

Gustav Emil Wilhelm Ecke
1896–1971
Collector and Art Historian



Gustav Ecke was born in Bonn, Germany, the son of Gustav Ecke (1855–1920), a professor of theology at Bonn University. Trained in European art history, Ecke completed his doctoral thesis on Charles Meryon, the first French surrealist artist, in 1922. The next year he joined Amoy University in Fujian province as professor of European philosophy; five years later he moved to Qinghua University in Beijing. Following a short period in 1933 studying

at the Ecole du Louvre and the Musée Guimet in Paris, Ecke returned to China to teach at Fujen (Catholic) University in Beijing. He was also attached to the National Institute of Architecture in Beijing.

In 1934 Ecke and a small group of scholars founded the journal *Monumenta Serica* (*Huayi xuezhì*). It was published out of Fujen University, with Ecke serving as its first editor. His first published work on architecture documented both stone and wooden buildings. This led him to research Chinese hardwood furniture, an area in which he and George N. Kates (1895–1990) were pioneers. Based upon his own collection Ecke published *Chinese Domestic Furniture* in 1944. The Peking bookseller Henri Vetch originally issued it as a limited edition of 200 portfolios of black-and-white illustrations and detailed line drawings. It was reprinted in 1962 and again in 1986.

In 1945 Ecke married artist and scholar Betty Tseng Yu-Ho (born 1923; see photo). Four years later the couple moved to Hawaii, where Ecke served as the curator of Chinese art at the Honolulu Academy of Arts and as professor of Asian art at the University of Hawaii (1950–1966).

Literature

Gustav Ecke and Paul Demiéville, *The twin pagodas of Zayton; a study of later Buddhist sculpture in China* (Cambridge, MA, 1935).

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Gustav Ecke, *Chinese Painting in Hawaii, in the Honolulu Academy of Arts and in private collections* (Honolulu, 1965).

Pierre Jaquillard, "In Memoriam: Gustav Ecke 1896–1971," *Artibus Asiae* 34, no. 2/3 (1972), pp. 114–18.

Tseng Yuho Ecke, "Gustav Ecke," *Orientalism* 12, no. 11 (November 1981), p. 68.