

Travel and Transport Theme Tour – Asia and the Middle East. (Elizabeth Black)

(Introduction deals with links to the silk road, direct or otherwise. Modes of transport are included, types of travel – military, trade, exile, etc. Travel also in terms of ideas. Some of the items have more detailed notes about them on their labels, which I have not reproduced here because it was not relevant to this theme, e.g. 38/1339)

1. Rodin's Eve (courtyard). Bought by Burrell 1937 from Musee Rodin. Created 1877 when Rodin was 37. 1875 visit to Italy, so influence of Michaelangelo. To be part of magnum opus, 'The Gates of Hell' for School of Decorative Arts, Paris; to go with one of Adam. Never completed in his lifetime. His 1st life size female nude. Model Italian, pregnant by Russian lover, disappears with him before piece finished, complained of cold in studio. 7/19.

North Gallery.

2. Grave goods. Travel to after life – food or drink vessels for journey or gifts to gods, use with Egyptian shawabtis (e.g. 13/164) and/or with Shang and Zhou Chinese bronzes (e.g. 38, 1, 8, 14) after items no. 23 in a free standing case to north..

3. Luristan bronzes. Horse cheek pieces, bit. 33/178, 179, 106. 2nd half 8C BC. Cimmerians then Scythian nomadic horsemen travel from South Russia across Caucasus to Asia Minor and one group to Luristan in Western Iran. Cemeteries found in Zagros mountains with series bronze artefacts done by native smiths for incomers, including weapons, horse trappings and religious items.

4. Assyrian reliefs. Series military campaigns by Sennacherib and Ashurnasirpal, kings of Assyria. Sennacherib shut up Hezekiah, one of Judah's most outstanding kings and contemporary with Isaiah, in siege of Jerusalem. Byron's poem, Destruction of Sennacherib, has the line, 'When the Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold'. Reliefs were decoration of royal palaces of Nimrud (Ashurnasirpal) and Nineveh in Tigris in Iraq. 9-7C BC. Almost annual military campaigns c.1000-612 BC. Note the scribes also taken into battle to note booty. 28/33, 38, 61, 65, 70, 73, 77.

Mezzanine.

5. Flight into Egypt. Master of the Prado Adoration. Parallel part of polyptych to Annunciation one. On wood. Had various owners before to Burrell in 1936. The horseman may be an emissary of Herod, reference to legend which says harvesters led him astray as sought Christchild and so saved him. 35/532

6. Chinese Rouleau vase. Qing Kangxi (1662-1722, parallel to later Stuarts in GB). Emperor on his dragon pleasure barge, at top, king riding on the waves. 38/1028.

(Opposite are from the same period 38/1218 a dish with lots of horsemen with swords and 38/1125 a bowl with saddled horses riding on waves)

North Gallery Chinese area.

Various vases in case to south of Tang horse and groom.

7. 38/929. c.1700. Verte enamel. Women of Yang family, all their menfolk killed by invading Khitan Tartars, fight the invaders, depicted riding out to meet the enemy.

8. Blue and White. 38/1029. Centre of case. c.1700. Qing Kangxi. From Romance of the 3 Kingdoms. Scene from the battle of the Riverlands, Cao Cao seen on board 1 of his warships, attendants ready to entertain him but approaching storm raised by enemy, Zhuge Liang. Boat in dragon form. Made in Jingdezhen kilns.

9. 38/889, east side of case. Fall of Wang Mang. His general, Wang Xin, rides on a lion. (More details of story on label) Qing Kangxi.

10. 38/1339. Blue/gold vase to rear and right of area. Neck has floating pleasure boat relating to Red Cliff poem and poet, Wang Bo. Kangxi.

11. Left of the above. Lograft. Legend of General Zhang Qian 2C BC on Silver River, i.e. Milky Way. On his travels meets many people including celestial maiden weaving cloud pattern brocade. He has her loom weight stone with him and the ladies in pavilion are sewing and weaving. Qing Kangxi. C.1700.38/892.

12. Carrying box. 2 tier. 17C Ming. Huanghuali wood. 5 parts, lid, shallow tray, 2 large containers and rigid carrying frame. Typical mitred, mortice and tenon construction; corners re-inforced with baitong or white metal mounts. Since is costly piece possibly for storing and carrying writing implements, small precious items, works of art. Other larger ones of bamboo would have been picnic baskets. 14/527.

13. Tang horse and groom – usual details but for this theme emphasise links to other cultures , i.e. Persian Sassanian horse harness and Central Asian robe of groom. Tang pieces grave goods – travel of part of the soul allowed, i.e. hun, po to remain.38/148

14. Tang camel. Link to silk trade. Legend re c.3000 BC semi-mythical Emperor Huangdi, wife Xiling Shi, accidental discovery of silk while watching a cocoon on a mulberry tree. By c.100 BC Han routes linked to form Silk Road. Goods travel east and west – including silk, jade, lapis, spices, fruits, ginger, pomegranates, roses. Ideas also re printing and paper-making. People – ambassadors, scholars, craftsmen, entertainers, monks, pilgrims and soldiers. General Zhang Qian's expedition links in to silk early to Rome.38/119

Chinese daylight gallery.

15. Ox-cart. Tang. 38/239. 618-907 A.D. Various other Tang pieces including horse with harness. Note open state of Tang court due to prosperity of silk trade and awareness of other cultures and introduction of these to China from all over Asia, Asia Minor, Arabia, Middle East to Japan and Korea. Those coming might be students, Buddhist monks, artists, musicians, merchants so city developed sculpture, painting, ceramics, metalwork and textiles. Even some Chinese dynasties, e.g. Liao and Jin, parallel to Song, were incomers.

16. Tea bowls. Tea trade and spread from there to India and to Europe. Celadon – travel of ideas – note Korean (38/302, 346) and Thai (8/318, 320) pieces, refer to Persian piece.

17. Blue and white Ming item 38/442 16C - sedan chair on it BUT at present turned so it is not visible!

18. Zun. Ming. Bronze 1368-1644. Ritual vessel on trolley with wheels. 8/137

Chinese bronzes off main tapestry area – case in wall to south east.

19. Bronze jingle from harness 13-11C BC. 8/31

20. Huan bell from chariot early Eastern Zhou/late Western Zhou. 8/82.

21. Axle cap Eastern Zhou 5-4C BC. 8/106

22. Cheekpieces from bridle Eastern Zhou 8-7C BC. 8/32, 33, 34.

North Gallery.

23. Case with red and white ceramic ewer. Discuss the need for cobalt for blue, e.g. 38/658, copper for red, e.g. 38/455; cobalt for long not known to be available in China so imports necessary, when not available, copper used for the red.

24. Basel tapestry of Scenes from the Early Life of Christ. All four scenes involve travel - Mary to Elizabeth for Visitation, Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for census, Wise Men follow the star from the East, Mary, Joseph and Christ travel to temple for sacrifice of doves for first-born son of poor family. 46/46. 1450-75.

25. Dalmatic – scene with Mary' learning to walk – using 'modern' walking frame, possibly anachronistic. 29/2. late 14C.

26. Aquamanile – from a synagogue, Jewish diaspora. 5 an 6/9. German from Brilon, Westfalen. C.1300-1350.

27. Champeve enamel from Limoges of St. Paul. Series of missionary journeys. 26/11. 1220-30.

Illuminated boxes.

28. Mary and Martha roundel. Christ rests at their home in Bethany on his journey to Jerusalem. Early 16C South Netherlands. 45/470.

Main tapestry gallery and east one.

29. Camel Caravan. 1 of several in series, e.g. giraffe one in V and A. Silk route 'cut off' by capture of Constantinople by Turks; voyages of exploration from Spain and Portugal to seek ways east or west to Indies. Vasco d Gama's successful voyage to India late 15C. Goods brought back to markets in Flanders and procession of such goods. This may illustrate that procession or simply the influence of this. From the workshop of Jean and Antoine Grenier and Arnould Poissonier at Tournai. Early 16C. 46/94.

30. Bible Tapestry. Series of journeys could be pointed out – Adam and Eve leave Garden, Noah's Ark, Fleeing from Sodom and Gomorrah, Passover from Egypt, Joseph sold into Egypt to Midianite traders, Solomon and Sheba (see later), Absalom – flees from battle, Grapes of Eshcol. This last relates to spies sent by Moses to Hebron to seek out the Promised Land; they bring back grapes, pomegranates and figs, but also said there were giants in that land. 46/20. early 16C. Middle Rhineland.

Embroidery room.

31. On casket in case, very difficult to decipher, Abraham sends his servant Eliazer to get a wife for Isaac, and he meets Rebecca at the well. Eliazer would have been the heir if there had been no son. 1650-80. 29/166.

West wall. 32. Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham has son by Hagar since none by Sarah, but Sarah becomes jealous and insists he sends them away after the birth of Isaac.. This scene shows this. 29/45. mid 17C. (See later.)

33. Esther and Ahasuerus/Xerxes. She is a Jewish exile and favourite wife of Ahasuaerus. She hears of a plot by his leading minister against her people in exile and risks her life to save them. No one was allowed to approach the king unless invited to come. He is holding out a staff to her indicating that she may approach and she exposes the plot and saves her people. 1652. 29/64. More details on label.

34. Solomon and Sheba. It is thought that Sheba was modern Yemen, with a strong link to the trade in incense, the Queen may have been part of a trade delegation to Solomon. 10C BC. 29/66. c.1650. Further notes re 17C fashion s

Gothic Chapel.

35. Tapestry of four Christian martyr saints from Nuremberg mid 16C. St Thomas. Tradition that 'Doubting Thomas' travelled to India taking Gospel with him. He is said to have been martyred and buried in Mylapore near Madras. His remains were said to have been taken later to Edessa and then to Italy. The Syrian Christians of Malabar are said to derive from his missionary work. A 6/8C cross in Mylapore with a problematic inscription may link to this. mid 16C. 46/7

36. Misericord with Noah's Ark. Misericords necessary to provide partial seat during long services – usually on a slope so that anyone who fell asleep, fell off. Often carvings underneath – not always religious. 50/205 in a group ranging from 15-early 16C.

Elizabethan Room.

37 and 38. Two tapestries, one again with Esther and Ahasuaerus (29/100, late 16C, story details on label), the other takes the Hagar story further. Hagar, driven off with her son Ishmael, despairs and sets him down under a tree for shade and moves away to avoid having to see him die of hunger. God's angel appears and tells her Ishmael will father a great nation and she must not despair they will be provided for. Early 17C. Amsterdam.

Islamic gallery.

Spread of Islam and various invasions, across North Africa, through the Middle East. In several instances I have put the Islamic dates in brackets beside the Christian one.

39. Prayer rugs. (nearest is 17/18C, 9/7) Mehrab shape like part of a mosque pointing to Mecca. This ties in to the journey all Muslims should make to Mecca, the Haj. This also links to the 'Al Isra wa Al-Miraj, The Night Journey and Ascension. Mohammed had a vision of Gabriel in 619, about ten years after Mohammed had been teaching Islam, in this he travels on a mule with wings, buraq, spirit horse, which had already carried other prophets including Abraham. The flight covers many lands including Jerusalem and they meet many prophets, including Jesus, and on to heaven and the 7 heavenly worlds. In the course of this Mohammed asks for guidance as to how often men should pray per day and gets the answer 50, he gets that reduced to 10 since he feels 50 is beyond human power, and even to 5, but when he tries to reduce it even further he is told that 5 is the lowest limit. He then travels back to earth and to Mecca.

In AD 622 Mohammed has to flee from Mecca to Medina. The term Hijra/Hegira means emigration.

40. The dragon carpets near the prayer rugs come from the Caucasus, the earlier one, where dragons are still visible, from 1650 and the later, more stylised, 1700. The dragon idea probably travels from China to this area.

41. and 42. In the case on the right on exit from Elizabethan room, there are examples of fritware and of lustre. The fritware was an attempt by the Middle Eastern potters to copy the porcelain already coming from China. The items here are from Iran and are 13C (7C Hijra). Most are also lustreware, e.g. 33/59, 44, 48, 49, 45. Lustre, the origin of which is obscure, may have come from 8C AD Egyptian glass makers and with the Islamic conquests have spread to Syria, Iraq and Persia. The lustre effect was got by using metallic oxides and low firing to get rid of the oxygen, the item was then gently rubbed and a metal sheen was left. (The domestic European gallery has examples of Hispano-Moresque ware from late 15C and 16C with lustre which entered Spain via Moorish rule.)

43. Opposite the Dietrichstein carpet, in case, no. 7 is a dish, 33/02, 12-13C (6-7C Hijra) with the hero Rustain, on his horse, Rakhsh; Rustain is a knight from the epic Shah-namah. This is the Iranian/Persian national epic of c.1000 AD by Firdusi. It relates to the story from the beginning of the world to 7C century arrival of Islam. The old

beliefs were Zoroastrian. One of the stories told is of Sohrab and Rostrom. It is known in English from Matthew Arnold's poem of this name, which he wrote in 1853 having got the story from a French translation. The story is of Sohrab as Rostrom's son, but unknown to him. He knew he had fathered a child but thought it was a girl. Rostrom is the leader of the Persian armies and meets the Tartars, led by Sohrab, in battle. Rather than have a full-scale battle they decide on single combat between them and only when Sohrab is mortally wounded by his father, do they find out their relationship.

44. The Persian celadon dish, 33/66, in fritwar, 13-14C (7-8C Hijra) has five fish in it compared with the two that one would have on a Chinese one. The fish swim in an anti-clockwise direction here and the Chinese idea has been adapted to Islam with the fish as devout believers, Sufi mystics, seeking knowledge of God, and the water in which they are swimming represents God's infinite and abundant Grace.

45. Isnik ware pottery. Chinese influence has come especially via Sultan Salim the Grim, who, c.1514-17, conquered Tabriz in Iran, Damascus in Syria and Cairo. He took large numbers of ceramics with him back to Istanbul and got his court artists to copy the patterns which were then sent to the potters of Isnik as stencils for them to use. An example of this is 33/67, fritware, c.1530 (10C Hijra).

46. Indian animal carpet. 17/18C. The animals depicted are those of the time in India. The Mughal Emperor, Akbar, 1556-1605 (similar time of James VI in Scotland) was fascinated by the quality of Persian carpets brought to his court and settled Persian weavers in his royal cities of Agra, Lahore and Fatehpur-Sikri. The Indian ones produced there are of the highest quality and reached their peak under Jahangir, Akbar's successor, 1605-1627 (c. James' time as king of England/Great Britain). 9/32.

Gothic Period Room.

47. Tapestry of David and Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, whom David lusts after. David sends Uriah to the frontline in battle to have him killed and so free Bathsheba. A messenger is depicted as go-between. There is the coat of arms of a Strasburg merchant. 46/27. late 15C Upper Rhine.

48. Nuremberg brass dish with Grapes of Eshcol – see above. 5 and 6/194 c.1500.

South Gallery.

49. Stained glass. St. Clement, 3rd bishop of Rome, exiled to the Crimea and martyred there with anchor round his neck and thrown into the Black Sea. 45/374. 1320-40.

50. Stained glass of Solomon and Sheba. Late 15C Cologne. 45/432.

51. Stained glass. David and a messenger. Early 16C Netherlands. 45/414.

Chinese gallery to east of Hutton Castle hall.

52. Chinese vase, 3rd case from south. Blue and white ware Rouleau. Qing 17C. punt-like boats. 38/1026.

(Though it is not from Asia or the Middle East, one can finish at the SS Strathclyde with the comment that Sir William's wealth derived from travel – shipping.)