

Collecting East and West

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Edited by

Susan Bracken, Andrea M. Gáldy
and Adriana Turpin

**CAMBRIDGE
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P U B L I S H I N G

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ABBREVIATIONS

ALB	Archive of Laurence Binyon, British Library, London
AMR	Archivio Museo del Risorgimento, Milano
AN.	Archives Nationales, Paris
ARSI	Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu
ASF	Archivio di Stato di Firenze
ASM	Archivio di Stato di Modena
ASP	Archivio di Stato di Pisa
ASR	Archivio di Stato di Roma
A-V&A	Minutes and Original Papers at the Archive of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
British Library, Add. MSS	British Library Additional Manuscripts
C.H.A.N.	Centre Historiques des Archives Nationales
CLFP, FGA	Charles Lang Freer Papers, Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives, Washington D. C.
<i>GM</i>	<i>Guardaroba Medicea</i>
LBPD, BM	Letter Books of the Department of Prints and Drawings, The British Museum, London
M.C.	Musée Cernuschi
MMTSC, BMCA	Minutes of Meetings of Trustees' Standing Committee, British Museum Central Archives
NMDrh	Nationalmuseum Drottningholm
NMGrh	Nationalmuseum Gripsholm
OP, BMCA	Original Papers, British Museum Central Archives

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FOREWORD

Lord Emsworth sat and smoked and sipped and smoked again, at peace with all the world. His mind was nearly as blank as it is possible for the human mind to be.

The hand which had not the task of holding the cigar was at rest in his trouser pocket. The fingers of it fumbled idly with a small hard object.

Gradually it filtered into his lordship's mind that this small object was not familiar. It was something new—something that was neither his keys, his pencil, nor his small change.

He yielded to a growing curiosity, and drew it out.

He examined it.

It was a little something, rather like a fossilized beetle. It touched no chord in him. He looked at it with an amiable distaste.

“Now, how in the world did that get there?” he said. [...]

He handed the thing to his secretary. Rupert Baxter's eyes lit up with a sudden enthusiasm. He gasped.

“Magnificent!” he cried “Superb!”

“It is a scarab, Lord Emsworth, and, unless I am mistaken—and I think I may claim to be something of an expert—a Cheops of the Fourth Dynasty. A wonderful addition to your museum.” [...]

“Extremely kind of Mr. Peters!” he [Lord Emsworth] said. “Really, there is something almost oriental in the lavish generosity of our American cousins.”

—P.G. Wodehouse, *Something Fresh* (1915), republished by Mayflower: London, 1961, 42-3.

What is it that makes the same object something to be looked at with amiable distaste by one party while the other considers it a wonderful addition to a museum? Part of it has to do with the exotic provenance of the object itself which makes it strange and distasteful to Lord Emsworth and magnificent to Rupert Baxter. Their difference is to be explained by their different levels of knowledge. Lord Emsworth, the owner of the museum at Blandings Castle, takes the scarab at face value, so to speak. It looks like a fossilised beetle and, therefore, to the un-initiated belongs with the odds and ends habitually carried in one's pocket. Baxter, to the contrary, is something of an expert in Egyptian artefacts and thus immediately recognises its subject matter, provenance, and can even distinguish the period of its creation. Hence his knowledge adds immense

value to an object unfamiliar to many in Britain but, of course, nothing out of the ordinary in ancient Egypt.

If collecting the rare and valuable is an entirely normal trait of human behaviour, amassing objects from far-away places has also long played a role in the history of collecting. “East” and “West”, or “North” and “South” for that matter, are of course entirely relative to one’s particular geographical position. Therefore, it is interesting that collecting exotic objects is an endeavour that unites humanity over millennia and round the globe. The ancient Assyrians did so as assiduously as eighteenth-century collectors in Paris or London; Chinese emperors collected Western art and artefacts at a time when Western collectors started to gather china, lacquered furniture, or South-east Asian prints. Key factors were, of course, increasingly frequent contact and an ever growing knowledge about the “other” and about the other’s artistic production.

Of particular interest to the mission of this working group is the fact that the building of collections was only part of the endeavour but that in many cases the objects imported at huge cost and logistic effort were meant to be displayed in surroundings reminiscent of their original habitat, even though their exact original context may have been open to debate and their final exhibition surroundings may have been unrecognisable to anyone from their former home. Western collectors built Chinese cabinets for their exotic treasures, often complemented by depictions of Oriental tea parties, as is well known. Less familiar is perhaps the fact that from the seventeenth century onwards Chinese emperors displayed their European collectibles in palaces built for them for this purpose in Western architectural style or that Jesuit missionaries played an important role as artists, architects, and cultural intermediaries at these foreign courts as was suggested in the winter of 2005-2006 at the wonderful exhibition *China: The Three Emperors, 1662-1795* at the Royal Academy in London.

Collecting and Display are the keywords in the name of the working group founded by three scholars in 2004 (www.collectinganddisplay.com). The group has been running a research seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, University of London since 2005 and in Florence from 2008 to 2012. Collecting & Display have organised summer conferences in London, Ottobereun and Florence since 2006. We would like to present, with this book, the fourth volume of proceedings of these conferences and hope that it will be followed by many more tomes dedicated to different aspects of collecting and display.

Our first conference took place in July 2006 at the Institute of Historical Research and discussed the connection between collecting and dynastic ambition (CSP 2009). This was followed a year later by the

conference on collecting and the princely apartment the proceedings of which have since been published by CSP (2011). Female Collectors were the focus of the conference the essays of which were published in 2012 under the title of *Women Patrons & Collectors*. For 2013 the organisers have prepared conferences on the reception of the Italian Trecento in the nineteenth century (March and November 2013) and on collections of *naturalia* and *artificialia* (May 2013) in collaboration with institutions in the UK, Italy and Germany.

London and Ottobeuren, March 2013

INTRODUCTION

ARTHUR MACGREGOR

The appeal of the exotic has proved an enduring factor in what now amounts to half a millennium of collecting history in Western Europe, notwithstanding the continually evolving concepts of what might be comprehended under such a heading. Interests waxed and waned, as extraordinarily rare and precious diplomatic gifts gave way to regularised imports on an industrial scale, as attitudes to remote peoples were modified in an increasingly assertive European population by considerations of commercial exploitation and conquest, and as developing strategies for comprehending and classifying the natural world gave rise to a sense that there was nothing in Creation that could not be similarly categorised and understood. In parallel with these developments, considerations of connoisseurship came to replace (or at least to overlay) earlier concepts that equated ownership with power and dominion, resulting in further fluctuations in estimation of the rich and strange. Extreme age, virtuosity of workmanship, historical association or even quasi-magical properties could none the less all be trumped on occasion by the power of the exotic.

At first, comparatively few individuals had their understanding of the world illuminated by personal experience abroad, or indeed by encounters with foreigners at home: most gained their knowledge from the travel writings of others, but physical encounters in the cabinet of curiosities—or indeed in the menagerie or the botanical garden—provided the majority with an introduction to the possibilities of the world beyond their own threshold. Even today, the primary role played by physical collections in providing the populace at large with some experience of the world beyond their immediate horizons tends to remain underestimated by historians wedded to the primacy of the written word:¹ the perspectives offered by

¹ In a thoughtful essay in which the concepts of presentation versus representation are compared and contrasted, Peter Mason (1994a, 1) proposes that “the primary status of [museum] objects as partaking of reality raised them above the secondary status of representations, which were always one degree removed from reality”.

the essays in this volume provide a powerful corrective to this narrow view of history, with their presentation of multiple alternative perspectives.

The means by which *exotica* reached the collectors' cabinets of Europe were many and they varied according to the means of the owner and prevailing relations with the country of origin. The agencies responsible for their introduction were equally miscellaneous: diplomatic gifts accounted for many of the earliest of them, with ambassadors relaying to the court perhaps rich textiles to be incorporated into clothing and furnishings, horses to enrich the bloodline of the royal stables and items of precious metal, ivory or hardstone which gradually emerged from the protective obscurity of the treasury to take their place on view in the cabinet. We are reminded below that specimens from the natural world could be no less prized than exotic man-made objects: Lisa Skogh's highlighting of the extreme rarity value attributed at Hedwig Eleonora's court to melons, grown against the climatic odds in the Swedish court, briefly prized for their all-too-transient singularity, and recorded for posterity by the court painters—reminds us that beyond the artificially constructed interest group considered here there was perhaps an even greater community for whom the natural world was of primary interest.

Voyages of exploration continued to enrich the cabinets of Europe over many centuries, from the period of early contacts by the Portuguese and Spanish in the Americas, and the Portuguese again in West Africa and in the Indian Ocean in the early 1500s. Furthermore, "East and West" is merely shorthand for a more universal compass: Lisa Skogh again reminds us of early interest in the far north, particularly amongst the Scandinavians who naturally looked in that direction, while the great eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century voyages under heroic figures such as Cook, Bougainville and Humboldt brought a fitting climax to the Age of Exploration and produced undreamed-of rarities from the deep south. Dynastic relationships within Europe also had an impact on the distribution of material gained in the course of colonial expansion, as when Portugal fell under Habsburg rule in 1580, providing the means for dispersal of material throughout the Holy Roman Empire and beyond to princely cousins in Munich and Florence. And, of course, internal warfare resulted in further redistribution in more preemptory fashion, as when the imperial collection in Prague was comprehensively pillaged by Swedish troops in 1648 during the Thirty Years War, or when Napoleon Bonaparte set about creating a new Rome in Paris by dint of relocating there the most desirable masterpieces from every state and city that fell to his armies.

Missionary activity proved equally fruitful for the collector, from the early foothold gained by the Jesuits in China and Japan, to the Lutheran

scholars sent by August Hermann Francke's orphanage in Halle to proselytise on the Malabar coast in the late 1600s (and whose gifts to their mother house survive today), to the Moravian Herrenhutters of the nineteenth century who contributed so usefully to early ethnographic interest in Germany. Incidentally, we hear much less of reciprocal Western influence on donor societies, although the fully-fledged cabinet of curiosities established by King Serfoji II of Tanjore (d. 1832) under the influence of Pietist missionaries in present-day Tamil Nadu forms a notable exception.²

Commerce rather than religion brought many more Europeans into contact with remote societies, most strikingly, perhaps, in the form of the Dutch East India Company's trading stations established at Batavia and in Japan. In time sizeable populations of Europeans settled in the Asian ports, more widely in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa and so overwhelmingly in Australia and North America as to all but eclipse the native populations. This not only brought unprecedented quantities of artefacts to Europe but resulted in the early establishment by colonists of new museums in those same countries, often with programmes aimed at registering their separate identities in a manner paralleling the role played by museums of nationalist character in the emerging nation-states of continental Europe. In such institutions the exotic (in European terms) could begin to serve in formulating these specific identities, instead of merely representing "otherness".

Military adventures abroad brought trophies of war over many centuries, from the *Türkenbeute* that featured in many of the early collections of central and Western Europe, salvaged from the field of battle in the prolonged struggle against Ottoman expansionism, to the First Nations material that found its way into circulation via isolated forts and trading stations in the northern and western regions of Canada, to the rich haul of loot from the sack of Yuanmingyuan during the Second Opium War. By no means all of this material was gathered with a great deal of discrimination, although a recent paper by Katrina Hill has demonstrated that certain soldiers, at least, achieved a surprising degree of sophistication in their acquisition strategies, both on the field and in the market-place.³

Antique shops, art dealers and auction houses also came to play an important part in the supply of goods to the collector by the nineteenth century, all by now having a considerable history behind them.⁴

The primary role of collections in allowing structures to evolve through the comparison of series of specimens, the analysis of their several relationships, the elaboration of taxonomies and the naming of

2 Peterson 1999.

3 Hill 2012.

4 For a review see Warren and Turpin 2008.

types is now taken for granted.⁵ Natural historians were undoubtedly at the forefront in developing this movement, but for those with other interests the possibilities took longer to dawn. A series of interesting developments instituted in the electoral galleries at Dresden and in the imperial collection at Vienna in the second half of the eighteenth century resulted in the first tentative attempts to classify works of art by schools: by presenting collections “aimed at instruction rather than casual satisfaction”, the curators attempted not to overthrow earlier forms of appreciation but to systematise them, so that “contemplation and comparison [...] will make of [the visitor] a connoisseur of art”.⁶ This declared ambition serves to remind us that systematics and connoisseurship, far from being mutually incompatible, can indeed be mutually reinforcing, although the former is especially reliant on firm documentation: what prevented the wider application of these principles before the nineteenth century to the appreciation of Chinese ceramics, ethnographic material from around the world or the interpretation of flints was not so much a failure to appreciate the potential rewards of such an approach as the absence of secure data on crucial matters such as provenance. Only with the emergence of appropriate techniques of collection and notation in the field could the museum display begin to aspire to the function of “a gauge by which to measure changing stages of civilisation”: Giambattista Vico’s phrase,⁷ perhaps over-optimistic in its expectations by today’s standards, none the less crystallises the goal of the collection’s long journey from exoticism to understanding.

Uncharted Territories

The seeming lack of ability—or lack of ambition—on the part of early collectors to distinguish very closely between the products of one culture (or even one continent) and another is well known: the fact that the single term ‘Indian’ could be applied in the sixteenth and seventeenth century to items from anywhere from Japan to South Africa to South America eloquently epitomises this indifference or inability. Clearly progress was made with the passage of time: by the eighteenth century the promiscuous use of such a term would already have seemed bizarre and by the time the rudiments of the discipline of ethnography were being constructed in the

5 See, for example, MacGregor 2007, chapter IV for an overview of the evolution of this role from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

6 Meijers 1995; summarised in MacGregor 2007, 114-8.

7 See chapter three of the present volume, 55.

nineteenth century it would have been totally unacceptable.

From the earliest periods of contact, the trajectory followed by each individual region differed in its course from that of its neighbours, so that it may be useful to glance briefly at the experience of each of these “Indias” in turn. Rather than making any attempt at comprehensiveness, the following notes highlight just a few of the differing experiences encountered in the process of bringing East and West to a European (and especially English) audience.

China and Japan

The means by which China and Japan began to impinge on Western consciousness have been particularly closely studied, not least because (from the European point of view) these encounters took place entirely within the period of our recorded history. Trade with China was at first carried on through the emporium of Malacca, but with the establishment of the Portuguese trading station on Macao in 1557 opportunities expanded for wealthy (and generally aristocratic) Europeans of other nations to access Chinese goods that in former times had arrived only intermittently as diplomatic gifts. Many early pieces received treatment that today would be looked at askance, being invested with European mounts in precious metal that for contemporaries celebrated their rarity rather than compromising it: a blue-and-white bowl now in Bologna, for example, bears silver mounts recording its presentation by John III of Portugal to the Papal Legate.⁸ Much of the appeal of porcelain at this period came not only from its sophisticated workmanship but from the still-indefinable nature of its raw material: there was much debate among connoisseurs as to whether it might be fashioned from crushed sea-shells, egg-shells, or even gem-stones.⁹

From 1600 the East India Company began contributing to the flow of goods from China to London, soon to be overtaken by the Dutch East India Company (VOC), established two years later, which supplied not only Holland but much of the rest of Europe through its Amsterdam headquarters. By 1608 the Dutch can be found placing orders for over 100,000 pieces from Chinese merchants—more, incidentally, than the

⁸ Ayers 1985, 262. Note also a Celadon bowl with enamelled mounts bearing the arms of Count Philip of Katzenelnbogen which is to be dated before 1453, demonstrating the lengthy tradition lying behind this practice: see no. 4.3 in Jackson and Jaffer 2004, 47.

⁹ See, for example, Pierson 2007.

market was able to provide on that occasion.¹⁰ Portugal and Spain also contributed—albeit unwillingly—to this flood of material as the cargoes of captured ships were regularly auctioned off to the highest bidder: that of the *Santa Catarina*, for example, sold to buyers from all over Europe in 1604, is said to have included another 100,000 pieces of Chinese porcelain. Some aristocratic collections, such as that at Wardour Castle (Wiltshire), were sufficiently extensive to merit display in a separate room by the opening years of the seventeenth century. Perhaps the most influential example of its day was provided by the Countess of Arundel’s “pranketing room”, established at Tart Hall on the fringes of St James’s in the 1630s, all four walls of which were densely populated with porcelain, combined in places with glass and brassware; sadly, it would not survive the Civil War.¹¹ Collectors of more modest stature might show off their possessions by standing them on shelves or cabinets or by mounting them above the fireplace.

By the turn of the eighteenth century, the example set by Queen Mary at Hampton Court and Kensington Palace provided a new lead for fashionable English households in which porcelain came increasingly to perform a more general decorative function.¹² Significantly, Mary’s earlier residences at The Hague and at Honselarsdijk had both included dedicated porcelain rooms, providing models for the innovations she popularised in England. Displays were by no means limited to such specialised chambers, however, and porcelain began to proliferate throughout the public rooms of the household: the heavy mouldings of cornices and overdoors of the period lent themselves to display spaces, while the plaster mouldings over mantelpieces and on walls now characteristically sprouted brackets and consoles to maximise the display area. Sets or “garnitures” of five or seven matched vessels were sold with this fashion specifically in mind, while more miscellaneous pots were piled up wherever they could find a space: a satirical complaint published in the *Spectator* in 1712, purporting to come from a city gentleman, has him grumbling that his wife has “planted every corner with such Heaps of China that I am obliged to move about my own house with the greatest Caution and Circumspection”.¹³ Specially designed

10 Impey 1986, 38.

11 Claxton 2010.

12 Anna Somers Cocks, who provides a vivid survey of this movement (1989), notes that in the best houses Delftware was the only European product to compete in this form of display with oriental porcelain, and even then it was mostly limited to the houses of those with royal connections or with diplomatic links with The Hague. The lesser gentry followed suit with English delftware.

13 Quoted in Somers Cocks 1989, 200-1.

china cabinets began to make their appearance in the 1750s, but within a couple of generations the craze had run its course and women (who had indeed played the leading role in forming ceramic collections in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) began to consign their china instead to the site of the latest feminine craze—the dairy.

Constance Bienaimé provides below a valuable French perspective on these early European contacts, in which a more marked influence can be detected amongst French artists, even by the late seventeenth century, in response to the stylistic exuberance of the “Empire of Extravagance”. For them, she suggests, Chinese exoticism provided sufficient reward in its own terms, and without generating a need to comprehend or to define it in terms of the society or even the country which produced it—a warning against the assumption that progress need necessarily be defined in terms of present-day anthropological understanding: the interests of the “art lovers”, as she calls them, were by no means always identical with those of the “scholars”.

The range of Chinese material reaching collectors meanwhile expanded to include ivories, textiles, writing equipment, seals and other exotica. A temporary falling-off in enthusiasm for things Chinese can be detected in the second half of the eighteenth century with the ending of direct trade by the East India Company, although again Bienaimé draws a distinction between the general trend and a continuing engagement on the part of the more scholarly community.¹⁴ After this period, it was principally intermittent military activity that stirred interest and promoted opportunity within the collector’s world, boosted by the sacking of the Summer Palace during the Second Opium War and maintained thereafter by the material recovered by numerous Western intelligence-gathering missions to western China in particular. There was still much to be learned, however: Silvia Davoli describes below how Enrico Cernuschi’s eyes were opened to the range and beauty of Chinese bronzes only when he travelled there himself in 1872 and how he attempted to apply a system to its stylistic development. Wider familiarity with Chinese graphic art came even later, so that the background to the acquisition by the British Museum of its first major collection of Chinese paintings “brought from China itself” in 1910, as described in Michelle Ying-Ling Huang’s chapter, remained one of confusion and uncertainty over authenticity and quality. That acquisition was itself to galvanise the first generation of specialists in Chinese drawing and painting (notably in the person of Laurence Binyon) to reach

14 It is of interest that Henri-Léonard Bertin, of whom Bienaimé writes, continued to gain particular benefit in the second half of the eighteenth century from contacts within the Jesuit community (140) then established at the Chinese court.

new levels of connoisseurship.

Japan began to contribute to European collecting from as early as 1544, when trading relations were established by the Portuguese. Two principal phases of contact are distinguished thereafter: in the first of these, up to 1639, the Portuguese and Chinese dominated trade (with the English and Dutch playing a lesser role); during the second phase, from 1639 to 1854, the Dutch and Chinese shared a monopoly of trade, with the Dutch trading-station on the island of Dejima at Nagasaki playing a role of particular importance after its foundation in 1641.¹⁵ Porcelain production was established in Japan from about 1600, so that when Chinese supplies were temporarily interrupted by the civil unrest that followed the fall of the Ming dynasty in the 1640s, Japan was able to fulfil European needs: the first sales are recorded in 1661.¹⁶ Little or no distinction between the products of these two sources was initially made by European consumers.

As with China, the story of collecting Japanese material is largely one of ceramics, with other materials such as lacquer playing a lesser part. The names of two German surgeons who served with the VOC on Dejima each stand out as being innovators in their own age. Engelbert Kaempfer (d. 1716) famously gathered documentary and other materials (under the most adverse conditions) which would form the basis of his *History of Japan*, published in 1727 by Sir Hans Sloane, who took pains to acquire both the collection and the manuscript. Philipp Franz von Siebold (d. 1866) was similarly acquisitive until he was banished in 1829 on suspicion of spying; his vast collections of books, pictures, ethnography and dried plants also formed the basis of a publication, his nine-volume *Nippon*, a tremendous work of reference, published 1832-58.¹⁷ Later travellers like Théodore Duret began to appreciate the potential impact that Japan's graphic arts in particular could make on European artists: Silvia Davoli tells how Duret saw in Japanese art and aesthetics "a template for the renovation of French art", and for a time Japanese influence did indeed play a leading role in influencing French style in particular.

15 The English opened a factory in Japan in 1613 but closed it as unprofitable a decade later: see Impey 1985, 268.

16 Impey 1986, 38.

17 On returning to Japan in 1859-62, von Siebold formed a second collection of ethnographic material, now in the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich. (His earlier collections are now mostly in a variety of specialist museums in Leiden).

India and the Islamic World

Circling Africa via the Cape of Good Hope, Vasco da Gama famously reached Calicut in 1498, opening up the possibilities for a direct long-distance maritime trade between Europe and India, although another century would pass before commercial interchange began to gather pace. In 1618 the Emperor Jehangir signed a treaty with the recently formed East India Company that gave the English the right to trade at any port in Mughal India, a concession which the Company was quick to exploit and to develop. From this point, the trickle of goods, semi-precious stones and curios that had made their way to Europe (mostly via the Turks) was dwarfed by the imports generated by one of the most successful trading companies ever formed. The history of the Company embodies a complex mix of enlightenment and ruthlessness: much of the advance in European scholarship and understanding of Indian culture and of the country's economic potential can be attributed to the officials and administrators who trod a path between the two societies and who contributed in large measure to the familiarisation of the British and their European neighbours with Indian material culture. The Company's surveyors, according to Ray Desmond, "were expected to record any archaeological sites and ancient buildings they encountered", while its surgeons "were encouraged to study the local fauna and flora and were put in charge of botanical gardens"—activities that could have been designed to promote a sympathetic response to collectors at home.¹⁸ By 1784 the British residents in Calcutta had formed the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and in time moves were instituted by certain officers of the East India Company aimed at establishing under their parent house in London a suitable repository for, in the first instance, books on all aspects of Indian culture (especially languages) and later, by 1799, for setting up a museum at India House which would hold all relevant "productions of nature and art" and which would be "useful, as well as ornamental". The museum, which finally came into being in 1801, formed a (possibly unique?) instance of a great national company being tempted into the museum field and for a time it fulfilled every expectation of it, although the collections would be dispersed in 1879, five years after the Company itself was dissolved.

Rare items from the Islamic world—perhaps especially textiles—periodically made an appearance in Europe in the centuries preceding the Renaissance interest in forming collections, generally arriving as diplomatic gifts: perhaps the most famous such occasion would be the

¹⁸ Desmond 1982, 4.

mutual exchange of missions between Shah Abbas and Rudolf II at the opening of the seventeenth century.¹⁹ In a recent survey of such material in the Habsburg collections, Barbara Karl has reminded us pertinently that Europe remained at this time economically underdeveloped and culturally peripheral, able to offer little in return but raw materials to the powerful Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals or their eastern neighbours.²⁰ The much-contested nature of the frontier between the Habsburg empire and the Ottomans is reflected in the impressive armours that came to be assembled in the *Rüstammer* at Schloss Ambras (including a representation of the arch-enemy of the Holy Roman Empire, Suleiman the Magnificent), and in the neighbouring *Türkenkammerl*, which was decorated with trophies of Ottoman arms.²¹ The repulse of the Siege of Vienna in 1683 not only ensured the survival of a large part of Christendom but brought further enormous quantities of booty, some of which would be arranged to celebrate the victory in the imperial armoury in Vienna. The character of this and other collections reflects the belligerent nature of a great deal of contact at this period, with arms and armour predominating.

Beyond the circles of the imperial court, items from the Islamic world made an occasional appearance in lesser collections, in some of which Iznik pottery, for example, might be given the same treatment administered to Chinese porcelain, with metal mounts being added to vessels to emphasise their rarity. Otherwise weaponry and defensive armour were again sought after, together with personal ornaments in metalwork. Religious scruples about the hoarding of personal wealth made silver plate less common in the Islamic world, although Persia continued to produce it in some quantities.

Africa

The Mediterranean littoral of the African continent, being comparatively accessible (however indirectly) to Europeans, had functioned as an almost continuous source of rarities throughout the history of collecting, primarily in the form of Egyptian antiquities supplied through the port of Alexandria: few Europeans penetrated south of Cairo up to the end of the seventeenth century and it was only with the headlong penetration of Napoleon's commissioners as far south as Nubia that the interior was to

19 Lisa Skogh mentions (129) a number of possible survivors from the gifts exchanged on this occasion, now in Stockholm.

20 Karl 2011.

21 For the presence in the electoral collections at Dresden of Near-Eastern pieces in the *Rüstammer*, see below, 133.

some degree opened up. Further west, such contact as there was with the Moorish population resulted in exchanges of material more contemporary in origin and more ethnographic in character (though Barbary horses remained their most coveted export). The sub-Saharan region had already contributed copiously to the riches of the Roman empire, mostly in the form of slaves and raw materials traded through the emporia on the Mediterranean coast, and the continuing flow of materials such as ivory during the medieval and Renaissance periods demonstrates that long-distance trade continued to some degree.

To the south it was the advances made by the Portuguese into the Gulf of Guinea in the middle decades of the fifteenth century that opened direct contact; by 1486 they had reached the Cape of Good Hope. It is perhaps not surprising that, in particular, the highly competent ivory carvings produced by craftsmen in and around Benin, Sierra Leone and the Congo should have found immediate favour with collectors, but what is striking is the rapidity with which the preferences of the European market were transmitted to and readily absorbed by those who had worked hitherto in an undiluted traditional style. Amongst the very earliest known imports, these tastes are already evident in ivories of what is now termed the Afro-Portuguese school, the name acknowledging the twin streams of influence which these items exhibit. Oliphants, salt-cellars, spoons and other pieces display an easy mix of forms and styles, with iconographical programmes that combine, for example, representations of African fauna together with shields of arms alluding to their ultimate owners—the arms of Castile, Aragon and Portugal in the case of an oliphant presented to Ferdinand and Isabella on the occasion of the marriage of their daughter to Manuel I of Portugal,²² and elsewhere the arms of the Medici indicate an ultimate destination in the Florentine collections. Just as prints and drawings might serve as guides to European tastes for Japanese craftsmen producing export wares, so European imagery was transmitted to the West African ivory carvers by the early years of the sixteenth century.²³ With the exception of highly admired textiles, mats and baskets, other materials from this area were less favoured in Europe (highly stylised “idols” perhaps least of all), although smaller numbers of musical instruments and weapons featured in a number of early *Kunstkammern* long before a consciously ethnographic interest developed in the nineteenth century.²⁴

22 Vogel 1988, 13.

23 For an account of an ivory trumpet from Sierra Leone, carved with the image of an Indian elephant—evidently one presented to Pope Leo X in 1512 and related here to a drawing by Raphael or his school; see Bassani 1998.

24 See the chapter “Collections and Collectors: Works of Art and Artefacts from

Something of a frenzy of collecting followed the wave of colonial and commercial expansion ushered in by the so-called Congo Conference in Berlin in 1885, but only in the early 1900s did the vitality of African art begin to be appreciated by artists of the European avant-garde, who ultimately introduced it to a wider public by now less fettered by prejudice.

The Americas

From the moment of the arrival in Europe of Hernán Cortés's first cargo of curiosities in 1519, rarities from the Americas were amongst those most prized by European collectors—not only those in intrinsically precious materials but also weapons, clothing and ornaments. Within a generation there are signs that these materials, which initially represented the ultimate in exotica, had already begun to be viewed in more rational comparative terms by privileged collectors like the Medici, who can be found in mid-century, arranging clubs and feather cloaks, for example, with the weapons and clothing of European and other cultures. By the turn of the century it was no longer necessary to belong to the most privileged ranks of church and state in order to share in this bounty: one could simply call in at establishments like Lisbon's "Shop of the Indies" and walk away with wonderful things.

Although it has only recently been recognised that Cortés himself played a part in manipulating native production of ornaments and other goods specifically for export to Europe,²⁵ it has long been known that the craftsmen who produced the feather cloaks, shields and other items that were amongst the items from Central and South America most sought-after by European collectors during the early contact period, quickly modified their output in a manner recalling the experience of the Afro-Portuguese ivory industry mentioned above: soon the glorious garments that had been integral to the enactment of indigenous ritual were displaced by pictures executed in a mosaic of featherwork featuring European heraldry and iconography—particularly that of the Crucifixion, the Virgin, and the whole panoply of saints of the Christian church introduced by the Spaniards. Bishops' mitres of featherwork became equally sought-after in the higher echelons of the Catholic hierarchy. In her chapter below, Corinna Gallori aptly demonstrates the multiple layers of symbolism embodied in the Church's pre-emption of this art-form, whose products

Black Africa in European Collections from the Age of Discovery to the End of the Eighteenth Century", in Bassani 2000, xxi-xxxvii.
25 Russo 2011, 238-40.