Charlotte van Rappard,
chairwoman Advisory Board, the Society of Friends of Asian Art

ON THE RETIREMENT OF CHRISTIAAN JÖRG AS PROFESSOR AND CHAIRMAN

Asian art has always been largely overlooked by the art-historical world in the Netherlands. No Dutch university has a structural professorship in this field, and a temporary posting is only very occasionally available. Dutch museums have only a handful of curators who take care of Asian art, and the few universities involved in this field have to procure much of their knowledge from abroad.

This is a peculiar situation because one would think that the centuries-old and long-lasting trade relations between the Netherlands and the Far East would have given rise to a long and well-founded academic tradition in this field. Such a tradition survives at only very few institutions: the Rijksmuseum with its Asian Department and the closely associated Society of Friends of Asian Art; at the Leeuwarden and Groningen museums; and – with intervals – at Leiden University. It is therefore noteworthy, but perhaps not surprising, that Christiaan Jörg has been associated with all these institutions. This scholar, whose specialisation is the relationships and interactions between Eastern and Western art, is himself a link between various museums in the Netherlands, supporting networks and academics.

It is only in recent years that close and long-term collaborations between museums and universities have been fostered in the Netherlands. These institutions have long been strongholds dominated by their own cultures, between which intensive collaborations were the exception, not the rule. They tend to rely on each other more now, and that 'old' and dignified societies continue to play a role in this is another positive factor. An extraordinary professorship such as that held by Christiaan Jörg in Leiden is clearly extremely beneficial for the Society and museums, and for this specialised field.

The success of these museum collaborations is made palpable by, for example, the exhibition Jörg curated and the accompanying catalogue he co-authored titled *Oriental Porcelain in the Netherlands. Four Museum Collections*, which exemplifies how museums can work together to provide an idea of what they designate by the high-flown term 'Collectie Nederland' ('The Netherlands Collection'), which is seldom presented in a concrete form.

This issue of *Aziatische Kunst* is a modest homage to Christiaan's erudition, to his ability to bring people and information together and to the enthusiasm with which he guided the Society through a challenging period to emerge as a revitalised and thriving organisation.