as sculpture or art, it was offered with an optimistic estimate of US\$460,000-590,000.<sup>82</sup>

August 2005. The Daoist figure now in the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco (B70P4) is comparable but not demonstrably from Houo.

79. *Preuves*, p. 639. I would be interested in news of the whereabouts of this and any other unpublished, comparable Liuli figures.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 555; and also shown in the unnumbered photographs of the Dagu Zhai, rooms I and V.
81. Huo Mingzhi 1932a, no. 46; see also REITLINGER, *Economics of Taste*, vol. II, p. 314.
82. CHRISTIE'S, London, *Ming: Age of Refinement*, 16 November 1998, cat. no. 108, "Property of a gentleman."

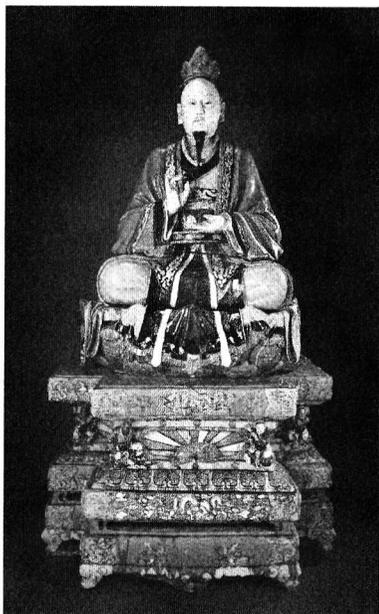


Figure 4. Yuanshi Tianzun.

These Liuli statues have achieved a certain visibility since the days when Houo put his on the market, and examples in museums outside China illustrate to a general public both Chinese craftsmanship and religious iconography. However, although they may have escaped the stigma of “curio,” they are still in a gray area, neither sculpture nor art.

### On Balance

After the 1935 publication of his Chinese *Preuves* with its annotated ancient texts, Paul Houo, like most of his wares and his shop, slips

83. Stephen LITTLE, with Shawn EICHMAN, *Taoism and the Arts of China*, Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago in association with University of California Press, 2000, cat. 68.

84. His name is not mentioned.

It did not sell at auction but was soon acquired (at an undisclosed price) by the Tsui Art Foundation in culturally hybrid Hong Kong. It was then exhibited in 2000 at Stephen Little’s Chicago show on Daoism, where it was introduced to an audience of art historians and interested scholars of religion, some of whom had not entirely accepted the category “Daoist art.”<sup>83</sup> By 2007, this Celestial Excellency had been donated to the Capital Museum (Shoudu Bowuguan 首都博物館) in Peking and was (and I presume still is) prominently on display there. Paul Houo might have been pleased.<sup>84</sup>

out of sight.<sup>85</sup> R. H. van Gulik, who was in Peking around this time, stated that Houo had become upset by the dating of texts from the desert site at Dunhuang, was involved in “a dispute with Western dealers and conceived a violent aversion to everything foreign,” and so became a withdrawn and “embittered man.”<sup>86</sup> Presumably he had a wife, possibly children. If he stayed in Peking, which I presume he did, then he lived through the Japanese occupation (1937-1945) and subsequent civil war. With his background as a Catholic and a capitalist, his future in the coming revolution would not have been promising. To survive, Paul Houo would have needed to become simply Huo Mingzhi. Perhaps denounced, as others were, as a looter, counterfeiter, or traitor, he may have died in 1949 (he would have been seventy years old). Whatever collections he had left were “donated to (*juanzeng* 捐贈)” or confiscated by the new government of the People’s Republic, and ended up in what was the newly enlarged the Museum of History (Lishi bowuguan 歷史博物館).<sup>87</sup> Houo’s breadth of interest provided useful material for a history museum whose heterogeneous holdings and more capacious view of the past made it a rival of the adjacent Palace Museum with its imperial collection.

For the historian, Paul Houo/Huo Mingzhi and the Dagu Zhai take us in several directions. His essays are akin to the more frank and subtle reconsiderations of authenticity and provenance that are taking place today. Technical knowledge about manufacture is now more widely shared, there are more secure foundations for dating, and objects “collected” in the early twentieth century are being more actively reconsidered. It should therefore be possible to reassess the expertise of Paul Houo and reevaluate his wares in context. His protestations notwithstanding, many of his objects were probably not what

85. Thorough research in Chinese sources of the period 1912-1950 would probably find more material.

86. VAN GULIK, *Chinese Pictorial Art*, p. 468. Van Gulik said that Houo “became a Taoist.”

87. Now the National Museum of China (Zhongguo Guojia Bowuguan 中國國家博物館) and home to much material seized in the 1950s. For one of Houo’s pieces, see Zuo Ming 作銘, “Waiguozi mingwende Handai (?) tongbing” 外國字銘文的漢代(?)銅餅 (A possible Han-dynasty bronze disk with an inscribed foreign script), *Kaogu* 1961, no. 5, pp. 272-276.

he claimed. Nevertheless, his forthright attention to counterfeiting and his multilingual essays on authentication were antecedents to our own concerns: earlier attempts, sometimes unwelcome or unseemly, to bring these covert activities squarely into the framework of Chinese art history. His willingness to place *les vrais et les faux* side by side likewise exemplifies a respect for the ability of objects to communicate with each other and is a call for us to stage and learn from such encounters. At the same time, there is nothing immutable about the Authentic, and Houo's views should also encourage us to write an intellectual and cultural history of the changing Chinese ideas about, and language for, distinguishing what is *zhen* 真.

Paul Houo and his objects can also be understood as actors in the translation and interpretation for contemporaries of a Chinese past that was then being rethought, and as helping to create a usable history from the confusions of the present. He was one of many multilingual and multicultural people of his era who could talk across national boundaries, speaking through writings, travels, and personal networks, of course, but also through their things. It would reward our attention to listen to how Paul Houo's objects communicated with their many audiences, with or without his words.

Houo had important stories he wanted his goods to tell about China's history and culture, but he could not control these meanings. Students of artistic and material culture need to release such collectable objects from their confinement in such narratives of national art histories and follow them where they lead, across long lifetimes and distances, accompanied by their changing meanings. The fate of pre-revolutionary Peking's "curios" and "antiquities" is far harder to trace than more admired artistic masterpieces, but they all enjoyed some time as gifts and possessions treasured for their mysteries, their quaintness, or their memories, even if they were later discarded. Contemporary knowledge of Chinese material culture is far more developed than a century ago, and no one now doubts its depth and variety. Nevertheless, Chinese art as it has been defined by Chinese and foreigners in the last century still excludes much of the material with which its exemplars shared space in the antiquities trade of the 1910s-1930s. These marginalized objects also have their histories, even if our only evidence is illustrations such as those in Paul Houo's *Preuves des antiquités de Chine*. As for those objects that do survive and

have found new residences in museums and private homes around the world, they are still talking—to each of those owners, curators, and visitors who pause and look. We have just not yet learned to hear clearly their conversations.

### Works by Huo Mingzhi 霍明志

1914. *Dagu Zhai bowu huizhi* 達古齋博物彙誌, 6 juan 卷, in 2 ce 冊, Peking: privately printed.
1919. Paul Houo, *Dagu Zhai bowu huizhi* 達古齋博物彙誌 / *Comment Éventer les Faux ? Études sur Quelques Antiquités Chinoises*, by the "Propriétaire de la 'Da Kou Tschai,'" in 2 ce, Peking: Imprimerie des Lazaristes du Pei-T'ang.
- 1930a. Paul Houo-Ming-Tse, *Preuves des antiquités de Chine* 達古齋古證錄, 745 pages, Peking.
- 1930b. "L'art de distinguer les faux, études sur quelques antiquités chinoises, par le propriétaire de la 'Ta Kou Tchai' (cabinet ou l'on pénètre l'antiquité)," French translation by Fr. Ildéphonse Klapusterghem, extract from *Bulletin de la Société des études indo-chinoise de Saïgon*, n.s., tome V: no. 1-2.
- 1932a. I. *Collection Paul Houo-Ming-Tse de Pékin. Objets d'art de la Chine des époques archaïques au XVIIIe siècle. Poteries Archaïques, Dynasties: Tcheou, Han, Souei, Tang, Song, Ming; Belle suite de divinités en grès Ming. Importantes Sculptures en Bois, Dynasties: Wei, Souei, Tang, Song, Yuen. Jades de Fouille. Verres Archaïques. Stèles en Pierre. Bronzes de Hautes Époques. Émaux cloisonnés des dynasties Ming et Tsing. Peintures et Broderies des dynasties Song, Yuen et Ming. II. Appartenant à M. F... Divinités en Grès Ming. Sculptures archaïques en bois sculpté. Dont la vente au enchères publiques aura lieu Hôtel Drouot, Salle No. 6. 15-17 Février 1932. Paris: Lahure.*
- 1932b. *Chinese Ancient Art: The Collection of Paul Houo-Ming-tse of "Ta-Kou-Tchai," Peking, China, sold by his order. To be sold*

- by auction, Thursday, May 12th . . . *The New Gallery of J. C. Morganthau*, New York: J. C. Morganthau & Co.
- 1932c. Paul Houo-Ming-Tse, "Selections from Proofs of Antiquity of Objects of Ancient Chinese Art" (distributed with 1932b).
1935. *Dagu Zhai guzheng lu* 達古齋古證錄, Shanghai (?): Liangyou Wenhuashe 良友文化社.

Wilt L. IDEMA\*

## Animals in Court

Résumé — Les scènes de procès figurent en bonne place dans les épopées animalières. Cette remarque s'applique aussi bien aux récits du domaine européen qu'à leurs équivalents de la littérature chinoise traditionnelle. Cet article s'intéresse à deux confrontations judiciaires entre animaux : l'une, opposant l'hirondelle au moineau, nous est connue à travers deux versions de Dunhuang ; l'autre, un procès mettant aux prises le chat et la souris, nous a été transmise par de nombreuses versions datant des derniers siècles de la Chine impériale et d'après. La version longue du procès de l'hirondelle et du moineau a préservé ce qui se trouve être la description la plus détaillée d'un procès dans la Chine des Tang. La plupart des versions du procès de la souris contre le chat ont quant à elles pour cadre la cour infernale du roi Yama : ce dernier, sensible au premier abord aux plaintes de la souris envers la cruauté déraisonnable du chat, changera vite d'avis lorsqu'il apprendra l'étendue des dégâts que sont susceptibles de causer les rongeurs, et finira par ordonner au chat d'en exterminer autant qu'il le pourra. Les formes littéraires par lesquelles nous ont été transmises ces histoires vont des poèmes narratifs aux pastiches d'actes judiciaires en prose en passant par de longues chantefables. Nos remarques sur les nombreuses versions du procès opposant chat et souris sont illustrées par de larges extraits d'œuvres, dont la traduction intégrale d'une plainte parodique en prose.

As a young boy in middle school in the Netherlands I was taught that the medieval Dutch beast epic *Van den vos Reinaerde* (Reinaert the Fox) of ca. 1260 was not just one of the finest works of Dutch literature but also by far the best of Europe's medieval beast epics. The Dutch

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