WILLIAM WATSON

William Watson
1917–2007

PROFESSOR WILLIAM (BILL) WATSON was a man whose unfailing curiosity and enthusiasm for his subject was infectious. This, combined with his remarkable intellect and breadth of vision, made him a great scholar and an extraordinary, if sometimes challenging, teacher. His capacity for learning languages left most of those who knew him in awe, and they lost track of just how many he spoke and read. As a scholar, Bill's contribution to the field of Asian art and archaeology was both multifaceted and far-reaching, while his sense of fun, as well as the lightness with which he wore his prodigious knowledge, made him an extremely entertaining companion.

William Watson was born in Darley Abbey, Derbyshire on 9 December 1917, but in his early years he spent time in Campos, Brazil, where his father managed a sugar factory. However, in 1925 he returned to Britain to live with relatives and attended Glasgow High School and the Herbert Strutt School at Belper in Derbyshire. He earned a scholarship to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge to read Modern and Medieval Languages (1936–9), and it was at Cambridge that he met a fellow-student Katherine (Kay) Armfield, whom he married in 1940.

With the coming of the Second World War in 1939 Bill volunteered to join the army and served in the Intelligence Corps from 1940 to 1946. His postings included Egypt, North Africa, Italy and India. He was first sent to Egypt, where he was stationed at Heliopolis (Cairo), intercepting German radio messages, which could then be sent on to the code-breakers of Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire. In 1942 he was sent to India, where he was involved in the interrogation of Japanese prisoners of war. It was this experience that sparked his interest in Asian languages—both spoken and written, and it was while in India that he served with John

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Figgess (later Sir John Figgess). After the war they remained friends with a shared interest in Asian art, particularly lacquer. One small note should be added on Bill's army career. Although he reached the rank of major, it seems that at one point he decided, typically, that he was not suitable officer material and requested permission to resign his commission and return to the ranks. He was told in no uncertain terms that in wartime resigning a commission was not permitted.

After the war, in 1947, Bill took up his first post in the arts, joining the staff of the British and Medieval Department of the British Museum. He once claimed that he only got the job because he was the only candidate who had bothered to look around the museum's galleries before the interview. It was also in 1947 that he published his first academic paper: 'Two British brooches of the Early Iron Age from Sawdon, North Riding, Yorkshire' in *The Antiquaries Journal*. During his time in the British and Medieval Department he wrote his first book *Flint Implements: An Account of Stone Age Techniques and Cultures*, which was first published by the British Museum in 1950. This became a standard work on the subject, and was reprinted in 1968, 1969 and 1975. However, he moved to the Department of Oriental Antiquities of the British Museum, and remained in that department until he left the British Museum in 1966. In 1950 he published his first paper on Chinese art, 'Archaic Chinese Jades', which appeared in *The Apollo Magazine*. Asian art, and particularly Chinese art and culture, was to remain a passion for the rest of his life. In 1966 Bill left the British Museum and moved to the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art to become its Director and take up the professorship of Chinese Art and Archaeology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; a post he held until his retirement in 1983. After his retirement he was Professor Emeritus.

As one of his four sons has noted, Bill learned languages with 'sickening ease'. After English, the first additional language he learned was Portuguese—acquired in his early years with his family in Brazil. More ancient and modern languages were added at school in Glasgow and Derby, and at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge—Latin, Greek, French, German, Swedish, Russian. Apropos Bill's command of Russian, in a tribute written on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, the then Director of the British Museum Sir David Wilson revealed that Bill and Kay had once appeared with Dmitri Obolensky (later Sir Dimitri Obolensky) in a full Russian version of *The Government Inspector*.[1]

[1] Sir David Wilson, 'Bill Watson', *Orientations*, vol. 20, no. 6 (June 1989), p. 34.

During his war service in the Intelligence Corps Bill's linguistic abilities were also utilised and expanded, as he developed an interest in Asian languages. He was to add Chinese, Japanese and Thai to his repertoire, among others. After his retirement, when he and Kay moved to Wales, he took up once again another extremely difficult language, Welsh. This was a language which had interested him in earlier times, but in his retirement he pursued it with renewed vigour. Indeed in the *International Who's Who* of 2004 he listed among his recreations Welsh literature—along with Iberia and claret.

Bill's linguistic abilities proved both a blessing and a challenge to his students. On the one hand he was able to read both original sources and published research in an array of languages, and convey their contents to his students. On the other hand in Buddhist art classes he used the correct nomenclature for the country of origin of the work of art he was discussing—Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Sanskrit—in the blithe expectation that his students could keep track of the different names. The Chinese characters he wrote on the whiteboard were remarkable for the speed and accuracy with which he was able to write them, but were written in cursive style, which sometimes rendered them unintelligible to those whose grasp of Chinese was in its infancy. A number of former students recall Bill conducting classes on an historical text entitled *Zhanguo ce* (Strategies of the Warring States). Sometimes he got so carried away by his explanations that he not only covered the board with illegible cursive Chinese characters, he also provided a commentary in a third (non-English) language.

It never seemed to occur to him that others did not find learning languages as easy as he did. On one occasion he and a student, whose mother tongue was Chinese, were trying to decipher an obscure Chinese character on a badly preserved artefact. Bill finally determined what the character was and turned cheerfully to the student saying: 'of course once you have seen a character you never forget it'. The look on the Chinese student's face registered the feeling of all the students present, which was something along the lines of: 'You can always remember a character after seeing it only once??'.

One of the few consolations for those who envied Bill's extraordinary linguistic abilities was that his accent was not always perfect. In this area his wife Kay, also an exceptional linguist, sometimes surpassed him. This was demonstrated by an event that occurred early in their married life when they were travelling in France. They had been in conversation with the proprietor of an establishment in which they were staying, who congratulated

Kay on her accent, saying that she spoke like a Parisian, while Bill was told, somewhat cruelly, that he sounded like a Belgian. On another occasion the Welsh-speaking acquaintance of a former student met Bill near his home at Bala in Wales and conversed with him in Welsh. The acquaintance joked later that Bill spoke Welsh with a slight Chinese accent.

A generation of students benefited from the fact that Bill's appointment to the professorship at SOAS in 1966 provided him with the opportunity to teach, and to pass on some of his enthusiasm, knowledge, and understanding of Asian art. His familiarity with and understanding of cultures from widely ranging geographical regions and time periods meant that he could fully demonstrate the way in which particular aspects of Asian art should be viewed in a global context. The challenge that then faced his students was how quickly to find out about these other cultures, with which Bill supposed them to be familiar. For this was one of his great strengths both as a man and as a teacher: he never talked down to anyone; he always assumed that they were as brilliant and well read as himself. As one of his students you were willing to work very hard to sustain that illusion.

Although he was a hard taskmaster, he could also be extremely kind. If he did not feel that a student's work was good enough, he could be very scathing, but on the other hand if he believed that they were fully engaged and working well he was full of encouragement and would spend hours discussing points of mutual interest, leaping up to get books off the shelves and littering his desk with open volumes. One year his class on the dreaded *Zhanguo ce* text, mentioned above, had to be held at 8.30 in the morning. This caused much grumbling among the students. He was unrepentant about getting them out of bed at what they regarded as 'crack of dawn', but if they arrived early he would make them a cup of tea. In many cases to be his student was also to become part of his extended family, and to be invited to their home to enjoy his wife Kay's famous 'one pot' meals along with animated conversation on a huge range of topics with whichever members of their family and wide circle of friends happened to be there. Kay tried hard to ensure that he had a reasonably healthy diet, but Bill had a liking for cakes, which he would occasionally indulge on pretext of taking some of his students out to one of the local cafes for tea.

At SOAS Bill set up a number of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, one of which was a bachelor's degree which incorporated classical and modern Chinese language, Chinese history, archaeological practice, and Chinese art and archaeology. This degree, which sadly no longer exists, provided those who took it with an unparalleled base on which

they could build careers in the subject—be those careers in museums, teaching and research, or the art market. It was a tough course, however, as the first year required the students to do all the work required of those who were taking a degree in Chinese language, plus all their own art history courses. One student remembers being told at her interview that, if accepted, she could expect to feel suicidal by the following April. She assumed that the interviewers were exaggerating. They certainly were not, but having survived the first year, it was an immensely rewarding course, and one for which those who completed it remain very grateful.

Another of Bill's major achievements at the Percival David Foundation, SOAS was the initiation of a series of annual Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia. Each colloquy was devoted to a specific topic, and international scholars were invited to present papers, which were then edited and published within the year. Among those from scholars with international reputations Bill would also occasionally include papers from young scholars at the beginning of their careers, if he thought they had something interesting to say. For the young scholars concerned this was a huge honour and absolutely terrifying in equal part. The subjects for these colloquies were quite varied. The first was devoted to pottery and metalwork in Tang China, while the second tackled the subject of Mahayanist art after AD 900, and subsequent topics included the art of Iran and Anatolia, and artistic personality and decorative style in Japanese art. The proceedings of the colloquies were edited either by Bill himself or by Margaret Medley, the Curator of the Percival David Foundation. After editing, these being the days before computers, the papers were typed up 'camera ready' so the proceedings could be produced as quickly and cheaply as possible. When Chinese characters were included in the publications, these were handwritten, frequently by Bill using a draughtsman's pen.

Bill would have been appalled that his beloved Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, for which he did so much in establishing it as an international academic centre of Asian art, is no more. It would have been inconceivable to him that SOAS should simply decide that it no longer wanted the unique collection of Chinese ceramics, second only to that of the National Palace Museum, Taiwan, bequeathed by Sir Percival David. One cannot help feeling that if Bill had still been in post he would not have allowed it to happen. He would have demanded he be allowed to instigate international fundraising, and led it himself. He would have forcefully suggested that those in power looked at China's growing importance on the world stage, and then he would have knocked bureaucratic

heads together until they saw sense. As one of his former students noted recently, in some ways it is a blessing that he did not live to see the Foundation's demise.

Bill travelled widely and often, and he developed close ties with scholars all over the world, particularly in Asia. Among those with whom he formed a friendship was the Chinese archaeologist Xia Nai, who had been a student in London in the 1930s and who was the Director of the Institute of Archaeology in Beijing in the 1970s when China and Europe were re-establishing cultural links. The two had an emotional reunion when Bill arrived at Beijing airport in February 1973 with the British delegation to plan what was to be the groundbreaking exhibition *The Genius of China*. This remarkable exhibition was held at the Royal Academy from September 1973 to January 1974, and brought to London some of the spectacular material excavated in China during the Cultural Revolution. It served to introduce a wide audience in Europe (it was also shown in Paris) to the arts and culture of pre-Ming China, and also helped international relations at a time when China was slowly emerging from a period of virtual isolation. Not only did Bill write the exhibition catalogue in record time,[2] but he also helped Wade, the exhibition designer, with the layout of the displays. Added to this he made a series of television programmes for the BBC linked to the exhibition. Bill and Magnus Magnusson were filmed travelling across China visiting some of the historic sites from which pieces in the exhibition had come and explaining their background and significance. Travelling in China was not particularly easy in the early 1970s, but Bill's infectious enthusiasm was undiminished and was effectively communicated in the television programmes.

The arts and language of Japan also fascinated Bill. In 1954 he was awarded a Nuffield Foundation grant to spend a year studying Chinese and Japanese art in Japan. This visit not only gave him the opportunity to hone his skills in the Japanese language, but also gave him access to classical Japanese paintings and sculpture for the first time. He also became friends with a number of Japanese scholars, among them the respected art historian Nagatake Asano. Bill's year in Japan confirmed his interest in the art of that country and in 1958 he wrote the catalogue for the Arts Council for an exhibition of Japanese art, which was held at the Victoria and Albert Museum.[3] In addition to articles, he also published

[2] W. Watson, *The Genius of China* (London, 1973).
[3] W. Watson, *Art Treasures from Japan. An Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture* (London, 1958).

three books on different aspects of Japanese art in 1959–60.[4] His contacts in Japan, his knowledge of the art, his linguistic abilities, and his leadership qualities were fully utilised in 1979–82 when he was invited by the Royal Academy to chair both the Content and Design Committee and the Catalogue Committee for *The Great Japan Exhibition*, which took place in London in 1981–2.[5] It was apparently he who managed to persuade the Japanese cultural authorities that the main focus for the exhibition should not be the earlier material, but the arts of the Edo period (1600–1868), which he felt would be more accessible to a European audience. Unusually the Japanese authorities agreed to lend so many pieces that were officially designated 'Important Art Object', 'Important Cultural Property', and even in very rare instances, such as Maruyama Ōkyo's *Pines in Snow*, 'National Treasure', that they could not all be allowed to leave Japan at the same time, and half way through the exhibition one group of important pieces was replaced by another. It was also a major concession that the exhibition catalogue should be written by British scholars, rather than simply being a translation of Japanese writings, although an historical essay by the Japanese Professor Masahide Bito was included at the beginning of the catalogue—translated by William Watson. The cataloguing and sectional essays were written by Bill, Lawrence Smith, Oliver Impey and Joe Earle working to very tight deadlines. Joe Earle has noted that the success of this venture, of which Bill was editor, was '. . . a tribute to his broad learning, flexible approach and good humour (tinged with useful moments of irascibility) . . .'.[6] Earle also recalled that during the writing and editing of the catalogue Bill was working a twelve-hour day at home on an old electric typewriter, and that he sought moments of relaxation by reading Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* in its original language.

Such was Bill's enthusiasm for Japanese art that in the early 1980s he and Professor Peter Lasko tried, unsuccessfully, to initiate the teaching of Japanese art at the Courtauld Institute of London University. Nevertheless he did introduce Japanese sculpture, as well as that of Korea, Central Asia and India into his own classes on Chinese sculpture,

[4] W. Watson, *Sculpture of Japan from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1959); *Sōtatsu—Based on the Japanese Text of Yamane Yūzō* (London, 1959); *Yosa no Buson* (London, 1960).

[5] W. Watson (ed.), *The Great Japan Exhibition—Art of the Edo Period 1600–1868* (London, 1981).

[6] J. Earle, 'William Watson', *The Guardian*, 26 June 2007.

giving his students a much better understanding of its context and relationships.

No one could accuse Bill Watson of being the sort of scholar who existed in an ivory tower. He had too many other interests—music, European literature, wine, new technology—and was involved with so many varied people and projects. He was also a hands-on archaeologist. Having previously been involved in archaeological excavations not only in Britain but also in more unusual locations, such as Libya, between 1966 and 1969 he worked with Thai colleagues on a series of excavations in Thailand. The time there, of course, also gave him the opportunity to learn the Thai language. In 1968 he wrote his first report of the excavations in the journal *Antiquity*, with a second in the *Journal of the Siam Society* in 1970.[7] Later, in 1979, he published some of his specific findings from Kok Charoen in a book on early South East Asia, which he co-edited with Ralph Smith.[8]

When personal computers became readily available, unlike many of his generation, Bill embraced the new technology with great enthusiasm. When computer programmes were developed to enable Chinese characters to be produced, he was even more enthusiastic. By this time he was retired, and so had the time to investigate the various competing systems for Chinese characters. Upon meeting him, those in the field often found themselves being asked their opinion of Chinese character programmes that they had never heard of, but which Bill had located and was comparing to the many others he had already accumulated.

Most of those who worked or studied with Bill had, at one time or another, an arcane type of Chinese dictionary recommended to them. The majority of Chinese dictionaries are arranged on the basis of 'radical' order—a radical being one of the 214 component parts from which Chinese characters are created. In some ways these are the equivalent of the western alphabet. Access can also be gained through the romanisation of the pronunciation of characters. Bill favoured a dictionary based upon the so-called 'four corner system', which entailed assigning a value to each corner of a Chinese character, based on its composition, and then looking up the resulting four digit number. The system is unavoidable in

[7] W. Watson, 'The Thai–British Archaeological Expedition', *Antiquity*, XLII (1968), 302–6; 'The Thai–British Archaeological Expedition: a preliminary report on the work of the second season 1967', *Journal of the Siam Society*, LVIII, 2 (July 1970).

[8] W. Watson, 'Kok Charoen and the Early Metal Age of Central Thailand', in R. Smith and W. Watson (eds.), *Early South East Asia: Essays in Archaeology, History and Historical Geography* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 53–62.

some older specialist dictionaries, but he was the only enthusiastic proponent of this system for everyday dictionaries that most of us ever met. Typically, he navigated it with speed and skill.

Bill Watson's research and publications covered a huge range of topics from British Iron Age brooches to Chinese bronze figures, and from Thai ceramics to Japanese painting.[9] Looking at a list of publications one is first struck by the geographical range—beginning with Britain but quickly expanding to include Cyrenaica in Libya, Khorezm and Samarqand in Uzbekistan, China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Iran and Turkey. One is then struck by the extended temporal span—from the Neolithic period to the twentieth century AD. Finally, the range of media, concepts and analyses is quite remarkable. Happily two volumes of collections of his shorter and less easily located works, covering a period of some forty years, were published in 1997 and 1998, facilitating access by the new generations of scholars to little gems such as 'The lathe in antiquity' and 'The Chinese chariot: an insider's view'.[10]

After Bill retired he continued to research, lecture and publish in many areas. He was also involved with exhibitions, albeit on a less grand scale than the *Genius of China* or *Great Japan* exhibitions, one of which was *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing* in 1984. This exhibition was organised jointly by the Oriental Ceramic Society and the British Museum and included more than 280 ivories ranging in date from the twelfth and eleventh centuries BC to the twentieth century AD. The catalogue, which was edited by Bill, filled a significant gap in western scholarship on Chinese ivory.[11]

It is impossible, in the space available, to provide a meaningful appreciation of all Bill's publications, but it is perhaps instructive to look at those he personally chose to include in his entries in *Who's Who.* Here his lack of vanity is immediately obvious, since, in contrast to some other entries, his contains only a very small percentage of his publications. He includes two books on Japanese art: *The Sculpture of Japan* (London, 1959), and the catalogue of *The Great Japan Exhibition* (London, 1981). Both books included significant new research and insights, adding to

[9] A bibliography for William Watson, up to November 1987, was compiled by his wife, Dr Katherine Watson, and included in the publication of the Festschrift organised by his former students in that year: R. E. Scott and G. Hutt (eds.), *Style in the East Asian Tradition*, Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia No. 14 (London, 1987), pp. 13–7.

[10] W. Watson, *Studies in Chinese Archaeology & Art* (London, Vol. I, 1997, Vol. II, 1998).

[11] W. Watson (ed.), *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing*, Oriental Ceramic Society (London, 1984).

international scholarship, while making the arts of Japan much more accessible to an English-speaking audience.

In the same list Bill includes three of the books he wrote in the early 1960s on archaeology and early Chinese material culture. These are *Archaeology in China*,[12] *China before the Han*,[13] and *Ancient Chinese Bronzes*.[14] The works reflected the main focus of his interest in China at the time, which tended towards the Bronze Age and pre-Bronze Age periods. It should be remembered that these books pre-date *The Archaeology of Ancient China* by Kwang-chih Chang, which was not published until 1963. All three of Bill's books broke new ground, not only in the information that they presented, but how it was presented. His analytical abilities and the way in which he was able to explain items in their cultural and geographical context, assessing archaeological finds alongside ancient literature with equal facility, made his contributions invaluable to anyone seeking an understanding of early China.

Bill's ability to take a huge geographical area and analyse the relationships within it is demonstrated by another book on his list, *Cultural Frontiers in Ancient East Asia*.[15] This remained a book in which he took some pride, and not without justification. In November 1965 he gave a lecture to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland entitled 'Structure and movement in the neolithic and bronze-age culture of East Asia', and *Cultural Frontiers* grew from that lecture. As Bill rightly pointed out in the Preface to the volume: '. . . the reader who wishes for a more conventional and systematic account of the fruits of recent archaeological excavation must look elsewhere'. However, readers who were willing to suspend their desire for neat categories and tidy geographical boundaries found themselves taken on a wonderfully complex intellectual journey and introduced to the material culture of peoples apparently remote from the heart of Chinese civilisation while, for example, investigating the form or decoration of a bronze weapon.

The list, not surprisingly, also includes his catalogue for *The Genius of China* exhibition, discussed above. Additionally, it includes the book that Bill often spoke of as his favourite amongst his publications—*Style in the Arts of China*.[16] It is no coincidence that the Festschrift organised by his

[12] W. Watson, *Archaeology in China* (London, 1960).
[13] W. Watson, *China before the Han* (London, 1961).
[14] W. Watson, *Ancient Chinese Bronzes* (London, 1962).
[15] W. Watson, *Cultural Frontiers in Ancient East Asia* (Edinburgh, 1971).
[16] W. Watson, *Style in the Arts of China* (Harmondsworth, 1974).

former students was called *Style in the East Asian Tradition* in reference to this book; on the one hand because it was his favourite, and on the other hand because he was well aware that it was not theirs. Once again Bill had departed from the strictly historical, or even geographical, and examined style through an examination of aspects such as invention, archaism and psychological impact, while categorising styles as hieratic, realistic or decorative. His students admitted that the book contained interesting and innovative ideas, but complained that it verged on the unreadable. Bill could never understand why they should find it so.

L'Art de l'ancienne Chine, also listed in his *Who's Who* entry, was a mammoth work first published in French in 1979 and later in English in 1981 under the title *Art of Dynastic China*.[17] Perhaps in deference to the enormous amount of material covered in this publication, Bill took a more easily followed, systematic approach to the arrangement of the work. Within the overall analyses, the book discussed more than 500 individual objects, examining them in the context of their origins, development, style and function within Chinese society. Details of major archaeological sites were included, as were architectural cross-sections, reconstructions, maps and a range of appendices, in addition to a large number of photographs. It is hard to think of anyone else who could have produced a work so comprehensive and admirably analytical.

There had always been a certain rivalry between Bill Watson and Margaret Medley, when it came to the subject of Chinese ceramics. He used to tease her by referring disparagingly to 'pots'. Margaret Medley had concentrated on ceramics for many years, and it was she who taught the Chinese ceramics classes at SOAS. She too was an excellent teacher, and the students who had the privilege of being taught by both Bill and Margaret were extraordinarily fortunate. The two scholars approached the subject of Chinese ceramics from different view points, and in many ways complemented each other. It is probably fair to say that Margaret excelled in her understanding of the actual material, while Bill excelled in a culturally broader view. It is interesting therefore to note that he included two ceramics books in his list: *Tang and Liao Ceramics*,[18] and *Pre-Tang Ceramics of China*.[19] The former showed both his strengths and

[17] W. Watson, *L'Art de l'ancienne Chine* (Paris, 1979); W. Watson, *Art of Dynastic China* (London, 1981).
[18] W. Watson, *Tang and Liao Ceramics* (London, 1984).
[19] W. Watson, *Pre-Tang Ceramics of China, Chinese Pottery from 4000 BC to 600 AD* (London, 1991).

his weakness. On the one hand he was able to analyse styles and set the material into context, but he would occasionally slip up in a description of whether something was higher or lower fired. With *Pre-Tang Ceramics of China*, he came into his own again, essentially doing for early ceramics what had been done for bronzes: examining them by geographical region.

A major project of his latter years was an extensive three-volume work on the arts of China. He included the two already published volumes in his *Who's Who* list. These were *The Arts of China to AD 900*,[20] and *The Arts of China 900–1620*.[21] In this trilogy Bill used his unparalleled knowledge of Chinese art to weave together a coherent account of the Chinese arts, examining technology, the development of styles, the relationships between media and the reflection of changes in Chinese society. Writing in the *Literary Review* Dr Frances Wood noted of the second volume that: 'Watson's is a magisterial work of traditional scholarship . . .', while a reviewer in the *Library Journal* said: '. . . Watson leads the reader on a journey that is both heavily loaded and pleasurable . . .'. Six days before his death, aged 89 on 15 March 2007, the third and final volume of this series, *The Arts of China After 1620*, was published.[22]

Bill Watson joined the Oriental Ceramic Society in 1957, and served on the Council as representative of the Percival David Foundation from 1966 to 1983. He was President of the OCS from 1981 to 1984. He was made a Fellow of the British Academy in 1972 (serving as Chairman of the Art History Section from 1977 to 1983, and a member of Council from 1983 to 1986), and, also in 1972, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. In 1973 he received The Sir Percy Sykes Memorial Medal from what is now the Royal Society for Asian Affairs. He was Slade Professor of Fine Art, Cambridge University 1975–6, and a Trustee of the British Museum for ten years, from 1980 to 1990. In 1982 he was awarded the CBE, and in 1984 he received an Honorary D.Litt. from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The awarding of the honorary doctorate occasioned a certain amount of teasing, since, notwithstanding his academic achievements and his professorship, until that time he did not have a doctorate, while his wife and two of his sons did.

It is no exaggeration to say that Bill Watson was one of the most influential scholars in the field of Asian art, known and respected internationally. He was impressively knowledgeable and passionate about his

[20] W. Watson, *The Arts of China to AD 900* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1995).
[21] W. Watson, *The Arts of China 900–1620* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2000).
[22] W. Watson and C. Ho, *The Arts of China After 1620* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2007).

subject, and he had infectious enthusiasm. His legacy is not only in the vast body of his published work, but the inspiration he gave to others, particularly to his students, many of whom have gone on to research and teach Asian art in institutions around the world.

His wife Kay predeceased him in 2001. He is survived by his four sons.

ROSEMARY SCOTT
Christie's
(Former Curator, Percival David Foundation)