

27 September 2024 – 23 February 2025
British Library Galleries
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A SILK ROAD OASIS

LIFE IN ANCIENT DUNHUANG

The exhibition is made possible
with support from
The Klein Family Foundation
and the Dunhuang Foundation

Reception, Impact, and Digital Legacy of a British Library exhibition

Mélodie Doumy

Lead Curator, Chinese collections and
International Dunhuang Programme
(IDP) Manager

Exhibition overview



- Uncover the legacy of religious, cultural and artistic exchanges along the Silk Roads during the first millennium of the common era, through the stories of people who inhabited or passed through Dunhuang in Northwest China

Illustrated scroll

10th century, ink on paper, Or.8210/S.159

Animation by Maria Morris

Exhibition content



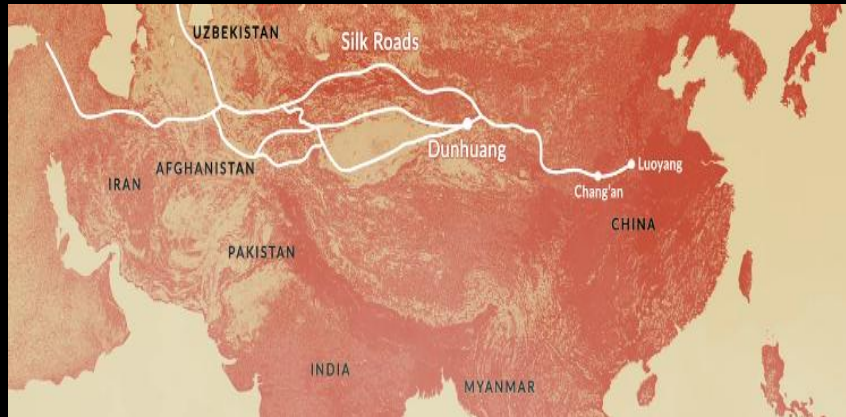
- 53 manuscripts, printed documents, pictorial works and other artefacts
- Combination of star items and objects of everyday life
- + Interactive components

3 key collaborations



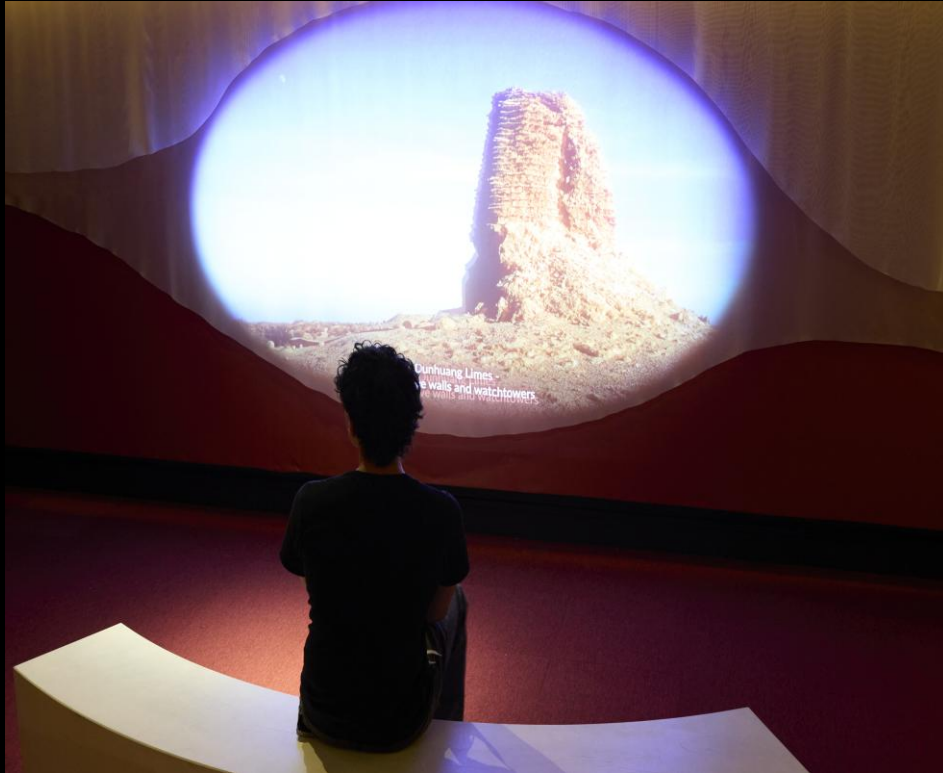
- Dunhuang Academy
 - Images used in AV map, slideshow, and design elements
- China Database for Traditional Music, Beijing
 - Soundscape
- Sound Art Museum, Beijing
 - Sound Points

Exhibition Reach and Impact



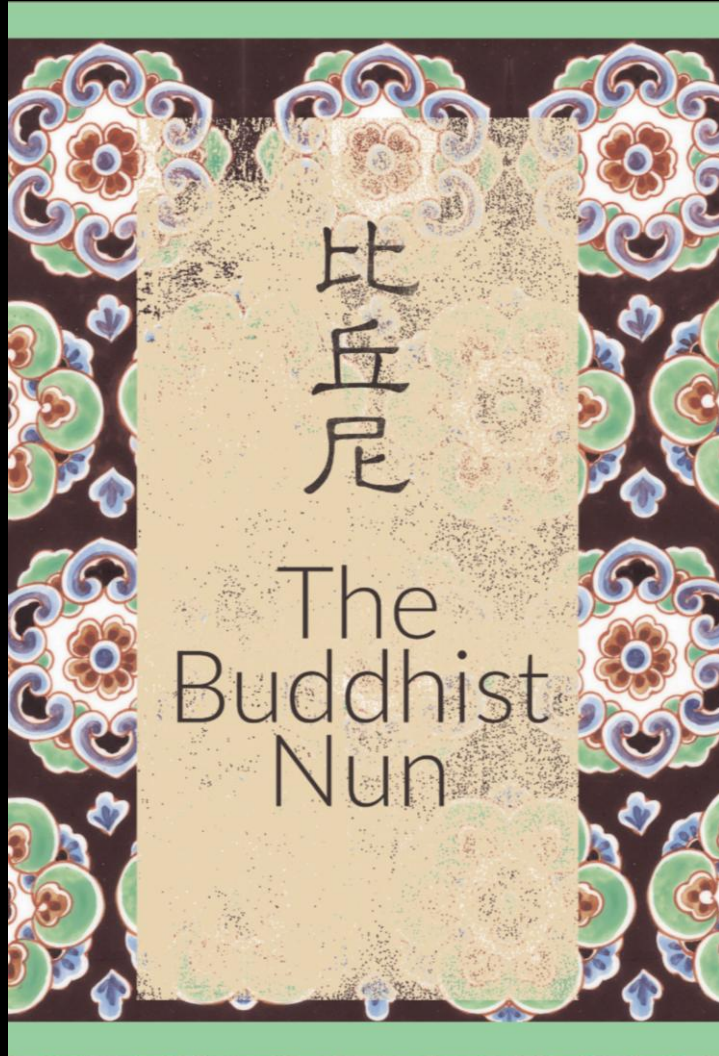
- Around 30,000 visitors (against initial target of 12,500)
- 1/3 of first-time visitors
- Attracted a diverse audience

Audience feedback



- Collected by the Library through formal Marketing evaluation survey
- Qualitative interviews of Chinese visitors
- Analysis of posts through Chinese social media

Audience feedback



- Overwhelmingly positive
- Focus on personal stories was well-received
- Objects chosen were popular

Audience feedback



- Layout and flow of the exhibition were praised for being logical and aesthetically engaging
- Special appreciation for the soundscape and visual richness of the exhibition
- Fostered feelings including understanding, awe, inspiration and surprise

Quotes

“I liked how the exhibition portrayed the Silk Road through the various occupations that would have interacted with it.”

“展览里关于“比丘尼”的部分让我特别惊喜，因为在佛教的世界里，女性群体往往被忽略。不论在中外博物馆的佛教展厅中，比丘尼/尼姑相关的展品和历史都较少展示。而这个展柜里展示了六件与比丘尼相关的文物，呈现出独特的女性社区，令人眼前一亮”

“展厅很小，却是诚意满满”

“The abandoned wife's letter to the husband, and a prayer for peace on Earth. These were people just like us. This made the entire exhibit approachable to me, and I was able to connect with these people even after several hundreds of years.”

“The soundscape [...] transported me to ancient Dunhuang.”

Audience feedback



'Rain of Languages (Buddhist Sutras)' by XIE Xiaoze, 2023

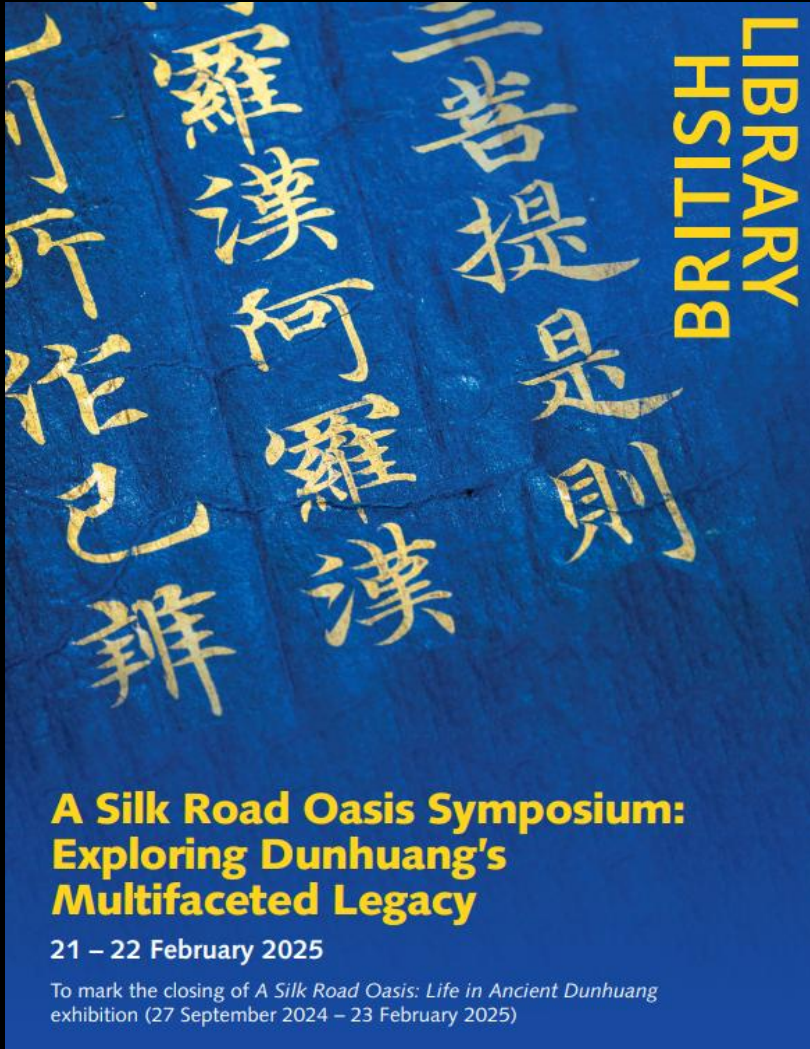
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Exhibition Events programme



- A total of 7 public events, including a concert by the Hong Kong Gaudeamus Ensemble performing music inspired by Dunhuang
- 1,307 people attended – onsite and live stream – our discussions and panels.

Exhibition Symposium



- To mark the closing of the exhibition
- In person and livestreamed
- Recordings available on IDP's Youtube channel.

Digital legacy: 3D tour

- Scan of the physical space
- Integrated resources and new content
- Bilingual access



Digital legacy

- Dedicated exhibition pages on the IDP website



<https://idp.bl.uk/>

[Home](#) > [Discover](#) > [Exhibitions](#) > A Silk Road Oasis: Life in Ancient Dunhuang

[A Silk Road Oasis: Life in Ancient Dunhuang](#) was supported by The Klein Family Foundation and the Dunhuang Foundation, with thanks to The Eccles Institute for the Americas and Oceania.

From this exhibition home page, explore a range of exhibition-related content on the IDP website.

Virtual Exhibition

The exhibition was scanned and is now available virtually to visitors in both English and Chinese, via the links below.



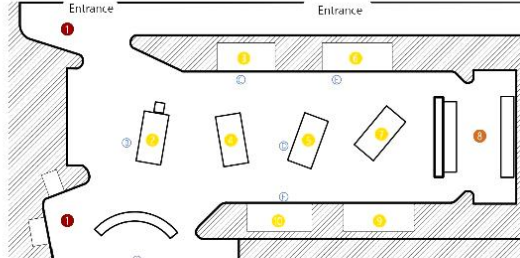
Virtual Exhibition
English Version

Enter Virtual Exhibition (English Version)



Virtual Exhibition
Chinese Version

進入虛擬展覽 (中文版)



Exhibition Guides

Download exhibition guides to help you better understand the exhibition

Digital legacy

- Blog posts
- And soon: a learning resource on Dunhuang!



<https://idp.bl.uk/>

