

Zhang Naiji 張乃驥**1899–1948****Collector of Chinese Art**

Born to a prestigious family that made its wealth in the silk and salt industries, ZHANG Naiji 張乃驥 (also known as Nai Chi Chang and N. C. Chang) grew up in Zhejiang province, China, just outside Shanghai. In 1917 Zhang married Xu Maoqian 徐懋倩 (known also as Mei Chien and Meiqian), and together they welcomed three sons, two of whom survived into adulthood: Nelson Chang (born 1923; his Chinese birthname is Zhang Zezhang 張澤璋; he was also called Nanchen 南琛) and Shelly Chang (born 1926; his Chinese birthname is Zhang Zelian 張澤璉; he was also called Beiyu 北口).

Zhang began collecting coins early in life, and over the years he built an enormous collection that grew to include nearly thirty thousand pieces. His collection—impressive both in its size and its unique content—became well known in Asian numismatic circles. Along with other collectors, Zhang organized the numismatic society Guquan in 1926 and the following year contributed to the development of the *Guquan zazhi (Journal of Ancient Coins)*, the first Chinese-language numismatic publication. When his father died in 1928, Zhang inherited a vast sum of money, which allowed him to diversify his collecting interests by purchasing scroll paintings, ancient bronzes, and archaic jades. Zhang’s uncle, Zhang Zengcheng 張增澄 (*zi* sobriquet Jingjiang 靜江; self-given nickname Renjie 人傑), is best known for his support of the Chinese politician Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孫中山), yet he was also an avid art collector who owned Tonying & Company, an antiquity and curiosity shop in Paris. (C.T. Loo’s first job in the art world was at Tonying.) Zhang later acquired fine examples of ancient jades from Loo and in 1935 loaned over forty pieces to the International Exhibition of Chinese Art at the Royal Academy, London.

During the Sino-Japanese War, Zhang relocated his family but left his coin collection behind. They sailed for New York City from Le Havre, France, in May 1939. C.T. Loo & Company, which later operated as Frank Caro Chinese Art, subsequently sold several of Zhang’s pieces to private American collectors and institutions. In New York, Zhang avidly collected Chinese coins and fine arts, joining the American Numismatic Society in 1944 and the Chinese Art Society of America in 1948. In fact, the American Numismatic Society offered Zhang a position as curator of Chinese coins; it is unclear if he accepted the offer. He did, however, write essays and published the booklet *An Inscribed Chinese Ingot of the XII Century AD* (1944). Heavily invested in the stock market, Zhang encountered great financial problems in 1942 and began selling his antiquities collections for added income. He worked for C.T. Loo & Company and later with Oriental Fine Arts. Zhang returned to China in 1946 to bring back “the finest coins in his collection” and, quite

possibly, his painting collection. C.T. Loo & Company later presented *An Exhibition of Authenticated Chinese Paintings* in 1948 to sell Zhang's art collection.

Zhang Naiji died in New York City on May 28, 1948. His wife, Zhang Maoqian sold his jades to C.T. Loo & Company and to J.T. Tai & Company. On December 1 and 2, 1949, the Park-Bernet Galleries auctioned some of his Chinese bronzes, ceramics, paintings, and tapestries; Kende Galleries sold the remaining pieces in June 1950. According to Zhang's descendants, several works that he left in China eventually found their way into the Shanghai Museum.

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