

JESSICA RAWSON (ed.):

*The British Museum Book of Chinese Art.* (Second Edition.)

395 pp. London: The British Museum Press, 2007. £16.99. ISBN 978 0 7141 2446 9.

To coincide with the blockbuster exhibition of 2007–08, *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army*, The British Museum Press has published a second edition of *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*, first published in 1992. The first edition was designed to accompany visitors to the new Hotung Gallery of Chinese Art which presented Chinese material culture from the Neolithic period to the twentieth century. The book was similarly comprehensive and thematic, taking its cues from social histories as well as histories of art. In many ways, the first edition could be used not only as a gallery guide but also as a textbook for those studying Chinese art, and as such it filled a gap in the literature of the subject.

Since then numerous survey histories of Chinese art have been published, some of which include objects from the British Museum collection, but none with the broad thematic structure that characterizes the original British Museum book. In the fifteen years since it first appeared the book has been reprinted three times, but has not been updated until now. However, even the new second edition has very little that is new, apart from a brief paragraph in the introduction, more colour images and an updated bibliography, which is none the less very useful. Considering that this new edition is not very new, has the book stood the test of time?

Certainly, much of the content is still relevant, and reflects the Hotung Gallery displays. While the gallery may need rethinking, until this happens, the book is a useful guide, particularly to novices and those unfamiliar with Chinese history and culture. The book begins with an introduction to China and Chinese traditional culture, giving an overview of the intellectual and social frameworks for the chapters which follow. Thus readers are introduced to Chinese language and government; religion and philosophy; and objects and society. Subsequent chapters examine British Museum objects in terms of consumption and functionality, for example: “Jades and bronzes for ritual”, “Sculpture for tombs and temples” or “Decorative arts for display”. These chapter themes are a useful way of organizing a vast array of objects in a meaningful manner, but some of the discussion does seem a little old-fashioned fifteen years on. Such terms as “decorative arts”, “the Arab world” and “literati” are outmoded today, but for the general reader, the target readership of this book, such minor points would not lessen their enjoyment.

More seriously, one section which really should have been updated is the appendixes, which cover chronologies, archaeological sites, tombs, etc. It is these appendixes which made the original book so enormously useful for specialists and students and which now instantly date the book with their exclusion of up-to-date information. Important new discoveries, such as the Buddhist sculpture at Longxingsi, Qingzhou and the Song kiln site at Laohudong, Hangzhou are absent, so the book will always have to be recommended with a proviso: no archaeological discoveries since 1992 appear in this volume. Bearing that in mind, this can still be recommended as a standard reference, and it is the only general survey of the British Museum collection, one of the more important collections of Chinese art in the world. Perhaps when the Chinese art galleries are refurbished, they will also be

reconceptualized and a new book to reflect current approaches to Chinese art will be produced.

**Stacey Pierson**

ENDŌ ORIE:

*A Cultural History of Japanese Women's Language.*

(Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies.) vii, 139 pp. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2006. \$38. ISBN 9781929280391.

Orie Endō's well-known abhorrence of a normative and inevitably ideological notion of "women's speech" surfaces vividly in *A Cultural History of Japanese Women's Language* (an English translation of the 1997 *Onna no kotoba no bunkashi*, Gakuyoo Shoboo, Tokyo). A female linguist investigating the nature of, and the discourse on, women's speech in literature, plays, press, governmental agency surveys, advertising, as well as in ostensibly scientific literature, Endō is confronted by a deluge of rather provocative material – commentators being typically male, and prescriptivism a more common currency than rigorous description. But Endō's objective is not limited to the rectification of received ideas about the nature of "women's language". She goes much further and challenges the common-sense, yet essentialist, notion that women's speech has always been there because it naturally embodies female nature.

Endō's deconstructive project starts out with an attempt to identify documented evidence of specific realizations of gendered speech, in the earliest literary texts and other surviving documents. In the *Kojiki*, the oldest Japanese chronicle written in the Nara period (710–794), the first utterance of the god Izanagi no Mikoto and the goddess Izanami no Mikoto upon meeting each other is a completely undifferentiated exclamation of mutual appreciation. But the goddess speaks first, which vitiates the success of the Japanese archipelago's creation; only after reversing the order of speech is the task achieved. The episode announces two broad themes of the book: the lack of evidence of a definite speech differentiation in ancient times, and males' early preoccupation with dominance. Even during the Heian Period (794–1185), the rare references to gendered differences concern neither vocabulary nor grammar, but rather women's "manner of speech", i.e. their attitude, the use of emphasis, the speed and logic of their speech. However, it is in the following Kamakura (1185–1333) and Muromachi (1336–1573) periods that crucial developments take place. Endō acknowledges revisions of the accepted view that medieval Japan has been a time of systematic oppression of women, and is careful to avoid unqualified statements that link such new developments to an absolute and universal transformation of gender roles in this period. But she notes, for example, that while the asymmetrical use of honorifics does not unambiguously index gender (but rather class or age) gender begins, in this period, to be marked in a way that mirrors subordination in class and age, and submits that the rationale for this development lies in the rise of the samurai's political power and the escalation of male-dominated discourse. The birth of *nyoobo kotoba* (or language of the *nyoobo*, daughters of nobility and intellectuals attending at court) is characterized as a linguistic innovation that indexed demeanour rather than deference. As a type of argot, this marks in-group communication, based on the use of devices of indirect, euphemistic,