8.2 The Emergence of East Asian Art History in the 1920s

*Karl With (1891-1980) and the Problem of Gandhara*

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East Asian art and art history

Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe saw an increasing interest in non-European art from Africa, Pre-Columbian America, Asia, the Pacific Islands and elsewhere. Private collectors and museums eagerly collected, exhibited, and published such works, often in competition with each other in the context of colonization. In addition to museums and collectors, artists developed a great interest in non-European art and artifacts since at least the mid-nineteenth century, ranging from Japanese woodcut prints to African masks, often summarized under the problematic category of primitivism. The academic discipline of art history, however, was slow in responding to the broadening range of images and objects that became available for study. In German-language academic art history, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a formative period with regard to the field’s methodological foundations, with major centers at the universities in Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Basel, and Vienna among others. Non-European art and artifacts rarely made their way into academic art-historical research; the newly emerging specialists in these fields were philologists, ethnologists, and archaeologists in addition to museum curators, collectors, and private scholars. One case in East Asian art was Otto Kümmel (1847-1952), who was appointed curator of the newly established Department of East Asian Art at the Berlin Museums in 1906. His academic background was in classical philology and archaeology before he started to familiarize himself with East Asian art, learned Japanese, and became one of the most influential figures in German art history of East Asia in the early twentieth century.

It was at the Vienna Department of Art History, where Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941) established the Section for East Asian Art History in 1912 – the first institution where research in East Asian art history was officially conducted and supported. Karl With (1891-1980), whose scholarship will be the focus of this es-
say, was among the first of Strzygowski’s students in East Asian art and finished his dissertation on Japanese Buddhist sculpture in 1919. His work in the early 1920s presents an interesting case study to explore the emergence of East Asian art history as an academic field: With combined an art-historical academic training, that lead to his specialization in Asian art, with ideas about art as a universal language that circulated among artists, collectors, and intellectuals at the time. This paper explores With’s scholarship in relation to that of his adviser Josef Strzygowski and takes into account With’s work for the private collectors Karl Ernst Osthaus (1874-1921) and Eduard von der Heydt (1882-1964).

**Josef Strzygowski and non-European art**

In the preface to Karl With’s dissertation, Josef Strzygowski claimed that the ‘East Asian section in the Department of Art History at the University of Vienna was founded in 1912, though with very limited means’. While Strzygowski may have exaggerated when he called the activities at his department pertaining to East Asian art a section or program (Abteilung), the statement illustrates his ambition to open up art history to non-European art. In a short pamphlet, *The Art History Department at the University of Vienna* (1913), Strzygowski outlined the structure and activities in more detail. In order to account for ‘the artistic creations of all mankind as a whole’, art history needed to expand its focus eastward and to free itself from the historical-philological method. The department was thus to be divided into the three sections (1) History, (2) Systematics, (3) Neighbor disciplines (such as ethnology, prehistory, and human geography) and the first, historical section was further subdivided by region: (1) Austria, (2) Western Europe, (3) Eastern Europe, (4) West Asia, and (5) East Asia (including India, Central Asia, China, Japan, South and South-East Asia).

With regard to the current activities of the East Asian group, Strzygowski reported that one member had been dispatched to the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne to work on cataloguing the collection, two members had traveled to Japan, a seminar on Indian art had taken place, and a group was studying Japanese Yamato-e painting. Strzygowski’s expansion eastward attracted many students, some of whom would go on to pursue distinguished academic careers.

Only recently has the role of Strzygowski in the formation of non-European art history come to the attention of art historians in relation to current debates about ‘global art history’. After having been more or less expelled from the history of art history after the Second World War because of his racist ideologies and support of the Nazi regime, Strzygowski’s work has been reevaluated in the past two decades. Besides acknowledging his contribution to broadening art history’s
geographical scope of inquiry – primarily with regard to the art of late antiquity, early Christian and Islamic art in Eastern Europe and the Near East – the lingering attraction of some of his ideas and their dangers have been pointed out as well: Jas Elsner has addressed the importance of Strzygowski’s book *Rome or Orient* (*Rom oder Orient* [1901]) and its methodological kinship with the much more appreciated Alois Riegl, whose *Late Roman Art Industry* (*Spätrömische Kunstdustrie*) was also published in 1901.11 Johann Konrad Eberlein has depicted Strzygowski as the ultimate modern art historian and has drawn attention to what he perceives to be current threats to the discipline of art history that are manifest in Strzygowski’s work, among them a thinking in terms of continents as an early form of globalization, the opening of disciplinary boundaries, assumptions about the spread of cultural streams as if they were independent entities, and a false belief to be free from ideologies by using scientific concepts.12 Yet other scholars have addressed Strzygowski’s involvement with anthropology, including the French avant-garde journal *Documents*,13 and the impact of his work on emerging national art histories, especially in Eastern Europe.14

Strzygowski’s motivation to extend the scope of his scholarship to include Asia, especially East Asia, should be understood as part of his anti-humanist and anti-historical-philological project that had begun with his attack on the privileging of Roman-Greek antiquity in art-historical narratives, as well as of methods largely relying on textual sources.15 Asia became part of this project, in order to counter prevailing assumptions that classical antiquity, or the influence of the Mediterranean, had extended as far as India, China, and Japan. Instead, the study of Asian art should, according to Strzygowski,

> force us to finally bridge the gaps between East and West and between South and North and to realize that the center 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 canals that connect these original streams.16

While arguing for independent artistic developments in Asia, Strzygowski was at the same time eager to prove the existence of a different kind of relationship between the arts of Europe and Asia based on shared racial heritage. His narrative aimed at foregrounding the achievements of ‘Northern man’ (*Nordmensch*) and to point out a common Indo-Germanic basis for Eurasia in these achievements. Strzygowski believed that there was an ‘Aryan axis’ – he alternatively called it the ‘Indo-Germanic axis’ – that connected Central Europe with the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea, reaching further to Central Asia, Iran, and India. As Susanne Leeb has pointed out, Strzygowski thus followed popular myths about the common
Indo-Germanic heritage of large parts of Europe and Asia. It appears obvious that Strzygowski took on doctoral students to study South Asian, Central Asian, and East Asian art in order to further his own agenda and to supply him with materials and arguments in his attack on mainstream art history.

Karl With’s career in art history, work for private collectors, and museums

According to Karl With’s own memory, his first fascination with Asian art arose when he received a collection of photographs of the Javanese Buddhist monument Borobudur, which lead him to explore Asian art in museums and to consider studying it academically. An anecdote from With’s autobiography illustrates that pursuing this interest was not easily to be realized at the time. Albert Grünwedel (1856-1935), curator for India at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, rejected With: ‘When I asked his advice how to go about studying Indian art, he jumped up from behind his desk, shouted at me that he would throw me out if I would ever again dare to speak of Hindu sculptures as works of art.’ After failing to find a professor in Germany, With was recommended to Josef Strzygowsksi, who accepted him as his student.

With had studied art history in Freiburg, Munich, and Berlin before he came to Vienna in 1912, and had also been connected to artistic circles in Munich and Berlin as well as to private collectors who combined an interest in the European avant-garde with a predilection for non-European art. Karl With would never focus on East Asian art alone but retained a strong interest in contemporary art and design that would continue to shape his career after he left Vienna. Among With’s early mentors was the prominent collector Karl Ernst Osthaus, for whom he first worked in the summer of 1911. Osthaus’s collection, which would become the basis for the Folkwang Museum in Hagen (and later in Essen), included works by artists such as Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, Aristide Maillol, Christian Rohlf, and Emil Nolde, but also Persian miniatures, ancient Egyptian sculpture, Chinese ceramics, Japanese Noh masks, and African sculpture. Through his contact with Osthaus, With met many artists, such as the architect and designer Henry van Velde, and he accompanied Osthaus to Paris in 1912. Here, With would encounter art dealers of Asian art and was first introduced to Victor Goboulev, a Russian aristocrat and collector of Asian art who recommended him to Strzygowski. After having finished and published his dissertation, With worked for Osthaus’s newly founded Folkwang Publishing House and was editor of the series Asia’s Spirit, Art, and Life (Geist, Kunst, und Leben in Asien). He then became the director of the Folkwang Museum from 1919
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to 1921 – still a work in progress at the time – for which he organized two exhibitions after Osthaus’s death in 1921. At that time, he had also started to work for Baron Eduard von der Heydt, a banker and collector of European avant-garde art, who had begun to build a collection of Asian and African works. With first catalogued parts of von der Heydt’s Asian art collection, mostly East and South-East Asian Buddhist sculpture, in 1923. The early 1920s were With’s most productive time as a scholar of Asian and East Asian art but he also published on contemporary European art, such as a small booklet on Marc Chagall. In 1925 he started working in Cologne, first as lecturer and later as director of the Werkschule (School for Applied Arts and Design), and starting in 1928 also as director of the Kunstgewerbe-Museum (Museum for Applied Arts), where he developed a new concept for exhibiting the collection. His focus shifted away from East Asian art at that time and his publications on Asia decreased. After the Nazis came to power in 1933, With lost his positions and after a few years he went to Switzerland, where he worked again on von der Heydt’s collection while staying at his estate on Monte Verità in Ascona. He emigrated to the US in 1939, where he became professor of art history at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1950, after some years as a lecturer and working for a variety of museums. Here he built up the art history program and developed the so-called ‘integrated art course’. East Asian art did not play a prominent role in his later career, but at UCLA he continued to promote a very broad notion of art history, not only in geographical terms but also by including design, film, and other subjects that were not widely acknowledged to belong to the discipline.

With’s dissertation on Japanese Buddhist art under Strzygowski

After having begun his studies in Vienna under Josef Strzygowski, Karl With had the opportunity to undertake research in Japan during a trip in 1913-1914 that was financed by his fellow student, Oskar Vonwiller. During his stay in Japan, he focused on exploring Buddhist sculpture in temples and museum collections and assembled rich photographic documentation that would serve as the basis for his dissertation. The completion of the dissertation was delayed when the First World War broke out and With was drafted to serve in the German army. After the war he returned to Vienna and completed the dissertation, which was published in two volumes as Buddhist Sculpture in Japan until the Beginning of the Eighth Century in 1919.

The dissertation focuses on a rather limited time period of roughly a century and a limited region, in order to provide, in With’s own words, ‘the detailed stylistic analysis that is indispensable for a sincere understanding’ and to ‘foreground the material itself by showing it as comprehensively as possible and to represent it
photographically in a way that allows an adequate perception.” The photographic documentation was indeed the very core of the published dissertation and the primary reason for its success: the separate volume of illustrations includes more than 200 photographs of sculptures dating from the seventh to the early eighth century, housed in temples in the Nara and Kyōto region – among them Hōryū-ji, Daigo-ji, and Kōryū-ji – but also from several museum collections such as the Ueno-Museum in Tokyo. With’s photographs isolate the individual sculptures from their surroundings and usually show at least a frontal and a side view, as in the example of the famous Yumedono Kannon in Hōryū-ji temple [Fig. 19 left and Fig. 20 right]. Often, he adds photos of further points of view and of details, as if dissecting the sculptures photographically.

The text volume of the dissertation is, as announced in the introduction, an attempt to carefully describe the formal properties of the individual sculptures, to compare them with each other, and to thus group them according to stylistic categories and to trace stylistic developments over time. For the example of the Yumedono Kannon, With describes formal properties characteristic for the Tori style: basic geometric forms of oval and triangle as the underlying structure and the creation of a silhouette that is developed out of a two-dimensional plane and thus dissolves the core of the sculpture. Such a formalist approach and categorizations are dominant throughout the dissertation and not unusual for the time. To apply this approach to a relatively short time frame of Japanese Buddhist art, however, must have challenged prevailing essentialist views about Buddhist art or East Asian art more generally. Rather than attempting to explain what Japanese Buddhist art was in essence, With treated his subject with the same attention to detail and historical change that had previously been afforded to European art.

Contextual considerations, such as about Buddhism in Japan, the ritual function of the sculptures, or their architectural framing, are hardly considered in With’s dissertation except for some general points mentioned in the introduction. Neither does he consider iconographic issues nor the different materials and techniques, such as bronze, wood, or lacquer, even though these did, at least partially, determine formal features. While one may detect a reference to Strzygowski’s method in these choices, i.e., disregard for textual sources and historical context, With acknowledges the lack of iconographical analysis and consideration of materials as shortcomings. In addition, he points out that he did not follow Strzygowski’s systematic method, because he considered it dangerous ‘to approach a foreign inventory of art by using a strict, systematic terminology that is primarily formed and evaluated based on the appearances of Western European art.’ At the same time, With explicitly situated his work within the framework established by Strzygowski for the study of East Asian art by emphasizing the
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Fig. 19. Yumedono Kannon, first half of the seventh century, wood and gilt lacquer, height: 178.8 cm, Horyu-ji, Nara prefecture (frontal view); after Karl With, Buddhistische Plastik in Japan (Vienna, 1919), vol. 2, plate 15

Fig. 20. Yumedono Kannon (see fig. 18) (side view); after Karl With, Buddhistische Plastik in Japan (Vienna, 1919), vol. 2, plate 16
importance of ‘scientific art research’ (wissenschaftliche Kunstforschung, i.e., Strzygowski’s term for his systematic approach):

It was of decisive significance (for scientific art research) to free itself from the tyranny of a one-sidedly conceived idea of development that understood the forms of archaic art production only as the primitive precondition for an art shaped according to natural observation. To recognize that in this case it was a fundamentally different drive to make art [Kunstwollen], and not just one single, continuous developmental scheme, it [i.e., scientific art research] lay the basis for research that was able to encompass the entire field of artistic expression and to understand its laws. It will contribute especially to broadening Western European consciousness toward a truly human one.31

While With’s work did not support Strzygowski in furthering his arguments about racial connections across Eurasia, he did emphasize the independence of developments in Japanese art and defended formal features that may not conform to European ideas of naturalism as being artistically superior. Strzygowski highly valued With’s work, as can be seen in his evaluation of the dissertation, where he states that:

With has collected early Japanese sculpture since the appearance of Buddhism and offers through individual photographs insights that we hardly had for Italian art. After having overcome the influences from India, China and Korea, Japan rises to great prosperity under the great masters of the Suiko and Hakuho periods, and With attempts to grasp these developments by examining the essence of the individual artworks.32

Strzygowski would also take up With’s work later on, especially in his The Visual Arts of Asia (Asiens Bildende Kunst [1930]), probably his most ambitious publication in terms of the historical and geographical range of materials covered. He includes some examples from With’s dissertation, e.g., to point out that Japanese art was equivalent in its achievements to the art of Central Europe: ‘[T]here existed at the time in Japan the same movement of art for art’s sake as in, for example, Quattrocento Italy’ and that certain formal features appear ‘as if in East Asia there was a movement in artistic creation that was scientifically grounded, similar to the so-called Gothic and Early Renaissance in Italy’.33

To prove the independence of East Asian art and its formal developments is the point in which Strzygowski’s and With’s arguments come together most closely. More concretely, this independence is identified as an independence from the art of Gandhara, i.e., Buddhist art from what is today northern Pakistan and
eastern Afghanistan during the first to fifth centuries with obvious Hellenistic influences. It is tempting to link the two scholars’ insistence on the independence of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese art to the emerging national art histories that opposed colonial narratives. For instance, in the 1920s Ananda Coomaraswamy was developing similar, yet much more detailed and historically sound arguments about Indian Buddhist art predating Gandharan examples in his well-known study ‘The Origin of the Buddha Image’ (1927), which highlighted indigenous traditions as opposed to Hellenistic models.34 Yet neither Strzygowski nor With were interested in arguments about national independence or indigenous artistic achievements; instead their main aim was the rejection of Hellenistic influences, though their reasons differed.

The problem of Gandhara

Gandharan sculpture first became known to a wider audience in Central Europe during the Vienna World Exposition in 1873. The works suggested that Indian and, by implication, Asian Buddhist art, derived from Greek models, yet without having achieved their ideal standards. Gandhara posed a problem to Strzygowski, because it seemed to confirm a far-reaching dependence on Hellenistic influences throughout Asia. This, of course, opposed his narrative that downplayed the importance of Greek and Roman art and Gandhara became an instance in Strzygowski’s ‘struggle against Rome’:

Just like Rome, supposedly the giving party everywhere in the Occident, so Hellas supposedly takes on the same role everywhere in Asia. The falsity of such an assumption is not recognized, because artistic research sits comfortably in its European nest and has not freed itself from the assumptions of historical research.35

The dismissal of Gandharan art and the emphasis on autochthonous developments in Buddhist sculpture of China and Japan became an important part of Karl With’s research as well, although his motivation differed from Strzygowski’s, as will be pointed out below.

With’s dissertation displays a striking rhetoric of purity and independence, especially if one considers his otherwise formalist approach. To return the example of the Yumedono Kannon introduced above, With ends his formal analysis with a surprising, almost abrupt, statement that this sculpture presented a counterpoint to Gandharan Buddhist art. According to With, Gandharan art, despite its abstractions, remained always bound to a Southern sensuality and to a naturalistic notion
and materiality. The Yumedono Kannon demonstrated in With’s understanding that the Japanese Tori style was indebted to an early Chinese ‘national’ style that was already fully independent from Indian models. With argues that even if one was to accept that early Chinese and Japanese sculptors ‘had indeed derived their forms from Gandharan works, then we can only admire their forceful, artistic will that transformed such provincial, naturalistic works into a new and deepened expression appropriate to the Buddhist spirit’. Several threads of a larger argument are combined in this statement. First of all, Gandharan art is dismissed as Southern, provincial, sensual, and naturalistic, i.e., With considers geography in relation to form and questions naturalism as the end to formal developments in sculpture. Secondly, With does not neglect the influence of Gandhara on Chinese and Japanese Buddhist art, but argues that Chinese Buddhist sculpture freed itself from it and developed a ‘national style’ that would then be further refined in Japan. Thirdly, the Chinese and Japanese examples that became independent from Gandhara display in With’s view a more properly Buddhist approach to sculpture.

The first point takes up Strzygowski’s division between Southern naturalism and Northern idealism in art. Whereas Strzygowski further linked these properties of artworks to racial categories in juxtaposing Semitic naturalism with Aryan idealism, With did not subscribe to these ideas. Instead, he sought to reevaluate an observed lack of naturalism in Buddhist sculpture to religious concepts of transcendence. The second point about the development of a Chinese national style can be illustrated by the comparison of two Buddha heads from Eduard von der Heydt’s collection. According to With’s analysis, one of the heads still belonged to the late phase of a declining art with formal features close to ‘Central Asian composite art’ (zentralasiatische Mischkunst) [Fig. 21]. Its characteristics are naturalistic, curly hair; irregular lower-eye contours; weak and bloated cheeks; a sensual heaviness in the lower part of the face disproportional to the narrow forehead; and a generally saturated and sedate expression. The second Buddha head is dated only slightly later, to the mid-fifth century and shows in With’s narrative how rapidly China purged foreign forms and found its own style during the Wei Dynasty (386-534 AD) [Fig. 22]. Characteristic for this ‘sincere Wei style’ are the massive, rectangular head; simple lines; and the frontal, architectonic structure. Further following With, the head’s expression is solemn, oriented inward, nonsensual and at the same time sculpturally alive, displaying a mysterious smile. It thus fulfills With’s requirements for transcendental monumental sculpture in the Chinese national style.

This comparison already hints at the third point, namely that the Chinese national style and subsequent Japanese examples were more properly Buddhist than their Gandharan predecessors. With states this explicitly in the same catalogue of Von der Heydt’s collection:
The province of Gandhara, however, formed the center of a late Hellenistic provincial art that made use of Buddhist motifs while completely ignoring the Buddhist spirit. This art is characterized by an unpleasant decline, or, alternatively put, a dependent composite art. Its weak and bloated, bodily and individualized forms have nothing to do with the transcendental spirit of Buddhism.40

In his work on Buddhist art, Karl With was searching for a spirituality that he understood as emerging from the dialectics of transcendence and body. If Buddhism was based on a transcendent concept of god and thus required an artistic form that departed from the empirical world, sculptors had to resolve an inherent contradiction caused by the focus on the historical Buddha and the human figure. Gandharan art had not been able to do this, according to With, as it adhered to naturalistic principles of representation in the Hellenistic tradition. The Chinese national style, however, had developed a fully sculptural form that rendered the physical presence of the Buddha while embodying transcendence in less naturalistic, basic three-dimensional forms. In With’s account, formal features in Chi-
nese and Japanese Buddhist sculpture are thus tied to religious concepts, and both are shown to depart from Gandharan models.

With’s argument was not confined to Asian Buddhist art. Instead, he related it to the artistic and intellectual concerns of his own time when he repeatedly pointed out that only now the appreciation of Buddhist art had become possible:

It was only the search of the soul of our own age, it was the artistic longing that urges away from constrictions or chaos toward a clarity of sculptural greatness, it was only the cosmopolitan attitude that opened the paths to appreciate the genius of sculptural creation in China.41

These ideas relate to the concept of ars una – that there is only one art – as promoted by With’s mentors Osthaus and Von der Heydt, as visible in their homes and exhibitions that displayed European avant-garde art in dialogue with non-European art [Fig. 23].

The connection that Karl With saw between Asian Buddhist art and the ‘soul-searching’ of his own time demands further exploration, extending to the role
that Buddhist art played in European collections and to the more general spiritual interest in Buddhism and other world religions among scholars and intellectuals at the time. One connection between ancient Asian Buddhist art and early twentieth-century avant-garde sculpture that With himself made by way of terminology, appears with regard to his favorite contemporary sculptor Moissey Kogan (1879-1943), a friend from his student days in Munich and a protégé of Karl Ernst Osthaus [Fig. 24]. 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’. This implies a formal and spiritual relation between the transcendental forms of Buddhist art that he found in Chinese and Japanese Buddhist sculpture and what he referred to as the urge toward ‘the clarity of sculptural greatness’ of his own time.
Notes

1 For instance, colonial powers sent out expeditions to Central Asia to excavate ancient sites and to bring back artifacts. Among these were several German expeditions starting in 1902, lead by Alfred Grünwedel and Albert von Le Coq to Turfan. The British government sent Sir Aurel Stein to Dunhuang in 1907, and shortly thereafter he was followed by the French Paul Pelliot. Earlier, the Swedish government had sent Sven Hedin in 1896 and again in 1899 to excavations in the Taklamakan desert. On the discovery of the Dunhuang caves by Western explorers See, e.g., Roderick Whitfield, Cave Temples of Mogao: Art and History on the Silk Road (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute and the Getty Museum, 2000). For a non-academic account, see Peter Hopkirk, Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia (London: Murray, 1980).

2 To name just a few of the scholars active at the time, whose work is still widely read and taught in historiography courses: Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), who taught in Berlin, Munich, Basel, and Zurich; Aby Warburg (1866-1929), who was active in Hamburg until his death; the Vienna school of art history with Alois Riegl (1858-1905), Franz Wickhoff (1853-1909), and others; and Erwin Panofsky (1892-1986), who taught in Hamburg until he emigrated to the United States.
A few exceptions were art historians initially trained in European art who then shifted their focus to East Asian art, such as Otto Fischer (1886-1948). He wrote his dissertation on Northern European painting under Heinrich Wölfflin in 1907 and subsequently focused on East Asian art with a Habilitation on Chinese landscape painting in 1912. Fischer contributed the volume on the arts of India, China, and Japan to the Propyläen-Kunstgeschichte in 1928 – marking a point when Asian art had arrived in the art-historical canon of German art history.


Karl With, Buddhistische Plastik in Japan bis in den Beginn des 8. Jahrhunderts (Vienna: Anton Schroll & Co., 1919). Besides Karl With, there were many better-known students of Strzygowski working on Asian and East Asian art, who would continue their careers in these fields. Among them were Stella Kramrisch (1896-1993), who finished her dissertation on Indian art in Vienna in 1919 and would become professor in Calcutta and later curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and professor at the University of Pennsylvania. Alfred Salmony (1890-1958), who studied in Vienna in 1919-1920, was a specialist in Chinese art, who worked at the Museum for East Asian Art in Cologne and became professor at the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University after his emigration.

Strzygowski provides a short list of materials and activities of his new East Asian section: a collection of photographs of Indian monuments donated by the collector Victor Goboulev, another collection of photographs of Javanese monuments donated by Karl With, the Japanese art journal Kokka provided by Otto Kümmel in Berlin, and a research trip undertaken by With together with Oskar Vonwiller to Japan, China, Java/Indonesia, and Egypt in 1913 that would result in With’s dissertation and from which he brought back more photographs as well as Japanese woodblock prints. Further mentioned is that With taught a seminar on early East Asian Buddhist sculpture in 1914 based on these materials.

Josef Strzygowski, 'Das Kunsthistorische Institut der Wiener Universität', Die Geisteswissenschaften 1.1 (1913/14), 12-16.

These members were, as pointed out above, Karl With and Oskar Vonwiller. Vonwiller was financing the journey. For an account, see With’s autobiography: Karl With, Autobiography of Ideas: Lebenerinnerungen eines außergewöhnlichen Kunstgelehrten (Memoirs of an Extraordinary Art Scholar), ed. Roland Jaeger (Berlin: Mann, 1997), 67-85.

For instance, Christopher Wood has addressed Strzygowski’s ‘global map of art history’ and warns against the danger of repeating Strzygowski’s mistakes, not because they were rooted in the racist and imperialist ideologies of the nineteenth century but rather because of their implicit ‘idealist fallacy’ that privileged a visual comparative approach to artifacts of uncertain date and origin without documentation in textual sources in order to draw conclusions about the people who had (supposedly) produced them. See Christopher Wood, ‘Strzygowski und Riegl in den Vereinigten Staaten,’ Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte 53 (2004), 225 and 231.
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17 Leeb, Die Kunst der Anderen, 240. In addition, Strzygowski clearly articulated the political implications of these views for his own time, when he declared that German dreams of world domination were simply an expression of a repressed former racial bond with the world. See Josef Strzygowski, Die Bildende Kunst des Ostens. Ein Überblick über die für Europa bedeutungsvollen Hauptströmungen (Leipzig: Verlag von Dr. Werner Klinkhardt, 1916), 71.

18 With, Autobiography of Ideas, 60.


22 Karl With, Marc Chagall (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1923). For a complete list of With’s publications, see Karl With, Autobiography of Ideas, 389-400.

23 This aspect of With’s career is currently explored by Marie Yasunaga in her dissertation at the University of Tokyo which focuses on Karl Ernst Osthaus and Karl With’s exhibition concepts and aesthetics in relation to their respective interests in non-Western art.

24 The trip to Japan and the return journey via China, Indonesia, and Egypt is described in With, Autobiography of Ideas, 67-85.

25 Karl With, Buddhistische Plastik in Japan bis in den Beginn des 8. Jahrhunderts (Vienna: Anton Schroll & Co., 1919). The dissertation is dedicated to Karl Ernst Osthaus and Oskar Vonwiller. The publication 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.

26 ‘[J]ene stilistische Kleinarbeit (zu ergänzen), die unerläßlich für ein aufrichtiges Verstehen ist [...]. Dafür versucht sie das Material selbst in den Vordergrund zu stellen und in möglichster Vollständigkeit aufzuzeigen und photographisch so wiederzugeben, dass eine gewissermassen adäquate Vorstellung möglich wird’ (With, *Buddhistische Plastik in Japan*, 11).

27 This sculpture – like many others studied by With – is today listed as a National Treasure and believed to be the oldest extant wooden sculpture in Japan. The Yumedono Kannon was ‘discovered’ by the American scholar Ernest Fenellosa, who worked for the Japanese government, in 1884. Before, it had been covered up in the temple and is until today usually hidden from view and only revealed on specific holidays. For Ernest Fenellosa’s discovery, see his *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art: An Outline History of East Asiatic Design* (London and New York: Heinemann and Stokes, 1913), vol. 2, 50. For more recent research on the sculpture, see, e.g., Lucie R. Weinstein, ‘The Yumedono Kannon: Problems in Seventh-Century Sculpture’, *Archives of Asian Art* 42 (1989), 25-48.

28 The term ‘Tori style’, after the sculptor Tori Busshi (active late sixth to early seventh century), was not invented by With and is still used today to identify features of Japanese sculpture related to Chinese Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534 AD) Buddhist sculpture. Interestingly, similar categories of stylistic categorization are still applied, for instance, when describing Tori-style bodhisattvas that are ‘frontally oriented, have slender bodies, oval faces, and drapery that terminates in a zigzag pattern on both sides of the skirt’ (Weinstein, ‘The Yumedono Kannon’, 30).

29 With, *Buddhistische Plastik in Japan*, vol. 1, 198.

30 ‘[E]s schien mir gefährlich mit einer festgelegten, systematischen Terminologie, die doch zum wesentlichen an den Erscheinungen der westeuropäischen Kunst ausgebildet und bewertet ist, an einen fremdländischen Kunstbestand heranzutreten...’, (ibid., vol. 1, 199).

31 ‘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 handelt, 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’ (ibid., 10).

32 ‘With hat die frühjapanische Plastik seit dem Auftreten des Buddhismus gesammelt und bietet durch seine Einzelaufnahmen einen Einblick, wie wir ihn bisher kaum für die italienische Kunst kannten. Nach Ueberwindung der Einflüsse von Indien, China und Korea her schwingt sich Japan unter grossen Meistern der Suiko- und Hakuho-Periode zu einer grossen Blüte auf, der With durch Untersuchung der Wesensart der einzelnen Kunstwerke beizukommen sucht:’ The original evaluation of With’s dissertation signed by both Strzygowski and Max Dvořák is available online from the University of Vienna, URL: http://www.univie.ac.at/geschichtegesichtet/images/vertreibung/With/_MG_3247.jpg (Accessed 1 November 2012).

33 ‘[D]ass damals in Japan die gleiche Bewegung, Kunst um der Kunst willen, bestanden hat, wie etwas in Italien im Quattrocento [...] als wenn in Ostasien in der Zeit seiner Blüte


36 ‘[I]hre Formen wirklich von den Gandhara Bildwerken abgeleitet hätten, so können wir nur ihren mächtigen, künstlerischen Willen bewundern, der jene provinziellen wirklichkeitsnahen Bildwerke auf einen neuen, dem buddhistischen Geiste entsprechenden und vertieferten Ausdruck gebracht haben’ (With, *Buddhistische Plastik in Japan*, 48). Similar statements can be found throughout With’s work on Buddhist art from the early 1920s, for instance, in an article on Chinese sculpture in the municipal gallery in Frankfurt (today’s Liebighaus), where he accuses previous scholarship of having falsely chased the ‘ghost’ of Greek and other influences in Asian sculpture instead of devoting itself to the independent values of a foreign aesthetic and spirit. See Karl With, ‘Chinesische Plastik in der Frankfurter Städtischen Galerie’, *Städel-Jahrbuch* 1 (1921), 6.


39 *Ibid.*. It should, however, be noted that Northern Wei Buddhist sculpture, identified by With as the epitome of a Chinese national style, was produced under a non-Chinese dynasty ruled by the Tuoba, a Turkic nomadic tribe that had united a large part of Northern China under its rule. I do not know whether With was aware of this, but if he was, then his use of the term ‘national’ does not carry racial or ethnic but instead regional or cultural connotations.


41 ‘Erst das Suchen unserer eigenen Zeitseele, die aus Enge oder Chaos zur Klarheit plastischer Größe drängende künstlerische Sehnsucht, erst die weltbürgerliche Einstellung fand die Wege, die Genialität plastischen Schaffens in China zu würdigen’ (With, ‘Chinesische Plastik in der Frankfurter Städtischen Galerie’), 6).

42 Karl With, ‘Kogan besucht Deutschland’, *Das Kunstblatt* 6.11 (1922).