

# DOSCO

VOL, 2, NO. 6

USS BRYCE CANYON (AD-36)

4 MAR 61

## SPECIAL EDITION CHINESE ART TREASURES

The USS BRYCE CANYON (AD-36), sailed from the northern part of Taiwan February 15 with 23 trunks of what is probably the most important part of China in its hold--its records of the country's history--one of civilization's oldest.

The BRYCE CANYON, under the command of Captain William R. Crutcher, of Long Beach, California, landed here with the unique distinction of being the one chosen to carry the cargo of rare art objects to American shores--the first time these precious items have left the country. Also on board are two art experts, Mr. Li Lin-T'san and Mr. Na Chi-Liang, assistant and curator of the China National Museum respectively. Both will remain in the United States with the art treasures for about a year and a half.

The careful handling of the cases containing the treasures by the crew of the BRYCE CANYON was evident under the able direction of the ship's Executive Officer, Commander William C. Logan. (see photo caption #2) The stowing of the precious cargo was the culmination of nearly a year's preparation to send the treasures abroad. (see photo captions #3 & 4) A delegation from the museum and other dignitaries, including Dr. Kung Teh-Chun, the 77<sup>th</sup> lineal descendant of the great Sage Confucius, inspected the loading. (see photo caption #1)

Aboard are some 252 pieces of rare Chinese ancient art objects some of which date back hundreds and thousands of years even before America was discovered. A joint committee of Chinese and American art experts met recently at the National Palace Museum in Taichung, seat of the Provincial Government in Central Taiwan and decided that a small part of China's Imperial Art Treasures would be displayed in America.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There are representative items from nine different categories of art. Most are paintings of the Tang Dynasty (618 A.D.--907 A.D.). Included in the selection are exquisite porcelains dating from the dawn of Chinese History to the Manchu Dynasty, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

## HISTORY (Cont'd)

Bronze wine vessels and elaborately carved jade vases dating back three thousand years were included. Samples of Chinese calligraphy, elegantly drafted, are also included. Silk tapestries which hung in palace halls 200 years before America was settled, are packed alongside red lacquer pieces on which minute figures, flowers, and landscapes were tooled by ancient Chinese wood-carvers.

The story of the Palace museum, which houses these invaluable pieces of art, is almost as fascinating as the tale of the treasures themselves. There are actually two museums, the National Palace Museum and the National Central Museum. On the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic of China, October 10, 1925, the Peking Palace Museum came into being, and a museum board was organized under the auspices of the Nationalist Chinese Government. When the Japanese invaded Manchuria, some 13,391 crates of these treasures were sent to Shanghai for safekeeping. Then a suitable warehouse was constructed in Nanking in December, 1936, and the priceless cargo was transferred from Shanghai to Nanking. Six months later, the Japanese thrust toward Nanking forced the treasures, the legacy of one of the world's oldest cultures, to move to the interior. The end of the war in 1945 enabled the museum to reclaim the treasures and the original buildings. Work at the Nanking National Central Museum and the Peiping Palace Museum was returned to normal.

Then once again war was heard. In the winter of 1947, the museums were directed to make a selection of their treasures for transport to Taiwan. Altogether, three shipments were made comprised of more than 35,000 pieces, including bronze articles, porcelains, enamelware, paintings, calligraphy and carved lacquer works. After arriving in Taiwan, every item of the precious cargo was checked, catalogued and carefully stored away. Not one item was lost, and nothing was damaged. Some of the personnel of the museum have been associated with the treasures for more than 40 years. Many of their sons are following in their footsteps.

Special warehouses with controlled temperature and humidity were constructed in Taichung in 1949. An entire mountain has been carved into house the treasures in various vault-like stererooms for safety. The Chinese Communists have left no stone unturned to broadcast their threats to regain these treasures by any means. A showroom was constructed in 1956 in Taichung and thousands have viewed some of the articles. Many of the most precious articles may never be seen by the public because of constant fading in sunlight or even subdued daylight! The display changes at monthly intervals and because of the size of the collection, more then 50 years will be needed to display every piece!!

When the exhibition arrives in the United States it will begin its tour at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. then travel to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; the Art Institute of Chicago and the Memorial Museum of San Francisco. Each showing will last two months.

## HISTORY (Cont'd)

The value of the Imperial Art Treasures is incalculable, not only because of their intrinsic value, but because of the many fascinating adventures that lie behind them. This trip to America is but just another adventure to be written alongside their history and the BRYCE CANYON and its crew members will appear on the ledger. The people of China have placed a great responsibility upon the ship and its men--the chronicle of its history.

### PHOTO CAPTIONS

Photographs of the BRYCE CANYON and crew and the Chinese Art Treasures will be on display on the amidships bulletin board for all hands. The following is a brief description of each picture:

1. At the Captain's table aboard the USS BRYCE CANYON the officials discuss the plans for loading the Chinese art treasures in the forward section of the vessel. (left to right) Na Chih-Liang, curator of the National Museum; Rear Admiral Cheng Chin-Chia, Commander of the Keelung area; Captain William R. Crutcher of the BRYCE CANYON; Pu Hsueh-Feng, Political Vice Minister of Education and Dr. Kung Teh-Chun, the 77<sup>th</sup> lineal descendant of Confucius.
2. The Executive Officer of the BRYCE CANYON, Commander William C. Logan checks the list of treasures with the National Museum's curator, Na Chih-Liang as the loading commences. Heavy padding was used on the decks to protect the cases from accidental roughness.
3. Part of the cases of the treasures are loaded in the hold, as the officials watch the packing. -(left to right) Dr. Kung Teh-Liang, Captain Crutcher and Political Vice Minister of Education, Pu Hsueh-Feng.
4. The cases of the treasures are carefully taken off Chinese army trucks to be later hoisted aboard the ship.
5. Crewmembers of the BRYCE CANYON prepare to get the ship underway with its precious cargo from the Keelung dock.
6. "Fu-chi ting", a bronze container with two ears and tripod feet, was made during the Shang Dynasty (1766 B.C.--1154 B.C.) as a sacrificial vessel. Later, it was regarded by succeeding dynasties as a symbol of imperial power. This nearly 3500-year-old treasure is a part of the collection housed in the National Central Museum in Taichung, Taiwan.
7. A twin vase carved from a single piece of yellow jade with carvings of dragon on one side and phoenix on the other was patterned after a bronze tsun (vase) during the Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.). It, too, is a part of the collection to be viewed in the U.S. during 1961 by courtesy of Taiwan's National Central Museum.
8. Ma Y'uan (fl. 1189-1224), a court painter of the Sung Dynasty (960-1278 A.D.), was famous for his impressionistic art work. This picture, titled "Mountain Journey at a Snowy Dawn," is one of his few remaining masterpieces. This painting, about 1000 years old, is a part of the collection to be exhibited in the United States.

CAPTIONS (Cont'd)

9. "Sing Pai Yu Chih," a white jade goblet, was carved by an unknown artist during the Sung Dynasty (960-1278 A.D.). This beautifully carved cup from the National Palace Museum collection will be shown for the first time outside China in the exhibit to be sent to the United States during 1961.

10. This painting is the work of Chou Ying (fl. 1505-1566), a famous painter during the Ming Dynasty. Captioned "Late Return after a Spring Excursion," it is now displayed at the National Palace Museum. An earlier version painted by Tai Chin (fl. 1425-1452), also in the museum's collection, is not considered by experts to be as fine a painting.

11. This beautiful teapot with framed paintings of lotus flowers on both sides was a product of the Ch'ienlung Kiln (1736-1795 A.D.) during the Ch'ing Dynasty. Its present custodian is Taiwan's National Central Museum.

-----  
A copy of the above press release was received from the Public Information Office, U. S. TAIWAN DEFENSE COMMAND.