

# Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony\*

Julia Orell

## Josef Strzygowski's global map of art history

The work of Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941), chair of the First Department of Art History at the University of Vienna from 1909 until 1933, has received increasing attention in studies of the historical precedence for current debates about global and world art history.<sup>1</sup> Jaś Elsner has discussed Strzygowski's global agenda,<sup>2</sup> and more recently Strzygowski has been frequently described as an early champion of world art history. For instance, Ulrich Pfisterer has stated that Strzygowski's *Crisis of the Humanities* (*Krisis der Geisteswissenschaften*, 1923) 'may have been regarded as one of the fundamental methodological texts of world art history',<sup>3</sup> and Strzygowski's repeated insistence that art history must leave its 'European nest' and instead take into account the arts of all times and all regions<sup>4</sup> has led scholars of the Vienna

\* I would like to thank Matthew Rampley and Lillian Lan-ying Tseng for their insightful and productive comments on a first draft of this article, and Richard Woodfield for including it in the current issue of the *Journal of Art Historiography*. Revisions of this article were undertaken during a fellowship at the Getty Research Institute, where I profited immensely from the library resources, special collections materials, and especially from the opportunity to present and discuss parts of this work with scholars and fellows. Thanks also to Joseph Koerner and Joyce Cheng for their comments and Irene Hsiao for copy-editing.

<sup>1</sup> For the need to distinguish more clearly between world art history and global art history, see e.g. Michael Falsers contribution in this issue of the *Journal of Art Historiography*, or Avinoam Shalem, 'Dangerous Claims. On the "Othering" of Islamic Art History and How it Operates within Global Art History', *Kritische Berichte*, 40:2, 2012, 79.

<sup>2</sup> Jaś Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity: Riegl and Strzygowski in 1901', *Art History*, 25:3, June 2002, 361.

<sup>3</sup> '... may have been', because of Strzygowski's anti-Semitism and his nationalist agenda; see Ulrich Pfisterer, 'Origins and Principles of World Art History - 1900 (and 2000)', in Wilfried Van Damme and Kitty Zijlmans eds., *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008, 81. In the same volume, Marlite Halbertsma states: 'Strzygowski must be accorded due credit as being one of the first art historians to consider non- or peripheral European art forms as part of one, dynamic and competing system of world art.' Marlite Halbertsma, 'The Many Beginnings and the One End of World Art History in Germany, 1900-1933', in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, 95.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to expanding art history's geographical scope, Strzygowski also sought to abolish the differentiations between pre-historical and historical as well as between high and low art. He discusses his approach most extensively in Josef Strzygowski, *Die Krisis Der Geisteswissenschaften. Vorgeführt am Beispiele der Forschung über Bildende Kunst. Ein Grundsätzlicher Rahmenversuch*, Wien: Schroll, 1923.

Julia Orell Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony

School to re-evaluate Strzygowski's role with regard to his 'alternative geography' and his 'global map' of art history.<sup>5</sup> Despite this renewed interest in Strzygowski, his global map has hardly been scrutinised and the narrative he developed based on his comparative approach within this new art geography has not been addressed in detail, at least not beyond confirming his racialised perspective, i.e. his attempt to reclaim the importance of a neglected 'Nordic' or 'Aryan' heritage in the development of European and Eurasian art.

In this article I step back from the supposedly global Strzygowski<sup>6</sup> to focus on one region on his global map, East Asia, and to examine his legacy – problematic as it may be – in East Asian art history by exploring the work of two of his students, Karl With<sup>7</sup> (1891-1980) and Alfred Salmony<sup>8</sup> (1890-1958). The intention is not a positive re-evaluation of Strzygowski's scholarship, but rather to recover a crucial episode in the history of East Asian art history in Europe.<sup>9</sup> This case study sheds

<sup>5</sup> Most recently, Matthew Rampley has described Strzygowski's project in terms of a spatial re-orientation of the discipline, as an '... alternative geography of art (...) that went completely against the grain of art-historical opinion and, crucially, turned Europe into a province within a much larger global artistic territory.' Matthew Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847-1918*, University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, 185. Christopher Wood has similarly described Strzygowski's 'global map' as one that shifted the centre of art historical attention toward the East and North: Christopher S. Wood, 'Strzygowski und Riegl in den Vereinigten Staaten', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, LIII, 2004, 226.

<sup>6</sup> While Strzygowski demanded that art history should take into account the art of all periods and regions, his own scholarship mostly stayed within the boundaries of Europe, Asia, and North Africa; e.g. he rarely addressed Pre-Columbian or Native American art and never wrote about African art and other regions.

<sup>7</sup> Karl With's biography is easily accessible through his posthumously published autobiography supplemented by the *Karl With Papers* kept at the Getty Research Institute. See Karl With, *Autobiography of Ideas. Memoirs of an Extraordinary Art Scholar*, Roland Jäger ed., Berlin: Mann, 1997. For a brief biographical account see also Rainer Stamm, 'Ein außergewöhnlicher Kunstgelehrter. Erinnerung an Karl With', *Weltkunst*, 68:12, 1998, 2312-2314.

<sup>8</sup> Information on Alfred Salmony's early career is rather scattered outside of his publications, and further archival research is necessary to better understand his work at museums and personal contacts with scholars and collectors. The most detailed biographical information is included in various obituaries; see A.B. Griswold, 'Alfred Salmony (1890-1956)', *Revue Archéologique*, 1, January-June 1960, 104-106; John F. Haskins, 'Alfred Salmony', *Artibus Asiae*, 21:3/4, 1958, 285-286; Gustav Ecke, 'Alfred Salmony', *Ars Orientalis*, 4, 1961, 453. See also Ulrike Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil*, München: Saur, 1998, 577-580; and: Hartmut Walravens, *Bibliographien zur ostasiatischen Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland*, Hamburg: Bell, 1983, vol. 2 with a complete list of Salmony's publications. These resources provide little information about Salmony's early work at the museum in Cologne, his studies in Bonn and Vienna, or his field trips to Russia and China in the late 1920s.

<sup>9</sup> I agree with Georg Vasold's warning that there is no justification for attempts 'to view Strzygowski in a positive light, to describe him as a pioneer of global art history, and to

light on the methodological stakes for the discipline of art history when it began to engage with non-European art in the early twentieth century and thus also contributes to a historiographical perspective in current debates about global art history. More specifically, early twentieth-century comparative approaches and concepts of cultural purity bear on current interests in transcultural phenomena and 'hybridity'. More broadly, I hope to raise questions with regard to the role of non-Western art in the formation of art historical methodology in early twentieth-century German-language art history.

After providing a brief overview of With's and Salmony's academic trajectories and careers, I first analyse the role of East Asian art in Strzygowski's scholarship before returning to his students in more detail.

In the case of Karl With, I focus exclusively on his writings on East Asian art from the early 1920s, as he ceased to publish in this field afterwards. Turning to Salmony's work, I will highlight his comparative approach and thus also include examples of his later work.

### Studying East Asian art history in Vienna

'...; then, during the semester before the war broke out, there were those strange students now active in Cologne, Wachsberger, With, and Salmony, who took part in the seminar on East Asian art and thus founded the basis for their future studies in Asian art.'<sup>10</sup> With these words Strzygowski remembered his earliest students of East Asian art, who had come to the University of Vienna, because it was one of the few places, where they could pursue studies in this field.<sup>11</sup> Strzygowski's pioneering role

---

make a distinction between the "early," supposedly interesting Strzygowski, and the "later," openly racist scholar.' See Georg Vasold, 'Riegl, Strzygowski and the development of art', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 5, 2011, 112. Yet, it seems necessary to better understand how Strzygowski's ideas, which were not isolated at the time, relate to the history of art historical concepts and approaches, such as comparative approaches with universalising tendencies and notions of purity and mixing, variously framed as national, ethnical, or cultural.

<sup>10</sup> '...; da waren dann im Semester vor Ausbruch des Krieges jene merkwürdigen jetzt in Köln wirkenden Studierenden Wachsberger, With und Salmony, die am Seminar über ostasiatische Kunst teilnahmen und im Anschluss daran ihre in Zukunft auf Asien eingestellte Arbeit begründeten.' Josef Strzygowski, 'Heinrich Glück', *Artibus Asiae*, 4:2/3, 1930-32, 166. The third student, Arthur Wachsberger, was the first to complete his dissertation on *The Murals in Chinese Turkestan (Die Wandmalereien in Chinesisch-Turkestan)* in 1914. He would not pursue a career in Asian art but became a businessman in Cologne before emigrating to Israel. See Karl With, *Autobiography of Ideas*, 66. For a list of the courses in Asian and Islamic art taught by Strzygowski in Vienna see Gabriele Anna Reisenauer, *Josef Strzygowski und die Islamische Kunst*, MA Thesis: University of Vienna, 2008, 20.

<sup>11</sup> With's autobiography relates an anecdote about the difficulty of pursuing his interest in Asian art: When he met Albert Grünwedel, curator of India at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, in 1911 to discuss the possibility of studying Indian art, Grünwedel 'jumped up from behind his desk, shouted at me that he would throw me out if I would ever again dare to

in establishing Asian and East Asian art history has been acknowledged for some time: In 1912 he founded the Section for East Asian Art History at the University of Vienna to train specialists in this newly emerging field.<sup>12</sup> He also relied on his students' research for his own forays into expanding art history's geographical boundaries, as he could not single-handedly study the large scope of materials falling under his interest.

Karl With and Alfred Salmony are representative of the first generation of art historians to complete dissertations in this field in German-language academia.<sup>13</sup> They both had studied elsewhere before coming to Vienna shortly before the 1914-18 war and their respective careers overlap in many other respects: They had close contacts with private collectors, shared an interest in modern art, worked at museums in Cologne after finishing their dissertations, and they lost their positions when the Nazis came to power in 1933 – With because of his modern exhibition concepts, Salmony because he was Jewish. Both would continue distinguished art historical careers after emigrating to the US in the 1930s; With as a 'generalist' in art history and Alfred Salmony as a specialist of East and Central Asian art. Their early scholarship contributed to the establishment of the emerging academic field of East Asian art history, but is largely unknown today. Not only is it out-dated and German-language materials are difficult to access for the majority of scholars in East Asian art history, but historiography has only recently begun to emerge as a field of research in East Asian art history.<sup>14</sup>

---

speak of Hindu sculptures as works of art.' With, *Autobiography of Ideas*, 60. An exception was the anthropologist Ernst Grosse (1862-1927), who taught courses on East Asian art at the University of Freiburg.

<sup>12</sup> See Eleanor von Erdberg, 'Die Anfänge der Ostasiatischen Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland,' in Lorenz Dittmann ed., *Kategorien und Methoden der Deutschen Kunstgeschichte 1900-1930*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1985, 192. See also Lothar Ledderose, 'Kunstgeschichte und Weltkunstgeschichte', *Saeculum*, 40, 1989, 138. The 'Section for East Asian Art History' also included South Asian and Central Asian art, and Strzygowski oftentimes remains vague about what he subsumes under the term 'East Asia'. One of his definitions of East Asia and other subdivisions within Asia will be discussed below.

<sup>13</sup> The interest in East Asian art had gained momentum throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century centred on private and museum collections. Research and publications on East Asian art was primarily conducted by collectors, museum curators, and private scholars without an academic training in East Asian art or art history. The major German-language journal for East Asian art was the *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, founded in 1912 by Otto Kummel (1874-1952), who would become director of the Berlin Museum of East Asian Art and William Cohn (1880-1961), who began working for the Berlin Museum in the 1920s.

<sup>14</sup> Recent interest in the history of the field in Europe and the US has mostly focused on the formation of museum and private collections. Early art historical scholarship in China and Japan has been studied, see e.g. in English Cheng-hua Wang, 'In the Name of the Nation: Song Painting and Artistic Discourse in Early Twentieth Century China', in Rebecca M. Brown and Deborah S. Hutton eds., *A Companion to Asian Art and Architecture*, Chichester: Blackwell-Wiley, 537-560; Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of*

Julia Orell Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony

With's interest in East Asian art arose mostly through his work for the collector Karl Ernst Osthaus (1874-1921) and his Folkwang Museum since 1911<sup>15</sup>, in addition to his friendships with contemporary artists, who explored non-European art. He joined the Vienna department in 1912 and undertook an extensive research trip to Japan in 1913, which would result in his dissertation on Japanese Buddhist sculpture.<sup>16</sup> With later recalled presenting the materials gathered during his trip in Vienna, revealing his negative view of his former fellow student Salmony:

Two other students, Ms. Stalissiny<sup>17</sup> (*sic*) and Alfred Salmony were so inspired

---

*Beauty*, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011, especially chapter four; or Hui Guo, *Writing Chinese Art History in Early Twentieth Century China*, PhD Thesis: Leiden University, 2010 (<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/15033>, accessed July 2014). Recent studies of early European art historians' work on East Asia include e.g. Minna Törmä, *Enchanted by Lohans. Oscald Siren's Journey into Chinese Art*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013. Better known amongst Strzygowski's students is Stella Kramrisch, a scholar of Indian art: Her work was acknowledged in the 2012 Courtauld Institute's conference *Divine Artefacts: Stella Kramrisch and Art History in the Twentieth Century*; a study of her work within the context of early twentieth-century intellectual and artistic exchanges between India and Germany, which includes clues about Strzygowski's personal acquaintance with Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) has been undertaken in Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014, 239-257.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Ernst Osthaus was probably the first private collector to make his collection, combining non-European art with contemporary art of the avant-garde, available to the public in his Folkwang Museum, which opened in 1902 in Hagen. For a recent publication on the history of the Folkwang Museum and aspects of its collection history, see Hartwig Fischer ed., 'Das schönste Museum der Welt' – Museum Folkwang bis 1933: Essays zur Geschichte des Museum Folkwang, Göttingen: Steidl, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> The trip was financed by one of his fellow students, Oskar Vonwiler, and also brought With to China, Indonesia and Egypt. See With, *Autobiography of Ideas*, 67-85. For an in-depth study of With's journey through Japan and the importance of his photographs for his approach to Buddhist sculpture within the context of Japanese art history, see Marie Yasunaga 安永 麻里絵, 'Dento to Kindai no Hazama de: Bijutzushi-ka Karl With no Nihon Taizai to "Nihon no Bukkyo-Chokoku" 伝統と近代のはざままで: 美術史家カール・ヴィートの日本滞在と『日本の仏教彫刻』 (Between the Tradition and Modernization: Karl With's Experience in Japan and his book "Buddhistische Plastik in Japan")', *Chooiki bunka kagaku kiyoo 超域文化科学紀要 (Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies)*, 18, 2013, 123-149.

<sup>17</sup> Melanie Stiaßny (1878-1966) was another student of Strzygowski and wrote her dissertation on Chinese landscape painting (*Die altchinesische Landschaftsmalerei*) in 1921. She was a founding member of the Society of the Friends of Asian Art and Culture (*Verein der Freunde asiatischer Kunst und Kultur*) in Vienna in 1925 and worked on the Asian objects in the Vienna Natural History Museum as well as in other collections and organised several exhibitions. After her emigration to Switzerland, she worked at the Musée et Institut d'ethnographie in Geneva, where she also lectured at the university. See Andrea Brandstätter, *Verein der Freunde Asiatischer Kunst und Kultur in Wien. Ein Beitrag zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte über die Entstehung ethnologisch orientierter Ostasienforschung in Österreich in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, MA Thesis: University of Vienna, 2000, 31-

by my representation of Buddhist statuary that both of them chose Far Eastern Art as their special field of future study. I had felt rather close to Salmony and in later years let him have some of my unpublished photographs which he reproduced in his book "Europa – Ostasien" (Potsdam 1922). Unfortunately, his rather questionable character and ambitious egotism drove us apart. When I last met him in New York where he held the position of a university professor he treated me, I am sorry to say, with the patronizing attitude and arrogance of a big shot.<sup>18</sup>

Work on his dissertation was delayed by the 1914-1918 war, during which he had to serve in the German military. It was finally published in 1919 as *Buddhist Sculpture in Japan until the Beginning of the Eighth Century (Buddhistische Plastik in Japan bis in den Beginn des 8. Jahrhunderts n.Chr.)*.<sup>19</sup> Salmony wrote his dissertation at the University of Bonn, only spending little time in Vienna. His studies were also interrupted by the wartime military service. He completed his dissertation *East Asia – Europe: Religious Sculpture (Europa – Ostasien. Religiöse Skulpturen)* in 1920<sup>20</sup> under the supervision of Paul Clemen (1866-1946), a specialist for European medieval art and architecture. Salmony had already worked at the newly established Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne as a student and would continue to do so after completing his dissertation; in 1925 he became the Museum's vice director.<sup>21</sup>

---

34. (URL: <http://othes.univie.ac.at/89/>, accessed March 2013.)

<sup>18</sup> With, *Autobiography of Ideas*, 86. With here probably takes too much credit for inspiring Stiaßny and Salmony in their studies for East Asian art, but Salmony's dissertation does indeed rely heavily on With's work as discussed below. With's negative tone towards Salmony is repeated in other anecdotes, such as when he points out that Salmony, who regarded himself a connoisseur, had published a collection of fake Chinese stele from the collection of the Cologne Museum for Far Eastern Art; see With, *Autobiography of Ideas*, 77-78. For the French scholar Paul Pelliot's identification of the fake stele and Salmony's response, see Paul Pelliot and Alfred Salmony, 'Pelliot and Salmony: Errata', *Artibus Asiae* 1:1, 1925, 55-63.

<sup>19</sup> Karl With, *Buddhistische Plastik in Japan bis in den Beginn des 8. Jahrhunderts*, Vienna: Anton Schroll & Co, 1919. The publication in two volumes was an unexpected success, primarily because of the photographic documentation of sculptures previously unavailable in European publications, and a second and third one-volume edition with a shortened text came out in 1920 and 1922.

<sup>20</sup> The dissertation was published two years later: Alfred Salmony, *Europa – Ostasien. Religiöse Skulpturen*, Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1922.

<sup>21</sup> The museum, the first art museum in Europe dedicated to East Asia was founded by the private collectors Frieda and Adolf Fischer in 1906 and opened in 1913. For the foundation and early history of the museum see Adele Schlombs, *Aufbruch in eine neue Zeit. Die Gründung des Museums für Ostasiatische Kunst in Köln. / The Dawn of a New Era. The Foundation of the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Cologne*, Cologne: Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, 2009. Evidence for Salmony's pre-wartime work at the museum is sketchy; two reviews he published in the same issue of *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* in 1914/15 suggest that he spent time in Cologne and in Vienna during before the war: one article is signed 'A. Salmony (Wien)' and

Julia Orell Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony

Together with the sinologist Carl Hentze (1883-1975), Salmony was the founding editor of the journal *Artibus Asiae* in 1925, which has remained one of the most important academic journals in Asian art history to this day.<sup>22</sup>

With also left the university after completing his dissertation to work for the collectors Karl Ernst Osthaus and Eduard von der Heydt, while lecturing and publishing widely on East Asian and Southeast Asian art. He became editor for the newly established Folkwang Publishing House and took over as director of the Folkwang Museum when Osthaus became ill and died in 1921.<sup>23</sup> Then he began to work on von der Heydt's Asian art collection; the catalogue was published in 1923.<sup>24</sup> Von der Heydt would support With again after he had lost his positions in Cologne in the 1930s; this time With was tracking down and cataloguing Asian art objects, which von der Heydt had lent to museums all over Europe. Salmony also had close contact with von der Heydt from at least the early 1920s onward; he advised him on his acquisitions and was a common guest at von der Heydt's residences in Zandvort

---

the other 'Alfred Salmony (Cöln)'. See *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, 3, 1914/15, 259 and 497. A letter to Karl With from 1916 further brings up Salmony's research on Chinese Buddhist sculpture at the museum in Cologne; *Karl With Papers*, Getty Research Institute, Box 3, Folder 8. Further archival research at the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne could potentially complete the picture.

<sup>22</sup> For a short history of *Artibus Asiae* and a complete record of its contents, see Hartmut Walravens, *Artibus Asiae. Eine deutsch-schweizerisch amerikanische Zeitschrift zur asiatischen Kunst: Eine Inhaltsbibliographie der Bände 1-12 (1925-1962)*, Berlin: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, 2007. See also Thomas Lawton, 'Artibus Asiae Seventieth Anniversary', *Artibus Asiae* 55:1/2, 1995, 5-16. Alfred Salmony resumed the position as the journal's main editor in 1946, after it had hardly survived the war and remained in this position until his death in 1958.

<sup>23</sup> The Folkwang Publishing House was founded in 1919 and With was responsible for the series 'Asia's Spirit, Art, and Life' (*Geist, Kunst und Leben Asiens*); the first volume in this series was his own book *Java: Brahmanische, budhistische und eigenlebige Architektur und Plastik auf Java*, Hagen i.W.: Folkwang Verlag, 1920. On the Folkwang Publishing House, see Rainer Stamm, *Der Folkwang Verlag. Auf dem Weg zu einem imaginärem Museum*, Frankfurt a.M.: Buchhändler-Vereinigung, 1999. With's autobiography provides further details about the difficulties encountered at the Folkwang after Osthaus' death, which led to his departure, see With, *Autobiography of Ideas*, 101-103.

<sup>24</sup> Published as Karl With, *Bildwerke Ost- und Südasiens aus der Sammlung Yi Yuan*, Basel: Schwabe & Co, 1924. The banker Eduard von der Heydt had been a collector of modern and avant-garde art, and started to collect non-Western Art in the 1910s. He bought the Petrucci collection of Asian sculpture in Amsterdam, which he made available to the public under the name Yi Yuan Collection. For von der Heydt's collection of non-European art, including the role With and Salmony played in its formation and study, see Esther Tisa Francini, "Ein Füllhorn künstlerischer Schätze" – Die Sammlung außereuropäischer Kunst von Eduard von der Heydt', in Eberhard Illner ed., *Eduard von der Heydt. Kunstsammler Bankier Mäzen*, Munich, London, and New York: Prestel, 2013, 155-176. See also Sabine Fehleemann ed., *Asien, Afrika, Amerika und Ozeanien. Eduard von der Heydt als Sammler aussereuropäischer Kunst*, Wuppertal: Von der Heydt Museum, 2002. Von der Heydt's collection is today divided between the Von der Heydt-Museum in Wuppertal (European art) and the Museum Rietberg in Zurich (non-European art).

Julia Orell Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony

and on Monte Verità in Ascona. Contacts with these collectors and their respective artistic and intellectual circles exposed With and Salmony not only to ideas about *ars una*, but also intensified their broad engagement with the arts, resulting in publications on the European avant-garde.<sup>25</sup>

Karl With's career shifted away from a focus on Asian art when he joined Salmony in Cologne in 1925 to become a lecturer at the *Werkschule* (School for Design and Applied Arts), where he could integrate his interests in ancient and contemporary visual art, architecture, and design as well as in museum education. In 1928 he assumed the position as director of the *Kunstgewerbemuseum* (Museum for Applied Arts), where he presented a new conception for the display of the collection in 1932, arranging objects according to their function, formal features, and iconography, thus integrating old and new, high and low, European and non-European.<sup>26</sup>

With and Salmony both lost their respective positions in Cologne when the Nazis came to power in 1933 and emigrated to the US: With first moved to Berlin and left for Switzerland in 1937, where he worked for von der Heydt before leaving for the US in 1939. After a rough beginning lecturing at several colleges and organizing exhibitions for a variety of small museums, he became professor of art history at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1950. In his courses With would continue to draw on the wide range of objects and themes he had worked with earlier in his career, i.e. art, architecture, design, film, theatre, dance and other media. His 'Integrated Arts Course', indebted to the idea of 'art as a grandiose and universal medium of communication' became a popular offering at UCLA.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> With, especially, had sought entry to artistic circles already during his student days in Berlin and Munich and befriended artists, such as Moissej Kogan (1878-1943). He published on Marc Chagall (1887-1985), Christian Rohlf (1849-1938), Otto Dix (1891-1969), and others. One example for Salmony and With publishing on contemporary artists is an article by With on Kogan and an article by Salmony on Christian Rohlf in the same issue of *Das Kunstblatt* 6, 1922, 243-246 (Salmony on Rohlf) and 461-470 (With on Kogan).

<sup>26</sup> The new museum display can be partially reconstructed based on photographic documentation in the *Karl With Papers*; e.g. a display case labelled 'bag, pouch, box (Tasche, Beutel, Dose)' uses a functional approach to group objects together; other display cases group objects that display religious symbols, modern brand labels or specific ornaments together, and in the 'colour room', each display case showed a diverse group of ceramics arranged by colour. The 'black' display, for instance, contained ceramics from eighteenth-century Persia, ancient Egypt, sixteenth-century Venice, Song dynasty China, and an Etruscan vessel. See *Karl With Papers*, Getty Research Institute, Box 3, Folder 3. Currently, Marie Yasunaga is completing her dissertation on Karl Ernst Osthaus' and Karl With's new exhibition concepts in relation to their interest in world art at the University of Tokyo.

<sup>27</sup> With, *Autobiography of Ideas*, 344 and 299-296. With further explicates his 'system', which encompasses all arts within the categories of symbolism, emotionalism, formal idealization, and factualism in art. Although some of these concepts appear to have evolved during his work in Cologne, I am not addressing them further, because the focus of this article is on his early work on East Asian art.



Julia Orell Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony

Salmony left Germany in 1933, first to France, where he briefly worked at the Musée Cernuschi, and then to the US, where he would enjoy a distinguished career as professor of East Asian art history: After teaching at Mills College and at the University of Washington in St. Louis, he became lecturer and then full professor at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University. Different from With, Salmony thus continued the work he had started in Vienna and Cologne with a focus on Chinese and Eurasian art. He was instrumental in establishing East Asian art history in the US.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the parallels in With's and Salmony's careers, their scholarship presents rather distinct art historical approaches: With's scholarship is marked by detailed formal analysis to describe minute changes in terms of stylistic developments; at the same time his framework largely remained indebted to the ideas of his early mentor Karl Ernst Osthaus, especially with regard to the concept of *ars una*, based on the assumption of art as an universal human form of expression. Salmony, on the other hand, who initially relied heavily on With's research, would – somewhat surprisingly – continue to pursue aspects of Strzygowski's project both in terms of his focus on Eurasian art and in terms of his broad, comparative approach. As discussed below, this reference to Strzygowski became even more explicit after Salmony had become professor at the Institute of Fine Arts.

### Strzygowski's East Asia

East Asian art played a prominent role in Strzygowski's campaign against what he conceived of as the art historical establishment of his time, including his colleagues in Vienna. These conflicts have been well-studied, primarily with a focus on late antique and early Christian art and labelled 'Orient-or-Rome debate'.<sup>29</sup> One of Strzygowski's reasons for embracing non-European and East Asian art history was to attack the humanistic and historical-philological foundations of art history in this debate. In addition, the allure of objects outside of contexts established by textual

<sup>28</sup> Other immigrants from Germany also contributed to establishing East Asian art history at US universities, such as Ludwig Bachhofer (1894-1976), who had studied with Heinrich Wölfflin and became professor for East Asian art history at the University of Chicago in 1935. For the impact of German sinologists, including art historians, on US academia, see Martin Kern, 'The Emigration of German Sinologists 1933-1945. Notes on the History and Historiography of Chinese Studies', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 188:4, 1998, 507-529.

<sup>29</sup> Named after Strzygowski 1901 publication *Orient or Rome (Orient oder Rom)*, a direct attack against the work of his Vienna colleague Franz Wickhoff. Scholarship on this debate is too rich to be quoted here; apart from the scholarship on Strzygowski referenced elsewhere in this article, relatively recent publications employing new angles include e.g. Talinn Grigor, "'Orient oder Rom?' Qajar "Aryan" Architecture and Strzygowski's Art History', *The Art Bulletin*, 89:3, September 2007, 562-590, and Carola Jäggi, 'Ex Oriente Lux: Josef Strzygowski und die "Orient oder Rom"-Debatte um 1900', *Sanat Tarihi Defterleri / Kunsthistorische Hefte*, special issue 6, Istanbul, 2002, 91-111.

historical records led Strzygowski eastward and engendered an approach based on geographical determinism and far-flung comparisons.<sup>30</sup>

The so-called 'eye-motif' on ancient Chinese bronzes (i.e. the *taotie*, a mask motif often created by two mythical beasts facing each other, thus combining a frontal mask with two profiles) presents a case for the role of Chinese art in Strzygowski's conflict with Franz Wickhoff (1853-1909), his predecessor in the Vienna art history department and main adversary in the Orient-or-Rome debate. In a 1898 article titled 'Concerning the historical unity of all art development (Über die historische Einheitlichkeit der gesamten Kunstentwicklung)' Wickhoff declared that this motif as well as the meander ornament on Chinese bronzes derived from Greek models and concluded that '... therefore, it is Attic art, that had victoriously advanced to China, and that created for this distant people its style'.<sup>31</sup> (fig. 1a and 1b) Strzygowski vehemently opposed this view; he argued instead that these motifs were indigenous to China and he would continue to address this issue until long after Wickhoff's death in 1909. This debate on the origins of a motif on Chinese bronzes was thus part of a much broader argument about the classical Greek foundations of European art, extending it to East Asia. Another point of contention with regard to the far-reaching influence of Mediterranean artistic traditions – in this case Hellenistic influences – was Buddhist art from Gandhara. While

<sup>30</sup> Strzygowski shared this preference for 'non-historical' artefacts with scholars and intellectuals at the time, as anthropology and pre-history gained popularity not only at universities but also among intellectuals more generally. For a discussion of how Strzygowski's scholarly focus intersected with the intellectual circle around the French journal *Documents* see Julia Kelly, 'Discipline and Indiscipline: The Ethnographies of Documents', *Papers of Surrealism* vol. 7, 2007. For a general account of anthropological perspectives in early world art history and Strzygowski's involvement see Susanne Leeb, *Die Kunst der Anderen. Weltkunst und die anthropologische Konfiguration der Moderne*, Frankfurt (Oder): Universitätsbibliothek der Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt, 2013, 239-243. (URL: <http://opus.kobv.de/euv/volltexte/2013/80/>, accessed November 2013.)

<sup>31</sup> 'Es ist also attische Kunst, die siegreich bis nach China vorgedrungen war, und die diesem fernen Volke seinen Stil schuf.' Franz Wickhoff, 'Über die historische Einheitlichkeit der gesamten Kunstentwicklung', *Abhandlungen, Vorträge und Anzeigen*, Berlin: Meyer & Jessen, 1913, 89. (First published in: Max Büdinger ed., *Festgaben zu Ehren Max Büdingers von seinen Freunden und Schülern*, Innsbruck: Wagner, 1898.) Wickhoff relied on an illustration of a Chinese bronze from Friedrich Hirth, *Über fremde Einflüsse in der chinesischen Kunst*, Munich and Leipzig: G. Hirth's Verlag, 1896. Hirth, however, had described early Chinese bronze decoration as displaying a 'strong national character' and stated that there was no evidence for foreign influences. Wickhoff instead argued that Greek ceramics had entered the market in massive amounts, leading to the foundation of Chinese art; the 'slanted eyes' on Greek objects must have appeared familiar to the Chinese and were thus readily appropriated. One should note that around 1900 knowledge of early Chinese bronzes was rather limited and their dates debated. The example of the 'eye-motif' is discussed by Matthew Rampley as a case for the orientalising strategies in the scholarship of the Vienna school within the context of the Austro-Hungarian empire, see Matthew Rampley, 'Art History and the Politics of Empire: Rethinking the Vienna School', *Art Bulletin* 41:4, December 2009, 456-459.

Strzygowski had to acknowledge its obvious Hellenistic heritage, he insisted that Gandhara was not representative of Indian art and he was vocal about his dislike for this 'provincial art', which had emerged after classical Greek art had been conquered by Semitic elements and declined as a consequence.<sup>32</sup>

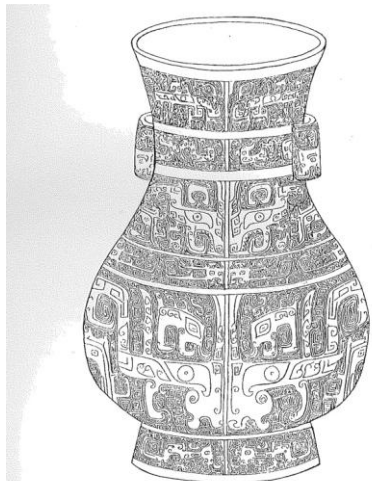


Fig. 4. Opfergefäß aus der Zeit der Dynastie Tschou (1122 bis 255 v. Chr.). — Nach einer Abbildung im Si-t's'ing-ku-kien. Aus Friedr. Hirth, *fremde Einflüsse* p. 4.

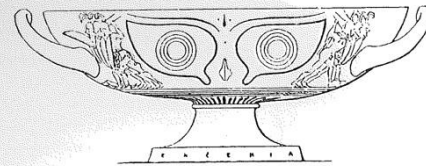


Fig. 5. Schale des Exekias in München. Aus Gehrhard's auserlesenen Vasenbildern.

Figure 1 a and 1b: Drawings of a Chinese bronze vessel and the cup from Exekia. After Franz Wickhoff, *Abhandlungen, Vorträge und Anzeigen*, Berlin: Meyer und Jessen, 1913, vol. 2, plates 4 and 5.

Both examples, Chinese bronzes and Gandharan art, serve in Strzygowski's 1913 programmatic essay 'East Asia within the framework of comparative art research (Ostasien im Rahmen der vergleichenden Kunstforschung)' to accuse the discipline of art history for repeating the same mistake it had made for European art: 'As much as Rome is supposedly the giving part everywhere in the occident, as much Hellas supposedly takes on this role everywhere in Asia. The falsity of such an assumption is not recognized, because art research is comfortably sitting in its European nest and has not freed itself from the assumptions of historical research.'<sup>33</sup> In order to demonstrate the independence of Indian and Chinese art, Strzygowski lines up the stupas of Barhut, Sanchi, and Amaravati with their sculptural

<sup>32</sup> See Michael Falser's article in this issue of the *Journal of Art Historiography* for a detailed discussion of Strzygowski's evaluation of Gandharan art. See also Julia Orell, 'The Emergence of East Asian Art History in the 1920s: Karl With (1891-1980) and the Problem of Gandhara', in *The Making of the Humanities. Volume III: The Modern Humanities*, edited by Rens Bod, Jaap Maat, and This Weststeijn, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014, 431-448.

<sup>33</sup> 'Wie im Abendlande überall Rom der gebende Teil sein soll, so in Asien überall Hellas. Die Verkehrtheit einer solchen Annahme wird nur deshalb nicht empfunden, weil die Kunstforschung behaglich in ihrem europäischen Neste hockt, und sich nicht von den Anschauungen der Geschichte freimacht.' Josef Strzygowski, 'Ostasien im Rahmen der vergleichenden Kunstforschung', *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, 2:1, 1913, 6.

decoration as examples of non-Hellenistic, ‘pure Indian art’, and a landscape by the Chinese painter Gu Kaizhi (active late fifth century), which demonstrates that pre-Buddhist Chinese art had independently arrived at a representational art form comparable to Rembrandt and Böcklin in its expressive qualities.<sup>34</sup>

The essay was published shortly after Strzygowski had founded the Section for East Asian Art History at the University of Vienna, and its overall aim was to explicate his ‘systematic’, comparative method for the case of East Asian art. The five analytical categories in Strzygowski’s ‘organic system’ are 1. material and technique, 2. subject (Gegenstand), 3. shape (Gestalt), 4. form, and 5. content, which he summarizes in a table (fig. 2) and explicates for the case of Chinese architecture.<sup>35</sup>

I. Material und Technik. Erreger: Schaffen. Ziel: Können.	Welt		
	Bedeutung	Erscheinung	
Mensch {	Objektive Auseinandersetzung	2. Sache (Zweck), Gegenstand. Erreger: Kultur. Ziel: Deutung.	3. Gestalt. Erreger: Natur. Ziel: Darstellung.
	Subjektives Wollen	5. Inhalt. Erreger: Seele. Ziel: Ausdruck.	4. Form. Erreger Sinne. Ziel: Wirkung.

Figure 2 Strzygowski’s table illustrating his system of a comparative approach in art history. After Strzygowski, ‘Ostasien im Rahmen vergleichender Kunstforschung’, *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, II:1 11.

<sup>34</sup> Strzygowski, ‘Ostasien im Rahmen der vergleichenden Kunstforschung’, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Strzygowski, ‘Ostasien im Rahmen der vergleichenden Kunstforschung’, 11-15.

Strzygowski would later elaborate his ‘system’. The most extensive discussion of his method and what Strzygowski conceived to be its strictly scientific basis, appeared in Josef Strzygowski, *Die Krisis der Geisteswissenschaften, vorgeführt am Beispiele der Forschung über bildende Kunst: Ein grundsätzlicher Rahmenversuch*, Wien: Schroll, 1923, 317. However, his categories remain rather vague and their application to specific cases do not result in new insights, but rather lead to a confusing repetitiveness in their discussion. Further research on Strzygowski’s ‘method’ could attempt to situate it more clearly within an inter-disciplinary discourse of his time. A brief outline of the ‘method’ is given in Eva Frodl-Kraft, ‘Eine Aporie und der Versuch ihrer Deutung. Josef Strzygowski – Julius v. Schlosser’, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, v. XLII, 1989, 33-35. The recent dissertation by Heinz Schödl lays out the development of Strzygowski’s method in detail, yet without a situating it in a broader context, see Heinz Schödl, *Josef Strzygowski - Zur Entwicklung Seines Denkens*, Ph.D. Thesis: University of Vienna, 2011. (URL: [http://othes.univie.ac.at/17238/1/2011-05-18\\_9706938.pdf](http://othes.univie.ac.at/17238/1/2011-05-18_9706938.pdf), accessed June 2015). Christopher Wood has called the method ‘a primitive, non-philosophical predecessor of Panofsky’s famous iconographic table. In our eyes this is not a method; Strzygowski’s ideas about representation and meaning were common opinion. (... - ein primitiver, unphilosophischer Vorreiter von Panofsky’s berühmter ikonographischer Tabelle. In unseren Augen ist dies keine “Methode”; Strzygowskis Ideen über Darstellung und Bedeutung waren Allgemeingut).’ Christopher Wood, ‘Strzygowski und Riegl in den Vereinigten Staaten’, 218.

The systematic study of East Asian art should result in the identification of the multiple 'origins' of forms<sup>36</sup>, and it would take into consideration the environmental conditions and resulting aesthetic sensibilities of various geographical regions, e.g. with regard to preferred materials, as well as the function and religious context of objects. Within this framework, East Asian monuments and objects offer to Strzygowski the potential '... to force us to finally bridge the gaps between East and West and between South and North and to realise that the centre of dispersing power is not to be found in the Mediterranean alone, but that the movement instead generates from a number of sources and a great number of channels that connect these original streams.'<sup>37</sup> Strzygowski's 'struggle against Rome' appears to be, yet again, the implicit driving force in the study of East Asian art.

Strzygowski further developed his vision of multiple sources and channels on 'his path' further eastward: Like a carefully planned military campaign this path led him from Rome and Byzantium via the hinterlands of the Mediterranean to Iran, into the Altai-region, to Armenia, and further to Central and East Asia, as described in his 1916 short booklet *The Visual Arts of the East. A Survey of the Major Developments with Importance for Europe (Die Bildende Kunst des Ostens. Ein Überblick über die für Europa bedeutungsvollen Hauptströmungen)*.<sup>38</sup> This publication also encapsulates the geographical determinism and racial foundations regarding Asian art: His main theme is the connection between Europe, specifically Northern Europe, and Asia, based on the assumption of an 'Aryan axis' (Strzygowski also calls it the 'Indo-Germanic axis'). In Strzygowski's view, this axis connected classical Greek art with Gallic art, and extended via the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea to Central Asia, Iran, and India. Strzygowski further characterises the artistic sensibility along this axis as displaying an 'introvert personality', which constituted a spiritual, inner link between the areas reaching from the Baltic Sea to India.<sup>39</sup> The movement of people sharing racial characteristics and thus artistic sensibilities – rather than the transmission of artistic forms and motifs across space and time – determined (artistic) relations across Europe and Asia in Strzygowski's view. Moreover, he articulates the political implications of these views for his own time,

<sup>36</sup> Georg Vasold has convincingly argued that Strzygowski's urge to search for origins, purity, and essence is one of the distinguishing features in his approach when compared with Alois Riegl's interest in change and influences. See Vasold, 'Riegl, Strzygowski, and the Development of Art', 110.

<sup>37</sup> '...daß sie uns zwingen, endlich einmal die Brücke zwischen Ost und West, Süd und Nord zu schlang und uns bewußt zu warden, daß das Ausbreitungszentrum der Kraft nicht nur am Mittelmeere liegt, die Bewegung vielmehr von mehreren Quellpunkten und sehr vielen diese originellen Ströme verbindenden Kanälen ausgeht.' Strzygowski, 'Ostasien im Rahmen der vergleichenden Kunstforschung', 8.

<sup>38</sup> Josef Strzygowski, *Die Bildende Kunst des Ostens. Ein Überblick über die für Europa bedeutungsvollen Hauptströmungen*, Leipzig: Verlag von Dr. Werner Klinkhardt, 1916.

<sup>39</sup> Strzygowski, *Die Bildende Kunst des Ostens*, 4-5. As Susanne Leeb has pointed out, Strzygowski followed popular myths about common Indo-Germanic heritage of large parts of Europe and Asia, see Leeb, *Die Kunst der Anderen*, 240.

i.e. in the midst of the 1914-1918 war, when he declares that German dreams of world domination were an expression of a repressed former bond with the world.<sup>40</sup>

East Asian art enters the book in the last chapter on the 'Aryan spirit in Chinese landscape painting', thus suggesting an extension of the 'inner line' between Europa and Asia to China based on Indo-Germanic traits.<sup>41</sup> Strzygowski asks whether the commonality he observes in Chinese and Northern European landscape painting, namely subjective expression, can be explained by a common Aryan heritage or whether they developed independently. He declines to answer the question, yet his suggestive tone – he also suggests that a shift of the cultural centre from Northern to Southern China may have led to an encounter with Indo-Germanic elements – implies that he intended to direct his readers to think so.

Strzygowski's 1930 publication *The Fine Arts of Asia in Case Studies, Their Essence and Their Developments. An Attempt by Josef Strzygowski (Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben, ihr Wesen und ihre Entwicklung. Ein Versuch von Josef Strzygowski)* is his most ambitious attempt to cover Asian art comprehensively by bringing together the results of previous studies in an ever more elaborate version of his method.<sup>42</sup> It is impossible to summarise the various, at times intersecting, at times conflicting, lines of argument that he applies to a large range of objects from all over Asia, moreover including comparisons from European art. He groups objects from disparate contexts in seemingly random combinations, e.g. to describe the appearance of a certain motif without necessarily suggesting actual connections between the chosen examples. The structure of the book follows his 'systematic' approach: Divided into four big parts, Strzygowski proceeds from the basic survey and description of the most relevant monuments ('Einleitung: Denkmalkunde in Stichproben') to the analysis of their 'characteristics' (Wesen) and 'development' (Entwicklung), ending with the 'beholder' (Beschauer)<sup>43</sup>. The part on characteristics subsumes the five analytical categories outlined above (material and techniques, subject, shape, form, and content), whereas the part on development is mostly concerned with the

<sup>40</sup> Strzygowski, *Die Bildende Kunst des Ostens*, 71. The book was written during the 1914-1918 war and ends with a call for peace in which Strzygowski expresses his hope that the ancient routes between Europe and Asia, and thus a new Eurasia will be re-established under German leadership. Strzygowski, *Die Bildende Kunst des Ostens*, 76-78.

<sup>41</sup> 'Arischer Geist in chinesischer Landschaftsmalerei'; Strzygowski, *Die Bildende Kunst des Ostens*, 71-76.

<sup>42</sup> Josef Strzygowski, *Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben, ihr Wesen und ihre Entwicklung. Ein Versuch*, Augsburg: Filser, 1930. Previous book publications, which he considered milestones in his trajectory eastward were his *Altai-Iran und Völkerwanderung. Ziergeschichtliche Untersuchungen über den Eintritt der Wander- und Nordvölker in die Treibhäuser geistigen Lebens*, Leipzig: Hinrich'se Buchhandlung, 1917; and his *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa*, Wien: Anton Schroll, 1918.

<sup>43</sup> The last part on the beholder does not address, as one may expect, a history of reception, but discusses recent and current approaches to Asian art. It is basically an attack against a variety of scholars and institutions as well as a promotion of the achievements at the Vienna department of art history.

distinction between 'static powers (beharrende Kräfte)' and 'will powers (Willenskräfte)'. Strzygowski juxtaposes the former as a positively connoted permanence of cultures, determined by location, environment, and blood, with the negatively connoted change of civilisations, dependent on state form, religion, and educational system. Throughout the book, he emphasizes the importance of the 'static powers', as only they allowed access to the original, essential characteristics of the art of a region, which would be transformed and diluted in an encounter with the 'will powers'.<sup>44</sup> This distinction is further mapped onto the geographic distinction between North and South, in which the North represents the static powers and the South the 'hothouses of civilisations'.

The main impetus of this book is to explore the artistic achievements of Northern and Central Asia – 'Asia proper' (eigentliches Asien) in Strzygowski's geography – and the role of this region in transferring artistic forms and motifs between North and South, East and West. According to Strzygowski, the arts of Northern Asia had been neglected, similar to the neglected Northern elements in European art, thus preventing a true understanding of Asian art. Consequently, large parts are dedicated to the study of metal artefacts, textiles, and ornament from Eurasia, giving prominence to nomadic art and the 'tent cultures', whose impact Strzygowski traces across large regions. Geographical distinctions between regions within Asia establish a framework to identify regional characteristics and areas of exchange and transfer. The most important division is, as already indicated, between North and South, which largely overlaps with Strzygowski's distinction between 'Asia proper' ('das eigentliche Asien') and the 'peripheral regions' ('vorgelagerte Gebiete').<sup>45</sup> The position of East Asia within this framework is ambiguous: On the one hand, East Asia belongs to the 'peripheral regions' together with South and South-West Asia. On the other hand, Strzygowski discusses East Asia as part of 'Asia proper' together with Western Asia, Northern and Middle Asia. He argues that East Asia was a mediator between 'Asia proper' and its periphery until the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), thus introducing a rare temporal, or historical, division into his overall spatial order.

Strzygowski's declared aim is to identify the artistic achievements of Northern Asia and nomadic cultures, as they present to him the original, essential Asia. The major difference between the artistic traditions of North and South, in both Europe and Asia, is according to Strzygowski the absence of representations of the human figure – he calls this 'image-less' ('bildlos') – in the North, which instead relied on ornament. Whereas European Northern art is characterized by geometric ornament, the Northern art of Asia used ornament based on animal forms.<sup>46</sup> East Asian art

<sup>44</sup> Strzygowski, *Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben*, 525.

<sup>45</sup> The first part of the book ('Einleitung: Denkmalkunde in Stichproben') is dedicated to the definition of these geographic divisions and a survey of the major monuments and objects traditionally associated with them. For the map illustrating the geographic divisions, see the article by Michael Falser in this issue.

<sup>46</sup> This claim is repeated throughout the book, see e.g. Strzygowski, *Asiens Bildende Kunst in*

takes on the role of exemplifying the tension between Northern ornament and Southern figurative representation in Strzygowski's overall argument, though this is rarely made explicit and the examples are scattered throughout the various parts of the book. One instance is Strzygowski's claim about the dominance of the line in East Asian art: He observes this emphasis of linearity in stone carvings from the Han dynasty and brings it up again in his discussion of Japanese woodcut prints to argue that line never lost its appeal and that formal qualities were more important than the figure in East Asia. Further examples, which extend his claim historically and geographically, include early Chinese and Japanese figure painting, murals from Turfan, and the fifth-century Chinese painter Gu Kaizhi:

We Europeans think that only architecture and the decorative arts are without representation; but in Asia also sculpting and painting can do without representation, i.e. without the apparent spatial depth required by naturalistic representation. It is significant to observe, how Asian art helps itself, when inspired to represent naturalistically by the South. (...) Asia proper, to which China originally belonged, represents with line and colour. (...) When the Asian is urged towards representation, and is independent in the choice of artistic means, he nevertheless sticks to line and colour – just like the Northern European during the “Middle Ages” – and never falls into the plain imitation of nature.<sup>47</sup>

How misleadingly his argument is at times constructed – whether knowingly or not – becomes obvious in the case of a Chinese Buddhist stele, which Strzygowski shows as evidence for the dominance of text over figurative representation in early Chinese Buddhist art. However, his illustration shows the back of the stele instead of its front, which is filled with figures (fig. 3a and 3b).<sup>48</sup> Other East Asian objects familiar from earlier publications by Strzygowski reappear, such as ancient Chinese bronze vessels: The ‘eye-motif’ is discussed again and Wickhoff's claim about its Greek origin rejected one more time. Now Strzygowski proposes that the ‘eye-motif’ was an indicator for artistic relations within Asia as he moves swiftly from the eye of god to textual sources concerning Chinese paintings coming alive after the eyes

---

*Stichproben*, 93.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Wir Europäer glauben, daß nur das Bauen und das kunsthandwerkliche Schaffen ohne Darstellung bestehen; für Asien gilt aber, daß auch Bilden und Malen ohne Darstellung bzw. ohne jene scheinbare Tiefenausdehnung auskommen, die jede naturnahe Darstellung erfordert. Es ist nun hochbedutsam, zu beobachten, wie sich die asiatische Kunst hilft, wenn sie vom Süden her zur naturnahen Darstellung angeregt wird. (...) Das eigentliche Asien, zu dem ursprünglich auch China gehörte, stellt mit Linie und Farbe dar. (...) Wenn der Asiate zur Darstellung gedrängt wird und in der Wahl der wirkenden Mittel selbständig ist, dann bleibt er wie der Nordeuropäer im „Mittelalter“ trotzdem bei Linie und Fabre, verfällt nie ganz der platten Naturnachahmung.’ Strzygowski, *Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben*, 466-469.

<sup>48</sup> Strzygowski, *Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben*, 255, fig. 244.



Julia Orell Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony

had been painted in, and he travels further in pointing out that the eye had also been a favourite motif with religious meaning in the arts of the Pacific.<sup>49</sup> In a different section, he discusses bronzes with animal motifs from the Caucasus and Siberia, suggesting a relationship between China and Northern Eurasia and thus the originally Northern character of early Chinese art.<sup>50</sup>



244. Berlin, Ostasiatisches Museum:  
Stele von 557.



Figure 3a and 3b Votive stele of the Yan family, Northern Qi dynasty, dated 557, limestone, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, a. After Strzygowski, *Die bildende Kunst Asiens in Stichproben*, fig. 244 (view of the backside) b. Front view, Museum Rietberg, Zurich

Further examples of East Asian objects could be listed here, including the seemingly random juxtapositions of motifs across Asia, sometimes also including examples from European art, but ultimately, they lead to the same conclusion: Strzygowski's foray into Asia and East Asia served his narrative about the dominance of Northern art. Relying on research undertaken by others, East Asia became one instance to showcase the struggle between North and South, between the 'static powers' and the 'will powers'. Strzygowski's 'global map' was in the end a means to support his arguments about European art: 'My own attitude towards

<sup>49</sup> Josef Strzygowski, *Asiens Bildende Kunst*, 288-290.

<sup>50</sup> Strzygowski, *Asiens Bildende Kunst*, 381.

art and the history of art is an attempt to understand European art by extra-European standards.<sup>51</sup>

### **Karl With: Buddhist art, transcendence, and *ars una***

Karl With's autobiography relates very little information about how he studied East Asian art in Vienna and remains silent about his perception of Strzygowski's methodology and its ideological assumptions.<sup>52</sup> Archival materials reveal that there were conflicts between Strzygowski and his students and that With left Vienna after finishing his dissertation against Strzygowski's hopes.<sup>53</sup>

With's publications, his dissertation, books and articles from the early 1920s, focus on Buddhist art from Japan, China, and Southeast Asia; many of them present studies of artworks recently assembled in private and public collections. His approach to the materials is marked by detailed formal analyses with the aim of describing formal developments over time in terms of period and regional styles. This detailed examination of very focused groups of objects presents an approach decidedly different from Strzygowski, who – despite meticulous descriptions – was not interested in stylistic developments or chronologies in his preference for comparisons across large regions and time periods based on rather loose notions of motif or form.

With's dissertation, for instance, identifies six major stylistic groups, which are even further distinguished, of Japanese Buddhist sculpture from the Nara region for the relatively short time period between the early seventh and the early eighth century.<sup>54</sup> The formal properties in his analysis are the sculptures' physicality ('Körperlichkeit') versus basic geometrical forms, the relationship between body and drapery, open or closed/unified silhouette, the relationship between frontal and side views and between parts and whole, the suggestion of movement, and surface treatment.<sup>55</sup> In conjunction with the description of stylistic developments, With's

<sup>51</sup> Josef Strzygowski, 'India's position in the Art of Asia', *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* vol. 1, 1933, 8 and 17.

<sup>52</sup> With describes Strzygowski as a relentless personality, without 'social graces', who was completely absorbed in his work and a 'slave-driver' to his students. Yet, he also acknowledges Strzygowski's 'immense drive and revolutionary achievements as an art historian'; see With, *Autobiography of Ideas*, 64.

<sup>53</sup> In a letter from January 1919 Heinrich Glück (1889-1930), who was Strzygowski's assistant and specialized in Islamic art, reports that Strzygowski had been angered by With's decision to leave Vienna. In addition, the letter reveals that Glück was rather unhappy working for Strzygowski, but continued in the hope to become lecturer. See *Karl With Papers*, Getty Research Institute, Box 2, Folder 3.

<sup>54</sup> He summarizes the main features of these stylistic groups in the conclusion to his dissertation; see With, *Buddhistische Plastik in Japan*, 200-202.

<sup>55</sup> Earlier German-language studies of Japanese Buddhist sculpture had attempted a similar narrative, but had to rely on limited resources of photographic materials available in Japanese publications and few pieces in European collections. For instance, Curt Glaser had

main question is how the Buddhist concept of transcendence was translated into a representation of the human figure. He perceives a dialectics of representation in the tension between transcendence and bodily presence in Buddhist art: Buddhism was based on a transcendent concept of god and thus required an artistic form that separated itself from the empirical world. At the same time, Buddhist art focused on the historical Buddha, his incarnations, bodhisattvas, monks, and disciples, thus requiring the representation of the human figure.<sup>56</sup> As a consequence With locates the highest quality of Buddhist sculpture not in a naturalistic rendition of the human figure but instead in a fully sculptural, yet transcendent rendition of the physical presence of the Buddha.

This positive evaluation of non-naturalistic representation displays parallels to Strzygowski's valorisation of the non-representational character of Northern art but is based on different assumptions. In the introduction to his dissertation With implicitly credits his professor by pointing out the importance of 'scientific art research' (*wissenschaftliche Kunstforschung*, i.e. Strzygowski's term for his methodological project) in enabling a new perspective on naturalistic representation:

It was decisive (for scientific art research) to free itself from the tyranny of a lopsidedly conceived idea of development, which understood the forms of archaic art production only as the primitive preconditions for an art shaped according to naturalistic concepts. Having recognized that here it is the matter of a principally different 'will to art' (*Kunstwollen*) instead of assuming a single, continuous developmental scheme, the basis has been built for a type of research that is able to encompass the complete field of artistic expression and to understand its laws. It will particularly contribute to broadening the Western European into a truly human consciousness.<sup>57</sup>

---

analysed the formal development of Buddhist sculpture with a focus on drapery; see Curt Glaser, 'Die Entwicklung der Gewanddarstellung in der ostasiatischen Plastik', *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift*, 3, 1914/15, 393-423. For a study of how With's photographs reflect his formal approach, see Yasunaga, 'Dento to Kindai no Hazama de', 137-143.

<sup>56</sup> The same ideas are articulated more succinctly for Chinese Buddhist sculpture, e.g. in With, *Bildwerke Ost- und Südasiens*, 14.

<sup>57</sup> 'Es war für sie (die wissenschaftliche Kunstforschung) von entscheidender Bedeutung, dass sie sich von der Tyrannei des einseitig aufgefassten Entwicklungsgedankens freimachte, der in den Formen archaischen Kunstschaffens nur die primitiven Vorstufen für eine im Sinne der natürlichen Anschauung gebildete Kunst sah. Mit der Erkenntnis, dass es sich hier um ein prinzipiell anders geartetes Kunstwollen und nicht nur um eine einzige durchlaufende Entwicklungsreihe handle, legte sie den Grund für eine Forschung, die das Gesamtgebiet künstlerischer Äusserungen zu umfassen und in ihrer Gesetzmässigkeit zu erkennen im Stande ist. Sie wird vornehmlich dazu beitragen, das westeuropäische Bewusstsein zu einem wahrhaft menschlichen zu erweitern.' With, *Buddhistische Plastik in Japan*, 10.

To combine references to Strzygowski and to Riegl's *Kunstwollen* in his dissertation may appear dangerous considering the enmity between the two. But while Strzygowski criticised Riegl for having ignored the East and for sticking to the humanist method, he commended the general direction of Riegl's research, especially his study of ornament.<sup>58</sup> Besides calling upon his teacher with regard to a critique of universal laws of formal developments, With also relied on notions of cultural geography as determining artistic production, referring e.g. to the geographer Georg Hanslik, who was promoted by Strzygowski. With establishes a general cultural-geographic understanding of Japan based on Hanslik, describing it as an isolated island, which was however dependent on and entirely entangled with the mainland (i.e. China).<sup>59</sup>

With's and Strzygowski's different agendas with regard to the notion of alternative artistic traditions, which did not aim for naturalistic representation, can also be observed for the role of Gandhara in the development of East Asian Buddhist art. Similar to Strzygowski, With sought to demonstrate the independence of Chinese and Japanese Buddhist art from Gandharan, and thus from Hellenistic, influences. In With's account, however, the independence from Gandharan art intersected with a formal development, which found its highest expression in the transcendent rendition of the physical presence of the Buddha, first achieved in China in the fifth century. The task for Chinese Buddhist sculpture, when China's indigenous sculptural traditions encountered Buddhist motifs as well as visual and material forms transmitted from India, was in With's view 'the appropriation and formation of a 'national Chinese style.'<sup>60</sup> His descriptive analysis of a Buddha head in von der Heydt's collection illustrates his narrative of the emergence of this 'pure national style' in terms of formal features (fig. 4). With presents this head as exemplary for the 'sincere Wei-style' of the mid-fifth century, which demonstrated how rapidly China purged foreign forms and found its own style. Characteristic for

<sup>58</sup> See e.g. Strzygowski, *Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben*, 747. The literature on Riegl and Strzygowski is extremely rich and tends to emphasise the differences between their approaches; see e.g. Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity'; Vasold, 'Riegl, Strzygowski, and the Development of Art'; or Wood, 'Riegl und Strzygowski in den Vereinigten Staaten'.

<sup>59</sup> More generally, With points out Hanslik's eye-opening research on cultural-geographic conditions, see With, *Buddhistische Plastik in Japan*, 20 and 199. Strzygowski apparently had supported Hanslik in taking up a lecturer position in Vienna and in 1915 Hanslik founded the Institute for Cultural Studies (Institut für Kulturforschung) in Vienna; see Strzygowski, 'Heinrich Glück', 165. Hanslik promoted a determinist environmentalism and argued for the dominance of the 'natural nation' over politically constructed nations, especially with regard to Austro-Hungarian identity. See Kimberly A. Smith, 'Schiele, Hanslik, and the Allure of the Natural Nation', *Austrian History Yearbook* no. 33, 2002, 178-182. With would remember Hanslik as 'by far the most fascinating and also the most enigmatic personality' in Vienna in his autobiography: 'We all were under the spell of his visions, ideas and down-to-earth imagination, his all-embracing views of factual observations and poetic fancy.' See With, *Autobiography of Idea*, 94.

<sup>60</sup> With, *Bildwerke Ost- und Südasiens*, 14.

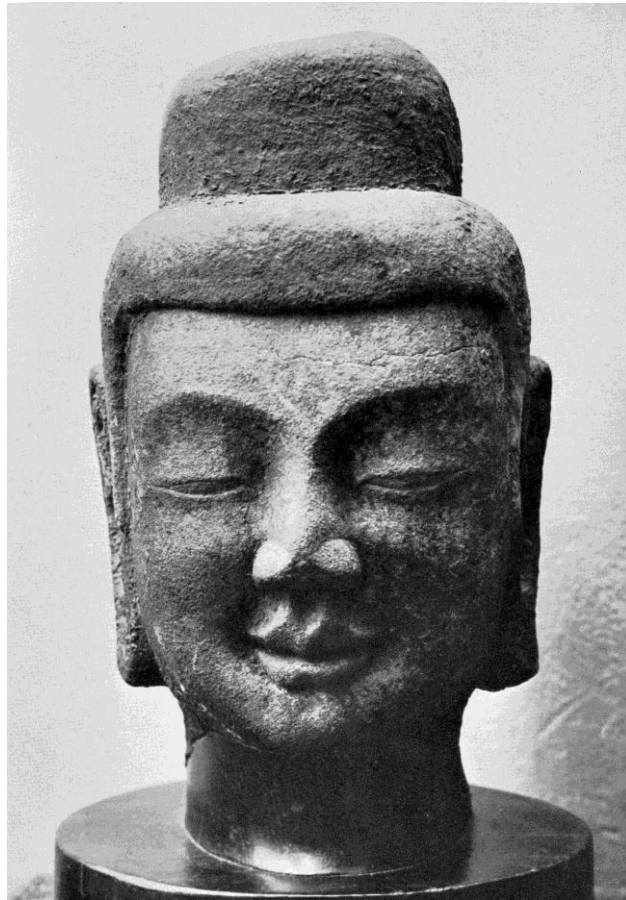


Figure 4 Head of a Buddha, sandstone, Wei dynasty, fifth century. After With, *Bildwerke Ost- und Südasiens aus der Sammlung Yi Yuan*, Basel: Schwabe, 1924, plate 22.

this development are, in With's account, the massive, rectangular form of the head, simple lines, and its frontal and architectonic structure. Further following With, the head's expression is solemn, oriented inwards, non-sensual, and at the same time sculpturally vivid: 'In such a head the task of transcendental, monumental sculpture is fulfilled.'<sup>61</sup> This Chinese 'national style' presented not only a departure from inferior Indian and Central Asian antecedents, but established more properly Buddhist forms. Gandharan Buddhist art was to With 'a late Hellenistic provincial art that made use of Buddhist motifs while completely ignoring the Buddhist spirit. (...) Its weak and bloated, bodily and individualized forms have nothing to do with the transcendental spirit of Buddhism.'<sup>62</sup> While these characterisations are not based on racial assumptions as in Strzygowski's argument, With subscribes to

<sup>61</sup> With, *Bildwerke Ost- und Südasiens*, 15 and 46-47. With compares this example with an earlier Buddha head, which he characterises as naturalistic, of sensual heaviness, with a saturated and sedate expression that is evidence of 'central Asian composite art' (*zentralasiatische Mischkunst*, a term that implies impurity). See the entry for figure 7, plates 20 and 21 in the same volume.

<sup>62</sup> With, *Kunstwerke Ost- und Südasiens*, 14.

essentialising distinctions between the arts of China and India: Whereas India is in his eyes characterised by a great variety of styles and religious ideas that lead to composite types (*Mischtypen*) in art, he believes that China was more culturally unified and thus developed a wealth of differentiated artistic forms that follow developmental laws. India remained a-historical and dominated by its tropical environment; China on the other hand, because of the cohesion of its people and culture, could become a universal world culture.<sup>63</sup>

With would further elaborate his narrative about the evolving transcendence of form in Buddhist art for other case studies. His account of works in the Frankfurt Municipal Gallery (Frankfurter Städtische Galerie, today in the collection of the Liebighaus) can here serve as an example for how he related formal changes to spiritual concepts. He locates the beginnings of the Chinese national style during the Wei dynasty (i.e. the Northern Wei dynasty, 386-534), emerging in the fifth-century cave temples of Yungang, where foreign influences were still dominant, and maturing in the sculpture of the slightly later Longmen cave temples and during the subsequent Sui dynasty (581-618).<sup>64</sup> With then traces the further development to seventh-century Japan, where he first observes an even more reduced, geometric, architectonic, and condensed style, in which 'absolute purity and un-relational self-sufficiency of form correspond with the mystical, transcendental content.'<sup>65</sup> This is countered by a second phase of a more fully sculptural treatment, which he characterises as dynamic, free, decorative, and sensual. His summary of these developments recognises a 'dis-embodiment and total spiritualisation of form' on the one hand, and 'the embodiment and animated potentialisation of sensual form,' on the other hand.<sup>66</sup>

With's search for transcendence in sculpture was furthermore related to his investment in the arts of his own time: 'It was only the search of the soul of our own age, it was an artistic longing urging away from constrictions or chaos toward clarity of sculptural greatness: it was only a cosmopolitan attitude that opened the path to appreciate the genius of sculptural creation in China.'<sup>67</sup> The context for the spiritual and formal link between ancient East Asian and modern European sculpture are the artistic and intellectual circles With was part of, especially the idea

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. With, *Bildwerke Ost- und Südasiens*, 9.

<sup>64</sup> The concept of 'Sinicisation' has had a long career in studies of Chinese Buddhist art, and has survived, despite growing criticism, to describe changes in the sculptures from the Yungang to the Longmen caves similar to With's account. More recently, scholars of Chinese Buddhist art have recast the process of Sinicisation as a conscious, political effort of the non-Han Chinese Northern Wei dynasty rulers in their patronage of Buddhist art; see e.g. Dorothy C. Wong, *Chinese Steles: Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist Uses of a Symbolic Form*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004, 53-60.

<sup>65</sup> '...; die absolute Reinheit und die unbezügliche Eigenwertigkeit der Formgebung korrespondiert mit dem mystisch übersinnlichen Gehalt.' With, 'Chinesische Plastik in der Frankfurter Städtischen Galerie', 16.

<sup>66</sup> With, *Chinesische Plastik in der Frankfurter Städtischen Galerie*, 16.

<sup>67</sup> With, 'Chinesische Plastik in der Frankfurter Städtischen Galerie', 6.

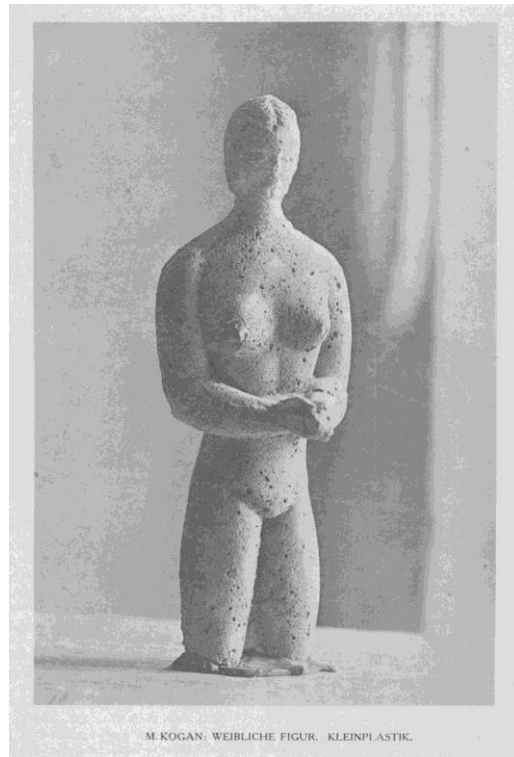


Figure 5 Moissej Kogan, *Female Figure*. After With, 'Kogan besucht Deutschland', *Das Kunstblatt* 6:11, 1922.

of *ars una* as advanced by his mentor Osthaus. In his obituary for Osthaus, With takes up the idea of the cosmopolitan attitude that enabled an understanding of Chinese art: The modern cosmopolite (*Großstadt Mensch*) – detached from his rural roots and deplete of spiritual traditions due to the dominance of mechanisation – is in search of a new homeland (*Heimat*) that he acquires through an intellectual and spiritual appropriation of the appearances the whole globe has to offer. This diversity is then condensed into a spiritual experience, which creates a new unity.<sup>68</sup> How With related his views on Buddhist sculpture to the art produced during his time is evident in his writing on the sculptures of Moissej Kogan (1879-1943), a friend from his student days in Munich and a protégé of Osthaus. In an article on the occasion of an exhibition of Kogan's work in Germany, With summarizes the effect of Kogan's sculpture as a 'silent transcendence',<sup>69</sup> thus implying a relation to the transcendental forms of Buddhist art he also found in fifth- and sixth-century China as well as in seventh-century Japan (fig. 5).<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Karl With, 'Karl Ernst Osthaus', *Das Kunstblatt*, 5, 1921, 164.

<sup>69</sup> Karl With, 'Kogan besucht Deutschland', *Das Kunstblatt*, 6:11, 1922.

<sup>70</sup> With's search for transcendence in Buddhist as well as in modern European art could take on a personal and esoteric tone. For instance, he composed a series of poems in response to von der Heydt's collection, published with woodcut illustrations by Kogan. See Karl With, *Jizo*, Amsterdam: Yi Yuan, 1922. He would later call this publication a 'folly of his youth' (*Jugendsünde*); see With, *Autobiography of Ideas*, 46. Another instance is the small booklet

With's work on Buddhist art presents only a small part of his scholarship on East Asian art, not even taking into account his publications on Southeast Asian art, European artists or modern architecture and design. His emphasis on detailed formal analysis in order to develop a narrative of evolving styles can be observed in other works as well. For instance, a short publication on Chinese stone carvings and sculpture relies on a set of dualistically conceived descriptive terms (ornamental – illustrative; abstract line – figurative drawing; flatness – distinction between figure and ground; symbolic – narrative) to analyse a variety of examples from different time periods and contexts to describe formal developments.<sup>71</sup> Despite the emphasis on formal properties, contextual considerations are not absent from With's work: In the catalogue for von der Heydts Yi Yuan collection, for example, he distinguishes between three groups of objects: ancestor worship and funerary arts, Buddhist sculpture, and popular beliefs and official cults (mostly Daoist themes).<sup>72</sup> When specific objects resist inclusion into his narrative of formal developments, With neither forces them into the narrative nor does he question it: For animal sculptures from Chinese spirit roads he suggests that their apparent 'existence outside art history' has two reasons. First, their specific spatial context as freestanding monuments facing the landscape, and secondly, the supposedly unchanging traditions of Chinese funerary art grant their resistance to stylistic analysis.<sup>73</sup>

When Strzygowski referred to With's work, he cast aside the meticulous formal analyses, stylistic sequences, and notions of Buddhist transcendence. Instead, he used With's photographs from the research trip to Japan in order to support his own claims within a broad comparative framework. Before With had even published them himself, Strzygowski included two examples from the photographs in his *Altai-Iran und Völkerwanderung* to show specific types of ornament in the halos of the sculptures within a larger argument about the origin of the arabesque in Chinese-Turkestan.<sup>74</sup> In *Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben*, two examples from With's work appear, now to illustrate that Japanese sculpture had developed an 'art

---

*Asiatische Monumentalskulptur*, which mostly consists of photographic illustrations and With's preface, which introduces some of his views about regional differences in Buddhist sculpture – along the lines of a cultural geography as outlined above – but mostly circles around themes of emptiness, nothingness, and salvation. See Karl With, *Asiatische Monumentalplastik*, Berlin: Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, n.d.

<sup>71</sup> Karl With, *Chinesische Steinschnitte*, Leipzig: Seemann, 1922. The works discussed include objects from the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne, from Osthaus' collection, and examples published by the French sinologist Édouard Chavannes.

<sup>72</sup> With, *Bildwerke Ost- und Südasiens*, 1924, 10.

<sup>73</sup> With, *Bildwerke Ost- und Südasiens*, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Strzygowski, *Altai-Iran und Völkerwanderung*, 119-121, fig. 116, 117, 118. Unfortunately, Strzygowski had been unaware of the fact that the halos were later additions and not original to the seventh-century sculptures. When he noticed the mistake, he wrote an upset letter to With asking for help in resolving the situation in order not to risk the reputation of his department, and especially the relatively new section for East Asian art. The (fragmented) letter is kept in the *Karl With Papers*, Getty Research Institute, Box 3, Folder 8.



for art's sake movement' comparable to Quattrocento Italy.<sup>75</sup>

### Alfred Salmony: Comparative approach and cultural diffusion

Strikingly similar to Strzygowksi, Salmony used With's work on Japanese Buddhist sculpture in his dissertation in a comparison with medieval French sculpture.<sup>76</sup> The range of objects discussed in the dissertation consists of stele, cave temple sculpture, as well as stone and bronze sculptures from China and Japan from the fifth to the eighth century for East Asia.<sup>77</sup> Europe is represented within a much narrower geographical and historical framework, focusing on Southern French Romanesque sculpture from the twelfth century, mostly in architectural contexts. Salmony justifies this difference in regional and historical scope by arguing that while the general developments in East and West followed similar lines, artistic changes and historical shifts occurred in a more rapid fashion in Europe than they did in the East: 'When juxtaposing Europe – East Asia one must juxtapose decades of the occidental with centuries of the East Asian processes.'<sup>78</sup> Apparently, he had no doubt that his understanding of East Asian history, religion, and art was as complete as that of Western Europe and that formal developments followed the same general patterns.

The individual chapters of the dissertation are ordered by the three stages of formal development described by Salmony: From *formation*, i.e. the departure from linear representation toward a more bodily and differentiated treatment of individual elements, such as head and hands that begin to imply movement, to *maturity*, when movement and plasticity are applied to the overall conception of religious sculpture, and ending with *proliferation*, the further development, spread, and decline. This three-phase model appears to follow a standard narrative of

<sup>75</sup> Strzygowski, *Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben*, 69-70. Osthaus, on the other hand, highly appreciated With's work on Buddhist art – in a gleamingly positive review of With's dissertation he celebrates him as the discoverer of a rich trove of materials and emphasizes that With had not only undertaken a splendid stylistic analysis but also displayed the deepest understanding for the emotional values of Buddhism. See Karl Ernst Osthaus, 'Karl Withs "Buddhistische Kunst in Japan". Eine Würdigung von Karl Ernst Osthaus', *Die Bildenden Künste*, II, 1919, 211-125

<sup>76</sup> Salmony seems to have originally planned to write his dissertation on Chinese Buddhist sculpture, largely based on objects at the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne. Salmony mentions this plan in a letter to With from 1916. See *Karl With Papers*, Getty Research Institute; Box 3, Folder 8. In addition, With mentions a study about the stylistic developments of the Wei, Sui, and Tang dynasties in preparation by Salmony, see With, *Buddhistische Plastik in Japan*, 25, n.1.

<sup>77</sup> All Japanese examples discussed by Salmony are taken from With's dissertation. In addition he includes Chinese sculpture, which also appears in With's writings – mostly examples published earlier by Chavannes – and objects from the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne.

<sup>78</sup> Salmony, *Europa – Ostasien*, 9.

Julia Orell Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony

beginning, blossoming, and decline, but Salmony emphasizes two points that distinguish his approach: First, he claims that the respective formal developments of sculpture were free from foreign influences and could thus be understood in their own right. Secondly, the developments do not simply follow an internal logic, but were instead necessitated by changes in religious attitudes. The first point is clearly indebted to Strzygowski: For East Asian religious sculpture this independence primarily means a departure from Indian, Gandharan models – as also seen in With's work – whereas for French medieval sculpture it meant to free itself from antique and Byzantine, i.e. Roman and Hellenistic, forms.



Abb. 22. Heilsbringer des Chuguji-Klosters, Japan.  
(Nach Karl With: „Buddhistische Plastik in Japan“, Verlag Schroll & Co., Wien.)



Abb. 23. Petrus in Moissac.

Figure 6a Miroku Bosatsu, wood and lacquer, seventh century, Chuguji Temple, Nara.

Fig. 6b St. Peter, twelfth century, Abbey of Moissac, jamb of the south portal.

After Salmony, *Europa – Ostasien. Religiöse Skulpturen*, Potsdam: Kiepenheuer, 1922, fig. 22 and fig. 23.

Besides establishing the respective independence of East Asian Buddhist and medieval French sculpture, Salmony's argument aims to overcome art history's prejudice against forms that did not follow classical models and to thus re-evaluate their specific achievements – an argument found similarly in Strzygowski's preference for Northern non-naturalism and With's valorisation of transcendence as pointed out above. Salmony's terms of analysis partially derive from With's work but are more poignant: He juxtaposes 'cubic physicality' (*kubische Körperlichkeit*) with 'organic physicality' (*organische Körperlichkeit*) in order to describe a development from flat, rigid, and linear qualities towards full plasticity and

movement, while avoiding to invoke the notion of naturalism.<sup>79</sup> In French sculpture the development was directed towards unnatural elongation and counter-movements, achieving greater physicality and sense of movement, whereas in East Asian sculpture Salmony observes a dematerialisation of the human body despite its increasing plasticity, thus following With's argument. The development toward increasing physicality and movement are not tied to the representation of the human body but instead understood as 'pure expressive forms' (*reine Ausdrucksformen*) and linked to religious concepts. In both East and West these formal developments exemplify, according to Salmony, the '... urge toward cubic-plastic visualisation of a transcendental concept of divinity.'<sup>80</sup> At the height of this development Salmony places the sculpture at the cathedral of Moissac and Chinese Buddhist sculpture of the late Wei and Sui dynasties as well as early seventh century Japanese sculpture (fig. 6a and 6b). This narrative about formal properties, which achieve a transcendental solution in the representation of the human body, is entirely derived from With.

Salmony's comparative approach is based on the observation of parallel formal developments in sculpture understood as expressions of religious concepts in Europe and East Asia, but he insists on the fundamental difference between the two traditions when he juxtaposes the 'ecstatic tension of a Faustian struggle for god' in the West and the sublime, 'disquieting calmness in Buddhism that connotes a unity of all being.'<sup>81</sup> He perceives of this fundamental difference as a difference in 'essence' (*Wesen*), thus taking up Strzygowski's notion, which sought the original, defining characteristics in the artistic production of a region, culture, or race.

Similar to With and Strzygowski, Salmony's argument is directed against the idea that naturalism was the aim of all artistic development; yet his point of reference is Oswald Spengler's (1880-1936) *Decline of the West (Der Untergang des Abendlandes)*: 'It is necessary to ban the phantom of the organic-natural appearance, and to establish instead the aesthetic principle of "the strength of a language of forms and the power of the symbolic" (Spengler).'<sup>82</sup> Spengler's book was very popular among intellectuals, including art historians, after its publication in 1918 and also a point of reference for Strzygowski.<sup>83</sup> As will be shown below, Salmony's

<sup>79</sup> Salmony, *Europa – Ostasien*, 44.

<sup>80</sup> '... Drang nach kubisch plastischer Veranschaulichung der transzendenten Gottesidee.' Salmony, *Europa – Ostasien*, 34.

<sup>81</sup> Salmony, *Europa – Ostasien*, 78: '...die ekstatische Anspannung des faustischen Ringens um Gott im Westen und die erschütternde Ruhe, der buddhistische Einklang mit allem Dasein im Osten.'

<sup>82</sup> 'Es gilt, das Phantom der organisch-natürlichen Erscheinung zu bannen und an seiner Stelle als ästhetisches Prinzip "die Kraft der Formensprache, die Stärke der Symbolik" (Spengler) zu setzen.' Salmony, *Europa – Ostasien*, 13.

<sup>83</sup> For example, Strzygowski supported his claim about the antagonism between static powers/cultures and will powers/civilisations, mentioned above, by referring to Spengler's dictum on the impossibility to understand 'high civilisations' based on their art production, because art served these civilisations and thus did not follow the inner, original course of its

interest in the 'power of the symbolic' would remain a driving force in his later work.

Another point of reference for Salmony was Hanslik's cultural geography, already encountered in With's work. The conclusion of his dissertation, which includes large claims about art as the only universal language, ends with a citation from Hanslik stating that it had only recently become possible to 'understand all of humankind and its different forms of attaining happiness.'<sup>84</sup> This seemingly innocent quotation within the context of art as a universal language, which at first glance seems related to With's concept of *ars una*, was however in Hanslik's work tied to an argument about Austrian exceptionalism based on its position between East and West, thus rendering Austria a true cosmopolitan nation that should take on a leadership position in the world.<sup>85</sup> Whether Salmony was aware of and subscribed to the ideological underpinnings of these writers – to Spengler's pessimist and anti-democratic cyclical history of high cultures and to Hanslik's pseudo-cosmopolitanism and geographical determinism – or whether he naively referred to fragments of ideas that appeared to support his own work cannot be answered.

Even though Salmony spent little time studying in Vienna, his early work was deeply affected by With's work on Japanese Buddhist sculpture and by Strzygowski's comparative approach, but without following Strzygowski's racial presuppositions and without attempting to suggest actual connections between East and West. Similar to With, Salmony's early work on East Asia was mostly descriptive and concerned with establishing dates for individual objects in order to establish characteristics for period and regional styles.

It is thus rather unexpected to discover rather explicit traits pointing to Strzygowski in Salmony's later teaching and scholarship, also after his emigration to the US. The field of East Asian art history had changed considerably by that time, and Salmony was working in a context of an increasing specialization in East Asian art history, when the larger art history departments in the US had established positions in this field between the 1930s and 1950s, and when formalism was heavily criticised by the 'sinologists', who demanded a contextual approach informed by research in textual sources.<sup>86</sup>

---

culture. See Strzygowski, *Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben*, 28.

<sup>84</sup> Salmony, *Europa – Ostasien*, 79. In addition, Hanslik appears in the acknowledgments of Salmony's dissertation, where he thanks – in this order – his teachers Josef Strzygowski, Paul Clemen, Erwin Hanslik and the Museum for Far Eastern Art in Cologne.

<sup>85</sup> On this aspect of Hanslik's work see William M. Johnston, *Der österreichische Mensch. Kulturgeschichte der Eigenart Österreichs*, Wien: Böhlau, 2009, 142-144.

<sup>86</sup> Among these newly hired specialists for East Asian art were quite a few other German immigrants, such as Ludwig Bachhofer (1894-1976) at the University of Chicago. Max Loehr (1903-1988) became professor at the University of Michigan in 1951 and then at Harvard University in 1960. American-trained professors of East Asian art history include e.g. George Rowley (1904-1972), originally a medievalist at Princeton who also taught Chinese art since the 1930s and Benjamin Rowland, who became professor for South Asian art history at

First of all, Salmony's specialization in Eurasian art and arts of the steppe took up Strzygowski's interest in this region.<sup>87</sup> For instance, his *Sino-Siberian Bronzes in the Collection of C.T. Loo*, first published in 1933 before his emigration, attempts to order the bronzes under consideration by tracing the origin of their respective forms, motifs, and styles to cultures/ethnic groups and/or regions (Scythian, Samartian, East Russia, Minussinsk, China, and even Persian influence) in addition to suggesting tentative dates.<sup>88</sup> The most important question for Salmony in addressing these objects was, in addition to his general interest in 'primitive' symbolism, to explore the question of 'influence' of 'primitive cultures' in Chinese art. He concludes his study with an explicit reference to Strzygowski, who had already observed the survival of the 'Eurasian animal style' in the both Southeastern Europe and among the ancient Germans in the Northwest. That these phenomena were separated by a large time span should not matter too much, according to Salmony, because an understanding of the objects would 'rather gain from finding parallels in the West, because these parallels widen the foundations of primitive art on which developed civilizations are built, civilizations with which primitive art is blended at certain periods and in certain regions'.<sup>89</sup> Much of Salmony's research in the 1940s and 1950s would follow similar interests in cultural diffusion and inter-cultural contacts.

Secondly, Strzygowski's method and his geographic distinction between North and South served as models in Salmony's teaching. His lecture notes for a survey of Far Eastern Art at the Institute of Fine Arts include Strzygowski's methodological table, introduced above, as the 'Strzygowski System for Analysis of Art Works' (fig. 7).<sup>90</sup> In another course on the Art of the Eurasian Steppe District Salmony provided his students with a distinction between three types of cultures

---

Harvard in 1950, to mention just a few. For a study of German sinologists who emigrated to the US, including art historians, see Martin Kern, 'The Emigration of German Sinologists 1933-1945: Notes on the History and Historiography of Chinese Studies', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 118:4, October-December 1998, 507-529. For the development of East Asian art history in the US and the formalism debate of the 1940s see Warren I. Cohen, *East Asian Art and American Culture. A Study in International Relations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, 155-199.

<sup>87</sup> This research interest predates his emigration. Salmony had traveled to Russia several times in the late 1920s and early 1930s; one of his publications during this time addresses recent archaeological finds at Noin-Ulla, some of which also played a prominent role in Strzygowski's *Asiens Bildende Kunst in Stichproben*. See Alfred Salmony, 'Der erste Fund von Noin-Ulla', *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 4, no. 2/3, 1930-32, 86-92.

<sup>88</sup> Alfred Salmony, *Sino-Siberian Art in the Collection of C.T.Loo*, Bangkok, 1998 (second edition edited by Bruce Miller, first published by C.T. Loo, New York, 1933).

<sup>89</sup> *Alfred Salmony Lecture Notes*, Chan Library, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University (SI 938 – F 1943: Early Art of the Far East, Fine Arts 278). Strzygowski would have disagreed with Salmony's use of the term 'primitive', insisting on 'archaic' as more appropriate.

<sup>90</sup> *Alfred Salmony Lecture Notes*, Chan Library, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University (SI 939 – F 1943: Art in the Eurasian Steppe District, Fine Arts 238).

Julia Orell Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony

relying on Strzygowski's distinctions and terminology: 1. 'Hot Houses of Civilization', 2. 'Northern type', and 3. 'Shore type'.<sup>91</sup> His characterisation of these cultures, while more elaborate than Strzygowski's, takes up the former teachers criteria of naturalism in the South and animal motifs or ornament in the North.

STRZYGOWSKI SYSTEM FOR ANALYSIS OF ART OBJECTS		
1. Handicraft	II. Spiritual and intellectual value	
Craftsman	world	
1. material technique	significance	appearance
bound by reality	2. Subject	3. Shape
artist personal freedom	5. Content	4. Form

Figure 7 Strzygowski System for Analysis of Art Objects, *Alfred Salmony Lecture Notes*, Chan Library, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University (SI 938 – F 1943: Early Art of the Far East, Fine Arts 278).

Thirdly, Salmony's broad comparative perspective and the tendency to bring together objects from a great variety of geographical and historical contexts is echoing Strzygowski's attempts in *Asiens bildende Kunst in Stichproben* and other publications. Salmony's last publication on antler and tongue in Chinese art is indicative of this tendency.<sup>92</sup> The starting point is a pair of carved and painted stag antlers from China dated to the fourth century BCE and the study proceeds to build up a context of related works from around the same time period and region. Salmony then continues to explore the motif of antlers in other media of ancient Chinese art and in textual sources. Yet, this is apparently insufficient to understand the appearance of the antler motif: Salmony traces first the 'Evolution of the Antler Symbol' and then the motif of 'The Long Tongue' through the history of European and Asian art from the Palaeolithic to the medieval period. Among the examples discussed are works from Scythia, India, Korea, ancient Egypt, Cambodia, Indonesia, Celtic and Etruscan art, as well as images from medieval Italy and France. This rather wild ride through the history of European and Asian art leads Salmony to the conclusion that both motifs (antler and tongue) as they appear in

<sup>91</sup> *Alfred Salmony Lecture Notes*, Chan Library, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, Group 9.2.1 Salmony, SI 939 – F 1943: Art in the Eurasian Steppe District (Fine Arts 238), 1939.

<sup>92</sup> Alfred Salmony, *Antler and Tongue: An Essay on Ancient Chinese Symbolism and Its Implications* (Artibus Asiae Supplementum vol.13), Ascona: Artibus Asiae, 1954.

Chinese art of the Chu culture<sup>93</sup> derived from Indian origins. According to Salmony, the two motifs must have been transmitted separately to China by texts rather than through objects, and were then first combined in China.

Salmony's reasons for including such a broad range of examples, which do not directly contribute to his argument, go beyond a display of his scholarly erudition. On one hand, the examples serve to point out the different symbolism of the same motif in various contexts. On the other hand, Salmony suggests actual relationships between these examples even when he is unable to prove them. For instance, he states that a Celtic figure 'cannot, for the time being, be connected with the shaman of the East', thus implying that a connection can be possibly made in the future.<sup>94</sup> For the French and Italian medieval examples of antler depictions he suggests that they showed a 'faint repercussion of Far Eastern antler significance', but were transformed from illustrating the holies into representing evil and became personifications of the devil.<sup>95</sup> For a bronze vessel from the Central European Hallstatt culture (eighth to sixth century BCE) Salmony interprets the depiction of the long tongue as a prayer for water and point to a potential relationship with China following the suggestion 'that tribes of Central Europe migrated to South China before the VIII century B.C.'<sup>96</sup> Further instances of such connections implied by Salmony with regard to the movement of motifs across Asia and Europe are spread throughout the text. Of interest in the context of this paper is that Salmony's comparative approach had shifted in its basic assumptions about how one could connect the arts of Asia and Europe: His dissertation was grounded in an understanding of art as a universal language and pointed out similarities in the formal developments of religious sculpture in East Asia and Europe while insisting on their fundamental otherness. In his later work, he instead traced the origins and development of motifs and their symbolism throughout Europe and Asia based on theories of cultural diffusion.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Chu refers to the State of Chu during the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1046–256 BCE), with its territory in Southeast China (today's provinces of Hubei and Hunan as well as parts of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shanghai, Guizhou, Henan, and Jiangxi).

<sup>94</sup> Salmony, *Antler and Tongue*, 51.

<sup>95</sup> Salmony, *Antler and Tongue*, 51.

<sup>96</sup> Salmony, *Antler and Tongue*, 52. He refers to the work of the ethnologist and archaeologist Robert Heine-Geldern (1885-1968) who specialised in Southeast Asia and proposed a theory of global cultural relations.

<sup>97</sup> Salmony was heavily criticised for this approach, which he seemed to have derived from Heine-Geldern (see previous footnote). Among others, it his former co-editor of *Artibus Asiae*, Carl Hentze, who attacked the basic analysis and suggestions about dates, provenance, and symbolism; see C. Hentze, 'Antler and Tongue. An Essay on Ancient Chinese Symbolism and its Implications by Alfred Salmony', *Anthropos*, 50:1/3, 1955, 450-454. Salmony responded to these critical reviews, especially to Hentze's, by adding further materials and defending his position about the Indian origins of the antler and tongue motifs. However, he did not address the basic question with regard to diffusionist theories. See Alfred Salmony, 'With Antler and Tongue', *Artibus Asiae*, 21:1, 1958, 29-36.

## Conclusion

Strzygowski's, With's, and Salmony's scholarship from the formational stage of East Asian art history in Europe shows how they responded to the challenges posed by East Asian art with regard to established narratives of stylistic developments and aesthetic values. They all rejected the notion of naturalism as the highest achievement of artistic development and they all invoke cultural-geographic determinism to establish the entities of their research. But whereas Strzygowski integrated East Asian art into his racially based framework about the struggle between Northern and Southern artistic traditions, With and Salmony subscribed to ideas about art as a universal human form of expression, and – implicitly – about art history as the key to this universal humanity. For With, formal change was intimately tied to spiritual values and he sought parallels in what he conceived of as transcendental forms in ancient Buddhist art and European modernism. Salmony's interest in symbolism led him to far-reaching comparisons and suggestions about inter-regional transfers.

Some of the issues raised by this early scholarship on East Asian art reverberate in recent art historical discussions with regard to new universalising tendencies, for instance suggested by neuroarthistory, and in the proliferation of transcultural studies, an emphasis on processes of cultural exchange, and the notion of hybrid artistic forms. On the surface, these approaches are far removed from vague theories of cultural diffusion or concerns with cultural purity. Yet, the early twentieth-century scholarship examined here, which only presents part of a much broader engagement with non-European art at the time, raises questions about how much our frameworks have changed after all, especially with regard to the cultural, national, ethnic, or religious entities that inform our definitions of an object as relevant for the study of cultural encounters.

**Julia Orell** is a historian of Chinese art with a research focus on landscape painting of the Song and Yuan dynasties. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Academia Sinica in Taipei, where she is working on her book manuscript *Landscape Painting and Geographical Knowledge in Song China (960-1279)*. The current essay is part of her second research area in the history of East Asian art history in German-language academia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which has received the support of the Getty Research Institute.

juliaorell@gmail.com

jorell@asihp.net



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).