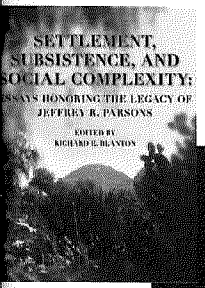
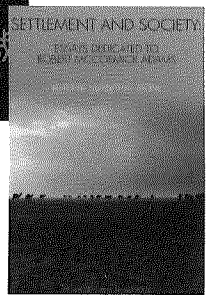
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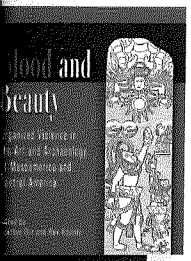


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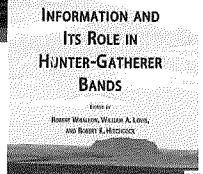
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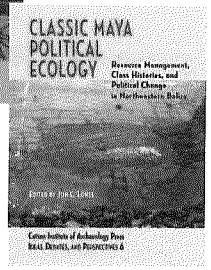
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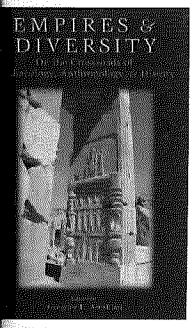
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Chapter 12

Four German Art Historians in Republican China

Lothar von Falkenhausen

The Chinese sojourns of the four scholars discussed in this chapter took place in the context of a steadily growing scholarly and popular interest in East Asian art in Germany during the early decades of the twentieth century (Erdberg 1985; Falkenhausen 2017; Goepper, Kuhn, and Wiesner 1977; Ledderose 1989; Schütte 2002: 75–87; Walravens 1983–85). This tendency, which paralleled developments elsewhere in Europe and North America, forms part of a complex and politically entangled process of opening toward exotic cultures. The consequences of this engagement for the academic and intellectual makeup of today's world have recently commanded a great deal of scholarly attention, and this conference volume, as well as the present study, form part of this important inquiry.

In the early twentieth century, it was highly uncommon for professional art historians from Europe and North America to settle in a "non-Western" country and engage with its intellectual traditions. The four scholars featured here—Gustav Ecke (Fig. 12.1) (1896–1971; in China from 1923 to 1949 [T. Y. Ecke 1991; Jaquillard 1972; Walravens and Kuwabara 2010: 99–175]), Victoria Contag (Fig. 12.2) (1906–1973; in China from 1934 to 1946 [Shi Mingli 2016; Spee 2008: passim]),[1] Eleanor von Erdberg (Fig. 12.3) (1907–2002; in China from 1936 to 1950 [Avitabile 2004; Avitabile and Lienert 1997; Gabbert-Avitabile and Lienert 1984]),[2] and Max Loehr (Fig. 12.4) (1903–88; in China from 1940 to 1949 [Brinker 1989; Cahill 1975])[3]—are, as far as I know, the only German art historians who settled in China for lengthy periods of time during the Republican period (1911–49).[4] The first-rate training they had received in Germany enabled all of them—even those who had no background in East Asian art history per



FIGURE 12.1. Gustav Ecke. In the 1947 edition of the Furen University annual report, *Furen Daxue Niankan*. Courtesy of Dr. Ye Gongping.



FIGURE 12.2. Victoria Contag-von Winterfeldt. Courtesy of Clarissa von Spee.

TABLE 12.1. Prosopographical Chart

Name	Gustav Ecke	Victoria Contag	Eleanor von Erdberg	Max Loehr
Full/alternative names	Gustav Emil Wilhelm ("Gösta")	von Winterfeldt; Contag-von Winterfeldt	von Erdberg-Consten; Consten	Max Johannes Joseph
Year of birth and death	1896–1971	1906–1973	1907–2002	1903–1988
City of birth	Bonn	Berlin	Graudenz (now Grudziądz, Poland)	Chemnitz
Father's profession	Professor of theology	?	Teacher, organizer of adult education	Textile merchant
Military service	1914–1918	—	—	1938–1939
Spouse	Tseng Yu-ho (Betty)	[Sigmund] Rudolf von Winterfeldt	Hermann Consten	Irmgard Kistenfeger
Spouse's year of birth and death	1925–2017	1897–1954	1878–1957	1905–1995 (?)
Spouse's profession	Artist	Diplomat	Mongolist; ex-secret service operative; riding instructor	Homemaker
Year of marriage	1945	1936	1936	1928
Children	—	Beatrix, now Freifrau von Riedelsel (b. ?)	—	Klaus (b. 1936), Thomas (1939–2010)
University education (*doctorate)	*Bonn, Berlin, Erlangen	Vienna, Frankfurt, Berlin, *Hamburg	*Bonn, Vienna, Berlin	*Munich, Berlin
Main teachers (*supervisor)	*Worringer, Clemen, Curtius, Goldschmidt	Strzygowski, Kümmel, Lessing, R. Wilhelm, *Forke	*Clemen, Delbrück, Strzygowski, Kümmel, Goldschmidt	Bachhofer, Buschor, *Pinder (?), Kümmel
Year of PhD	1922	1932	1931	1936 (submitted 1935)
PhD published	1923	1933	1936	1936
Habilitation	—	—	1955	—
Professional work experience before travel to China	Kaiser-Friedrich Museum Berlin, Municipal Museum Bonn (early 1920s)	Museum of Ethnography, Berlin (1932–1934)	Harvard University, Fogg Museum (1931–1934)	Museum of Ethnography, Munich (1936–1940)
Dates of residence in China	1923–1949	1934–1946	1936–1950	1940–1949

Continued on following page

TABLE 12.1. Prosopographical Chart, continued

Name	Gustav Ecke	Victoria Contag	Eleanor von Erdberg	Max Loehr
Professional employment in China	University of Amoy, Xiamen, 1924–1928; Tsinghua University, Beijing, 1928–1933; Fu-jen University, Beijing, 1935–1947; University of Amoy, 1947–1948	(Independent scholar)	Peking University, Beijing, 1938–1945; Yenching University, Beijing, 1938–1941; Fu-jen University, Beijing, 1946–1950	Deutschland-Institut, Beijing, 1940–1945; Tsinghua University, Beijing, 1945–1949
Affiliations in China	Institute for Research in Chinese Architecture	National Palace Museum	National Palace Museum	National Palace Museum
Edited series	*Monumenta Serica*	—	—	*Sinologische Arbeiten*
Sojourns in Japan	Tokyo, Nara, 1928	?	Tokyo and Kyoto, 1934–1936, 1939	Japan, 1943
European leave during stay in China	Paris, 1933–1934	(late 1930s?)	—	—
Membership in National Socialist (NS) organizations	NS Teachers' Federation (?)	?	NS Women's League	NSDAP
Professional employment after China	Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1949–1966; University of Hawai'i 1950–1966	University of Mainz, 1951–1968	Technical University, Aachen, 1951–1971/77; University of Cologne, 1965–1968; University of Bonn, 1968–1976	Museum of Ethnography, Munich, 1949–1951; University of Michigan, 1951–1960; Harvard University 1960–1974
Naturalization in the United States	1955	—	?	1957
Post-retirement activities	Guest professor (Bonn 1966–1968, Munich 1968–1969)	—	—	—
Honors	—	—	Three *Festschriften* (1984, 1989, 1997)	Guggenheim Fellowship, 1957; Freer Medal, 1983



FIGURE 12.3. Eleanor von Erdberg-Consten. In the 1948 edition of the Furen University annual report, *Furen Daxue Niankan*. Courtesy of Dr. Ye Gongping.



FIGURE 12.4. Max Loehr, 1955, in *The Michiganensian*, the yearbook of the University of Michigan.

se—to make important contributions to Chinese art history, and they all went on to distinguished academic careers in Germany (Erdberg, Contag) or in the United States (Ecke, Loehr).[5] How did each of them adapt to China? How did they deploy their art historical background in the Chinese academic context? How did they interact with Chinese scholars? What was their impact on China? How did their sojourns in China influence their later work?

Such a direction of inquiry is admittedly somewhat tangential to "colonial archaeology." This is true not only because China was never formally a "colony," or because our four protagonists self-identified as art historians rather than as archaeologists. More pertinently, neither the lives they were leading in China nor their scholarly practices had overtly colonial characteristics. In both respects, the

contrast vis-à-vis the pre–World War I German expeditions to Xinjiang (Hopkirk 1980: 125–47; Marchand 2009: 416–26), which certainly fall under the rubric of colonial (or imperialist) archaeology, could hardly be greater. By the 1920s, the psychological and sociopolitical dynamics between the Chinese and foreign inhabitants of China had changed greatly; it was, for instance, completely normal for all our four protagonists to work with Chinese-run institutions and in direct association with Chinese colleagues. The two main factors shaping this new situation were the founding of the Chinese Republic (1912) and Germany's defeat in World War I (1918) (Steen and Leutner 2006). In its 1921 peace treaty with China, Germany had explicitly renounced all the extraterritorial rights that citizens of many other countries continued to enjoy until the mid-1940s. To be sure, there were still asymmetries. Our four protagonists and their families were part of the international community, and their lifestyles were rather privileged—not merely by comparison with ordinary Chinese but also with their compatriots in Germany, especially during and after World War II. All in all, however, their existence in China resembled that of expatriates in today's globalized world, rather than that of colonial overlords in the age of imperialism.

For basic biographical information, see Table 12.1. It seems unlikely that Ecke, Erdberg, Contag, and Loehr had met in Germany; and although they did come to know one another in China, they never formed a close-knit group. Instead, their individual experiences exemplify a range of possibilities for acculturation, inviting comparisons that I shall pursue in the following through a series of topical explorations.

Family Background and Upbringing

The family backgrounds of the four protagonists—with the possible exception of Contag, about whose early life I have been unable to learn any details—may be described as *impecunious upper-middle class*. Technically, Erdberg belonged to, and Contag married into, the lower nobility; and Ecke's mother, Elisabeth von Lepel-Hattenbach (1861–1910), was a baroness, born into a landowning family in Hesse. Ecke's father, also named Gustav Ecke (1855–1920), was a well-known professor of Protestant theology at Bonn University (Ecke 1964). Erdberg's father, Robert von Erdberg-Krzenciewski (1866–1929), of Baltic German aristocratic origin, is remembered as one of the founding figures of adult education in Germany, and Erdberg's mother, Amy Wesselhoeft (1876–1972), a musician, hailed from Cambridge, Massachusetts, her ancestors having emigrated from Germany in the early nineteenth century. (Although both of Erdberg's parents identified as ethnically German, her father had been born a subject of the Russian czar and her mother was an American citizen.) Ecke's and Erdberg's parents' marriages are representative of the gradual merging of the intellectual elite and the lower nobility in pre–World War I Germany. But both the Erdbergs and the Eckes lived as urban bourgeois, and their circumstances presumably became severely straitened after World War I. By then, Erdberg's paternal relatives' landed estates, located in present-day Latvia, had been lost. About Contag I know only that she hailed from the West Prussian town of Graudenz (now Grudziądz), which became part of Poland in 1919; here, too, there may have been economic losses.

Under the Weimar Republic, it was still unusual for women to finish the gymnasium, let alone to attend university. That Contag and Erdberg were able to do so indicates certain socioeconomic aspirations, as well as relatively enlightened attitudes, on the part of their families; it also necessitated considerable willpower of their own.

Max Loehr, whose father had a clothing business in Chemnitz (Saxony), came from a commercial-professional milieu. But he also had a connection to twentieth-century Germany's leading literary family: his uncle, Josef ("Jof") Löhr (1862–1922), a successful banker in Munich, in 1890 had married Julia Mann (1877–1927), the younger sister of the writers Heinrich Mann (1871–1950) and Thomas Mann (1875–1955) (for reminiscences of the wedding, see Katia Mann 1974: 32; Victor Mann 1949: 165–80). When Loehr's father's business went bankrupt during World War I, the family moved to Augsburg to be close to their Bavarian relatives. His father's early death forced Loehr to leave the Gymnasium at the age of seventeen and to take up a job in a bank (one would like to surmise, but I have not been able to ascertain, that it was in Josef Löhr's bank). Having earned his high-school diploma in night courses, Loehr entered university at the age of twenty-eight.

As teenagers, both Ecke and Loehr came under the influence of the poet Stefan George (1868–1933), who mesmerized many young men with his elitist, homoerotically tinged cult of beauty, undergirded by fantasies of a secret worldwide fraternity of like-minded spirits (see Böschenstein et al. 2005; Raulff 2009). George, who became increasingly Germanocentric over time, is sometimes apostrophized as a trailblazer of Nazism; but some of his closest associates were Jews, and while many of his followers did become Nazis, others turned decisively against the Nazi regime, and several of the main conspirators in the July 20, 1944, assassination attempt on Hitler had been members of George's inner circle. It is uncertain whether either Ecke or Loehr ever met George in person, but his influence remained palpable in various ways, not least in their handwriting, which both adapted to the idiosyncratic letter-forms George had imposed on his disciples.[6] Ecke, in the aftermath of World War I, served as the

co-founder and charismatic leader of the Nibelungenbund, a boy-scout-like association (suffused with what a modern sensibility would characterize as thinly veiled gay undertones) of male teenagers under strong influence from George, ostensibly striving for Germany's spiritual renewal (Krusenstjern 2009: 72–74).

Our four protagonists belong to a generation whose world view was shaped by World War I. Ecke, a few years older than the others, fought in northern France through the entire length of the war, rising to the rank of lieutenant. Even in China, he would still occasionally identify himself by his former army rank (Franke 1995: 157). His three colleagues suffered the deprivations that the war brought to the civilian population, and they shared the feeling of profound national shame in the wake of Germany's defeat. As with many of their contemporaries from once-comparable backgrounds, their political orientations tended toward the right.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION AND INTELLECTUAL LINEAGES

Ecke and Erdberg both attended Bonn University, but their sojourns did not overlap. Ecke double-majored in art history and French literature and wrote his dissertation on the nineteenth-century Parisian engraver Charles Méryon (1821–1862) (Ecke 1923).[7] The art historian Wilhelm Worringer (1881–1965) became his *Doktorvater*. In a seminal book on Islamic art (Worringer 1908), Worringer had established a theoretical basis for the understanding of non-representational art. He was a vociferous advocate of expressionism—a term that he may have invented—at a time when that style was still highly controversial. His ideas played a major role in the emancipation of non-Western art as a legitimate subject of art historical inquiry. Erdberg, who also studied with Worringer briefly before his 1928 move to Königsberg, reported that he offered a seminar on East Asian art (in Erdberg's words: "He knew nothing about it, but he understood it!"), and she credited him for encouraging her to specialize in that field (Erdberg 1994: 92).

Ecke, under Worringer's tutelage, developed a resolutely modernistic art-historical sensitivity. Two of his fellow students, Paul Ortwin Rave (1893–1962) and Walter Holzhausen (1896–1968), eventually became major promoters of modern art in post–World War II Germany as directors of, respectively, the National Gallery in Berlin and Bonn's Municipal Art Museum; Ecke, as well, trained for museum work at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (now Bode-Museum) in Berlin as well as at the Municipal Museum in Bonn. In Bonn, he made a point of interacting with the painters of the "Rhenish Secession," as well as, allegedly (T. Y. Ecke 1991), with some Russian constructivist painters who had fled the Bolshevik revolution.[8] Ecke continued his practice of engaging with living artists once he got to China; it may be surmised, furthermore, that his familiarity with German avant-garde art of the 1920s helped open his mind to East Asian aesthetics.

Ecke learned architectural analysis from the medieval art historian Paul Clemen (1866–1947). This experience was to prove useful when Ecke started working on Chinese architecture. Clemen himself was sympathetic to East Asian art. In 1920—just at the time when Ecke was in Bonn—he supervised Alfred Salmony's (1890–1958) dissertation on the comparison of European and East Asian medieval sculpture (Salmony 1922), one of the first art history degrees ever awarded on an East Asian subject (Falkenhausen 2017; Orell 2015; Walravens 1983–85, vol. 2: 1–66). A decade later, Erdberg, too, became Clemen's advisee. Her dissertation, "Chinese Influence on European Garden Structures" (Erdberg 1936), was a compromise, as she did not feel she knew enough to take on a fully East Asian subject (Erdberg 1994: 104–105).

Following custom, Ecke and Erdberg each spent a couple of semesters sampling the offerings of other universities: Ecke at Berlin and Erlangen, Erdberg at Vienna and Berlin. Unlike Ecke, who still had to get France out of his system, Erdberg used these sojourns to seek instruction in East Asian art from specialists (Erdberg 1994: 94–96). She studied with Otto Kümmel (1874–1952), the founder of East Asian art history as a serious academic discipline, then director of Berlin's new Museum of East Asian Art and adjunct professor (*Honorarprofessor*) at Berlin University (Walravens 1983–85, vol. 3; 1987; Walravens and Kuwabara 2010: 9–11, 13–94). Moreover, at the Technical University of Berlin, she took classes with the architectural historian Ernst Boerschmann (1873–1949) (Kögel 2015; Walravens and Kuwabara 2010), who had undertaken extensive architectural surveys in China before World War I.

In Vienna in 1929, Erdberg was both fascinated and ever so slightly repelled by the idiosyncratic teachings of Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941). The irascible Strzygowski, who had broken away from the Art History Department and established his own institute within the university, zealously propagated the importance of "Oriental" (Near Eastern, Egyptian, Indian) influences on medieval European art, thereby aiming to decouple northern Europe from the Greco-Roman heritage. Though himself an extreme pan-German nationalist (late in life he even lobbied to be appointed as Adolf Hitler's art-historical advisor), Strzygowski was also a pioneer in expanding the reach of art-historical inquiry beyond Europe (Marchand 2009: 403–10). Erdberg (1994: 103) irreverently summarized her impressions as follows: "Strzygowski's theories are always correct, but his proofs are always wrong."

Contag, as well, started out as a pupil of Strzygowski in the mid-1920s. Later she held a job and learned Chinese at the China-Institut in Frankfurt, a private organization founded by the missionary Sinologist Richard Wilhelm (1873–1930). She continued her Sinological training in Berlin under Ferdinand Lessing (1882–1961), then curator at the Museum of Ethnography and professor of Chinese at the Institute for Oriental Languages run by the German Foreign Ministry. She also studied with Kümmel, who by then was beginning to have a sizable cohort of advisees. But for some reason, Contag obtained her doctorate under the Sinologist Alfred Forke (1867–1944) at the University of Hamburg, with a dissertation on the Ming-dynasty painter Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555–1636) (Contag 1933).

After completing her degree, Contag worked as Kümmel's (probably unremunerated) assistant at the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin, translating inscriptions on Chinese paintings. An avid fencer, she was training for the upcoming Berlin Olympic Games. It was during this period that Hitler came to power, and in 1934, Kümmel, who was a member of the Nazi party, was appointed director-general of the Berlin museums. Notwithstanding a certain hagiographic tendency on the part of his successors, who mention only his epoch-making achievements on behalf of the East Asian art history field, it cannot be ignored today that Kümmel became involved early on with some of the nastier aspects of Nazi politics.[9] During World War II, he took a leading role in organizing the despoliation of art treasures from German-occupied territories (Haase 1991: 198–202; Petropoulos 2000: 56–57). But by then, Contag had long left his ambit.

Loehr, the last of the four to start his career in East Asian art history, studied at the University of Munich, except for a semester spent in Berlin in 1934, where he worked with Kümmel. His main exposure to non-European art came from Ludwig Bachhofer (1894–1976) (Vanderstappen 1978–78; Walravens 1983–85, vol. 1, F1–23, vol. 2: i–ix). Bachhofer had been a student of Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945), arguably the twentieth century's most influential art historian, during the latter's stint as a professor in Munich; in 1920, he had written a doctoral dissertation on Japanese woodblock prints (Bachhofer 1922) and in 1926, he had passed his *Habilitation* (probably on the Buddhist art of Gandhāra), the additional academic degree after the PhD that is the precondition for becoming a professor in the German university system. When Loehr first met him, Bachhofer was working at Munich's Museum of Ethnography and teaching without salary as a *Privatdozent* at the university while waiting for a professorial chair to become available. In 1933, he was approved for a supernumerary professorship (*Extraordinariat*), but the Nazi administration rescinded the appointment because of his wife's Jewish descent; they emigrated in 1935. Loehr

therefore obtained his doctorate under Wilhelm Pinder (1878–1947), a specialist in German art and one of the most notorious promoters of art history in the spirit of the Nazi regime (Halbertsma 1985).[10] But throughout his life, Loehr preferred to trace his intellectual lineage through Bachhofer to Wölfflin, who had left Munich for Switzerland back in 1924. (Whether Loehr ever met Wölfflin in person is uncertain.)

The conception of art history Loehr absorbed in Munich was extremely different from, and much less forward-looking than, what Ecke and (perhaps to a lesser extent) Erdberg had taken away from Bonn not so many years earlier. Together with a solid mastery of the Wölfflinian formalist method, Loehr acquired a racially focused view of material culture. These two ingredients he deftly applied in his dissertation on the chronology of early Chinese bronzes (Loehr 1936). Subsequently, Loehr worked for four years in Bachhofer's former job at the Museum of Ethnography, interrupted by voluntary military service in 1938–39 with an elite unit of mountain troopers in the German Alps.[11] He started to develop a research interest in Chinese painting (Loehr 1939); but a planned *Habilitationsschrift* on Yuan-dynasty painting (mentioned in his 1940 curriculum vitae[12]) never came to fruition.

Erdberg, thanks to her mother's family connections, was able to go to the United States for post-doctoral work. She spent three years at Harvard University as a research assistant to Langdon Warner (1881–1955), a noted specialist on Asian religious art who is excoriated today for having despoiled the Dunhuang caves in 1924 (Cohen 1992: 78–100 et passim; Hopkirk 1980: 209–22). She put the photograph and slide collections of the Fogg Art Museum in usable order,[13] and translated her PhD thesis into English for publication by Harvard University Press, an endeavor in which she was helped by the prominent landscape architect and Harvard professor Bremer Whidden Pond (1884–1959). Subsequently she was awarded a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies that enabled her to spend two years in Tokyo and Kyoto to study Japanese language and culture. It was from Japan, at the end of 1934, that she first traveled to China.

One is impressed with the speed with which Ecke, Erdberg, and Loehr completed their doctorates: including temporary stays away from their home universities, they each finished in the minimum time of four years. The reason for the haste, obviously, was lack of funds. Even so, it would be wrong to imagine their academic achievement as equivalent to that of an American four-year college graduate. Their Gymnasium education may be assumed to have brought them close to that level. In university, they were able to specialize in their chosen subject without onerous distribution requirements, and their dissertations were

expected to constitute original contributions to knowledge. The constraints of their personal situations compelled them not only to work with tremendous discipline but also to seek out opportunities for practical training in the hope of eventually making a living as scholars. Thus, all of our four protagonists acquired significant museum experience during or shortly after their time in university. By the time they arrived in China, they were broadly and solidly trained art history professionals.

There was one aspect, however, in which a relatively short time spent in university likely had a negative effect: language training. In this respect, Contag may have been privileged: she seems to have spent as many as eight years in university (perhaps indicating that she was financially better off than the others), emerging as a first-rate Sinologist. In her dissertation and other early writings, she translated several difficult and highly subtle Ming- and Qing-period texts on art theory. Her linguistic competence was undoubtedly one major factor—besides introductions from powerful people—for the ease with which, once in China, Contag was accepted into the circles of leading artists and connoisseurs.

Erdberg and Loehr, though both started university intending to become East Asia specialists, had a more difficult time with language preparation. Erdberg made several attempts to learn Chinese, but her performance was substandard and she almost failed her PhD exams as a result (Erdberg 1994: 111–12). She subsequently learned Japanese tolerably well—during the war, she gave courses in the language to other Westerners in Japanese-occupied Beijing (Erdberg 1994: 254)—but she admits that her Chinese was insufficient to sustain an academic conversation. Tellingly, her publications contain few references to Chinese sources.

Although there was a tradition of Chinese studies in Munich going back to the first half of the nineteenth century, neither Sinology nor the Chinese language were being taught there in Loehr's time. Georg Reismüller (1882–1936), director-general of the Bavarian State Library, is mentioned as Loehr's first Chinese teacher,[14] but it seems that his instruction, such as it was, was limited to classical Chinese, and that Loehr started learning Mandarin only after his arrival in China (Merker 1998a: 33, n. 30). Ecke, who seems to have had no China-related academic preparation, acquired whatever he did of the language entirely in country.

To China: Circumstances and Motivations

None of our four protagonists was a refugee. Their removal to China was not part of the Nazi-induced exodus of large parts of Germany's intellectual elite (Kern 1988; Martin and Hammer 1999; Wendland 1998). Ecke and Erdberg left Germany years before the Nazi takeover; Contag shortly thereafter, but under no pressure; and Loehr was actually sent to Japanese-occupied Beijing as an official emissary of the Nazi regime.

For Ecke, the main motivation for leaving was no doubt the dismal academic job prospects in Weimar Germany. The invitation to go to China was probably arranged through his older cousin, Ruth Wang, née Kettner, who was married to Wang Yintai 王蔭泰 (1888–1961), a German-educated lawyer and politician.[15] At the University of Amoy (Xiamen), which had been founded only in 1921 as a private institution by the Singaporean-Chinese tycoon Tan Kah Kee (Chen Jiageng 陳嘉庚, 1874–1961), Ecke could realize his dream of being a professor—albeit for German language and literature, not art history. An added inducement of settling in China may have been the greater freedom—at least for a foreigner—to conduct his personal life in accordance with the proclivities of the George circle and the Nibelungenbund.[16]

For Erdberg and Contag, the dearth of professional opportunities for women in Germany surely played a role in their decision to leave. In China, they could work fruitfully while enjoying a relatively privileged status. For both, however, the immediate reason to stay in China was their marriage to expatriate German husbands already established there.

Erdberg, during two trips to Beijing from Japan in 1934 and 1935, became acquainted with the much older Mongolist and explorer Hermann Consten (1878–1957) (Götting 2012), who had been stranded in Beijing after losing his fortune in the crash of 1929 (Fuchs 2010: 33; Schmitt-Englert 2012: 506). Consten operated a horse-riding outfit for tourists; Erdberg was one of his customers. In 1936, Consten visited Erdberg in Japan, where they married. Since she had no further prospects at Harvard, they returned to Beijing, where they lived precariously for the next fifteen years.

Contag traveled to China in a semi-official capacity. In 1933–34, she had been involved in curating an exhibition of modern Chinese art in Berlin (Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst and Preußische Akademie der Künste 1934; Shi Mingli 2016). This exhibition had been organized under the aegis of the former Minister of Education Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940), Republican China's leading liberal intellectual (Ts'ai 1934). It was Cai who invited Contag to conduct research on Chinese scroll paintings at the Palace Museum in Beijing. She arrived in mid-October, 1934. The following year, in Shanghai, she met Sigmund Rudolf von Winterfeldt (1897–1954), a highly decorated World War I veteran who had been working in the banking business in Shanghai and was about to be appointed to the newly created position of trade expert (*Handelssachverständiger*) at the Shanghai Branch Office of the German Embassy (Freyeisen 2000: 45; on

his activities in that capacity, see Leutner, Adolphi, and Merker 1998: 341; Ratenhof 1987: 419 et passim; Schmitt-Englert 2012: 151, n. 57 et passim). They were married in 1936 and remained in Shanghai throughout World War II; their daughter Beatrix (now Freifrau von Riedesel) was born there. It was presumably her husband's diplomatic position that provided the economic and social basis for Contag's highly productive stay in China.

Loehr was dispatched to Beijing by the German Foreign Office in 1940 to take over the directorship of the Deutschland-Institut. Founded in 1931, this was ostensibly a Chinese-run institution dedicated to the dissemination of German culture; but by the mid-1930s, it had come to be financed and controlled by the German government (Ding and Li 1996; Franke 1995: 60–68 et passim, 2000; Jansen 1999; Kreisler 1989: 184–95). At a time when World War II was already raging, and when most men Loehr's age were being conscripted and sent to the front, to be dispatched to Beijing must have constituted a tremendous privilege. Loehr made the trip to Beijing by train, his wife and two infant sons following in early 1941. Two other Sinologists were sent to the Deutschland-Institut at that time: Alfred Hoffmann (1911–97) (Martin 1998; Merker 1998b) and Ilse Martin (later Ilse Martin Fang, 1914–2008) (Fang 2005; Walravens 2010). Martin, who was delayed by the need to complete her doctorate at the Berlin School of Foreign Studies, arrived just before Germany's attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, which interrupted rail communication. Having planned to stay two or three years, all of them were now stuck in Beijing indefinitely.

The Chinese sojourns of our four protagonists, though lengthy, were not entirely uninterrupted. Ecke, after his first five-year contract at Xiamen came to an end in 1928, spent several months in Japan, where he was affiliated with the Maison Franco-japonaise. After another five years at Tsinghua (Qinghua) University 清華大學 in Beijing, he returned to Europe for almost a year. Well connected with French academia, he spent most of that time in Paris, conducting research at the Louvre and working with the archaeologist Joseph Hackin (1886–1941). He had intended to seek academic employment in Germany but was so appalled by the realities of life under the Nazi regime that he departed once again for Beijing. Somehow he secured a lecturership at Fu-jen (Furen) University 輔仁大學 financed by the German Academy in Munich, the forerunner of today's Goethe Institute (Franke 1995: 61, 68). Furen was (and, now in Taiwan, remains) China's leading Catholic university—a somewhat ironic affiliation for the son of a leading Protestant theologian.

Contag and her diplomat husband were presumably entitled to go on home leave at least once before war made travel difficult, but the details are not recorded. Erdberg took one more trip to Japan, in 1939, to recuperate from an illness (Erdberg 1994: 254). Loehr also undertook an intensive, officially sponsored research trip to Japan from April to June, 1943.[17]

ACTIVITIES IN CHINA

Of our four protagonists, Ecke, though the least prepared for China, spent the longest time in the country. Starting right after he got to Xiamen, he took advantage of every opportunity to undertake field trips to the region's architectural monuments. Initially he was most comfortable studying stone-built architecture (T. Y. Ecke 1991), which he felt was similar to the Rhenish medieval architecture he had learned to analyze under Clemen. His first major China-related publication was a monograph on the twin Song-period stone pagodas of the Kaiyuansi temple in Quanzhou (Fujian) 福建泉州開元寺, co-authored with the Swiss-born French Sinologist Paul Demiéville (1894–1979), who was then based at the École Française d'Extrême-Orient in Hanoi (Ecke and Demiéville 1935); the book remains seminal today. Additionally, Ecke published five shorter articles on stone buildings and sculptures in Fujian (Walravens and Kuwabara 2010: 161, nos. 2, 4–6; 162, no. 11), one of which (Ecke 1931) was soon translated into Chinese (Liang Sicheng 1933).

Recognizing that wooden structures constituted the mainstay of East Asian architectural traditions, Ecke used his 1928 stay in Japan for in-depth on-site study of the temples of Nara. In China, serious research into architectural history by Chinese scholars was just then getting underway. In 1930, the ex-minister of transport of the defunct Beijing-based Beiyang 北洋 regime of the early Republican period, Zhu Qiqian 朱啓鈐 (Chu Ch'i-ch'ien, 1872–1964), founded the Institute for Research in Chinese Architecture (*Yingzao xueshe* 營造學社) with the dual purpose of republishing traditional architects' manuals and scientifically documenting extant monuments. The new institution's most prominent staff member was the American-trained architect Liang Sicheng 梁思成 (1901–1972) (Fairbank 1994). Ecke, by then teaching at Qinghua, became one of the members of the *Yingzao xueshe*, and in 1937 he published a report on its work in English (Ecke 1936–37); one of the other members of the institute, Liu Dunzhen 劉敦楨 (1897–1968), published an article explicitly responding to an (apparently unpublished) inquiry by Ecke (Liu 1933). Although Ecke does not seem to have participated in any of Liang Sicheng's epoch-making survey trips, which led to the discovery of many of the country's most important extant ancient buildings, he studied ancient architecture on his own in those parts of China that were then accessible (Hebei, Henan, Shandong, and the Jiangnan area). He also collaborated extensively with Boerschmann, who returned to

China repeatedly during the 1930s to resume his ambitious project of documenting the traditional architecture of China in all its complexity (for their correspondence, see Walravens and Kuwabara 2010: 101–60). But while Boerschmann's interest was in the traditional architectural environment, and consequently concerned chiefly with relatively recent buildings, Ecke and his colleagues at the *Yingzao xueshe* were busy developing methods for dating and periodizing the earlier stages of Chinese architectural history; and while Boerschmann documented vernacular architecture and still-functioning religious structures in his search for what was culturally typical, Ecke zeroed in on major monuments from the past. In contrast to Boerschmann's more anthropological approach, Ecke's was very much that of an art historian.

The 1937 Japanese invasion put an end to research travel by foreigners. The *Yingzao xueshe* joined the exodus of Nationalist government-run institutions to the unoccupied areas of China; it ceased operations in 1946. Left behind in Beijing, Ecke shifted his interest to the study of traditional furniture, as he had noticed that the joinery techniques employed by furniture-makers were largely analogous to those used by carpenters. Ecke was particularly interested in how the development of these techniques determined stylistic changes. Chinese furniture had never previously been touched by art historians. But unlike buildings, pieces of furniture could easily be obtained and taken apart; Ecke and his collaborator, the architect Yang Yüeh (*recte* Yang Yao 楊耀, 1902–78), did this and recorded their observations in exactly measured drawings. Straightforward as it seems, this procedure constituted a major methodological breakthrough. The book Ecke and Yang produced together, *Chinese Domestic Furniture*, first published under difficult conditions in 1944, became a classic (Ecke and Yang 1944).

With their elegant proportions, sparse decoration, and explicit revelation of structural components, East Asian architecture and furniture spoke to Ecke's modernist sensibilities. He displayed his collection of Ming and Qing furniture in his own Beijing courtyard house, where he lived like a traditional Chinese scholar. His hospitality was legendary, and he was esteemed as a tastemaker by the expatriate community. In this respect, his influence also extended to his Chinese friends, such as the poet and epigrapher Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1911–66) (Wang Shimin 2015), and the aesthete, connoisseur, bon-vivant, and (later on) cultural-relics administrator Wang Shixiang 王世襄 (1914–2009), who assembled distinguished furniture collections of their own (Ye Gongping 2014).

In Beijing, Ecke moved in an international circle of scholars, artists, and intellectuals that included leading Chinese figures alongside the *crème de la crème* of expatriate Sinologists. The Manchu specialist Walter Fuchs (1902–79), who, like Ecke, had been living in China since the 1920s, wrote of a "Sinologists' circle" in the early 1930s (Fuchs 2010: 38), where he and Ecke mixed with the German-educated Fu Sinian (1896–1950), founder of the Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica (in 1928) and the first to inaugurate China's large-scale archaeological campaigns (see Lai, this volume); the American-educated director of the National Library in Beijing, Yuan Tongli (1895–1965); the Nazi Sinologist Ernst Schierlitz (1902–40), Loehr's predecessor as the director of the Deutschland-Institut; the anti-Nazi emigré Hellmut Wilhelm (1905–90), later professor of Chinese literature at the University of Washington, and others. Ecke and Wilhelm remained close, even as much of the German expatriate community in Beijing increasingly kept Wilhelm at arm's length because of his wife's Jewish descent (a situation alluded to in Wilhelm 1960: vii).

The rise of the Nazis brought other Asia scholars to Beijing as refugees, such as the Sanskritist and Buddhologist Walter Liebenthal (1886–1982), and Rudolf Löwenthal (1904–96), a specialist on the modern Chinese press as well as on Chinese Jews and Muslims. Unlike Ecke, both relocated with their host institutions to unoccupied China when the Japanese invaded in 1937. Other expatriates in Ecke's Beijing circle included the curators George N. Kates (1895–1990) from the Brooklyn Museum, and Laurence Sickman (1907–88) from what is now the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City; Wolfgang Franke (1912–2007), later professor of Sinology at Hamburg; Walther Heissig (1913–2005), later professor of Mongolian studies at Bonn; the Harvard scholars Wilma Fairbank (1909–2002), John King Fairbank (1911–91), Francis W. Cleaves (1911–95), and J. Robert Hightower (1915–2006); and many others.

In 1937–38, Adam von Trott zu Solz (1909–44), who had known Ecke in the early 1920s through the Nibelungenbund, lodged with Ecke for a year (Krusenstjern 2009: 286–87; 331–73). Trott, trained in law and philosophy, intended to integrate Chinese ideas into an ambitious design of a new political order—an alternative to both Western democracy and Nazi ideology. Inasmuch as it can now be reconstructed, his vision, based on relationships of mutual responsibility between the rulers and the ruled, amounted to a heady combination of traditional Prussian and Confucian values. In Beijing, Trott worked through key philosophical texts with a Chinese assistant and consulted with leading Sinologists (Lukens 2008). After his return to Germany, he entered the German diplomatic service; during a later trip to Beijing in 1940, he unsuccessfully attempted to involve Republican China in the German resistance against Hitler (H.-H. Liang 1978: 148–53). He took a leading role in the July 20, 1944, assassination attempt on Hitler and was executed after it failed. Trott was arguably the best mind of the German resistance. One can only imagine what his

conversations with Ecke and his colleagues must have been like during the intense months they spent together in Beijing.

On the Chinese side, since his days in Xiamen, Ecke was acquainted with twentieth-century China's greatest modernist writer, Lu Xun 魯迅 (Zhou Shuren 周樹人, 1881–1936), who mentioned him in his diary (Ye Gongping 2014) and owned his book on Méryon (Lu Xun Bowuguan n.d., Xiwen bufen: 10), and with the eminent classical poet Chen Yan 陳衍 (1856–1937). In Beijing, he interacted with such luminaries as the French-trained painter Xu Beihong 徐悲鴻 (1895–1953); the German-trained poet and literary scholar Feng Zhi 馮至 (1905–93); the Columbia University–educated aesthetician Deng Yizhe 鄧以蟄 (1892–1973); and the promising Buddhologist and Sanskritist Lin Liguang 林藜光 (1902–45), among others. Moreover, he was friends with three princes of the Qing imperial family who were teaching art at Furen University: the painters Pu Jin 溥伒 (1879?–1966) and Pu Quan 溥佺 (1913–91) (Vainker and Lin 2004) and the calligrapher Qi Gong 啟功 (1912–2005). Among Ecke's students at Qinghua, the best known today is Ji Xianlin 季羨林 (1911–2009), twentieth-century China's leading Sanskritist (Ye Gongping 2014; *q.v.* for further references). Ji, originally a student of Western literature, credited Ecke for inspiring him to specialize in Sanskrit and go to Germany for further study (he was in Göttingen from 1935 to 1946). He reports that Ecke taught German through English, with less-than-satisfactory results.

In spite of his friendships with many Chinese colleagues and his involvement with Chinese-run institutions, Ecke by no means "went native." It is not even certain that he spoke, let alone read, Chinese fluently. Much of his scholarly activity, as well as large parts of his social life, took place in a worldwide frame of reference, and his experience illustrates how completely the intelligentsia of Republican-era Beijing was integrated into international networks. As a case in point, when in 1935 Furen University launched a new Western-language Sinological journal, *Monumenta Serica*, Ecke was appointed associate editor. Thanks in large measure to his strong and sensitive leadership, *Monumenta Serica* soon became, as it remains today, a prestigious vehicle for scholarship. Ecke himself published as many as fifteen pieces in it during his time in China.

Expatriate solidarity may also have played a part in impelling Ecke to apply his art-historical skills to Chinese archaic bronzes. Two German collectors whom he knew in Beijing asked him to publish their collections: Oskar Trautmann (1877–1950), Germany's ambassador to China from 1935–1938 (Merker 1998a: 21 et passim), and Hans-Jürgen von Lochow (1902–89), a railway expert who had worked for the Chinese government (Schlombs 1997: 62–63). Bound in the traditional Chinese manner and illustrated with high-quality photographs

on rice paper, the catalogs were published through Furen University Press (Ecke 1939, 1943–44).[18] The Trautmann catalog elicited positive reviews from leading Chinese scholars such as Chen Mengjia (1940) and Qu Duizhi 瞿兌之 (1894–1973) (Qu 1942).[19]

According to Wolfgang Franke (1995: 68), Ecke was "a strongly marked, genial, willful personality, but uneven, moody, and sometimes difficult to relate to for others." He remained a bachelor well into middle age but in 1945 married his student Tseng Yu-ho (Zeng Youhe 曾幼荷; a.k.a. Betty Ecke, 1925–2017),[20] an immensely gifted painter. Despite the age difference, the marriage was a true meeting of minds. With his well-honed art-historical judgment, Ecke was able to provide Tseng Yu-ho with important guidance as she developed into an internationally renowned artist (Sullivan 1989: 203; Thompson 2001).

Erdberg's life in Beijing was very different from Ecke's (and, for that matter, Loehr's). Above all, she had to make a living. Complementing her husband's business, she worked as a tourist guide, developing considerable expertise about Beijing and its sights. She gave lectures on Chinese art to interested groups of expatriates and made money as a restorer (and, allegedly, as a dealer)[21] of antiques.

Erdberg had little time for scholarship; during her stay in Beijing, she only published one brief study of a medieval Taoist sculpture in *Monumenta Serica* (Consten 1942b), as well as a half-dozen popular articles. Although she was known to members of the German and international academic community, they did not regard her as a colleague (Erdberg 1994: 246). And while her husband was well connected to Mongolian-speaking intellectual circles, Erdberg's limited command of Chinese prevented her from cultivating the acquaintance of Chinese scholars in her field of interest. She did interact—albeit in a rather subaltern position—with two very senior foreign scholars: she provided editorial services to the Japanese ethnographer and archaeologist Torii Ryūzō 鳥居龍藏 (1870–1953), who resided in Beijing at the American missionary-run Yenching (Yanjing) University 燕京大學 during the war (Erdberg 1994: 247–48; see also Egan 1987: 150–153, 159, 176–77); and she worked intermittently as a typist for John C. Ferguson (1866–1945), a Canadian-born former missionary turned art expert and government advisor (Erdberg 1994: 244–45; Netting 2013). The latter source of income dried up after Pearl Harbor, when Ferguson and his fellow US citizens were interned by the Japanese.

It was another expatriate German collector of archaic bronzes, Werner Jannings (1886–after 1954), a prosperous merchant in Tianjin (Schmitt-Englert 2012), who, in 1944, gave Erdberg her first opportunity for major scholarly work. Jannings had entrusted Loehr with the publication of his extensive holdings of bronze weapons, and he turned to Erdberg to publish his bronze vessels.

Erdberg, only too aware that "Loehr was better" than she (Erdberg 1994: 269), felt very honored. But in January 1946, the Nationalist government, once again in control of Beijing, strong-armed Jannings to "donate" his collection to the Palace Museum. Loehr and Erderg were hired to install its display there (Fig. 12.5). The person instrumental in bringing about the transaction was Ecke's former student Wang Shixiang, then a low-ranking government official attached to the Ministry of Education. Through the good offices of Zhu Qiqian, Wang had obtained the intercession of no less a personage than T. V. Soong (Song Ziwen 宋子文, 1894–1971), Chiang Kai-shek's 蔣介石 brother-in-law, to overcome Jannings's initial resistance (Chen Zhou 2002: 49–54; Elliott and Shambaugh 2006: 91; Erdberg 1994: 281–86; Li Hui 2001: 59–66; Li Jingguo 2007: 147–51, 162–67).[2] Wang happened to be Loehr's next-door neighbor at Fangjiayuan Hutong 芳嘉園胡同 in Dongcheng District, Beijing, and Loehr's cooperation in this affair may well have helped to make him *persona grata* with the Republican authorities. (As to Jannings, the Communists after 1949 sentenced him to hard labor as a punishment for his largesse to the Republican regime; he was finally repatriated in 1954.) Today, the Jannings collection constitutes an important part of the Beijing Palace Museum's holdings of bronzes, the former imperial bronze collections having been removed to Taiwan.

In connection with his work on the Jannings collection, Loehr wrote several articles on bronze weapons. Much later, he published his part of the catalog as a book, which was illustrated only with his own drawings, as the photographs had been lost (Loehr 1956). Erdberg, too, as of 1984 was still planning to publish her portion of the catalog, but that plan never materialized. A new effort at cataloging the collection is currently underway in Beijing.[23]

Loehr, at the Deutschland-Institut, inaugurated a German-language journal of Chinese Studies, *Sinologische Arbeiten*, three issues of which appeared before the end of the war. His own publications from the war years are scant and very preliminary; perhaps he was holding back his best work for later. He undertook research trips into some Japanese-occupied areas in north China—Manchuria and northern Shanxi—most memorably to the Buddhist cave temples at Yungang 雲岡 in Datong (Shanxi) 山西大同, which were being recorded by Japanese scholars.

Until 1945, Loehr's life in Beijing contrasted with Ecke's in its apparent lack of gregariousness. Perhaps because he did not yet know enough Chinese, he kept his distance from expatriate Sinological circles. Wolfgang Franke (1995: 114) notes in his memoirs that Loehr was uninterested in interacting with Chinese people; one cannot exclude the fact that his attitude was influenced by Nazi racial prejudices. Perhaps, as an official representative of the German government, Loehr identified



FIGURE 12.5. Handover of the Werner Jannings Collection at the Jiangxue xuan at the National Palace Museum, Beijing, January 22, 1946, including Eleanor Consten-von Erdberg (front row, first from left), Shen Jianshi (first row, second from left), Max Loehr (front row, second from right), Wang Shixiang (front row, first from right), and Yu Xingwu (second row, first from left). Courtesy of the Palace Museum, Beijing.

with the Japanese occupiers. If one may believe later retrospective accounts, such a pro-Japanese stance was not widely held among German expatriates, especially among those who had lived in Beijing before the Japanese invasion. In any case, even during the war, Loehr cultivated some contacts with Chinese specialists who shared his interest in archaic Chinese art. Since much of the Chinese scholarly elite had left Beijing, the choice was limited, but Loehr found two old-style antiquarians, Rong Geng 容庚 (1894–1983) (Huang Yifei 2015) and Sun Haibo 孫海波 (1911–72), with whom to study bronze inscriptions.

Loehr's social life changed drastically at war's end, when the international scholarly community suddenly became important for him as a source of support. Ironically, it was through the good offices of none other than Hellmut Wilhelm—with whom he had heretofore been afraid to associate openly—that he obtained a teaching post at the once-again Chinese-run Qinghua University. Equally ironically, his former tutor Rong Geng, who had chosen not to go to

unoccupied China out of concern for his collections and personal library, was ignominously dismissed from Peking University for having allegedly "collaborated" with the Japanese. Instead, Loehr now became friendly with Feng Zhi, Chen Mengjia, and Wang Shixiang, who had returned to Beijing from the south.

Contag's work on literati painting, in contrast to the antiquities-and-monuments–focused scholarship of her colleagues, not only demanded very different methods of study but also took place in a completely different culture of research, imbricated in very different modes of socializing. In Republican China, paintings were for the most part held by private collectors. Even the Palace Museum did not regularly exhibit its paintings. But it so happened that, around the time Contag arrived in China, two teams of researchers were taking comprehensive stock of the Palace Museum's holdings; and through a combination of uncommon talent and an extraordinary stroke of good luck, Contag was allowed to participate in both endeavors.

The first viewing project was occasioned by a scandal involving the former director of the Palace Museum, Yi Peiji 易培基 (1880–1937). In 1933, one of the Museum's board members had denounced Yi for replacing artworks with fakes and selling off the originals for his own profit (Elliott and Shambaugh 2005: 75–78; Roberts 2007).[24] To investigate these allegations—which ultimately turned out to be baseless—the judicial authorities mandated a comprehensive check of the Museum's paintings. The person in charge of that effort was Ye Gongchuo 葉恭綽 (1881–1968), a railway expert and former vice minister of communications of the Beiyang government as well as a major art collector and calligrapher, who at that time was semi-retired but still politically influential. To head the committee of experts, Ye prevailed upon Huang Binhong 黃賓虹 (Huang Zhi 黃質, 1865– 1955), twentieth-century China's greatest traditional-style painter, who was also a leading connoisseur, and whose work had been prominently shown in the 1934 Berlin exhibition. At the recommendation of Cai Yuanpei, Ye had the recently arrived Contag appointed as an advisor to the committee. She was by far the youngest, as well as the only female, member of the group; but she was not the only foreigner: Ferguson, as well, participated during the project's initial stages. First in Beijing, then in Shanghai (where much of the Palace Museum's painting collection had been removed for safekeeping in anticipation of a Japanese invasion of north China), Contag, as part of the committee, was privileged to view thousands of normally inaccessible works from the former Imperial collections.

The second viewing project took place in preparation for the great exhibition of Chinese art that was held in London from November 1935 to March 1936. As part of its effort to generate goodwill for China in its looming war with Japan,

the Nationalist government had agreed to lend masterworks from the Palace Museum. The person charged with selecting the paintings was the collector and painter Wu Hufan 吳湖帆 (1894–1968). Again, Contag was invited to join (Spee 2008: 50–51).

As documented in their letters and diaries, both Huang Binhong and Wu Hufan were positively impressed with Contag: they appreciated her seriousness as a scholar and her lack of arrogance (Huang Binhong, letter to Xu Chengyao, February 19, 1936, in Huang Binhong 1999: 147; translated in Roberts 2005: ch. 4. 130–31; Spee 2008: 58, also in Shi Mingli 2016). They introduced her to other members of their vast circle of old-style literati painters, collectors, and connoisseurs in the Jiangnan region (Qiu Zhuchang 1985: 181; Wang Zhongxiu 1995: 352, 356), and Contag soon developed a deep understanding of their aesthetic and moral values. Huang Binhong dedicated a painting to Contag with an inscription that brings this out (Roberts 2005: ch. 4, 132, ill. 4:10). Respect developed into friendship. At Contag's wedding, Wu Hufan and his wife, Pan Jingshu 潘靜淑 (1892–1939), an accomplished artist in her own right, presented her with a painted fan (Shi Mingli 2016).

Contag proposed to Wu Hufan to collaborate on a much-needed comprehensive reference work on Ming and Qing-period painters' and collectors' seals. Since Wu, an opium addict, lacked the energy to do this himself, he recommended his student and protégé Wang Jiqian (Wang Chi-ch'ien 王季遷 / 王己千; a.k.a. Wang Chi-ch'üan 王季銓, C. C. Wang; 1907–2003) (Spee 2008).[25] The project, which occupied them for three years, provided a unique opportunity to view most of the region's major private painting collections in their entirety (Wang 1977; Silbergeld 1987: 21). Embellished with calligraphic prefaces by Ye Gongchuo and Wu Hufan, the dictionary was published in Shanghai in 1940, reconstituted and slightly reduced in size after a Japanese air raid in October 1937 had destroyed the original galley (Contag and Wang 1940). It was innovative for providing full-size photographic renditions of the seals together with transcriptions into standard script and German translations. The book was seriously, and quite positively, reviewed by leading Chinese scholars and artists (Fu 1942; Rong 1940). Reissued several times (sometimes under an English title and with a new preface by the American art historian James Cahill [1926–2014], yet retaining Contag's German text unchanged [Contag and Wang 1966]),[26] it remains an indispensable tool for the authentication of literati paintings from Late Imperial China. Aside from the dictionary, Contag also published a substantial journal article during her time in China (Contag 1937) as well as a book on Qing literati painting that was later translated into English (Contag 1941).

WARTIME AND POLITICAL ENTANGLEMENTS

When the Second Sino-Japanese war broke out in July 1937, both Beijing and Shanghai were occupied by Japanese troops. Germany at first conducted a somewhat inconsistent foreign policy vis-à-vis China, maintaining relations with both Japan and Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government in Chongqing. Diplomatic correspondence from the early years of the war records plans to move the Deutschland-Institut from Beijing to unoccupied Kunming, where many academic institutions had relocated (Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3385, 3386, 3387). Only in 1941, following the signing of the tripartite alliance that established the "Axis Berlin-Rome-Tokyo," did Germany recognize Wang Jingwei's 汪精衛 (1883–1944) Japanese-dominated puppet regime in Nanjing and break off relations with Chongqing. The Deutschland-Institut remained in Japanese-occupied Beijing. As allies of the Japanese, German nationals in occupied China enjoyed a relatively privileged position, while Allied nationals were cruelly interned after Pearl Harbor. The tables were turned after the Allied victory.

If Ecke had still been teaching at Qinghua in 1937, he presumably would have joined in that institution's exodus. In a letter to Trott from September 2, 1937 (cited in Krusenstjern 2009: 337), Ecke wrote: "All the genuine Chinese are leaving us, for crying out loud!" (Alle echten Chinesen aber verlassen uns, es ist zum Heulen!) But Furen University, where he was now a professor, stayed put in Japanese-occupied Beijing. Shielded to some extent by the special status of the mostly German missionaries who were running it, Furen maintained a modicum of autonomy, and Ecke's life in Beijing continued under a semblance of normalcy. Since his salary was paid in part from official German sources, Ecke had to be careful "to veil his otherwise quite pronounced anti-Nazi attitude in the company of other Germans who were not completely reliable" (Franke 1995: 68). Like most expatriate German academics at the time, he may have been compelled to join the National Socialist Teachers' Federation (Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund).[27]

Since the Nazi takeover in 1933, all German nationals living abroad had been coopted to some extent by the new regime. In Beijing, too, the Nazi party's Foreign Organization (Auslandsorganisation) had increasingly tightened its stranglehold over the German Community (Deutsche Gemeinde), which had previously functioned as a loose and entirely voluntary organization representing the interest of German nationals (Merker 1998a; Schmitt-Englert 2012: 493–501). All of Beijing's approximately 275 Germans were now theoretically obliged to join the Deutsche Gemeinde and attend its activities, which included political

indoctrination by Nazi party functionaries.[28] In practice, if one may believe the recollections of Erdberg and others, the officials in charge of enforcing the new order in Beijing were comparatively benign, and social interactions between Nazis and non-Nazis, "Aryans" and Jews, Germans and other foreigners, as well as Germans and Chinese, went on more or less as before (Franke 1995: 66; Schmitt-Englert 2012: 265).

Nazi-imposed strictures were particularly onerous when it came to getting married, even abroad. Erdberg (1994a: 165–68) and Contag (Schmitt-Englert 2012: 151, n. 57), in order for their marriages to be recognized under German law, had to proffer proof that both they and their fiancés were of pure "Aryan" descent. Assembling the necessary documentation—especially for Erdberg with her far-flung background—caused considerable difficulties. As to Ecke, he dared not marry Tseng Yu-ho until February 27, 1945, when the German defeat was imminent—for marrying a non-"Aryan" would have constituted "racial abomination" (*Rassenschande*) under Nazi anti-miscegenation laws and would have entailed severe punishment in the event of a return to Germany (Franke 1995: 139; the same considerations delayed Franke's own marriage as well).[29] Even so, Ecke felt obliged to report the marriage to the German consulate, and on March 4, he wrote to the official in charge, Felix Altenburg (1889–1970)—who himself was under a cloud for having a Chinese girlfriend—apologizing for having married without official permission.[30] As mitigating factors, he mentioned that Tseng Yu-ho had "connections to Japan and to Manchukuo," presumably referring to the Manchu princes who were her teachers at Furen University. One of the latter, Pu Jin, had conducted the marriage, the other, Pu Quan, serving as master of ceremonies. Also present were the Swiss consul and seven other Germans, including Wilhelm, Fuchs, and Loehr (whose presence at this occasion may signal an incipient opportunistic reorientation away from National Socialist orthodoxy), as well as Ecke's cousin Ruth Wang, whose husband, Wang Yintai, by then was serving as head of the collaborationist North Chinese government. On March 16, 1945, Altenburg notified the German embassy in Nanjing of the marriage, pointing out that it was valid under Chinese law and expressing the conviction that Ecke's and Tseng's artistic collaboration would be positive for German–Chinese cultural relations. In a marginal note, the local Nazi party boss agreed that no action was needed.[31]

Contag, as the wife of a diplomat, was part of the official German presence in China. Since the German Community in Shanghai, some 2000 strong, was under far stricter Nazi control than the one in Beijing (Freyeisen 2000), she inevitably had to participate, at least sometimes, in activities organized under Nazi auspices. But neither Contag nor her husband appears to have been prominently involved

in such goings-on. Winterfeldt, in spite of his prominent official position, is not named even once in Freyeisen's (2000) detailed treatment of Nazi activities in Shanghai. However, one 1941 source (cited in Leutner, Adolphi, and Merker 1998: 222) hints that he may have been involved in intelligence gathering. Like virtually all German diplomats, he applied to join the Nazi party, but it is unclear whether he actually joined (Schmitt-Englert 2012: 151, n. 57). In any case, when Franke much later referred to Contag as "a somewhat controversial personage" (*eine etwas umstrittene Persönlichkeit*; Franke, letter to Walter Fuchs, September 6, 1973, in Walravens 2013: 141), the reference is unlikely to have been a political one.

Erdberg, by her own frank admission (1994: 226), benefited from the Japanese invasion. For as the Japanese occupying authorities made it a *point d'honneur* to keep open the universities whose faculty and students had fled, they faced a dire staffing shortage, enabling Erdberg to land a teaching position for the first time. Until the end of the war, she taught at the newly founded Faculty of Medicine of what later came to be called "Fake Peking University" (Wei Beida 偽北大, in counterdistinction to the "Real" Peking University that had relocated to Kunming). She also taught at Yanjing University until the entry of the United States into the war forced its closure. At some point, Erdberg writes, she "had to join the National Socialist Women's League" (Frauenschaft), whose Beijing chapter she describes as a "knitting club that met once a month to make warm clothes for the freezing Germans at home—including, naturally, soldiers' socks" (Erdberg 1994: 226). Erdberg evidently intended to convey that she never went so far as to join the Nazi party. Her husband, on the other hand, had become a member of the party as early as 1933, even serving as the leader of its Beijing chapter until 1934 (Schmitt-Englert 2012: 500–501).[32] In her memoirs, Erdberg (1994: 148–49) claimed that he had early on become disenchanted with the Nazis and had provoked his expulsion from the party, triggering social and professional repercussions; but this account may not be accurate.

As to whether Loehr was a member of the Nazi party, published opinion has been divided. Wolfgang Franke, who knew him well in China, denies it (1995: 113),[33] but Peter Merker (1998b), based on extensive archival research, considers it certain.[34] Indeed, the Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry preserves a printed invitation to a lecture by Loehr on "New Art in Germany" on September 26, 1941, on which Loehr's name is explicitly preceded by the abbreviation for "Party Comrade" (*Pg = Parteigenosse*); this should clinch the matter.[35] Corroborating this, Merker notes that Loehr won his job at the Deutschland-Institut over two dyed-in-the-wool Nazi scholars, Werner Speiser (1908–65) and Hans O. Stange (1903–78); that his subordinate in Beijing, Hoffmann, was

a staunch party member; and that both Loehr and Hoffmann, before being sent to Beijing, had to be officially exempted from military service—a tall order under wartime conditions. That the exemption was granted signals the importance with which their mission was viewed by the highest authorities. Ilse Martin, before being sent to China, had worked as an employee for the German military for two years (according to the autobiographical statement in her dissertation cited in Walravens 2010). Franke (1995: 114) alleges that she was "not a party member, but quite naïve," but in this case, too, he may be misremembering. In any case, all three were obviously regarded as politically reliable.

On the other hand, there is the following evaluation by an unnamed Nazi official (Freyeisen 1999: 213, n. 41; cited from Krüger and Wulff 1994):

> Dr. Löhr [sic], as to his professional qualifications, keeps himself mainly oriented aesthetically and is considered to be little interested in politics.

Be that as it may, the presence in China of Loehr, Hoffmann, and Martin almost certainly constituted part of the German war effort. It is hardly an accident that their arrival coincided with a significant expansion of the German cultural and media presence in East Asia under the aegis of the "Axis Berlin-Rome-Tokyo." Most of this expansion took place in Shanghai, which even under Japanese occupation was a far more important node in the international communication network than Beijing. In 1940–41, Shanghai saw the establishment of the Deutsches Informationszentrum dedicated to the dissemination of pro-German propaganda to the general public as well as to the press; a German-run radio station; as well as a fancy monthly periodical directed at an educated readership, *The XXth Century* (Freyeisen 2000: 266–353). As Astrid Freyeisen's careful archival research has revealed (2000: 351–56, 367–89), the Nazi functionaries who directed each of these operations were simultaneously involved in clandestine intelligence gathering; in fact, that very probably was their main preoccupation, their respective "day jobs" merely serving as fronts. It would be naïve not to assume that plans existed to use the Deutschland-Institut in Beijing for espionage purposes, and it is known that one of its associates, the Mongolist Walter Heissig, was engaged in such activities.[36] This became an issue when Loehr approached Heissig to contribute to *Sinologische Arbeiten*: the latter's superiors in the German military were slow in giving their assent.[37] Rumors that Loehr himself had been a spy circulated in Beijing after the war, and he is said to have been investigated by US Army intelligence on that account, but nothing of substance seems to have come to light (Rudolph 1985: 97–98). The institute's (actual or potential) role as a front for covert operations might explain its tendency, noted by Françoise Kreissler (1989: 195), of "multiplying its activities to excess, without always following through on

them."[38] But the archival materials currently accessible do not directly attest to such a role.

Even so, there are signs that, back in Germany, Loehr and his two companions had been given a mission that included other tasks besides their ostensible pursuit of Sinology. If we may believe Wolfgang Franke, who had been in charge of the daily operations of the Deutschland-Institut for more than a year before their arrival, none of the three took much interest in the institute. Instead, Hoffmann devoted himself to "the German Community and the party, where he was put in charge of political indoctrination and also of the Hitler Youth" (Franke 1994: 113). Ilse Martin, though more of a presence at the Deutschland-Institut than the other two, engaged herself in organizing women and became the leader of the Beijing Branch of the League of German Girls (Bund der Mädels), the female equivalent of the Hitler Youth (Franke 1994: 114). About Loehr, Franke writes (1994: 113; similarly 114 et passim):

> He was glad to be in Beijing and to be able to pursue his scholarly interests there. To us he showed himself as an easygoing person. He had no interest in the Deutschland-Institut and its work, even though he took over its directorship in August 1941. He essentially limited himself to representing the Institute toward the outside, especially vis-à-vis the German authorities; he virtually ignored the Chinese members and staff. . . . He was exclusively concerned to satisfy the higher German authorities and to avoid anything that could possibly have provoked their criticism. . . . Caution was his utmost priority.

While Franke continued to serve as "managing director" (*Geschäftsführer*) of the Institute (by his own estimate, he did about 90% of the routine administrative work [Franke 1995: 114]), Loehr showed up there only "two or three times a week for a couple of hours" (Franke 1995: 116).

Franke generously assumes that Loehr made use of his ample free time to pursue his scholarship. And it is true that between 1943 and 1945, Loehr published a piece in each annual issue of *Sinologische Arbeiten*. These include a description of Shang-period grey ceramics (Loehr 1943a), the first installment of a series of translations of bronze inscriptions that he had worked on with Rong Geng (Loehr 1944a), and the partial translation of a bibliography on oracle bone inscriptions compiled by Rong (1945a). But these pieces, which constitute the sum total of Loehr's published scholarly output during his years at the Deutschland-Institut, strike one as, frankly, perfunctory; they bear no comparison with the brilliance of his own later work or, indeed, of the two journal articles he had published in Germany before departing for China (Loehr 1936, 1939). During the same time span, Franke published considerably more, in spite

of being kept busy managing the institute and by an active social life. One cannot help suspecting that Loehr had time on his hands for other occupations on which the sources are largely silent.

A glimpse into the nature of these activities may be obtained if one compares the non-scholarly articles that Loehr and Erdberg, respectively, contributed to the propaganda periodical *The XXth Century*, which was published in Shanghai between 1941 and 1945 under the editorship of Klaus Mehnert (1906–1984) (Freyeisen 2000: 286–306).[39] Erdberg's six articles (Consten 1942a; 1944; Consten and Hammer 1942; B. von Erdberg 1943, 1944a, 1944b) are innocuous disquisitions on aspects of East Asian traditional culture, such as the lotus flower, brush calligraphy, landscape painting, and Mongolian folk art. One notes that only three pieces were published under her own name, while the others appeared under the pseudonym "Beata von Erdberg." Was she afraid of overexposing herself in a venue of obviously partisan political character? Or did the editors wish to convey the impression that they could muster a wider roster of contributors than was actually the case?

By contrast, the two articles on contemporary German painting and sculpture that Loehr contributed to *The XXth Century* (Loehr 1943b, 1944b) can only be described as hard-core Nazi propaganda. In them, Loehr excoriates "Degenerate art," criticizes the Italian fascists for their tolerance of modernist painting, and waxes eloquent about how carefully the German authorities were in selecting the kind of art that befitted the new order. He even approvingly cites Adolf Hitler verbatim.[40] To exemplify recent German artistic achievements, he chose artworks that were utterly banal but "politically correct." The comparison with Erdberg's pieces shows that, even at the height of the war, following the Nazi party line to such an extreme extent was not a necessary precondition to getting one's work published. Moreover, publishing in a venue like *The XXth Century* was not obligatory. Erdberg, perpetually short of money, quite possibly did it for the honorarium. One notes with interest that Contag, even though she lived in Shanghai and must have known Mehnert, successfully avoided ever publishing anything in his journal.

Diplomatic correspondence concerning Loehr's work at the Deutschland-Institut shows that at least some of his time was taken up with political hackwork; an article on "Sun Yat-sen, Truth and Legend" that he had written—apparently under protest—for publication in *The XXth Century* was returned, presumably because it was considered too sensitive (letter from Felix Altenburg to German Embassy in Nanjing, dated May 18, 1945 [Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3389, item 3]). Elsewhere, Loehr is asked to coordinate a translation of Chiang Kai-shek's book *China's Destiny* (letter from Loehr to

Kordt, dated June 28, 1944[41]—a task he tried to foist onto Fuchs. Apparently acting on his own initiative, Loehr reorganized along Nazi lines an exhibition of high-quality reproductions of German artworks organized by the Deutschland-Institut. That exhibition had been shown in several Chinese cities before Loehr's arrival, but Loehr promptly saw to it that all works by "degenerate" (i.e., expressionist) and Jewish (e.g., Max Liebermann [1847–1935]) artists were eliminated (Merker 1998b: 34). Also due to Loehr's intervention was the inclusion of a poem by Baldur von Schirach (1907–74), founder of the Hitler Youth, as the final climax of an anthology of German poetry published by the Deutschland-Institut—the only institute publication Loehr and Hoffmann actively helped to compile. Franke considered this "a bow before the Nazi régime that would not have been necessary" (Franke 1995: 113).[42] But this formulation assumes a distance between Loehr and the Nazi regime that may have been nonexistent. In fact, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Loehr's role in wartime China was that of a Nazi operative and cultural enforcer.

Giving Loehr the benefit of doubt, one may imagine that his main goal in going to Beijing was his own professional advancement, and that he regarded the compliance with his (overt and possibly covert) official tasks as a sacrifice worth making in exchange for the opportunity of pursuing his scholarship. To his superiors in Berlin, on the other hand, his scholarship may have been no more than a smoke screen. It seems fair to say that, during his first four years or so in China, Loehr was what his German compatriots at that time called a "golden pheasant" (*Goldfasan*): a privileged functionary of the Nazi regime, affable, cultivated, and seemingly open-minded, eminently presentable, but completely loyal to his superiors and ready to execute their commands ruthlessly if called upon. But Loehr, as far as we know, was never seriously called upon, and he may have deployed considerable ingenuity to keep it that way.

DEPARTURE

Following the collapse of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, the victorious Allies insisted on the repatriation of German citizens, but this took time. Contag, as part of the former diplomatic community, was interned in Shanghai and sent back to Germany as early as 1946. Loehr sent his family ahead (according to Fuchs [2010], they were living in the resort town of Bad Aibling in Bavaria as of 1947; see also Franke 1995: 167); but Loehr himself—very likely in order to avoid being caught up in bothersome denazification proceedings—went to teach at Qinghua University and stayed until 1949, when denazification had begun to ebb. Remarkably, he was even able to make the Hong Kong–Paris leg of his homeward journey by airplane, rather than having to go by ship like most others. Back in Munich, he resumed his old position at the Museum of Ethnography.

Ecke continued at Furen as before. Perhaps because of his Chinese wife, he was able to eschew repatriation. He left Beijing with his wife in 1948 to teach once more at the University of Amoy, which in the meantime had become a state-run institution. The following year, just before the Communists overran Xiamen, he accepted the offer of a curatorship for Asian art at the Honolulu Academy of Arts and left China forever.

In her memoirs, Erdberg (1994: 297–98) claims that the Honolulu position had originally been offered to her, but—very possibly because of her husband's Nazi party affiliation, which was well known to the American Secret Service (Erdberg 1994: 278)—she had been unable to get her immigration papers on time. Without naming Ecke anywhere in the book, she gave free rein to her jealousy. This seems somewhat small-minded, considering that it had probably been none other than Ecke who had helped Erdberg find employment at Furen University after the institutions where she had previously taught had reverted to Chinese control. She and her husband were still in Beijing when the Communists took the city; it was only after more than a year filled with uncertainties and bureaucratic harassment that they were able to board an overcrowded steamer out of Tianjin. They reached Hamburg on December 31, 1950.

LATER CAREERS

The later professional trajectories of all our four protagonists attest that they had profited immensely from their stays in China. Ecke and Contag, even though both continued publishing, had done their best work while in China. Ecke's book on furniture and Contag's book on seals—each, significantly, written together with a Chinese co-author—remained their most significant achievements. For Erdberg and Loehr, on the other hand, their academic careers only truly took off after they left China.

The East Asian art collection Ecke built at the Honolulu Academy of Arts is his monument. Most of his publications after 1950 were short pieces on artworks in the museum; he also co-authored a catalog of Chinese paintings in Hawaii with Tseng Yu-ho (Ecke and Ecke 1965; Ecke's other *opuscula* from his time in Hawaii are listed in Walravens and Kuwabara 2010: 164–68, nos. 32–67). From 1951 onward, he concurrently taught at the University of Hawai'i. By all accounts he was a beloved teacher, but he did not train any graduate students, and none of his undergraduates went on to specialize in East Asian art. Gradually he receded behind Tseng Yu-ho, who not only exhibited her paintings

all over the world but also trained for her PhD in art history at New York University and, in a somewhat unusual maneuver, succeeded her husband on the University of Hawai'i faculty after his retirement in 1966. Ecke subsequently returned to Germany, where he taught at Munich and Bonn as a visiting professor for three years. He died in Honolulu in 1971.

Contag and her family settled in Wiesbaden. From 1951 onward, she taught as an adjunct at the nearby University of Mainz. But Mainz had no Chinese studies department, and Contag never succeeded in acquiring the *Habilitation*.[43] Rather than art history, she taught mainly Chinese literature and philosophy (on her strict and conservative teaching style, see Shi Mingli 2016); none of her students specialized in a China-related field. She published two more insightful monographs on Chinese painting (Contag 1950, 1955) and one on the impact of Confucianism on Chinese culture (Contag 1964). She died in 1973.

Erdberg and her husband relocated to the latter's hometown of Aachen, where she found a job as part-time lecturer and librarian in the Architecture Department of that city's Technical University (Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule). She taught a wide spectrum of courses, spanning European and general art history in addition to her East Asian specialty. Encouraged by her colleagues, she passed her *Habilitation* in 1955; three years later she was appointed supernumerary professor, and in 1961 her title was changed to "academic counselor and professor." Even though she never held a full chair, she was now one of an infinitesimally small number of German female scholars of her generation who had the legal right to be addressed as "Frau Professor." She trained dozens of PhDs, most of whom went on to practice as architects, though some continued to work on East Asian art while holding jobs at museums or galleries. Her last PhD finished in 1984.

Erdberg's scholarly life was a busy one. Aside from Aachen, she also taught as an adjunct at the universities of Cologne and Bonn, and she traveled abroad for visiting professorships at Mills College (1960–61), the University of the Philippines (1968), and the State University of New York at Buffalo (1970). Although she never visited Beijing again, she undertook research and conference trips to other parts of Asia. Since her mother and her second husband—her first cousin Robert von Erdberg (1906–89), whom she married in 1961—both lived in the United States, she spent considerable amounts of time there as well. She lived to the age of 95.

Erdberg published prolifically on Chinese bronzes (the subject of her *Habilitationsschrift*), textiles, and other applied arts, as well as general art history. She was a popularizer rather than a profoundly original thinker, and most of her work, though useful in its time, is now out of date. Her general introductions to

ancient Chinese art (Consten 1958) and traditional East Asian architecture (Speiser and Consten 1964) were disseminated in French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese translations. (For a bibliography through 1984, which does not list all the translations, see Fischer and Klein-Bednay 1984: 17–24.)

Without question, the most successful of our four protagonists was Loehr. In 1951, he had the choice of the directorship of his museum in Munich and a professorship at the University of Michigan, for which his former teacher Bachhofer—now at the University of Chicago—had recommended him. Possibly because prospects for a proper professorial appointment in Germany still seemed slim at the time for a former Nazi functionary (attitudes did relax later on), or perhaps because the American system did not require the *Habilitation*, which he had never obtained, Loehr chose Michigan. In 1960, he moved to Harvard as the inaugural Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Professor of Asian Art and Curator of Oriental Art at the Fogg Museum. Here he was reunited with Ilse Martin and her husband, the literary scholar Achilles Fang (1910–95), another former staff member of the Deutschland-Institut, who had settled in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

During the two decades preceding his retirement in 1974, Loehr was the leading scholar of Chinese art in the Western hemisphere. A number of his former PhD students went on to distinguished careers in the United States, Europe, and Asia. He published numerous important works on archaic Chinese bronzes and jades, as well as on prints, paintings, and Buddhist art. His basic approach, formed during his student days in Munich, never changed, and his mature scholarship arguably bears fewer marks of the impact of his long stay in China than does that of his three compatriots. Loehr's influence has decisively shaped the American practice of Chinese art history (see Bagley 2008 and the uncritical review of that book by Miao Zhe and Wang Haicheng 2011). A critical assessment of his intellectual legacy is overdue, but that task must be left to a future study.

Even though he became a US citizen in 1957, Loehr maintained excellent connections with German academia. Efforts to call him back—for example, to Berlin in 1958, as documented in letters by Walter Fuchs to Wolfgang Franke from May 29 and June 7 of that year (Walravens and Gimm 2011: 185)—never came to fruition, however; nor did he retire to Germany, as had apparently once been his plan. Suffering from Parkinson's disease, he died at his home in Lexington, Massachusetts, in 1988.

COLLECTIONS

The Republican period is often said to have been a golden age of Chinese art collecting. Prices were low, and many masterpieces left the country and entered

museums and private collections in Japan, Europe, and North America (Cohen 1992; Netting 2013; Ruchivacharakul 2011; Steuber and Lai 2014). Many foreign residents of China collected curios, and our four protagonists, with their well-trained art historians' eyes, were in a particularly advantageous position to do so. Given the fluctuations in the value of local currencies, investing in antiques could also be a way of protecting one's wealth. In spite of strict laws governing the export of cultural relics that had been put into place in the 1930s (see Lai, this volume), all of our four protagonists managed to take the bulk of their collections with them when they left China.

Ecke owned many of the splendid Ming and Qing furniture pieces he had published in his book, as well as numerous priceless paintings and other antiques. He was very worried about them as the Communists closed in on Beijing. He sacrificed the bulk of his extensive library but got his most important artworks safely out of China, partly via Xiamen and partly, later on, with the help of friends in the Western diplomatic community (Rudolph 1985: 98; Thompson 2001: 63–64, 72–73). Some of them—notably the Ming painter Wen Zhengming's 文徵明 (1470–1559) masterpiece, "Seven Junipers"—are now in the Honolulu Academy of Art. When Tseng Yu-ho moved back to Beijing in 2006, she donated seven of the best furniture pieces to the Chinese government, which exhibits them at the Prince Gong Mansion 恭王府 in Beijing.

Contag, advised by her Jiangnan friends, acquired an exceptionally fine collection of more than one hundred Ming and Qing literati paintings, as well as a large number of contemporary works, all of which she was able to take back to Germany. She organized exhibitions in Hamburg in 1949 (Contag 1949) and in Düsseldorf in 1950 (Contag and Speiser 1950). After her husband's death, she sought to sell the collection. Unable to find a buyer in Germany, she sent the paintings to the United States, where, thanks to her old friend Sickman, they were stored for some time at the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City. After a failed attempt to sell the collection in toto to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the paintings were sold off separately. The best pieces, including an important album by Shitao 石涛 (1642–1707), ended up in the hands of C. C. Wang, who had emigrated to the United States (Cahill n.d. [unfortunately, Cahill does not specify the time when the events he recalls took place]; Spee 2013). An important large painting by Mi Wanzhong 米萬鍾 (1570–1628) is in the Stanford Art Museum. Harrie Vanderstappen (1921–2007), Bachhofer's successor at the University of Chicago, acquired twelve others for what is now the David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art (Vanderstappen et al. 1989: nos. 101–104, 109, 110, 113, 114, 116, 118, 119); another forty items are in Berlin, on loan to the Museum of Asian Art from the MCH Hammonds foundation in Dallas, Texas. Contag's archives—folder after folder of painstakingly collected images of works by all the major classical painters of China—are in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne.[44]

Erdberg's collection, put together under conditions of penury, was more eclectic but still quite extensive—it filled most of the twenty-four boxes that she and her husband were allowed to take with them when they left Beijing in 1950. In particular, she possessed some remarkable textiles and ceramics. The most important pieces were eventually purchased by the Aachen-based collectors Peter (1925–1996) and Irene Ludwig (née Monheim, 1927–2010), major patrons of modern international art in post–World War II West Germany, who became interested in China late in their lives (Schlombs 1997: 64–65). These works are now in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne.

Loehr, too, though he also had to leave behind a large part of his personal library, left China with a collection that included archaic bronzes, jades, and ceramics, as well as paintings. He intermittently sold or donated objects. A group of nineteen early jades was acquired by the University Museum at the University of Michigan in 1960[45] (the Museum also owns a painting by Hanabusa Itchō 英一蝶 [1652–1724], donated by Loehr in 1958). What remained was sold at auction after his death (Lally 1993).

THE PUZZLING LACK OF AN ECHO

In contrast to the deep imprint China left on each of our four protagonists, their sojourns do not seem to have exerted much of an influence on the study of the visual arts in China. This unfortunate situation can be explained from several angles.

To begin with, the Republican period was the time when modern archaeology was being established in China. The large-scale excavations at Anyang and elsewhere undertaken by the Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica in Nanjing after 1928 aroused much excitement and lastingly changed the nation's self-perception of its ancient past. The Beiping Academy in Beijing was involved in similar research, and some of its members participated in Sven Hedin's (1865–1952) Sino-Swedish Expedition (1927–1935). As early as 1922, Peking University established an Archaeology Research Institute, and other universities made fledgling efforts in a similar direction. From the mid-1920s, the government established national museums, such as the Palace Museum and the National Museum of History, both in Beijing; these were complemented by provincial and local institutions. The *Yingzao xueshe*, as well, was part of this flurry of institution-building.

The four German art historians featured in this article, in spite of their professional competence, were but tangentially involved in these developments. Ecke probably was closest to the pulse of things as a member of the *Yingzao xueshe* in the 1930s; the other three, too, were temporarily part of the system when they were working—Contag in the mid-1930s, Loehr and Erdberg in the late 1940s—with the Palace Museum. But their involvement was marginal. The reason for this was probably not xenophobia but a general lack of comprehension in Republican China's official and intellectual circles of the aims and potential benefit of art history as an academic discipline. Some of the tasks that fall within the purview of art historians, such as the documentation, classification, and conservation of artifacts and monuments, had been relegated to the above-mentioned archaeological and museum institutions; but an understanding of art history's ability to process visual evidence into an independent body of source material for social and intellectual history never developed. (This incomprehension continues in today's China, where the Ministry of Education still does not recognize art history as a "core subject," even as some universities are beginning to establish art history departments.)

There was thus a palpable disconnect with what Ecke, Contag, Erdberg, and Loehr were capable of doing and what was possible in China under the conditions of the time. Their presence, in that sense, was premature. And historical circumstances hardly lent themselves to the contemplative study of art history. For most Chinese intellectuals, the Republican period—especially the long war with Japan—was a time of national struggle, during which art history could easily appear ephemeral, if not irrelevant.

Another reason for our four protagonists' failure to transfer their skills in German-style academic art history to China may have been the lack of appropriate counterparts on the Chinese side. To my knowledge, only one Chinese intellectual went to Germany to study art history during the Republican period: Teng Gu 滕固 (1901–42), who obtained his PhD in 1932 at the University of Berlin. Even before departing for Germany, under the influence of Japanese scholarship, he had authored the first modern synthesis of Chinese art history in Chinese (Teng 1926). Back in China, he became a high-ranking art-school administrator, but tragically he died young. It is uncertain whether Teng was acquainted with any of the four protagonists of this study—all except Ecke were in Berlin at one time or another when he was a student there—or whether he met them in China.[46] Several other Chinese students in Germany during the Republican period studied philosophical aesthetics—the most well known being Zong Baihua 宗白華 (1897–1986), later professor of philosophy at Peking University—but the concerns of art history remained alien to their scholarship. One

wonders what circumstances could have fostered the development of a synergy conducive to launching the art-historical discipline in Republican China's academia. If any such opportunities existed, they were missed.

None of our four protagonists appears to have taught specialized classes in art history during their time in China. Contag, as far as I know, did not teach at all. The others supported themselves by teaching language and literature—German of course, but also English, including Anglo-Saxon! (Erdberg)—as well as Greek, Latin, and (probably in translation) Russian (Ecke). Upholding a long-standing tradition in Catholic institutions of higher learning, Ecke at Furen also taught rhetoric. He included some art history in his general introductions to European culture;[47] and Erdberg for a while inserted coverage of the subject in the courses on interior design she taught in the Home Economics Department at Yanjing (Erdberg 1994: 230–31). Otherwise, the separation of their teaching from their own research interests was complete.

One probably should not underestimate the extent to which simple logistical difficulties were a factor in the absence of art history from university curricula in Republican China. Few if any Chinese institutions at the time are likely to have had the necessary library holdings, to say nothing of slide collections and the projection equipment needed in order to use them for instruction purposes. Teaching literature as an entryway into the humanities required fewer resources, and it may also have appealed more strongly to the text-centered sensitivities of the Chinese academic audience.

The most fundamental factor impeding the flow of ideas was long-standing incompatibilities in dealing with material culture. On the Chinese side, there was the persistence of traditional connoisseurial and antiquarian modes of scholarship, which made their practitioners complacent vis-à-vis the more systematic (or, as the four protagonists themselves would undoubtedly have put it, more *scientific*) approaches that German-trained art historians espoused. There was, in other words, no demand for this kind of intellectual import on the Chinese side. If anything, the influence flowed in the opposite direction: Ecke and Contag—even though their respective studies of furniture and seals were unprecedented in their systematic grasp—largely succumbed to the inducements of Chinese traditional connoisseurship. This seems particularly true in the case of Contag, who excelled at communicating to Western readers the traditional emic (or, as one would have said at the time, "native") concepts undergirding the practice of literati painting.

With Loehr, on the other hand, it was always his German art-historical training that determined his mode of investigation into Chinese art history. Throughout his career, he rigidly adhered to a watered-down version of Wölfflinian

formalism. There is no sign whatsoever that this impressed anyone in China at the time—but it is also doubtful that Loehr ever even tried to explain his methods to Chinese scholars. To the contrary: with him and his school, one senses that they imagined themselves in exclusive possession of a system of hegemonic knowledge (*Herrschaftswissen*): a superior means for establishing tight methodological control over their subject, unfathomable to the "natives," whom, in any case, they considered unworthy of it. This mind-set bears a strong and probably not coincidental resemblance to that of Stefan George's secret cliques of initiates.

One comes away with the impression that the life these four German art historians led in Republican China was, essentially, a parasitic one. They took away much and gave back little. In spite of what has been said above about the essentially non-colonial context of their sojourns, scrutiny reveals a residually colonial conjuncture in their interactions with the country and its inhabitants—one that did not inhere in their legal status but in geopolitical realities. For all their goodwill toward China, the four scholars are likely to have felt comfortable with this asymmetry. Whether the balance was eventually redressed by their subsequent efforts to build up East Asian art history and thereby to contribute to a deeper understanding of China in the West will have to be left up to future generations to decide.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Beijing was officially called Beiping 北平 from 1928 to 1949; herein I nevertheless use the more familiar "Beijing," which corresponds to "Peking," the name most commonly used at the time for the city. For the sake of economy, references have been reduced, omitting information that can be easily cross-checked on the Web or in such readily accessible resources as *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, the *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China* (Howard L. Boorman, editor; New York: Columbia University Press, 1967–1979), or Michael Sullivan's *Modern Chinese Artists: A Biographical Dictionary* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006). Several of the scholars mentioned herein are treated in Kern (1988) and/or Wendland (1998). All translations are mine.

NOTES

1 Many details of Contag's life remain unclear, but Spee's planned biography will hopefully remedy this situation.

2 Erdberg is the only one among the four to have written her memoirs (Erdberg 1994) and—since she was also the only one to become a professor in the German university system—to have been the dedicatee of Festschriften (Fischer and Klein-Bednay 1984; Holländer 1989; and a double issue of *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Ostasiatische Kunst* 21–22 [1997]).

3 Merker (1998b), though mainly concerned with another scholar, sheds important light on Loehr's activities in Beijing during the 1940s. Following Merker's leads, I consulted relevant archival material at the German Foreign Ministry (Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208, Deutsche Botschaft China) in September 2008.

4 I may be making a mistake by not including Otto Burchard (1892–1965), a leading Berlin art dealer well known for his sponsorship of the avant-garde, who relocated to Beijing in 1932 and rebuilt his business there, becoming a well-reputed connoisseur of Chinese art (Jirka-Schmitz 1995). Burchard had earned his PhD in Sinology in Leipzig in 1917 under August Conrady (1864–1925) on a philological topic with ramifications in the visual arts. To my knowledge, however, he published no scholarly works on East Asian art history. In Beijing during the 1930s, he served as mentor to Laurence Sickman (Cohen 1992: 113); he is mentioned in Erdberg's memoirs (Erdberg 1994).

5 For full disclosure: the only one of the four scholars I ever encountered in person, albeit very fleetingly, was Loehr, at Harvard during the early 1980s. I briefly corresponded with Erdberg in the 1990s, but we never met. As a child I occasionally heard tales about Ecke, who had been a comrade-in-arms during World War I, as well as a close friend (they founded the *Nibelungenbund* together in 1922), of my maternal grandfather Lothar Freiherr von Biedermann (1898–1945); but by then the family was no longer in touch with him. I did meet Ecke's widow twice, many years after his death, but we only talked superficially. With Contag I have had no contact, although distant collateral kin relationships could probably be traced between her husband's family and mine.

6 Ecke's George-style handwriting appears, for example, on his 1948 German colophon on the painting "Eighty-seven Immortals," now in the Xu Beihong Memorial Museum in Beijing; the colophon ends with a quotation from George's poetry. (I am grateful to Dr. Ye Gongping for sharing Professor Li Song's photo of the colophon.) Loehr's handwriting that I have seen in the archival materials is also George-influenced.

[7] Ecke's interest in French culture may have been awakened less by his wartime experience in the country than by the fact that he had well-placed relatives in France on his mother's side (Thompson 2001: 109–10).

[8] I have not been able to find out who these artists were.

[9] Through vicious political denunciations, Kümmel destroyed the careers of colleagues he disliked. One of his victims, as early as 1933, was the Leipzig Sinologist Eduard Erkes (1891–1958); see Lewin (1999). On Kümmel's dictatorial behavior even before the Hitler era, see With (1997: 120).

[10] A complete listing of Loehr's academic teachers is in his 1940 curriculum vitae (Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3387, items 184–86).

[11] As indicated in Loehr's CV (Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3390, item 327), this service was voluntary, coming at a time when Loehr was already twice the age of ordinary army recruits. Due to Germany's partial demilitarization, imposed by the Treaty of Versailles (1919), Loehr's generation had been exempt from mandatory conscription.

[12] See n. 10.

[13] Langdon Warner, letter of recommendation for Erdberg, dated September 5, 1951, available at http: //www.archiv.rwth-aachen.de/web/online-pionierinnen/objektevitrine4.htm (last accessed January 10, 2016).

[14] Brinker (1989: 283) characterizes Reismüller, who had visited China, as an "enthusiastic China lover" rather than a China scholar.

[15] Ruth Wang was the daughter of a Protestant minister from Leipzig (Harnisch 2004: 117; for her family relationship to Ecke, see Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3389, items 19–21). Her husband, who had held senior positions under the Beiyang regime, collaborated with the Japanese during World War II, was subsequently convicted of treason, and died in prison. Thompson (2001: 42), probably relying on Ecke's wife's recollections, claims—implausibly, in my opinion—that Ecke had befriended some unnamed Chinese students in Germany who arranged for his invitation.

[16] On the gay imbrications of the Stefan George circle, see Raulff (2009). On the charmed lives of Western gays in Republican China, see Brady (2013), Brown (2013), and Mungello (2012). Persistent allegations by individuals of his acquaintance that Ecke was gay should be weighed against the fact that he eventually did get married.

[17] See Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3389, items 191–94.

[18] Walravens and Kuwabara (2010: 164, n. 26) believe that the second volume of the latter work is not by Ecke.

[19] I am grateful to Ye Gongping for sharing copies of these reviews.

[20] Franke (1995: 106) alleges that his own wife, Hu Chün-yin 胡雋吟 (1910–89), had previously been courted by Ecke. This, like several other things in Franke's memoirs, is difficult to believe. Thompson (2001: 45–47, 63 et passim), in recounting Ecke's courtship and marriage to Zeng, relies heavily on the heavily romanticized account by Eyre (1966).

[21] J. Robert Hightower, personal communication, 1982.

[22] Wang's official title at the time was "Deputy Delegate from the [Tian]jin-[Bei]ping Special District to the Ministry of Education's Commission for Sorting Out Cultural-Relics Losses during the War" 教育部清理戰時文物損失委員會平津特區副代表. Li Jingguo (2007: 162–67) cites original documents pertinent to the Jannings donation that are now in the Palace Museum's archives (including a letter from Wang Shixiang to T. V. Soong's representative in Beijing, Tan Boyu 譚伯羽 [1900–1982], in which he recommends Loehr

and Erdberg [referred to as Kangsidun 康思頓 = Consten] for their "scientific method" [*kexue fangfa* 科學方法] in approaching bronzes); a photo of the handover of the bronzes (Li Jingguo 2007: 166); as well as (Li Jingguo 2007: 149) a contemporary newspaper account from *Huabei ribao* 華北日報 on January 25, 1946. Li Hui (2001: 64–65) fills in some details with Wang's later autobiographical recollections.

[23] Su Rongyu, personal communication, 2016.

[24] Also implicated in the scandal was Yi's French-educated son-in-law, Li Zongtong 李宗侗 (1895–1974), later professor of history at National Taiwan University and influential on East Asian archaeology as teacher of the late Prof. K. C. Chang (1931–2001).

[25] On Wang Jiqian as an artist, see Cahill (1986), Silbergeld (1987), and Wang (1977). On his collections, see Barnhart (1983), Hearn and Fong (1999), Juliano (1988), and Yang (2010).

[26] Cahill visited Contag in Wiesbaden in 1956.

[27] Dietrich Seckel (1981: 61), who was in a similar situation in Japan, describes that organization as "a rather harmless club."

[28] One German resident of Beijing who vociferously resisted this was the eccentric poet and printer Vincenz Hundhausen (1878–1955); see Walravens and Bieg 1999.

[29] As recounted by Thompson (2001: 47–48), there was also severe opposition to the marriage from Tseng's family, as well as, for religious reasons, from the leadership of Furen University.

[30] See Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3389, items 19–21.

[31] Ibid. See also Thompson (2001: 48 n. 64 and fig. 5, wedding photograph).

[32] Another obviously semi-fictionalized account of Consten's activities for the Nazi party appears in Mohr 1985: 95 (as cited in Merker 1998a: 19).

[33] Franke relates (1995: 123) that one day he and Loehr submitted their applications for membership in the Nazi party with the head of the Beijing chapter (*Ortsgruppenleiter*) of the Nazi party, Herbert Wobser, who was simultaneously the consular secretary at the Beijing Branch Office of the German Embassy. (This must have been before Wobser's transfer to Shanghai in 1941.) Franke claims that the applications were never processed, and he himself was later prevailed upon to withdraw his application (1995: 139). Schütte (2002: 330–32) tabulates information in an official 1942 report from which it may appear that Max Loehr (here referred to as "Johannes Löhr") was not a party member. But Schütte cautions (2002: 126) that the information in this report, especially concerning Nazi party membership, is often incorrect.

[34] Franke (2000) strongly objected to this, but Hartmut Walravens (2000–2001), whose judgment should count for a lot, lists Merker's article among those he considers "high-quality and even-minded" (*qualitätsvoll und abgewogen*).

[35] Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3386, item 21. The original text runs: "Die Ortsgruppe Peking der Auslands-Organisation der N. S. D. A. P./ veranstaltet im Gemeindehaus/ Mittwoch, dem [sic] 26. November 1941, 8.30 Uhr abends/ einen Gemeinschaftsabend/ Dienstag, dem [sic] 9. Dezember 1941, 8.30 Uhr abends/ eine Versammlung/ Sprecher: Pg. Dr. Loehr ueber [sic] 'Neue Kunst in Deutschland'. Alle Mitglieder der Deutschen Gemeinde und ihre Gaeste [sic] sind zu diesen Veranstaltungen eingeladen./ F. Petzschke/ Stellv. Ortsgruppenleiter." It is extremely unlikely that someone in Petzschke's position would not have known who among the residents of Beijing was or was not a party member. The fact that the correspondence preserved in the Foreign Office archive was with

German government rather than with Nazi Party entities may explain why Loehr's party membership is not made explicit more frequently.

[36] Heissig's covert activities are only tangentially touched upon in Walravens 2012.

[37] See Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R-9208/3389, items 134, 138–39.

[38] Kreissler herself more modestly suggests that the institute engaged in "silent cooperation" with the Nazi regime and that, rather than truly representing German culture to its Chinese clientele, its leadership mainly aimed to satisfy the German official authorities.

[39] Mehnert later became a prominent rightist political pundit and professor of political science in West Germany. His own recollections of his time in China (Mehnert 1981: 258–60) are quite unreliable.

[40] An anonymously published article on Nazi architecture (*The XXth Century* Editorial Staff 1944) may also be at least partly from Loehr's pen. A third article published in the journal under Loehr's name, on Bronze Age weapons (Loehr 1945b), is unpolitical.

[41] See Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3389, item 119.

[42] Schirach's poem was highlighted in a press report (*Ostasiatischer Lloyd*, December 24, 1942; Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3389, item 304).

[43] Sometime in the 1960s, Contag allegedly did submit a *Habilitationsschrift* to the University of Munich, where she was planning to move and to teach as a *Privatdozentin*; but due to an intrigue, her submission was rejected by the Munich faculty, forcing Contag to remain in Mainz (Lothar Ledderose, personal communication, 2016).

[44] Thanks to the hospitality of Dr. Adele Schlombs, I was able to view the archives on May 14, 2016.

[45] See http: //quod.lib.umich.edu/m/musart?type=boolean&view=thumbnail&rgn1=ic_all&from=index&q1=loehr&rgn9=musart_iod&sel9=ic_exact&op9=And (accessed November 26, 2015).

[46] Teng's name is mentioned once in connection with the above-mentioned exhibition of reproductions of German artworks in 1937–38 (Politisches Archiv, Aktienbestand R 9208/3552, item 22).

[47] Thompson (2001: 35, 47 et passim) claims that Ecke offered art history courses at Furen and indeed (citing C.-t. Li 1992: 17) earlier at Xiamen, but this contradicts other available accounts and archival documentation.

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