

Eduard Toda i Güell: From Vice-Consul of Spain in China to the *Renaixença* in Barcelona (1871-84)¹

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abstract

Eduard Toda i Güell was vice-consul of Spain in China between 1876 and 1882. His interest in Chinese culture brought him to travel widely around Asia, to gather a Chinese art and coin collection, and to publish in Catalan, Spanish and English about Chinese culture, history, geography and economics. Whilst in China, he took part in a project, the aim of which was to restore Chinese immigration to Cuba, still a Spanish colony at that time. Immigration to Cuba had been forbidden due to the inhumane conditions suffered by the Chinese who had emigrated there. After his stay in China, he lived in Barcelona, befriending some of the leading Catalan writers, journalists and artists of his time, and also exhibiting his art and coin collection. This article examines Toda's position and activities as a Spanish diplomat in China, in perspective to his engagement within the Catalan movement of the *Renaixença*, in a moment when the Spanish colony of Cuba was facing turbulent economic times.

keywords

Eduard Toda i Güell, China, Barcelona, 19th century, *Renaixença*, global and local, Francesc Abellá, Chinese art collecting

Eduard Toda i Güell (*b* Reus, 1855; *d* Poblet, 1941) was a Catalan diplomat, an arts patron, a collector, a bibliophile, a scholar, and an Egyptologist, as well as a relevant witness of 19th century China in Spain, who published numerous articles and books

¹ This article presents some of the results researched for my PhD dissertation, entitled “El col·leccionisme entre Catalunya i la Xina (1876-1895)”. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Rubén Carrillo, who suggested writing the present paper; to Mireia Freixa Serra, for guiding me through my research; to Jaume Massó i Carballido, for giving me access to material I would not have found otherwise; to Xavier Guanter, from de Poblet Monastery; and to Oliver Schofield, for his great help and continuous support.

about Chinese culture in Catalan, Spanish and English. His project for the restoration of the Poblet Monastery is one aspect of his life which has awakened most interest in historians and his biographers.² In contrast with this, some of the aspects of his life which have aroused a lesser amount of research include, the six years he spent in China, his activities as a Chinese art and coin collector, and the parallel relationship he held both with Spanish imperial ambitions, and with leading writers and artists of the Catalan *Renaixença*.³

After obtaining his law degree in Madrid, he embarked as vice-consul to Hong Kong (1876-78), Guangzhou and Whampoa (1878-80), and Shanghai (1880-82), where he took part in the Spanish government's last attempts to re-establish Chinese immigration to Cuba, and also had the opportunity to travel widely and to form an important and diverse Asian art and coin collection. While in Barcelona, he befriended the principal Catalan literary figures of the *Renaixença*. This led him to sell and donate his collection and to publish to a respectable degree about Chinese culture. What makes Eduard Toda an interesting figure, is that he knew how to combine his responsibilities as a diplomat working within the Spanish colonial frame, and his involvement in the Catalan cultural and political revivalist movement of the *Renaixença*. Therefore, he is a good representative of the global-local dichotomy which rose out of the late 19th century, which has been considered crucial in the understanding of the development of modern culture in Europe.

Even though there has been little research on Toda's relationship with East Asia, over the last ten years, various authors have made small yet relevant contributions, from which it has been made possible to begin more systematic and intensive research. These authors are Eulàlia Jardí i Soler, Manuel Forasté i Giravent, Jaume Massó i Carballido, Josep Maria Fradera, María Dolores Elizalde and Irene Seco Serra.⁴

² Eufemià Fort's biography of Eduard Toda is still a referential book to study Eduard Toda's life, even though it pays little attention to the period Toda spent in China and focuses mostly on Toda's project for the restoration of the Poblet Monastery. See *Eduard Toda, tal com l'he conegut* (Montserrat: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1975). Gener Gonzalvo i Bou has widely published about this aspect of Toda's life, see for example "Eduard Toda, historiador de Poblet," *Aplec de treballs* 15 (1997), 103-128.

³ The Catalan "*Renaixença*", meaning "renaissance" or "re-birth", was a Catalan cultural and political revival movement that took place in the 19th century. See Joan Costa Carreras and Alan Yates, "The Catalan language," in *The Architect of Modern Catalan: Pompeu Fabra (1868-1948) Selected Writings*, ed. Joan Costa Carreras (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2009), 3-17.

⁴ See Eulàlia Jardí i Soler, "El jove Eduard Toda i la Xina," *L'Avenç* 316 (2006), 34-40; Idem, "El Fons de l'Extrem Orient en el Llegat Fundacional de la Biblioteca Museu Balaguer," *Butlletí de la Biblioteca Museu Balaguer* 3 (2010), 29-43; Manuel Forasté i Giravent, "Eduard Toda i Güell, viatger," *Els Marges* 30 (1984), 97-10; Jaume Massó i Carballido, *Eduard Toda i Güell: de Reus a Sardenya (passant per la Xina i Egipte, 1855-1887)* (Càller: Arxiu de Tradicions de l'Alguer, 2010); Josep Maria Fradera and Ma Dolores Elizalde, "Los portugueses en Asia en la óptica del diplomático Eduard Toda," in *Traspassando Fronteras: el reto de Asia y el Pacífico*, ed. Francisco Javier Antón Burgos and Luis Oscar Ramos Alonso (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2002), 245-259; Irene Seco Serra, "Estudio Preliminar de la Colección de Moneda China y Japonesa del Museo Arqueológico Nacional de Madrid," in *Actas del XIII Congreso Internacional de Numismática*, ed. Carmen Alfaro Asins, Carmen Marcos Alonso and Paloma Otero Morán, 2003 (Madrid: Secretaría General Técnica, 2005), 1669-1675.

Other authors have pointed out how intercultural exchange was vital to the process of the development of modern art and culture which took place during the second half of the 19th century. With regards to the development of modern art, Harrison, Wood and Gaiger, for example, suggest in their book *Art in Theory 1815-1900* that the import of exotic images in the various industrial and artistic centres of late 19th century Europe, such as Paris, London and Glasgow, marked the transition from naturalism to symbolism.⁵ Seemingly, according to Wilfried Van Damme, if we study different cultures of the world in comparative perspective, we will see that they all present the common aspect of developing dynamically, rather than statically. A culture develops dynamically when it is subject to both internal changes and external factors. Economical and social conditions are basic so that processes of interculturalization can take place in a culture which presents a latent dynamism, for instance, the industrial, cultural and artistic renewal in the last third of 19th century Catalonia.⁶ The process which took place in the modernization of European culture during the last decades of the 19th century was intercultural exchange, and Eduard Toda is a key figure whose life embodies the processes which took place in the development of modern culture.

This paper explores the first thirty years of Toda's life, and focuses on his role as a Spanish diplomat in China during turbulent economical times of Spanish colonies overseas, his activities as a collector of Chinese art and coins, in perspective to his engagement within the Catalan cultural and political revivalist movement of the Renaixença.

School years: from Reus to Madrid

Eduard Toda i Güell was born January 9, 1855, in Reus, Catalonia. He was raised by his mother and never received care from his father, Eduard Toda i Albertos, who had been the major of the city of Reus between 1851 and 1853. Given his father's absence, Toda's uncle, Josep Güell i Mercader, a famous journalist and promoter of the cultural institution, Centre de Lectura of Reus, had a great influence upon his education.⁷

Toda's school years were significant in the development of some of the interests which he built up throughout his life, such as becoming acquainted, at a very young age, with the worlds of literature, numismatics and history. The friendship which he enjoyed with some of his schoolmates, including the famous architect Antoni Gaudí i Cornet (*b* Reus, 1852; *d* Barcelona, 1926), the doctor Josep Ribera i Sans (*b* Tivissa, 1852; *d* Madrid, 1912) and the poet Joaquim Maria Bartrina i d'Aixemús (*b* Reus, 1850; *d* Barcelona, 1880) may have further stimulated these interests, as he found in them the ideal group with which to carry

⁵ The subtitle specifies *An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 875-877.

⁶ *Interculturalization* describes a two-way process of potential intercultural exchange between socio-cultural settings. Wilfried Van Damme, "Interculturalization in Art: Conceptualizing Processes and Products," in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, ed. Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried Van Damme (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008), 375-384.

⁷ Massó, 2010, *op. cit.*, 5-6; Fort, 1975, *op. cit.*, 18-20.

out shared projects.⁸ An example of this is when Toda, then only 12 years old, started publishing a weekly manuscript magazine, entitled *El Arlequín*, together with Ribera, who like Toda, wrote mostly poetry and prose, and also with Gaudí, who was in charge of illustrating the magazine.⁹

Another interesting project which he began to develop with Gaudí and Ribera right before undertaking his university studies in Madrid, was the restoration of the Poblet Monastery. In 1870, when he was only 15 years old, Toda visited the Monastery twice. These visits would awaken his desire to restore the complex, to write a review entitled "Poblet, datos y apuntes de Eduardo Toda Güell", and, that same year, to publish his first book, *Poblet: descripcion històrica*.¹⁰ Later that year, each member of this group of friends would follow a different route in order to undertake their respective studies, with Toda moving to Madrid. Ribera and Gaudí gradually lost involvement in the project, and Toda was the only one to return to it throughout his life.¹¹

In October 1870 Toda moved to Madrid in order to study a degree in law, which he finished in 1873. During this period, Toda published several articles in *La Redencion del Pueblo* and *El Eco del Centro de Lectura*, the latter being directed by his uncle Josep Güell i Mercader. These articles covered a wide range of subjects, ranging from love poems to history, but especially covering politics and economics.¹² Most likely through the influence of his uncle, who had moved to Madrid where he had been elected Member of Parliament, Toda entered the Ministry of State, and would later ask to participate in the exams, which he passed, in order to achieve the position of diplomatic aggregate. He enjoyed this position for only two months though, since the position was suppressed in January 1874. In late 1875, he asked for the vacant position of vice-consul in the city of Macao, which he was granted on January 14, 1876.¹³

Eduard Toda in China (1876-82)

The sources accounting for Toda's stay in China consist primarily of manuscript sources and works published by Toda after his return to Catalonia in 1882. The most relevant of these manuscript sources are his correspondence, preserved in the Instituto de Historia de CSIC in Madrid; his travel diary, edited by Jaume Massó and published in 2008; and his

⁸ Regarding Toda's youth and his relationship with his schoolmates see Massó, 2010, *op. cit.*, 5-16.

⁹ The entire collection of this magazine is preserved in the library Tomás Navarro Tomás of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), in Madrid, and is currently accessible online. Concerning the history and content of *El Arlequín* see Massó, 2010, *op. cit.*, 16-20.

¹⁰ Fort, 1975, *op. cit.*, 26-32.

¹¹ Eufemià Fort argues that the level of implication of Gaudí and Ribera in the project never reached a real and efficient collaboration, see *Ibid.*, 26-32.

¹² See Toda's bibliographical account by Dolors Ferré i Florit, "Bibliografía de Eduardo Toda," *Boletín Arqueológico* fasc. 37-40 (1952), 330-331.

¹³ This paragraph has been written using the information provided in Massó, 2010, *op. cit.*, 24-29.

personal notes regarding different aspects of Chinese culture, which are quite scattered, but most of them are preserved in the CSIC library in Madrid and the Archive of Poblet.¹⁴

As he explains in his travel diary, Toda departed from Marseille to Macao on February 13, 1876, on board of the ship *Iraouaddy*, travelling through Italy, Egypt, the Red Sea, Aden, Ceylan, Singapore, Saigon and Hong Kong. In Singapore he met the consul of Spain, Albino Mencarini, and his family, and arrived in Macao on March 25, 1876.¹⁵

Both Toda's perception of China and his opinion regarding the Chinese, were not very positive, as portrayed in his travelling notes, his personal correspondence, and in the different books and articles he later published in Catalan and Spanish. Take, for instance, his account of Chinese people sent to his friend Josep M. Morlius from the Portuguese colony of Macao, by letter, in July 1876:

En la China hay materia para volver loco á un hombre de sano entendimiento. Hasta ahora no he podido encontrar a esa raza laboriosa, inteligente, astuta, cuyos adelantos en mecanica y en ciencias se han supuesto superiores á los nuestros. He visto un pueblo servil, canalla, haragan, hambriento, pueblo miserable y de miserables. El chino para mí es el tipo del hombre falso, hipócrita y cobarde, y desde el emperador al último coolie dudo que pudiera encontrarse un hombre de cola que teniendo la ocasión no se aprovechara de lo ageno.¹⁶

Seemingly, he did not hold Chinese women's fashion and physique in very high esteem, as he stated: "(d)ecididamente no son guapas, á lo menos para nuestro gusto. Su fisonomía es angulosa y sin espresión: además carecen del gusto de la forma y aun de la forma misma, y finalmente su desastrosa manera de componerse y de adornarse es un profundo contrasentido de las leyes de estética".¹⁷

Yet apart from this, he shows great interest in other aspects of Chinese culture, shown by his dedication to long and detailed descriptions of Chinese festivities, theatre, and architecture in his travelling notes, articles and books.¹⁸ Being a Spanish diplomat may have given him quite a lot of freedom to travel and gather his Asian art and coin collection, as he may not have had as many demanding responsibilities to maintain.

¹⁴ Regarding Toda's correspondence, it was digitalized to ensure its preservation, and its digital copy can be consulted in the library Tomás Navarro Tomás in Madrid. I have not consulted this copy personally, as Jaume Massó i Carballido allowed me to have access to his personal database about Toda in Reus, which includes these letters, and for which I would like to express my gratitude. Eduard Toda i Güell, *Dietari de viatges d'Eduard Toda i Güell, 1876-1891 : (amb un apèndix de 1907)*, ed. Jaume Massó i Carballido (Reus: Museu d'Arqueologia Salvador Vilaseca, 2008). Concerning Toda's notes preserved in Madrid see Fradera, 2002, *op. cit.*, 245-259.

¹⁵ *Dietari de viatges d'Eduard Toda i Güell...*, 2008, *op. cit.*, 18-21.

¹⁶ Fragment extracted from "Carta d'Eduard Toda des de Macau," *Revista del Centre de Lectura de Reus* 52 (1999), 16.

¹⁷ Eduard Toda i Güell, "Modas Chinas," *Revista del Centro de Lectura* 5 (1883b), 3.

¹⁸ See *Dietari de viatges d'Eduard Toda i Güell...*, 2008, *op. cit.*, 22-28; Eduard Toda i Güell, *La Vida en el Celeste Imperio* (Madrid: El Progreso Editorial, 1887).

Toda's involvement in Abellá's project of Chinese immigration to Cuba

One chapter of Toda's stay in China which stands out is his involvement in Francisco de Abellá y Raldirí's last attempts to re-establish Chinese immigration to the Spanish colony of Cuba, which was brought to a standstill in 1874.

The production of sugar cane had traditionally been the base of Cuba's economics. From the end of the 18th century, the expansion of Cuba's sugar cane complexes was due to the continuous introduction of slaves, who had recently arrived from the African coast. When the treaty fell into crisis in the 1840s, there was a need for new sources of labour, and these were found in the form of coolies, Chinese workers coming from Macao and Guangzhou.¹⁹ The first Chinese migrants who embarked to Cuba migrated in 1847, and from then on until 1874, more than 140 thousand contracted Chinese workers, or coolies, travelled to Cuba to work in the sugar cane plantations. During this period, Cuba was still a Spanish colony.

Even though Chinese workers arrived in Cuba with a contract specifying that they had accepted their jobs freely and voluntarily, the recruiting process and their travelling conditions showed that they lived in conditions of slavery. A great number of reports giving testimony to their inhumane conditions in Cuba caused the prohibition of the contract system by the Chinese government in 1874.²⁰

Given this context, and taking into consideration that Cuba and the Philippines were still Spanish colonies, the immigration agent Francisco de Abellá y Raldiris (*b* and *d* unknown), who had surely benefited greatly from Chinese immigration to Cuba, attempted to create new strategies in order to re-establish Chinese immigration.²¹ Eduard Toda was involved in this project while acting as vice-consul in Guangzhou between 1879 and 1880. Nevertheless, Toda's attempts to convince Chinese authorities to allow this migration were not successful, and the project failed rapidly, becoming a prime example of the fall of Spanish capitalist imperialism at the end of the 19th century.

In 1873, an international commission formed by representatives of Great Britain, France and China, travelled to Cuba in order to judge the treatment received by Chinese immigrants. Expecting a negative review from the commission, *hacendados* in Cuba looked for different strategies in order to reach a new immigration agreement, and with this

¹⁹ This paragraph has been written using the information provided in José Luis Luzón, "Chineros, diplomáticos y hacendados en la Habana colonial. Don Francisco Abellá y Raldiris y su proyecto de inmigración libre a Cuba (1874)," *Boletín Americanista* 39-40 (1989), 143.

²⁰ See Lisa Yun, "El coolie habla: obreros contratados chinos y esclavos africanos en Cuba," *Emesferica* 5.2: Race and its Others (2008).

²¹ Even though Francisco de Abellá's birthplace is unknown, his surname is Catalan, he established a long relationship with some Catalan personalities, like Víctor Balaguer, and he refers to himself as such in a document preserved in the archive Biblioteca Víctor Balaguer, in Vilanova i la Geltrú, as it is explained in Luzón, 1989, *op. cit.*, 146-149.

interest in mind, created a society for the import of free workers, called Sociedad de Importación de Trabajadores Libres.²² This society named Francisco de Abellá an agent in China, who quickly published a study on Chinese immigration in Cuba, with suggestions on how to increase the benefits of the *hacendados*, and how to establish a new agreement between Spain and the Chinese government.²³

Abellá's project consisted of a new system of free immigration to Cuba, which meant considering the Chinese immigrant a free worker, yet, maintained their status as slaves, as it introduced a system which would hold them in debt to the Society of *hacendados*. This system introduced a few novelties: on the one hand, the Chinese worker had the freedom to decide how long he wanted to work under contract; yet, on the other hand, for the first time ever the travelling expenses would be paid by the Chinese labourer in China prior to embarking there. Taking into account the level of poverty in China, the travelling expenses, rising up to \$145, £33 or 147 pesos, meant emigrating was an extremely expensive investment. For this reason, the Society would lend the amount to the Chinese worker, who would have to discount it from his monthly salary of 10 pesos in Cuba.

Abellá must have had a great interest in this project, as he obtained benefits from the travelling expenses, which included an agency fee of \$8. There was also a "passport and rights" fee, consisting of 3\$, and this is most likely the reason why Toda may have been involved in Abellá's project, since, as vice-consul in different Chinese coastal cities, he was one of the authorities in charge of giving passage to the Chinese migrants who requested to go to Cuba, and therefore, would have also been paid a commission for each Chinese immigrant.²⁴

In 1877, a new Treaty was signed between the governments of China and Spain in order to regulate Chinese immigration to Cuba. The Chinese government imposed a new article which specified that the Emperor of China would not oppose emigration, as long as only merchants of Chinese nationality would lend the travelling fees to the Chinese workers.²⁵ This made emigrating very difficult, as Chinese merchants were often threatened by the Chinese authorities to be beheaded if a Chinese immigrant claimed to have been cheated.²⁶

Between 1879 and 1880, Francisco Abellá attempted to board more than 800 Chinese passengers on the German ship *Hesperia*, which was anchored in Whampoa, where Toda

²² See Yun, 2008, *op. cit.*, 3-5; Luzón, 1989, *op. cit.*, 145.

²³ There is a copy of this book in the Biblioteca Víctor Balaguer, in Vilanova i la Geltrú, see Francisco Abellá, *Proyecto de Emigración Libre China Dirigido á los Srs. Hacendados de la Isla de Cuba* (La Habana: Imprenta y Librería El Iris, 1874).

²⁴ See *Colección de documentos sobre emigración china ofrecidos por Francisco Abellá á la Biblioteca Museo Balaguer, 1887*, Ms. 9, Biblioteca Víctor Balaguer (BMVB).

²⁵ Luzón, 1989, *op. cit.*, 149.

²⁶ *Colección de documentos sobre emigración china ...*, Ms. 9, BMVB, 69.

was vice-consul at the time. However, he found difficulties in shipping it since the Chinese authorities required the travelling fees from Chinese merchants. Given these obstacles, Abellá offered Toda the possibility of recruiting Chinese workers and their families by offering free passage to Cuba, as well as paying a \$25 000 commission to customs himself, which would guarantee the return of the ship to China with the Chinese workers who no longer wished to stay in Cuba onboard. Eduard Toda agreed to this and held long negotiations with the Viceroy of Canton, who refused Toda and Abellá's offer, so subsequently, the *Hesperia* never set sail to Cuba.²⁷

This last attempt to send Chinese workers to Cuba sheds light on Toda's bureaucratic activities in China, and could explain how he gathered the budget which he invested on drawing together the Chinese coins, artworks and other objects of his collection. In 1887, in his book *La Vida en el Celeste Imperio*, Toda still defended how "el desarrollo de nuestras dos grandes colonias ultramarinas, Cuba y Filipinas, está sujeto á la influencia de la emigración china, que lleva consigo la actividad, la fuerza, y frecuentemente la inteligencia, á las tierras donde se dirige", while clearly criticizing, later in the same book, Chinese immigration to the Philippines:

Mezquinos intereses se han opuesto a que fuese nunca conocida de una manera explícita esa migración de chinos a Manila, quizás el mismo gobierno español ignora el carácter que reviste. Desde luego hay que descartar en ella toda libertad individual y propia iniciativa de los emigrantes. Los coolies que van a Filipinas, como los que van a Java y a los estrechos de Malaca, salen vendidos de su país... de esta suerte se proveían los barracones de La Habana.

And he finishes by pointing out

Sólo nosotros seguimos recibiendo con los brazos abiertos, les sufrimos en una situación vinculada a la voluntad de un agente, les dejamos hasta una especie de autonomia con tribunales y gobernadorcillos propios. Quiera Dios, que como tantas veces ha sucedido en nuestra historia, no tengamos que lamentar por este descuido un conflicto trascendental!²⁸

Travelling and gathering his collection

During the six years that Toda stayed in China, he had the opportunity to travel extensively, within China, the Philippines and Japan. Notes on his trips can be found in his travelling diary, as well as in some of the numerous articles which he published in various magazines, such as *La Renaixensa* or *La Il·lustració Catalana*, particularly between 1883 and 1886.²⁹

²⁷ *Colección de documentos sobre emigración china ...*, Ms. 9, BMVB, 68-70.

²⁸ Toda, 1887, *op. cit.*, 1 and 274-277.

²⁹ See *Dietari de viatges d'Eduard Toda i Güell...*, 2008, *op. cit.*, 21-30; He narrates some of his trips in Eduard Toda i Güell, "Macao, Recorts de Viatje," *La Renaixensa* 42-43 (1883c), 329 and 337; Idem, "Recorts de Xina: Las Planas de Ka-shim," *La Renaixensa* 52 (1883d), 411; Idem, "Conferencia sobre una excursió á Tung Hoa y Nan-Kin (Xina), y visitas als mausoleus imperials de las antigas dinastias," *L'Excursionista: Bolletí mensual de la Associació Catalanista d'Excursions Científicas* 60-62 (1883e), 251, 258 and 267; Idem, "Recorts de Xina," *La Il·lustració Catalana* 120 (1884b), 291-292; Idem. "Recorts de Primavera," *La Il·lustració Catalana* 144 (1886), 292-294.

Apart from the places where he stayed as vice-consul, he also travelled to Suzhou, Hunan, the Philippines in 1878, and to Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and finally Japan, in 1882.

In his travelling notes and some of his articles, he sometimes makes reference to the acquisition of his collection. For instance, when he arrived in Guangzhou in June 1877, he explains how little he visited the city as he was mostly focused on looking for Chinese coins.³⁰ Even though there are few sources about how he purchased the artworks and other objects of his collection, there are some manuscripts preserved in the Archive of Poblet detailing how he gathered his Asian coins collection.

Toda's manuscript volume preserved in Poblet, entitled "Apuntes para la formación de la colección de monedas chinas", shows how he gathered his collection. Toda gathered information from different books and articles in English and French, written by English, French and Chinese authors, which he compared in order to find mistakes concerning false coins, and made notes on the history of Chinese coins, the meaning of different inscriptions, as well as the meaning of different Chinese characters and the development of Chinese script throughout history. It is obvious from these manuscripts that he was able to read and write in Chinese.

These notes may have given him a base from which to start recognizing coins in order to buy them. As well as this volume, he created an inventory of Asian coins, which contains a list of emperors and the coins issued within their rule, and is marked with inventory numbers of the coins he collected. His collection contained around 10.000 Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Uighur, Vietnamese, Siamese and Indian copper, gold, silver and porcelain coins, as well as medals, ingots and paper money.

From his study of Vietnamese coins, he wrote *Annam and its Minor Currency*, first published in the form of an article in the *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, and, later that same year, edited as a book under the same title.³¹ The North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society was an association created in Shanghai in 1857, and although it was affiliated with the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1858, it functioned independently. Eduard Toda became a member of this Society in 1880 when he moved to Shanghai and likely continued his membership until 1883, when he moved back to Catalonia. On December 15, 1881, his article, then entitled "The Minor Currency of Annam", was read at the monthly meeting of the Society, and was published in 1882, in the 17th volume of the *Journal*.

One aspect that comes to attention from *Annam and its Minor Currency* is Toda's knowledge of and ability to write in different languages. The manuscript notes that Toda

³⁰ See *Dietari de viatges d'Eduard Toda i Güell...*, 2008, *op. cit.*, 28.

³¹ Eduard Toda i Güell, "Annam and its minor currency (I)," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 17 (1882), 41-220.

used to publish *Annam and its Minor Currency*, preserved in the archive of the Biblioteca Museu Víctor Balaguer, in Vilanova, show that in order to write this book, he used notes provided by the Vietnamese erudite Petrus Truong-Vinh-Ky, with whom he had been exchanging correspondence.³²

Aside from his Asian coin collection, Toda gathered artworks and other objects, of interest to the study of Chinese material culture. Apart from his coins section, the rest of his collection consisted of Chinese clothing and attire, two Japanese sets of armour, Chinese and Japanese swords and daggers, boxes, decorative objects, fans, books, calligraphy scrolls, paintings, small religious metal, wood and porcelain idols, and porcelain and ceramic vases and plates.³³

On July 27, 1882, Toda asked for a ten-month licence to return to Europe in order to recover from anaemia, which he had contracted as a result of intermittent fever.³⁴ On November 16, 1882, he left Shanghai to travel back to Spain. On the way back, he stopped for two days in Hong Kong, where he said farewell to his friends in China and later passed by Saigon, where he had the opportunity to visit Petrus Ky, who had provided him with information for his book on Vietnamese coins, and afterwards he travelled through Singapore, Ceylon and Aden, and arrived in Marseille on December 22.³⁵

Back to Reus, Madrid and Barcelona (1883-84)

In his travelling notes, Toda explains that he arrived at his home in Reus on December 31, 1882. On his way back to Reus, he first stayed at the hotel Gran Fonda d'Orient of Barcelona, located at La Rambla, 45. On January 1, the newspaper *La Renaixensa* published this interesting note on his arrival in Barcelona:

Se troba en Barcelona, hospedat en la fonda d'Orient, de pas pera Reus, sa ciutat natal, nostra paysà lo jove y distingit jurisconsult D. Eduard Toda y Güell, que ab llicencia d'un any pera pasarlo al costat de sa volguda familia, ve de Shany-gai, Xina, ahont és cònsul representant d'Espanya. Entre'ls molts objectes rars y curiosos que porta d'aquellas interessants terras, hi ha una riquíssima y numerosa colecció de totas las monedas que s'han conegut en lo celest Imperi, la qual li es ab insistencia pretenguda per una distingidíssima academia alemana. Molt celebrariam que dit señor realisés la idea que te de exposarho y ab molt mes gust veuriam que en cas de desprendres de sa colecció la adquirís nostra ciutat, per anar á enriqueir lo naixent *Museu Martorell*.³⁶

This note indicates that, on the one hand, Toda, while staying in La Fonda d'Orient, was accompanied by his collection, and on the other hand, that he was planning to exhibit it, as

³² Manuscrito castellano y notas de la obra: "Annam and its minor currency", by Eduard Toda i Güell. Shanghai, August 6, 1882, 5 Ms. 236, BMVB.

³³ Peregrí Casades i Gramatxes, "Tenia Museus Barcelona? (I)," *Butlletí dels Museus d'Art de Barcelona* 48 (1935), 145-149.

³⁴ Massó, 2010, *op. cit.*, 34.

³⁵ See *Dietari de viatges d'Eduard Toda i Güell...*, 2008, *op. cit.*, 30-31.

³⁶ *La Renaixensa: Diari de Catalunya* (Barcelona), January 1, 1883, 8747.

well as either selling or donating it to the first museum of Barcelona, the recently inaugurated Museu Martorell.

A few days after his arrival on January 16, he spent a few days in Madrid, where he met Víctor Balaguer i Cirera (*b* Barcelona, 1824; *d* Madrid, 1901), a Catalan politician, writer and intellectual, who at that time was organising the inauguration of the museum and library Biblioteca-Museu Víctor Balaguer, in Vilanova i la Geltrú. In his house in Madrid, Balaguer had a private library which was to be the foundation of the content of his public Library in Vilanova. During his stay in Madrid, Toda collaborated on the task of packing the books which had to be sent to Vilanova, and owing to his new friendship with Balaguer, he offered his first donation of Chinese and Japanese artworks to the incipient Museum Balaguer of Vilanova. As Toda departed back to Reus, on January 25, Balaguer informed the librarian of his Biblioteca-Museu in Vilanova of Toda's gift:

Recomiendo a U. ponga un suelto en el Diario notificando que el distinguido reusense D. Eduardo Toda, qe ha permanecido por durante ocho años en una mision diplomática en China me ha regalado varios ídolos y objetos de cerámica y tapiceria chinas y japonesas con destino al Museo.³⁷

Toda was invited to attend the Jocs Florals of Barcelona, an annual Catalan literary competition which took place on May 6, 1883, where Víctor Balaguer introduced him to prominent Catalan nationalist writers of the *Renaixença* movement. After the event, he participated in the different activities surrounding the occasion, becoming acquainted with the leading Catalan nationalist poets, journalists and artists of the time, who were, more or less, the same age as Eduard Toda. A few days later, he was invited to join an excursion to the mountain of Montserrat, which was organized in order to celebrate the fact that writers from Roussillon had participated in the Jocs Florals. During this excursion, Toda recounted some of his experiences in China, which in turn, accelerated his acceptance within this group of intellectuals. Joan Sardà, a journalist writing for the magazine *La Il·lustració Catalana*, explained how easily Toda made his way into the group:

No sé si ell se trobava tant bé entre nosaltres com nosaltres al costat d'ell. Lo cert es que desde aquella primera entrada no deixá un moment d'assistir á nostres círcols, de ser un dels nostres, amich de tots, estimat de tots, compartint nostras aficions, identificantse ab los nostres gustos, y fent, en una paraula, com si de tota la vida hagués sigut del círculo de literats y artistas que cuotidianament, á falta de lloch més apropiat, se reuneixen en pintoresch aplech en un dels cafés més concorreguts de Barcelona.³⁸

The coffeehouse Sardà makes reference to was the Café Pelayo. Toda, who after the event moved to the Fonda d'Orient hotel in Barcelona, began taking part in some of the regular meetings of artists and writers which would take place in the Café. Some of the intellectuals who used to participate in these meetings were the modernist architects Lluís

³⁷ Letter from Víctor Balaguer to Joan Oliva. Madrid, January 25, 1883. Ms. 18, BMVB.

³⁸ Joan Sardà, "Poblet: per Eduard Toda," *La Il·lustració Catalana* 97 (1883), 315.

Domènech i Montaner and Antoni Gaudí, who had moved to Barcelona, Antoni Aulèstia, who was also from Reus, the sculptor Agustí Querol i Subirats, the writer and politician Joaquim Riera i Bertran, the poet Ramon Picó i Campamar, Joan Sardà, and Francesc Matheu, director of *La Il·lustració Catalana*.³⁹

After meeting this group of Catalan nationalist artists and writers in May 1883, he stayed in Barcelona most of the year, and only left for short excursions and trips. Of all his friends in Barcelona, there are three whom deserve special attention: Pere Aldavert, founder of *La Renaixensa*, Àngel Guimerà, director of the same newspaper, and Francesc Matheu. Toda developed an almost family-like relationship with Aldavert and Guimerà, living between the Fonda d'Orient hotel and Aldavert's residence while staying in Barcelona. Developing from these friendships, Toda initiated interesting collaborations with the newspaper and the magazine *La Renaixensa*, and with *La Il·lustració Catalana*.

During his stay in Barcelona, Toda exhibited his collection in the building of La Renaixensa's editing, publishing and printing production, which was located in Carrer Xuclà, 13. Toda's friendship with Aldavert may explain why he came to exhibit his Chinese art and coin collection in the building of La Renaixensa, as he explained when José Maria Dalmases i Bocabella interviewed him in 1929: "Cuando volví de China en 1884 expuse en *La Renaixensa* algunas de mis colecciones de porcelanas, cobres, etc., que traía y en las que había invertido todo mi capital."⁴⁰

Aldavert's residence, where Aldavert lived with his wife and children, was located in the same building as the editing, publishing and printing production of La Renaixensa, this way he was able to control the production of his newspaper at any given time. Given the proximity of Aldavert's residence to the Fonda d'Orient, Toda visited Aldavert's home very often to share meals with Aldavert and his family and to bring presents for Aldavert's daughters.

En Toda, boig per les xirivies, ves qui ho diria en un home que, per un flux, al tornar de la Xina
s'instal·là a la fonda d'Orient!

I de les xirivies vingué la nostra gran amistat i l'estimació que posà a la mainadeta de casa.
Mesos i mesos tinguérem de tirar xirivies a l'olla. Mesos i mesos cada dia s'enduia a les meves
filles, tornant del "Siglo" cada dia, igual que si els Reis d'Orient haguessin passat pel carrer d'en
Xuclà!⁴¹

³⁹ Regarding the writers and artists that used to participate in these meetings, see Lluís Domènech i Montaner, "L'Emili Vilanova: Records," *La Il·lustració Catalana* 167 (1906), 499-501. This text has been partially transcribed in Massó, 2010, *op. cit.*, 37.

⁴⁰ José María Dalmases i Bocabella, "Recuerdos de la infancia y primera juventud de nuestro Gaudí," *Calendario Josefino para 1929*, edited in Lluís Bonet i Armengol, *La mort de Gaudí i el seu ressò a la revista "El Propagador de la Devoción a San José"* (Barcelona: Editorial Claret, 2001), 239.

⁴¹ Pere Aldavert, *Records*, ed. Carola Duran i Tort (Lleida: Punctum, Grup d'Estudis sobre Literatura del Vuit-Cents, 2010), 68-69. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Carola Duran i Tort, who has provided me with this information, and who has participated in the formulation of this interpretation. Concerning Aldavert's mention of "El Siglo", it makes reference to the *Grandes Almacenes El Siglo*, the

It seems logical to think, that if Toda was staying in a hotel, he may have preferred to keep his collection in La Renaixensa, as it could also be exhibited there. The building in Carrer Xuclà was often used as a meeting place for writers and collaborators of the newspaper, and therefore, it may also have been used as a deposit for Toda's objects, so that he could show his collection.

While staying in Barcelona, Toda sold some of the artworks to Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi, the patron of Antoni Gaudí. Gaudí, one of Toda's childhood friends, advised Güell to acquire half of the art collection:

Gaudí, arquitecto y amigo de Don Eusebio Güell, le aconsejó adquirir la mitad de ellas. Era yo sólo Vice-Cónsul y apenas regresado de China muy luego volví otra vez a correr mundo (...).

No volví a ver a Gaudí hasta muchos años después, a mi regreso de Londres, terminada la guerra. Gaudí, acompañado de su amigo el Dr. Santaló, vino a verme a este mismo Hotel Colón y me pidió una limosna para el Templo de la Sagrada Familia: Te daré, le dije, una cantidad igual a la que tú obtuviste de Güell en la venta de mis colecciones chinas.⁴²

Toda's original idea was to sell his collection to a Catalan museum. He had offered to sell his collection, valued at 30.000 pesetas, to the Town Hall of Barcelona in order to increase the collections of the Museu Martorell, which was inaugurated one year earlier, and most likely had it on display in La Renaixensa while waiting for a decision from the Town Hall of Barcelona.

The Museu Martorell, inaugurated in September 1882, was created from a donation given by Francesc Martorell y Peña (1822-78) in 1878, consisting of his collections of natural history, archaeology and also from his library.⁴³ Through numerous donations, the Museum gathered many objects of diverse nature: objects exhibited for the study of natural sciences, archaeology, ethnology, history and art. During the 1880s, the Museum received several donations of Chinese and Japanese objects: a Chinese comb, some Chinese weapons, a Japanese box, a print, a piece of armour, four Chinese wooden and terracotta idols, six Chinese books, and some paintings.⁴⁴

first shopping centre of Barcelona. It was inaugurated in 1878, and was located in Rambla dels Estudis 10, 12 and 14. It was later moved to Carrer Pelai after burning in a fire in 1932. See Carola Duran's footnotes in Aldavert, 2010, *op. cit.*, 69; and Patricia Faciabén Lacorte, "Los grandes almacenes en Barcelona," *Scripta Nova: Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales* 140 (2003), accessed March 25, 2013, <http://www.ub.edu/geocrit/sn/sn-140.htm>.

⁴² Dalmases, 2001, *op. cit.*, 239.

⁴³ Alicia Masrera, *El Museu Martorell, 125 anys de Ciències Naturals (1878-2003)* (Barcelona: Monografies del Museu de Ciències Naturals, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2006), 35.

⁴⁴ Ricard Bru Turull, "Notes pel col·leccionisme d'art oriental a la Barcelona vuitcentista," *Butlletí de la Reial Acadèmia Catalana de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi* 18 (2004), 242-243.

Even though the Museum did accept donations of Chinese and Japanese objects, Toda's offer was not accepted. This double facet of Museu Martorell might seem contradictory, but in reality, it has to do with the original characteristics of the Museum. The Museu Martorell shares characteristics with two museum models which spread out in different European cities in the 19th century: the local museum model, representing local aspirations, and the national museum model, as it was formed from a private collection which, by becoming a public museum, served its country and society.⁴⁵

In order to arrive at a verdict regarding the acquisition of Toda's collection, the Comisión de la Ciudadela, responsible for taking care of the development of the Museum and the installations attached to it, held diverse meetings to discuss the subject. While most of the members of the Commission were decided against the acquisition, the mayor of Barcelona, Rius i Taulet, argued in favour of it.⁴⁶ In October 1883, the Town Hall asked for a report from art and archaeology experts from the Asociación Artístico-Arqueológica Barcelonesa. The report, which took into consideration the value of the objects, its price, and the place it would occupy in the Martorell Museum, as well as in future public collections of Barcelona, was favourable to the acquisition.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the Commission finally decided to refuse the offer.

This is a very illustrative example of the place which Chinese art and archaeology came to occupy in public art collecting of 19th century Barcelona. Even though, since Toda's offer in 1883, some private collectors have tried to create public collections of Chinese and Japanese art in Barcelona, their attempts have never had continuity, as the main goal of public museum management in Catalonia was set to preserving local art only.

Toda finally donated most of the artworks of his collection to the Museu Balaguer of Vilanova, and later, in 1887, sold his Asian coin collection to the Museo Arqueológico Nacional of Madrid.⁴⁸ A few years later, Josep Roca i Roca, nicknamed P. del O., in his portrayal of Eduard Toda published in *La Esquella de la Torratxa* in 1888, recalled this incident, complaining of how the Town Hall had turned down Toda's offer: "L'Ajuntament de Barcelona no's digná adquirir tal preciositat, que avuy figura en lo *Museo arqueològich nacional*. Si s'hagués tractat de *tarugos*... en fi deixemho correr".⁴⁹

Toda's conferences, books and articles about China

Toda's friendship with Catalan writers and journalists brought about interesting collaborations, through which he arrived to publish in Catalan about Chinese history,

⁴⁵ Laura Valls Plana, "El museo de ciencias naturales de Barcelona (1882-1917): popularización de las ciencias naturales dentro y fuera del museo," *Biblio 3w: revista bibliográfica de geografía y ciencias sociales* 918 (2011).

⁴⁶ *El Diluvio: Diario político de avisos, noticias y decretos* (Barcelona), October 10, 1883, 8117-8118.

⁴⁷ The report was transcribed in Casades, 1935, *op. cit.*, 145-149.

⁴⁸ Regarding Toda's donation to the Museu Balaguer, see Jardí, 2010, *op. cit.*, 29-43. Concerning the sale of his coins collection to the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, see Seco, 2005, *op. cit.*, 1669-1675.

⁴⁹ P. del O., "Retrats de Cos Sencer. Eduard Toda," *La Esquella de la Torratxa* 0471 (1888), 1-2.

geography, culture, and especially, about his trips and experiences in China. Shortly after meeting Aldavert, Guimerà and Matheu in May 1883, he started publishing articles in *La Renaixensa* and *La Il·lustració Catalana*.

In *La Renaixensa*, he published "Macao, Recorts de Viatge", "Recorts de Xina: Las planas de Ka-shim" in 1883, and "Los Portuguesos en Xina: Un erro històrich", in 1884.⁵⁰ He also published some articles on China's political situation in the newspaper *La Renaixensa: Diari de Catalunya*, under the nickname "T.". ⁵¹ In *La Il·lustració Catalana*, he published "Recorts de Xina" in 1884, and "Recorts de Primavera" in 1886.⁵² In Reus, he published "Kin-Yeng: Estudio de costumbres chinas" and "Modas chinas".⁵³ And furthermore, in 1883, he also gave two conferences in Barcelona about China in the excursions Association, the Associació Catalanista d'Excursions Científiques, which were later published in the Association's bulletin.⁵⁴

In February 1884, he was asked to recover his position in China, but he renounced it, and instead was nominated vice-consul in Cairo.⁵⁵ In March that same year, Toda stayed a short while in Madrid, and later went back to Reus, only to leave again, on April 2, to Egypt.

After Toda's stay in Barcelona in 1883, he continued to publish about China. For instance, in 1884, he published *La Agricultura en Xina: notas sobre'l cultiu de las terras y la produccio del thé y algunas consideraciones relativas á la minería d'aquell país*, in 1887, *La Vida en el Celeste Imperio*, in 1890, the volume about Asia, "El Asia Oriental: El Imperio Chino, La Corea, El Japón", of Élisée Reclús's the *Nueva Geografía Universal*, and in 1893, *Historia de la China*.⁵⁶

Conclusions

Eduard Toda's career as a Spanish diplomat and his relationship with leading Catalan writers of the Renaixença are both of great interest, as they brought knowledge of Chinese culture to Catalonia. Toda's accounts of his trips around China, his collection of Chinese artworks and coins, and his books and articles dealing with Chinese culture, history, and economics, represent a unique source about Chinese culture, which he made available to Catalan society in a moment when publications about Chinese culture in Spanish, and,

⁵⁰ Toda, 1883c and d, *op. cit.* And Idem. *La Renaixensa* 34-37 (1884a), 281.

⁵¹ See *La Renaixensa: Diari de Catalunya* (Barcelona), 1883-1884.

⁵² Toda, 1884b, *op. cit.*, 291-292; Idem. 1886, *op. cit.*, 292-294.

⁵³ Eduard Toda i Güell, "Kin-Yeng: Estudio de costumbres chinas," *Revista del Centre de Lectura de Reus* 1 (1883a), 5-7; Idem. "Modas chinas," *Revista del Centre de Lectura de Reus* 5 (1883b), 2-3.

⁵⁴ Toda, 1883e, *op. cit.*, 251, 258 and 267.

⁵⁵ Fort, 1975, *op. cit.*, 67; Massó, 2010, *op. cit.*, 38-39.

⁵⁶ Eduard Toda i Güell, *La Agricultura en Xina: notas sobre'l cultiu de las terras y la produccio del thé y algunas consideraciones relativas á la minería d'aquell país* (Barcelona: Estampa La Renaixensa, 1884c); Idem. 1887, *op. cit.*; Idem. "El Asia Oriental: El Imperio Chino, La Corea, El Japón," in *Nueva Geografía Universal: la tierra y los hombres*, Élisée Reclús, 1888-1893 (Madrid: El Progreso Editorial, 1890); Idem. *Historia de la China* (Madrid: El Progreso editorial, 1893).

even more so in Catalan, were still scarce.⁵⁷ Toda's friendship with these leading Catalan writers and journalists was highly significant to his work in the divulgation of Chinese culture in Catalonia, which he could have only brought about by being a Spanish representative in China.

Furthermore, Toda started a cycle in Chinese art collecting in Catalonia that would be followed by other art collectors throughout the 20th century. His donation to the Museum Balaguer opened a section of Asian art which continued to receive donations, some of them consisting of artworks of great value, such as the donation of Juan Mencarini, who had exhibited his collection in the Great Exhibition of Barcelona in 1888.⁵⁸ Later in the 20th century, other art collectors acquired and exhibited their Chinese and Japanese art collections in Barcelona, the most conspicuous of which, being the collection of Damià Mateu, who in the 1930s tried to begin an Asian art section in the Museum of Decorative Arts of Barcelona, departing from the exhibition of his own collection. This collection was returned to his heirs as soon as Mateu died, and, therefore, did not have a great impact in public art collecting in Barcelona.⁵⁹

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⁵⁷ See David Martínez Robles account on Spanish sources about China in the 18th and 19th century, David Martínez Robles, "Las fuentes españolas sobre China en los siglos XVIII y XIX," in *Traspasando Fronteras: el reto de Asia y el Pacífico*, ed. Francisco Javier Antón Burgos and Luis Oscar Ramos Alonso (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2002), 383-392.

⁵⁸ See Jardí, 2010, *op. cit.*, 29-43; Mònica Ginés Blasi, "Estudi preliminar de la col·lecció de moneda xinesa de la Biblioteca Museu Balaguer," *Butlletí de la Biblioteca Museu Balaguer* 4 (2011), 115-128.

⁵⁹ Jaume Barrachina, "Maties Muntadas, Jaume Espona i Miquel Mateu: el col·leccionisme d'art antic i d'arts decoratives," in *Col·leccionistes, Col·leccions i Museus. Episodis de la Història del Patrimoni Artístic Català*, ed. Bonaventura Bassegoda i Hugas (Barcelona: Memoria Artium, 2007), 248-251.

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