

Jackie Chan is Angry!

Less than 150 years ago, the magnificent Chinese Imperial Summer Palace in Beijing was robbed and burnt by the British and the French. At the time, more than 1000 tons of hard drugs a year were smuggled into China by Britain, who used the military to protect their drug trafficking interests from the Chinese government.

300 men and women were burned alive inside the palace. 3,500 British troops carried out the destruction and massacre. Charles Gordon of the Royal Engineers took part. "We went out, and after pillaging it, burned the whole place... We got upward of 48 pounds apiece prize money... I have done well... You can scarcely imagine the beauty and magnificence of the places we burnt... It was wretchedly demoralizing work for an army."

Many of the treasures were more than 3,500 years old.

The wonderful palace grounds, known as the Garden of Perfect Brightness, were destroyed so completely that the area was used for farmland until the 1980s. Inside the garden, there was an amazing zodiac water clock. It consisted of twelve bronze statues representing the signs of the Chinese zodiac. All these statues were robbed in the attack.

The Chinese Poly Art Museum is being helped by billionaire Stanley Ho to recover the twelve bronzes. He bought the horse for 6.3 million pounds in 2007 and gave it to the museum. So far, the museum has recovered the tiger, the monkey and the ox, as well as the horse of course.

In February 2009, the rabbit and the rat appeared in an auction at Christie's in Paris. They had been in the possession of French fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent until his death. The price of the statues was estimated to be worth 8.8 million pounds!

The Chinese government tried to stop the auction and the film star Jackie Chan was very angry. "The statues were stolen. It was stealing yesterday and it is still stealing today. And now we are going to lose two more pieces of the clock to who-knows-who."

When the auction was held at Christie's in Paris, the rabbit and the rat were sold for 13 million pounds! They were bought by Cai Mingchao. But now Mr Mingchao says he will not pay for them.

The author of *Les Miserables*, the great French writer Victor Hugo, gave his opinion about the robbery and destruction of the Chinese Imperial Summer Palace in Beijing in 1860. "Two robbers broke into a museum, destroying, robbing and burning. They left together with their bags full of treasure and laughing. One robber is called France and the other Britain."

It is now March 2009 and the rabbit and the rat are still in France.

449 words

Grammar: the passive voice

