



MING: FIFTY YEARS THAT CHANGED CHINA
BRITISH MUSEUM EXHIBITION

FRIDAY 31 OCTOBER
DR CRAIG LUNAS AND NICHOLAS FRIEND

The Ming (literally 'brilliant') dynasty was founded by General Zhu Yuanzhang in 1368, an orphan and a Buddhist novice from Nanjing. The previous rulers, the Mongols, had generally been ineffective towards the end of their Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). Peasant unrest was compounded by droughts and famines, and there were many rebellions against the alien ruling power. Zhu Yuanzhang emerged victorious among the various warring factions, and declared himself emperor, with the title Hongwu ('vast military accomplishment'). In 1421, under Yongle (1403-24), Beijing was completely rebuilt and became the official capital. Its design is maintained to this day. The Ming dynasty was one of the more stable and longer-lasting dynasties of Chinese history. The short reign of the Xuande emperor (1426-35) was regarded by later Ming scholars as a golden age of good government and patronage of the arts. Xuande was himself a talented artist and poet, and he gathered a group of artists at court. In Ming scholar-painting, as in calligraphy, each form is built up of a recognized set of brushstrokes, yet the execution of these forms is, each time, a unique personal performance. In the decorative arts, notable advances were made in the porcelains produced at the imperial kilns at Jingdezhen. The fourteenth-century development of blue-and-white ware and cloisonné enamelware arose, at least in part, in response to lively trade with the Islamic world, and many early Ming examples continued to reflect strong West Asian influences. This is the period celebrated in this amazing exhibition: 1400-1450, 'Fifty Years that Changed the World'.

MEET 10:30 am at the British Museum for coffee for 11 am lecture

ENDS 3:30 pm at the British Museum

COST £83 members, £93 non-members, including coffee, lecture by Dr Craig Lunas, and exhibition entry