

From: Michelle Jacques mjacques@aggv.ca
Subject: Fwd: oracle bones
Date: December 17, 2020 at 5:37 PM
To: Emily Luce info@emilyluce.net



From: Heng Wu <hwu@aggv.ca>
Date: Wed, Sep 9, 2020 at 11:10 PM
Subject: Re: oracle bones
To: Michelle Jacques <mjacques@aggv.ca>

Hello Michelle,

I did a bit online “digging” on the scholarly works (including two biographies), journalistic reports, social media comments written in Chinese language about Dr. Menzies, and what I have found is in agreement with my impression that Dr. Menzies has been portrayed as a heroic figure in Chinese archaeology rather than a looter of Chinese artifacts. There seems to be a common understanding that Dr. Menzies, unlike the other western collectors of that time, is a serious scholar who truly loved China and Chinese culture. On the contrary, William White, another important figure in the formation of ROM collection, was viewed as a cultural thief. I couldn't find any comments from Chinese government officials regarding this issue though. The listing of Dr. Menzies's residency in Anyang as a cultural property by Anyang government could however be seen as an official acknowledgement of his positive role. I think the Global and Mail article has done a good job in depicting him.

I would love to know more about the digital strategy.

Have a good night
Heng

On Sep 9, 2020, at 10:24 AM, Michelle Jacques <mjacques@aggv.ca> wrote:

Hi Heng,

I'm wondering if you can help me with something. I'm trying to pull together some information about the oracle bones. Mainly about Rev. Dr. Menzies and his involvement in the excavation and any controversy around how he amassed his personal collection of oracle bones (a small selection now in our collection, a larger group at the ROM) when publicly he claimed to be very concerned about the objects staying in China.

There is A LOT of information on line, and I'm trying to sift through to the key documents. I've come up with this list:

Biography of Menzies by Chinese author Linfu Dong: James Mellon Menzies (1885-1957) was a Canadian engineer, Presbyterian missionary, and archaeologist active in China in the 1920s and 1930s. In a tradition that saw archaeology as a means of gathering artefacts for the collections of Western museums, Menzies believed in collecting for the people of China. He also saw his archaeological work as an extension of his missionary work, connecting, through his discoveries, the religious beliefs of ancient China to those of evangelical Christianity. In Cross Culture and Faith, Linfu Dong sheds new light on the modern encounter between China and the West through Menzies's life, work, and thought. He elucidates the difficult 'negotiation' processes that Menzies endured on multiple levels and with multiple forces, including Chinese nationalism, Western imperialism, the evangelical Mission, and his own personal interest in Chinese archaeology within that world. Despite his belief in assuring Chinese artefacts remained in China, some of Menzies's personal collection was donated to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria in British Columbia. This has assured his place in the cultural memory of both East and West - appropriate, since his life so often straddled the two worlds.

https://books.google.ca/books?id=3RWfNg_9XtQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=james+mellon+menzies&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjyJHEqNvrAhXRHjQIHc_UDcQ_Q6AEwBHoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q=james%20mellon%20menzies&f=false

https://books.google.ca/books?id=3RWfNg_9XtQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=james+mellon+menzies&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjyJHEqNvrAhXRHjQIHc_UDcQ_Q6AEwBHoECAgQAQ#v=onepage&q=james%20mellon%20menzies&f=false

Basic info about oracle bones from Ancient History Encyclopedia: https://www.ancient.eu/Oracle_Bones/

Recent-ish Canadian newspaper article about the collector:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/the-unsung-canadian-some-knew-as-old-bones/article1050873/>

Article about the collector through lens onto his role as a missionary:

http://chinachristiandaily.com/news/culture/2019-08-22/missionary-james-mellon-menzies--first-western-researcher-of-oracle-bone-inscriptions_8509

Recent dissertation about collecting and its impact on the understanding of Chinese history:

<https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/41141785/CHEN-DISSERTATION-2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Is there anything you would add or take away from this list?

Thanks in advance for your help,

M.

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The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria is located on the traditional territories of the Lekwungen peoples, today known as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. We extend our appreciation for the opportunity to live and learn on this territory.