

Strand 4: Research and doctoral theses in progress

Art collecting between Catalonia and China (1880-95)

Mònica Ginés Blasi

Various authors have pointed out how the interest in art produced in China and Japan can be traced back to 16th century Spain, stimulating the decorative style known as *Chinoiserie*, out of which was derived a fashion known as *Japonisme*, which was a penchant for objects coming from Japan in the 19th century.¹ In the mid-19th century, the Japanese government initiated a strong modernization of its country, establishing intense commercial relations with European countries, which, in turn, aroused interest in Japanese art within diverse European city-centers.² Meanwhile, the interest which was aroused for artworks made in China during Baroque and Rococo declined strongly

¹ Oliver Impey defines *Chinoiserie* as “the european idea of what oriental things were like. Apart from the genuine easter objects (the japanese lacquer, the Chinese porcelain, and possibly the Indian fabrics) these were European things – they were ‘oriental’ style”. See Oliver IMPEY, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles in Western Art and Decoration*, London, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 9. Concerning the authors that have published about the interest in China and Japan in Spain, see Elena BARLÉS BÁGUENA; David ALMAZÁN TOMÁS (Coord.): “Monográfico: Las colecciones de arte extremo oriental en España”, *Artigrama*, 18, 2003, p. 13-268. Regarding the concept of *Japonisme*, Eva Fernández del Campo argues that, even though it is a term used, in a broader sense, to allude to the influence of Japanese art in western art without chronological or geographical limits, often including any form of art coming from East Asia, it is more concretely used to refer to “un momento acotado del arte que se identifica con la corriente artística europea que se desarrolla unos años antes de la irrupción de las vanguardias y que tiene como protagonistas a aquellos artistas (y en muchos casos coleccionistas) del arte japonés que trabajaron fundamentalmente en París, aunque también en Londres, en el último tercio del siglo XIX y primeros años del siglo XX”, in Eva FERNÁNDEZ DEL CAMPO: “Las Fuentes y Lugares del ‘Japonismo’”, *Anales de la Historia del Arte*, 11, 2001, p. 329-356: 329. Ricard Bru i Turull has published his PhD dissertation on the presence of Japan in the arts of Barcelona, see Ricard BRU I TURULL, *Els orígens del Japonisme a Barcelona*, Barcelona, Institut d’Estudis Montjuïc, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2011.

² London, Glasgow, Paris and Barcelona, are some of the cities which experimented with an intense industrial, urban and commercial development, at the end of the 19th century. See Teresa-Montserrat SALA (Ed.): *Barcelona 1900* (exhibition catalogue), Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum, 2007.

as a consequence of the commercial hermeticism of China's foreign policies. This factor, in addition to the lesser amount of interest held in art collecting by Spaniards in general, explains that traditionally, the presence of Chinese art collections has been considered meager in our country.³ During the last third of the 19th century, even though there was little Spanish presence in China, there were some figures belonging to Catalonia's 19th century cultural and political elite, such as Eduard Toda i Güell (*b* Reus, 1855; *d* Poblet, 1941), Víctor Balaguer i Cirera (*b* Barcelona, 1824; *d* Madrid, 1901), Juan Mencarini (1860-1939?) and Francesc Abellá (*b* and *d* unknown), who all made a great effort to buy, sell, distribute, exchange and exhibit artworks and other objects produced in China.

The collections of coins and artworks of China's imperial past which were formed by Toda, Mencarini and Abellá, are nowadays preserved in the public collections of the Museum and Library Víctor Balaguer in Vilanova i la Geltrú. Toda also sold his coin collection to the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid.⁴ Furthermore, other personalities from Catalonia's cultural elite participated in the acquisition, distribution, exchange and exhibition of Chinese art, coins, and material culture, between the last two decades of the 19th century, right up until the 1930's. This is an aspect of the history of Catalan art collecting and of the history of international relations between Spain and China that requires an intensive and systematic research. This project researches the extent to which Chinese art collecting reached in Catalonia, as well as the place Chinese art came to occupy in the development of private and public art collecting in the last third of the 19th century.

³ E. BARLÉS: "Monográfico...", 4.

⁴ Regarding the East Asian collection of the Biblioteca-Museu Víctor Balaguer see Eulàlia JARDÍ I SOLER: "El fons de l'Extrem Orient en el llegat fundacional de la Biblioteca Museu Balaguer", *Butlletí de la Biblioteca Museu Balaguer*, 3, 2010, p. 29-43; Mònica GINÉS BLASI, "Estudi preliminar de la col·lecció de moneda xinesa de la Biblioteca Museu Balaguer", *Butlletí de la Biblioteca Museu Balaguer*, 4, 2011, p. 115-128. Concerning the collection of Chinese and Japanese coins preserved in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, see Irene SECO SERRA: "Estudio preliminar de la colección de moneda china y japonesa del Museo Arqueológico Nacional de Madrid" in Carmen ALFARO ASINS; Carmen MARCOS ALONSO and Paloma OTERO MORÁN (Ed.): *Actas del XIII Congreso Internacional de Numismàtica* (Madrid, 2003), Madrid, Secretaría General Técnica, vol. 2, 2005, p. 1669-1675.

Chinese art collecting in Catalonia, and its effect on 19th century Catalan society, are aspects of the history of Catalan art collecting which have not yet been researched comprehensively. It is relevant to produce research on this field in order to allow a better understanding on how Chinese art, archaeology and material culture collecting contributed to the enrichment of Catalan patrimony. Furthermore, diverse authors have pointed out how the six years that Eduard Toda spent in China, as well as his studies on Chinese culture, have never been studied in depth. This project's research attempts to release new information on Chinese art collections in 19th century Catalonia, and especially, on the activities that Toda, a relevant witness of 19th century China, developed in East Asia as an art and coin collector.

Chinese art in private art collecting in Catalonia

In Barcelona, several art and archaeology collectors gathered Chinese artworks, coins and objects of interest to the study of Chinese material culture in the last two decades of the 19th century, coinciding with Eduard Toda's return to Catalonia in 1883, after he had spent a period of six years as a Spanish diplomat in various Chinese cities. While most of these collectors had collections consisting of pieces varying in origin, with either Chinese sections or single articles, such as Josep Ferrer i Soler, others had formed collections containing only East Asian objects, the most representative of which being Eduard Toda i Güell, who had had the opportunity of gathering the objects of his collection in China.

Eduard Toda i Güell's collection

Eduard Toda i Güell was a Catalan diplomat, an arts patron, a collector, a bibliophile, a scholar, and an Egyptologist, as well as a relevant witness of 19th century China in Spain, who published numerous articles and books about Chinese culture in Catalan, Spanish and English. His project for the restoration of the Poblet Monastery is one

aspect of his life which has awakened the most interest in historians and his biographers.⁵ In contrast with this, the six years he spent in China and his activities as a Chinese art and coin collector are some of the aspects of his life which have aroused a lesser amount of research. Even though there has been little research on Toda's relationship with East Asia, over the last ten years, various authors have made small yet relevant contributions, from which it has been made possible to begin a more systematic and intensive research. These authors are Eulàlia Jardí i Soler, Manuel Forasté i Giravent, Jaume Massó i Carballido, Josep Maria Fradera, María Dolores Elizalde and Irene Seco Serra.⁶

Eduard Toda spent a period of six years as Spanish Vice-Consul in Hong Kong (1876-78), Guangzhou and Whampoa (1878-80), and Shanghai (1880-82), where he had the opportunity to travel widely and form an Asian art and coin collection.⁷

His collection consisted of around 10.000 Asian copper, gold, silver and porcelain coins, as well as medals, ingots and paper money.⁸ Aside from his Asian coin collection, Toda gathered artworks and other objects of interest to the study of Chinese material culture. Apart from his coin section, the rest of his collection consisted of

⁵ Eufemià Fort's biography of Eduard Toda is still a referential book to study Eduard Toda's life, even though it pays little attention to the period Toda spent in China and focuses mostly on Toda's project for the restoration of the Poblet Monastery. See Eufemià FORT I GOGUL, *Eduard Toda, tal com l'he conegut*, Montserrat, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1975. Gener Gonzalvo i Bou has widely published about this aspect of Toda's life, see for example, Gener GONZALVO I BOU: "Eduard Toda, historiador de Poblet", *Aplec de treballs*, 15, 1997, p. 103-128.

⁶ See Eulàlia JARDÍ I SOLER: "El jove Eduard Toda i la Xina", *L'Avenç*, 316, 2006, p. 34-40; Manuel FORASTÉ I GIRAVENT: "Eduard Toda i Güell, viatger", *Els Marges*, 30, 1984, p. 97-10; Jaume MASSÓ I CARBALLIDO, *Eduard Toda i Güell: de Reus a Sardenya (passant per la Xina i Egipte, 1855-1887)*, Càller, Arxiu de Tradicions de l'Alguer, 2010; Josep MARIA FRADERA and Ma Dolores ELIZALDE: "Los portugueses en Asia en la óptica del diplomático Eduard Toda", in Francisco Javier ANTÓN BURGOS; Luis Oscar RAMOS ALONSO (Ed.): *Traspasando Fronteras: el reto de Asia y el Pacífico*, Valladolid, Universidad de Valladolid, 2002, p. 245-259; I. SECO: "Estudio preliminar...", 1669-1675. See also See Mònica GINÉS BLASI: "Eduard Toda i Güell: from vice-consul of Spain in China to the *Renaixença* in Barcelona (1871-84)", *Entremons*, 5, 2013 (in press).

⁷ J. MASSÓ, *Eduard Toda...*, p. 29-35.

⁸ I. SECO: "Estudio preliminar...", 1669-1675.

Chinese clothing and attire, weapons, decorative objects, books, paintings, religious idols, and porcelain and ceramic vases and plates.⁹

On July 27, 1882, Toda asked for a ten-month licence to return to Europe. On November 16, 1882, he left Shanghai to travel back to Spain and arrived in Reus, his native city, in December 1882.¹⁰ During 1883, up until April 1884, he mostly stayed in Barcelona, residing in the hotel Gran Fonda d'Orient, located at La Rambla, 45.¹¹ In Barcelona, his friend Víctor Balaguer introduced him to prominent Catalan nationalist writers of the *Renaixença* movement, such as Pere Aldavert (*b* Barcelona, 1850; *d* Barcelona, 1932), founder of *La Renaixensa*; Àngel Guimerà (*b* Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1845; *d* Barcelona, 1924), director of the same newspaper; and Francesc Matheu (*b* Barcelona, 1851; *d* Sant Antoni de Vilamajor, 1938), director of *La Il·lustració Catalana*.¹²

During his stay in Barcelona, Toda exhibited his collection in the building of *La Renaixensa*'s editing, publishing and printing production, which was located at Carrer Xuclà, 13. Toda's friendship with Aldavert may explain why he came to exhibit his Chinese art and coin collection in the building of *La Renaixensa*. In 1929, when he was interviewed by José María Dalmasas i Bocabella, he explained that "(c)uando volví de China en 1884 expuse en *La Renaixensa* algunas de mis colecciones de porcelanas, cobres, etc., que traía y en las que había invertido todo mi capital".¹³

⁹ Peregrí CASADES I GRAMATXES: "Tenia Museus Barcelona? (I)", *Butlletí dels Museus d'Art de Barcelona*, 48, 1935, p. 133-149: 145-146.

¹⁰ J. MASSÓ, *Eduard Toda...*, p. 34.

¹¹ *La Renaixensa: Diari de Catalunya*, January 1, 1883, p. 8747.

¹² The Catalan "Renaixença", meaning "renaissance" or "re-birth", was a Catalan cultural and political revival movement that took place in the 19th century. See Joan COSTA CARRERAS and Alan YATES: "The Catalan language", in Joan COSTA CARRERAS (Ed.): *The Architect of Modern Catalan: Pompeu Fabra (1868-1948) Selected Writings*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing, 2009, p. 3-17. Regarding Toda's friendship with Balaguer, Aldavert, Guimerà and Matheu, see E. FORT, *Eduard Toda...*, p. 49-54.

¹³ José María DALMASSES I BOCABELLA: "Recuerdos de la infancia y primera juventud de nuestro Gaudí", in *Calendario Josefino para 1929* (Barcelona, 1929), edited in Lluís BONET I ARMENGOL, *La mort de Gaudí i el seu ressó a la revista "El Propagador de la Devoción a San José"*, Barcelona, Editorial Claret, 2001, p. 235-240: 239.

While in Barcelona, Toda also sold some of his artworks to Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi, the patron of Antoni Gaudí. Gaudí, one of Toda's childhood friends, advised Güell to acquire half of the art collection, as Toda explained in José María Dalmases' interview in 1929:

*“Gaudí, arquitecto y amigo de Don Eusebio Güell, le aconsejó adquirir la mitad de ellas. (...) No volví a ver a Gaudí hasta muchos años después, a mi regreso de Londres, terminada la guerra. Gaudí (...) vino a verme a este mismo Hotel Colón y me pidió una limosna para el Templo de la Sagrada Familia: Te daré, le dije, una cantidad igual a la que tú obtuviste de Güell en la venda de mis colecciones chinas”.*¹⁴

Finally, Toda donated part of his Chinese art collection to the Biblioteca-Museu Víctor Balaguer of Vilanova i la Geltrú, in 1883, and sold his coin collection to the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid, in 1887.¹⁵

Chinese art in other collections

Other art and coin collectors in 19th and early 20th century Catalonia had Chinese artworks in their collections. Unlike Toda's collection, which had been acquired in China and consisted mainly of Chinese and Japanese artworks, most of these collections contained, not only a few Chinese artworks, but also many other objects of diverse origins. In the Exposición de Artes Decorativas, held in the Asociación Artístico-Arqueológica Barcelonesa in 1881, for instance, some of the collections exhibited contained Chinese artworks and other objects of interest to the study of Chinese culture.¹⁶

¹⁴ J. DALMASES, “Recuerdos...”, 239.

¹⁵ See E. JARDÍ: “El fons...”, 31-35; I. SECO: “Estudio preliminar...”, 1669.

¹⁶ *Álbum de la Exposición de Artes Decorativas : celebrada en el local de la Sociedad Artístico-Arqueológica durante los meses de enero y febrero del año 1881*, Barcelona, Asociación Artístico-Arqueológica Barcelonesa, Sucesores de Narciso Ramírez, 1881.

Josep Ferrer i Soler's private collection, about which the Asociación Artístico-Arqueológica published an *Álbum* in 1884, also had some Chinese and Japanese artworks. Most of the East Asian pieces from this collection were Japanese, as he had a section dedicated exclusively to objects coming from this country.¹⁷

Another interesting collection is the one gathered by Joan Artigas-Alart Casas (*b* 1885; *d* 1934), who had formed a private collection of Chinese furniture, artworks and clothing, housed in his apartment in Sarrià, Barcelona. In 1930, the magazine *D'ací d'allà*, published an interesting review about this collection, where it was stated that it was "un veritable Museu del moble xinès i una transposició a Barcelona d'un riquíssim saló xinès, o més ben dit, una successió de salonets xinesos perfectament agençats".¹⁸

From private to public Chinese art collecting

The Town Hall of Barcelona's acquisition policies regarding Barcelona's public collections in the 19th century were oriented towards the recovery of artworks from Catalan historical past only.¹⁹ The origin of these policies comes from the 1870's, when there was the need to increase the level of Catalan industrial production, which, in comparison to the great industries of that time, such as English, German and French industries, was at a standstill. Figures belonging to the Catalan bourgeoisie had the initiative to fix this problem by conciliating art and industry through exhibitions and the creation of public collections which would stimulate the study and the imitation of artworks of Catalonia's historical past. This emphasis on the need for recovering Catalan heritage had a great impact on the collecting policies which developed in

¹⁷ *Álbum Heliográfico del Gabinete de Objetos Artísticos de D. José Ferrer i Soler, socio numérico de la presente Asociación*, Barcelona, Asociación Artístico-Arqueológica Barcelonesa, Imprenta de Luis Tasso, 1884.

¹⁸ P. de l'A.: "Un interior d'estil xinès", *D'ací d'allà*, 155, November 1930, p. 380.

¹⁹ See Vicente MAESTRE ABAD: "Las primeras exposiciones retrospectivas, coleccionismo y museos: temas para un capítulo de la historia del arte en la Barcelona de la Restauración", in Bonaventura BASSEGODA I HUGAS (Ed.): *Col·leccionistes, Col·leccions i Museus. Episodis de la Història del Patrimoni Artístic Català*, Barcelona, Memoria Artium, 2007, p. 223-262: 66-69.

Barcelona, and it surely affected the place that Asian art occupied in public art collecting in Catalonia. Even though the Town Hall of Barcelona's policies regarding art collecting were set to preserving Catalan art only, there were some initiatives to create public collections of Asian art in Barcelona.

Chinese art and material culture in the Museu Martorell

The Museu Martorell was created from a donation given by Francesc Martorell y Peña (1822-78) in 1878, consisting of his collections of natural history, archaeology and also his library.²⁰ Through numerous donations, the Museum gathered many objects of diverse nature: objects exhibited for the study of natural sciences, archaeology, ethnology, history and art. During the 1880s, the Museum received several donations of Chinese and Japanese objects.²¹

In 1883, Eduard Toda attempted to sell his collection, valued at 30.000 pesetas, to the Town Hall of Barcelona, in order to increase the collections of the Museu Martorell, which had been inaugurated in September 1882. Even though the Museum had accepted donations of Chinese and Japanese objects during the 1880's, Toda's offer was rejected.²²

Damià Mateu's collection

Since Toda's offer in 1883, another private collector tried to create a public collection of Chinese and Japanese art in Catalonia: Damià Mateu tried to begin an East Asian art section in the Museu d'Arts Decoratives of Barcelona in the 1930s, departing from the exhibition of his own collection.

²⁰ Alicia MASRIERA, *El Museu Martorell, 125 anys de Ciències Naturals (1878-2003)*, Barcelona, Monografies del Museu de Ciències Naturals, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2006, p. 35.

²¹ Ricard BRU I TURULL: "Notes pel col·leccionisme d'art oriental a la Barcelona vuitcentista", *Bulletí de la Reial Acadèmia Catalana de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi*, 18, 2004, p. 233-257: 242-243.

²² See P. CASADES: "Tenia Museus...", 144-149.

Mateu's private collection was quite unusual: it was conceived as a private collection formed to be exhibited publically, with the objective of filling the gap existing in Barcelona's public collections. As he gathered the artworks of his collections, especially in Paris, but also from local private collectors, they were deposited straight away to fill the rooms of the Museum of Decorative Arts.²³ His collection consisted of 18th century wooden carvings, stone and bronze Buddhist sculptures, Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan ritual bronzes and a vast collection of porcelains.²⁴

Many other collectors participated in Mateu's initiative, exhibiting their collections, or making important donations to the Museum: Lluís Masriera deposited his Japanese art collection; Joan Artigas-Alart Casas legated a collection of Manila shawls; Carme Artigas-Alart donated the collection of Chinese artworks and furniture which she had inherited from her brother in 1935; also Joan Fabré Oliver contributed to the exhibition.²⁵

The East Asian collection of the Biblioteca-Museu Víctor Balaguer

One Museum which did accept donations of Chinese artworks was the Biblioteca-Museu Víctor Balaguer in Vilanova i la Geltrú. This Museum holds one of the most interesting Asian collections formed by a 19th century museum in Catalonia. The Asian section of the Museum's collection was most likely opened with Toda's donation in 1883. Since then, and throughout the seven years following the inauguration of this Institution in October 1884, the Museum received a great deal of donations of mostly Chinese, but also Japanese, artworks, coins, documents and objects of interest to the

²³ Jaume BARRACHINA: "Maties Muntadas, Jaume Espona i Miquel Mateu: el col·leccionisme d'art antic i d'arts decoratives", in B. BASSEGODA (Ed.): *Col·leccionistes...*, p. 223-262: 248-251; *Butlletí dels Museus d'Art de Barcelona*, 33, 45, 53, Barcelona, 1934 and 1935.

²⁴ *Catàleg de les sales que contenen la col·lecció d'art xinès, dipòsit del Sr. Damià Mateu al Museu de les Arts Decoratives inaugurades el 17 de febrer de 1935* (exhibition catalogue, Museu d'Arts Decoratives, Barcelona, 1935), Barcelona, Junta de Museus, 1935?.

²⁵ See J. GIBERT: "El contingut del Museu de Pedralbes", *Butlletí dels Museus d'Art de Barcelona*, 21, 1933, p. 40-58; Adelaida FERRÉ DE RUIZ NARVÁEZ: "Una col·lecció de mantons de Manila al Museu de Pedralbes", *Butlletí dels Museus d'Art de Barcelona*, 71, 1937, p. 113-125; "L'Exposició Artigas-Alart", *Butlletí dels Museus d'Art de Barcelona*, 47, 1935, p. 117-118; "Dos donatius als Museus", *Butlletí dels Museus d'Art de Barcelona*, 49, 1935, p. 182-184.

study of Chinese and Japanese material culture.²⁶ These contributions were made by diverse donors, who either donated part of their collections in one go, like Eduard Toda and Juan Mencarini, or gave single objects sporadically.

The Balaguer Museum's East Asian collection consists of three clearly differentiated sections: a collection of Chinese export paintings, which contains paintings representing Chinese landscapes (Fig. 1), Chinese flora and fauna, and images of Chinese inhabitants (Fig. 2); a Chinese coin collection, and a collection of religious idols, weapons, ceramics and decorative objects made of a soft stone known as steatite or soapstone. Most of the artworks and coins forming these sections were donated by Eduard Toda, Juan Mencarini, Francesc Abellá and his wife, Carmen Abellá.

The first artworks which entered the Museum were those donated by Eduard Toda in 1883. There are very few sources which make reference to Toda's donation, as it entered the Museum before the Museum's inauguration in October 1884. Only a few letters between Toda, Balaguer, and the Institution's librarian, Juan Oliva i Milà, refer to this donation. Since Toda was the only donor to have given Chinese artworks before the Museum's inauguration, it is possible to seize the general characteristics of his collection through the Museum's description published in the first issue of the Institution's *Boletín*, which mentions Chinese and Japanese paintings, Chinese clothing, weapons and armour, and also Chinese and Japanese bronze jars.

Following Toda's donation, the next group of artworks to enter the Museum were those given by Juan Mencarini, Fourth Assistant B in the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service. Mencarini had travelled to Barcelona in 1888 to participate in the Great Exhibition of Barcelona, where he exhibited his collection in representation of Formosa. Mencarini had also travelled to Barcelona to posthumously publish his father's translation of the *Pindar Odes*. His father was Albino Mencarini, who had served as a Spanish diplomat in different East Asian cities, including Singapore and Hong Kong.

²⁶ E. JARDÍ: "El fons...", 29-43; M. GINÉS: "Estudi preliminar...", 115-128.

Mencarini asked for help from Víctor Balaguer in order to present the book to the Ministerio de Fomento, in order for it to acquire 250 prints to be distributed in public libraries.²⁷

After participating in the Great Exhibition, he donated part of the Chinese collection he had exhibited: two porcelain religious idols; ten pottery idols; a large representation of Buddha in majolica (Fig. 3); four volumes on Chinese numismatics; a collection of export paintings; a collection of 500 coins from China's imperial past, and a two volume manuscript catalogue in Chinese of his coin collection.²⁸

Other contributions of interest are the donations made by Francisco de Abellá y Raldiris and his wife, Carmen, who gave decorative objects and interesting documents on Chinese immigration to Cuba, between 1887 and 1895, while residing in Paris. Abellá was an immigration agent who worked with the Sociedad de Importación de Trabajadores Libres of Cuba, to create new strategies in order to re-establish Chinese immigration to Cuba, which had been put to a standstill in 1874.²⁹

In March 1887, Carmen Abellá ordered various decorative objects to be sent from China.³⁰ That same year, Francisco de Abellá visited the Biblioteca-Museu in Vilanova, and donated a volume, bound in red leather with golden letters, with original documents regarding his project to re-establish Chinese immigration to Cuba. This volume was entitled *Colección de documentos sobre emigración china ofrecidos por D. Francisco*

²⁷ E. JARDÍ: "El fons...", 37-40; M. GINÉS: "Estudi preliminar...", 115-118.

²⁸ *Boletín de la Biblioteca-Museo Víctor Balaguer*, 50, 1888: 1-2.

²⁹ Even though Francisco de Abellá's birthplace is unknown, his surname is Catalan, he established a long relationship with some Catalan figures, like Víctor Balaguer, and he refers to himself as such in a document preserved in the archive Biblioteca Víctor Balaguer, in Vilanova i la Geltrú, as it is explained in José Luis LUZÓN, "Chineros, diplomáticos y hacendados en la Habana colonial. Don Francisco Abellá y Raldiris y su proyecto de inmigración libre a Cuba (1874)", *Boletín Americanista*, 39-40, 1989, p 143-158: 146-149.

³⁰ *Boletín de la Biblioteca-Museo...*, 30, 1887: 7.

*Abellá á la Biblioteca-Museo-Balaguer 1887.*³¹ In the 1890's, Francisco de Abellá donated several Fuzhou engraved steatite decorative objects and porcelain dishes.³²

Finally, Víctor Balaguer, the founder of the Institution, also gathered several Chinese artworks to enrich the East Asian collection of the Museum. In 1890, he informed Manuel Creus i Esther, who was in charge of the art collections of the Museum, that in Madrid, he had acquired a porcelain figure of *Guanyin*, a wooden carving of the Daoist god *Shoulao*, and an incense burner (Fig. 4):

*“Esta noche he adquirido tres objetos de gran mérito y de gran valor. Una imagen de porcelana, china, representando la Diosa de la misericordia de los chinos, que está tasada en mil reales, un pebetero de rica labor, y una admirable escultura hecha trabajada en una raiz de árbol, que, por lo menos, vales otros mil reales”.*³³

In addition to Eduard Toda, Juan Mencarini, Carmen Abellá, Francisco Abellá and Víctor Balaguer, other donors had also contributed to the formation of this collection with sporadic donations of Chinese and Japanese artworks, these include Agustí Panner, Sebastià Vidal, Josep Ferrer i Soler and Pere Llibre.³⁴

³¹ Ms. 9, BMVB.

³² Steatite, also known as “soapstone”, is a type of mineral, soft enough to be engraved by knife. See Craig CLUNAS, *Chinese carving*, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, Sun Tree Publishing Limited, 1996, p. 89.

³³ Letter from Víctor Balaguer to Manuel Creus, Madrid, October 10, 1890. Ms. Creus/187, BMVB.

³⁴ R. BRU: “Notes...”, 243-244.