The Achievements of Archaeology and the Revolutionary Line of Chairman Mao – Reading „Cultural Relics Excavated During the Great Cultural Revolution“ of 1972

While countless monuments and artworks were destroyed all over China at the outset of the Cultural Revolution as Red Guards “smashed the Four Olds”, archaeological excavation continued to be undertaken, and important finds were made during the years from 1966 to 1970. And although Wenwu, the country’s most important archaeological journal, like other scholarly publications ceased to appear after May 1966 due to the turbulences of the Cultural Revolution, it resumed publication at a comparably early date, in January 1972. Early the same year, a large-scale exhibition in Beijing featured „Cultural Relics Excavated During the Great Cultural Revolution“. Two books were published under the same title: a large luxurious edition with high-quality plates in black and white and several colour plates and short entries on each object that appeared in February and, in September 1972, a booklet with short articles that introduced the main finds, sketched their historical importance and gave an ideological interpretation according to the Maoist politics of the day. The paper will analyse how the publications and the exhibition were orchestrated to ensure the rebirth of scholarly research and publication on artworks and at the same time secure a correct political outlook.

CV:
Since 2010  Adjunct Professor of Chinese Art History, Institute of East Asian Art History, Heidelberg University
Since 2008  Assistant Professor of East Asian Art History, Institute of Art History, Freie Universität Berlin
M.A. Art History and Sinology, Freie Universität Berlin 1999
Dr. phil. East Asian Art History, Freie Universität Berlin 2006

Recent publications on related topics: