

# The Bishopric Agency

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THE BISHOPRIC AGENCY

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*ASIA WEEK in New York*

Friday, March 13th through Sunday March 22<sup>nd</sup>

*Dr. Robert R. Bigler Asian and Egyptian Art presents*

**“Before Yongle – Chinese and Tibeto-Chinese  
Buddhist Sculpture of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries”**

“After 15 years of research, this exhibition aims to bring new light into a somewhat obscure period of Buddhist art; it is hoped that the journey into this “terra incognita,” which has only just begun, will bring new insight into the art historical development of a long neglected group of religious works of art. It is, in fact, the first time that this many such objects from the Yuan period will be exhibited together as a group.”

*- Dr. Robert R. Bigler*

NEW YORK Jan 15 - The past decade has witnessed an increasing interest in the field of Tibeto-Chinese Buddhist art. Especially the gilt metal icons produced in the Chinese imperial workshops of the early Ming period at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which have become the focus of attention and are much in demand by collectors all over the world.

During ASIA WEEK in New York – beginning Friday, March 13, and on view through Sunday, March 22 – Dr. Robert R. Bigler ([www.bigler-finearts.com](http://www.bigler-finearts.com)) will present a group of religious works of art created in China and the Himalayas during the Yuan and early Ming period (ca. 1260 – 1400 A.D.).

“BEFORE YONGLE – Chinese and Tibeto-Chinese Buddhist Sculpture of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries” is comprised of 32 important artworks –of which 28 are sculptures: 6 Himalayan, 9 in the Chinese style and 13 Nepalo- and Tibeto-Chinese. Dr. Bigler says that of all the figures on view in the exhibition, the 20 Buddhist metal images which can be attributed to the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) are the largest group

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of sculptures from this period ever to be shown in public – most of them on display for the first time.

As a result of over 15 years of research, the exhibition will be accompanied by a catalog relating to the art historical development of metal sculpture in the “Tibeto-Chinese” style; based on the Vajrayana Buddhism originating from Tibet, these images were produced in workshops in China.

The statues created by imperial command during the Yongle (1403-24) and Xuande (1426-35) reign are famous for their flawless casting, their rich gilding and superb execution of every detail. They share the highest level of quality and are immediately recognizable by their specific style.

While these Buddhist images from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century and Ming Dynasty are well documented and can be accurately dated by the six-character reign mark they usually bear, much less is known about their predecessors. Although it would seem logical that icons in such a refined style could not have appeared suddenly and “ex nihilo”, only very few sculptures from the preceding Yuan period have in fact been identified so far. Khubilai Khan (1215-94) adopted the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and declared Vajrayana as the state religion when he ascended to the Chinese imperial throne. That at least suggests that a large number of Buddhist sculptures in a new style must have been produced under imperial patronage of the Mongols to promote the foreign faith in China. This resulted in the birth of the so-called “Tibeto-Chinese” style which was later further developed at the beginning of the Ming dynasty.

Dr. Bigler adds, “My 2015 ASIA WEEK exhibition in New York, “BEFORE YONGLE – Chinese and Tibeto-Chinese Buddhist Sculpture of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries” is an important step in casting a greater spotlight onto a long neglected and somewhat obscure period of Asian art. I believe that collectors and scholars will recognize the value of these insights as they relate to increasing our awareness and appreciation of this important group of religious works of art.”

Among objects Dr. Bigler has acquired for offer at ASIA WEEK in New York in March is a 14<sup>th</sup> century Vajravarahi, a Buddha Shakyamuni of gilt copper alloy, a Nepalo-Chinese sculpture dating to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, a Tibeto-Chinese Yuan

made of gilt copper alloy, and a Chinese Yuan Seated Bodhisattva, ca first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, made of dark patinated copper alloy.

One of four co-organizers of the BASEL ANCIENT ART FAIR, ([www.baaf.ch](http://www.baaf.ch)), Dr. Bigler earned a Ph. D. in European History of Art and studied Asian History of Art and Egyptology at the University of Zurich before embarking on his career. He started his business in 1994 and since then has earned a reputation for scholarship and integrity in his field. DR. ROBERT R. BIGLER ASIAN AND EGYPTIAN ART is a foremost dealer in museum quality artworks, based in Zurich.

“Among dealers of ancient art I am one of the few protagonists with an academic, rather than a purely trade-oriented background; therefore my approach is slightly different and influences the way I work.” Bigler uses his academic knowledge and training to acquire rare or unusual objects whose virtues may have been overlooked or not properly identified by less academically-oriented art dealers. As a result, and on the basis of thorough research, he can help his clients make the right choices and decisions about their collections.

He is a featured exhibitor at important national and international fairs including Fine Art Zurich, Cultura Basel, BAAF Brussels, BAAF Basel, and Arts of the Pacific Asia Show, New York. In March, 2013 during Asia Week in New York, Bigler staged an exhibition and published “Art and Faith at the Crossroads: Tibeto-Chinese Buddhist images and ritual implements from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.”

A board member of IADAA, (International Association of Dealers in Ancient Art), and The Swiss Association of Dealers in Art & Antiques (SADAA) and [www.CINOA.org](http://www.CINOA.org), Dr. Bigler says his commitment to maintain a strict code of ethics is underscored by the quality of the research he does on each object he sells.

“I do extensive research so that I can provide the client with a maximum of information; learning and knowing more not only automatically leads to a better understanding of a culture, and its remains, but usually also to higher appreciation! When required or necessary, every object will be carefully cleaned, sometimes restored and/or re-mounted so that it not only can be preserved for future generations, but can also be presented in the best possible way. Each buyer is given a full documentation guaranteeing authenticity.”

Dr. Bigler maintains an academically rigorous schedule combining scholarship with exhibitions. “After 21 years in business, I see how much I enjoy working individually with my clients, including private collectors, museum curators, and dealer colleagues. It’s rewarding to help them build fine collections of these important examples of ancient Egyptian and Asian art, and a very satisfying way to combine my academic training and aesthetic passion.”

*IF YOU GO*

**ASIA WEEK NEW YORK 2015**

Friday, March 13 through Sunday, March 22

Dr. Robert R. Bigler presents

**BEFORE YONGLE – Chinese and Tibeto-Chinese Sculpture of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

at Dickinson Roundell Inc.

19 East 66<sup>th</sup> Street between Madison and Fifth Avenues

New York NY 10065

March 13 – 22 Daily 10am to 6pm

**DR. ROBERT R. BIGLER Asian and Egyptian Art**

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