The British Museum

China's 1800s: Material and Visual Culture

Edited by Jessica Harrison-Hall

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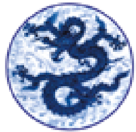

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Edited by Jessica Harrison-Hall

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Front cover: Detail of painting by the Zhou Peichun workshop (active *c.* 1880–1910) depicting two figures pulled on a sledge. Watercolours and ink on paper, Beijing, h. 25.5cm, w. 34.5cm. British Museum, London, 1938,1210,0.7, given by Mrs Alfred Wingate

Pg. iv: Ren Xun 任薰 (1835–1893), *Magu gives her Birthday Greetings* (*Magu xianshou tu* 麻姑獻壽圖), *c.* 1850–93, Shanghai. Ink, colours and gold on paper, h. 176cm, w. 92cm. Michael Yun-Wen Shih Collection

Pg. vi: Sun Mingqiu 孫鳴球 (1823–after 1903), detail of *Congratulatory Wishes for Longevity* (*Qingshou tu* 慶壽圖), 1892, Beijing. Ink and colours on paper, diam. 25cm (image), h. 40.5cm, w. 32cm (album). British Museum, London, 1973,0917,0.59.44

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Last but by no means least my grateful thanks also to Julia Lovell who embarked on the original UKRI AHRC project with me six years ago. Working with such an interdisciplinary and international group across 20 countries has been a real challenge but our different approaches and distinct combined chemistry have created something quite unique and have underpinned the books *China's Hidden Century* – which explored the experience of different sectors of Qing society in the 19th century – and *Creators of Modern China 100 lives from Empire to Republic 1796–1912* which uncovered the lives of individuals and their impact on China. I hope that this new book will open a window onto the material and visual culture of the long 19th century in all its glorious diversity, and encourage the next generation of scholars to create future volumes exploring other aspects of the material and visual culture of China's 1800s.

Jessica Harrison-Hall
December 2024

Chronology of the Qing Dynasty

Reign title	Reign period	Family name	Temple name
Tianming 天命	1616–1626	Nurhaci 努爾哈赤	Taizu 太祖
Tiancong 天聰 Chongde 崇德	1627–1636 1636–1643	Hong Taiji 皇太極	Taizong 太宗
Shunzhi 順治	1644–1661	Fulin 福臨	Shizu 世祖
Kangxi 康熙	1662–1722	Xuanye 玄燁	Shengzu 聖祖
Yongzheng 雍正	1723–1735	Yinzhen 胤禛	Shizong 世宗
Qianlong 乾隆	1736–1795	Hongli 弘曆	Gaozong 高宗
Jiaqing 嘉慶	1796–1820	Yongyan 顒琰	Renzong 仁宗
Daoguang 道光	1821–1850	Mianning 旻寧	Xuanzong 宣宗
Xianfeng 咸豐	1851–1861	Yizhu 奕詝	Wenzong 文宗
Qixiang 祺祥 Tongzhi 同治	1861 1862–1874	Zaichun 載淳	Muzong 穆宗
Guangxu 光緒	1875–1908	Zaitian 載湉	Dezong 德宗
Xuantong 宣統	1909–1912	Puyi 溥儀	

Introduction

Jessica Harrison-Hall

This book presents the papers given at the public conference *China's 1800s: Material and Visual Culture*, held over two days at the British Museum in London on 8 and 9 June 2023. Speakers came in person to Bloomsbury from as far afield as Canada, China, France, Switzerland and the United States, representing a wide range of disciplines. Scholars who presented papers included representatives of a new generation of rising stars in the field alongside some of the world's most respected authorities on Chinese art and Qing culture. To my knowledge, this was the first public conference to focus on the full spectrum of the arts in a period lauded for its technological advances but overshadowed by wars, and long dismissed by many as producing only derivative works (**Fig. 1**).

The political events, conflicts, famines and droughts of the late imperial era dominate the narratives of China in the twilight of empire. Photography, which we tend to trust as a true capturing of facts, distorts our picturing of late Qing China: street scenes, landscapes and posed groupings record everything in what was then new technology in shades of grey, and this black-and-white palette has dulled our imagination. We often think of and visualise 19th-century China as a place in the shadows. Yet Qing textiles, with their vibrant colours and textures, testify to the existence of a more colourful world that belies the photographic evidence (**Fig. 2**). On the other hand, material culture was demonstrably impacted by photography, sometimes overtly so, as with a stitched portrait of a middle-aged man in shades of grey, perfectly imitating a photographic portrait and on a far larger scale (**Fig. 3**). Other connections are more subtle, such as the poses people struck for portraits in oils in the studios of Guangzhou and Hong Kong, which mirror the usual composition of photographs of people of the period. Some of these staged interiors are arranged like the backgrounds

Figure 1 Figure of a *qilin* painted in an innovative overglaze colour palette derived from textiles, porcelain with polychrome enamels, Jingdezhen, *c.* 1850–60. H. 12.1cm, w. 10.2cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 6943-1860

Figure 2 Sleeveless jacket with different types of ancient and modern money, China, 1875–1903. Cotton plain weave with multicoloured silk and gold metallic embroidery in straight and filling stitches and laid work; gilt braid; printed cotton plain weave, w. 57.2cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, purchased with the John T. Morris Fund from the Carl Schuster Collection, 1940, 1940-4-730

for Chinese ancestor paintings or paintings of indoor spaces, others follow a Western studio model.

Until recently court arts have dominated the late Qing collections of museums, galleries and private collectors. Some of these works arguably failed to reach the technical achievements and high quality of the imperially commissioned products of the 1700s, which were made in the reigns of the Three Emperors: Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662–1722), Yongzheng 雍正 (r. 1723–35) and Qianlong 乾隆 (r. 1736–95). However, this is not the complete picture, as the studies of the court arts in this volume demonstrate absorbing exchanges with the arts of Japan, as well as the revitalisation of court commissioning that came with the rise in power of Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧太后 (1835–1908).

Specialists in 19th-century photography, painting and art history have developed a compelling counter-narrative to the traditional one of stagnation. In 1992, Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou demonstrated that late Qing art 'transcended turmoil',[1] or, as Wan Qingli 萬青力 (1945–2017) put it in 2005, 'The century was not declining in art'.[2]

Figure 3 Unidentified maker, portrait of a man imitating a photograph, silk embroidered in shades of grey, probably Suzhou, 1860–1900, h. 60cm, w. 45cm. British Museum funded by the Brooke Sewell Fund, 2024,3009.1

Figure 4 Ren Xiong 任熊, *Autumn Shadow in Liangxi (Wuxi)* (*Liangxi qiuying tu* 梁谿秋影圖), 1840–57, ink and colours on silk, h. 126cm, w. 60cm. Michael Yun-Wen Shih Collection

Recent studies of 19th-century Qing paintings have also emphasised both regional and ethnic diversity in styles and subject matter. The regional focus is evidenced by superb exhibitions held in Hong Kong and Shanghai of the so-called 'Shanghai School', as well as other shows on painters from Guangdong, Beijing-based court artists and Manchu finger painters (**Fig. 4**).

Universities around the world have finally awoken to the importance of studying material culture to complement textual evidence. The late Qing model of 'evidential scholarship', whereby scholars sought authentic physical connections with objects of the past, is more in line with the way that curators worked earlier in the 20th century. There has been a major shift in the study of material culture by museums, from connoisseurship, through a form of apprenticeship and a traditionally intense examination of the artefact itself and the method of its production, to the study of an object within its wider social contexts. The contexts established for objects are the networks of people involved in their 'consumption', circulation and collection. Information about these networks is sometimes only available from the object itself. For example, in the section in this volume on calligraphy and seals, the chapter by Weitian Yan examines the circles of people involved with a model-compendia of letters in Guangzhou.

China's long 19th century, between the abdication of the Qianlong emperor in 1796 and that of the Xuantong 宣統 emperor in 1912, is an era that overlaps with its 'Century of National Humiliation' 百年國恥 (1839–1949). Its study has often been overshadowed by the consequences of a series of foreign and domestic conflicts, including the Opium Wars, Taiping Civil War, Sino-French War, Sino-Japanese War, Boxer War and Xinhai Revolution. Indeed, so enduringly painful has been the collective national memory of this era that even the museums in China that have a display of 19th-century material (and many do not) focus on a historical narrative illustrated with documents and photographs but with relatively few 19th-century objects, textiles and paintings. It is an era evoked by ruins, violence and cultural destruction. Remnants of the Old Summer Palace (Yuanmingyuan 圓明園), destroyed by British and French troops in 1860, are maintained as a site of national mourning and the sacked contents of the gardens scattered across the world.

Figure 5 Photograph of the *China's Hidden Century* exhibition held at the British Museum from May–October 2023

The purpose of focusing on the late Qing and bringing the people and material products of the era together in this book and conference was to redefine perceptions about 19th-century art in China and to open up new areas for future research. The conference also sought to challenge conventional methods of categorising art by presenting and grouping this material through a curator's 'warts and all' lens, with objects of 'daily life' discussed alongside 'commercial' and 'fine' art. It embraced an approach free from the more traditional conventional hierarchies of objects, and spotlighted the different approaches of a truly interdisciplinary group of scholars with backgrounds in universities, libraries, archives and museums, as well as collectors and dealers.

This conference volume is also one of the key outputs of the 2020–24 research project funded by the UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) on *Cultural Creativity in Qing China 1796–1912* (AH/T001895/1). Although the whole project involved over 400 people from 20 countries, at its core was a small team of myself, Julia Lovell, Professor of Modern History at Birkbeck, University of London, and Wenyuan Xin, Project Curator at the British Museum. Two other books have also been published as part of the project, both in 2023 and both of which are being translated into Chinese. The first, *Creators of Modern China*, is a collection of 100 essays by almost 100 authors on the lives of individuals who made a significant impact on the late Qing and beyond.[3] The second, *China's Hidden Century*, includes contributions from five other scholars who were our core advisory team (Mei Mei Rado, Stephen Platt, Chia-Ling Yang, Anne Gerritsen and Jeffrey Wasserstrom), and focuses on different sectors of late Qing society and their resilient and creative responses to China's long 19th century.[4]

China's Hidden Century accompanied a major exhibition of the same name at the British Museum from May to October 2023, designed by Nissen Richards Studios and known in China as 晚清百態 (literally, *The late Qing in all its forms*) (**Fig. 5**). The show attracted 237,000 recorded visitors to Bloomsbury, and aspects of the original research were disseminated to over 100 million people through social media and a packed public programme of events. Remarkably, the book of the exhibition was even illegally 'pirated' or bootlegged in China, showing both the widespread desire for information on the 19th century and the immense popularity of the show. With an emphasis on the extraordinary resilience and creativity exhibited amidst the horrific violence of the period, Chinese social media influencers, press and online coverage and an app that introduced the exhibition also helped to change attitudes to 19th-century China and provide an opportunity for debate.

Our research encompassed multiple smaller projects. For example, in the exhibition we used sound literally to give people from different sectors of 19th-century society a voice, a process that was greatly assisted by language specialists and native speakers. Some of the characters featured (among them a young woman, Cixi, a bannerman, an artist, an elderly woman, a merchant and a poet) 'spoke' through recordings of their own words; for others, a poem or historical text was adapted to give them speech. The languages heard in the show reflected a multicultural Qing empire in which Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, Chagatai and Chinese in many dialects – Mandarin, Cantonese and Shaoxing dialect

Figure 6 ***Papilionidae: Bhutanitis thaidina Blanchard*****, 1871: Chinese Three-tailed Swallowtail butterfly collected in 1899 in Sichuan, China. Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter accession/loan number 105/1936/33**

– were all spoken. The chosen voices also emphasised the roles of women and minorities, who are often excluded from the historical written record. Sound also conveyed a sense of place, for example in the urban section, which included the distinctive noises of pigeon whistles, snippets of Peking opera and the click-clacking of mahjong tiles. In the reformers and revolutionaries' section, 50 members of the London Chinese Philharmonic Choir created a bespoke recording of a song written by a female poet, Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875–1907), giving her an audible presence and providing a truly moving ending to the exhibition. Some of the other projects connected to the research, such as the painstaking restoration by conservators of a straw rain cape belonging to a labourer, or the process of working with students from the London College of Fashion to create the shadows of our key figures, are recorded in blogs. Other research, including on the evolution of Chinese universities' logos or on diaspora figures, is yet to be published.

This book of conference papers forms both a manual for the arts of China's long 19th century and a springboard for future research. The essays reveal the social, cultural, religious, creative, economic and political history of makers, users, owners and collectors. Students and professionals who work in the fields of art, art history, history, social history, Chinese studies, fashion, photography, craft and environmental studies will find it useful, and it will also appeal to a general public that is obviously eager for new information about the past.

The book, like the conference, is divided into eight sections, each introduced by a short essay that sets the scene: *Painting and patronage*; *Calligraphy and seal carving*; *Vernacular painting and prints*; *Maps, money and cultural media*; *Commerce and fashion*; *Textiles*; *Decorative arts*; and *Craft technology and the environment*. I am extremely grateful to all the authors and to those speakers whose busy schedules unfortunately did not allow them to produce written texts.

In the first section, *Painting and patronage*, Craig Clunas sets the scene for four papers by Michele Matteini, Michael J. Hatch, Roberta Wue and Ying-chen Peng, which together highlight some of the contrasting contexts for the consumption of paintings from the market place to the homes and gardens of elite groups of connoisseurs; from the public streets of Shanghai to the private confines of the Beijing palace. In section two, *Calligraphy and seal carving*, Roderick Whitfield's introduction considers the content of an elite classical education in 19th-century China, including the role that the study of calligraphy played within that education. He demonstrates that knowledge of the written Chinese language played an important part in uniting educated people across East Asia including in Korea and China. They spoke very different languages, but could converse using written classical Chinese. Chapters by Weitian Yan, Yeewan Koon and Chia-ling Yang explore the commissioning, use and creation of calligraphy and seals.

In section three, *Vernacular painting and prints*, Yu-ping Luk sets the scene for vernacular non-elite images from 19th-

Figure 7 Figure of General Xie 謝將軍 wearing a tall hat and holding a fan, painted wood, paper and hair, Chaozhou, 1875–1927, h. 26cm. British Museum, London, donated by Keith Stevens 1973,0419.1

century China that are defined by their functionality. The essays by Wen-chien Cheng, Alina Martimyanova and Patrick Conner explore different media – ancestral images, prints, paintings on glass and portraits in oils – and their social contexts.

In the introduction to section four, *Maps, money and cultural media*, Shane McCausland focuses on the ways in which different types of maps, books, money and photographs assisted the transmission of knowledge about China in the 1800s. Essays by Xue Zhang, Emma Harrison, Amy Matthewson, Helen Wang and Joe Cribb respectively examine the role of these materials in helping bureaucrats communicate with the Qing court to describe travel routes and land reclamation; the methods of codifying linguistic, religious and military knowledge; the ways in which a British photographer gained better understanding of the people she photographed through interactions with the Chinese people who assisted her; and finally, for the modern researcher, how to use Qing money as a resource for transmitting knowledge.[5]

Section five, *Commerce and fashion*, was chaired by Dorothy Ko and in her scene-setting introduction she addresses what happens when money and technology dictate the perception and valuation of art, fashion and design in the late Qing world. Chapters by Sarah Cheang, Rachel Silberstein and Mei Mei Rado focus on hair ornaments, cloth dyes and Japanese objects in the late Qing court.

In section six, *Textiles*, Yuhang Li's opening introduction considers how textiles enabled interaction between lay people and monastic practitioners, Chinese businesses and foreign traders. Chapters by Nancy Berliner and Chi-Lynn Lin demonstrate different aspects of textile production and their social contexts from patchwork to carpets.

Section seven, *Decorative arts*, is introduced by Cheng-hua Wang, who draws out connections between the essays, including the shift of production from the imperial court to local society across the 1800s. Xiaoxin Li, Shelly Xue, Jessica Harrison-Hall and Maria Menshikova focus on furniture, glass, ceramics and *cloisonné* enamelware.

In the introduction to the final section, *Craft technology and the environment*, Ching-fei Shih considers the development of technological and industrial knowledge. Yijun Wang's, Susan I. Eberhard's and Jonathan Schlesinger's papers focus on knowledge of mining, the circulation of commodities such as silver, and the effects of craft production (for example using ivory) on the environment.

This book is published in a series of both British Museum Research Publications and Sir Percival David Foundation Colloquies. However, I have also often thought of it as the first in a new series, because I hope that it will encourage the creation of another volume of material and visual culture from the long 19th century. As Shane McCausland notes in his introduction to section four, inevitably there are categories of objects that had to be omitted because of a lack of time and space, and those categories will hopefully be addressed by other scholars. I think that such a book could include: mass printing – postage stamps, postcards, illustrated newspapers and advertisements; machines – clocks, cars, steamships and trains; military equipment – arms and armour, flags and weapons; entertainments – games, musical instruments, puppets and opera; natural history – birds, animals, insects (**Fig. 6**) and plants; metalwork – charms, mirrors and altar vessels; carvings – soapstone sculpture, wood carvings (**Fig. 7**) and jades; and furniture and architecture – screens, tools, architectural fragments and buildings. We can endlessly define and redefine what fits together – even to the extent of what belongs in this volume and what needs to go into the next.

Many people may wonder why the arts of China's turbulent 19th century have been the focus of so large a project. Put simply, there was a gap that needed filling. This is true even of the British Museum's extraordinarily encyclopaedic collections, in which Qing China of the 1800s was relatively poorly represented. Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826–1897), almost a second founder of the Museum, donated his Chinese ceramics collection after exhibiting it in 1876 at the Bethnal Green Museum in London. The objects included some contemporary 19th-century porcelains, but not in the quantities of earlier eras. The British Museum curators who followed him, from Charles Hercules Read (1857–1929) to R.L. Hobson (1872–1941) and Soame Jenyns (1904–1976), rarely acquired late Qing objects or paintings. By contrast, the Museum's collection does include interesting objects of everyday life in the 19th century that were collected by missionaries, soldiers, doctors and diplomats, and they give us an idea of the sights, sounds and even texture of daily life at the end of the imperial age.

Nearly a decade ago, in 2015, we began rethinking the presentation of the Chinese collections at the British

Museum, in order to create a narrative of China's history from the Neolithic to the present in the Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery for China and South Asia. In parallel with this process, we wanted to show how China literally shifted shape, with borders changing and rechanging as dynasties came and went, and how its interactions with the outside world altered over time. The old narrative, which stood for 25 years from 1992 to 2017, had effectively stopped in the 18th century, like so many other presentations of China's past. Yet having taken the decision to fill a number of cases with an introduction to the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, it was extremely difficult to select material for the display on the 1800s. It was even harder to find books about objects of the late Qing, so that was in part the catalyst for wanting to work on the period and to bring scholars together in a network to pool existing knowledge, and to create something new and exciting for the oft-neglected material culture of the long 19th century.

The work by painting scholars on the Shanghai School of artists has demonstrated the extraordinary creativity that existed in this turbulent time. For example, Ren Xiong's 任熊 (1823–1857) exquisite self-portrait in the Palace Museum, Beijing, is material evidence that the 19th century was a time of remarkable innovation and resilience. In the past, there have been some wonderful exhibitions of 19th-century painting, which have shown that the arts were still flourishing during the period. In 1992, Claudia Brown and Ju-Hsi Chou's pioneering show opened at the Phoenix Art Museum with an accompanying book, *Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire, 1796–1911*.[6] With some 50 lenders and a list of acknowledgements that is effectively a who's who of Chinese art history in the 1990s, this show was an absolute game-changer, or, perhaps more accurately, a field- or discipline-changer. Organised with an emphasis on artists and places, in many ways it links to the current project. Other shows demonstrated the impact of photography, including Scottish photographer John Thomson's (1837–1921) works shown at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London in 2018 and, ending just before the British Museum's 19th-century exhibition began in 2023, *Power and Perspective: Early Photography in China* at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem in the United States.[7]

The almost 400 images that have been compiled for this volume are evidence of the extraordinary materials that survive and illustrate the material and visual culture of China's long 19th century. A trend to wear Hanfu 漢服, Manfu 满服 or modern adaptations of Chinese or Manchu costumes among visitors to the *China's Hidden Century* exhibition and the China gallery at the British Museum shows a creative engagement with the textiles of the late Qing and its acceptance into popular culture. More shows of late Qing dress are already being planned for New York and Hong Kong and we hope that many more 19th-century exhibitions will follow as the arts of the 19th century emerge from the shadows.

Notes

1 Brown and Chou 1992.
2 Wan 2005.
3 Harrison-Hall and Lovell 2023b.
4 Harrison-Hall and Lovell 2023a.
5 This last paper is different to the paper Helen Wang presented at the conference, which asked, 'The Chinese ransom – what happened to the millions of dollars of silver?' In response to Lin Zexu's (1785–1850) burning of opium in 1839, British troops attacked Canton in 1841; as one of the conditions for ending hostilities, Charles Elliott (1801–1875), Superintendent of Trade at Canton, demanded six million dollars of silver from the Chinese. What happened to all that silver? And where is it now? This was published by Helen Wang in 2023 (Wang 2023b).
6 Brown and Chou 1992.
7 Corrigan and Tung 2022.

1 PAINTING AND PATRONAGE

Introduction: painting and patronage

Craig Clunas

Well within living memory, the idea of '19th-century Chinese art' as a topic of serious research was inadmissible, this neglect being a reflection of wider currents of historical enquiry, which if they looked at the late Qing at all saw it very much within a framing of an activist West and a passive, even stagnant, China. With very few exceptions, like Mary Wright's 1957 volume on the Tongzhi period (1861–75), scholarship on China in western languages largely avoided the 19th century.[1] This was even more so in the developing field of Chinese art history. The standard survey volume available in the 1970s simply stops dead without comment, and without apology, in the 18th century.[2] Michael Sullivan's 1967 *A Short History of Chinese Art* might lament the 'general custom of books on Chinese art to end with the pious abdication of Ch'ien-lung in 1796', but his own coverage of the late Qing is in that first edition extremely sketchy, including no 19th-century works at all among its illustrations, and telling the reader (inaccurately) that by this time court painters had sunk to such a low status that 'even their names are unknown'. He further comments that 'The porcelain, lacquer, carved jade and other crafts of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century are derivative and uninspired'.[3] Here, he is essentially still echoing Stephen Bushell, who in 1906, in the first book in English to be entitled simply *Chinese Art*, complained of decline and stagnation in 'Pictorial Art', adding, 'nor is there yet any renaissance in sight'.[4]

Clearly things have changed. It therefore seems appropriate to draw attention to two key pieces of work which stand out as turning points in the discipline of Chinese painting studies. Significantly, both have a relationship to the intellectual climate of Hong Kong. If Hong Kong, with its origins in the British imperialist assault on the Qing from 1840 onwards, is seen as itself being a key artefact of 19th-century history, then it is hardly surprising that it should also be the setting for original reflections on the ways in which imperialism and colonialism played out in the arts of the era. The first turning point to be noted here is the work of a scholar long associated with the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Professor Mayching Kao 高美慶, stemming from her 1972 Stanford doctoral thesis, 'China's Response to the West in Art, 1898–1937'.[5] Today, the trope of 'China's Response to the West' has been extensively critiqued, and a current writer on the period would be wary of using this title, but it remains important to recognise the ground-breaking nature of Kao's address to art education, and her then-innovative time frame, which refused to fetishise 1911, the end of the Qing, as some impermeable boundary between reified categories of 'tradition' and 'modernity'.

The second piece of work is the polemically named 2005 volume by the late Professor Wan Qingli 萬青力 (1945–2017), then of the University of Hong Kong, titled in English as *The Century was not Declining in Art: A History of Nineteenth Century Painting*.[6] Richly illustrated, it was in the context of its time also slightly transgressive in its comprehensive embrace of a very broad array of picture-making practices in the last Qing century. Laudably, it takes the 19th century as a unit, *not* fetishising the 1840 boundary this time, but giving close attention to the often-neglected

Pages 8–9: After Tang Yifen 湯貽汾 (1778–1853), *Garden of Pleasure* (*Ai yuan tu* 愛園圖), 1848, Nanjing, ink and colours on paper, h. 59cm, l. 1580cm (whole painting). British Museum, London, 1938,1210,0.1

eras of Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1796–1820) and Daoguang 道光 (1821–1850). It refuses any hierarchy of esteem, and simply disregards hand-wringing about categories of 'Chinese' and 'western' in favour of a rich range of material. To that extent, it underlines the fact that the topic of painting in China's long 19th century has never been entirely insulated from trends in the wider discipline of art history. The move from questions of defining a canon of perceived quality, to a wider historical scope and a willingness to look at what was being done, *as historians* and not with a critically judgmental eye, is a part of those larger trends which *The Century was not Declining in Art* shares. Another such trend is the shift of attention which the book demonstrates, from artists to audiences, to contexts of reception as well as production. A third aspect, perhaps most importantly, is that this is a 'China-centred' account, as opposed to one of 'response' to external stimuli, even if those impacts are never ignored or underplayed. An important methodological point is being made here. In asserting that, during this vibrant century of creative endeavour, painting in China was like this, *and* like this, *and* like this, Wan is issuing a powerful rebuke to all monolithic or reductive readings of the period. He gives us 'and, and' instead of 'either, or'. This points a way for scholarship to embrace the notion that the 19th century was a period of tragedy and war, colonial violence and aggression, in which culture was on occasion destroyed and plundered, *and* it was a period of resistance to that aggression, *and* it was a period in which cultural newness was brought into the world by the imagination and energy of China's creators. To honour that creativity with scholarly attention is not to disregard the adverse conditions under which it was often practised.

The two volumes singled out above are clearly not the only works of significance – one might equally draw attention to the presence in the Drenowatz collection, now in the Rietberg Museum, Zurich, of 19th-century works, catalogued by art historian Chu-tsing Li (1920–2014) as early as 1974.[7] And in 1987 art dealer Robert Ellsworth (1929–2014) published three volumes documenting a collection of post-Qianlong painting and calligraphy, now mostly in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.[8] But there is clearly much more to be done, and the essays collected here are at the forefront of doing it. The four contributions in this section by Michele Matteini, Michael J. Hatch, Roberta Wue and Ying-chen Peng address the production and consumption of late Qing painting in a range of settings, and look at the contexts of the marketplace in which objects were bought and sold, as well as the personal sensory experiences of elite connoisseurs. They give a sense of the wide range of actors engaged with painting in the late Qing world, and the growth of new forms of appreciation and understanding of that art.

Notes

1 Wright 1957.
2 Sickman and Soper 1956.
3 Sullivan 1967, 260.
4 Bushell 1904–6, vol. 2, 144.
5 Kao 1972.
6 Wan 2005.
7 Li 1974.
8 Ellsworth 1987.

Chapter 1
The ‘stuff’ of Liulichang

Michele Matteini

In Lao She’s 老舍 (1899–1966) *Four Generations Under One Roof*, the monumental account of life in Beijing during Japanese occupation, the capital lies silent and hollow; everything that once pulsed with energy is now debris and roaming ghosts. Beijing’s imposing walls and avenues, its unique customs, even the weather, are suspended between waning glory and an unscripted future. Ruixuan 瑞宣, the oldest son of the Qi 祁 family whose vicissitudes run through the novel, is similarly caught halfway: he is a dedicated citizen of New China, fluent in many languages, yet reluctant to leave behind everything that had made Beijing great. Hoping to make some extra cash, Ruixuan reconnects with his old university professor, the mercurial Mr Goodrich, ‘a typical Englishman [who] had his opinions about everything’.[1] These opinions did not always align with Ruixuan’s, especially Mr Goodrich’s disdain for everything modern and his unwavering adoration for imperial Beijing, second only to his love for Britain. Yet, Ruixuan was intrigued by the Englishman and his erudition: he was a real ‘encyclopedia of Peking lore’.[2] After retiring, Mr Goodrich had withdrawn into a courtyard house with the sole company of an elderly eunuch. There, he had amassed an enormous amount of old junk, picked up from various corners of the city, and stuffed it into a small room with the somewhat grandiose name of ‘Small Liulichang’. Mr Goodrich had also planned to write the most exhaustive account of Beijing’s history and traditions, and for that he needed an editorial assistant. Ruixuan took on that role, but soon realised that the project had grown so disproportionately that its completion, variously announced, could never be accomplished.

This desire of cataloguing everything, of making endless lists of what was in fact indefinable because too rich, too vast, too multiform, is a familiar trope in the description of

Figure 8 Hedda Morrison, *Man at the Curios Market of Liulichang*, c. 1933–46, gelatin silver process, h. 19.5cm, w. 15.5cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 4178386

Figure 9 ***Complete Map of Beijing*** **(*Jingshi cheng nei shoushan quantu* 京師城內首善全圖), 1870, ink on paper h. 60cm, w. 54cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, T 3086 1109. The black rectangle highlights the location of the Liulichang Market in Beijing's Outer City**

ancient capitals in China, including Beijing. And it reappears with special potency in the textual life of Liulichang 琉璃廠, the largest emporium in the city and the empire, to which Mr Goodrich's storage arrangements paid modest homage. Growing rapidly to become one of the symbols of Beijing's cultural efflorescence and economic prosperity, Liulichang was a busy hub, where a vast amount of old and new stuff could be bought, commissioned, bartered or simply admired. Beijing residents and out-of-town visitors took pride in the bustling landscape of Liulichang and left vivid accounts of their leisurely strolls through its seemingly endless rows of shops and stands where they browsed for rarities or met fellow art lovers (**Fig. 8**). If the name of Liulichang conjures today the nostalgic atmospheres of 'Old Beijing', Chen Shizeng's 陳師曾 (1876–1923) lively sketches of street life, or Lu Xun's 魯迅 (1881–1936) erudite wanderings through time and space, the history of Liulichang had begun much earlier and is deeply entwined with the alternate fortunes of Beijing under Qing dominion and its aftermath.[3]

What made Liulichang a place like no other has been told many times and cannot be adequately recounted in this short paper, which will instead explore the market for pictures after a general introduction to Liulichang's

Figure 10 Hedda Morrison, *Stall at the Antique Market*, c. 1933–46, negative on film, h. 6cm, w. 9cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 4186610

changing layout and organisation. Prevalent narratives revolve around a set of recurring themes: the fortuitous discovery of lost 'treasures' by astute and discerning scholars, the seamless merging of scholarship and commerce, and the accomplishments of ambitious dealers who rose from anonymity to fame thanks to their cleverness, sophistication and connections with Beijing's powerful elites. These stories, evocative as they are, inscribe Liulichang into a triumphal narrative of capitalist growth and reward that does not quite register the fragile ecology of the place, the precarious existence of the many peddlers, smugglers, in-betweeners and connoisseurs-for-hire for whom the market was not a fashionable destination, and the influx of an enormous amount of low-value stuff that, piled up all over, defied even the most zealous list-taker.

A visit to Liulichang

In Qing Beijing, Liulichang stood in the southwestern quadrant of the city, an area that was part of the Outer City 外城 and known colloquially as Xuannan 宣南 [lit: 'South of the Xuan (wu Gate)']. To get to Liulichang one had to reach the imposing Zhengyang Gate 正陽門 and take one of the long, narrow lanes on the west side that ran parallel to the city walls and the wide moat (**Fig. 9**). Weaving through stands of dried fruits and other delicacies, one eventually arrived at a small clearing where a sign marked the entrance to the market. The site of a former factory producing glazed tiles for imperial buildings, Liulichang was what we would today call a multipurpose space: a mix of commercial, residential, manufacturing and worship areas in close proximity to one another. In the early 1700s, permission was granted to relocate into this vacant lot in a fast-developing area of Beijing, attracting book sellers, printing shops and other businesses. If prior to that date, Beijing residents had come to Liulichang in conjunction with a popular temple fair, a daily market was then set up where all sorts of things, from books and stationery to furniture, antiques and tourist souvenirs, were on display.

Liulichang's location was ideal, easily reachable by both land and water and in close proximity to the residences of Beijing's top collectors. In the area also lodged long- and short-term visitors to the capital, examination candidates, unemployed scholars, impresarios and anyone else who came to seek their fortune. The Outer City had developed after the 1648 Qing's reorganisation of Beijing into two separate but complementary halves, with the Inner City surrounding the Imperial Palace on one side and the Outer City on the other. By the late 18th century, the Outer City sprawled like a labyrinth of narrow alleys enveloping ancient temples, markets and belvederes.[4] Its population was geographically and socially diversified, and the area thrived at the intersection of the world of the court, the central administration and the provinces.

The extension of the original market is the subject of some discussion because early sources certainly overstated its size to better convey the authors' wonder about what they saw. In 1765, the market spanned two continuous lanes, bordered by two gates and interrupted by a bridge over a canal, a vestige of the site's previous use.[5] As time passed, more businesses moved in, and the market expanded to encompass all adjacent lanes. In 1915, the Haiwangcun Park 海王村公園 was created nearby, featuring 59 more stalls along its perimeter.[6] Famous artists established their ateliers in the vicinity, while high-end craftsmen, once their employment at court had ended, set up their workshops around Liulichang. These workshops offered new designs as well as replicas of old ones. Additionally, second-hand stores and pawnshops further diversified the range of goods available in the area. For those in need of a break, there were restaurants and food stands.

Bookshops were typically identified by dark green banners and large plaques inscribed by famous scholars. In earlier periods, they featured ornate latticework facades with touches of green and blue, but in the 19th century they adopted simpler designs with pale pink or white walls.[7] Ground-floor showrooms displayed select highlights while

Figure 11 Zhang Qi 張淇, ***Pulling a Carriage for Help*** 攀轅求救 **from *Dianshizhai huabao*** 點石齋畫報 **(Dianshizhai pictorial), 1884, Shanghai, issue chou 4, lithograph, h. 23.7cm, w. 13.7cm (approx. closed). Shanghai Library**

private spaces were reserved above for special clients. Here, scholars would relax, 'loosen their hat string', and enjoy rare items while being served food.[8] Storage areas were usually in the back, along with makeshift living quarters for staff. The interiors were crammed with hundreds of books, each identified by a white cotton slip, as well as antiques and paintings displayed on tables and walls. One visitor remembered the overwhelming experience of stepping into a mirror shop and the disorientation of seeing oneself refracted into myriad images.[9] Another estimated that if all the books he had seen were piled up, their height would surpass that of Mount Namsan, Korea's tallest mountain.[10] What was arrayed for sale in these shops was truly unprecedented, but the stuff amassed on temporary stalls and directly on the streets was genuinely overwhelming (**Fig. 10**). For one visitor, going to Liulichang was like visiting a 'Persian market', the kind of magical place that could be read about in novels.[11] Despite one's best effort to see everything, a single day was not enough.

'Strolling through Liulichang' (*you chang* 游廠) became a fashionable pastime for Beijing's elites. People flocked there not only to peruse new arrivals but also to engage in various social rituals. Beijing's powerful scholars were known to bring their pupils to Liulichang for informal training sessions, making it the ideal place to catch their attention. But one could also come for remonstration, as in the case of a destitute peasant who blocked the way of the minister Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 (1823–1901). In an illustration of the incident in the late Qing publication *Dianshizhai huabao* (點石齋畫報), the neat arrangement of the shops and their tidy interiors were certainly determined by the decision to dramatise the disruptive episode in the foreground, rather than by a desire to accurately capture Liulichang's true character (**Fig. 11**). In reality, the market was bustling and chaotic during the day and also at night. Students gathered there to await examinations results in boisterous events, and the festive parades of those who succeeded passed through before dispersing into the theatres, wine shops and brothels conveniently located nearby. As electricity reached the area in the late 19th century, Liulichang transformed into a dazzling kaleidoscope of coloured lights. The first photographic studio in Beijing opened there in 1892 and China's first cinema, the Daguan lou 大觀樓, followed in 1905.

Over its long history, Liulichang also endured loot and destruction, particularly during the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) and the May Fourth Demonstrations in 1919. Fires routinely ravaged the area, which was always rebuilt in slightly different configurations. The final years of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) were especially arduous with the city isolated from the rest of the country and its population dispersed. Several dealers relocated

Figure 12 Hedda Morrison, *Mr. Huang in His Antique Shop*, *c.* 1933–46, gelatin silver process, h. 8cm, w. 7.5cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 4186264

Figure 13 Hedda Morrison, *Mr. Huang in His Antique Shop with His Staff*, *c.* 1933–46, gelatin silver process, h. 8cm, w. 7.5cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 4185114

elsewhere and, under Mr Goodrich's concerned eyes, the market's fortunes declined. Today Liulichang, admittedly a pale reflection of its past glory, is the by-product of 1980s urban rejuvenation plans and occupies the westernmost edge of its original location.

The hands of Liulichang

Precious, rare and unique things were not the only reason to visit Liulichang; the chance to meet its dealers was also not to be missed. Unforgettable pages were written about these dealers' colourful personalities and manners (**Fig. 12**). The scholar Yu Tŭkkong 柳得恭 (1748–1807), for instance, recounts a lively exchange with Cui Qi 崔琦 (dates unknown), the owner of the Wuliu Ju 五柳居, a must-stop destination for Chosŏn emissaries to the Qing court.[12] Mr Cui was a southerner who had relocated to Beijing under the recommendation of his father. He initially intended to stay only for a short time, but the business was too good to relinquish. Mr Cui cooked excellent food, entertained guests for hours and was quite forthright about current affairs. At the time of this meeting, around 1800, Mr Cui expressed concern about the disruptions in the southwest, likely a reference to the White Lotus Uprising (1796–1804), and was adamant that its causes had to be found in officials' corruption and an inadequate imperial army. Mr Cui also mentioned that most of his goods came from the south, but lamented the burden of steep taxation on his trade.

Dealers' backgrounds were diverse and changed over time. While southerners were predominant during the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, Hebei and Shanxi natives took over the market in the late Qing and Republican eras.[13] Several of these dealers had been examination candidates who turned to trade as their careers in the administration faltered. Others, like Mr Cui, inherited the family business and brought it to Beijing where opportunities for growth were unparalleled. Still others, as we shall see, began their careers at Liulichang in the lower echelons and, after years of training, managed to establish their own ventures. Some dealers were highly regarded among scholars not only because of their ability to scout rare items, but also for their active involvement in publishing and collecting.

Research on the book trade has revealed the logistics of an articulated network that connected Beijing to the provinces through intermediaries and agents acting on behalf of Liulichang dealers, particularly in the southeastern regions.[14] Goods from the south were transported along the Grand Canal and unloaded at Zhangjiawan 張家灣 on the outskirts of Beijing. Dealers also scoured the city itself for precious holdings and solicited consignments from departing officials.[15] The financial investment required to enter into the business was substantial, and for those without personal or family wealth, funding was provided by affluent patrons who took a share of the profits. Imperial princes and members of the court played crucial roles in the development and longevity of Liulichang. For example, Zaifeng 載灃 (1883–1951), prince-regent between 1908 and 1911, contributed in 1900 to the establishment of the Shangqi zhai 賞奇齋, an antique shop that was managed by one of his personal assistants. Wen Xi 文錫 (dates unknown), former head of the Imperial Household Department, was associated with the Yanqing tang 延清堂, a shop specialising in Song and Yuan ceramics, as well as the Daguan zhai 大觀齋, of which more below.[16] When the latter was destroyed during the Boxer Rebellion, Wen funded the shop's renovation. To bypass legislation that prohibited involvement with trade, court members referred to their properties in Liulichang as a 'place to rest' on the way from and to the Inner City where they resided and relied on trusted representatives 'body men' to overview their interests .[17] The connections between Liulichang dealers and court members require further

Figure 14 Hedda Morrison, *Street Vendor Selling Second-hand Goods*, c. 1933–46, gelatin silver process, h. 19.5cm, w. 16cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 4179532

investigation, but they likely began quite early. Already during the Qianlong reign, properties of princes fallen from favour or rare imperial editions and objects became available at Liulichang. In later periods, these ties must have only intensified, as indicated by politician and collector Duanfang's 端方 (1861–1911) multiple activities in the area.[18]

To maximise profit and minimise competition, dealers organised themselves into conglomerates. It was common for them to sign collaborative agreements as well as to join forces to acquire struggling businesses, which were then relaunched under new management.[19] Typically, these responsibilities were delegated to younger associates. In late 19th- and early 20th-century sources, the practice of becoming an apprentice within the entourage of a prominent dealer is well documented (**Fig. 13**). For example, Xiao Shunong 蕭書農 (dates unknown) arrived at Liulichang from Hebei at age 15 to work under the dealer Zhao Peizhai 趙佩齋 (dates unknown), also from Hebei. Zhao oversaw the renowned Rugu zhai 茹古齋 and later established the Daguan zhai, with record funding of 9,000 taels provided by Wen Xi.[20] Apprentices were involved in all aspects of the profession, from setting up stores to running errands for clients, and received bonuses based on their performance, in addition to a monthly allowance. After five years, at the age of 20, Xiao Shunong opened the Yawen zhai 雅文齋, dealing in ceramics. During his time at the Rugu zhai, Xiao worked alongside Zhou Jiechen 周杰臣 (dates unknown), who had also been one of Zhao's pupils before becoming his business partner. These years of apprenticeship provided Zhou with the credentials and connections to enable him to venture solo with the Jiangu zhai 鑒古齋, one of the few stores specialising in embroidery during the Republican period. Zhou was close to Zhu Qiqian 朱啟鈐 (1872–1964) the 'founding father of Chinese architectural conservation', and much of Zhu's research on craft traditions was conducted in Liulichang, particularly at Zhou's shop.[21]

While some apprentices managed to establish their own businesses, many others did not but nevertheless remained in the area. In the late Qianlong reign, the Chosŏn scholar Pak Chiwŏn 朴趾源 (1735–1805) noted the presence of young men with 'haggard and emaciated appearances', who, despite their 'impoverished background', were the foremost specialists in seal carving and epigraphy.[22] They earned a 'meagre' living by selling books and scholars' objects, or by acting as intermediaries between clients and dealers. These 'street connoisseurs' became fixtures at Liulichang, and their role must have been significant if even a seasoned regular like the scholar and high official Weng Tonghe 翁同龢 (1830–1904) recognised them as the true talents of the market.[23] Beneath and around them was an even larger population of peddlers, itinerant sellers, smugglers, resellers and individuals who roamed with small baskets filled with random stuff, known in Beijing parlance as 'Shangmazi' 上馬子 (**Fig. 14**).[24]

Experienced dealers advised waiting for three years before opening a store and believed that a store would remain profitable for three years.[25] This adage captures the precarious ecosystem of Liulichang, a place shaped by insiders' rules and subject to quickly evolving economic trends, volatile fashions, and unpredictable shifts in supply and demand. Like any other market, Liulichang had a complex ecology that expanded and contracted as the capital and the world around it changed and as the economic geography of the empire first and the Republic later was transformed by the rise of new buyers and new dealers' strategies.[26] With the exception of a few establishments that enjoyed multi-generational success, most shops were short-lived or changed ownership often.

Figure 15 Hedda Morrison, ***Men Looking at Scroll Paintings for Sale at New Year's Market at Liulichang***, ***c.*** **1933–46, gelatin silver process, h. 18.5cm, w. 15cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 4179591**

Conservative critics saw in the instability of Liulichang a sign of broader societal decline and blamed dealers' increasingly rapacious behaviour as well as a lack of discernment on the part of buyers.[27] However, the market also served as a learning ground for new generations of art professionals who might not have had such opportunities otherwise. Liulichang's significance in this regard should be understood in the context of the emergence of other more accessible spaces for exhibiting art that significantly altered how the specialised knowledge of art expertise circulated in modern China. Even a progressive and cosmopolitan critic like Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879–1942) acknowledged in a famous essay that he would not have gained a thorough understanding of Qing 'Orthodox' painting, the target of his critiques, without the many hours spent in the shop belonging to his uncle, a famous dealer at Liulichang.[28]

Looking for pictures at Liulichang

A quick look at any historical account of Liulichang reveals that the volume and range of famous works that passed through it was truly impressive. The wide distribution of these accounts also bolstered Liulichang's reputation as a place where great discoveries could indeed be made (**Fig. 15**). Whether these works were always what they claimed to be is debatable, but over the years, renowned collectors and scholars regularly checked on Liulichang's offer. In 1852, the eminent antiquarian Chen Jieqi 陳介祺 (1813–1884) saw the *ding* tripod vessel of the Duke of Mao at the Debao zhai 德寶齋 and immediately recognised it as one of the greatest bronzes of the Western Zhou period (*c.* 1046 –771 BCE). Chen paid a 'high price' for it and kept the purchase secret even from his closest associates.[29] The cauldron had arrived in Liulichang through the intermediation of another dealer based in Xi'an, where the vessel was unearthed, who had paid a mere 20 taels to a local farmer for it.[30] Many of the over 6,000 ancient bronze seals in Chen's collection were also purchased at Liulichang and, following Chen's death, were resold there.

When it comes to painting and calligraphy, the documentation is especially fragmentary, partly because of scholars' notorious reticence about discussing the monetary value of their precious possessions. Because of that and because dealers' records are rare, it may never be possible to conduct the kind of detailed survey historians have accomplished for the book trade or other segments of the market for second-hand goods in Beijing's Outer City.[31] Still, we know that not only were antique paintings and calligraphy sold at Liulichang, but also contemporary works, sometimes directly from artists, fashionable, decorative pictures, and even 'Western' imports or replicas.[32] He Tongyun 何彤雲, an 1844 imperial graduate, meticulously documented the names and locations of Liulichang's main stores, their proprietors and their respective specialisations.[33] He commented on the popularity of establishments selling commemorative portraiture and on the significance of paper and mounting shops, which also functioned as consignment stores where items could be left for resale. His concise entries highlighted particular appealing items but did not provide prices or detailed descriptions of them.

Later in the 19th century, comprehensive reports about Liulichang's art market began to appear, inspired by earlier analogous publications on the book market. The official Li Baoxun 李葆恂 (1859–1915), for instance, claimed to have noted down all the valuable pictures he could identify at Liulichang and made transcriptions of each painting's seals and colophons.[34] Like others, Li was concerned about the countless forgeries he encountered, including over 200 of Wang Yuanqi's 王原祁 (1642–1715) works. Nonetheless, he was amazed at the exceptional quality of his discoveries. His entries read like a who's who of the classical canon of Chinese painting, featuring works ascribed to artists such as Wang Meng 王蒙 (1308–1385), Huang Gongwang 黄公望 (1269–1354) and Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (*c.* 345–406), some of which have since been firmly attributed. Regrettably, Li does not share much about how these pictures ended up at Liulichang, nor does he report on their values, although he occasionally notes that the price was high.

Less systematic but considerably richer is the diary of Weng Tonghe, a resource extensively used today to document price fluctuations and the supply of historical paintings, as well as to gain a deeper sense of the various forms of collaboration between top collectors and Liulichang dealers.[35] Heir of a prestigious family from Changzhou, Jiangsu province, Weng was summoned in 1875 to serve as tutor for the future emperor and he intermittently resided in Beijing until 1898. During this period, his diary chronicles almost daily visits to Liulichang. Weng was a familiar presence there and even contributed his calligraphy

Figure 16 Hedda Morrison, *Stall at the Antique Market*, *c.* 1933–46, negative on film, h. 6cm, w. 9cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 4183680

to adorn the signs of several renowned shops. In line with other sources of the time, Weng's diary confirms the overwhelming popularity of classicising landscape painting in the so-called 'Orthodox' tradition of the 17th and 18th centuries.[36] The Lungu zhai 論古齋, which was a must-stop destination for Weng and others, shipped these kinds of paintings from Suzhou and resold them at a higher price in Liulichang.[37] Some of them found their way into Weng's collection, while others remained beyond his reach.

Wang Hui's 王翬 (1632–1717) *Ten Thousand Miles along the Yangzi River* 長江萬里圖 was among the great treasures in Weng Tonghe's collection, and that too was purchased at Liulichang.[38] Painted in 1699, this impressive 16m-long scroll is a tour de force of compositional invention and technical precision. Laden with references to prestigious ancient sources, the painting remained in private hands until Weng saw it in 1875 at the Bogu zhai 博古齋. The initial asking price was 1,000 taels, a staggering sum, especially when considering that the annual rent for Weng's residence was 240 taels and his court salary was about 200. After a lengthy negotiation, Weng managed to secure the painting for 400 taels, which was less than half the asking price but still a considerable amount. Less ambitious works by Wang Hui were selling for around 200 in Shanghai and for just 25 in Canton.[39] To make this purchase, Weng had to use all his savings, a decision that must have been difficult to make. In a poem inscribed on the wooden case for the treasured painting, he candidly asked himself: 'Who would buy a painting instead of a house?'[40]

The stuff of Liulichang

These records are insightful, but they tend to focus on the upper echelon of the market, a domain controlled by prominent dealers and affluent buyers who mobilised substantial sums to salvage unique and precious items from amongst the heaps of cheaper, damaged and counterfeited items. To exclusively spotlight these transactions, while disregarding the countless others unfolding around them at any given time, means continuing to disseminate a somewhat rarified idea of a place that was, in fact, fast-paced and quite chaotic. Indeed, what struck everyone upon arriving at Liulichang was the hectic ebb and flow of crowds and the sheer abundance of stuff that filled every nook and cranny within the shops, storage areas and surrounding environs. One overwhelmed visitor described that stuff as causing a 'headache' and another experienced 'vertigo' after only a few hours at the market.[41]

Written records group the mass of Liulichang's stuff as '*zaxiang*' 雜項, a term conveniently placed at the end of a list to encompass the miscellaneous, the trinkets, the knick-knacks, and anything else deemed unworthy of individual mention. This 'materiality out of bounds' was, however, the real substance of the market, a volatile and unclassifiable amalgamation of old and new, ordinary and possibly valuable things that exceeded classification and unsettled the commodity system established by top dealers.[42] Cluttered in precarious assemblages on tables, stands, or even right on the street, this stuff constituted an extraordinary repository of craft traditions, applied skills and forms of embodied knowledge that have not always been

Figure 17 John Thomson, *Dealers in Peking*, 1869, glass photonegative, wet collodion. Wellcome Collection, London, 19702i

adequately preserved (**Fig. 16**). These transient yet thoughtful presentations also fostered unexpected material, formal and multimedia exchanges between seemingly disparate objects with purportedly different temporal or geographical origins, and inspired artists and craftsmen in their own creations. More significantly, these low-value and easily dismissed accumulations told stories of the many unaccounted-for makers and sellers for whom Liulichang was both home and workplace and whose experiences were marked by precarity, insecurity and self-reliance.

For the numerous visitors, writers and artists who shared their vivid descriptions of leisurely hours spent at the market, 'strolling through Liulichang' was a momentary suspension of the rigid geometries of institutional life. Liulichang provided the coordinates for shaping an alternative cityscape modelled on opportunities and disappointments, and encounters between rapidly moving people and equally rapidly moving things. For those who, in a practical sense, made all that possible and unforgettable, Liulichang was, however, something else. Just as a history of the accomplishments of the top dealers and buyers remains incomplete without recognising the impact of the numerous associates and apprentices who ran the businesses from day to day, a history of the 'treasures' of Liulichang should not gloss over the extraordinary, multiform and ever-shifting material environment in which such rare objects were once immersed and which so vividly resurfaces in old photographs and rare film recordings today (**Fig. 17**). To reconsider Liulichang as a space of convergence, a gathering point for multiple, intersecting agents, rather than as a singular totality, is to draw closer to the incessant influx, accumulation and dispersal of things in the vast, cosmopolitan, congested metropolis that Beijing was in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and to the coordinated movements of those who made, carried, held and cared for these things.

Notes

1 *Four Generations Under One Roof* includes three parts that were written between 1944 and 1948 while Lao She was in Beijing, Chongqing and New York City. No complete English translation exists and the abridged version by Ida Pruitt has been used here (Lao She 1951, 203). On the representation of Beijing in Lao She's fiction and plays, see Song 2018, 36–79.
2 Lao She 1951, 204.
3 The literature on Liulichang is vast, but standard references include Sun 2010, Ye 1997 and Ma 2018. On Lu Xun and Liulichang, see Chen 2020.
4 For an introduction to the history and cultural life of Beijing's Southern City during the Qing Dynasty, see Wei 2008.
5 Hong 2001, 319.
6 Liulichang was also called Haiwangcun 海王村 and Changdian 廠甸, and the three terms appear interchangeably in early sources. On the park, see Wu and Chang 2022b, 128.
7 Kim 2001, 569, cited in Wang 2011, 24.
8 Yu 2001, 663.
9 Kim 2001, 252, cited in Lee 2017, 207.
10 Yi 2001, 87–9.
11 Han 2008, 306.
12 Yu 2001, 663.
13 Wu and Chang 2022b, 47.
14 Wang 2018; Reed 2015.
15 Wang and Chang 2022a, 51.
16 Wu and Chang 2022a, 46.
17 Chen 1990, 50.
18 See the plan for the opening the Taozhai Museum in 1910; Li 2019.
19 Ma 2018, 147–8.
20 Liu 2022, 54–5.
21 Ma 2018, 145.
22 Pak 1997, 289.
23 Ma 2018, 156.
24 Wu and Chang 2022a, 131n.9.
25 Liu 2018, 22.
26 Several modern authors point to the increasing investment of Japanese businesses and the impact of European or American buyers in Liulichang during the Republican period. In addition, to coordinate a more diversified market, dealers also established semi-public auctions and the Antique Dealers Association. Wu and Chang 2022b.
27 Zhou Zhaoxiang 1995, cited in Sun 2010, 22.
28 Cited in Yin 2018, 204–5.
29 See the colophon by Bao Kang 鮑康 (1810–1881) on the 'full-form' rubbing of the vessel (000299-00000) in the collection of the National Palace Museum, where the vessel is also housed.
30 Ma and Tian 2023, 52.
31 On the book trade, see Dou 2006; on second-hand textiles, see Silberstein 2019.
32 Matteini 2019.
33 Sun 2010, 144–6.
34 Sun 2010, 343–62.
35 Weng 2006.
36 Zhen 1982, 170–1.
37 Yin 2018, 203.
38 The painting is now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Gift of the Wan-go H. C. Weng Collection and the Weng family, in honor of Weng Tonghe, 2018.2106). On its provenance, see Ying 2018.
39 Pan 2020, 54.
40 Ying 2018, 24.
41 Kwŏn 2001, 141; Pak 1962, 899.
42 Boscagli 2014, 3.

Chapter 2
Tactful relations: networking through touch in early 19th-century literati art

Michael J. Hatch

Oxidised ancient bronzes (**Fig. 18**) and fresh radishes (**Fig. 19**): what might these two paintings have in common? At first glance, perhaps very little. Their subjects belong to entirely different genres of painting – portraiture and bird-and-flower – each of which maintained different image conventions and canons of style. The figure painting by Zhou Zan 周瓚 (active *c.* 1800), from 1803, shows a gathering of three scholars engaged in the study of ancient bronzes. It is a social image meant to confirm the relationship between an elite group and their antique possessions in stable, idealised terms. The radish bunch by Chen Hongshou 陳鴻壽 (1768–1822), from 1810, is one page from a larger painting album of fruits, vegetables and flora that uses loose, vigorous marks to sketch out impressions of living plants.

These paintings do come from the same decade, and they were made for members of the same social circle. However, I would propose that these contextual linkages provide less of a connection between the images than another, more unexpected, factor: that both must be understood primarily through their shared appeals to touch.

This may seem quite apparent in the case of Zhou Zan's *Accumulated Antiquities*, a collector portrait of Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), who sits at the centre of the scene while watching his friend Zhu Weibi 朱為弼 (1771–1840) and his adopted son Ruan Changsheng 阮常生 (d. 1833) handle two bronzes from his collection. Two of the figures are shown engaging in acts of touch, and this tactile approach does not stop with the portrait. As the image unrolls to the left, a series of rubbings follow, each documenting the text-bearing portions of the various bronzes depicted in the painting (**Fig. 20**). Just as the men are painted in the act of taking pleasure in the green-blue patinated surfaces of the bronzes, so can a viewer of this handscroll indulge in similar surface contact with each object through the direct experiences of touch that the rubbings record. As art historian Eric Lefebvre has argued, this is doubly a portrait – firstly of the three men, and secondly of the 90 or so bronze and stone objects, with the latter benefiting from two separate sets of depiction, one in painted pigment, the other in rubbed ink.[1]

But what of the radishes? How can their image possibly be as tactile as the antiquarian painting when no body is depicted touching another body and no rubbings are appended? The answer is in their brushless-ness. Chen's depiction of these vibrant red roots is one leaf from a larger album of flora made for his friend Yuan Tingdao 袁廷檮 (1762–1810), several pages of which Chen painted using the 'boneless' style, in which surface washes diffuse the brush's line. Boneless brushwork was part of a larger disavowal of the brush's indexicality that Chen promoted in his art. Aside from this technique, he often painted directly with his fingers; and in his seal cutting, rather than composing words first with a brush, he advocated for direct use of the knife on stone as if it were a brush. His inscription to the radish painting plays with the semantic implications of touch: 'I take this down to the corner to sell it for a coin; I prepare myself in rouge to pen gifts for these gentlemen.' In this couplet, the painting becomes a crude commodity for exchange, the modulated surfaces of the taproots become the touched-up face of the painter, and the ink and brush of a scholar become the make-up tools of a courtesan – a set of

Figure 18 (above) Zhou Zan 周瓚, *Accumulated Antiquities* (*Jigu tu* 積古圖), 1803, handscroll, ink and colour on paper, h. 33.8cm, w. 67.5cm. National Library of China, Beijing, 善拓188

Figure 19 (left) Chen Hongshou 陳鴻壽, leaf from *Album of Flora* for Yuan Tingdao, 1810, ink and colour on paper, h. 26.7cm, w. 37.5cm (each leaf). Shanghai Museum

exchanges that use gender play to identify the ambivalent attitude many early 19th-century literati had towards the means of their livelihood.

Each picture may belong to a different genre of painting, and each may promote a visual and material engagement with the sense of touch or surface by varying means, but as the remainder of this chapter will show, these two paintings are both grounded in a generationally specific interest in tactility. This early 19th-century turn towards touch originated in an epigraphic aesthetic that defined the literati arts and material culture of the period, an aesthetic that can in turn be traced to the increased popularity of rubbings in the 18th century, when they became essential primary sources for evidential scholarship, the fact-based mode of analysis that dominated intellectual discourse at the time.[2]

If we return to Zhou Zan's painting, this relationship between touch and the subject of epigraphy is, again, quite visible in the proud display of ancient bronzes and the appended rubbings of their inscriptions. It may, however, be surprising to find that the radish painting is just as invested in classical linguistics. Chen further notes in his inscription that 'rouge 燕支 is also written as rouge 胭脂', using two homophonous words with different characters that describe the same material. Likewise, in a painting of loquats following the radishes in this album, Chen writes, 'The pipa 枇杷 [loquat fruit] is not the pipa 琵琶 [instrument]; they only called it that back then because they hadn't yet learned the word. If a pipa [instrument] could grow fruit, then flowers will soon be spouting from the ends of all the flutes in town.'

These short etymological asides only offer a muted reflection of the greater obsession with the forms and materiality of ancient language that Chen cultivated while working under Ruan Yuan over several decades, and which was typical of most scholars in his generation. Whereas Ruan's interest primarily manifested in the production of large scholarly catalogues of ancient inscriptions and the emulation of classical calligraphy styles in his own brushwork, Chen's fascination crossed material boundaries.

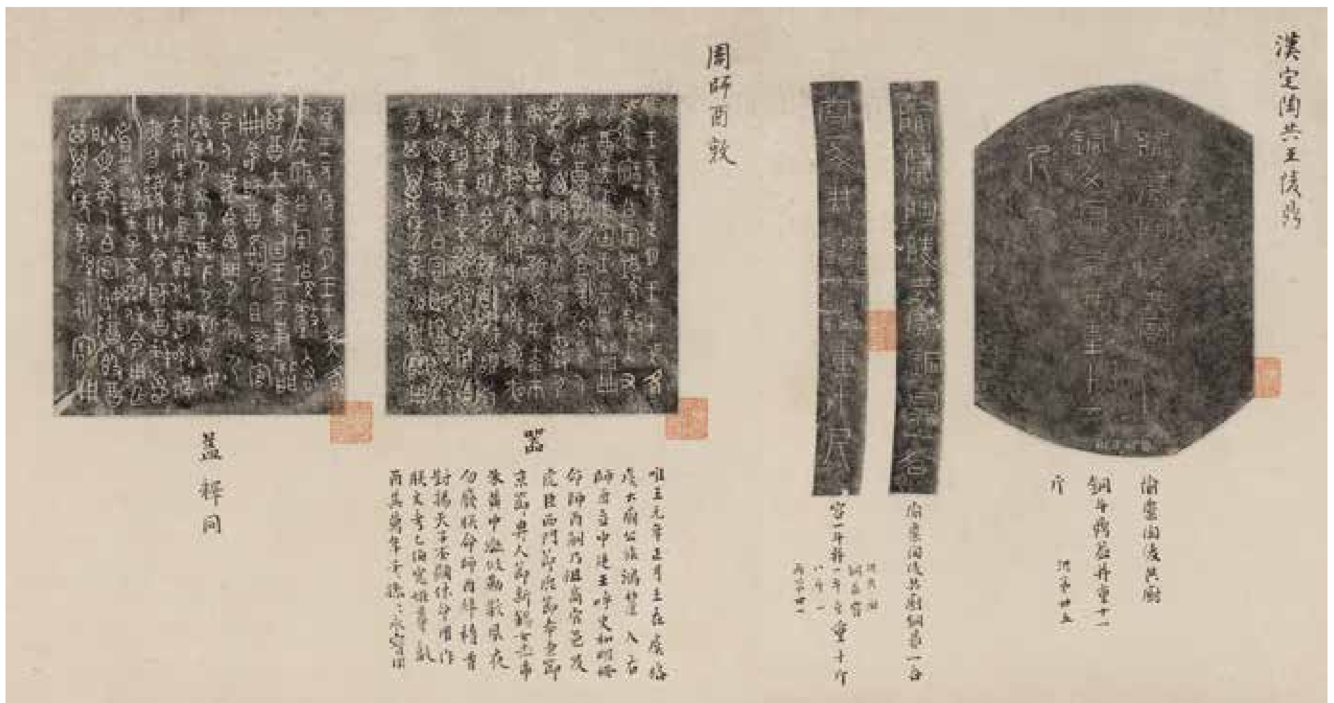


Figure 20 Ruan Yuan 阮元, rubbings appended to *Accumulated Antiquities*, 1803, handscroll, ink and colour on paper, full length of scroll h. 38cm, w. 2640cm. National Library of China, Beijing

His seal carving and his collaborative teapot production in particular were inspired by ancient clay, stone and metal objects from the deep past. When we consider these epigraphically inspired artworks in relation to his boneless method and finger paintings, another distinguishing feature of this period begins to emerge – an interest in supplanting older canons of brushwork by working with the hand and avoiding the brush altogether.

The early 19th-century networks of colleagues, friends and scholars that began to turn towards touch to handle their relationships with the past and with each other centred around keystone individuals who could afford to sponsor and promote these networks, and Ruan Yuan was one such person. Ruan's governmental career was perhaps the most impressive of his generation. In the early decades of the 19th century, he governed six different provinces and was eventually named a grand secretary in the Qing imperial palaces. This trajectory began with Ruan's first place exam in the 1786 Jiangsu provincial examinations, a feat that brought him into the orbit of Xie Yong 謝庸 (1719–1795) and Zhu Gui 朱珪 (1731–1807), two highly influential scholars and government officials who took notice of the young man's promise and brought him to the capital, where they introduced him to an influential network of scholars invested in the principles of evidential studies, the predominant intellectual trend of the 18th century.[3]

Early forms of inscribed Chinese were of special interest within evidential studies. They were the primary sources through which scholars could reinterpret the received traditions of early Chinese language and thought. Scholars relied heavily on the linguistic, stylistic and material comparison of early inscribed words in order to secure their claims about the authenticity or coherence of important classical texts.[4] This led to a proliferation of rubbings in late 18th- and early 19th-century China. Stones and bronzes were singular, but rubbings spread the experience of such objects exponentially. Literati grew to rely on rubbings for research purposes, and they also appropriated various stylistic features from them to produce new artworks for one another across a range of mediums, leading to an epigraphic aesthetic within the literati arts of the period.[5]

The most direct manifestation of this trend was the increased use of archaic calligraphy styles such as clerical script, the style traditionally found on the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE) inscribed objects that were so valued by evidential research scholars. Like his peers, Ruan Yuan practised these calligraphic styles by copying from rubbings, sometimes word for word, as in his selection from the Yi Ying 郃陽 stele (**Fig. 21**), and sometimes adapting the style for new texts, such as his frontispiece for the expansive *Epigraphy Gazetteer for Shandong Province* (*Shanzuo jinshi zhi* 山左金石志) (**Fig. 22**).

This book was Ruan Yuan's first major scholarly publication, and was completed in 1795–6, at the end of his tenure in his first official posting as provincial education commissioner of Shandong province. While an education commissioner was primarily tasked with running the official civil service examinations that formed the principal path to advancement in late imperial society, their responsibilities also included fostering local cultural projects, which were up to the commissioner to define. In both Shandong and Zhejiang, Ruan chose to compile epigraphy gazetteers to record the inscribed monuments from each province. These were not small undertakings: the *Epigraphy Gazetteer for Shandong Province* totalled 24 volumes, and the later *Epigraphy Gazetteer for Zhejiang Province* (*Liangzhe jinshi zhi* 兩浙金石志) comprised 18 volumes. The scale of labour involved in researching, compiling, fact-checking, editing and printing these resources attests to the value that scholars and officials of Ruan Yuan's generation afforded to epigraphy.

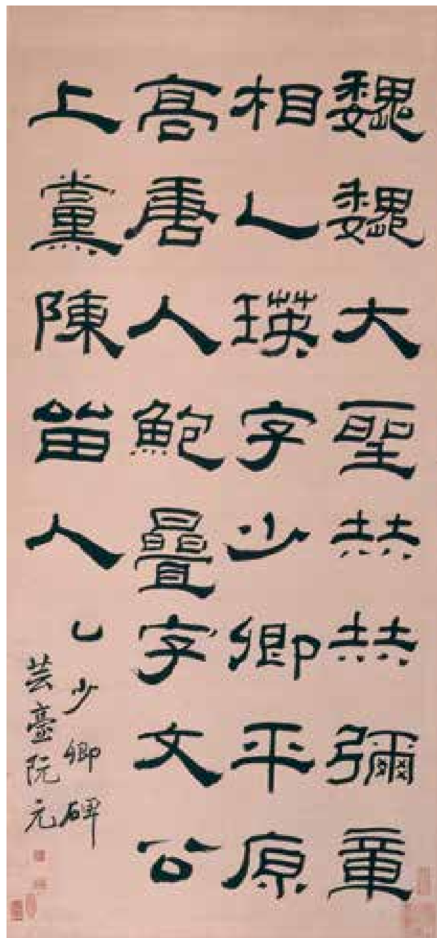


Figure 21 Ruan Yuan 阮元, calligraphy after the Yi Ying stele, in clerical script, late 18th or early 19th century, ink on paper, h. 123cm, w. 57.2cm. Xubaizhai collection, Hong Kong Museum of Art XB1992.0376

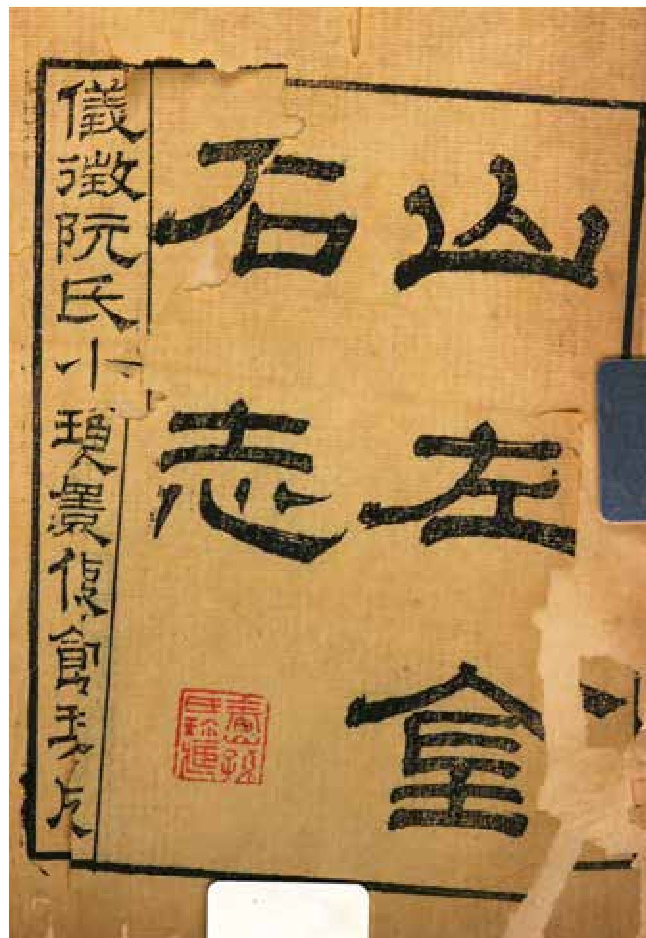


Figure 22 *Epigraphy Gazetteer for Shandong Province* (*Shanzuo jinshi zhi* 山左金石志), vol. 1, 5b, published 1797, woodblock print on paper, 28cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 2133 6571

These projects also connected scholars from across the Qing empire, defining networks of intellectual and social relations at a time when typical paths to advancement were growing more uncertain. Some of these scholar-officials were already serving in governmental positions in Shandong before Ruan's arrival, like Huang Yi 黃易 (1744–1803), who had worked in the Yellow River conservancy in Jining since the late 1770s. Ruan brought others into his administration based on their intellectual strengths and social connections, hiring them as part of the *muyou* 幕友 system of employing aides for ad hoc projects. This system allowed for flexible hiring and it was also the means by which the sons of privileged families maintained their position if unable to advance directly through the normal paths of governmental promotion.

It was through this network that Ruan Yuan and Chen Hongshou met. While they may have known each other as early as 1793, in Shandong, they were certainly acquainted by 1795, when Ruan became provincial education commissioner of Zhejiang province, a position based in Chen's hometown of Hangzhou. Though Ruan was only four years older than Chen, the slightly younger man owed his career to Ruan's promotion of him. Various objects commemorated and secured their relationship in the language of the epigraphic aesthetic. For instance, Chen carved a personalised seal for Ruan in 1797 using the other script style most commonly appropriated from epigraphic sources, seal script (**Fig. 23**).

Ruan's emulation of early calligraphic styles and Chen's carved seals in ancient scripts may not immediately seem to indicate a definitive generational interest in epigraphy. After all, both practices were extremely common in literati artistic production going back to the Song dynasty (960–1279).

Figure 23 Chen Hongshou 陳鴻壽, 'Lesser Langhuan Immortal Hall seal' (*Xiao langhuan xianguan* 小瑯嬛仙館), for Ruan Yuan, 1797, stone, h. 3.5cm, w. 2.1cm, d. 2.1cm. Shanghai Museum

However, when we look to the variety of other publications, artworks and material culture produced within this particular network of scholars, several distinctive features distinguish their epigraphic aesthetics from earlier archaicising tendencies, in particular the prioritisation of both materiality and tactility.

A book published by Huang Yi in 1800, *Engraved Texts of the Lesser Penglai Pavilion* (*Xiao Penglaige jinshi wenzi* 小蓬萊閣金石文字), shows these priorities coming to the fore (**Fig. 24**). Huang was a well-known connoisseur of ancient inscriptions, and had built a reputation from the 1770s onwards for his ability to rediscover buried remnants of important engraved monuments.[6] He also had a collection of very old rubbings of ancient engraved stone monuments. In many cases his rubbings recorded sections of text that had since been worn away or destroyed, making them even more valuable to scholars than the extant pieces of the ancient monuments themselves. Huang's book reproduced these precious early documents along with transcriptions and commentaries added to the original rubbings by later viewers.

The choice Huang Yi made to reproduce his rubbings with an outline technique called *shuanggou* 雙鉤 set his book apart from earlier epigraphy publications. Rather than images that simulated the rubbing format of white characters against an entirely black background, or the alternative, a simulation of calligraphic format, with black characters against a white background, Huang's images traced boundary lines around the spaces where the original carved characters stood in the stone, to whatever degree the rubbings had made them visible. In many cases, due to damage in the original stone or a lack of clarity in the aged rubbings, these outlines produced illegible forms, sometimes linking consecutive characters in extended craters of complete nonsense. In keeping with the values of evidential research, Huang Yi's choice favoured a neutral interpretive stance, preferring to faithfully describe the deteriorated state of the stone material through the rubbing rather than to impose uncertain linguistic meaning. The reader was left to understand what remained of the words in accord with their own epigraphic acumen.[7]

Despite the ostensible focus of epigraphy on ancient forms of language, then, these images in fact do not describe language. They studiously trace the surface variances of eroded stone as recorded in rubbings, drawing our attention to the liminality of language and the diminishing capacity for a given material to support words over time. *Shuanggou* outline technique had not been used in printed reproduction before.[8] Traditionally it was reserved for transferring calligraphy from one medium to another, whether from paper to stone or wood, or vice versa. While Huang's images may have been used as templates to re-carve the earlier monuments, no examples of such re-carving have been identified, and the prefaces to the book do not articulate this as its purpose. Surprisingly, perhaps, the impact of Huang's emphasis on the degraded material halos of ancient carved and cast marks is perhaps most evident in contemporaneous painting and calligraphy practices, where the boundaries of form began to wobble and break in emulation of ancient materials. In calligraphy, purposeful attention to the sizing

Figure 24 Reproductions of the Fanshi stele rubbings from Huang Yi, *Engraved Texts of the Lesser Penglai Pavilion* (*Xiao Penglaige jinshi wenz i* 小蓬萊閣金石文字), vol. 4, fig. 9b, 1800, woodblock print on paper, h. 31cm. Shanghai Library

of paper and wetness of the brush produced jagged edges around clerical script words, as can be seen in the work of Huang's contemporary, Xi Gang 奚岡 (1746–1803) (**Fig. 25**).

Likewise, painters used stippled or dry brushwork in landscape and figure paintings to evoke the feeling of aged stone surfaces. This happened not only in artwork that explicitly described the search for ancient carvings, as in Huang Yi's landscape paintings of his travels through the countryside, but also in the work of painters like Qian Du 錢杜 (1763–1844), who stated in his painting treatise that 'in making large figures [in one's paintings], one must grasp the antique and awkward concepts of the stone carvings of the Wu Liang shrine'. Qian, who never recorded a visit to the Wu family shrines, is most likely to have built his understanding of their images from rubbings or from prints such as the ones Huang Yi reproduced in his book (**Fig. 26**).

Dry brushwork and broken outlines also have their precedents in earlier periods of painting, yet the phrase Qian Du used to describe his figures, 'antique and awkward (or unstudied)' 古拙, appears over and over in writing of the time and links practices of epigraphy, calligraphy and painting. Huang Yi used it as a definitive aesthetic criterion

Figure 25 Xi Gang 奚岡, *Couplet in Clerical Script*, detail, 1794, pair of hanging scrolls, ink on paper, h. 124.3cm, w. 24.3cm (each scroll). Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Gift of Robert Hatfield Ellsworth in honor of the 75th Anniversary of the Freer Gallery of Art, F1997.44.1-2

for the identification of authentic Han dynasty inscriptions.[9] Ruan Yuan likewise promoted the concept in his essays of 1823, 'Southern and northern schools of calligraphy', and 'Northern steles and southern letters'.[10] In these writings, Ruan emphasised a material logic to effectively argue that the inherited canons of the so-called southern school of calligraphy had been distorted over time through copying, and that to return to the true calligraphic styles of the ancients it was necessary to sort through and authenticate ancient inscriptions on steles and bronzes. Calligraphy from these sources constituted what he called the northern school of calligraphy, a tradition that had languished from the Tang dynasty (618–907) onwards but which was also therefore uncorrupted.[11] Aside from this material emphasis, which can be seen in the brushwork changes in calligraphy and painting already mentioned, the anonymity of the sources was a key factor in the rethinking of canonical brushwork styles of calligraphy, and also of painting.[12] Without hagiographical priorities to defend, the inscribed texts of the northern school were open to a new set of values, described most often with the phrase 'antique and awkward', but also with words such as 'strong', 'forceful' and 'coarse'.

The role of touch in this return to the material forms of the deep past was perhaps most exemplified by the work of Liuzhou 六舟 (1791–1858), whom Ruan Yuan named Jinshi seng 金石僧,the 'epigrapher-monk'. Ruan and his peers were astounded by the novel type of 'full-form' or 'composite' rubbings 全形拓 Liuzhou helped to pioneer. Rather than rubbing only the text-bearing, flat sections of an antique's surface, Liuzhou selectively rubbed portions of the entire object and then conjoined them to form a complete and optically realistic image of the object that appeared to be receding away from the viewer in a unified picture plane. In *Cleaning the Lamp*, from 1836, a work created by Liuzhou and Chen Geng 陳庚 (active mid-19th century) for the collector Cheng Hongpu 程洪溥 (active in the early 19th century), the tactile fetishism of this generation takes full form (**Fig. 27**). Figure paintings by Chen Geng supplement Liuzhou's full form rubbings to illustrate him literally touching, cleaning

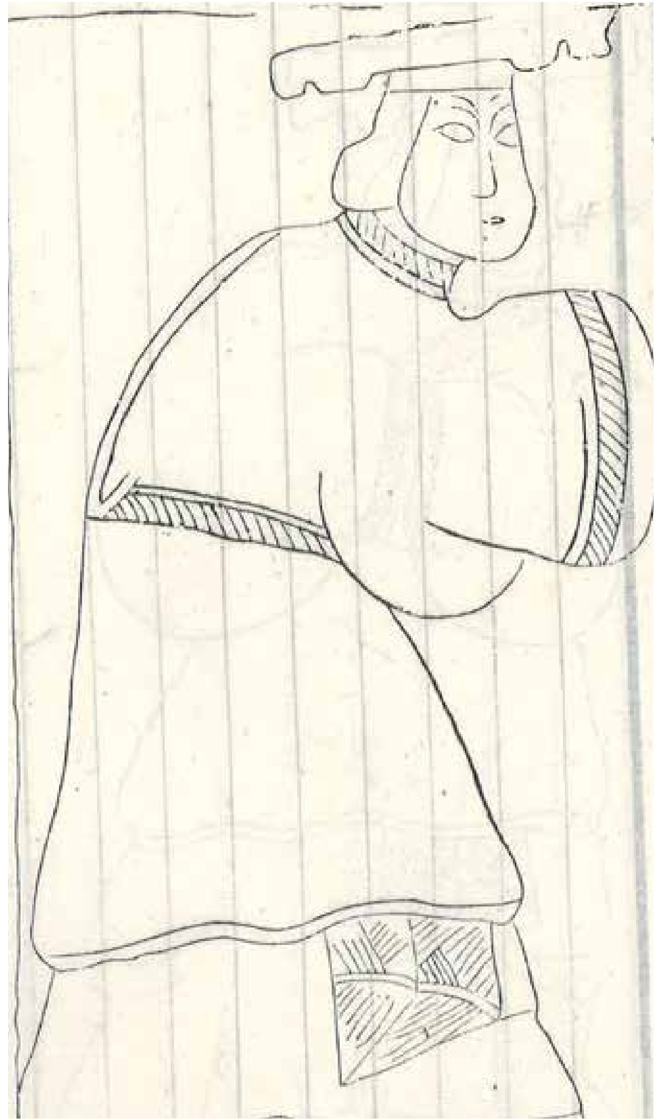


Figure 26 Detail of a figure from a reproduction of Tang dynasty rubbings of the Wu family shrines, as published in Huang Yi, *Engraved Texts of the Lesser Penglai Pavilion* (*Xiao Penglaige jinshi wenzi* 小蓬萊閣金石文字), vol. 1, fig. 7a, 1800, woodblock print on paper, h. 31cm. Shanghai Library

and caressing the surfaces and words of a Han dynasty goose-foot lamp in the form of a rubbed image that he had also produced with his hands.

Liuzhou frequently doubled his rubbings in the manner of *Cleaning the Lamp* and had painted images added into them by collaborators such as Chen Geng. Rather than pointing to the obvious manipulation necessary to produce a full-form rubbing, these uncanny additions only seemed to bolster the sense of truth that his audiences sought in them. Viewers knew that the likeness was at scale because it was a rubbing, an image made by direct contact with the ancient object. Yet the tiny painted figures also reflect a desire to be overwhelmed by that experience of ancient surfaces, a need that the combination of rubbing and painting could meet. Ruan wrote of images such as these, 'from it one can see the form of the entire bronze … looking at this is as if looking at the original vessel. The dimensions [of the image] are true; I've held the original in my hands.' For Ruan, Liuzhou's work was startling because it combined vision and touch to equal the memory of his own bodily experiences.

Figure 27 Liuzhou 六舟 and Chen Geng 陳庚, *Cleaning the Lamp* (*Ti deng tu* 剔燈圖), composite rubbing of a bronze lamp in the shape of a goose foot with portraits of Liuzhou, for Cheng Hongpu, 1836, ink and colour on paper, h. 31cm, w. 69.5cm. Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou

The sense of touch has always been implicated in the brush arts of China, which have long been understood as the pre-eminent media for literati. But with the increased importance of rubbings in the 18th century, touch rose to equal visuality and textuality as the primary means by which viewers could engage with artworks and through them engage with each other. Old canons of brushwork were overturned, and at times the brush itself was cast aside to reassert the role of the body and break down boundaries between mediums. What makes this turn to touch all the more surprising is its appearance in a period such as the early 19th century, which has often been undervalued by scholars of Chinese art due to the easily made accusation that its artists tended towards conservative repetition of established norms. Making touch visible in this period encourages us to ask what more there might be to the field of literati arts beyond explicating the rich layers of historical, textual and visual citation that seem to all but define it. By what other direct and even sensuous means might literati artworks have reinforced elite taste and facilitated social networking?

Notes

1 Lefebvre 2008.
2 Elman 1984; Hatch 2024.
3 Wei 2006.
4 Elman 1984; Sela 2018.
5 Hatch 2024.
6 Tseng 2003; Hsu 2008.
7 Hatch 2020.
8 Xue 2021.
9 Hsu 2008, 244.
10 Both essays can be found in Ruan Yuan 1823, vol. 1:1a–6b and 6b–9b.
11 McNair 1995; Ledderose 2001.
12 Hatch 2024.

Chapter 3
Ren Bonian and the Shanghai fan in motion

Roberta Wue

Fans are made to move. An early fan painting from the hand of Ren Bonian 任伯年 (1840–1895), the late Qing Shanghai School painter, is no exception (**Fig. 28**). Here, movement and motion are united in the fan's identity as both tool and painting, elucidating the functions and possibilities of the painting as object for its eager contemporary consumers. As a tool, it is a large screen fan equipped with a handle, a popular accessory made to agitate the air and enhance its owner's appearance. As a painting, the irregularly shaped image has as its subject the exemplary and curious behaviours of the Song dynasty scholar Mi Fu 米黻 (1051–1107). In accordance with a well-known anecdote, Mi is shown in the midst of his enraptured encounter with an especially fine garden rock, having donned his official's robes and taken up his tablet of office before bowing to the rock and addressing it as 'elder brother'. Ren represents the two protagonists' meeting as suitably intense, even dynamic, while adding in a servant looking on dubiously. Like the servant, the viewer is also an onlooker and even a presence in the scene through their physical possession of the fan; this is not a painting to be dispassionately regarded at arm's length. Instead, the viewer is connected to the image through the (painted) staff of the large ceremonial fan held by Mi's servant, a staff which aligns with the composition's vertical axis and the (actual) fan's now lost handle. The merging of representation and reality thus incorporates the fan format explicitly into picture and plot, joining the two worlds of viewer and painting along the axis at the heart of the picture. It is around this axis that Mi Fu and his stony friend seem to revolve, and it is along this axis that both fans are grasped, moved or even twirled. The reciprocity of real and virtual worlds is further conveyed using additional visual means: through our partner in the image, the sceptical servant with whom we exchange a nervous glance, and the actual fan's archaic spade-like form (sometimes compared to a jade tablet), which echoes throughout the painting from the shape of the servant's fan to the trapezoidal outline of Mi's blocky body. These bits of play mobilise the viewer's attention on several levels by oscillating between real and pictured and the fan as tool and image. The fan now becomes a device capable of light-heartedly spanning different worlds, times and spaces.

Ren's interest in the fan's multiple roles and specifically in its rotations between reality and picture was one he investigated repeatedly throughout his career. He often revisited the theme of Mi Fu bowing to the rock, in a number of formats; in a later fan version, he continued to probe the porous boundaries between real and painted worlds. However, Ren progresses from the heavy-handed meta-commentary made in his earlier work. An 1886 round screen fan operates differently by focusing on a back-and-forth dynamic through reiterations of circle and arc (**Fig. 29**). The fan's circular shape is not so much repeated as suggested in the form of interlocking swirls and curves, evoking intersections between matter and ether in a composition configured like a yin-and-yang symbol. This time the figure of Mi Fu, bobbing, kneeling, bowing, is composed from sinuous flowing lines in direct contrast to the wetly brushed and amorphous rock. Despite differences in form and matter, these two figures are conceived of as companionate

Figure 28 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Mi Fu Bowing to the Rock* (*Mi Fu baishi tu* 米黻拜石圖), late 1860s, ink and colour on gold paper, h. 22.5cm, w. 24.5cm. Nanjing Museum

Figure 29 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Mi Fu Bowing to the Rock* (*Mi Fu baishi tu* 米黻拜石圖), 1886, ink and colour on silk, diam. 20.3cm. Wuxi Museum

equals, each mirroring the other in shape and attention. Just as Mi Fu and the rock peer earnestly into each other's eyes, the viewer must also stare, absorbed, into the face-shaped fan. The emphasis on curves, loops and arcs all nestled within one another serve to further shift the viewer's own attention constantly between man and rock, establishing a gentle back-and-forth in visualised motion and metaphor, echoing the movements of the fan and the idea of a shared dialogue and encounter.

In subject and strategy, Ren's paintings owe a significant debt to the 17th-century painter Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬 (1598–1652). Like Ren, Chen was a native of Shaoxing and also a crucial reference point for Ren clan painters, a source of their love for visual puns and witty pictorial self-referentiality. However, while Chen's works frequently address the overflow of illusion into reality and vice versa, his images seldom acknowledge motion and participate in quite different conceptions of time. In Chen's 1619 album leaf showing a lady's gauze fan, he depicts the fan as an object and also as a painting of chrysanthemums. Chen's play with multiple levels of representation are reinforced by his seal and signature which serve as themselves on the album leaf as well as the seal and signature on the painted fan in the album leaf (**Fig. 30**). Chen's fascination with such overlaps in fiction and reality is further rendered through the figure of the butterfly attracted to the flowers, fluttering half in and half out of the painting, itself part of the painting-within-a-painting while also an independent representation, as it were, of a living butterfly which has been painfully pinned to the table by the transparent fan. Chen's commentary here is not so much Ren's effervescent momentary merging of viewer and picture as it is a meditation on illusory realities, truth and fiction, a poetic and history-drenched evocation of Lady Ban (Ban Jieyu 班婕妤) (*c.* 48–6 BCE), the abandoned palace lady, and her comparison of herself to a discarded autumn fan.[1] The subdued undertow of Chen's work and its invocation of the past would have been out of place in late Qing Shanghai, with the latter's rushing embrace of the pleasurable and present.[2] Thus, Ren Bonian's fan paintings seldom linger in the same way, and his tantalising slippages between representation and reality are hurried along in a contemporary moment of energetic movement and unexpected encounter.

Ren and his colleagues were, after all, working within the urban and commercial contexts of 19th-century Shanghai.[3] Fan painting historically may have been considered a lesser, smaller kind of painting, but the size and mobility of fans

Figure 30 Chen Hongshou 陳洪綬, untitled leaf from *Miscellaneous Studies* (*Mogu tu ce* 橅古圖冊), *c.* 1619, ink on paper, h. 17.8cm, w. 17.8cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Mr and Mrs Wan-go H. C. Weng, 2005.112d

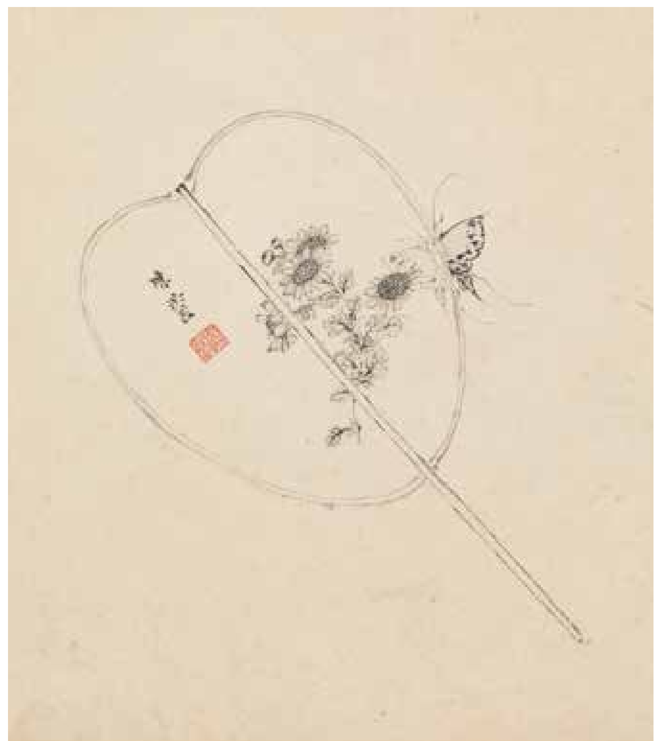


Figure 31 'Habits de cérémonie d'un mandarin' (Ceremonial clothes of a mandarin), from *Quelques mots sur la politesse chinoise* (Some words on Chinese etiquette) by S. Kiong (1906, pl. XV). SOAS Library, RJ CC395 /62723

became advantages in a crowded city where they could serve as newly visible sites for personal display in an increasing number of public settings.[4] The ways in which a compact painted fan could support the complexities of late Qing social identity are suggested in a number of roughly contemporary illustrations. A guide to Chinese social etiquette written for foreign audiences, for example, depicts a Chinese official in correct ceremonial regalia (**Fig. 31**). His folding fan, bearing a river landscape scene, likely indicates the kind of accessory and subject considered appropriate for an official's use. Moreover, the mode of presentation – open and held flatly against the body – demonstrates a suitable and masculine manner of displaying one's fan in formal situations. This notion of the fan as a space of display and a key component of one's appearance indicates its new roles in the period. Its presentation as statement and accessory, particularly within Shanghai's expanding commercial and cultural spaces, can be gauged by the frequency with which fans incidentally appear in contemporary imagery of the city. In the pictorial magazine *Dianshizhai huabao* and its fascinating commentary on Shanghai places and phenomena, especially the newer urban spaces of the commercial garden, restaurant and teahouse, brothel, street and theatre, fans invariably appear as a necessary part of the background. A *Dianshizhai* illustration from 1884, for example, depicts the story of a monk who brings a prostitute to the theatre (**Fig. 32**). The energetic opera performance glimpsed to the right barely registers, nor is there much focus on the monk and his companion at lower centre. Instead, the illustrator Jin Shanxiang makes a careful record of the actual *mise en scène*: the packed auditorium, its many audience members and their ripple of reactions to the scandalous pair. The story's interest in the performance of social roles and norms is thus laid out in the theatregoers'

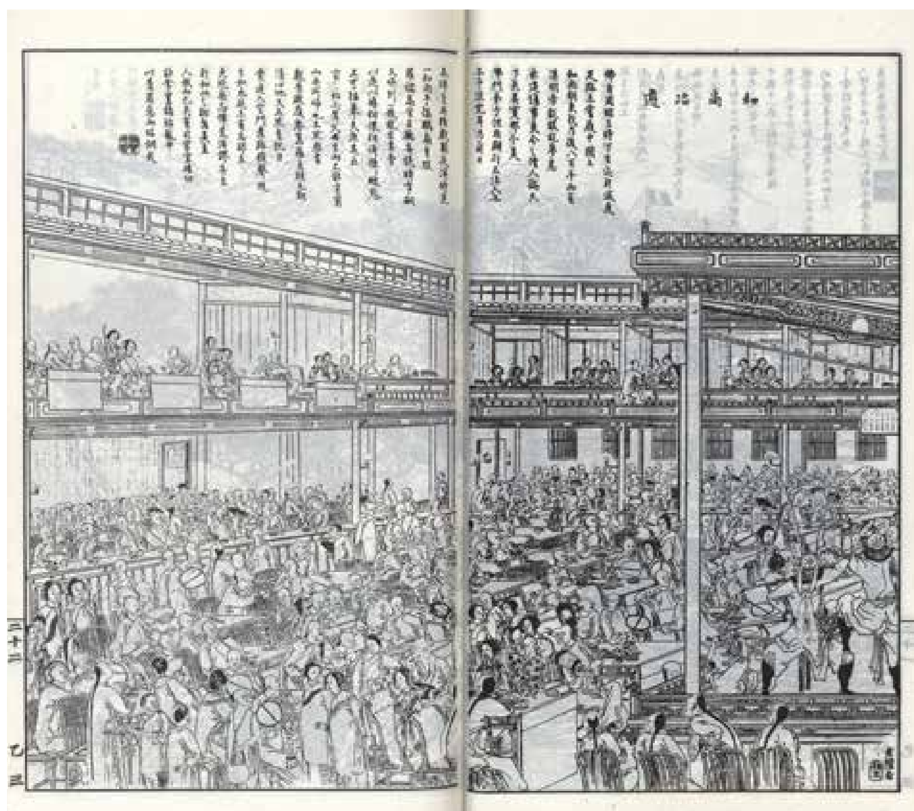


Figure 32 Jin Chanxiang 金蟾香, *A Monk Hires a Prostitute* (*Heshang ye you* 和尚冶遊), *Dianshizhai huabao* (點石齋畫報 Dianshizhai pictorial), 8th month, Guangxu 10 [1884], issue *yi* 3. Lithograph, h. 22cm, w. 12cm (approx. closed). Shanghai Library

reactions and responses, helpfully articulated by their fans – whether folding, screen or feather – which fill the scene, acting as markers of the class and status of the bourgeois men and courtesans in attendance at the opera. The monk himself is identifiable by his tonsure and robe, but it is the fashionable and masculine eagle-feather fan he holds which drives home the point of his unseemly assumption of a secular identity.

For Shanghai artists producing works for the market and for their customers, painted fans were saleable, desirable and accessible.[5] The painted fan as a product of the artist's output is suggested in Ren's now-lost portrait of his senior colleague Zhang Xiong 張熊 (1803–1886), a popular painter known for his seasonal and appealing images of urban nature (**Fig. 33**).[6] The elderly Zhang is shown in a garden, robustly shirtless in the summer heat, and thus cast in a conventional role of the sage-like eccentric who eschews accepted norms of appearance. However, the scene is updated by Zhang's enormous screen fan, imported from contemporary Shanghai. The fan is depicted clearly enough to show its subject of a large bird, also in a garden, painted or embroidered on transparent material. Fans were standard accessories in portraits, but the flamboyant size of Zhang's fan and its prominent placement move it beyond a common accessory to an attribute complimenting Zhang's personal and social visibility, his fashionable works and high standing in the Shanghai art world. Fans were also closely identified with Zhang Xiong's colleague, the painter Zhu Cheng 朱偁 (1826–1900). A formidable influence on Ren Bonian, Zhu Cheng contributed to the Shanghai style of painting in his development of lively compositions and attractive bird-and-flower subjects. One anecdote records the reception of Zhu's fan paintings, which were so in demand that 'nearly every merchant wanted his work and was proud of holding a fan in his sleeve when he went out'.[7] Unable to escape his demanding customers even by raising prices higher and higher, Zhu eventually became a victim of his runaway success.

Ren Bonian was thus far from the only Shanghai artist producing fan paintings, but his works are notable for their witty merging of format, subject and image, often spliced together through mechanisms of movement. This is made possible via the intensely visual nature of his paintings, and their pictorial immediacy could only boost the painted fan's expanding roles as commodity, accessory and field of display, roles which could be said to serve as the operating conditions of the late Qing Shanghai art world. From his arrival in Shanghai in the late 1860s onwards, Ren continued to build on this model of production, particularly in his depictions of bird-and-flower and figural subjects, and in the espousal of a vivid, colourful *xieyi* 寫意 painting style. His paintings invariably invest in movement and mobility, often on several levels. As we have seen, these levels included considerations of the fan as an object intended to be manipulated and moved, depictions of his painted subjects in energetic motion, and inducements to the viewer to see, engage, and interact with the fan. This idea of the fan painting as a combined active image-object was deeply appealing to his customers, and by extension, it allowed Ren to incorporate viewers into the image and prompt a serious reconsideration of what a painting could do.[8]

Figure 33 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Escaping the Summer Heat in the Shade of Banana Palms [Portrait of Zhang Xiong]* (*Jiaolin bishu* 蕉林避暑), 1872, ink on paper, location unknown (reproduced in Gao Yehou, Ding Fuzhi, Wu Changshuo and Ye Ming (eds), 1935, *Jinshijia shuhuaji* 金石家書畫集 [Calligraphy and painting by masters of epigraphy], Shanghai, vol. 2, no. 341). University of Hawai'i at Manoa Library, ND1043.4 .J432 1935

Ren may have experimented most extensively with his concepts of the fan with his bird-and-flower subjects. Such subjects were popular and decorative, typically possessing established auspicious meanings and associations. However, in a Shanghai context, bird-and-flower subjects could take on new connotations through dynamism and movement, becoming integrated into the city's dense and sped-up realm.[9] Conversely, if the territory of the picture had become newly conjoined with that of the viewer, the fan's portability and capacities as a tool now extended the reach of the fan's owner, physically and metaphorically, by enhancing the latter's visibility and agency. We may consider this through Ren Bonian's compositional innovations, his usual gateway to movement and its accessories. In a screen fan from the 1870s depicting a songbird in flight, the image becomes a challenge to the viewer (**Fig. 34**). Taking advantage of the

Figure 34 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Bird and Flower*, 1870s, ink and colour on silk, diam. 29.9cm. Zhejiang Provincial Museum, Hangzhou

Figure 35 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Peach Blossoms and Mynah*, 1879, ink and colour on silk, h. 27.3cm, w. 28.1cm. National Art Museum of China, Beijing

painting's shape, the unorthodox composition becomes a whirling circle which, target-like, briefly focuses on the bird at the centre of the image. The bird, its form distorted by flight, is placed at a sharp and unexpected angle to our line of vision, and is obscured by intersecting lines of branches, stalks and leaves. Initially, the image seems on the verge of disintegration with its elements shown as chopped up, fragmented, incomplete. However, Ren's careful organisation of the scene into a structure of horizontals and verticals allows the viewer to piece these elements back together, with the bird now a helpful if momentary focal point. The demand on the viewer to recognise and reconfigure this disorienting scene pulls one in. We may relate to this painted world as nearly coterminous with our own; though the painting is small, its elements are roughly life-size and its quick pacing aids the illusion of a moment captured and shared. Our visual access and destabilised point of view thus becomes as much the subject of the fan as is the bird in its natural world, just as the bird's motion might catalyse our reciprocal response as gestures made with the fan in hand. The painting's circular shape and compressed layout could suggest, for example, a portal into which we gaze, or a kind of mobile viewfinder through which we track the bird across our field of vision. The fan format even serves as a conceptual container which has briefly scooped up the shallow tight space circumscribed by the fan's edges, a funnel pulled tight by the bird's trajectory away from us.[10] The focus on movement, including by ourselves, reinforces the fan's function as a tool, from hand-held portal to container or even scoop, one to be used to briefly trap and keep this small and fascinating scene in sight.

Considering the social context of Ren's works within Shanghai and Shanghai culture, it is unsurprising that many of his fan subjects can be considered as urban, whether by featuring local flora and fauna, or through settings in city gardens. One may note that the idea of a fan as a device to frame or set a 'natural' view is already familiar from gardens, in the form of outdoor cutout windows, as well as in the adjacent idea of small, arranged views. Commercial gardens in Shanghai were public spaces, and thus important venues for the fan. As we have seen, Ren's fan paintings can be easily understood as accessories to or interpretations of close action-packed spaces where so much can happen, and where viewers and the objects of their attention are both in motion. This particular urban experience appears articulated in Ren's frequent anthropomorphising of his natural subjects, giving a human sentience and awareness to his birds, animals and sometimes even plants, which often seem to consciously meet our glance. The effect of encountering a non-human interlocutor is often found in Ren's fans, reinforced as it is by the fan's face-like qualities in size and shape; his paintings can appear to look back at us.[11] Sometimes, as painting and viewer pause to examine each other, all motion stops, as can be seen in the case of a staring mynah bird who seems to turn to give us a long, considered look (**Fig. 35**). Similarly, on another fan which depicts a large white lotus blossom, the flower lifts its heavy head to gaze at us over the edge of a large green leaf.[12]

If these images briefly stop time as the painting and viewer exchange looks, other of Ren's fan paintings continue the idea of an encounter but perhaps in a less bold manner. In these cases, the painter may shift attention away from the centre of the fan to its peripheries, dodging expectation, and encouraging the viewer to pay attention. This can be done by placing the main subject on the very edges of the work, thereby not only drawing attention to the areas where the painting ends but even pushing the limits of the painting outwards. Sometimes Ren goes so far as to shove the subject of the painting out of the painting altogether as if to completely evade our expectant gaze. This can be seen in a fan showing a melon plant, whose leaves, flowers and tendrils occupy the middle of the image, sprouting, curling, expanding and unrolling ornately across the painting surface (**Fig. 36**). In contrast, the anticipated star of the

show, the melon itself, has unexpectedly dropped from centre stage, and dangles barely in sight towards the bottom of the image. Its placement there serves to weight and even stabilise the scene while drawing our attention sharply to the picture's limits. The round shape of the fan reminds us of the heavy melon dropping from view, perhaps even tempting the viewer to yank the fan downwards in search of a proper look. Ren's most obvious jokes on painting's edges can be seen in another work which makes use of the inscription. It was not uncommon for Ren to incorporate inscriptions into the larger composition, usually as a balancing element or helpful horizontal or vertical, but in one case, a small bird on a branch hugging the painting's left edge seems to sink downwards, in the opposite direction to the inscription clinging to the painting's right edge which seems to swing upwards. Placed in visual counterbalance to each other, both elements appear to attempt to break free from the fan's limiting orbit.[13]

Figure 36 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Melon Vine*, 1879, ink and colour on silk, diam. 28cm. National Art Museum of China, Beijing

In these round screen fans, Ren's experimentation with movement takes advantage of their focused stable shapes and the implications of their centre-periphery dynamics. In contrast, his folding fans propose a different set of compositional challenges through their wide dimensions and eccentrically shaped field. Ren's compositions also seem to take advantage of the folding fan's ability to expand and collapse, whether by pursuing scenes that race across the fan's wide face or which can fragment into segments still viewable when the fan is partially folded. With the former, it was not unusual for Ren to make use of strongly horizontal compositions dispersed along the length of the fan and which encourage the viewer's eye to move across the image, in the direction along which the fan folds or unfolds. An example of this is offered by a fan painting with an image of a bulbul in flight, only seen when the fan has been completely opened, revealing the bird spontaneously appearing at the left end of the branch, accelerating the plot and tempo of the usual bird-and-flower composition.[14] If such compositions employ the horizontal axis as a kind of catalysing force, in other works, the same axis anchors the composition. Sometimes neither subject nor viewer are required to move, as with a static example from 1883 of swallows perched on a flowering branch (**Fig. 37**). A standard theme representing springtime and marital harmony, the composition seems dramatically minimal, organised by the strong bar of the branch, and balanced by the counterweights of blossoms and inscription. However, despite the scene's simplicity, it also illustrates Ren's typical strategy of engaging and controlling the viewer's eye. He may submerge or conceal details to force a double-take and return of direction. Initially, there appears little to retain the viewer's interest or stop one's attention from skating across and out of the picture; if we look again, we may see not only the first swallow, who appears to look back at us, but also a second, barely visible bird coalesce from a patch of colours and shapes, to pair with the first.

This ability to keep the eye moving, thereby maintaining the viewer's interest through unexpected elements, is common in Ren's ingenious paintings. As noted, this may be via semi-hidden details, or the placement of a bird in an unexpected place. Often movement on the part of the subject has stopped and now it is the viewer's eye which darts around the picture, looking for a visual reward. The painter might hide or partially shield his main subject from view, tucking a bird away behind foliage. In one peekaboo composition, the viewer is perhaps initially distracted by a

Figure 37 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Peach Blossoms and a Pair of Swallows*, 1883, ink and colour on gold paper, h. 24.2cm, w. 52cm. National Art Museum of China, Beijing

Figure 38 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Bird and Grasses*, 1877, ink and colour on gold paper. Nanjing Museum

Figure 39 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Chrysanthemums and Crabs*, 1877, ink and colour on gold paper. Nanjing Museum

screen of spiky grasses executed in lively brushwork (**Fig. 38**). It may take another glance to piece together the small bird, a counterpoint to the green grasses in colour and roundness and only partially discernible as it picks its way among the plants and through the scene. In other paintings, the bird can be even more nominally depicted, and in one example is shown only as a sharp expression and splash of colour emanating from the foliage, another example of an unexpected encounter.[15] With many of these folding fan paintings, the asymmetric placement of the primary subject staves off monotony and keeps the viewer's attention in motion. This dynamic also cleverly duplicates the fan's format, pulling the eye back and forth across the fan, in lively imitation of its opening and closing. As folding fans could be extended, collapsed or even displayed half-opened, it is conceivable that Ren's fan compositions took this range of picturing possibilities into consideration, by allowing a scene to be comprehensible when fully opened to view or even when only partially glimpsed or hinted at.

The folding fan's variety of display choices also heightens the affective potential of anthropomorphised birds, animals or plants. Their conventional auspicious meaning could be dislodged or replaced by Ren's theatrical and often unsettling strategies of allowing his avian or animal subjects to connect unexpectedly with the viewer. Self-aware animal subjects can be traced back to the 17th-century monk painter Bada Shanren 八大山人 (1625–1705), whose works were held in high regard in late Qing Shanghai art circles. However, there is an intriguing shift from Bada's enigmatic birds and animals who appear to think and feel things which could not be articulated, to Ren Bonian's birds who seem to epitomise fleeting urban encounters. These Shanghai birds and animals, whether they operate as local nature, lucky symbols or desirable foodstuffs, are savvy foils to their human counterparts and it seems only right that they are aware of and responsive to the viewer's presence on the other side of the picture plane. An example is a scene of chrysanthemums and hairy crabs, a tableau of fall pleasures. However, the sight of a delicious meal is vividly transformed by the cooked yet apparently alive and brawling crabs who threaten to spill out of the painting (**Fig. 39**). Their aggressive encounter with each other and with us, disagreeable, amusing and startling, heightens the sensorial and emotional implications of an autumn feast, particularly with the emphasis on the sharp angles of flailing crab legs and chrysanthemum branch. A sense of confrontation is further alluded to in the representation of the two crabs from front and back in a somewhat unnerving echo of the fan as an object also with two sides, or even as if presenting the impending meal as another kind of encounter requiring two sides and two parties, feaster and foodstuff, consumer and consumed, viewer and viewed.

As already noted, Ren frequently reworked established iconographies, and two final examples will consider common pictorial schemes for first, marriage and double happiness, and second, scholarly identity and success. In

Figure 40 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Lotuses and Mandarin Ducks,* 1875, ink and colour on paper, h. 18.5cm, w. 51.5cm. Tianjin Museum

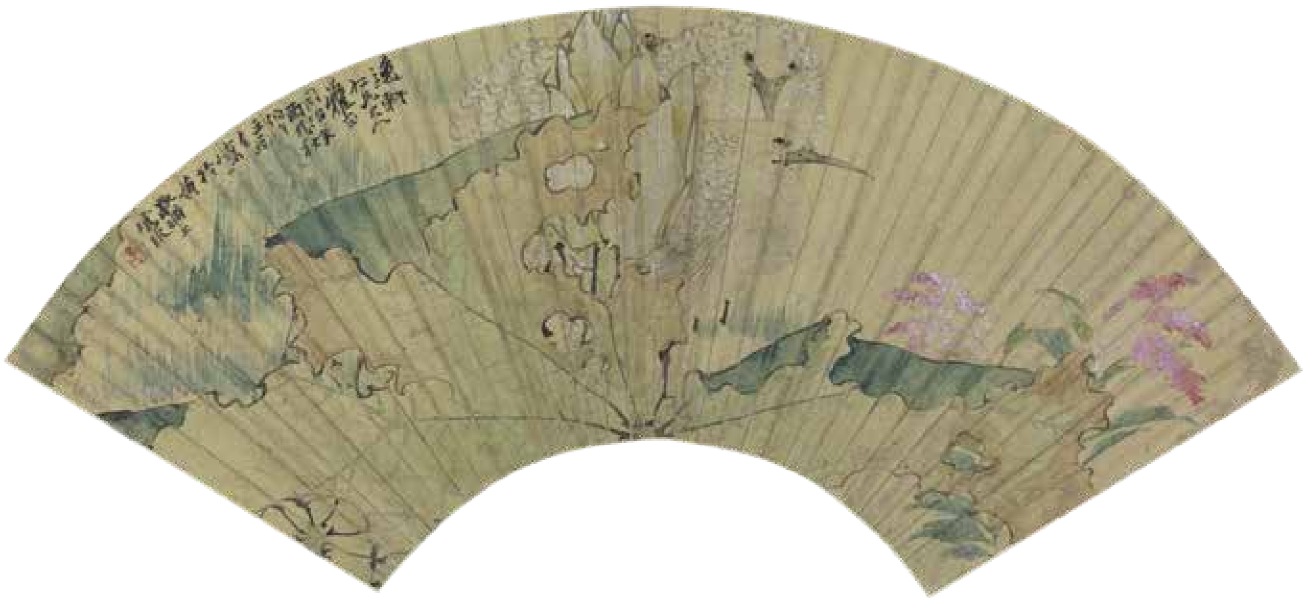


Figure 41 Ren Bonian 任伯年, *Lotuses and Egrets*, 1873, ink and colour on paper, h. 23.5cm, w. 49.2cm. National Art Museum of China, Beijing

both cases, the frequent use of paintings and fans as gifts lends another aspect to the fan's image and use, and another contextual layer to each scene's iconology. The first folding fan represents a pair of ducks, male and female, common symbols of marital joy and harmony, shown in the sensual heat of summer as represented through lush lotus plants (**Fig. 40**). It is the lotuses that set the visual terms of the painting through the arcing edges of their enormous leaves, leading the viewer's eyes back and around the image in a twining path. This focus on the plants reverses our expectations: instead of a clear view of the supposed main subject of the ducks, which are placed in the background at the picture's most distant point, a curled leaf occupies the image's centre, obscuring our proper anticipated view. If we peer around and beyond this leaf, we may first note a sagging blossom to the left before finally catching sight of the ducks at the top of the image, where they have paused to take our measure. It is as if we have been suddenly spotted and thus forced into the position of intruders into their small domain. The insistent sense of a moment of fleeting contact is heightened by the radical cropping, with the fan's sharp outer edge pruning away much of the birds' bodies and further circumscribing our view, like a curtain falling or door closing. The sense of a passing glance is conveyed emphatically by devices such as the female bird's eye just touching the upper edge of painting and fan, causing her to crane her neck to catch a last look before she drifts out of sight. This play on viewing, on the hidden and revealed as well as the momentary, exploits the possibilities of the format by effectively whisking elements of the image in and out of sight, as only a folding fan can do. The painting is able to remind us of its own shape, not only in the many arcs in the

composition mimicking the fan's curving edge, but also in the representation of the broad lotus leaves, segmented like a folding fan, and shown both collapsed and extended, as if reminding us of the fan's ability to open, close and even sweep through space.

In the second example, Ren replays this compositional strategy in a scene of egrets, another auspicious theme which likely refers to good fortune and official advancement (punning on the homonyms of *lu*, meaning egret or emoluments; **Fig. 41**). Scenes featuring nine egrets may refer to Confucius's comments on the superior gentleman's nine thoughts, or nine subjects of consideration, *jiusi* 九思; the first is, 'In regard to the use of his eyes, he is eager to see clearly'. This is not always easy with a Ren Bonian composition: in this fan the viewer's eye again first alights on a prominent lotus leaf, which also simulates the shape and sections of an opened fan. This wide spreading leaf is juxtaposed with a tightly closed lotus bud, behind which are the egg-like shapes of three egrets, bunched together at the top of the painting; we again can only catch sight of them around and beyond the lotus plant perhaps a moment before they also unfold and take flight. A sense of compaction and compression at the centre heightens the tension of the image, alongside a growing awareness of the birds' gazes and reactions to our attempted entry into their world. The complex composition and its references to the folding fan format capitalises on the fan's unique ability to alternately reveal the scene on its surface completely, partially or not at all, enhanced by Ren's further visual play on spaces, plants and birds which appear to expand and contract before our eyes. Whatever the scene has to say about the gentleman's considerations, its witty construction, dynamic and interactive, forces the viewer to reconsider the placid platitudes of painting's usual auspicious iconographies, now reformulated for the Shanghai marketplace. The evident pleasure Ren took in devising these novel scenes of urban experience and in his expansion of the fan's pictorial and physical limits, he appear determined to dramatise the fan's intriguingly ambiguous location between painting, accessory and object. In giving fan painting this agile ability to agitate, move, comment and respond, it is as if he allows the painting and the viewer to interact, look and look again.

Notes

1 Hearn 2008, 150–5.
2 See John Hay's (1975) discussion of the fan format and its contributions to pictorial composition in Chinese painting.
3 Wue 2014, 25–69; Hay 1998.
4 For a very useful examination of late Qing fans, see Tsang 2002.
5 Ren's early career especially was marked by a high output of fans; see, for example, Ding 1991, 31.
6 For an introduction to the beginnings of the Shanghai School, see Chou and Brown 1992, 101–19.
7 Zhang 1908, 121.
8 Schapiro 1972–3.
9 For a discussion of auspicious themes in fan paintings from the Song dynasty, see Weitz 2011.
10 For a useful consideration of space in Chinese painting, see Hay 1994.
11 Mitchell 2005.
12 Ren Bonian, *Lotus*, late 1870s, ink and colour on silk, diam. 28cm, Nanjing Museum.
13 Ren Bonian, *Bulbul and Peach Blossoms*, 1888, diam. 27cm, Tianjin Art Museum.
14 Ren Bonian, *Bulbul and Marrows,*1879, h. 23.5cm, w. 50cm, National Art Museum of China, Beijing.
15 Ren Bonian, *Bird and Flower*, 1878, Yanhuang Art Museum, Beijing.

Chapter 4
Empress Xiaoquancheng's portraits: the beginning of the end of Qing court patriarchy and the rise of female subjectivity

Ying-chen Peng

Portraiture is a critical and gendered genre in Qing court art. Biographical and symbolic, each portrait of the male sitter is a visual documentation of his idealised self. On the contrary, pictures of imperial women were mainly commissioned and approved by the male patron, in most instances the emperor, to serve the patriarchal gaze rather than demonstrate the sitter's personality or subjectivity. This chapter examines a rare and compelling exception: the portrait of Empress Xiaoquancheng 孝全成 (1808–1840) and the fourth princess commissioned by the Daoguang emperor in 1827. Xiaoquancheng was Daoguang's third empress and bore his successor, Xianfeng 咸丰 (r. 1850–61). The fourth princess, also known as Princess Shouan Gulun 寿安固伦 (1826–1860), was their third child and Daoguang's favourite daughter. The empress is portrayed as the emperor's beloved consort, a caring mother and, most uniquely, an individual accustomed to Han Chinese culture, a representation against the Qing court tradition of forbidding Manchu women from dressing in Han Chinese costumes. While such a personalised depiction was made possible with the emperor's permission, it paved the way for a much more provocative assertion of female agency that Xiaoquancheng's daughter-in-law, Empress Dowager Cixi, orchestrated towards the end of 19th century.

Representations of father and son in Qing court art

Qing imperial portraiture stood on a long tradition of courtly art representing monarchy, but the Manchu rulers soon began to develop unique expressions that best illustrated their ethnicity, religious identity and worldview. In addition to continuing to make formal portraits for ceremonial purposes and ancestral rites, new types of informal portraits that bore symbolic association with rulership appeared during the Kangxi emperor's reign. The images of him writing and reading demonstrate his qualifications as a capable monarch of a multi-ethnic empire, and his calligraphy also became a form of symbolic portrait.[1] The political and cultural symbolism in portraiture was elevated to a more complex level in the following generations. As historian Hui-chi Lo argues, the seemingly playful representation of Kangxi's successor, the Yongzheng emperor, in various guises reflects his deeper religious and political affinity.[2] His consorts are also featured in paintings that visualise Confucian virtues, but these works are highly performative and should not be mistaken for documentary images.[3] The exploration of portraiture's potential reached its zenith during the reign of the Qianlong emperor. Building on his father's novel use of the genre, Qianlong further promoted filial piety, which resulted in paintings documenting the birthday celebrations of his mother, Empress Xiaoshengxian 孝圣宪 (1693–1777), that included images of female family members.[4]

Father and son is an innovative subject that emerged during the Yongzheng period. *Spring's Peaceful Message* by the Jesuit artist Giuseppe Castiglione (16w88–1766) portrays Yongzheng and teenage Qianlong in the costumes of Han Chinese scholars (**Fig. 42**). Standing before two thriving bamboos, the father hands his son a branch of blooming plum blossoms. Yongzheng's gesture is often interpreted as passing power to his successor.[5] A similar rendition appears

Figure 42 Giuseppe Castiglione 郎世寧, *Spring's Peaceful Message* (*Ping'an chunxin tu* 平安春信圖), detail, *c.* 1727–8, hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, h. 68.8cm, w. 40.6cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00005361

Figure 43 Giuseppe Castiglione 郎世寧 and Qing court artists, *New Year's Painting* (*Suizhao xingle tu* 歲朝行樂圖), detail, *c.* 1736, hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, h. 277.7cm, w. 160.2cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006506

in *New Year's Painting*, an image of Qianlong and his three eldest sons celebrating the Lunar New Year (**Fig. 43**). Historian Pao-chen Chen has identified the boys by analysing the painting's dating: the one in purple is Yonglian 永琏 (1730–1738), the second son of Qianlong and his first Empress Xiaoxianchun 孝贤纯 (1712–1748). Qianlong secretly appointed this child the crown prince soon after he ascended the throne; the *qing* 罄 instrument and the seal the boy holds therefore symbolise his prestigious role as Qianlong's successor.[6] Interestingly, Yonglian's mother is absent in this painting (the two women standing behind Qianlong are most likely his daughters). Her absence negatively proves the political aspect of this painting, which has no room for women, even the empress.

Qianlong's take on imperial portraiture explains why portraits of Qing imperial women are fewer in number and less sophisticated in representation. For instance, while Xiaoxianchun enjoyed Qianlong's love and respect even after her unfortunate early passing, she only left a handful of portraits representing her actively engaging in her role as the empress. She is the emperor's primary consort in her official portraits, and the mother of all Qing subjects in the handscrolls documenting the sericulture ceremony she took charge of. Despite the impressive verisimilitude, Xiaoxianchun's formal regalia and non-expressive face in these works mask her personality.[7] Another type of picture of imperial women in Qianlong's court was commissioned in the context of filial piety, a Confucian virtue for which Qing emperors tirelessly campaigned. To facilitate his self-promoted image of a filial son, Qianlong made Empress Xiaoshengxian a critical prop.[8] Her birthdays were sumptuously celebrated and documented: a wall painting of her 80th birthday, for example, shows the imperial family's banquet, at which Qianlong's consorts make a rare group appearance with the imperial children (**Fig. 44**). Young children are held while older children stand by their caregivers. The varying facial features suggest that each figure represents a particular member of the imperial family, thus adhering to the documentary function of this painting.

The uniquely large size of the work implies that it was initially made for wall decoration. Indeed, domestic scenes often appear on wall paintings for interior decoration. These are rather utilitarian creations and contain livelier representations of imperial women. Another example features Qianlong's son, the Jiaqing emperor, and his mother (**Fig. 45**). The young boy waves at the viewer behind the painted window; a yellow tag beside him was added in 1815 to identify the ruling emperor.[9] However, the woman, presumably his birth mother, Noble Consort Ling 令贵妃 (1727–1775), does not enjoy the same treatment. Contrary to the boy's exposure to the viewer, she hides behind the partition, and the absence of a tag obscures her identity. Similarly to the absence of Empress Xiaoxianchun in *New Year's Painting*, Noble Consort Ling's anonymity also testifies to the insignificance of 18th-century imperial women in the discourse and visual representation of the patriarchy.

Images of Daoguang and his family

The heavy emphasis on representing patrilineage in Qing court art took an intriguing turn during the reign of

Figure 44 (left) Yao Wenhan 姚文瀚 (dates unknown) and Qing court artists, *The Eightieth Birthday Celebration for the Empress Xiaoshengxian* (*Chongqing huangtaihou baxun wanshou tu* 崇慶皇太后八旬萬壽圖), detail, 1771–2, hanging scroll, h. 219cm, w. 285cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006541

Figure 45 (above) Qing court artists, *The Emperor Qianlong's Consort and the Young Jiaqing Emperor* (*Qianlong di fei yu Jiaqing di younian xiang* 乾隆帝妃與嘉慶帝幼年像), detail, *c.* 1760–70, hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, h. 326.5cm, w. 186cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006539

Qianlong's grandson, the Daoguang emperor. Following his predecessor's path, Daoguang frequently summoned court painters to create formal and informal portraits of him. However, his interest extended to including his children and consorts in the Qing imperial family's visual genealogy from a more intimate angle. The dynamics of Daoguang and his children in these paintings are less symbolic but more realistic than the 'father and son' images of his predecessors. This is vividly reflected in the sizeable hanging scroll painted by He Shikui 贺世魁 (*c.* mid- to late 19th century) and other court artists, *Autumn Garden Beaming with Joy* (henceforth *Autumn Garden*), which was originally a wall decoration (**Fig. 46a**). It is arguably the earliest and only published example of an image of the Qing imperial family similar to the modern perception of a 'family portrait'. Historian Shi Li's in-depth study reveals that, commissioned in the autumn of 1833 and completed the following year, *Autumn Garden* was meant to celebrate Daoguang's birthday. Daoguang invested heavily in the creation of this work and even ordered the court painters to repaint his children several times.[10] Abundant auspicious motifs were incorporated such as chrysanthemum blossoms, pine trees and a scholar's rock symbolising longevity. The decorative patterns on the sitters' gowns also echo the auspicious theme.

As if taking a break from study, Daoguang leisurely sits before a winter landscape. Two snuff bottles are on the table for his convenience. One is green and round; the other is a flat white oval bottle. The consumption of snuff powder was a fashionable pastime for male Manchus, and it gradually became a symbol of status and masculinity in Qing imperial portraiture. According to archival records from the Qing Imperial Household Department's workshops,[11] Daoguang was such a snuff connoisseur that he often commented on the quality of snuff presented to the court.[12] He even documented this hobby in paintings, bringing snuff bottles to several portraits, including *Autumn Garden*.

Three consorts are portrayed in the painting. Imperial Noble Consort Quan 全皇贵妃, who was to advance to become Empress Xiaoquancheng in less than a year, sits next to Daoguang and watches the fourth prince, Yizhu 奕詝 (the future Xianfeng emperor), and the sixth princess play with two dogs in front of the pavilion. Imperial Noble Consort Quan wears two hairpins, one featuring a blue *shou* 寿 (longevity) character and the other a green *xi* 喜 (happiness) character (**Fig. 46b**). Consort Jing 静妃 (1812–1855) stands in the foreground and holds the hand of her toddler son (the sixth prince). Near her is the third princess, who carries a tray, and another consort, possibly Consort Tong 彤妃 (1817–1875), appreciates blooming chrysanthemums in the lower right corner of the painting.[13] The court painter adopted a convenient device to identify two mother and child pairs: Consort Jing points at her other child, the sixth princess, while the fourth prince's hand leads the viewer's gaze to his parents, Daoguang and Imperial Noble Consort Quan.[14]

Figure 46a He Shikui 贺世魁 and Qing court artists, *Autumn Garden Beaming with Joy* (*Xi yi qiuting tu* 喜溢秋庭圖), 1833–4, hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, h. 181cm, w. 202.5cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006564

Figure 46b He Shikui and Qing court artists, *Autumn Garden Beaming with Joy*, detail, 1833–4, hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, h. 181cm, w. 202.5cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006564

Daoguang's relaxed pose and facial expression, the garden setting and the highly naturalistic representation of children and pets at play give *Autumn Garden* a unique aura of intimacy unseen in preceding Chinese imperial portraits. Unlike Yongzheng and Qianlong, who emphasised their family members' symbolic presence in the paintings, Daoguang preferred a personal touch in documenting the growth of his children. The earliest images of this kind were painted before he ascended to the throne, representing his first two children playing in the garden and fishing by the lotus pond.[15] He continued to commission various paintings of his family, accumulating more than any other Qing emperor. While parental affection played a role, it is suspected that Daoguang did this mainly because he became a father at twenty-five, much later than other Qing rulers, and many of his children unfortunately died prematurely.[16] The desire to cherish the moment and pray for the health of his children probably prompted him to commission family portraits frequently.

The mysterious Empress Xiaoquancheng

With Daoguang's thinking in mind, it is unsurprising that Empress Xiaoquancheng was the most painted consort during his reign, since she entered the inner court when he was in his prime and quickly produced the much-needed imperial children. Nonetheless, her abundant presence in pictures contradicts the brevity of her official biography. Qing court documents show that Xiaoquancheng was a daughter of Yiling 颐龄 from the Niohuru clan of the Manchu Bordered Yellow Banner. She participated in the Elegant Ladies' Selection in 1821 at the age of 13 and was granted the title of Concubine Quan 全嫔, which stood at the fifth rank in the inner court. In just four years she advanced to the third rank of Noble Consort Quan when she bore Daoguang's third daughter. Quan then gave birth to the fourth princess and the fourth prince (the future Xianfeng emperor) in 1826 and 1831, respectively. Daoguang's second empress died in the summer of 1833, and he published Empress Xiaoquancheng's appointment in autumn; the aforementioned *Autumn Garden* was commissioned shortly after this announcement. The ceremony was held in the following year. However, the empress seemed to suffer from a quickly worsening illness in 1839 and died in the first month of 1840 at the age of 31. The sorrowful Daoguang took the rare action of personally choosing her posthumous honorary title, 'quan' 全, the same character he had granted for her first title in the inner court. It means well-rounded, comprehensive and perfect. For 13 days after her death, Daoguang visited the palace where her coffin was placed for mourning, and he did not appoint another empress for the rest of his reign.[17]

A common interpretation of Daoguang's determination to leave the seat of the empress empty is that it was an act of conjugal devotion to Xiaoquancheng. This romanticised view, though, ignores the fact that he showed a similar degree of respect to the annual rituals of his two other empresses. Furthermore, it might also be an existing convention since Kangxi and Qianlong stopped appointing new empresses after their second and third empresses died.[18]

Empress Xiaoquancheng enjoyed Daoguang's favour and was showered with sumptuous gifts from the day she entered the Forbidden City.[19] Her youth and fertility was an essential factor, but among the consorts that bore Daoguang children, Xiaoquancheng stood out for her intelligence. The lack of authentic documents and the obscurity of her death have encouraged colourful anecdotes that mystify this woman's life. However, several oft-cited accounts are worth analysing as they carry some degree of truthfulness. First is a poem composed by Wu Shijian 吴士鉴 (1868–1934), a late Qing scholar-official known for his familiarity with court affairs and compilation of Qing court anecdotes:

> [Empress Xiaoquancheng's] heart and spirit are as pure as the bud of an orchid flower, something unmatched by anyone in the world; she remembered living in Gusu in her childhood. The empress once [used the tangram] to make four characters of *liuhe tongchun* 六合同春, which is even more clever than [Su Hui's] embroidered palindrome.[20]

Wu spares no effort in praising Xiaoquancheng's quality and intelligence here, comparing her with an orchid, a symbol of noble personality in Chinese tradition. What is most notable in the poem is the description of her creative use of the tangram, a puzzle game that consists of seven flat polygons. She used these polygons to make the auspicious phrase *liuhe tongchun* 六合同春 ('all the creatures in heaven and earth celebrating spring's arrival') for the Lunar New Year. A Qing court document indirectly authenticates this anecdote: the imperial workshops received an order to make several sets of tangrams in the last month of 1833, a few months after Daoguang announced Imperial Noble Consort Quan's appointment as empress.[21]

An earlier order to the imperial workshops came directly from Imperial Noble Consort Quan, which leads one to suspect that perhaps the tangram commission was also her idea.[22] Her communication with the imperial workshops was a rare honour since the agency usually worked directly for the emperor, with occasional commissions from the highest-ranked male imperial family members. The workshops' records reveal that Daoguang's favourite consort was not shy about utilising the exceptional authority the emperor granted her, which might be associated with her tragic destiny.

Unlike the clear account above, Wu offers an ambiguous explanation of Xiaoquancheng's death, connecting it with the will of Daoguang's foster mother, Empress Xiaoherui 孝和睿 (1776–1850), who wielded significant influence on her filial son.[23] Anecdotes provide different versions of the conflict between the mother and daughter-in-law, ranging from Xiaoherui's discontent with Xiaoquancheng's high-profile showing-off of her intelligence at the empress dowager's birthday banquet to Xiaoquancheng's unsuccessful attempt to poison the sixth prince, who was suspected to be a strong competitor for the throne and thus a rival to her own son for the position.[24] An entry from the emperor's records indirectly documents Daoguang's rage over an unspecified incident involving Xiaoquancheng in the sixth month of 1839, half a year before her death:

> Inform the officials in the Grand Council and the leading eunuchs of the inner court of the Qianqinggong and the Yuanmingyuan. There is absolutely one and only one ruler of heaven and earth, one master in the household. You must follow only one majesty. From now on, everything that the empress should be informed about must be reported to me first, except for matters related to the empress, the fourth prince and the fourth princess. If the empress gives out any order, you must report and await my approval. I will severely punish the head eunuch and the leading official of the Department of Imperial Household if I find any violation of this order: no tolerance or exception. Send copies of my imperial order to the Grand Council, the Department of Imperial Household, and the Respectability Room. Everyone must always follow it with ultimate respect.[25]

The incident seems to have come as a surprise to Daoguang as there had been no change in the couple's recorded routine in early 1839. He celebrated her birthday in the second month and gave her presents, including a precious round Ding ware writing brush cleaner; Xiaoquancheng also performed the important sericulture ceremony in the third month.[26] Daoguang was then incensed by something the empress had done beyond her role, a matter that reminds us of her communications with the imperial workshops. The emperor did not punish the

Figure 47 Qing court artists, *Model for the Imperial Tutorage* (*Yonggong shifan* 雍宮式範), detail, 1827 handscroll, ink and colour on silk, h. 50.7cm, w. 516cm. Guangzhou Museum

empress directly but turned his anger on the inner court officials. It is unclear whether the empress had already fallen ill by the time of the incident, but records do show that two months later, Daoguang visited the sick empress in Yuanmingyuan.[27] He accompanied Xiaoherui to visit the still-ill Xiaoquancheng again on the fifth day of the Lunar New Year in 1840, and she died five days afterwards.[28]

Wu Shijian and Luo Dunrong 罗惇曧 (1872–1924), another late Qing writer who collected court anecdotes, connected the incident with poisoning. The former hinted that the empress died of a forced suicide ordered by her mother-in-law for an unspecified reason. Meanwhile, the latter claimed that it was due to Xiaoquancheng's failed attempt to poison the sixth prince.[29] Demystifying the death of Xiaoquancheng is not the goal of this chapter, but the official documents and anecdotes analysed above paint a picture of Daoguang as an affectionate spouse who tolerated, or even spoiled, his favourite consort as much as possible. This dynamic helps to explain the unique components of Xiaoquancheng's portraits.

Portraits of Empress Xiaoquancheng

Daoguang's affection for Xiaoquancheng is vividly reflected in her existing portraits, most in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, which houses at least ten of them. *Model for the Imperial Tutorage* from the collection of Guangzhou Museum contains perhaps the earliest known portrait of Xiaoquancheng. It is a handscroll of the bust portraits of Daoguang and six consorts that he commissioned in 1827 (**Fig. 47**).[30] Its format is identical to Qianlong's *Mind Picture of a Well-Governed and Tranquil Reign* in Cleveland Museum.[31] The painter captures her facial features, such as the almond-shaped eyes that raise slightly in the corners and her signature buck teeth. Next to her image is her title, Noble Consort Quan, over which is the seal of the Daoguang emperor, as well as two lines of later annotation which document the years

Figure 48 He Shikui 贺世魁, *Portrait of Empress Xiaoquan and the Fourth Princess* (*Xiaoquancheng huanghou yu si gongzhu xiang* 孝全成皇后與四公主像), 1827, hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, h. 177cm, w. 96.5cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006582

she was advanced to the roles of imperial noble consort and empress. Her lack of expression is consistent with the convention of the official portrait, and comparable to her official portrait made after she became empress.

Xiaoquancheng's informal portraits provide a livelier image. Daoguang ordered He Shikui to paint Xiaoquancheng and the fourth princess around the same time as *Model for the Imperial Tutorage*, and the final work was presented to the emperor on the thirteenth day of the ninth month in 1827 (**Fig. 48**).[32] The two seals in the upper right corner, 'Daoguang yulan zhibao 道光御览之宝' and 'Yangzheng shuwu zhibao 养正书屋之宝', make it clear that the painting belonged to Daoguang and that he had it stored in his study, the Study of Nurturing Just 养正书屋, in the Yuanmingyuan. The life-size painting represents the mother and her toddler daughter facing the viewer in an interior space. Xiaoquancheng leans on the table, and the fourth princess grabs the edge of a green stool. Compared with the formal bust portrait made earlier in the year, Xiaoquancheng's downward eyebrows and slightly raised lips form a soft, melancholic expression. The fourth princess

Figure 49 Attributed to Qiu Ying 仇英, *A Hundred Beauties (Bai mei tu* 百美圖), detail, *c.* 17th century, handscroll, ink and colour on silk, h. 36.8cm, w. 483.2cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 中畫 000025N000000000

inherits her mother's eyebrows, but her gaze is more vigorous. The artist continued the 18th-century tradition of incorporating perspective and naturalistic shading to enhance realism; the volume of the stool, for example, is precisely represented through the carefully executed shadows on the openwork.

The space and the two sitters' similar poses create a harmonious and intimate ambiance, but this seemingly casual painting is exceptional in multiple aspects. Unlike their male counterparts, Qing imperial women, including consorts and princesses, are mainly known from written records, and were rarely pictured except in documentary paintings featuring the imperial family's important events. The subject of mother and daughter is also unique in Qing imperial portraiture since, as discussed earlier, the representation of family always emphasised father and son to highlight patrilineage.

The most noteworthy characteristic, though, is Xiaoquancheng's persona hidden in her attire, contrary to the celebratory motifs on her robe and accessories in *Autumn Garden* that were chosen in service of Daoguang's birthday. She wears two white peonies, a flower symbolising wealth and status, and reserved for the highest-ranked imperial woman. On the other side of her headgear are several orchid blossoms, a low-profile, fragrant flower representing one's noble personality. This symbolism had originated from the Han Chinese literary tradition and was soon adopted by the Manchus. If this connection is coincidental, two decorative elements on Xiaoquancheng's gown suggest a deeper engagement with Han Chinese culture. She wears a blue informal robe decorated with small branches of red and white plum blossoms. The borders of the robe are embroidered with two narrow bands: a yellow one with navy lines of cracked ice and plum blossoms and a navy one with white and pink plum blossoms. Plum blooms in winter and thus plum blossoms symbolise enduring cold weather and, by extension, harsh circumstances. Artists and craftsmen of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) amplified this double metaphor by combining cracked ice and plum blossoms into one motif. It became prevalent in the repertoire of Qing imperial workshops and can be found decorating various mediums such as porcelain and furniture.

The defining Han Chinese element of Xiaoquancheng's attire is her colourful *yunjian* 云肩 collar in the shape of flower

Figure 50 Stage costume for characters of female royalty, 1875–1908. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00213748

petals. The history of this unique accessory can be traced to over two thousand years ago.[33] Short and convenient to wear, it is a popular winter accessory for Han Chinese women, as is seen in a 17th-century painting picturing Han Chinese beauties: a dancing woman wears a multi-layered dress and ribbons that flutter gracefully when she twirls, and her shoulders are covered with a light beige collar decorated with floral patterns (**Fig. 49**). Although scholars dismiss Wu Shijian's poem about Xiaoquancheng spending her childhood in Suzhou on the grounds that her father had never held a position there, this does not interfere with the possibility that this bright Manchu woman grew up with Han popular culture such as the tangram and brought it to the court. Furthermore, considering the popularity of theatrical performances in the Qing period and the degree to which they permeated Qing court life, Xiaoquancheng's collar was likely inspired by the court troupe's stage costume for Han female royalty, an example of which has been preserved (**Fig. 50**).

These possible sources of inspiration aside, what is critical here is *how* this Han Chinese accessory found its way to the neck of a high-ranked Manchu consort. What enabled Xiaoquancheng to break away from the Qing imperial tradition forbidding Manchu women from wearing Han Chinese costume? It is true that this dress code, while followed rigorously in the 18th century, saw a decline in the early 19th century, which is evidenced by the frequent decrees condemning women's violations of the rules.[34] Under such circumstances, it would seem that a portrait offered Xiaoquancheng an opportunity to please the emperor by setting a good example; nevertheless, she does just the opposite, confidently donning the delicate collar before the emperor's gaze.

The two snuff bottles on the table help decipher another message embedded in the painting. They are unlikely to be Xiaoquancheng's belongings because snuff powder was part of the male Manchu aristocrat's world. Women, if smoking, usually used water pipes.[35] Upon close examination, it becomes clear that one bottle is green, round and topped with a grey cap, while the other is close to oval and has yellowish shading on one side – very similar to the two bottles in *Autumn Garden* (**Fig. 46b**). In other words, on the table are two symbols of Daoguang's presence as well as his wish: a small tower of apples, whose Chinese pronunciation of *ping* 苹 is a homophonous pun for peace (平).[36] Of course, as mentioned earlier, the production of a Qing imperial portrait still followed a rigid protocol. The patron's preference was superior to that of the artist and even the sitter. It is therefore hard to tell whether Xiaoquancheng's attire in this painting was of her own choice or at the emperor's behest. However, the fact that Daoguang accepted the painting and stored it in his study suggests that he admired this unique representation that emphasised his consort's persona.

Interestingly, the slight 'free spirit' evident in this painting seemed to be short-lived. The portrayal of the sitters in a portrait of Xiaoquancheng and the future Xianfeng emperor, also stored in Daoguang's study, returns to the orbit of Qing imperial portraiture (**Fig. 51**). It was likely commissioned between 1832 and 1833, as the prince looks younger than his appearance in *Autumn Garden*. Compared with the 1827 portrait, Xiaoquancheng appears older and more confident, and her dark purple attire echoes such maturity. But the small orchid flowers on the narrow bands give way to the large dragon roundels on the fabric.

Figure 51 (left) Qing court artists, ***Portrait of Empress Xiaoquancheng and a Young Boy*** **(*****Xiaoquancheng huanghou yu youzi xiang*** **孝全成皇后與幼子像), detail, c. 1834, hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, h. 184cm, w. 72.2cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006585**

Figure 52 (right) Qing court artists, *Empress Dowager Cixi* (*Cixi taihou jifu xiang* 慈禧太后吉服像), detail, *c.* 1870–4, hanging scroll, ink, colour and gold on paper, h. 180cm, w. 77cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006361

Xiaoquancheng takes a frontal view and holds her toddler son's hand. The mother and son also wield a lotus leaf and flower, respectively. While the flower might refer to the summer season when the painting was produced, it can also be a symbol of fertility, and since the flower and leaf grow from the same stem, they signify a mother-and-son bond.[37] More importantly, the lock-shaped gold pendant on the boy's necklace symbolises the wish for the child's good health. All these motifs point to the fact that it was the prince, rather than his mother, who was the focus of the painting.

Conclusion: the beginning of the end

Although the representation of Empress Xiaoquancheng's persona in the portrait of her and the fourth princess is exceptional in Qing imperial portraiture, it should be considered the precursor to a critical change to this genre in late Qing court art. We cannot be sure if Xiaoquancheng played a spontaneous role in deciding how she could be painted, but Daoguang's preference for making informal portraits of his family from a personal perspective allowed room for picturing her personality. It planted the seed for more assertive visual representations of female agency when

Figure 53 Qing court painters, *Empress Dowager Cixi in the Guise of Guanyin* (*Cixi taihou ban Guanyin xiang* 慈禧太后扮觀音像), detail, 1875–1908, hanging scroll, ink, colour and gold on silk, h. 191.2cm, w. 100cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006602

Xiaoquancheng's daughter-in-law, the subversive female ruler Empress Dowager Cixi, made full use of the lacuna while adapting the blurred boundary of reality and theatricality in imperial portraiture.

In an early portrait to visualise her bond with Xianfeng, Cixi wields a branch of orchid that alludes to her title when she bore his only male heir, the future Tongzhi 同治 emperor (1856–1875) (**Fig. 52**). Nevertheless, her left index finger lays on a small dish of snuff powder, a striking detail that makes one big leap from Xiaoquancheng's portrait, where the snuff bottles symbolise the emperor's love and protection. Here, Cixi directly consumes the divine powder to link her to the male world and male power. The borrowing of stage costumes is also apparent in Cixi's later portraits. She is depicted, for example, in the costume of bodhisattva Guanyin in a portrait celebrating her birthday (**Fig. 53**). The dragon robe underneath the pearl mantle is sewn with many golden *fo* 佛 characters that refer to the Buddha, undoubtedly inspired by a standard device of late Qing stage costume that combines the character's name with their costume for the audience's convenient identification.[38]

The portrait of Empress Xiaoquancheng and the fourth princess thus signals the beginning of loosened patriarchal control over the visual representation of imperial women. This change had its origins in the Daoguang emperor's efforts to document his family in a more personalised fashion, which resulted in a painting that portrays Empress Xiaoquancheng's interest in Han Chinese culture. The limited records from the time suggest that she was a clever and audacious woman; consequently, it would not be surprising if she had played a role in deciding her dress. Although the experiment was not followed by more works during Xiaoquancheng's lifetime, it enabled Empress Dowager Cixi's assertion of female agency several decades later. This chapter is an attempt to call more scholarly attention to the importance of the early 19th century, for the drastic changes in late Qing court politics and culture were the result of a long process that took place during this time, and more research is needed to contextualise that process in greater detail.

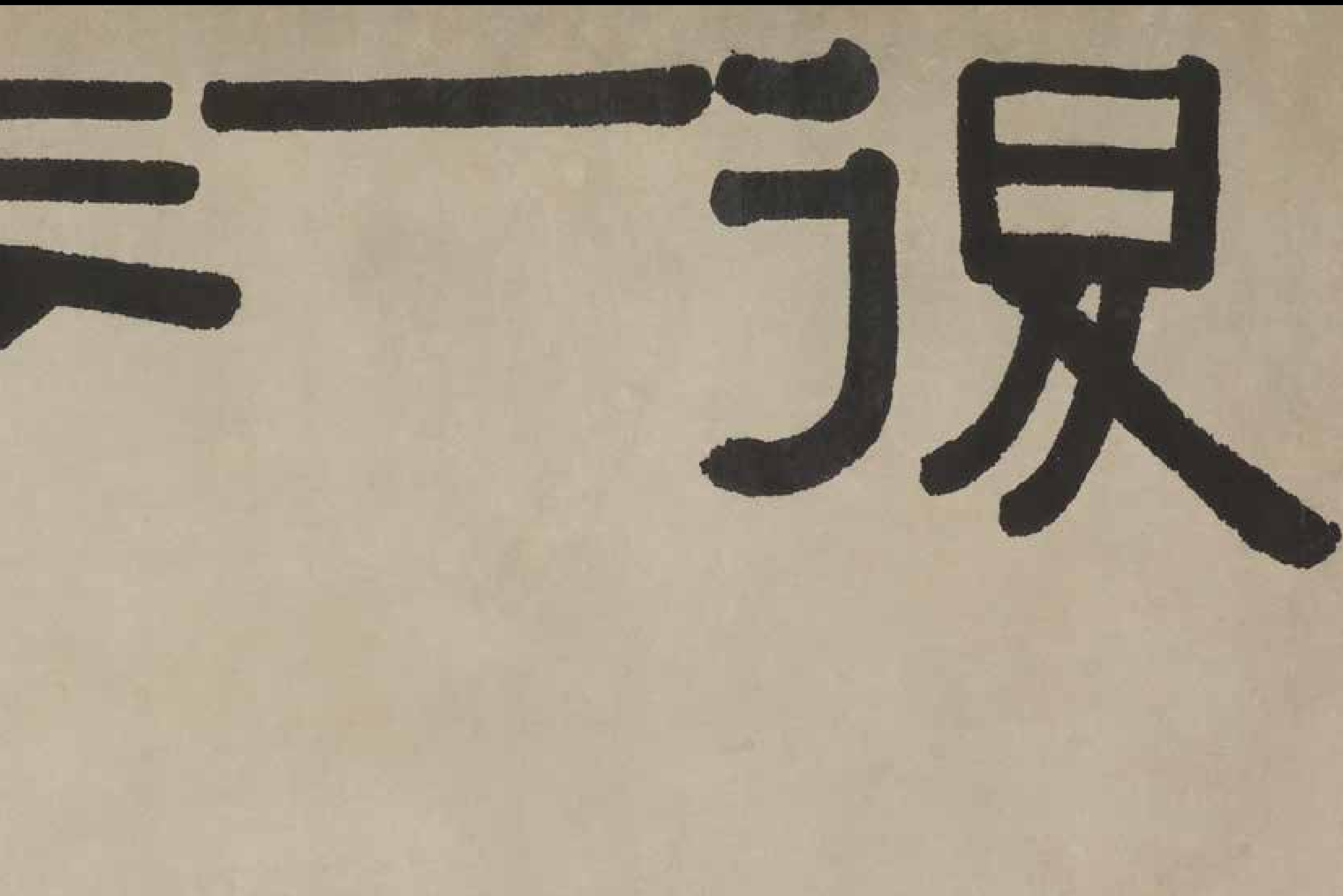
Notes

1 Wang 2004; Hay 2005.
2 Lo 2009; Chen 2014; Wu 1995.
3 Lo 2009, 30–42; Jin 2018, 88–97.
4 Lin, Shu 2015; 2019; 2020.
5 Jin 2018, 108.
6 Chen 2014, 187.
7 Jin 2018, 72–6; Tong 2006.
8 Peng 2018, 108–10.
9 Berliner 2010, 227.
10 Li 2017, 75–7.
11 *Neiwufu zaobanchu huojidang* (NZH).
12 NZH, box no. 019-129-603.
13 Jin 2018, 111–12.
14 Li 2017, 73–7.
15 Song 2018.
16 Jin 2018, 109.
17 Xu 2019, 201–6; Zhang 1929, 347–51; Zhao *et al.* 1927, xx.
18 Xu 2019, 190–201, 211–12.
19 NZH, box no. 018-567-585.
20 Wu 1986, 127.
21 NZH, box. no.017-312-597.
22 NZH, box. no.018-131-585.
23 Xu 2019, 177–9.
24 Xu 2019, 204–5.
25 *Xuanzong shilu*, *juan* 323, 449. Translation mine.
26 *Xuanzong shilu*, *juan* 319, 184; Tie and Li, vol. 6, 326.
27 *Xuanzong shilu*, *juan* 325, 75.
28 *Xuanzong shilu*, *juan* 325, 81.
29 Xu 2019, 204.
30 NZH, box. no. 014-215-572.
31 Yu 2003, 6; Chen 2014, 117–49.
32 NZH, box. no. 014-287-572.
33 Huang and Meng 2021.
34 *Xuanzong shilu*, *juan* 329, 268.
35 Peng 2023, 25.
36 Jin 2018, 110.
37 Jin 2018, 109–10.
38 Since Cixi was often referred to as *laofoye* 老佛爷 in the court, the image possibly represents Cixi's desire to incorporate her secular and spiritual identities: a female ruler and an incarnation of Guanyin. Peng 2023, 24–5, 42–4.

齋

蘅沚三兄屬書

嘉慶癸酉伊秉綬



2 CALLIGRAPHY AND SEAL CARVING

Introduction: calligraphy and seal carving

Roderick Whitfield

Pages 48–9: Yi Bingshou 伊秉綬 (1754–1815), *Studio of one-step-back* (*Tui yibu zhai* 退一步齋), 1813, ink on paper, h. 47cm, l. 139cm. Shanghai Museum

To understand the long tradition of Chinese culture it is instructive to take a glance at the schedule of lessons set out for Zhou Yiliang 周一良 (1913–2001), not long after the fall of the Qing dynasty, by his tutor Mr Zhang. Zhou's daily routine required him to reread the Confucian *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經), *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), *Analects* and *Mencius;* to start reading the *Book of Rites* (*Li Ji* 禮經) and the *Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳) and, twice a week, to explicate the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* (*Yi li* 儀禮). In addition, he should study the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* (*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑) (ten pages, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday) and *Lesser Learning of Master Zhu Xi* (*Zhuzi xiaoxue* 朱子小學) (five pages, Monday, Wednesday, Friday). For writing, he should practise ten characters of Han stele script daily and, three days a week, fifty characters from the *Shuowen* (說文), China's first dictionary, compiled in around 100 CE and presented to the throne in 121. Finally, three days a week for two months, he should use oiled paper to trace characters from the Daoist *Yellow Court Scripture* (*Huangting jing* 黃庭經).[1]

While the focus of Zhou's curriculum is on the Confucian classics and historical and Neo-Confucian texts, what is striking is the choice of styles that he was required to emulate in his calligraphy practice. The Daoist *Yellow Court Scripture*, in *xiaokai* 小楷, small regular script, is forever associated with Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361) the patriarch of Chinese calligraphy: it was copied by several Tang masters, including Sun Guoting 孫過庭 (638–after 703) who wrote that in it Wang 'achieved a joyful emptiness'.[2] The use of tracing paper implies that Yiliang should copy the text punctiliously. He would have had more freedom with his daily task of ten much larger characters engraved on stone in *lishu* 隸書, clerical script, for which he would certainly have studied a rubbing of the Ritual Implements (*Liqibei* 禮器碑), a stele dated to 156 CE in the temple of Confucius in Qufu, Shandong province, measuring seven feet one inch in height and three feet two inches wide. The text is written in 16 columns each of 36 characters, each inscribed in a rectangle that gives ample scope for horizontal strokes with bold flourishes, particularly towards the right (**Fig. 54**). Despite this emphasis in the clerical script, however, through the centuries, no matter what the style of writing, one feature of Chinese calligraphy is the vertical. In the West 'Small letters, as we know them, fall between four imaginary horizontal lines'[3] with ascenders and descenders to ensure legibility and abbreviations for speed. By contrast in China an unseen vertical within the column of characters allows far more scope for movement to either side, as well as up and down.[4]

Large steles were not studied *in situ*; instead, the rubbings made from them were sliced into long columns that were then cut up and pasted into concertina albums. The latter could even be pocket-sized, as is the case with the Stele of the Huadu Temple (*Huadusi bei* 化度寺碑), a few pages from which were obtained by both Aurel Stein (1862–1943) and Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) from the Dunhuang Library Cave in Gansu province (**Fig. 55**).[5] Dated to 631 CE, the text on this stele, in 36 columns of 33 characters each, was written by the gifted calligrapher Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641) for the relic pagoda of Chan Buddhist Master Yong 邕禪師 (late 6th

Figure 54 (left) Rubbing from the Stele on Ritual Implements in the temple of Confucius in Qufu, Shandong province, 156 CE. From *Shoseki meihin sokan* (Journal of Calligraphy), Tokyo: Nigensha, 1966, series 1, no. 3. Heidelberg University Library

Figure 55 (above) Rubbing of Ouyang Xun's calligraphy from the Stele of the Huadu Temple, 631 CE, h. 12.3cm, w. 8.5cm (each leaf). British Library, London, Stein collection, S.5791

century–early 7th century). When the Jin sacked the capital at the end of the Northern Song period (960–1127), the stele was hidden in a well. Though broken during its retrieval, many rubbings of it were made, as well as re-carvings, but the stone itself was lost.[6] The rubbing found at Dunhuang and illustrated here is alone in showing almost no signs of wear or breakage while others, including one treasured by the noted Qing dynasty scholar Weng Fanggang 翁方綱 (1733–1818), are much more indistinct.[7]

Respect for fine calligraphy also inspired the gathering together for public display of the Classics and other impressive steles, now known as the Beilin 碑林 or Forest of Steles in Xi'an. This event was commemorated in a stele entitled On Newly Moving the Stone Classics to the Prefectural Academy in the Capital (*Jingzhaofu fuxue xinyishijing ji* 京兆府府學新移石經記) dated to 1090. This stele records the move, under the direction of Transport Commissioner Lü Dazhong 呂大忠 (*c.*1020–1096), of the engraved stones to their present location. The text is in *kaishu* 楷書, regular script, and modelled on the calligraphy of Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿 (709–785), with a title of ten much larger characters in *zhuanshu* 篆書, seal script. The use of seal script, similar to the use of Roman capitals in the west, confers a sense of importance through its association with Chinese writing of a much earlier time. A rubbing from the stele, cut into columns and pasted into a booklet whose grubby cover and heavy staining suggest long-time use, is shown here. The calligrapher, An Yizhi 安宜之 (dates unknown) of Chang'an, is an obscure figure and this is his only surviving work (**Fig. 56a–c**). With little demand for his calligraphy, the characters on this stele have remained clear and crisp: the stone has not suffered for its art, whereas others have become worn through repeated rubbings. Indeed, the probable date of a rubbing can often be determined through its degree of degradation or illegibility, as is the case with the character *zuo* 鑿, numbering 27 strokes, in Yan Zhenqing's inscription for the Prabhūtaratna Pagoda 多寶塔 in Chang'an.

From the Eastern Han onwards, 'fine writing begins to be connected with the special abilities and qualities of the person who does it… elegant writing is thought to reveal the extraordinary dignity of the writer.'[8] It is against this cultural backdrop that we see the beginnings of antiquarianism in China, from early discoveries of ancient bronzes and other artefacts to, little more than a century ago, the excavation of oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty (16th–11th century BCE), engraved on turtle plastrons or bull scapulae, with traces of black or vermilion that reveal the use of a brush even at this early date.[9] Gazetteers compiled by officials on their tour of duty regularly recorded the inscriptions and antiquities of the region for which they were responsible. The collective noun for such studies, discussed in this volume by Yang Chia-Ling, is *Jinshixue* 金石學 (Study of [Inscriptions on] Metal and Stone). In the 18th century, in the midst of fervent cultural activities, the Kangxi, Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors sponsored vast literary enterprises, such as the *Complete Library in Four Branches of Literature* (*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書), the *Synthesis of Books and Illustrations of Ancient and Modern Times* (*Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成), and *Texts on Calligraphy and Painting in the Imperial Collection* (*Peiwenzhai shuhuapu* 佩文齋書畫譜). Rewards were given to collectors who sent rare works from their libraries. Even in the early Republic, Zhou

Figure 56a An Yizhi, rubbing of title characters from the stele On Newly Moving the Stone Classics to the Prefectural Academy in the Capital, dated 1090, ink on paper, each leaf approximately h. *c.* 25cm, w. 11cm

Figure 56b An Yizhi, rubbing of text characters from the stele On Newly Moving the Stone Classics to the Prefectural Academy in the Capital, dated 1090. Emperor Ming (Xuanzong)'s *Commentary on the Filial Piety Classic* (745), heads the list of famous Tang calligraphers, ink on paper, each leaf approximately h. *c.* 25cm, w. 11cm

Figure 56c Rubbing of the whole stele. Being so large (130 x 80cm), it is inconvenient to copy and even to read. Cut and pasted to make a booklet, as in Figure 56a–b, it is not only of handy size, but the spacing and brush flow of the characters in each column remain exactly as written

Yiliang's father too had a vast library, while he 'also enjoyed collecting cultural artefacts and works of calligraphy'.[10]

The study of inscriptions on metal and stone spread beyond China: international contacts were fostered by embassies from Korea. It was on such an embassy, led in 1809–10 by his father Kim No-gyeong 金魯敬 (1766–1840), who had been on previous embassies to Yanjing (now Beijing), that the young scholar Kim Jeong-hui 金正喜 (1786–1856) met some of the foremost collectors and antiquarians, including both Ruan Yuan and Weng Fanggang. Though they did not speak each other's languages, as scholars, steeped in ancient texts, they were united in their common appreciation of calligraphic styles that documented the development of the Chinese writing system from its earliest stages to the present day. They could communicate freely in writing, as well as by the exchange of rubbings and seals. Not only did Kim, better known as the calligrapher Chusa 秋史, stay in touch with Chinese calligraphers and antiquarians through letters and poems, but he also took a second studio name, Wandang 阮堂 (Hall of Ruan) in honour of Ruan Yuan.

Surprisingly, to illustrate the ever-widening scope of Chinese antiquarian studies, a rubbing made from an item from Ruan Yuan's collection has recently been discovered by Zhang Hongxing in the Victoria and Albert Museum, where it is currently exhibited in the T T Tsui Gallery. It takes the form of a rubbing of a bronze bell of the Western Zhou period (*c.* 1046–771 BCE; **Fig. 57**).[11] This is no ordinary rubbing, but a composite, made by the monk Liuzhou, also known as Dashou, who used a new technique to bring the three-dimensionality of the bell vividly to life by making rubbings of separate details and then assembling them (see also **Fig. 27**). It was Ruan Yuan himself who commissioned

Figure 57 Liuzhou, composite rubbing of the Western Zhou Period bell of Guo Shu Lü 虢淑旅 made for Ruan Yuan. Ink rubbing on paper, h. 73cm, w. 52cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, given by Mrs Stephen Bushell, E.1071-1918

the rubbing, which was subsequently acquired by Stephen W. Bushell, C.M.G, and illustrated in his pioneering two-volume history of Chinese art.[12]

Dorothy Ko, in her essay for this volume, identifies the traits of a consumer society in China of the 18th and 19th centuries. Alongside such activities, however, we should note that the study of ancient inscriptions on metal and stone involved very little expense, requiring only basic materials such as ink and paper, and skills such as cutting, pasting and thread-binding to make handy volumes that could be passed from hand to hand, both within China and beyond. As noted above of the stele of Newly Moving the Stone Classics, *lishu* or clerical script was used to lend dignity and authority to the title of the stele, by association with great antiquity. But seal script was also employed on a much smaller scale for making seals, both official and personal. Chia-Ling Yang, in her essay for this volume, has shown how the study of ancient inscriptions, where cast in bronze or engraved in stone, was reflected in the legends carved in personal seals. These were exchanged between friends with similar interests; moreover, just as rubbings taken from very large steles could be mounted in concertina albums so that the calligraphy could be studied in detail and in sequence. Connoisseurs could themselves carve seals, with the minimum of means, such as a handheld clamp to hold the blank block in place, and sharp steel engraving tools. The seals that they carved, whether in relief or in intaglio, reflected not only the calligraphy engraved on the steles, but also that of new discoveries, such as the oracle bones of the Shang period and the amazing hidden library discovered in a sealed chamber at Mogao, near Dunhuang.

Notes

1 Zhou 2014, xii.
2 Qi Gong, Poetry, 'Calligraphy and Painting' in Murck and Fong 1991, 11.
3 See Mahoney 1981, 65–7.
4 Zhou Yiliang spent seven years at Harvard earning his doctorate, where 'my life was extremely monotonous. Apart from studying, the only thing I did was to study.' (Zhou 2014, 49). Returning to China, he survived the Cultural Revolution, becoming one of China's premier historians of the 20th century.
5 The leaves from both collections are illustrated in Whitfield 1983–5, vol. 2, fig. 97.
6 Liu 1989, vol. 1, 451–2.
7 See Tokyo National Museum 2019, 64, for the opening leaf of Weng Fanggang's rubbing of the Stele of the Huadu Temple, with every space crowded with seals and inscriptions by Ming and Qing collectors.
8 Nylan 1999, 18.
9 Yang 1962, 41–6.
10 Zhou 2014, 5.
11 The rubbing was formerly in the collection of Stephen Bushell; see Bushell 1904–6, 80–2, fig.46. See also https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O490214/ink-rubbing-of-bell-of-rubbing-dashou/.
12 Bushell 1904–6, vol. 1, 69.

Chapter 5

Eternal stones: model-letters compendia and regional memories of Qing Guangzhou

Weitian Yan

Between 1757 and 1842, when Guangzhou (also known as Canton) was designated by the Qing government as the only trading port with the outside world, its bustling marketplaces were filled with calligraphic signs.[1] A variety of stores for domestic customers, each marked by a vertical signboard of distinctive Chinese characters, packed the narrow alleys. These written artefacts added a rich texture to the city; some were brushed with ink, some painted in red colours and others carved in intaglio then filled with gold pigments. In an arresting 19th-century photograph, placards for bookstores, stationery shops, carpenter stores and apothecaries selling 'smoking cessation pills' (*jieyan wan* 戒煙丸) stand next to one another, forming a forest of calligraphic styles (**Fig. 58**). The dazzling diversity of inscriptions – none of the signboards are in the exact same style – allows each boutique to take on its own character. Merchants who ran the shops were deeply aware of the power of words, and these giant characters in bold strokes generated curiosity, making passers-by linger and wonder.

At the private residences of merchants in Guangzhou, calligraphic inscriptions were also on constant display. In a 19th-century photograph of a living space, a large horizontal plaque, decorated with fluid calligraphy, was put up high on a beam (**Fig. 59**). Sets of hanging scrolls with inked calligraphy embellish both side walls. On the two front panels are replicas of engraved eave tiles from the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE). The abundance of texts reveals that it was de rigueur for wealthy families at the time to use calligraphy as architectural decoration, showcasing their literary knowledge and antiquarian taste.

Like those street placards and interior inscriptions, the 'model-letters compendia' (*fatie* 法帖) commissioned by prominent merchant families in Guangzhou also served important public functions. The term 'model-letters compendia' refers to an age-old tradition that involves the engraving of calligraphic works (such as the correspondence of notable calligraphers) in stone and the reproduction of them via ink rubbing.[2] By the 19th century, model-letters compendia entailed at least two modes of enjoyment. Traditionally, scholars would make ink rubbings from engraved stone slabs and have these images mounted in album or book formats. Such a product could be enjoyed in a manner akin to reading an exhibition catalogue today, to be flipped through page by page, closely perused alone in a quiet setting, or shared and discussed with friends. Even when stone slabs perished, as many did, their ink rubbings often survive. Bound as traditional book volumes, these ink rubbings became portable, bringing the engraved texts to a much wider audience beyond the walls of wealthy residences.

Alternatively, one could also look at the engraved stones directly since many of them were conspicuously displayed at their owners' private mansions.[3] Commonly referred to as 'calligraphy stone slabs' (*shu tao shi* 書條石), they were mounted in the walls of corridors and integrated into gardens. For instance, the Tower of Viewing Antiquity (*Yuegulou* 閱古樓) in Beijing's Beihai Park, an imperial site constructed under the direction of the Qianlong emperor, exhibits close to 500 calligraphy stone slabs. Another example is the renowned Lingering Garden (*Liu Yuan* 留園)

Figure 58 A. Chan (Chinese, active late 19th century), *Seung Moon Street, Canton, c.* 1870, albumen silver print, h. 20.2cm, w. 26.6cm. Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 84. XP.237.19

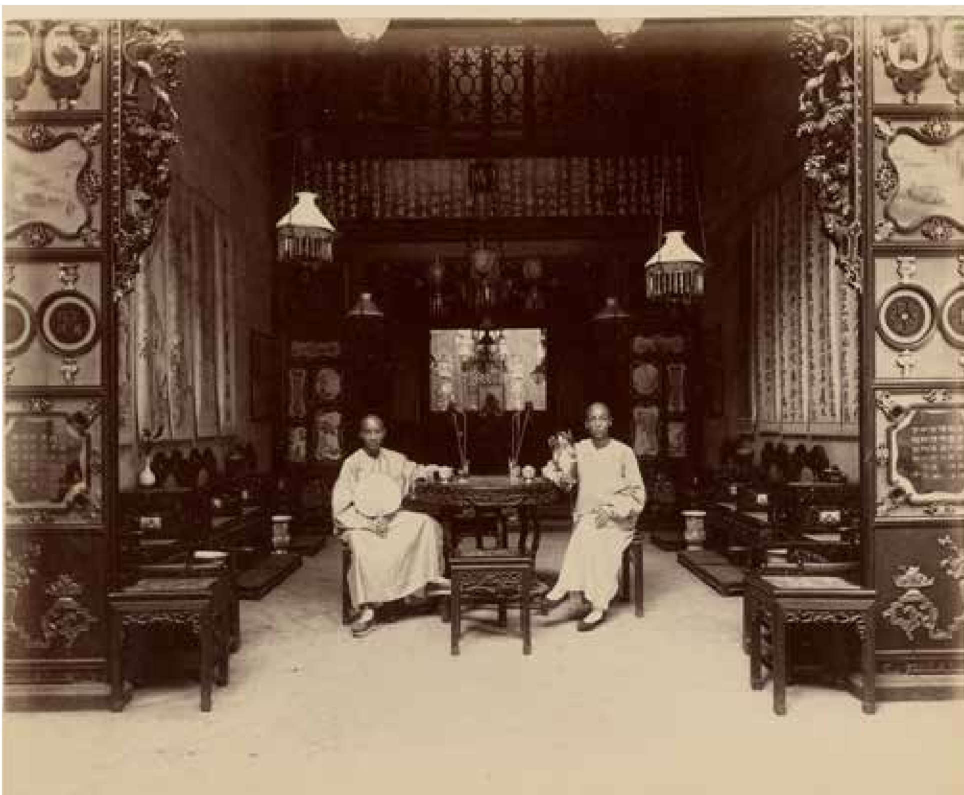


Figure 59 Unknown photographer, *Domestic-life Gentleman's House, Reception Hall, Canton*, *c.* 1880–90, albumen silver print, h. 20.2cm, w. 24.3cm. Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 84.XP.721.31

in Suzhou, which presents more than 300 slabs assembled by the scholar-official Liu Shu 劉恕 (1759–1816). Touring through these curated spaces provokes conversation. Hosts would explain their calligraphic selection and privileged guests would comment on the contents, styles and provenances of the displayed works. Projects of model-letters compendia therefore served not only as guides to canonical historical styles but also as social spaces for negotiating identities.

Merchants in Guangdong province were avid patrons of model-letter compendia. According to the art historian Cao Jian 曹建, more than 80 model-letters compendia were produced in the 19th century, and Guangdong province alone was home to almost 20 such projects.[4] The immense wealth of maritime merchants in the region made them ideal patrons for such costly enterprises. Purchasing stone slabs and recruiting skilled carvers required substantial monetary investment. A single project might take years, if not decades, to complete. However, unlike other ephemeral media of writing (e.g. paper and silk), stone was believed to be a much more durable material that could transcend time. When important pieces of handwriting were preserved in stone, the

styles of these works, as well as memories about their writers, could be passed down to future generations. Motivated by this desire to seek enduring reputations, some merchant families decided to sponsor multiple projects of this kind, in spite of all the challenges.

The large number of model-letters compendia in Guangdong embodies local scholars' aspiration to create a distinguished image of their native place. Recent scholarship by historian Steven B. Miles and art historian Yeewan Koon has pointed out that regional elites attempted to produce counter-narratives to the stereotypical perception of Guangdong as a remote 'barbarian' land lacking significant cultural traditions.[5] Via the lavishly manufactured model-letter compendia, Guangdong merchants translated their economic success into cultural distinction.

How, then, did merchant families make use of model-letter compendia to achieve their social needs? In what follows, I use three model-letters compendia commissioned by Ye Menglong 葉夢龍 (1775–1832), an important member of the Ye family in Guangzhou, to exemplify how elites of merchant backgrounds appropriated calligraphic texts to celebrate their ancestry, their social networks and the cultural luminaries of Guangdong. In the original context of display, viewers did not just read the texts all by themselves; members of the Ye family were likely present, having conversations with the invited guests and explaining their ideas behind each project. The Ye family probably also gifted ink rubbings of these engraved stones to friends in their social circle, further disseminating the family's image as a cultured clan. Altogether, these three projects delivered a message that the prosperous present of Guangdong was rooted in its cultured past.[6] This continuity enabled the Ye family to assert its identity as a steward of local history and culture. Such interests and commitment transformed the southern frontier into a cultural centre for manufacturing model-letters compendia.

The Ye family of Guangzhou

The Ye family gained prominence in Guangzhou through their success in maritime trade.[7] Native to Tong'an 同安, a small coastal village in southeast Fujian, the Ye family relocated to Guangzhou in the early 18th century, part of an influx of immigrants from nearby provinces in search of opportunities. The family began building their fortune during the generation of Ye Tingxun 葉廷勳 (1753–1809), who had several aliases as a businessman. In trading records, he was known as Ye Shanglin 葉上林 and Ye Renshang 葉仁商 (lit. 'the benevolent merchant Ye'); foreign merchants often referred to him as Yanqua (Renguan 仁官).[8] He started his career as a clerk at the firm of Pan Youdu 潘有度 (1755–1820), the leading merchant in Guangzhou at the time.[9] In 1792, Ye Tingxun was appointed by the Qing government as a 'Hong merchant' (行商), the official position licensed to conduct business directly with foreigners. His own firm, the Yicheng Company (Yichenghang 義成行), traded many products with the English East India Company, the Swedish East India Company and the Danish Asiatic Company. By the early 19th century, the Yicheng Company had grown into one of the largest firms in Guangzhou. However, around the same time, due to his declining health, Ye Tingxun began to plan for his retirement. In 1804, perhaps after making a substantial donation to the court, he gained approval from the throne to relinquish his role as a Hong merchant.[10] This was not a common outcome for merchant families in Guangzhou; many in Ye Tingxun's position had to serve till their death or the collapse of their businesses. He is the only Hong merchant known to have successfully withdrawn from the appointment during his lifetime.

In his retirement, Ye Tingxun assumed the social profile of a traditional literatus. He became known as the 'Old Man of the Flower Stream' (*Huaxi laoren* 花谿老人), a classical reference to a recluse living in a utopian world.[11] He sponsored the reprinting of poems by Wang Shizhen 王士禛 (1634–1711), a scholar-official who briefly served in Guangzhou, and published a four-volume collection of his own poems.

Ye Tingxun also regularly hosted literary gatherings for local scholars at his private residence, a property colloquially known as the Little Field Garden (*Xiaotianyuan* 小田園). Located at the Litchi Cove (*Lizhi wan* 荔枝灣), a scenic site in the Xiguan 西關 area of Guangzhou and a neighbourhood of merchant mansions, this family property overlooks the beautiful scenery along the Pearl River. The most famous residence in the area was the Sea Mountain Immortals' Lodge (*Haishan xianguan* 海山仙館), built by the Pan family.[12] In a Confucian society like Qing Guangzhou, 'merchant' remained a low social class that could be frowned upon by scholars and officials.[13] Ye Tingxun's investments in cultural pursuits were thus an attempt to rewrite his merchant past.

Ye Menglong, the second son of Ye Tingxun, further enhanced the public image of the Ye family as a cultured group. Ye Menglong was best known as an art collector who inherited a body of significant works from his father and acquired more pieces during his time in the capital. After purchasing a position at the Ministry of Revenue, Ye Menglong spent a few years in Beijing where he developed relationships with several important scholars. When he returned to Guangzhou, he engaged in the production of model-letters compendia, including the three projects discussed in this paper. These calligraphy stone slabs were originally stored and displayed in the garden of the Ye family. Ye Menglong had also ordered ink rubbings to be made from these stones and published them as volumes of calligraphic exemplars. Although the current whereabouts of the stones are unknown, ink-rubbing images of the engraved texts survive, testifying to the capability of such projects to shape and maintain a family legacy.

Model Letters of the Upright Recluse Garden

Completed in 1813, *Model Letters of the Upright Recluse Garden* (*Zhenyinyuan fatie* 貞隱園法帖) was the first project directed by Ye Menglong. This compendium features copies of early calligraphic works made by Guo Bingzhan 郭秉詹 (fl. 17th century), a scholar-calligrapher from Fujian province who lived through the Ming-Qing dynastic transition. The term in the title, 'upright recluse' (*zhenyin* 貞隱), points to the identity of Guo as a Ming loyalist, who chose to be cloistered at home and not serve the newly established Manchu

regime. Guo belonged to a renowned gentry family in Wenling 溫陵 (modern-day Quanzhou). His brother, Guo Xianzhan 郭憲詹 (dates unknown), was the compiler of *Model Letters of the Resounding Zither Studio* (*Xiangqinzhai fatie* 響琴齋法帖), a five-volume compendium of well-known calligraphic works from the Jin (266–420) to the Ming dynasties.[14] Although Guo Bingzhan may appear obscure today, his name and family background signified an important episode of local history to the educated elites in Fujian during the Qing dynasty.

Ye Menglong's compendium of Guo Bingzhan's works was a collaboration among Fujian natives in Guangzhou to celebrate their hometown as a place of rich cultural heritage. The copies originally made by Guo, in ten volumes, came from the family collection of Li Wei 李威 (active 1770–1823), a scholar-official native of Longxi 龍溪 county in Quanzhou, Fujian. According to Li, they were purchased by his father at a local market. In 1812, when Li arrived in Guangdong as the Prefect of Guangzhou, he showed the collection to Ye Menglong, who then eagerly proposed to have them engraved in stone and hired Xie Yunsheng 謝雲生 (b. 1760), the elder brother of the noted Guangzhou literatus Xie Lansheng 謝蘭生 (1769–1831), as the primary carver.[15] The cost of stone slabs was likely also covered by Ye Menglong. The scholar-official and calligrapher Yi Bingshou 伊秉綬 (1754–1815), from Ninghua (north of Quanzhou), who was a close friend of Ye, was invited to brush the title of the project, which was then engraved in stone. Together, these three descendants of Fujian produced a project to honour their native place.

The content of the compendium further perpetuates the regional theme of Fujian. Guo Bingzhan's ten-volume project presents a series of 'reduced copies' (*linsuo* 縮臨) of historical works. This refers to the use of a calligrapher's personal style to transcribe early calligraphic works in reduced *scale* and *length*. The copies made by Guo include many well-known pieces that could be easily found in other model-letters compendia, such as early bronze inscriptions, steles from the Qin and Han dynasties, and canonical works by revered writers from the Tang to the Ming periods. However, in between these familiar choices, Guo sometimes inserted samples of calligraphy that were less known outside Fujian but significant to locals. For example, the first copy in the ninth volume is the stone inscription 'forgetting to return' (*wanggui* 忘歸), attributed to Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012–1067), at Mount Gu (Gushan 鼓山) near Fuzhou in Fujian province. Each character of the original text measures about 70cm in height (**Fig. 60**). In his transcription, Guo scaled down the inscription to less than 10cm high, transforming the monumental engraving into a portable memorial of the local landscape (**Fig. 61**). In this way, Guo was able to transport a regional landmark to places beyond its original location. Guo's copies constructed a personal history of Chinese calligraphy, uniting classical and regional traditions.

Several of Guo's 'reduced copies' also reflect the more general zeal for ancient inscriptions at the time. With the rise of evidential scholarship, a methodology promoting the use of rigorous textual analyses as historical evidence, scholars in 18th-century China turned to the study of early

Figure 60 Juan Mencarini, *Shrine at Kushan Monastery* (photograph no. 31 from his 'Foochow album'), *c.* 1894, gelatin silver print, h. 19cm, w. 13cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University, 013348443. The inscription next to the monks reads '*wanggui shi* 忘歸石' (the 'Forgetting to Return' Stone)

Figure 61 Guo Bingzhan 郭秉詹, *Copy of the Inscription 'Forgetting to Return'*, from Ye Menglong (ed.), 'Zhenyinyuan fatie' 貞隱園法帖 (Model Letters of the Upright Recluse Garden), 1813. Guangzhou Museum

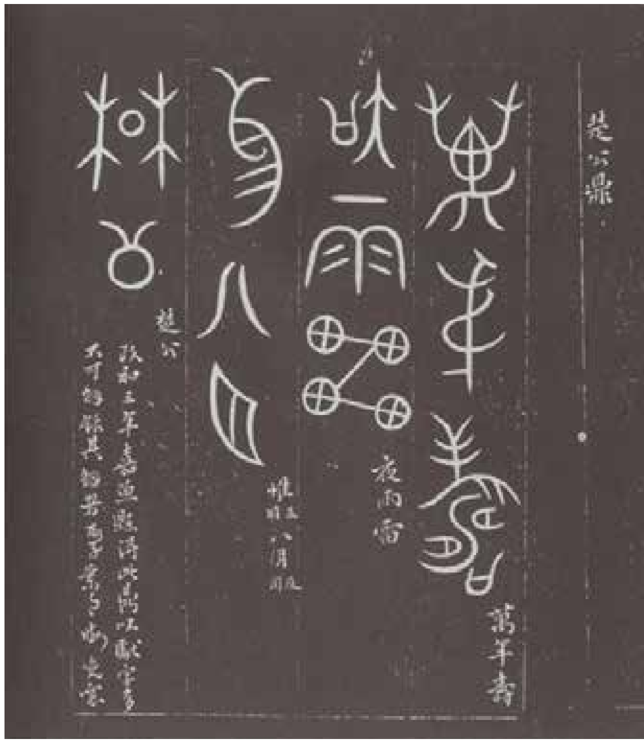


Figure 62 (above) Guo Bingzhan 郭秉詹, *Copy of the Inscription 'Bronze Bell of the Duke of Chu'*, from Ye Menglong (ed.), 'Zhenyinyuan fatie' 貞隱園法帖 (Model Letters of the Upright Recluse Garden), 1813. Guangzhou Museum

Figure 63 (right) *Bell-shaped Clay Vase inscribed with calligraphy of Yi Bingshou*, 1812, Fujian, stone, h. 33.8cm, diam, 18.5cm. British Museum, London, 1910,0615.1, donated by William Cleverly Alexander

engraved texts.[16] For example, the inscription 'Bronze Bell of the Duke of Chu' (*Chugong zhong* 楚公鐘), dated to around 800 BCE, had captivated the attention of many scholars during the Qing dynasty. It was first documented in the 12th century for its strange configuration of individual characters.[17] In Guo's copy, the inscription was abridged to include only the four key aspects of the text: the prayer, the poetic description of the sound of the bell, the date and the patron's name (**Fig. 62**).

Interestingly, in 1812, Yi Bingshou transcribed this inscription in full length but reduced size and had it engraved on a bell-shaped vase, now in the collection of the British Museum (**Fig. 63**). The simulation of the medium (a bronze bell) on which the text was originally situated suggests a fascination with the sound of the inscription, as described by the phrase 'evening rain thunder' (*yeyulei* 夜雨雷) in the third line. This object reveals that epigraphists at the time were aware of the sonic illusion of the text – a loud bang during a severe thunderstorm at night – and hoped to recreate the sensory experience via the material form of the inscription.

Another reason behind the success of Guo's project was the very idea of 'reduced copy'. As early as the 17th century, many artists began to experiment with miniaturising well-known artworks, because being able to transform them into small objects, which can be touched and held, allowed for a different kind of enjoyment. Painters such as Wang Yuanqi were known to have created miniaturised copies of monumental paintings on album leaves.[18] Calligraphers also engaged in similar ventures. Weng Fanggang, for instance, once carved an exceptionally small copy of the *Orchid Pavilion Preface* (*Lanting xu* 蘭亭序), perhaps the most celebrated work in the history of Chinese calligraphy (**Fig. 64**). Each character in Weng's engraving, measuring less than 5mm in height, is difficult to see with the naked eye. The popularity of such miniaturisations made the compendium of Guo's 'reduced copies' attractive to scholars as a tasteful form of antiquarian learning.

As a symbol of place, Ye Menglong's *Model Letters of the Upright Recluse Garden* continued to hold sway in its afterlife. In 1845, after the First Opium War, the stone slabs of the *Model Letters of the Upright Recluse Garden* were transferred from the Sweeping Wind Tower (*Fengmanlou* 風滿樓), one of the main stores for their art collection in the Little Field Garden, to the Sea Mountain Immortals' Lodge, where they were treasured by Pan Shicheng 潘仕成 (1804–1873), the head of the Pan family at the time.[19] It was not uncommon for wealthy families in Guangzhou to exchange their collected objects. However, because the Pan family was originally from Zhangzhou (southwest of Quanzhou) in Fujian province, *Model Letters of the Upright Recluse Garden* probably carried similar regional significance to them.

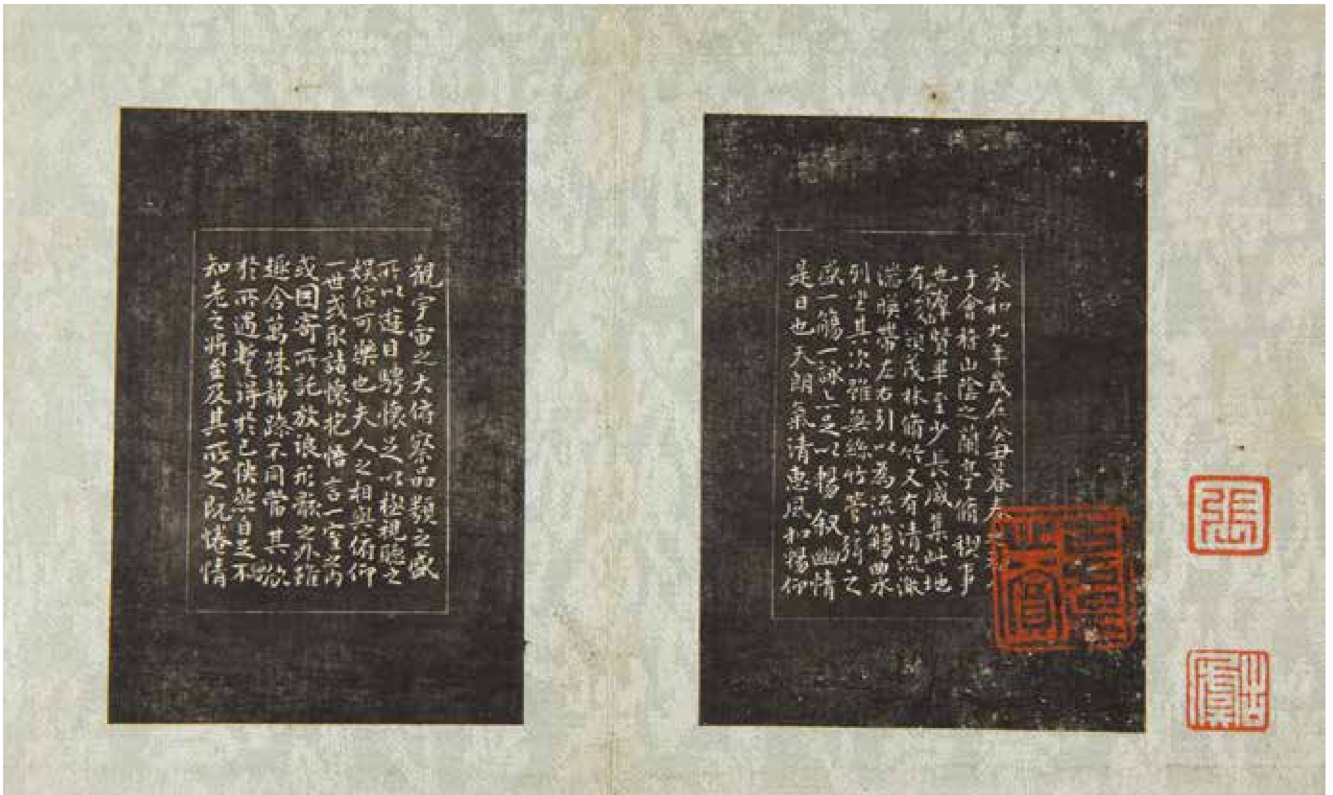


Figure 64 Weng Fanggang 翁方綱, *Reduced Copy of the Orchid Pavilion Preface* (*Suo lin Lanting xu* 縮臨蘭亭序), 1782, album, ink on paper, h. 7.3cm, w. 4.8cm (each leaf). Palace Museum, Beijing, 新00145918

Model Letters of the Friend's Stone Studio

In 1815, Ye Menglong finished a second, though slightly smaller, project of model-letters compendia, titled *Model Letters of the Friend's Stone Studio* (*Youshizhai fatie* 友石齋法帖). In the Ye family garden, the name points to a specific structure, originally built to preserve a special 'stone couch' once possessed by the renowned local painter Li Jian 黎簡 (1747–1799).[20] A native of Shunde 順德 in Guangdong, Li Jian spent his entire career in the region and became recognised for his depiction of local scenery such as Dawu Peak 大烏峰, a mountain near Guangzhou (**Fig. 65**). Li Jian acquired the stone couch from nearby Foshan 佛山 and regarded it as one of his cherished 'stone friends' (*shiyou* 石友). After Li Jian's death, the object passed into the collection of Ye Tingxun, who then established the Friend's Stone Studio to laud the legacy of a regional scholar-artist. The Ye family also used the studio for social gatherings. For invited guests, the building served as a reminder of a recent episode of local culture.

Model Letters of the Friend's Stone Studio, now existing as a four-volume compilation of ink rubbings, echoes the commemorative theme of the studio. The original engravings feature 18 historical works by writers from the Tang to the Ming dynasties. All from the personal collection of Ye Tingxun, these samples of calligraphy were chosen under the advice of Li Wei and Yi Bingshou. As stated by Ye Menglong, the goal of this compendium was not merely to transmit the skills of calligraphy, but also to enable viewers to remember the people behind the writings.[21] This was a reflection of the belief that a calligraphic work can evoke the life and personality of its maker.[22] In addition to the actual writers, this could also be applied to the person who assembled a compendium of their works. This project, similar to its companions, could therefore be considered a memorial to Ye Tingxun, whose interest in calligraphy as a scholar-collector became immortalised in the form of engraved stone slabs.

The compendium also solidifies the scholarly network that the Ye family had developed over the years. Colophons by noted contemporary scholars with whom Ye Menglong had personal connections were also engraved on the stone slab. For example, the first piece in the compendium, 'The Preface to the Engraved Records of the Directors of the Department of State Affairs' (*Shangshusheng langguan shiji xu* 尚書省郎官石紀序), a classical standard-script writing by the renowned Tang calligrapher Zhang Xu 張旭 (*c.* 675–750), is accompanied by a lengthy inscription by Weng Fanggang. An influential court academician, Weng Fanggang had briefly served in Guangdong as Provincial Education Commissioner.[23] The original stone engraving of this Zhang Xu calligraphy had long been lost, but Ye Menglong owned a rare early ink-rubbing copy, likely dated to the Song period. In his colophon, after recounting the history of the piece and its aesthetic significance, Weng praised how Ye Menglong's compendium contributed to the transmission of this work and could rectify poorly made re-engravings by some early collectors. The colophons allowed the Ye Family to display their expansive social circle across the Qing empire and their reputation as responsible art collectors.

Collected Letters of the Sweeping Wind Tower

The third project, *Collected Letters of the Sweeping Wind Tower* (*Fengmanlou jitie* 風滿樓集帖), was completed in 1830. The

Figure 65 Li Jian 黎簡, *Dawu Peak* (*Dawu feng* 大烏峰), 1790, hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, h. 76.4cm, w. 47.1cm. Collection of Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, gift of Bei Shan Tang, 1995.0433

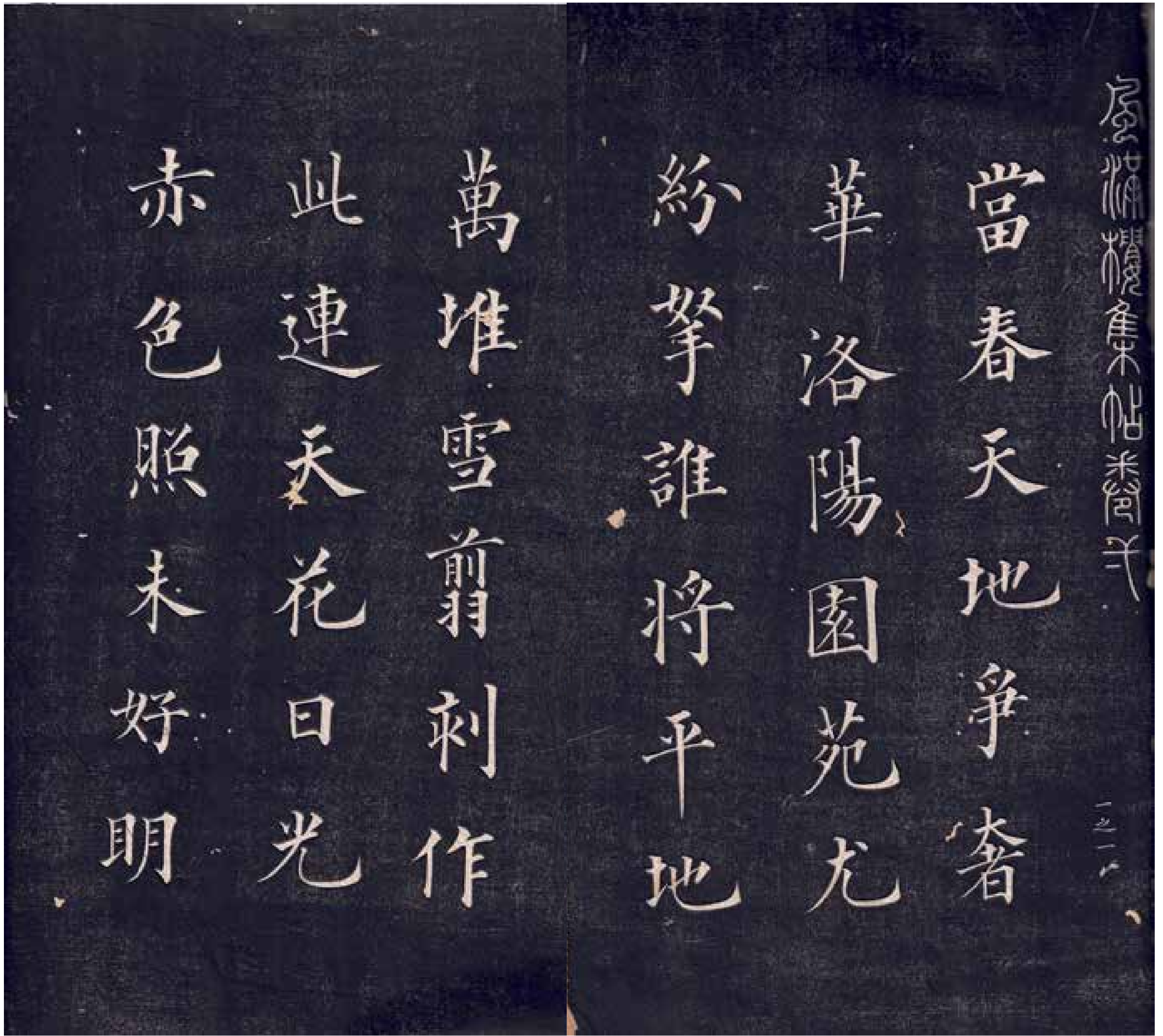


Figure 66 Prince Yongxing 永瑆, *Copy of a Poem by Han Yu*, from Ye Menglong (ed.), 'Fengmanlou jitie' 風滿樓集帖 (Collected Letters of the Sweeping Wind Tower), 1830. h. 18.9cm, w. 32.3cm. Bibliothèque d'études chinoises – Collège de France, E I 5-21

Sweeping Wind Tower in the title refers to the structure that housed the family art collection in the Little Field Garden[24]. As pointed out by the art historian Chuang Shen 莊申 (1932–2000), many works in the collection were gifts from scholars close to the Ye family.[25] The building and its stored artworks thus took on a memorial function similar to the Friend's Stone Studio, both documenting the exchanges between members of the Ye family and contemporary scholars.

A significant goal of *Collected Letters of the Sweeping Wind Tower* was to evoke the biographies of selected calligraphers and use them to produce a cultural history of Guangdong. Unlike the second project, *Collected Letters of the Sweeping Wind Tower* focuses on contemporary rather than historical figures. It covers 37 scholars active from the 17th to the 19th centuries. All the works featured came from the personal collection of Ye Tingxun. Of the selected writers, 16 were either native to Guangdong or known to have sojourned in this area. For example, among the eight calligraphers in the first volume, three men of Guangzhou – Cheng Keze 程可則 (1624–1673), Liang Peilan 梁佩蘭 (1629–1705) and Wang Sun 王隼 (1644–1700) – gained empire-wide distinction through their literary achievements. Two other writers in the same volume, Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709) and Wang Shizhen, had joyful visits to Guangdong during the 17th century. The engraved compendium ends with several calligraphic works of Ye Tingxun, including his copy of the *Heart Sutra* (*Xinjing* 心經) and three of his draft poems. Through this arrangement, Ye Menglong aligned his father with these distinguished scholars. Taken altogether, the collected calligraphic works also signified the lives of scholars who made Guangdong a cultured locale.

Although the remaining 21 scholars in the compendium had no obvious connection with Guangdong, the textual contents of their calligraphy still celebrated some prominent cultural traditions of the region. For instance, in the first work of the compendium (**Fig. 66**), Prince Yongxing 永瑆 (1752–1823), the eleventh son of the Qianlong emperor, transcribed a poem by Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) using a mode of standard script that is often associated with Ouyang Xun

Figure 67 Shao Bao 邵寶 (1460–1527), *Record of Sea and Sky Pavillion*, Ming Dynasty, Jichang Garden 寄暢園, Wuxi, Jiangxu province, 2023

歐陽詢. A literary paragon of Tang China, Han Yu was banished to Guangdong in 819 due to his opposition to the throne. In the poem, Han Yu admires the beauty of plum flowers in the exquisite gardens of Luoyang. Parallel to this poem was the emergence of Guangdong during the 19th century as a centre for the enjoyment of a diverse range of flowers.[26] This piece of calligraphy could have been intended to illuminate both Guangdong's past, a place of exile for upright officials, and Guangdong's present, a new hub of cultural enjoyment.

Conclusion

Today, in many Chinese gardens, while calligraphy stone slabs are still displayed *in situ*, they tend to be protected by transparent glass that creates a mirror-like surface. When a person stands in front of one of these mirror-like slabs, they see their own reflection, as well as the colours from surrounding environment, superimposed on the engraved calligraphy (**Fig. 67**). This seems a perfect metaphor for the three projects sponsored by Ye Menglong. Most of the engraved works were not by members of the Ye family, yet they were fully saturated with their presence. In *Model Letters of the Upright Recluse Garden*, the miniature scale and portable format relocated the ancestral home of Fujian natives to their new living spaces in Guangzhou. At the same time, its creative adaptations of ancient inscriptions evoked varied sensory engagement, transforming histories into the palpable experience of the present. Both *Model Letters of the Friend's Stone Studio* and *Collected Letters of the Sweeping Wind Tower* appropriated calligraphic works as architectural designs, commemorating the cultivated passion of the Ye family and their eminent social networks across the Qing empire. Altogether, the three model-letters compendia established the Ye family as a part of the cultural landscape of Guangdong. Through these selected calligraphic works, Ye Menglong engraved a history of his family in stone that would last an eternity.

Notes

1 For the commercial environment of Guangzhou during this period, see Rawski and Naquin 2018; Van Dyke 2007, 2011; Wong 2016.
2 For the tradition of model-letters compendia in China, see McNair 1994; Xue 2019, 77–106.
3 I am deeply indebted to the pioneering work of Xue Lei, who is currently completing a book on model-letters compendia in China. For his recent talk on the topic 'Inscribing Chinese Gardens: The Origins of Shutiaoshi' at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, see https://youtu.be/tzSbjTSUB7Q?si=eTsOdHHo2lag_4cq (accessed 30 October 2023).
4 Cao Jian 2005, 155–73.
5 Miles 2006; Koon 2014.
6 These three compendia are reproduced in a recent encyclopedic project: see Ye Menglong 1813, 1815, 1830.
7 For details about the business profile of the Ye family, see Ye Guanqian 1924; Chen Kuo-tung 1990, 312–7; Liang Jiabin 1960, 243–4; Van Dyke 2005, 2011, 181–97.
8 'Yanqua' is a Cantonese pronunciation for 'Renguan' because foreigners at the time would add the suffix 'mandarin (*guan* 官)' to the first character of Hong merchants' given names to indicate their social superiority. Van Dyke 2011, 13–14; Yan 2022, 135.
9 For the history of the Pan family, see Pan Jianfen 2017; Koon 2014, 26–33.
10 Van Dyke 2011, 196.
11 The idea 'Fisherman Retreating at the Flower Stream (花谿漁隱)' was a popular pictorial theme derived from the classical essay 'The Peach Blossom Spring (桃花源記)' by Tao Qian 陶潛 (365–427). Wang Meng 王蒙 (1308–1385), a painting master of the Yuan, created an image of the same title, see https://digitalarchive.npm.gov.tw/Painting/Content?pid=709&Dept=P (accessed 30 October 2023). For discussion on the cultural endeavours of the Ye family, see Yan 2022, 138–49.
12 Richard 2017, 112–32; Feng and Li 2023.
13 For a recent discussion on the interaction between merchants and literati in Guangzhou, see Miles 2006, 70–3.
14 A copy of this model-letters compendia, dated to 1627, is now in the collection of Harvard-Yenching Library, see https://id.lib.harvard.edu/curiosity/chinese-rubbings-collection/6-990095573240203941 (accessed 30 October 2023).
15 Ye Menglong 1813, 325.
16 Elman 1984; Sela 2018.
17 Xue Shanggong 12th century.
18 Wang Ching-ling 2018.
19 Ye Menglong 1813, 263.
20 Yan 2022, 140–1.
21 The original sentence reads '觀者翫其書思其人知不徒於八法得師也', see Ye Menglong 1815, 356.
22 McNair 1998, 1–15.
23 Ye Menglong 1815, 330–3.
24 Some of these collected works were documented in a now fragmented catalogue by Ye Menglong, titled *Records of Painting and Calligraphy at the Sweeping Wind Tower* (風滿樓書畫錄), see Ye Menglong n.d.
25 Chuang Shen 1997, 325–8.
26 Richard and Woudstra 2017, 475–97.

Chapter 6
Marks and manifestations: the religious art of Su Renshan

Yeewan Koon

For centuries, the Lingnan region (broadly encompassing the modern provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi) was seen as remote, dangerous, even outlandish. The magistrate Wang Linheng 王臨亨 (1557–1603) from Suzhou described how 'The Yue [people] vulgarly worship ghosts and spirits, with a fondness for illegal worship. When they are sick, they do not eat medicine, they rather believe in the shaman'.[1] The Chan master Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623), who was exiled in 1595 to Lingnan, was more sparing but nonetheless noted how 'Guangdong is distinctively different in customs from those in the regions north of the Five Ridges'.[2] Both comments were responses to how vernacular religion threatened state-approved temple practices. Their biases continue today where local rituals and festivals remain a hallmark of Cantonese identity.

This chapter delves into how the Buddhist-related artworks of Su Renshan 蘇仁山 (1814–*c.* 1850) challenge the historical perception of the region. If 19th-century China is an oft-maligned place in time, Lingnan was doubly so, seen by outsiders as being of little cultural relevance. In the Qing dynasty, wealthy merchants and scholars tended to align themselves with literary practices popular in the centre and embedded themselves into networks that included those from Jiangnan and Beijing. For example, in the early 19th century, many followed the principle of evidential scholarship, promoted by the likes of Ruan Yuan, the prominent Jiangnan official who served as the governor-general of Guangdong from 1818 to 1826. This promoted the use of empirical studies of early texts to excavate meanings and histories of local regions, producing anthologies and texts that favoured certain stylistic forms of writing. Ruan also founded the Xuehaitang Academy (學海堂), which was an active hub for literary engagement and formed interregional networks that furthered Guangdong as an extension of China's cultural centre. However, at the same time, this elite literati group also excluded interests that did not reinforce the cultural values and tastes of the typical Qing scholar, including local religious practices, especially those associated with Guangdong's hinterlands, with their threat of being outlandishly vernacular.

Su, unlike his peers, embraced Guangdong's marginality and difference from the cultural centres of Beijing and Jiangnan, and developed a visual mode that emphasised his divergence from literati painters in the region. More specifically, by exploring a different 'local' he devised formal strategies that overturned the expectations of viewers informed by literati taste. His highly individualistic style, iconoclastic in intent, means that using conventional art history methods such as iconographic analysis or tracing artistic influences can lead to frustrating non-conclusions. How do you assess an artist who operates outside the canon? This chapter uses close readings to determine Su's departure from mainstream art with interpretations that echo findings in other fields. It draws on the spatial politics of centre/margin used in frontier histories, as well as scholarship on migratory and exile experiences. It also demonstrates how Su's distinctive style exudes a psychological charge of unfamiliar belonging and a sense of being unsettled. He achieves this through compositional strangeness with a shallow ground plane, and an unusual

hybridity of themes, genres and visual/textual language that can be serene yet confrontational, logical and excessive. Whether this unfamiliar belonging can be considered a characteristic of this period awaits further assessment. But perhaps this is a task worth undertaking because in identifying such traits, this century becomes less hidden within our current art history discourse.

Su Renshan

Su Renshan was from Shunde, an area outside the city of Guangzhou, known for its sericulture, clan lineages and local religious practices. Unusually, as an elder son, he married late in life, to a woman who observed the delay-marriage practice (where a bride stays with her family for three years after marriage or until the couple produces a child). They did not have any children, and as such, his younger brother's son was repositioned as the next head of the family, an honour that normally would have passed to Su's offspring. In Guangdong, lineage rights – where all members share the same foundation of kinship – defined social positions and managed local economies including the all-important land rights. Su's failure to produce an heir meant he effectively lost his standing within his kin group.

Su was also an outsider among his peers, leaving behind no textual trace in the works of his contemporaries. However, in the years around 1841, difficulties with his family led to autobiographical inscriptions from which it has been possible to reconstruct his life. Of relevance is how, on his third attempt at taking the civil examination, he absconded to Guizhou, in Guangxi, whose distinctive rock formations and carvings would influence his artwork. At this time, in 1841, Guangzhou was blighted by the violence of the First Opium War both within the city and on its outskirts. The war had a far greater impact on the people in Guangdong than on those in the north, who considered it a frontier issue contained within the southern port city. In Lingnan, the people witnessed and sometimes took part in violent clashes against the Qing administration and foreign traders. There was an overwhelming sense of disenfranchisement providing fuel for one of China's biggest uprisings, the Taiping Civil War (1850–64), which began in Guangxi.

Despite the political circumstances, Su's absence from the exams was regarded as a reckless abandonment of duty and he was forced to leave home. During this time of familial estrangement, he made some of his most experimental works while staying in Guangzhou city, and in Guilin and Cangwu in Guangxi province. He also voiced strong opinions criticising the restrictions of civil examinations (which was not an unusual position) and how women made better scholars as they did not have to conform to a rigid education system enforced on male scholars (this was a rare opinion). At his most ardent, he condemned Confucius as a bringer of hell, and Confucian learning as corrupt as it is based on the philosophies of a moral hypocrite. These radical opinions may have led to his imprisonment at the local government office (*yamen* 衙門) by his father for filial impiety in 1849.[3] His last dated painting was executed while he was still imprisoned in 1850. Entangled within his politics, Su also embraced the Lingnan frontier as a relevant place of cultural importance that offered an alternative sense of belonging, which he often expressed in artworks related to Buddhism.

Inscriptional space

Su Renshan's focus on Guangdong's marginality finds expression in his distinctive painting style achieved by employing two related formal methods: brushwork as mark-making and compositions that deny a sense of depth. Both are indebted to two transfer-modes of line-making: print and engravings. We see their influence in Su's imitation of the graphic quality of a printed or engraved line, or in the tilted ground plane he uses, echoing the flatness of prints or calligraphic carvings. Su paints within an 'inscriptional space' rather than a 'pictorial one', and his compositions are closer to the spatial aesthetics of text-related forms that inhabit a shallow depth. Related to this, his brushwork is closer to the linear marks of printed books and carved surfaces. He does not rely on the spatial logic of recession with distinct ground planes, and does not use the S-like axial composition often seen in landscape paintings that directs a meandering eye across the surface. An example is seen in his hanging scroll *Landscape with Torrent*, in which the use of a flattened ground plane partitions the scene into geometric-like forms (**Fig. 68**). Here, verticality is used to lead the viewer's eyes up and down, as if reading rather than penetrating through the depth of the surface. There are no simple exits out of this painting allowing the viewer to gently ease beyond the frame, but rather there is a confrontational force that denies entry into the landscape. At their best, Su's formal strategies create odd pictorial habitats: who can belong in or step into such a shallow space?

Bearing this question in mind, in a small unassuming work, *Two Revered Temple Gardens of Xianjie An and Zhuangyan Si*, the humble structures sit among rockeries and flowing water (**Fig. 69**). There are no figures in this painting, but the hemmed-in composition draws us into this enclave as if the temples themselves are waiting to be discovered. As expected, there are no easy entry points, but there is an alertness to the edges of a frame made of cliff and words. Here, the columns of words in clerical script (*lishu* 隸書) and seal script (*zhuanshu* 篆書) allude to an archaic past. The inscription in the top right accentuates this immemorial sense of time:

> The Ancients, considered the heads of clouds, raindrops, lotus leaves, log woods in disarray as symbols of the Six Methods. They found inspiration by imitating the forms of dragons, phoenixes, tortoises, birds, tadpoles, water dragons and cranes.
>
> [These forms] were used to engrave on metal, stone, ceramics and carved forms, vividly appearing as paintings. Now, this belief is revered and chanted as the 'Cloud Script', honouring Kharosthi and Changjie; standing on par with Heaven.[4]

The analogy of calligraphy with natural phenomena is common in the history of Chinese writing, which has long emphasised the centrality of principles associated

Figure 68 Su Renshan 蘇仁山, *Landscape with Torrent* (*Shanshui qijing tu* 山水奇景圖), undated, hanging scroll, ink on paper, h. 112cm, w. 48cm. Collection of Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Gift of Mr. Ho Iu-kwong, Mr. Huo Pao-tsai, Mr. Lai Tak and others, 1973.0607

Figure 69 Su Renshan 蘇仁山, *Two Revered Temple Gardens of Xianjie An and Zhuangyan Si* (*Xianjie an Zhuangyan si liangdiyuan tu* 賢劫庵莊嚴寺兩秖園圖), undated, hanging scroll, ink on paper, h. 74cm, w. 39cm. Kyoto National Museum, A甲1114

with movement, growth and the structure of nature as inspiration. Of more interest is Su's attention to the materials for engravings – clay, metal and stone. Their importance is also registered in the painting by the placement and choice of calligraphy. The title and the first inscription appear as if they are carved into Su's depicted cliff face. This meta-play of 'words-of-images-as-image' works to transform, at least conceptually, the material dimension of Su's ink brushwork into engraved markings, and paper into stone. Su extends the material nature of words to the oral world of speech, and more specifically of chanting to the layered meanings of 'cloud script'. He creates a synergy here with *yunshu* (雲書), which literally means 'cloud writing' but is a term for both clerical script and Buddhist sutras, both of which form the general theme of the painting. However, it also alludes to words being cloud-like: short-lived in their shapes like the fugitive nature of the spoken word.

Figure 70 Felice Beato and Henry Hering, *Guangxiao Main Hall and courtyard in Canton*, April 1860, albumen silver print, h. 25.4cm, w. 30.6cm. The J. Paul Getty Museum, partial gift from the Wilson Centre for Photography, 2007.26.198.79

The connection of the early invention and transmission of writing and Buddhism is furthered by Su's reference to Changjie, the inventor of Chinese script, and Kharosthi, an ancient Indo-Iranian script. The latter is based on the Arapacana alphabet used in Gandharan Buddhism, the 42 letters of which are said to represent all the phonemes of the spoken language. Once again, Su emphasises the potency of words that are spoken and words that are turned into carved texts that travel through time. Concurrently, Su's *Two Temples* also anchors the visual and sonic power of words into origin myths and transmission histories that expand the borders of China.

The strange pairing in Su's narrative of the transformation and transmission of words extends to the naming of the two temples (Xianjie An and Zhuangyan Si), which identifies them not as actual places but of time. They reference two (of three) Buddhist kalpas (aeons), during which a different number of Buddhas will appear. We are currently living in *xianjie* (賢劫) kalpa, or present time, having moved beyond the *zhuangyan* (莊嚴) kalpa, the Buddhist time of the past. Su offers no explanations for the temples' names but perhaps as Buddhist aeons they become otherworldly timekeepers of myth-histories of the sonic and textual nature of words.

It is also possible that the temples named in the painting are allegories for Guangxiao Main Hall and Liurong Hall, two temple structures inside the Guangxiao Monastery complex. It is likely that Su stayed in the area by the temple during his exile, and it is a place that he has referenced in other works. Moreover, Guangxiao's history is often one of 'firsts' and fits in with the inscription's interest in origins. Founded in the Southern Han period, when Guangdong was an independent kingdom, it was converted from an imperial residence to a Buddhist temple, making it the first monastery in the region. It soon began to play a key role in the development of new Buddhist practices in China, not least because it was often the first stop for foreign monks. According to the temple's records, the *Guangxiao Annals* (*Guangxiao jing* 光孝經), written in 1769, the monk Dharmayasas 達磨耶舍 or 法稱 (dates unknown) from Kashmir arrived in 397, initiated the building of the Main Hall and completed a translation of the *Chamojing sutra* (差摩經), which was the first scripture to be translated in Guangxiao. Bodhidharma 菩提達摩 (fl. 6th century), the Indian founder of Chan Buddhism, stayed in Guangxiao in 527, and Paramartha 真諦 (499–569), from the Funan kingdom (Indochina), stayed from 558–69. During those ten years, Paramartha oversaw the translations of more than 40 Buddhist scriptures, many being written in Chinese for the first time. Liurong Hall is a pagoda next to a bodhi tree, and is associated with the sixth patriarch, Huineng 惠能 (638–713), who was the first Cantonese to be part of the Chan lineage who supposedly preached under the monastery's tree. Huineng is an influential teacher of the Southern Chan School doctrine and believed to be the founder of sudden enlightenment practice. The term Liurong ('six banyans') is associated with Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), who composed a poem dedicated to a pagoda in the Baozhuangyan temple, which is next to Guangxiao. Su Renshan, who identified with the Northern Song scholar, also had the style-name Seventh Patriarch (七祖), after Huineng. Thus this site, aside from being a place of 'firsts', is also part of Su's personal identification with locale.[5]

Su's historicising of Guangxiao echoes the evidential scholarship practices of his peers, but the temple in his own time was less influential within literary circles, being situated in a poorer part of the city where the Qing bannermen lived, practising archery and horse-riding in the fields.[6] Despite receiving state salaries, many of the bannermen families supplemented their income through activities such as making paper lanterns, a practice that continued through to the late 19th century as evidenced by photographs of the

Figure 71 Su Renshan 蘇仁山, *Nineteen High Kings* (*Shijiu dashi* 十九大士), undated, hanging scroll, ink on paper, h. 124cm, w. 59.3cm. Guangdong Museum, Guangzhou

temple's grounds employed for such use (**Fig. 70**). In the early 19th century, Guangxiao Monastery was less influential among the scholarly elite than Nanhua Temple and Changshou Temple, despite (or because of) being located near government offices. Nonetheless, it remained popular among the local community.[7]

It may be the temple's attraction to the non-elite that prompted Su to resurrect its significance as the hub of translations central to the spread of Buddhism in China, and the region's international connections. It reflects his strong Cantonese pride in local histories that were outside the purview of his peers. However, *Two Temples* also offers an alternative narrative of Guangdong's role as a major maritime hub, different from the circumstances of his own time when the port city was inflicted with the violence of war. Instead, Su offers a more peaceful message of religious and cultural exchange.

It is worth summarising Su's approach of bringing unlikely themes together, using *Two Temples* as an example. Su first selects one subject (Buddhism), only to then redirect with a comparison that is seemingly random (early writing). Through this unexpected juxtaposition what emerges is a new narrative (of origins and transmission, with Lingnan as the connective point). It is his use of unexpected subjects and a circuitous approach, which some later scholars claimed to be signs of madness, that underscores his difference from other Guangdong painters. As a follower of the Chan monk Huineng, the sixth patriarch, Su may have been inspired to use this method as a form of sudden enlightenment practice, where conundrums and surprises can break one's habits and awaken minds. However, without textual evidence, we can only speculate on the degree to which Chan Buddhism influenced him.

Su's unusual hybrid themes can also be found in a pair of paintings of luohans and bodhisattvas and related to the Guangxiao Monastery. The first, *Nineteen High Kings* (**Fig. 71**), refers to the High King Avalokitesvara Sutra, and emphasises the power of spoken words. The sutra is based on a 10th-century story of a man who, while imprisoned and waiting for his death, had a dream in which a monk taught him to chant all the names of 19 High Kings, 100 times. He managed to finish his recitations by the time he was taken to the executioner's block. When the sword came down on his neck, it broke in two and he was saved. Su's inscription reads:

> The Nineteen Great Beings of King Gao,
> [Their sutra] taught in a dream can eliminate wars and punishments.
> Alas, the cycles of karmic entanglements are full of troubled dreams,
> Nanke remains as yet unawakened.[8]

Su's painting can be seen as the manifestation of the chant, with the appearance of female goddesses accompanied by mythical beasts and in one instance being carried by dancing ogres. That we are still within the dream may be indicated by the inscription's reference to Nanke, which has not woken up. 'It was but a dream of Nanke' (*nanke yimeng* 南柯一夢) was a Tang dynasty short story turned into a popular play in the Ming dynasty about a man who dreamt he was the governor of Nanke, only to wake up and discover that it was but a hill of ants (or variations of such). According to researcher Aude Lucas' work on late imperial Chinese novels, the trope of 'It was but a dream of Nanke' was commonly used to conclude a dream narrative, following one's waking and the realisation that the events were only illusory.[9] Su's switch from Buddhist sutras to popular novels is part of his mixing of themes. If this is indeed a painting of the sutra's prayer, it is us, the viewer, who becomes the implied chanter. Still within our dream, like Nanke, we remain caught in the potential of enlightenment rather than living in the uncertainty of our illusionary present. Given the political circumstances of Guangdong, it is tempting to read this painting of Nanke as an escapist wish, but it also captures being caught in the moment of chanting, when the gods are only beginning to

manifest in one's dream. As with *Two Temples*, this too captures a sense of being in a different time-space. As a dream, it offers a time-space that departs from traditional depiction of Buddhist realms, lacking the opulence of paradise scenes or the blue and green of magical mountain retreats. It does, however, include highly unusual fantastical elements such as the prancing ogres bearing on their shoulders a Guanyin with a child within a cave-throne.

In the second painting, *Eighteen Luohans of the Guangxiao Temple*, Su develops this concept of a time of the gods in-between that of our own mundane world (**Fig. 72**). His inscription reads:

> In the Great Hall of Mahavira stands three Buddha statues,
> Amidst them are also the eighteen luohans.
> But one only sees the falling leaves from Su's abode,
> [X] and grazing horses pass by the walls.[10]

The inscription evokes a scene of an empty Buddhist temple compound where one watches the leaves fall and the horses graze, perhaps from the nearby bannerman training grounds, instead of being devoted to the worship of the gods within. This inscription, unlike that of the *Nineteen High Kings*, suggests a moment of doing little, a passive mood of waiting at (or by) the Hall of Mahavira, also known as the Main Hall. In the painting, there are 21 figures comprising the 18 luohans and the three Buddhas, corresponding to what was recorded as being at the site. In 1663, a triad of bronze sculptures of Shakyamuni, Amitabha and Maitreya was ordered by the Kangxi emperor. In this painting, however, it is difficult to ascertain which of the figures are the three gods and which are the luohans. At top right, we see the back of a bodhisattva with three-faces, which may possibly be Maitreya, but otherwise the identity of the figures, which blend in with one another, is uncertain. The depiction of luohans and buddhas as being so similar that it becomes impossible to distinguish them disrupts the conventions of depicting religious figures. By not conforming to any spatial system that might identify a devotional focus, there is a disregard of hierarchy and ritual order, central to devotional religions. Instead, one of the luohans lies asleep, others look up into the skies or to their sides, some are slouching, a few are turned away and all are looking in different directions, inattentive to each other and the viewer.

This is a daring iteration of a familiar genre of the 18 luohans, one in which Su's beings are portrayed as gods *not* in action – as if they too are simply watching the leaves fall and the horses graze – while waiting to be called upon. These are not luohans who imitate scholars at leisure nor are they possessors of miraculous powers. Comparisons with these typical tropes may better elucidate our interpretation. For example, *Sixteen Luohans* by Shitao 石濤 (1642–1707) shows the subjects in a landscape garden engaged with one another in either literary pursuits or with magical beasts (**Fig. 73**). Their faces are lit up with enjoyment, perhaps even wonder, alert to their surroundings and each other. Another example is an anonymous scroll of a group of four luohans meeting tribute bearers in the mountains (**Fig. 74**). The importance of these four luohans is emphasised by the scale of the figures, their halos and the greater attention to their dress.

Figure 72 Su Renshan 蘇仁山, ***Eighteen Luohans of the Guangxiao Temple*** **(*Guangxiao si shiba luohan* 光孝寺十八羅漢), undated, hanging scroll, ink on paper, h. 124cm, w. 59.3cm. Guangdong Museum, Guangzhou**

In comparison, Su's figures are deprived of context and their status is undifferentiated. They appear ordinary, sitting in an in-between state, waiting to be called by devotees into action. If the scene can be read as gods within their own time-space, their spatial proximity to each other conveys a sense of a community. While conventional ritual hierarchies play no role in identification, these enlightened beings are given a different kind of agency, even arguably autonomy. By overturning established tropes and themes within Buddhist representation, Su provides alternative timescales and spaces, strengthens local histories that are often overlooked, and offers a new sense of presence and agency in his religious figures beyond their iconographic functions. In so doing, he reinforces the subjectivities of being on the margins, independent and moving away from narratives

Figure 73 Shitao 石濤, ***Sixteen Luohans* (*Shiliu luohan tu* 十六羅漢圖)**, 1667, handscroll, ink on paper, h. 46.4cm, w. 598.8cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Douglas Dillon, 1985.227.1

Figure 74 Anonymous, *Four Luohans*, 15th century, hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk, h. 170.5cm, w. 88cm. British Museum, London, 1983,0705,0.2

constructed by the centre of outlandishness and social exclusion.

A better society?

There is painterly precedence for Su's inscriptional space in the shape of the 18th-century Yangzhou Eccentrics (*Yangzhou baguai* 揚州八怪) and their practices of conveying 'strangeness', an aesthetic mode of claiming artistic individualism that dates from the 17th century. For example, *Shakaymuni Buddha,* by Jin Nong 金農 (1687–1763), mimics an engraving and in so doing exerts an authoritarian voice of history (**Fig. 75**). But this archaic effect also entails a doubling of pasts, of one invented (Jin's mimicry) and referenced (the metaphoric). Although the inscription lists a number of famous past masters known for their religious figurative images, Jin claims that viewers should look at his painting as if they were looking at the Buddhist statutes at Longmen. By aligning his pictorial image with those carved from stone, there is an acute awareness of the artwork as object, and a boastfulness that earmarks the artist's 'eccentricity'.[11]

Su Renshan's approach, similar to that of Jin Nong, draws on unconventional sources to create images of gods outside conventional Buddhist iconography. He also uses mark-making brushwork to evoke an archaic past of carved surfaces to reimagine historical narratives. Broadly, it is possible to place Su as part of a history of strangeness, one that connects him to the likes of Jin Nong. Su's mixing of high and low cultures, however, differs from the eccentric artists of the previous century. Rather than using strangeness to stage one's individualism (although that too is present), Su is also interested in moral and social values and questioning what makes a better society. This is understandable as his works intersect with the political uncertainties and the violent trauma of the 19th century. As such, he is closer in ambition to later modern artists who were using their art to envision a new China. Su's works, therefore, also anchor mid-19th-century Guangdong art as an integral part of China's modernity.

Su Renshan's conviction that Lingnan's distinctive localness has a far-reaching impact on society's welfare is seen in his calligraphy piece entitled *Record of the Iron Ox in Guizhou in the Style of Mi Fu* (**Fig. 76**).[12] The inscription reads:

> [Among the] metamorphoses of the Five Elements, that of metal is the most awe-inspiring. Even the birds, beasts, fish and crustaceans, one fears, are insufficient in understanding the origins of ghosts, let alone humans? Laughing at why a beam cannot be used for prognostication, how can one know of all things?
>
> The followers of the Buddha refrain from harming all living beings, and their kitchen is known as the site of 'fragrance accumulation'. Furthermore, they compassionately navigate and deliver beings across the sea of suffering, providing salvation to both humans and ghosts. By practicing this way, one prolongs life, protects the people and expands the welfare to all other beings. In doing so, one can make a bull with metal, without altering the innate qualities bestowed by Heaven.
>
> This is the Way; one can be the master of husbandry, one can be the master of crafts, thus this record was made. Written with the left hand.[13]

This undated work by Su is executed with his left hand, distinguishing himself from the Song dynasty scholar, Mi Fu 米芾 (1051–1107). The title of this scroll is, unsurprisingly, deceptive in that Su is not recording the actual ritual itself. This ritual, which is not uncommon in China, involves placing a cast iron bull in a river as a protective water deity.[14] Su's words, however, are about Buddhism and ghosts. In the first part, he references a work by the Tang poet Han Yu called *Origins of Ghost* (*yuangu* 原鬼), that opens with a scene in which he hears unexplained sounds banging against a beam, thus prognosticating the existence of ghosts. Han Yu, a strong proponent of Confucian learning, proposes that one can revere ghosts but keep them at a distance.[15] Otherworldly elements are forces that only take on voice and form when men break celestial rules, and are otherwise formless and voiceless and therefore inconsequential. According to Han, ghosts are made by men who fail in their Confucian duties.

Han Yu was not only critical of those who entertained the presence of ghosts, but also famously sceptical about Buddhism. In his *A Memorial on the Relic of the Buddha*, to the Xianzhong emperor (r. 805–820), he argued that relic rituals 'are simply a frivolous gimmick and a deceitful and exotic

Figure 75 Jin Nong 金農, *Shakyamuni* (*Fo xiang tu* 佛像圖), 1760, hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, h. 133cm, w. 62.5cm. Tianjin Museum

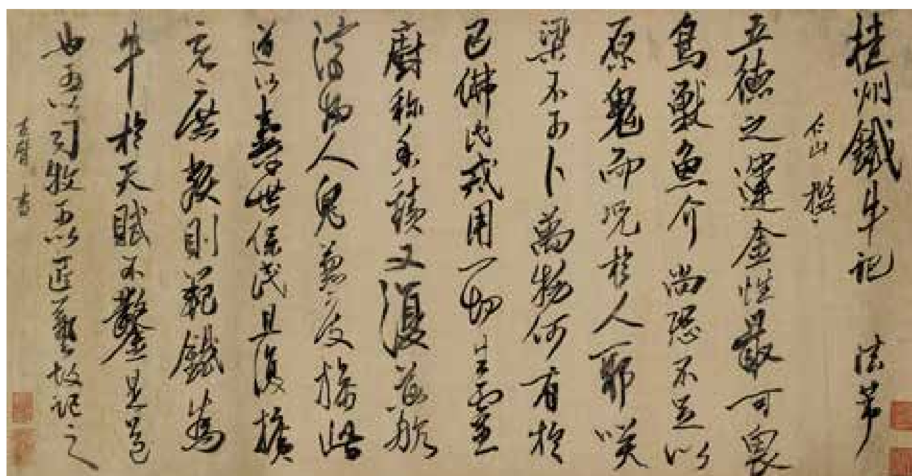


Figure 76 Su Renshan 蘇仁山, *Record of the Iron Ox in Guizhou in the Style of Mi Fu* (*Fang Mi Fu Guizhou tieniu ji* 仿米芾桂州鐵牛記), undated, ink on paper, h. 31.6cm, w. 61.2cm. Collection of Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, gift of Bei Shan Tang, 1988.0114

Figure 77 Su Renshan 蘇仁山, ***Figures***, **1848, hanging scroll, ink on paper, h. 237cm, w. 119cm. Guangzhou Art Museum**

spectacle set up for the officials and commoners of the capital in an attempt to [humour] some people at a time when the harvest is good and people are happy'.[16] Han Yu's scorn for those who indulged in the worship of ghosts and other frivolous rituals was typical of criticisms lodged against the Lingnan region. Hanshan Deqing, the exiled Jiangnan monk, had once complained about the practice of ghost worship in Leiyang, but which equally applies to Guangzhou: 'I found that the people there worshiped ghosts and did not have a single Buddhist monk. I found that it was *mleccha* [barbarian frontiers] where people no longer have the Buddha nature…. I cultivated local people with *Ullambana Dharma Service*.[17] Then they knew of the Three Jewels for the first time, and innumerable people were converted to Buddhism.'[18]

Hanshan Deqing's mission to civilise the frontier regions was a common narrative. In 1596, the scholar Guo Fei 郭斐 (1529–1605), citing a Tang dynasty source, explained how it was the making of a road that connected Lingnan to the centre which transformed its backwardness. He wrote, 'In the regions south of the Five Ridges, talented men have emerged, [the barriers to] wealth and goods have been broken through, and the prestige and civilisation of central China spread [southwards], making increasing changes to the customs of [Lingnan] as a remote and secluded region.'[19] Su Renshan's *Iron Ox* calligraphy can be read as a response to these presumptions, with Han Yu, representative of the centre, held as a mirror to a way of thinking about a society that Su believes to be narrow-minded and therefore, neglectful of the common good. In contrast, he embraces the diverse local practices of the south, where one can be Buddhist yet also respect ghosts.

The last line of the inscription, on husbandry and craftsmen, seems out of place in a piece about religion and ghosts. Why is the bull – as a real animal for farming and as a crafted iron object for rituals – used to speak about ghosts or Buddhism? Where is the link to make sense of these seemingly different things? There is perhaps one connection evidenced by the title. In Jiangcheng, north Guangxi, there is a local practice among ethnic minority groups of paying respect to the Bull-King and the souls of dead oxen. Oral traditions hold that in ancient times, eight kings visited Jiangcheng and made rivers that irrigated the land and brought prosperity to the people. The Jade Emperor, on hearing the news, asked to see the kings responsible. They in turn sent the local Bull-King, who had also helped the visiting eight kings, as envoy. When asked by the emperor who were the people who made the rivers, the humble and modest Bull-King named the eight but did not include himself. As a result, the others were immortalised as the Eight Immortals, seen in many popular religious practices. The people of Jiangcheng, however, in recognising the Bull-King's contribution, on the sixth day of the sixth month (this varies among different groups who held similar festivals), paid respect to him and the bovine beasts who were weakened or died by their hard work in the fields by holding rituals to call back the souls of the dead oxen. It is possible that Su's calligraphy expresses his interest in ethnic rituals in Guangxi, or at the very least an awareness of practices in a province where he had spent significant time.

Su's defence of folk religious practices, which challenges Confucian stalwarts such as Han Yu, also prompts questions of who is worthy of emulation. What does a good moral society look like? One answer may be in his painting *Figures*, an unusual grouping of women and children painted with Su's signature graphic quality (**Fig. 77**). On the left, an old lady tenderly rests her firm hands on the shoulders of a young child. To the right, a young mother holds a baby in her arms. In the centre is a figure wearing a torque and a belt, and carrying a *ruyi* (如意) sceptre, following the traditional depiction of a court emperor or high official. However, on closer inspection, the figure wears a phoenix crown, identifying her as a woman. Together, this intergenerational group melds into one another with intimate gestures: the grandmother places her hands on her grandchild, and the mother wraps her arms around her child.

This tender painting of women belies a more iconoclastic message. It is based on a popular group of folk gods, who are

Figure 78 Anonymous, *Fu Lu Shou*, 19th century, coloured woodblock print. Whereabouts unknown

still used today in New Year's Festivities or in general as auspicious elements found in many domestic quarters (**Fig. 78**). Here, the three key characters – the imperial figure, the young mother and the old woman – demonstrate a gender reversal of the three Daoist Star Gods: Fu (福 wealth and happiness), Lu (祿 affluence and achievement), and Shou (壽 longevity). The Star Gods can be found on an array of art forms, particularly in folk prints or as decorative motifs on ceramics bringing wealth, health and fortune. Su Renshan's *Figures* features the empress as Lu, the young mother as Fu, and the elderly woman as Shou. With great wit, Su suggests that a propitious tomorrow is to be found in the alternative world of women.[20]

At the beginning of this chapter, the question of who can inhabit the odd space created by Su was posed. The answer may be gods and those who dare to tread outside of the dominant structures of hierarchies, time and spatial order. In line with this bold departure, Su's overturning of conventional pictorial practice and his use of an inscriptional space were means of unsettling the familiar. Now gods can appear ordinary, women can cross-dress as men, and the textual and the pictorial can blur into marks that enact new futures as well as histories.

Refusing to be 'civilised' by the centre, the last word is left to Su and his painting *Leading the Phoenixes by Playing the Flute*, a scene from a romance story (**Fig. 79**). In this graffiti-esque artwork, Su's markings exude an aggressive energy that makes the creation neither wholly a painting nor purely calligraphic. Some of the words are illegible, boldly laying a claim for confusion as part of the painting's pictorial/textual order. If Su's use of inscriptional space and his debt to prints and engravings is a way to draw on textual practices in order to both rewrite and undo histories and

Figure 79 Su Renshan 蘇仁山, *Leading the Phoenixes by Playing the Flute* (*Chui xiao yin feng tu* 吹簫引鳳圖), 1848, hanging scroll, ink on paper, h. 278cm, w. 120cm. Collection of Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, gift of Mr. Ho Iu-kwong, Mr. Huo Pao-tsai, Mr. Lai Tak and others, 1973.0615

tales, it is here pushed to its limit. Does this open the way for new mediated forms of ethos? Can this painting be considered an extreme version of what 19th-century art was doing: disallowing the long-held authority of the literati aesthetics so it turns in on itself to reveal its ineffable and contradictory nature? Perhaps it took being on the margins to convey an intersectional sense of belonging, one that can be hopeful of alternatives, yet remain unsettled by its separation from a long history of elite art-making. Certainly, in mid-19th-century Guangzhou, to argue for the margins as a place of relevance sometimes also meant knowingly placing oneself at the precarious edge of a centre that cannot hold.

Notes

1 Wang n.d., *juan* 2.

2 Zhang 2023, 498.

3 Koon 2014.

4 古人於雲頭、雨點、荷葉、亂柴，猶六義象形，采材於龍、鳳、龜、鳥、蝌蚪、蛟、鶴耳。用銘金石窯雕，儼然如畫，茲信沮誦 之為雲書，典佉盧蒼頡而參立天。

5 Koon 2014.

6 Huang 1994.

7 He 2018.

8 高王十九摩訶薩，
夢授能銷兵與刑。
可惜塵緣多劫夢，
南柯終是未夢醒。

9 Lucas 2021.

10 大 雄寶殿三尊佛，
十八阿羅漢在焉。
惟見蘇盧葉葉落，
[X] 時牧馬過牆邊。

11 Hay 1999.

12 It should be noted that the Chinese character 牛 does not differentiate between types of bovine such as water buffalo, ox, steer, cow or bull. The translation uses the term ‘bull’, which departs from the catalogue entry of this artwork, which uses the term ‘ox’ as a general descriptor.

13 桂 州鐵牛記。法芾。仁山撰。五德之運，金性最可畏。鳥獸魚介，尚恐不足以原鬼，而況於人耶。笑梁不可卜，萬物何有於己。佛氏戒用一切生靈，厨稱香積。又復慈航濟物，人鬼兼度。操此道以壽世保民，且復擴充庶類，則範鐵為牛，於天賦不鑿。是道也，可以司牧，可以匠藝，故記之。左臂書。

14 Zhang 2016.

15 Fang 2010.

16 Xiong 2005.

17 One key aspect of the Ullambana Dharma Service is to extend compassion to parents of past seven lifetimes, thus connecting filial piety with Buddhist concept of giving.

18 Zhang 2023, 498.

19 Zhang 2023.

20 Koon 2014, 179–80.

Chapter 7

Seal carving and seal manuals in the late Qing dynasty

Chia-Ling Yang

Why was there a surge in seal carving and publications of seal collections and seal manuals by contemporary artists during the 19th century? This chapter explores the works of an elite circle of three key artists: Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829–1884), Wu Rangzhi 吳讓之 (1799–1870) and Wu Changshi 吳昌碩 (1844–1927). Their seal carvings were infused with the principle of evidential scholarship, which had laid the foundation for reform in art since the Jiaqing era. The rise of seal carvings, showing homage to Han and pre-Han seal scripts, was largely indebted to epigraphical studies; only when scholars understood the origin and development of the script system could they apply their knowledge to the composition of seal scripts on stone. Their aesthetic discernment and antiquarian style exemplify the continuity and innovation in 19th-century scholars' practices of the so-called 'four accomplishments': calligraphy, painting, poetry and seal carving. By appreciating Han relics and Northern Wei (386–535) steles, the elites applied evidential scholarship to art and extended the scope of 'antiquarianism' beyond traditional boundaries. Simultaneously, the Taiping Civil War destroyed cultural centres in the Lower Yangzi River region. Artists constantly moved between places, leading to greater diversity of artistic practices and audiences. After these turbulent times, more elites were keen to record their memories and publish contemporary art works. The Treaty Port of Shanghai offered stability and the opportunity to interact with new printing technologies. This chapter argues that these were the factors that enhanced the status and fame of seal carvers and contributed to the accessibility of seal manuals among elite circles in Japan and Korea after the mid-19th century.

From 1589 to 1799, seals were primarily featured in three types of publication. The first category was a compilation of ancient seals, which included official examples such as the emperors' seals (*guxiyin* 古璽印) and seals of officialdom (*guanyin* 官印), as well as private seals such as those with personal names (*fuxingyin* 複姓印), studio seals (*minghaoyin* 名號印), motto seals (*xianwenyin* 閑文印), diagram seals (*xiaoxingyin* 肖形印), double-sided seals (*liangmianyin* 兩面印), a set of double or triple 'nesting' seals in diminishing sizes (*zimuyin* 子母印), seals of blessings (*jiyuyin* 吉語印) and monogram seals (*yuanya* 元押). This type of publication presented the material and style of seals, such as the types of protruding knobs allowing it to be strung on a cord (*yinniu* 印鈕). There were different forms such as two-piece tiger-shaped tallies issued to generals as imperial authorisation for troop movements (*hufu* 虎符). Essays were often included on the theory and art historiography of seal carving, as well as discussions on the evolution of six scripts (*liushu* 六書).[1]

The second category of publication was a compilation of seals by contemporary artists, and the third, mostly self-published, was a collection of an individual's seals. He Zhen 何震 (*c.* 1522–1604) was the first person to self-publish his own seals in China in the early 1600s. He also began to carve long inscriptions (*mingwen* 銘文) on the sides of seal stones, an approach which was to become popular.[2]

From the late 18th century, there was an increase in publications of 'themed' seal carvings. For instance, Yan Kun 嚴坤 (active *c.* 1783–1833) carved his seals based on Daoist doctrine and in 1833 composed the *Seal Manual of Tai*

Types of publications of seals	1589–1799	1800–1911
Compilation of ancient seals	35	27
Compilation of Ming and Qing seals	n/a	28
Compilation of seals by contemporary artists	8	2
Collection of an individual's seals	56	62
Total	**99**	**119**

Table 1 Types of publication of seals in 1589–1799 and 1800–1911 (Huang 2011, 231–5; Sun and Dong 2020, vol. 1, 216–40)

Types of seal publications	Shanghai	Other places
Compilation of ancient seals	9	18
Compilation of Ming and Qing seals	16	12
Compilation of seals by contemporary artists	1	1
Collection of an individual's seals	45	17
Total	**71**	**48**

Table 2 Seal publications from Shanghai and elsewhere in 1800–1911 (Sun and Dong 2020, vol. 1, 216–40; Yu 2008, 395–547)

Shang's Treatise on Action and Response (*Taishang ganyingpan yinpu* 太上感應篇印譜).[3] Inspired by evidential scholarship, ancient objects that bear inscriptions, including steles, ancient seals, roof tiles, bricks and sealing clays were circulated, collected and studied more widely. There were more publications dedicated to Qin and Han bronze seals and publications of collected seals by antiquarian artists of the Ming and Qing dynasties. One notable example is the series of compilations of seals published by Wang Qishu 汪啟淑 (1728–1800).

Wang Qishu was a wealthy book and seal collector from Anhui, who served as an official for the Ministry of Works and Ministry of War in Hangzhou (工部都水司郎中，遷至兵部郎中).[4] In 1752, he published his *Collection of Han Bronze Seals* (*Han tongyin cong* 漢銅印叢), which catalogued 1,174 seals, and in 1769, his edited volume *Sources of Han Bronze Seals* (*Han tongyin yuan* 漢銅印原) catalogued 1,877 seals.[5] Back in 1754, Wang expressed his love for the art of archaic seals by releasing a compact catalogue titled *Forest of Seal Impressions in a Brocade Sack* (*Jinnang yinlin* 錦囊印林).[6] Among the 236 seals it showcased were works of renowned artists of his time, such as Ding Jing 丁敬 (1695–1765), Deng Shiru 鄧石如 (1743–1805) and Chen Lian 陳鍊 (1730–1775). The catalogue's portability made it ideal for taking travelling and sharing among the intellectual community. In 1776, Wang went on to publish a catalogue of 3,498 seals by over 100 contemporary artists in the *Collection of Seal Impressions of the Flying Swallow Studio* (*Feihongtang yinpu* 飛鴻堂印譜).[7] For the first time in history, this seal catalogue included a female seal artist named Jin Sujuan 金素娟 (active 1760–80s). Jin was sold to Wang's family as a servant and later became his mistress and shared his interest in bronze inscriptions.[8] In Wang's *Continuity of Biography of Seal Carvers* (*Xu Yinrenzhuan* 續印人傳), from 1750, he also acknowledged his other mistress Yang Ruiyun 楊瑞雲 (d. before 1750, aged 21); she was talented in calligraphy and helped him compile seal manuals detailing 124 famous 18th-century seal carvers.[9] Before the 20th century, there are very few records of female seal carvers and their work; it seems that the works of female carvers were often ascribed to their male family members. Did these female seal carvers make work for people outside their families? Would the names of Jin Sujuan and Yang Ruiyun even be remembered if it were not for their close relationships with Wang Qishu?

The vast number of seals documented in Wang's publications corresponds to the emerging antiquarian trend of his time. His index of seal carvers also suggests a surge of contemporary 18th-century seal carving. Wang Dingxu 王鼎敘 (active *c.* 1750–80s) wrote in the preface, in a copy dated 1789, that the *Seal Manuals of the Xuanhe Era* (*Xuanhe yinpu* 宣和印譜) had been distorted due to centuries of copy-making. Wang Qishu's publications indeed revitalised epigraphical studies. As Wang noted, the materials used to make seals are more durable than the paper used for calligraphy and painting. Their value as historical documents and the talented seal carvers who made them should be esteemed.[10]

Between 1800 and 1911, 119 publications on seals were released, with 71 of them originating from Shanghai and the remaining examples coming from other cultural hubs in the Lower Yangzi Delta, such as Yangzhou, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Changzhou, Guangdong and Shandong (**Tables 1–2**).[11] Many antiquarians and scholars came from cities along the banks of the Lower Yangzi River, and there were many opportunities for artists and scholars to collaborate in publishing and connoisseurship. The gathering of scholars also meant a 'big market' for seal artists. Regional differences were evident, with Shanghai producing more publications on the Eight Seal Masters of Hangzhou (*Xiling bajia* 西泠八家) and on the work of particular individuals.

Changing printing technology

Over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries, both traditional and new technologies were adopted for publishing seal manuals, including wood-block printing, stone lithography, zinc etching and collotype printing:[12]

1. Wood-block printing (*qianke ben* 鈐刻本) – single- and multicolour reproductions
2. Impressing each seal manually on the page (*qianyin ben* 鈐印本) – reproduction of ancient seals (*fangke* 仿刻) and original seal stones (*yuanyin* 原印), after 1804
3. Combining original seal impressions and inscription rubbings (*qianta ben* 鈐拓本), *c.* 1860s

4. Stone lithography (*shiyin* 石印) – single-colour printing, Dianshizhai Studio, 1896
5. Zinc etching and impressing each seal manually (*xinban qianyin* 鋅版鈐印) – Shanghai Xiling Seal Carvers' Society, 1908[13]
6. Zinc etching, impressing each seal manually and adding inscription rubbings to the page (*xinban qianta* 鋅版鈐拓) – Shanghai Xiling Seal Carvers' Society, 1908
7. Collotype printing, *c.* 1921

The print run of earlier seal catalogues was lower than that of painting manuals and popular literature due to the manual production process. Typically, 20 to 100 copies were made for friends, making these publications scarce. As a result, there are fewer surviving early volumes with woodcut printing and original seal impressions. The adaptation of lithography for news and reproducing painting and calligraphy started in 1884 in the Dianshizhai Studio (點石齋) in Shanghai, but only in 1896 did the first seal catalogue use this technology.[14] This delay was perhaps because lithographic printing could only produce black and white images at this time, which was not so suitable for seal catalogues. It was not until around 1913 that double- and triple-coloured lithographic (black, red and blue) printing was adopted in seal manuals in Shanghai.[15]

Zinc etching was introduced by the Shanghai Xiling Seal Carvers' Society (*Shanghai Xiling yinshe* 上海西泠印社) in 1908, which boosted the mass production and commercialisation of seal manuals. The Society also republished 19th-century volumes to advance seal art. In the early 1920s, collotype printing, which combined photography, seal impression and inscription rubbing, was introduced. Due to the greater availability of mass printed seal catalogues, promoted by the Shanghai Xiling Seal Carvers' Society, Youzheng Bookstore (*Youzheng shuju* 有正書局) and Cathay Art Union (*Shenzhou guoguang she* 神州國光社) in Shanghai between 1908 and the 1930s, the trends in seal carving since the late 18th century became canonised into the Anhui School (徽派) and Zhejiang School (浙派). Subsequently, both styles were succeeded, often fused, by artists in Shanghai in the modern era.

Represented by Deng Shiru, Anhui makers used the 'abrasive blade' (*chongdao* 衝刀) technique: they held the knife sideways, pushing the angled blade quickly and continuously, using the power of both wrist and fingertips. Few of Deng's works survive, with only 30 original seals and 145 seal impressions (authenticated by Sun Weizu of Shanghai Museum) able to be traced today.[16] During Deng's lifetime, as commented on by his contemporary the scholar Zhang Huiyan 張惠言 (1761–1802), 'Only a few people throughout the country appreciated his writing'.[17] Indeed, Deng Shiru's first seal manual, *Occasional Accomplishments of Seals by Wanbai Mountainman* (*Wanbao Shanren zhuanke oucun* 完白山人篆刻偶存) was published in 1846, more than three decades after his death, with a preface by his son Deng Chuanmi 鄧傳密 (1795–1870).[18] Later in 1873, *The Brief Biography of Deng Shiru* (*Deng Shiru xiaozhuan* 鄧石如小傳) was published by artist Yang Yisun 楊沂孫 (1813–1881), illustrating 13 seals. Despite this relative scarcity of published material, Deng's name as a reformer in calligraphy and seal carving was endorsed by his followers Bao Shichen 包世臣 (1775–1855), Wu Rangzhi and Zhao Zhiqian. They recognised that Deng, who understood the aesthetic and structural system of scripts through steles and drum stones, had restored the essence of Pre-Tang script and reintroduced it to artists in the 19th century.[19] In 1916, Youzheng Bookstore (*Youzheng shuju* 有正書局) in Shanghai reprinted the 1846 book, retitled as *Seals of Deng Shiru* (*Deng shiru yincun* 鄧石如印存). Due to its popularity, it was reprinted in 1919.[20] In the same year, the Shanghai Xiling Seal Carvers' Society published *Seals of Wanbai Mountainman* (*Wanbai Shanren yinpu* 完白山人印譜), after Yang Yisun's 1873 book, using zinc etching with each seal impressed manually and a rubbing of the inscription added to the page. The new zinc editions reached a wider readership, and the status of Deng as a leader of the Anhui School was thus confirmed in modern Chinese art.

While the Zhejiang seal-makers used 'cutting blade' (*qiedao* 切刀) techniques, they would hold the knife vertically upright, point it at one end of a stroke and cut forward. This required a recurring action, transmitting the strength of the wrist to the seal, with each cut connecting naturally to the previous one. The Zhejiang School was represented by eight artists from Hangzhou, namely Ding Jing, Jiang Ren 蔣仁 (1743–1795), Huang Yi 黄易 (1744–1802), Xi Gang 奚岡 (1746–1803), Chen Yuzhong 陳豫鍾 (1762–1806), Chen Hongshou 陳鴻壽 (1768–1822), Zhao Zhichen 趙之琛 (1781–1852) and Qian Song 錢松 (1818–1860). The first four artists were grouped as the 'Four Masters of Zhejiang School' by scholars He Yuanxi 何元錫 (1766–1829) and He Shu 何澍 (act. 1790–1808) in their 1808 edited book *Seal Manuals of the Four Masters of Xiling [Hangzhou]* (*Xiling sijia yinpu* 西泠四家印譜). It catalogued 367 seals in total, among which were 166 seals by Ding Jing, 35 by Jiang Ren, 101 by Huang Yi and 65 by Xi Gang; all were original seal imprints cut and pasted onto 30 pages; the accompanying rubbings were handmade by He Yuanxi.[21]

In 1883, artist Fu Shi 傅栻 (1850–1903) added Chen Yuzhong and Chen Hongshou to the existing 'Four Masters' in his *Seal Manuals of Six Masters of Xiling* (*Xiling liujia yincun* 西泠六家印存), featuring 189 seals.[22] The grouping of the 'Eight Masters of Seal Carving of Hangzhou' was first asserted in book connoisseur Ding Bing's 丁丙 (1832–1899) *Seal Manuals of Four Masters of Xiling* (*Xiling sijia yinpu* 西泠四家印谱), published in 1885 (**Fig. 80**). In this book, he added Chen Yuzhong, Chen Hongshou, Zhao Zhichen and Qian Song in the appendix 'The Other Four Masters Appended' ('fucun sijia' 附存四家), bringing the total number of seals featured up to 370.[23] The classification of 'Eight Masters' was further confirmed in artist Ding Ren's 丁仁 (1879–1949) edited books, *Selected Seals of Eight Masters of Seal Carving in Hangzhou* (*Xiling bajia yinxuan* 西泠八家印選) in 1904 and *Seal Album of Eight Masters of Seal Carving in Hangzhou* (*Xiling bajia yinpu* 西泠八家印譜) in 1926, which provided biographies of the individual artists and featured 500 seals. Only 50 copies of the 1926 edition were made, due to the arduous process of making the rubbings of the inscriptions of the original seal stones and pressing each seal imprint manually inside the printed grid.[24] Although these eight seal carvers were grouped together, the publications of each individual were also popular and since 1864 were constantly reprinted with added seals.[25]

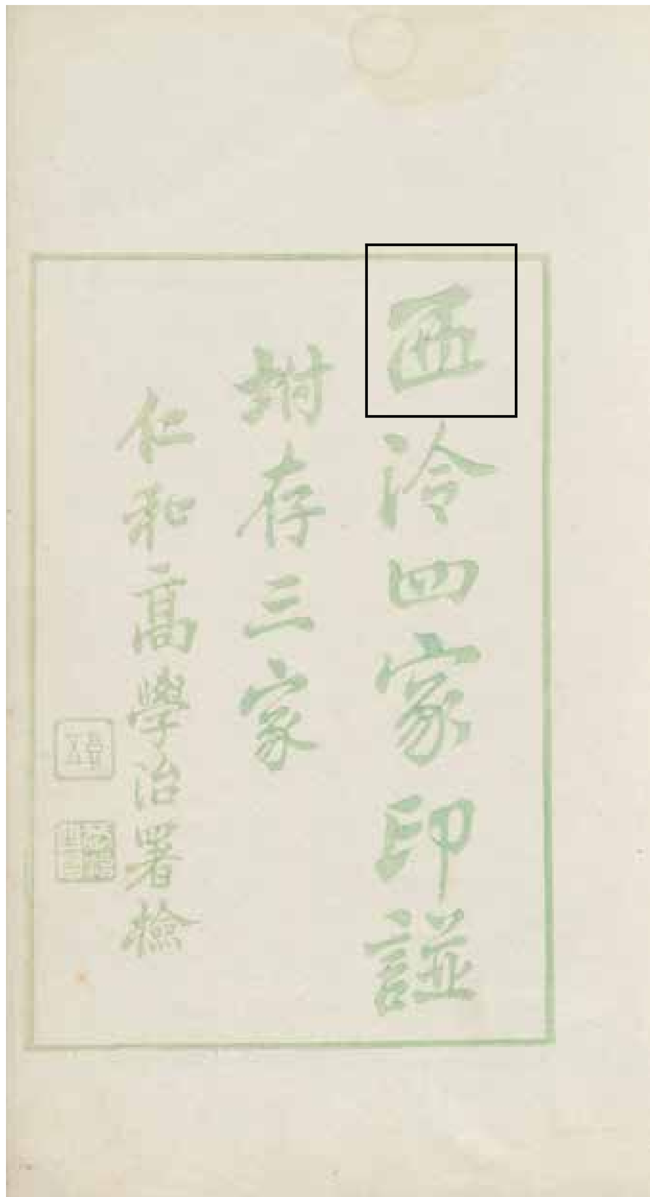


Figure 80 Ding Bing 丁丙, ***Seal Manuals of Four Masters of Xiling (Xiling sijia yinpu*** 西泠四家印谱**), 1885, woodcut print, h. 20cm, w. 12.3cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, 0058980410. The black box shows the title of the book 'Xi** 西**'**

Making seal masters through new commercial printing

Following the Taiping Civil War, there was a surge in popularity of influential artists such as Wu Rangzhi of the Anhui School, Zhao Zhiqian who combined both Anhui and Zhejiang styles, and Wu Changshi of the Shanghai School of seal carving towards the end of 19th century. In 1951, artist Fang Jie'an 方節盦 (1913–1951) referred to these artists, along with Hu Jue 胡钁 (1840–1910), as the 'Four Master Seal Carvers of the Late Qing' in his *Seal Manuals of the Four Masters of the Late Qing* (*Wan Qing sidajia yinpu* 晚清四大家印譜).[26] The seal manuals of the first three were reproduced and circulated in East Asia, attracting domestic and overseas collectors.

Wu Rangzhi, a student of Deng Shiru and Bao Shichen, followed Deng's aesthetics '*yin cong shu chu*' (印從書出), which emphasised that the quality of the seal carving is judged by one's knowledge of the ancient script system and training in calligraphy.[27] Wu Rangzhi's carving style emulated calligraphic brushwork, cursive and rounded at each turn,

Figure 81 Wu Rangzhi 吴讓之, ***Seal of Six Faces*****,** ***c.*** **1851–63, Qingtian stone, h. 4.4cm, w. 4.4cm, d. 4cm. Private collection. Seal reads on one side 'Outside the time when one received a mandate instructing to resist and guard the place' (*Fengxi zhiyu*** 奉檄之餘**). On another side, '*Chuke*' (**楚客**), referring to Qu Yuan** 屈原 **(342–278 BCE) and his hometown of Yizheng** 儀徵 **in Jiangsu** 江蘇**, reflecting Wu's diaspora state when he escaped the war in Taizhou** 泰州

and accurately represented the script of ancient bronzes and Han dynasty seal script styles.

According to Zhao Zhiqian and Wu Changshi, for the convenience of travelling many seals made during the Taiping Civil War were carved with multiple inscriptions – two-sided, three-sided, four-sided and six-sided (**Fig. 81**).[28] To escape from the war, Wu Rangzhi and Wang Yun 汪鋆 (1816–after 1882) stayed with Yao Zhenglian 姚正鐮 (active 1840–60), Cen Rong 岑鎔 (active 1840–60), Chen Baojin 陳寶晉 (active 1840–60), Zhu Zhuxuan 朱築軒 (active 1840–60) and Xu Zhenjia 徐震甲 (active 1840–60), constantly moving between homes.[29] During Wu's flight to Taizhou, Liu Hanchen 劉漢臣 (Luqiao 麓樵, act. 1840–60) hosted Wu and employed him to give tuition to his children for three years. In return, Wu dedicated 88 seals and many paintings and calligraphy works to Liu.[30] To repay the hospitality and financial support, Wu Rangzhi also carved 119 seals for Cen Rong dated between 1853 and 1860 as well as another 31 undated seals.[31] The 119 seals were published in *Seals of Wu Rangzhi from the Bottle Gourd Chamber* (*Paoguashi yincun* 匏瓜室印存) after 1860, with a preface by collector Zhu You 諸猷 (Hongqiu 鴻秋, dates unknown) dated 1917. It is notable that these seals formerly bestowed to Cen Rong were dispersed; 87 of them were collected by Chen Liu 陳瀏 (1863–1929) and published in *Seals from the Studio of Watching the Cloud* (*Wangyunxuan yinji* 望雲軒印集) in 1918, and those seals later went to collector Xu Xianfang 徐咸芳 (active 1910–1930s) and were published in his undated *Seals from the Studio of Keeping Plums* (*Shoumei shanguan yinpu* 守梅山館印譜).[32] Each seal impression in these two publications was made manually from the original seal stone. In the recent discovery of *Seals of Wu Rangzhi* (*Wu Rangzhi yincun* 吳讓之印存) in Cai Liquan's 蔡澧泉 (1919–1999) collection, among 232 seals, 82 were for Yao Zhenglian 96 for Cen Rong, 19 for Zhang Bingyan 張丙炎 (Wuqiao午橋, 1826–1905), 15 for Zhang Shubo 張樹伯 (Shiqin 石琴, active *c.* 1820–50s), 6 for Ling Yurui 凌毓瑞 (active 1840–50s), 2 for Tang Benjian

唐本儉 (active 1840–50s), 2 for Wang Qingqi 王慶祺 (Zhonglian 仲廉, 1850–70) and 10 for Wu Rangzhi himself.[33] These patrons included the wealthiest businessman of Taizhou (Yao Zhenglian), collectors (Cen Rong), artists (Wang Yun and Xu Zhenjia), scholars (Ling Yurui, Zhang Shubo and Chen Baojin), the governor of Lianzhou in Guangdong (Zhang Bingyan) and an official of the Hanlin Academy in Beijing (Wang Qingqi). The various publications demonstrate the dispersal of the art after the Taiping Civil War and the influence of patronage and intellectual circles on Wu's carving. Wu conveyed his feelings about the war and his life through his seals.

Towards the end of the Taiping Civil War, Wei Xizeng 魏錫曾 (Wei Jiasun 魏稼孫, d. 1881) received permission from Wu Rangzhi to publish his seals. In Wu Rangzhi's account, he estimated that he had carved more than 10,000 seals over three decades, but only kept a record of 232 seals in 1863. Wei managed to trace 95 seals (with actual seal stones) and impressed them manually in his book, *Draft of Seals by Wu Rangzhi* (*Wu Rangzhi yingao* 吳讓之印稿); only 20 copies were published.[34] In 1904, Wu Yin 吳隱 (1867–1922), the founder of the Xiling Seal Carvers' Society, was able to catalogue 199 seals in his *Seals of Wu Rangzhi* (*Wu Rangzhi yincun* 吳讓之印存).[35] In the early 20th century Lin Jun 林鈞 (1891–1971) also published over 160 Wu Rangzhi seals in his undated *Draft of Seals from a Student of Bao Shichen* (*Shishenxuan yingao* 師慎軒印稿), and Fang Jie'an published 122 Wu Rangzhi seals in the 1951 edition of *Seal Manuals of the Four Masters of the Late Qing*.[36]

Unlike Wu Rangzhi, Zhao Zhiqian retained more records of his seals. His seal carving was greatly influenced by Deng Shiru's approach, *yin nei qiu yin* (印內求印), which stressed the importance of learning from other ancient seals. Zhao drew inspiration from Han bronze seals and steles of the Northern Wei, which featured a style that was blunter with slanting edges. In 1889, he published *A Study of Qin and Han Seals in the Zhao Zhiqian Collection* (*Huishu kaocang Qin Han yincun* 撝叔考藏秦漢印存), showcasing the 80 ancient seals that he had collected.[37]

Zhao also looked beyond stone steles and found revelations from other forms of artefact, including bronze bow fittings, Qin dynasty stone drums, *zhaoban* (詔版, plaques announcing official edicts) and bronze weights, Han dynasty bronze mirrors, lamps and bricks, and coins made between the Six Dynasties period (220–589) and the Song dynasty. Zhao's adaptation of diverse ancient styles earned him a unique reputation; artist Shen Shuyong 沈樹鏞 (1832–1873) commented that 'Zhao was the first to create a new path for the art of seal-carving in six hundred years'.[38]

In 1863, Zhao travelled to Beijing to participate in the civil examinations but failed twice. To support himself, he regularly sold calligraphy and paintings and continued to carve seals for his scholarly friends.[39] Zhao often crafted seals for Wei Xizeng, receiving rubbings and powdered tobacco for snuff-taking in exchange. He charged fifty *qian* (錢, 0.5 silver taels 兩) per character in seal script and took commissions of ten seals at a time from Wei and Wei's contacts to earn extra income during the difficult years of the early 1860s.[40] By 1872, a piece of Zhao's calligraphy sold for 20 silver taels, and his monthly salary was 60 silver taels. He had to carve 10 seals (each bore 4 characters) to make the same profit as he did on one piece of calligraphy.[41]

Wei compiled Zhao's seal imprints into the 1864 catalogue *Draft of Seals by Zhao Zhiqian* (*Zhao Huishu yingao* 趙撝叔印稿), recording over 200 seals. Among them, around 70 were made during the war, between 1862 and 1864, for Zhao's close friends, namely Hu Shu 胡澍 (1825–72, *c.* 20 seals), Wei Xizeng (*c.* 20 seals) and Shen Shuyong (*c.* 30 seals). At the beginning of the catalogue, Zhao wrote the title piece '[Wei] Jiasun is meddlesome' (*jiasun duoshi* 稼孫多事) and a long inscription, which expressed gratitude for Wei's kindness in collecting his seal imprints and copying his poems to ensure that his name would be remembered. However, Zhao believed that his skills in seal carving, poetry and writing were a gift from Heaven to keep him alive and not the sole reason for his existence.[42] Zhao aimed to be a serious scholar with a political career and not be considered a seal carver for literary leisure. Thus, except for making two seals for his friend, Grand Councilor Pan Zuyin 潘祖蔭 (1830–90) in 1882, he stopped carving seals in 1872. Whilst Zhao refused to be regarded as a master of seal carving, the catalogues of his seals never ceased to appear (although Wei's original seal catalogue is hard to trace).

Numerous editions of Zhao Zhiqian's seal manuals were published throughout his lifetime and into the 20th century, mostly based on earlier editions, and these included:

1. Hu Shu 胡澍 (ed.), *Draft of Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies* (*Erjin dietang yingao*二金蝶堂印稿), Zhejiang Provincial Museum, 1863 (**Fig. 82**; containing 37 seals).
2. Zhu Zhifu 朱志復, *Draft of Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies Assembled after the Guihai Year* [1863] (*Erjin dietang guihai zhihou yingao* 二金蝶堂癸亥以后印稿), 1865.
3. Fu Shi 傅栻 (ed.), *Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies* (*Erjin dietang yinpu* 二金蝶堂印譜), 1877 (bearing the mark of 'Youwanxi zhai 有萬熹齋' on the title piece and listing 48 seals).
4. Xu Shikai 徐士愷 (ed.), *Draft of Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies* (*Erjin dietang yingao* 二金蝶堂印稿), 1896 (bearing the mark of 'Guanzide zhai 觀自得齋' on the title piece and listing 100 seals).
5. Wu Yin 吳隱 (ed.), *Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies* (*Erjin dietang yinpu* 二金蝶堂印譜), Shanghai Xiling Seal Carvers' Society, 1908 (after Fu's 1877 edition, and containing 48 seals).
6. Lin Jun 林鈞 (ed.), *Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies* (*Erjin dietang yinpu* 二金蝶堂印譜), Hangzhou Xiling Seal Carvers' Society, 1910 (containing 108 seals).
7. Anonymous (ed.), *Seal Imprints Carved Manually by Zhao Huishu* (*Zhao Huishu shouke yincun* 趙撝叔手刻印存), Shanghai, Youzheng Bookstore, 1911 (after Fu's 1877 edition, but poorer quality).
8. Ding Ren 丁仁 (ed.), *Seal Imprints from the Hut of Sorrow[Zhao Zhi Qian]* (*Bei'an yinsheng* 悲盦印賸), Shanghai Xiling Seal Carvers' Society, 1914 (39 seals are from Ding's own collection).
9. Zhu Suisheng 朱遂生 (ed.), *Seal Imprints from the Hut of Sorrow [Zhao Zhiqian]* (*Zhao Bei'an yincun* 趙悲庵印存), Shanghai, Shenzhou guoguang she, 1914.

Figure 82 Hu Shu 胡澍, ***Draft of Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies*** **(*Erjin dietang yingao*** 二金蜨堂印稿**), 1863, woodcut print with original seal imprints, h. 21.1cm, w. 13.4cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, 005901804**

10. Wu Yin 吳隱 (ed.), *Seal Imprints of Zhao Huishu* (*Zhao Huishu yinpu* 趙撝叔印譜), Shanghai Xiling Seal Carvers' Society, 1917 (291 seals sourced from various collections by the editor).
11. Ye Weiming 葉為銘 (ed.), *Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies* (*Erjin dietang yinpu* 二金蜨堂印譜), 1920.
12. Fang Jie'an 方節盦, *Seal Imprints from the Hut of Sorrow [Zhao Zhiqian]* (*Bei'an yincun* 悲盦印存), 1933.
13. Wu Putang 吳樸堂 (ed.), *Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies* (*Erjin dietang yinpu* 二金蜨堂印譜), 1950.
14. Qian Juntao 錢君匋 ed., *Seal Imprints from the Hall of Two Golden Butterflies* (*Erjin dietang yinpu* 二金蜨堂印譜), 1962.

The seal imprints in the editions by Hu Shu, Fu Shi, Xu Shikai, Qian Juntao, Fang Jie'an and Wu Putang were impressed using original seal stones. The publications soon led to Zhao's fame spreading to Japan. The 1877 edition by Fu Shi was first circulated in Japan via artists Kawai Senro 河井荃廬 (1871–1945) and Kuwana Tetsujō 桑名鐵城 (1864–1938) in 1891, and later Nishikawa Yasushi 西川寧 (1902–1989) reprinted the Xu Shikai edition in Japanese in 1942.[43]

Inspired by Wu Rangzhi and Zhao Zhiqian, Wu Changshi, active in Shanghai, was widely admired as the most renowned seal artist in modern China. He began self-publishing his seals in Hangzhou and Shanghai; his first publication in 1870, at the age of 27, *Seals from the Unadorned Hideout* (*Puchao yincun* 樸巢印存), contained 103 examples, showcasing his learning from Qin and Han seals, as well as those of Deng Shiru, Ding Jing, Huang Yi and Qian Song during his time in Hangzhou. Between 1873 and 1881, Wu travelled between Shanghai and Suzhou, diversifying his style by learning from a greater variety of relics and fellow Shanghai School artists such as Gao Yong 高邕 (1850–1921), Ren Bonian and Wu Botao 吳伯滔 (1840–1895). His publications during this period, signifying his stylistic move from taking inspiration from Qin and Han bronze seals to taking ideas from Jin dynasty (266–420) bricks, included *Seals from Studio of Old Stone* (Cangshizhai zhuanyin 蒼石齋篆印, 1874), *Seals from Studio of Levelling with Cloud* (齊雲館印譜, 1876; **Fig. 83**), *Seals from Studio of Boundless Seal Scripts* (*Zhuanyunxuan yincun* 篆雲軒印存, 1879) and *Seals from Mountain Hall of Iron Letters* (*Tiehan shanguan yincun* 鐵函山館印存, 1881).

Presenting 65 seals, Wu Changshi's 1883 catalogue, *Studio of Peeling the Goblet* (*Xiaogulu yincun* 削觚廬印存), documented his progress in learning from the stone-drum script in the early 1880s. *Seals from Hut of Fou Bronze Vessel* (*Foulu yincun* 缶廬印存, 1889) showed Wu's adaptation of a technique called '*dundao yingru* 鈍刀硬入', that involves cutting a line harder with forceful power onto the seal stone with a blunt blade, so the style is archaic and unwieldly (*guzhuo* 古拙), mimicking the ancient seals from Qin and Han. Each of these publications conveyed his learning from various types of relics.

Wu's cutting technique combined elements from both the Anhui and Zhejiang Schools, highlighting his aspiration to be a swordsman. He held his blade like a sword, demonstrating forcefulness, speed and techniques such as 'strip off' (*pixiao* 披削) and 'whittle the surface' (*pocan* 破殘). His use of the 'Han Bronze Seals grid' and framing techniques was evident, but he also added broken frames and strokes in a blunt knife-cut style to mimic the archaic temperament of ancient seals swept by time.

In 1913, Wu Changshi became the first president of the Xiling Seal Carvers' Society and went on in 1914 to become the chairman of the Association of Calligraphers and Painters in Shanghai (*Haishang shuhua xiehui* 海上書畫協會). He was also made the honorary chairman of Shanghai Tijinguan Metal and Stone, Calligraphy and Painting Society (*Shanghai tijinguan jinshi shuhua hui* 上海題襟館金石書畫會) in 1915. Wu aimed to increase the reach of seal art and publishing to a wider audience. However, in his later years, he expressed frustration at the heavy workload he faced due to the large number of Japanese clients seeking his services,

Figure 83 Wu Changshi 吳昌碩, *Seals from Studio of Levelling with Cloud (Qiyunguan yinpu* 齊雲館印譜), 1876, woodblock print with original seal imprints, h. 20.2cm, w. 11.6cm. Tokyo National Museum, gift of Mr. Kobayashi Toan, P-12415

though he appreciated the good revenue from foreign buyers.[44] Wu Changshi's clientele included prominent figures from Japanese art and political circles such as calligraphers Akiyama Hakugan 秋山白巌 (1864–1954), Kusakabe Meikaku 日下部鳴鶴 (1838–1922) and Kuwana Tetsujō, Nanga painter Tomioka Tessai 富岡鐵齋 (1837–1924), and Sinologist Nato Konan 内藤湖南 (1866–1934), who later became the prime minister of Japan.

In addition to his Japanese clients, Wu Changshi also had contacts with Koreans. Korean artist Min Yeongik 閔泳翊 (1860–1914) commissioned Wu Changshi to carve more than 30 seals between 1890 and 1910 when he was in exile in China. Based on Wu's 'account book' dated in the spring of 1906, Min commissioned three seals, 'Qianxun zhuzhai ('千尋竹齋', 'Yuanding 園丁' and 'Min Yuanding 閔園丁') on the 10th day of the first month in the 25th year of Guangxu (1906), and another five seals ('Qianxun zhuzhai 千尋竹齋', 'Shizunzhe 石尊者', 'Min Yuanding 閔園丁', 'Yuanding shuhua 園丁書畫' and 'Yi 翊' on the 8th day of the third month of the same year.[45] On the 21st day of the third month, Min went on to commission one horizontal board of calligraphy, two sets of four scrolls of calligraphy, two couplets, one set of four scrolls of painting, one set of six scrolls of painting, one set of four album leaves of orchids and eight seals. The total cost of these commissions was 91.6 silver taels, and Min was to pay this amount after receiving the artwork.[46]

The price of Wu Changshi's seals was 0.6 silver taels per character, and customers had to provide their own stones. According to Wu's own price list, in 1906 a set of four 6-*chi* (尺, 181.8cm) scrolls of calligraphy in stone drum script and painting cost 12 silver taels, a set of four 5-*chi* (151.5cm) scrolls of calligraphy and painting cost 8 silver taels, a single hanging scroll of painting cost 4 to 5 silver taels, a smaller scroll of painting cost 2 silver taels, a single hanging scroll of calligraphy in stone-drum script cost 3 silver taels, couplets of calligraphy and fan painting cost 1 silver tael, and an album of four leaves of orchids cost 6 silver taels.[47] A seal of four characters cost 2.4 silver taels, which was more expensive than a 5-*chi* hanging scroll of painting and calligraphy. The popularity and price of Wu's seals reflects their increased value as collectables in overseas art markets. The demand for famous artists' seals was high and the price affordable, as evidenced by the fact that Min Yeongik frequently issued orders during his exile in China, and that Tomioka Tessai, who had never visited China, had his seals commissioned via letters or friends who visited Shanghai.[48]

Trends in late Qing seal art and Korean connections

The market for Chinese seal art grew in the late 19th century, with Japanese and Korean intellectuals and artists collecting ancient seals and requisitioning contemporary Chinese examples. In the second edition of *Continuation of Biography of Seal Carvers* (*Zaixu Yinrenzhuan* 再續印人傳, 1910) by artist Ye Ming 葉銘 (Ye Weiming 葉為銘, 1866–1948), for the first time Japanese artists were listed, namely Kuwana Tetsujō, Kawai Senro, Nagao Uzan 長尾雨山 (1864–1942), Namekawa Tanjo 滑川澹如 (1868–1936) and Hamamura Zoroku 浜村蔵六(五世) (The Fifth Generation, 1866–1909). The first four artists had close exchanges with Wu Changshi during their visit to Shanghai. In 1921, Ye Ming recorded over 60 Japanese artists in his *Expanded Biography of Seal Carvers* (*Guang Yinrenzhuan* 廣印人傳).[49]

One might wonder when such a vibrant trend began. While the exchanges between the seal carvers of the late Qing and Meiji periods seemed exuberant, how about those with Joseon artists? What contributed to the popularity of the Zhejiang, Anhui and Shanghai Schools of seal carving in Japan and Korea at the turn of the 20th century? While scholars have studied the exchange of

Figure 84 Kim Jeong-hui, 'Calligraphy of Kim Jeong-hui (A Farewell Poem)', undated, hanging scroll, ink on paper, h. 111.8cm, w. 30.6cm. National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Deoksu 5759

books between China, Japan, and Korea, there is little record of the circulation of seal manuals in the first half of the 19th century.

Since 1637, official envoys had been sent annually to China from Korea. Kim Chang-eop's 金昌業 (1658–1721) *Journal of the Trip to Qing from Studio of Old Crops* (*Nogajae yeonhaeng ilgi* 老稼齋燕行日記, 1712) documented the books purchased from China during a three-month trip to Beijing: typical Confucian discussions of the *History of the Han* (*Hanshu* 漢書), the *Analects of Zhu Xi* (*Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類), collected poems by Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770), the *Encyclopaedia of Agricultural Administration* (*Nongzheng quanshu* 農政全書) and the *Compendium of Materia Medica* (*Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目). These publications were scholarly but did not quite reflect the trends in contemporary Qing scholarship.[50]

King Jeongjo of Joseon (1752–1800; r. 1776–1800) built the imperial library Kyujanggak 奎章閣 in 1776 to collect his writing and promote scholarship.[51] In 1777, with the support of Jeongjo, Joseon diplomat Seo Hosu 徐浩修 (1736–1799) purchased the *Imperially Commissioned Complete Collection of Illustrations and Works from Past and Present* (*Qinding Gujin tushu jicheng* 欽定古今圖書集成), a vast encyclopaedic catalogue of 10040 *juan* (chapters) in 5020 volumes compiled during the Kangxi reign. Seo paid 2,150 silver taels for the 5,200 *juan* of this compendium in 502 bookcases.[52] During three visits to China in 1778, 1790 and 1801, another envoy, Bak Jega 朴齊家 (1750–1805), made friends with several prolific Qing antiquarian scholars, mathematicians and artists, including Ji Yun紀昀 (1727–1805), Weng Fanggang, Sun Xingyan 孫星衍 (1853–1818), Yi Bingshou 伊秉綬 (1754–1815), Donggo Tiyeboo and Yangzhou painter Luo Pin 羅聘 (1733–1799).[53] Through their contact, further books and scholarly thoughts on both countries were shared and circulated. For instance, Korean poet Yu Deuk-gong 柳得恭 (1748–1807) presented Ji Yun with his manuscript *Collected Poems of Nostalgic Reflections of the Twenty-One Capitals* (*Isib-i do hoegosi* 二十一懷懷古詩) when he visited Beijing with Bak Jega in 1790. Luo Pin hand-copied these poems, passing them on to Weng Fanggang and Ye Zhishen 葉志詵 (1779–1863), after which they were collected by Zhao Zhiqian. Zhao later edited the manuscript into his *Collected Writing from the Studio of Looking at 1729 Cranes* (*Yangshi qian qibai ershijiu hezhai congshu* 仰視千七百二十九鶴齋叢書) in 1829.[54] On the 1801 trip, Yu Deuk-gong also made friends with Ruan Yuan, the leader of Qing scholarship in the Jiaqing and Daoguang eras.[55] By the turn of the 19th century, the Korean envoys were able to build stronger connections with Qing officials and scholars in Beijing and sourced books and art through dealers and friends in both Beijing and the Lower Yangzi River cities.[56]

Following his father Kim No-gyeong's 金魯敬 (1766–1840) envoy mission sent by King Sunjo (1790–1834; r. 1800–34), scholar-artist Kim Jeong-hui 金正喜 (1786–1856) met with Ruan Yuan and Weng Fanggang during his first visit to China in 1809–10. Kim and Weng discussed the calligraphic aesthetics of the Stele School and dedicated poems to each other, as seen in Kim Jeonghee's 'Calligraphy of Kim Jeong-hui (A Farewell Poem)' (**Fig. 84**).

The encounter of Koreans with Ruan Yuan in person and through his publications was influential in spreading evidential scholarship and the Stele School of calligraphy in

Figure 85 Kim Jeong-hui, *Album Containing Rubbings of Kim Jeong-hui's Calligraphy*, undated, album leaves, ink on paper, h. 25.7cm, w. 15.6cm. National Museum of Korea, Seoul, Dongwon 3802

Korea. Kim's *Album Containing Rubbings of Kim Jeong-hui's Calligraphy* (*Wandang tangmuk* 阮堂拓墨) features a discussion on Northern and Southern Schools and shows awareness of the Steles of the Northern School among Korean intellectuals (**Fig. 85**). Led by Kim, Joseon scholars and calligraphers engaged with the crucial publications on the Stele School of calligraphy, Ruan Yuan's *Treatise on the Northern and Southern Schools of Calligraphy* (*Nanbei shupai lun* 南北書派論, 1814) and *Treatise on the Northern Steles and Southern Model-Calligraphy-Book* (*Beibei nantie lun* 北碑南帖論, 1819).[57] Ruan's publications, *Identifications in the Studio for Accumulating Antique Inscriptions on Bronze Bells and Tripods* (*Jiguzhai zhongding yiqi kuanshi* 積古齋鐘鼎彝器款識, 1804) and *Collection of Writing from the Study of Confucian Classics* (*Yanjingshi ji* 揅經室集, 1814) were introduced along with Qing evidential scholarship to the Joseon court and elites in the early 19th century.

The 'Red-lacquered Cabinet for Stone Seals of King Heonjong' (1827–1849; r. 1834–49) at the National Museum of Korea contained a catalogue of seal impressions, *Seal Imprints from the Hall of Treasuring Su [Shi]* (*Bosodang injon*; *Baosushi yincun* 寶蘇堂印存). Among 700 seal impressions, 195 seal stones recorded in the catalogue still survive. The title of the catalogue was engraved on the top of the cabinet, evidencing the presence of the cult of Northern Song (960-1127) literati Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1107) under the influence of Qing antiquarians: the Qing evidential scholars often celebrated Su Shi's scholarship on his birthday. Weng Fanggang was one of the first scholars to host such an event, Shou Su Hui 壽蘇會 (A gathering celebrating Su Shi's birthday).[58] Qing scholars also chose their studio names to show their admiration for Su Shi as, for instance, in the case of Weng's Suzhai 蘇齋 (Studio of Su).

Personal seals developed into seal art reflecting the user's taste in literature and art. King Heonjong collected seals used by famous literati in China and Joseon and used many personal seals himself. He appreciated the seals used by Kim Jeong-hui, Jeong Yak-yong (丁若鏞, 1762–1836) and Kwon Don-in 權敦仁 (1783–1859), whose art corresponded to the trends of antiquarianism of late 18th- to 19th-century China. Among the 195 seal stones in his collection that survive, 'Brief Respite amid Ten Thousand Duties' (*wanji yuxia* 萬幾餘暇), after the seal of the Kangxi emperor, was used by King Heonjong and had a dragon flying through the clouds elaborately carved on its body.[59] His other two personal seals, 'Seal on Books, Writings, and Paintings Kept in the House to Study the Confucian Classics' (*Yanjingzhai cangshu yin* 研經齋藏書印) and 'Pavilion to Study the Confucian Classics' (*Yanjing lou* 研經樓) were in homage to Ruan Yuan's influential publication, *Collection of Writing from the Study of Confucian Classics* (**Fig. 86**) (*Yanjingshi ji* 揅經室集, 1814).[60] Another seal, 'Stone Seal with Inscription' (*Taoling ding ming* 陶陵鼎銘), was after the style of the bronze inscription on the Dingtao Tripod 定陶鼎 and based on Ruan Yuan's *Identifications in the Studio for Accumulating Antique Inscriptions on Bronze Bells and Tripods* (*Jiguzhai zhongding yiqi kuanshi* 積古齋鐘鼎彝器款識) in 1804.[61]

Korean collection and commissions

During the period when Korean visitors travelled to China, they brought back to the Korean elite various antiquarian

Figure 86 Two personal seals of King Heonjong, 'Pavilion to Study the Confucian Classics' and 'Seal on Books, Writings, and Paintings Kept in the House to Study the Confucian Classics', undated, stone. National Palace Museum of Korea, Seoul.
Far left: Changdeok 7855, w. 2.5cm, l. 2.5cm, h. 4cm, wt 0.06kg
Left: Changdeok 7857, w. 4.6cm, l. 4.8cm, h. 6.8cm, wt 0.34kg

Figure 87 Zhao Xishou 趙錫綬, *Compilation of Pavilion of Fragrant Seal Imprints* (*Yinxiangge yinpu* 印香閣印譜), 1813 edition, woodblock print with original seal imprints, h. 26.4cm, w. 17.2cm. Seoul National University Library, Rarebook collection, 奎中2706

objects, such as rubbings of steles and bronze inscriptions, calligraphy, paintings, relics and books of antiquarian studies.[62] But did the Koreans commission seals from contemporary Chinese artists who were active in Liulichang in Beijing and the Lower Yangzi Delta? And did they collect seal manuals?

Kim Jeong-hui's Chinese friends, Weng Fanggang (letter dated 1816), Cao Jiang 曹江 (Yushui 玉水, 1781–1837, letter dated 1816), Ye Zhishen (Dongqing 東卿, letters dated 1819 and 1820) and Liu Xihai 劉喜海 (Yanting 燕庭, 1793–1852, letter dated 1824) constantly sent him seals on request. A few seal carvers' names were mentioned in these letter exchanges, including Chen Wuzi 陳務滋 (Zhifu 植夫, active 1780–1816, native of Hebei), Chen Shaoshi 陳少室 (1800–after 1870, native of Hejian 河間, Hebei), Wu Wenzheng 吳文徵 (Nanxiang 南薌, active 1804–16, native of She County 歙縣, Anhui) and Shan Kehui 單可惠 (Lianquan 廉泉, Jiezhou 芥舟, active 1810–20s, native of Gaomi 高密, Shandong).[63]

Kim's Chinese book collection contained only three publications on seal manuals:

1. Zhao Xishou 趙錫綬 (ed.), *Yinxiangge yinpu* 印香閣印譜

(Compilation of Pavilion of Fragrant Seal Imprints), 1803. The first edition had 4 volumes; the 1813 edition had 15 volumes (**Fig. 87**). The 1803 edition contains around 400 seals by Zhao Xishou 趙錫綬 (active 1770–1813), his sons Zhao Qingtai 趙清泰 (active 1800–1810s) and Zhao Qingyuan 趙清遠 (active 1800–1810s).

2. Zhao Xishou 趙錫綬 (ed.), *Yunfeng shuwu jiyinpu* 雲峰書屋集印譜 (Seals of Yunfeng Book Dwelling [Zhao Xishou]), 1804–6. 8 volumes, including volumes of *Yinzhang jijin* 印章集錦 (Compilation of seals) and a volume of Fa guzhuanwen 法古篆文 (Seals after ancient seal script).
3. Shan Lianquan 單廉泉, *Yinpu* 印譜 (Seal Manual), *c.* 1824. Preface by Kim Jeonghee in 1824.[64]

These three seal publications reflected the cult of restoring Qin and Han styles in search of the evolution of the Chinese script system. Compared with rubbings and other literature, there has been relatively little evidence of the circulation of Chinese seal publications in Korea and Japan before the first half of the 19th century. Were Kim Jeong-hui's seals carved by Chinese artists through the help of Yi Sang-jeok 李尚迪 (1803–1865) and the other Korean envoys?

Through the introduction of Ye Zhishen, Kim Jeong-hui met Deng Chuanmi (Deng Shiru's son) during his visit to Beijing in 1823 and began to exchange letters and rubbings of calligraphy with him. Kim mentioned his admiration for Deng Shiru's calligraphy in his letter to Wang Xisun 汪喜孫 (1786–1848) and considered Deng's calligraphy had revitalised tradition and found no equal to him in history. Kim also mentioned the scarcity of Deng's work while he was trying to collect it.[65]

Kim self-styled his name Chusa 秋史, and used this name for many personal seals.[66] One of the seals, 'Chusa' (秋史), is after Deng Shiru's style in seal script, very different from the rest of his seals (**Fig. 88**). The left particle of the character *chu* 秋 is reversed, and the character *shi* 史 is identical to Deng Shiru's writing as seen in his *Calligraphy in Four Scripts* (*Siti shuping* 四體書屏, 1790). It is possible that this 'Chusa' seal was carved by a Chinese artist after the style of Deng Shiru in around 1853–55, perhaps through contact with Deng Chuanmi (or carved by Deng Chuanmi himself).

Kim's seals also show an awareness of the Zhejiang School of seal carving. This is illustrated in the seals 'Old Ruan' (*lao Ruan* 老阮), 'One Hill, One Peak' (*yiqiu yihe* 一丘一壑), and 'Chanting One's Poem' (*yin zi ge shi* 吟自個詩). The spiky lines mimic carved bronze inscriptions using the 'cutting blade' (*qiedao* 切刀) technique of the Zhejiang School. It is unclear if Kim made these seals himself or commissioned them from Chinese artists. However, it is notable that by the 1850s, the Korean elite had adopted and become familiar with the Anhui and Zhejiang schools of seal carving, and were conscious of the antiquarian approaches inspired by evidential scholarship.[67]

There is still more research needed on how early 19th-century artists connected to the Korean elite through seal carving, which led to a trend for antiquarian art in Meiji Japan, Joseon Korea and late Qing China. Artists treated seal carving as a form of autobiography, using inscriptions to express their emotions, memories and laments. Although

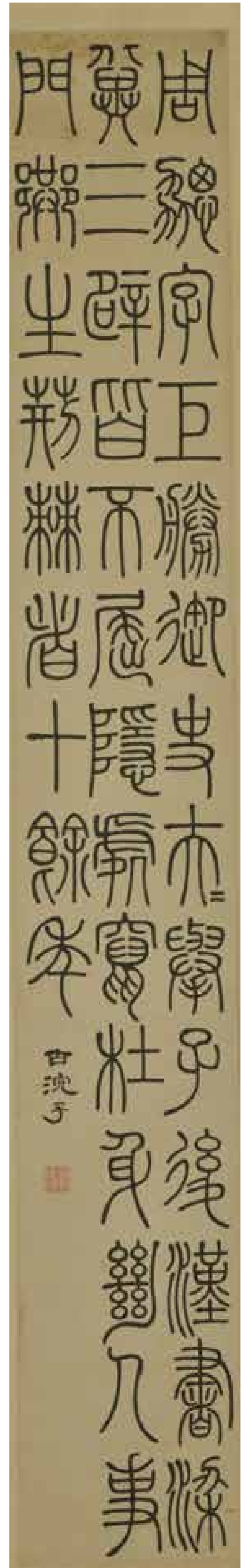


Figure 88 (top left) Kim Jeong-hui, 'Chusa' (秋史), undated, stone, h. 2.6cm, w. 2.6cm, d. 3.7cm. National Museum of Korea, Seoul, KIT 201; (above) Deng Shiru 鄧石如, *Calligraphy in Four Scripts*, detail of reversed character *shi* 史 and (right) detail of the hanging scroll in seal script, 1790, hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, h. 134.5cm, w. 20cm. Anhui Provincial Museum

there are only a few surviving seal manuals with original imprints due to the Taiping Civil War and low print runs, these publications of late Qing seals reflect an empirical investigation of antiquities. This practice of 'antique innovation' left a deep impression on 19th-century elites and their successors in the modern era. The shift in printing technology and strategic promotion of publishers in the early 20th century contributed to the fame of the 'masters' of seal carving, who may not have been well-known to their contemporaries, and established what we call the canon of art historiography of Qing seals today.

Notes

1 Luo 1925.
2 He 1595.
3 Yan 1833.
4 Yu 2008, 273–5.
5 Wang Qishu 1752, 1769; Yu 2008, 312 and 316.
6 Wang Qishu 1754; Yu 2008, 329.
7 Wang Qishu 1776; Yu 2008, 272.
8 Wang Qishu 1750a.
9 Wang Qishu 1750b.
10 Wang Dingxu 1750.
11 Sun and Dong 2020, vol. 1, 203–374.
12 Sun and Dong 2020, vol. 1, 203–374.
13 Ding 1909.
14 Huang 1896.
15 Chen Jide 1804.
16 Sun 2001.
17 Zhang 1915, vol. 1889, 46.
18 Chen 1846.
19 Zhao Zhiqian, '鄧石如書司馬溫公[居]家[雜]儀跋' (Colophon for Deng Shiru's Calligraphy after the 'At-Home Etiquette and Manners' inscription by Sima Guang [1019–1086]), in Dai 2015, vol. 1, 135.
20 Shanghai Youzheng shuju 1916.
21 He and He 1808.
22 Yu 2008, 495.
23 Ibid., 498–9.
24 Ibid., 570–1.
25 The example can be seen in Yan 1864. The first 8 volumes presented 124 seals of Qian Song and the last 2 volumes have 26 seals of Hu Zhen. This edition was reprinted in zinc etching by Shanghai Xiling Seal Carvers' Society in 1908 into 4 volumes with added seals (Shanghai Xiling yinshe 1908).
26 Fang and Fang 1951–3.
27 Dai 2006, 24–9. Many contemporary studies interpret Deng's claim as 'seal carving should derive from the practice of calligraphy', however, this does not make sense in the case of Deng Shiru and Zhao Zhiqian. *Shu* 書 here could also refer to *shufa* 書法 (method of writing, calligraphy) or *liushu* 六書 (six scripts of writing, script system).
28 See the side inscription on the seals '俊卿之印' and '倉碩', 1877, Shanghai Museum; Zou 2022, vol. 4, 1399.
29 Wang Yun 1885, *juan* 2, 11–12; Zhu 2008.
30 Xie 2022.
31 Zheng 2022.
32 Chen 1918 (10 volumes, 201 seals in total); Xu n.d. (a copy was auctioned in Shanghai Boguzhai 上海博古齋, Autumn 2021, Lot 450; http://www.n21ce.com:8080/live/liveresult_detail.aspx?v=0&a=5536&t=450, accessed 26 September 2023; see discussion in Zheng 2022, vol. 1, 109–10).
33 Xie 2002, vol. 2, 255–6.
34 Prefaces by Zhao Zhiqian and Wu Rangzhi, in Wei 1863.
35 Wu 1904.
36 Lin n.d. (an early copy was sold in 2018 Xiling Yinshe Auction, Lot 4771; http://www.xlysauc.net/auction5_det.php?id=151571&ccid=1060&n=4771, accessed 12 September 2023); Fang and Fang 1951–3.
37 Zhao 1889.
38 Shen Shuyong's inscription on the seal '松江沈樹鏞考藏印集', 1863; Zhejiang guji chubanshe 2007, 66.
39 Zhao 1880a; Dai 2015, vol. 1, 116–18.

40 Zhao Zhiqian, 'Letters to Wei Xizeng, No. 19'; Dai 2015, vol. 2, 266.
41 Zhao Zhiqian, 'Letters to Shu Meipu 舒梅圃', 1873; Zou 2003, 216.
42 Zhao Zhiqian, 'Jiasun spent half of the year collecting my seal imprints, hand-copying poems and looking everywhere for my scattered work, to ensure that one day [my name as a seal carver] would not be forgotten or unnoticed. His kindness was profound. Nevertheless, my skill in seal carving, poetry and writing was a gift from Heaven to keep me alive; yet they are not the reasons why I was given a life in this world by my parents. These four characters are a forewarning to me.' (稼孫竭半載心力為我集印稿，抄詩，蒐散棄文字，比於掩骼埋胔，意則厚矣。然令我一生刻印賦詩學文字，固天所以活我，而於我父母生我之意大悖矣。書四字以儆之。), in Zou 2003, 111.
43 Chen Zhenlian 2008, 429–31; Nishikawa 1942.
44 Wu Changshi, 'Letter to Shen Rujin 致沈汝瑾札' (2 leaves), Fukuyama Museum of Calligraphy, *c.* 1911; Zou 2022, vol. 4, 1760–1.
45 Wu Changshi, 'Account Book 記潤筆', 1 page, dated from 10th day of the first month to the 8th day of the third month in 1906, private collection; Zou 2022, vol. 4, 1956, plate 1.
46 Wu Changshi, 'Account Book 記潤筆', 1 page, dated on 21st day of the third month in 1906, private collection; Zou 2022, vol. 4, 1956, plate 3.
47 Wu Changshi, 'Account Book 記潤筆', 3 pages, dated from 10th day of the first month to the 29th day of the fifth month in 1906, private collection; Zou 2022, vol. 4, 1956, plates 1–3.
48 Wu Changshi carved two seals for Tomioka Tessai, '富岡百錬' and '鐵齋外史'; Chen Manshou carved two seals for Tessai, '富岡百錬' and '葦原迂人', *c.* 1880; Zhao Shuru 趙叔孺 carved four seals for Tessai, '魁星閣' (Hall of God of Literature), ' 富岡百錬', '無量壽佛堂' (Dwelling of Longevity) and '曼陀羅窟' (Cave of Mandala). These seals are in the collection of the Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art. Yang 2023a, 197–201.
49 Ye 1921.
50 Fujitsuka and Fujitsuka 1975; Liu 2020, 7.
51 Fujitsuka and Fujitsuka 1975; Liu 2020, 19. Fujitsuka suggested Joseon scholarship was enhanced and impacted by the compilation of *The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries* (四庫全書, 1772–93). But he was wrong about who built the library: it was Emperor Jeongjo, not Emperor Yeongjo, because the date for building the library was the 24th day of seventh month of 1776 (25 September) after the death of Yeongjo (1694–1776). See '25 September 1776', *Jeongjong daewang sillok* 正宗大王實錄 (*Veritable Records of King Jeongjong*) 1805 (https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/朝鮮王朝實錄/正祖實錄/即位年#9月25日, accessed 17 September 2023).
52 '24th February 1777', *Jeongjong daewang sillok* 正宗大王實錄 (*Veritable Records of King Jeongjong*) 1805 (https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/朝鮮王朝實錄/正祖實錄/元年#2月24日, accessed 17 September 2023).
53 Park 2013.
54 Fujitsuka and Fujitsuka 1975; Liu 2020, 35–6.
55 Liu 2020, 36.
56 Kanghun Ahn 2018.
57 Ruan Yuan, 南北書派論 (Treatise on the Northern and Southern Schools of Calligraphy); 揅經室第三集 (The Third Volume of Studio of Studying Classics), 1814, *juan* 1; 揅經室集 (Collected Essays from Studio of Studying Classics), Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016, vol. 2, 591.
58 Yi 2016.
59 The original seal in seal script was diminished and re-carved into '敬天勤民' (Revere Heaven and serve thy people) by the Yongzheng emperor in 1748; see (https://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/seal/233617.html?hl=玉玺, accessed 12 February 2024). The original seal imprint can be found in the hanging scroll *Calligraphy by Kangxi Emperor*, undated; 2009 Autumn Sale, Lot 5168, Poly Auction Company, Beijing. (https://www.polypm.com.cn/assest/detail/0/art61415168/34/1, accessed 12 February 2024).
60 Ruan Yuan, 揅經室集 (Studio of Studying Classics), 1814.
61 Ruan Yuan, 焦山定陶鼎考 (Study on the Dingtao Tripod in Temple Jiaoshan, 1802; 揅經室第二集 (*The Second Volume of Studio of Studying Classics*), *juan* 7, 7–11; 揅經室集 (*Collected Essays from Studio of Studying Classics*), vol. 1, 537–8; Ruan Yuan 1804.
62 For instance, Weng Fanggang's book, *Jiaoshan dingming kao* 焦山鼎銘考 (Investigation on Bronze Inscriptions of Mount Jiao Tripot), 1773; reprinted in 1795, 1862 and 1921). The 1852 edition can be found in Harvard University Yen-Ching Library (https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&file=104215&page=1, accessed 10 September 2023); Fujitsuka and Fujitsuka 2020, 261.
63 Fujitsuka and Fujitsuka 2020, 212, 256, 262, 282, 286 and 356.
64 Fujitsuka and Fujitsuka 2020, 306 and 513.
65 Kim Jeonghee, *The Couplet from Kim Wandang to Zhuwan* 阮堂寄竹畹楹聯, undated. A couplet of two hanging scrolls, ink on paper, size unknown, Gansong Art Museum; Fujitsuka and Fujitsuka 2020, 313.
66 Choi 2017, 774–82.
67 Another example of a seal after the Zhejiang School style can be found in the National Museum of Korea: Anonymous, 'Stone Seal with Inscription', Joseon Dynasty, h. 4.1cm, w. 3.9cm, d. 3.9cm, No. Sinsu 14252 (https://www.museum.go.kr/site/eng/relic/search/view?relicId=8118, accessed 5 January 2023).

3 VERNACULAR PAINTING AND PRINTS

Introduction: vernacular painting and prints

Yu-ping Luk

Pages 88–9: Unknown artist, Women jugglers, acrobats and musicians. 1873, Tianjin, woodblock print with ink and colours, h. 59.3cm, w. 116cm. British Museum, London, 1954,1113,0.1. Donated by Mrs R. E. A. Hughes-Jones

'Vernacular' is a term that typically relates to everyday speech as opposed to more formal written language. It follows then that 'vernacular culture' can refer to cultural forms that are commonplace and accessible to many, as opposed to 'elite' or 'high' culture.[1]

In the field of Chinese art history, calligraphy and painting (*shuhua* 書畫) have traditionally occupied a privileged position in both historical writings and modern scholarship.[2] The ideal qualities of scholar-official or literati painting, such as amateurism, calligraphic brushwork and self-expression, have been emphasised and celebrated.[3] In more recent times, critical reflection on this discourse and its limitations have led to greater scholarly interest in other types of images. Art historian James Cahill used the term 'vernacular painting' to refer to works painted with fine outlines by studio painters that served specific functions.[4] In this section, however, 'vernacular painting and prints' will be more loosely defined to include a wide range of functional and popular images, including ancestral images, New Year prints and reverse glass paintings. Oil paintings can also be included in the definition, since they were part of the new visual and material culture of the Treaty Ports in 19th-century China.

In reality, the boundaries between elite versus vernacular, scholar-amateur versus professional were very blurred by the late Qing dynasty. Artists could draw on the legacy of the literati painting tradition while openly catering to the market and setting prices for their artworks.[5] An artist like Ren Bonian working in Shanghai could socialise in more exclusive artistic and cultural circles, as suggested by his portrait paintings, while also fitting in a vernacular context.[6] His painting repertoire included a variety of popular subject matter painted in a lively and accessible way, and aimed at a general clientele whom he did not personally know.[7] He also painted themes that catered to birthday celebrations and seasonal festivals, such as the demon-queller Zhong Kui 鍾馗, venerated on the day of the Dragon Boat Festival (*duanwu jie* 端午節).

Artists also took advantage of new mass media opportunities to reach a bigger audience and engage with them in new ways. For instance, many artists in Shanghai participated in the pictorial *Dianshizhai huabao* (點石齋畫報), which was published in the late 1800s. Intended for a popular readership, it combined eye-catching illustrations with news reporting that was informative and entertaining. As Roberta Wue discusses in her book on the Shanghai *Art Worlds*, artists like Ren Bonian (1840–1895), Ren Xun 任薰 (1835–1893), Sha Fu 沙馥 (1831–1906), Xugu 虛谷 (1824–1896) and many others contributed painting designs to *Dianshizhai huabao*.[8] These were compiled into inserts that were given away for free with the publication.

In other instances, art forms can become vernacularised. One example of this is reverse glass painting, which was introduced to China from Europe in the 1700s and in turn became an item produced in China for both the domestic and overseas markets. As has been discussed by Lihong Liu and Alina Martimyanova, glass was initially a luxury and exotic product in China.[9] But as the material became increasingly common from the mid-1800s onwards, reverse glass painting workshops started to depict popular stories,

dramas and auspicious motifs, thus transforming a luxury item into an accessible and fashionable commodity.[10] In this way and many others, technological changes and economic growth contributed to greater fluidity in the visual and material culture of urban centres of late 1800s China.

Indeed, there was a great deal that was new about vernacular painting and prints during this period. The introduction of photography and lithography played a key role in creating and spreading new forms of visual images and communication. Older forms of media, however, continued to be important in the experiences of the everyday during the 1800s. For example, woodblock prints, which have a long history in China, continued to be produced in the period following the turmoil of the mid-1800s. In fact, the scale of woodblock print production grew as markets developed among populations in rural areas. In the early 1900s, the Russian sinologist V.M. Aekseev estimated that there were some 6,000 artisans working for the biggest woodblock printmaking workshops in Tianjin 天津 alone, supplying prints to areas across central China.[11] Clearly, there was still significant demand for woodblock prints, which had not been entirely replaced by newer and more efficient forms of image reproduction at this point. But woodblock printmakers also had to adapt to new realities, finding ways to reduce costs or experimenting with new subjects that kept up with current events and changes in society.

The example of woodblock printmaking in Tianjin is a reminder that there were other sites of image production apart from the key cities of Shanghai, Canton and Beijing in the vast country that is China during the 1800s. Provinces across China had workshops that produced New Year prints for cities and smaller villages. These include Zhuxianzhen 朱仙鎮 in Henan 河南, Taohuawu 桃花塢 in Suzhou 蘇州, Yangliuqing 楊柳青 in Tianjin, Weifang 濰坊 in Shandong 山東, and Mianzhu 綿竹 in Sichuan 四川. This shifts our attention to regions that are not usually discussed in the study of the visual and material culture of late Qing China, and brings us closer to the vernacular culture of rural areas beyond the most prosperous urban centres. These sites of production have their own history of development and characteristic styles. Their experiences of the turmoil and changes of the 1800s may have differed too because of their varied geographic locations. Regional differences, transfers and exchanges across media and sites of production within China as well as with the wider world offer considerable room for exploration and further research.

Notes

1 For a classic article on 'vernacular culture', see Lantis 1960.
2 Clunas 1997, 17.
3 Cahill 2010, 5.
4 Cahill 2010, 3.
5 Yang 2023b, 172.
6 For instance, Wan 2005 describes Ren Bonian's works as 'vernacular' (*tongsu* 通俗). For Ren's portrait paintings, see Wue 2014.
7 Wue 2014, 166.
8 Wue 2014, 130–45.
9 Liu 2023; Martimyanova 2023.
10 Ibid.
11 Cited in Lust 1996, 103.

Chapter 8
Pictorial versatility: ancestral images in late imperial China

Wen-chien Cheng

Ancestral images stand out as a unique category of Chinese visual culture because of their specific functionality connected with ancestor worship – a family ritual that has been practised for thousands of years. The worship is of great importance to Chinese culture as it underscores filial piety and family lineages. Although ancestral images were reportedly used in worship as early as the Song dynasty (960–1279), it was not until the late imperial period (Ming and Qing dynasties, 1368–1912) that they spread more widely among different social classes, from the imperial court to commoners.[1] Each household might have a simple altar space for worshipping direct ancestors, and families with joint kinship would worship in shared shrines.[2] It cannot be overstated that every Chinese family or clan in the 1800s possessed ancestral images. Their popular use leads us to speculate that those owned by literati were likely different from those of peasants. As a result of this wide range of patronage, the genre of ancestral images is one of the most diversified visual categories in traditional Chinese culture in terms of its pictorial schemes.

This chapter introduces three kinds of ancestral images used during the 19th century: painted ancestor portraits, painted or printed pedigree scrolls and mass-produced ancestral prints. A variety of pictorial repertoires that these images commonly draw upon will be explored, including portraiture conventions, Western painting techniques, photographic portraits and New Year woodblock prints (*nianhua* 年画). Ancestral images provide a lens through which we see how a vernacular genre manifested its pictorial versatility and adapted to changes in China's visual culture over the course of the 19th century.

Painted ancestor portraits

What was expected and depicted in a painted ancestor portrait derived largely from its specific function.[3] In general, this type of portrait was used as a visual focal point for veneration by descendants in a family ritual on certain dates. Not only did the portrait serve to identify the forebear during worship, but it was also considered a 'seat' for the deceased soul. The ancestor's face is thus the key to identification. Likely for this reason, the sitter is often portrayed front-facing to clearly show all facial features. However, one can find a wide range of facial fidelity depending on portraitists' skills, methods and production circumstances, as well as patrons' expectations. A highly realistic effect could be achieved by combining traditional ink grading with the so-called chiaroscuro painting technique, possibly transmitted from the West through Jesuit missionaries in Nanjing since the 1600s.[4] The goal was to depict the sitter's 'true appearance' (*zhenrong* 真容), which included not only physical features but also personality. In this aspect, ancestor portraits do not deviate from the general Chinese portraiture tradition in which faces were considered the most essential element and 'transmission of the spirit or personality' (*chuanshen* 傳神) was a desirable goal.[5] This was evident in many high-end ancestor portraits. For example, the face of a male Manchu official exhibits remarkable physical details of the sitter's forehead, short and extremely thin eyebrows, slightly draped eyelids and baggy eyes, revealing the stern and uncompromising character of the person (**Fig. 89**). Light

Figure 89 Anonymous, ***Ancestor Portrait of a Male Official***, **Qing dynasty, hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, h. 176cm, w. 95cm. The George Crofts Collection, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 921.1.151**

Figure 90 Anonymous, ***Ancestor Portrait of a Couple***, **Qing dynasty, hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, h. 138.4cm, w. 77.5cm. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Gift of Dr Vivienne Poy, 2018.46.1**

and shading are carefully applied to give volume to his forehead, cheekbones and nose.

The faces of forebears in ancestor portraits, however, do not always look as serious as one might assume. Many examples show approachable, warm-looking ancestors, some even smiling. A couple in a double portrait, for instance, appears incredibly amicable with a hint of a smile on their faces (**Fig. 90**). The welcoming facial expression is related to the increasing desire to use portraits in rituals to evoke the presence of forebears and arouse communication and emotional connection between ancestors and their descendants. Much literature from the 18th and 19th centuries describes how ancestor portraits' visual power could elicit emotional memories of forebears. Zou Shouxuan 鄒守軒, a scholar from the 18th century, wrote:

> There are good reasons for making true-to-life portraits to be left for descendants. In local customs, every year after the ritual house cleaning in the lunar twelfth month *la* 臘, portraits of ancestors are respectfully taken out to hang in the main hall [of the household]. Incense and offerings are set up to worship [them]. This filial act of seeing the images evokes one's memories of loving parents!
>
> 寫真貽後，由來尚矣。虔俗每歲臘辰袱舍後，請祖若父真容出懸堂中，設香供以祀，此孝慈慨聞僾見之思予！[6]

Ancestor portraits were hung above the altar with offerings during family worship and for gatherings on important occasions such as New Year's Eve. Looking at the candlelit images, worshippers recalled the voices and countenances of their forebears. The gazes of ancestors in portraits directly met the worshippers' eyes. In this manner, ancestor portraits were said to engage descendants in the visualisation of their ancestors.

Although the face is essential in identifying a forebear, equally important is their social identity. As in other types of conventional portraiture, this could be represented by clothing styles, body postures, attributes, symbols of

Figure 91 Anonymous, paired *Ancestor Portrait of a Couple*, Qing dynasty, hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, left: h. 100.3cm, w. 59.7cm, right: 100.3cm, w. 59.5cm. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Gift of Dr and Mrs Newcombe, 994.195.1.2, 994.195.1.1

officialdom and settings. Members of a social elite could choose between being depicted in informal attire or in their formal official robes with badges. The man in **Figure 89** wears a formal ceremonial robe (*chaofu* 朝服) covered by a dark blue surcoat (*bufu* 補服), with a court hat. By the 19th century, the Manchu style of dress, which was introduced by the Qing ruling class, was common in representations of Manchu officials. Dramatically different from the simpler-looking Ming dynasty official robe, it nevertheless adopted the Ming court's use of a square badge with similar ranking symbols of animals and birds for military and civil officials, respectively. One can identify the sitter in this portrait as a civil official of the first rank (of nine), which is represented by a crane, embroidered on the badge worn on the front of his *bufu*.[7] Other accessories such as the bead necklace, archer's ring (worn on his right hand) and luxurious chair cover made of tiger pelt all convey his high social status.

Books, scrolls, vases, bronze vessels, incense burners, peacock feathers and so forth were common props symbolising the sitters' erudition and privilege. Painters strove painstakingly to depict all these items realistically with details that were persuasive indicators of social standing and wealth. The double portrait in **Figure 90** gives a strong impression of opulence. The texture of the expensive fur trimming on the borders and each sleeve of the coats worn by the couple are meticulously depicted. An elegant hairstyle and large earrings adorn the woman, whose beautifully decorated pleated skirt is visible at the bottom. The man exposes his long fingernails, a sign of his civil official status even though he is not wearing an official robe with a badge. All these details indicate the couple's privileged social status.

Instead of viewing the pictorial diversity in these portraits as 'standard vs variation', we may interpret differences in terms of preference and affordability as well as distinctive regional styles. The paired portraits of a husband and wife illustrated in **Figure 91** are typical examples of barebone type with no setting (except the chair for sitter), a popular style in many regions. Other patrons might prefer much richer settings, including not only objects and furniture but also architecture and even additional figures (such as children and servants), as long as they could afford the extra cost.

The portraits shown in **Figure 92** not only include elaborate architectural elements, but also reveal a new application of Western techniques brought by Jesuit painters employed in the Qing court. The sitters' faces are lifelike and the surrounding objects appear three-dimensional in a

Figure 92 (left) Anonymous, *Ancestor Portrait of a Nobleman*, Qing dynasty, hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, h. 85cm, w. 66cm. The George Crofts Collection, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 921.1.156; (right) Anonymous, *Ancestor Portrait of a Noble Couple*, Qing dynasty, hanging scroll, ink and colours on silk, h. 113cm, w. 74.5cm. The George Crofts Collection, ROM 921.1.153

trompe l'oeil living space. The sitters are zoomed out in a convincing scene in which the relationship between sitter and architectural setting is well proportioned. But this new style was likely pursued by only a small group of patrons – the Manchu nobility who would have the privilege of direct contact with missionary painters at court.

Portraiture absorbed another new Western technology, photography, during the late 19th century, only a few decades after its introduction to China (in around 1840).[8] Painted ancestor portraits, however, were not replaced by photographic portraits during this period even though Chinese people began to recognise photography's ability to capture realistic facial features. Instead, workshop painters adapted the photographic effect in a new kind of portraiture that combined painting and photography. In fact, portrait painters were among the first to operate photography studios in China. On the one hand, these hybrid portraits render the sitter's pose and costume like those in conventional painted portraiture (**Fig. 91**), but on the other, they embrace a photo-like quality in representing sitters' faces. The most distinctive feature is the application of numerous tiny pixel-like brushstrokes to create a photo-realistic effect, as can be seen in the facial details of three such portraits (**Fig. 93**). Unlike more conventional ancestor portraits, these paintings also include shadows. The combination of photo-like faces with painted elements may suggest that portraitists offered the novelty of 'photo features' to those clients who still preferred painted portraits. Interestingly, some painted portraits include the props found in 19th-century photographic portraits, such as European-looking tables and Western clocks. Presumably, a shared pictorial repertoire between photographic and painted portraits was used by workshops that followed the new trend of portraiture brought by contact with the West.

The painted portraits of Lu Xifu 陸禧甫 and his wife Lady Li 李 (dates unknown) exhibit more direct photographic influences (**Fig. 94**). As a matter of fact, in the inscription, Lu's portrait was called a 'handsome picture' (*yuzhao* 玉照), a term still used today to indicate a photographic portrait. The realistic facial features suggest that the painters may have worked directly from photos while the sitters were alive. This pair of paintings eventually served as ancestor portraits with inscriptions by their offspring added at the top to pay homage to their forebears and summarise their life stories. The inscription on Lu Xifu's portrait mentions him as 'a person of Yue' (*Yue ren* 粵人), in today's Guangdong province. Coastal cities such as Canton (modern-day Guangzhou) in Guangdong indeed were among the first Treaty Ports where photographic portraits were embraced by the Chinese, starting in the 1860s to 1870s. The rendering of the sitters' faces is extremely lifelike with noticeable shading that implies a single light source (**Fig. 93**, centre and right). The folds of their clothes reveal strong shadowy effects as well. Another photographic

Figure 93 Details of faces from: (left) Figure 91, left; (centre) Figure 94, left; (right) Figure 94, right

influence that is evident is the sitters' bust length, a popular feature of portrait photography. The poses and clothes look less formal, and Lu Xifu is rendered in a slightly oblique position, a preferred Western photography style. Although Lady Li is portrayed facing forwards, her arms and hands are not quite symmetrical, which makes her look more relaxed. Although these portraits are rendered in the style of photographs, the painting format preserves the traditional practice of including a section (*shitang* 詩堂; literally, 'poetry hall') above the images for inscriptions. This blending of photographic and painted elements likely catered to patrons' desire for fashionable verisimilitude while still maintaining adherence to the more familiar traditional painting format, accommodating not only the application of vibrant colours but also allowing for the inclusion of inscriptions in a proper manner.

The ancestor portraits discussed so far more or less preserve the lifelike quality of their sitters. However, only noble or affluent families could afford to commission portraits during the sitter's lifetime. Families of commoners and low-ranking officials more often commissioned their ancestor portraits in one of three categories, as noted by a late Qing professional portrait painter and woodblock print designer, Gao Tongxuan 高桐軒 (1835–1906), in his *Scatter Records of Excess Ink* (*Moyu suolu* 墨餘瑣錄): 'depicting the shadow' (*huiying* 繪影), 'lifting the shroud' (*jiebo* 揭帛) and 'recapturing the appearance' (*zhuirong* 追容).[9] Each indicates the approach portraitists used under different circumstances, reflecting the pictorial adaptability of the genre. *Huiying* refers to capturing an image of a dying person; *jiebo* refers to sketching the dead by looking at their bare faces before burial. In both cases, painters must sketch the face speedily and overcome the challenge of visualising a person beyond his or her sickened body or closed eyes. In addition to rendering the face based on what they have directly observed, painters would also rely on certain formulae for facial representations, transmitted through teachers and treatises on portraiture. *Zhuirong* refers to making portraits of long-gone forebears, the most challenging approach. In some cases, patrons requiring this type of portrait were newly rising members of society whose ancestors lacked social standing and left no images behind. In others, previously made portraits of ancestors were destroyed or lost. Instead of sketching the actual sitter, rendering the portrait relied on a type of drafting manual commonly called *Zhuirong xiangpu* 追容像譜, a collection of sketches of people's faces. Men's and women's faces were usually collected in separate volumes. Painters are thought to have assembled and transmitted such sketches over time from the face drafts made for previously commissioned ancestor portraits.[10] Created in a less than ideal situation, a portrait could still be made to its patron's satisfaction by combining their description of the ancestor with their choice of a 'model' face from the manual. Nevertheless, this method might result in less distinctive faces in some portraits.

Posthumous ancestor portraits were commonly commissioned by middle-income families. In the late Qing period, it was customary to display the large, life-size portrait, sheltered in a portable pavilion (*yingting* 影亭), for public viewing during the funeral procession.[11] If a family rushed to order a portrait when a person was critically ill or dying, the portrait workshop needed to produce results quickly. Workshops handled such a situation by means of a 'pre-manufactured' form of production. Several surviving examples of ancestor portraits show the sitters' faces painted on a separate piece of paper and then pasted onto the bodies painted on the silk ground of the work.[12] This phenomenon may suggest that workshops specialising in ancestor portraits kept a supply of semi-finished paintings of costumed bodies and settings. These could then be offered to clients to make a selection. When an order for a portrait of a dying person came, a sketch of the face would be made (on paper), probably in the manner of *huiying* or *jiebo*. Once the final face was added to a chosen body, the work was finished. This process would no doubt speed up the orders and help to meet market demand.

Painted or printed pedigree scrolls

Painted or printed ancestral scrolls focusing on pedigree rather than individual forebears were another type of ancestral image commonly used in the late imperial period. Frequently called *jiatang hua* 家堂畫 (literally, 'picture of family hall'), they served as both a pedigree chart, recording

Figure 94 Anonymous, paired *Ancestor Portrait of Lu Xifu and His Wife Lady Li* (*Lu Xifu ji furen xiang* 陸禧甫及夫人李氏像), late 19th century, hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, left: h. 104.8cm, w. 54.7cm, right: h. 116cm, w. 55cm. Gift of Mr Harp Ming Luk, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 976.46.2, 976.46.1

family or clan lineage, and a visual focus of ancestor worship. The importance of lineage solidarity in the Qing dynasty must have contributed to their popularity.[13] No matter how simple or complex the design, *jiatang hua* always depict a family's shrine-like space with images of ancestral tablets or a 'tablet-like' grid, in which the names of multigenerational ancestors would be inscribed.[14]

Both painted and printed pedigree scrolls were available, with painted versions more individualised and thus pricier. Families under the same kinship could commission a scroll and pass it down from generation to generation, as in the case of the example illustrated in **Figure 95**, which combines a multigenerational ancestor portrait with rows of spirit tablets (*paiwei* 牌位); an 1845 inscription on the back of the painting reports that it is a remake of a 1682 scroll that was badly worn out. The multigenerational ancestor portrait (*daitu* 代圖) is convenient for the worshipping of different generations of ancestors as they are all represented in one scroll. When the purpose of the scroll is for the worship of lineage instead of individuals, the distinctive face of each ancestor becomes less important. This is what we find in the large ancestral scroll under discussion (**Fig. 95**). The earlier ancestors are depicted as the largest and placed highest in the painting, and the size of the figures reduces dramatically for the next two generations. At the top, an altar space is depicted that includes the essential elements for worship (incense burner, wine vessels, candles and flower vases), with a spirit tablet representing the founding ancestor. Rolled-up curtains above the altar space suggest the setting of a family shrine. Names of ancestors would be inscribed on the spirit tablet images below when they passed away. This scroll is of massive dimensions, with a height of 260cm and a width of 184cm. One can imagine the large space – likely within a shrine – that would be required to hang it on the occasion of many families from the same clan gathering to worship their ancestors.

Printed versions were more affordable because they were mass-produced. They were individualised after purchase when ancestors' names were inscribed on the spirit tablets

Figure 95 Anonymous, *Ancestral Scroll*, 19th century (inscription on the back dated 1845), hanging scroll, ink and colours on cloth, h. 260cm, w. 184cm. Far Eastern Department Acquisition Fund, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 2018.48.2

Figure 96 Anonymous, *Ancestral Pedigree Scroll*, modern reprint from an old block of the Qing dynasty, woodblock print, ink and colours on paper, h. 180cm, w. 120cm. Private collection, Shandong, China

for worshipping. There was a wide variety of designs available and many distinctive regional styles, but they tend to follow a consistent layout. The shrine-like architectural elements include a front gate in the lower part of the image, some courtyard space in the middle, and an inner or main worshipping hall above it, topped with eaves, curtains or roofs. Walls, side-wings, towers and so forth might be added, depending on how elaborate the design is. This layout is always perfectly symmetrical, lined up along a north–south central axis, reflecting how an actual ancestral shrine would be structured. The focal point of this shrine on paper is a central altar area where offerings (incense and candles, sometimes dishes, wine, vases of flowers, etc.) are depicted in front of the main tablet. In certain regions, general figures of a male and a female elder may be included to symbolically represent the founding ancestors. **Figure 96** shows an example of a modern reprint from a Qing dynasty woodblock that has the typical layout and includes all of the basic elements described above.

Although essentially a religious object, some of the content and appearance of *jiatang hua* is reminiscent of secular representation found in vernacular visual culture. Printed versions were made in workshops that also produced popular New Year prints. Before they were used in worship, they were products sold in the New Year market along with other prints. This may sound unusual for a ritual subject – yet the vernacular design of *jiatang hua* is the most fascinating aspect of this type of ancestral image, since they catered for the popular taste of common folk. **Figure 96** is a very pleasant-looking printed *jiatang* scroll that not only

Figure 97 (left) Wenyizhai 文儀齋 workshop, Xiaojiaochang, Shanghai, *God of Fortune*, 19th to mid-20th century, woodblock print, ink and colours on paper, h. 54.5cm, w. 31.2cm. Gift of Mr and Mrs George Hood, Royal Ontario Museum, 995.160.15.1;
(centre) detail from the lower right section of Figure 96;
(right) Wenyizhai 文儀齋 workshop, Xiaojiaochang, Shanghai, *God of Prosperity*, 19th to mid-20th century, woodblock print, ink and colours on paper, h. 54.5cm, w. 31.2cm. Gift of Mr and Mrs George Hood, Royal Ontario Museum, 995.160.15.2

represents the essential elements for the purpose of worship but also includes other 'add-ons' expressing ideas not confined within its ritual function as an object. These added visual elements take up over half the space, making the already colourful print look even busier. Outside the large, ornate gate and walls on the left, we see an idealised family of four generations: a grandfather, a father with his adult son – both wearing official robes to suggest their well-respected social status – and a boy. Attended by a few servants who carry food baskets and lanterns, the family is represented as bringing offerings to pay homage to their ancestors. The presence of this 'model family', four generations under one roof, ensures the idea of continuous offering to the ancestors. On the right, another ensemble is shown wearing more elaborate clothing and headgear. They are not people but popular gods who commoners believed capable of bringing fortune, prosperity, longevity and happiness. These images and motifs also appear in Chinese New Year prints: one can easily identify the tall figure on the far left as the God of Fortune (*Fuxing* 福星) and the one on the far right as the God of Prosperity (*Luxing* 祿星) (**Fig. 97**). More children are depicted setting up firecrackers in a courtyard inside the gate, suggesting a New Year scene. Like other popular prints, plants and animals such as pine trees, plum branches and paired cranes and deer are included as auspicious symbols. The pairing of deer and cranes was most frequently seen in *jiatang* scrolls, likely expressing the ideas of prosperity and longevity. Objects typically not belonging to an ancestral hall are also represented here, including a zither, chessboard, books and painting (*qin, qi, shu, hua* 琴棋書畫), which are considered the four key cultivations of literati.

The content of *jiatang* scrolls no doubt reinforced many ideas centred on and extended from ancestor worship: the continuity of the family line, prosperity, the act of expression of filial piety, idealised social status and blessings from ancestors and deities. The shared pictorial repertoire with popular New Year prints allows a pedigree scroll to be seen 'often [as] a beautiful work of art', in addition to being a ritual object, as a field researcher in the Shandong region commented in 1910.[15] In hanging such a scroll as a centerpiece above the altar in a humble rural home in the New Year, its users expected that the abundant imagery would inspire harmony among families, evoke blessings and be pleasant to view.

Mass-produced 'Ancestors of Three Generations' prints

The last kind of ancestral image was also produced in popular woodblock printings. Unlike pedigree scrolls, these prints have no place for inscribing ancestors' names. Instead, a line of 'ancestors of three generations' (*sandai zongqin* 三代宗親) is printed in a central image of a spirit tablet, set in a shrine-like space. Typically, a couple dressed in formal attire is depicted at the top or centre, framing the spirit tablet to symbolise ancestors. The example illustrated in **Figure 98** (left) includes a reference to an ancestral hall as the framework by depicting a roof, panels of doors and curtains in a relatively simple manner compared to the more elaborate *jiatang* scroll discussed above. The lower part of the print can be viewed as an add-on. It represents a scene announcing the official status of a civil examinee, suggested by an imperial decree written in a scroll held by an officer in the left corner. On the opposite side, we find a popular motif of New Year prints: the God of Prosperity is unrolling a scroll on which 'heavenly official bestowing happiness' is written. Such add-on elements enhance the auspicious expression of prints to appeal to their customers – the common folk in this case. In fact, ancestral prints were mass-produced in a format no different from popular New Year decorative prints and paper gods (images of deities), and they were available for purchase in the New Year market as well. These prints conveniently share similar pictorial schemes with popular New Year prints, which is clear from an example featuring a stove god with his wife, illustrated in **Figure 98** (right). The colours in New Year prints are

Figure 98 (left) Anonymous, *Ancestors of Three Generations*, 19th to mid-20th century, woodblock print, ink and colours on paper, h. 36.2cm, w. 22.9cm. Brooklyn Museum Collection, New York, X863.7; (right) Anonymous, Beijing, *Stove God and His Wife*, 1909, calendar woodblock print, ink and colours on paper, h. 35. 3cm, w. 25.1cm. The Collection of Gerd and Lottie Wallenstein, Museum für Asiatische Kunst Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1984-182

simple and bright and the designers wasted no space, packing the scenes with rich graphics. These compositions are strongly viewer centred. Characters are usually in three-quarter profile or in a front-facing position and are placed as if on a stage. The images are straightforward, and the messages are clear.

Although mass-produced prints were the cheapest ancestral images of those discussed in this chapter, a variety of designs packed with rich imagery were available for customers to choose from. They allowed relatively poor families in rural areas to have an image representing their family's ancestors for worship. Unlike pedigree prints, which would be mounted as hanging scrolls for worship and stored away for safekeeping, ancestral prints were simply pasted onto walls, with a simple altar table set up in front of the image. Some were burned as part of a ritual after the ceremony.

Conclusion

Although ancestral images were widely used in late imperial China, there was no orthodoxy to inform how they should look. Ancestral imagery was shaped by pictorial conventions established over time based on ritual functions and the users' preferences and social expectations. Among all the image types, painted ancestor portraits were the most individualised. A true likeness of the forebear was desirable, but various circumstances under which the portraits were commissioned largely determined their qualities. Although portraitists and workshops followed portraiture conventions to a certain extent, they embraced innovations and adaptations to sustain continuous business. *Jiatang* scrolls and ancestral prints met the demand from the larger market of commoners. Their vernacular features were unprecedented in ancestral representations, and they have a 'hybrid' quality as both a ritual object used in worship and an item that brings blessing and auspiciousness, serving both sacred and secular functions, particularly in the New Year. Both were mass produced, but while the ancestral prints bore no specific relationship to the actual ancestors of an individual or family, *jiatang* scrolls could be individualised after purchase. Anyone could purchase an 'Ancestors of Three Generations' print to be used in ancestor worship.

The variety of ancestral images testifies not only to the market demand from a wide spectrum of social classes as well as differences in expected functionality, but also to the dynamics of visual culture that workshop artists constantly faced and to which they adapted. Whereas a family with status might use intricate, individualised portraits for worship, a simple colourful ancestral print could receive no less respect for its generic representation of the ancestors of a family of villagers.

Notes

1 For a more detailed discussion of the development of ancestral images from the Song to Ming-Qing period, see Cheng 2017, 24–6.
2 Ebrey 2004.
3 For an informative discussion of ancestor portraits, see Stuart and Rawski 2001.
4 Yu 2017.
5 For a general discussion of traditional Chinese portraiture, see Ching 2016.
6 Zou Shouxuan, 'Zhenrong xia yin' 真容小引 (Preface to the true portrait of ancestor), cited in Liu 2006, 188–9.
7 Jackson and Hugus 1999.
8 Bennett 2013.
9 Gao's manuscript did not survive but is partially transcribed by Wang Shucun 王樹村. See Wang 1963, 48–51.
10 For a study of the practice of *Zhuirong xiangpu*, see Ruitenbeek 2017.
11 Wang 1963, 48.
12 There are a few such cases in the Royal Ontario Museum's collection. Interestingly, they are all female portraits.
13 Cohen 1990.
14 For a more thorough study of pedigree scrolls, see Cheng 2019, 25–34.
15 This account is by Sir Reginald Fleming Johnston in his field survey of family rituals in Weihaiwei, Shandong. See Johnston 1910, 279.

Chapter 9
Transmedial connections as artistic choices in vernacular art in China

Alina Martimyanova

Transmedial exchanges and the aesthetic links they produce are not exceptional in the art world, but in each new context they function under specific rules of consumption and reception. This chapter explores transmedial exchanges resulting from the mobility of artists and images in China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The case studies examined help to situate the likenesses and repetitions in Chinese vernacular art that are often labelled as 'borrowing' into a larger paradigm of artistic choices and practices.

What do we understand when we use such words as 'transmedial' and 'intermedial' to describe artistic production? According to the definitions of Irina Rajewsky, who proposed her theory on intermediality in 2002, the term 'intermedial' encompasses all phenomena that cross the borders between media, while the term 'transmedial' describes an appearance of a certain motif, aesthetic or discourse across different media.[1] She also introduced three subcategories of intermedial phenomena, of which 'intermedial references' are of particular interest in the context of this chapter. An intermedial reference is defined as a reference produced by work in a specific medium (such as a printed image, glass painting, painting with ink on paper or silk) to a single individual work produced in another medium (referred to as an *Einzelreferenz*) or to a whole system of a completely different medium (referred to as a *Systemreferenz*). It evokes and imitates the specific elements and structures of the referenced medium, while also alluding to a specific code of reception and consumption.[2] These intermedial references might refer to the artist's own work produced in a different medium or to works produced by other artists, whose names in many cases are unknown. In order to gain a deeper understanding of intermedial references, it is essential to move beyond the notion of imitation or emulation and consider the possibility of conscious agency on the part of artists within the context of specific historically set factors.[3]

Artistic mobility

In his book about vernacular painting in Qing China, the art historian James Cahill discussed the mobility pathways of urban artists, who moved between cities and the court and the Imperial Academy in Beijing. He maintains that 'they did not, as conventional accounts have assumed, simply learn their art from their engagements with the Academy and take what they learned back to the cities; in large part they constituted the Academy and brought to it their highly developed skills and urban repertoires'.[4] According to Cahill, the recommendations of fellow townsmen who held official positions or a direct invitation by the emperor (when the opportunity presented itself during imperial tours, for example) were the driving forces in this kind of artistic mobility. Some artists remained in Beijing for the rest of their lives, while others returned to their hometowns or moved to new cities to open their own workshops after either completing the projects they were invited for or failing to succeed at the Academy.[5]

This was a frequent pattern for artists working in different media. Records tell us, for example, that some artists specialising in reverse glass painting, from the best workshops in Canton, were regularly sent on assignments to the court in Beijing.[6] Print artists from urban workshops who made a

Figure 99 Yungu 筠谷 (artist), Zhang Xingju 張星聚 (printer), ***One Hundred Children*** (***Baizi tu*** 百子圖), 1743, woodblock print mounted as a hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, h. 98.2cm, w. 53.5cm. British Museum, London, Brooke Sewell Permanent Fund, 1991,1031,0.1

good name for themselves were also invited to work in the Forbidden City and later returned to their home cities.[7] We also know that artistic mobility happened not only within one medium but also across media. For example, we know of 18th-century Suzhou prints with signatures or seals indicating the artist's former employment as a painter at the court (**Fig. 99**).

The study of artistic mobility in China is complicated in many cases. While the biographies of known literati artists are well documented through public records, gazetteers, memoirs and colophons, vernacular art often remains anonymous, lacking textual references or else poorly documented by sparse mentions that are dispersed in different sources.

Case study one: Qian Hui'an

The artist Qian Hui'an 錢慧安 (1833–1911) provides a relatively well-documented example for the study of transmedial artistic mobility in late 19th-century China. From *Shanghai's Forest of Ink* (*Haishang molin* 海上墨林) – a standard biographical compendium for artists residing in Shanghai in the late 19th and early 20th century – we learn that Qian was professionally successful, respected and praised by his contemporaries:

> Qian Hui'an… a native of Baoshan…. From his youth [he] pursued the art of painting and excelled in meticulous style, specialising in figure painting and paintings of beautiful women. Occasionally he painted flowers, plants and landscapes, in every subject he was original without falling behind the set standards of the previous generations.... In the *jiyou* year of the Xuantong era [1909], the Yuyuan Painting and Calligraphy Association was established, and he was recommended by all members as a chairman….[8]

We have records of several painters getting involved in the designs of popular prints after the Taiping Civil War, when print workshops were desperate to reinvigorate the industry. Qian spent several years residing in Yangliuqing 楊柳青, near Tianjin, and creating designs for New Year prints (*nianhua* 年畫). This fact was commented upon in several contemporary sources, such as late Qing author Cai Shenwu's 蔡省吾 (1856–1933) *Records from the Northern Capital* (*Beijing suishi ji* 北京歲時記):

> In the mid-Guangxu era, Qian Hui'an arrived [in Yangliuqing] and helped to produce new ideas, frequently resorting to old sayings or poetic lines of the past. In colour, he changed to subdued hues, thus achieving the quality of being lofty, ancient, handsome and free. Unfortunately, nothing like these remains today. …One can only see the sort of works that are vulgar and despicable nowadays.[9]

Some of the designs produced by the workshops in Yangliuqing after the drawings of Qian Hui'an have survived, both as original Guangxu era (1875–1908) prints and as reprints from the original blocks. In these extant works, we observe the characteristic meticulous style of the artist that, unfortunately, turned out to be too refined and complex to produce given the declining standards of craftsmanship in the workshops. Many of the designs he produced eventually had to be dropped out of the print run because of this. One of the best-known *nianhua* images Qian created, reproduced even today, is *Making Inquiries About the Peach Blossom Valley* (*Taoyuan wenjin tu* 桃園問津圖) (**Fig. 100**). The original print in the collection of the Tianjin Museum retains the fluidity of lines and a painterly quality in the application of colours that far exceeds the regular output of the Yangliuqing workshops and is instantly recognisable as 'typical Qian Hui'an'. Another extant print from Yangliuqing is *Zhong Kui Marries Off his Younger Sister* (*Zhong Kui jia mei* 鐘馗嫁妹), in which the artist reworks a story popular in urban and folk art. Qian Hui'an produced representations of Zhong Kui on several occasions as hanging scrolls and there exists another very similar version of the same narrative in a folding fan format.

Qian Hui'an was an extremely prolific artist, and the genre of New Year prints was not the only example of his engagement with the medium of print. A great many of his works appear in lithographically printed books, commonly known as *huapu* 畫譜. The tradition of *huapu*, that is books in which the central role is given to images rather than text, dates to the Song dynasty. The images in these publications are related to the art of painting, thus differentiating them

Figure 100 Qian Hui'an 錢慧安, *Making Inquiries About the Peach Blossom Valley* (*Taoyuan wenjin tu* 桃園問津圖), Guangxu era (1875–1908), woodblock print, ink and colours on paper, h. 62.5cm, w. 110cm. Tianjin Museum

from pictorial encyclopaedias on different subjects, from flora and fauna to various trades and crafts. English-language sources frequently translate the term as 'painting manual', implying a specific function as an aid to studying painting techniques by copying the masters as well as a specific mode of consumption by those who are learning to paint. The word actually encompasses a broader multivalent phenomenon, with a range of formats and uses in different periods and contexts. In the available primary and secondary sources, we find various types of publications covered by this umbrella term: catalogues, manuals, collection books, art treatises and hybrid forms of these.[10] This ambiguity has resulted in a trend towards adopting *huapu* as a more general Chinese term, without translating it into English.[11] Shanghai artists, including Qian Hui'an, participated in a number of such publications in the late 19th century. These *huapu* were either creations of individual artists or collaborative image collections by groups of artists. Sometimes, such books were also compiled by publishing houses, who commissioned or purchased images from multiple artists to include in them, so they were not strictly speaking collaborative. Qian Hui'an is credited with publishing two books: *Qingxi's Manual of Painting* (*Qingxi huapu* 清溪畫譜) and *Qian Jisheng's Manual of Figure Painting* (*Qian Jisheng renwu huapu* 錢吉生人物畫譜). While the former does not seem to be extant, the latter showcases the subject matter Qian Hui'an was famous for: scenes with beautiful women as well as historical and mythological characters.

Examination of these printed works shows that in many instances we can find almost identical image counterparts in print and painting in the *oeuvre* of the artist or at the very least images clearly dealing with the same subject matter, with various degrees of differences in the composition, angle and amount of detail, but still recognisable as related images. The printed images are always monochrome and have the quality of a draft or a sketch done before an actual painting is produced. We may speculate that printed collections like these would include sketches and out-takes that did not end up as finished paintings, but also that they could include images specifically made for print. A painting on a folding fan from the Guangzhou Museum of Art (**Fig. 101**) can boast a direct counterpart in print from *Qian Jisheng's Manual of Figure Painting* (**Fig. 102**). The figure of a young girl playing the flute is realised almost identically, except that in the painted version the composition has been expanded to include a window with a blossoming tree in front of the budding musician.

One of a dozen images by Qian Hui'an which the Dianshizhai Studio published in its *Collected Images from Dianshizhai* (*Dianshizahi conghua* 點石齋叢畫) from 1886 depicts a woman sitting on a chair (**Fig. 103**). She is motionless, a *qin* resting idly on her lap. Her back is slouched, her gaze directed somewhere in the distance. The image is entitled *Stopping the Qin and Waiting for the Moon* (*Tingqin daiyue* 停琴待月). It seems to have a 'painting – draft' relationship to an undated album leaf also painted by Qian Hui'an, that refers to the famous line from a poem by the Tang poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), *Song of the Pipa Player* (*Pipa xing* 琵琶行).[12] Even though the inscriptions point to two opposite actions (stopping the music and playing the music), the hair of the girl, her dress, her slightly bent posture and the tilt of her head all suggest a strong connection. In a similar manner, a page from *A New Painting Manual Selection* (*Huapu caixin* 畫譜采新) published in 1885 (**Fig. 104**), relates to another painting by Qian Hui'an in a folding fan format.[13] The centre of the composition is a scene around a window with a woman, a child, a cat and a few interior elements, and a tree in the window frame all

Figure 101 Qian Hui'an 錢慧安, *A Beauty Playing the Flute* (*Shinü chuidi tu* 仕女吹笛圖), 1875, ink and colours on paper. Guangzhou Museum of Art

Figure 102 Qian Hui'an 錢慧安, *Playing the Flute and Awaiting the Noble Gentleman* (*Chuidi dai jun lai* 吹笛待君來). From *Qian Jisheng's Manual of Figure Painting* (*Qian Jisheng renwu huapu* 錢吉生人物畫譜), p. 22. Nanjing Library

Figure 104 Qian Hui'an 錢慧安, *There was no Shortage of Food in the Kitchen Yesterday* (*Zuori chuzhong fa duangong* (昨日廚中乏短供), lithograph. From *A New Painting Manual Selection* (*Huapu caixin* 畫譜采新), Shanghai, 1885–6, h. 20cm, w. 25cm. SOAS library, Archives and Special Collections, London, c.FFH.625/397290

Figure 103 Qian Hui'an 錢慧安, *Stopping the Qin and Waiting for the Moon* (*Tingqin daiyue* 停琴待月), lithograph. From *Collected Images from Dianshizhai* (*Dianshizhai conghua* 點石齋叢畫), Shanghai, 1885, fascicle 5, p.14b. h. 12.5cm, w. 8.5cm. SOAS library, China section, London, EF.c.FFH.310/64262

Figure 105 Gao Tongxuan 高桐軒, *Celebrating the Lantern Festival* (*Qingshang Yuanxiao* (*Qingshang yuanxiao* 慶賞元宵), Guangxu era (1875–1908), woodblock print, ink and colours on paper, h. 62.5cm, w. 109.5cm. Tianjin Museum

collected into a single compositional group. The rest of the room is barely indicated by a faint line separating the wall from the floor. The fan painting is slightly different, as if the author has been playing with a few compositional variations to find the best moment to capture.

Not every painting or printed image by Qian Hui'an will have a related image in other media and the task of tracing such connections among a very rich *oeuvre* is not realistic. However, the transmedial patterns we have observed show us the artist as an experimenter, who is reaching out into a new medium with the means he knows well and transforming his already available imagery to give it new meaning and a fresh context.

Case study two: Gao Tongxuan

Gao Tongxuan's 高桐軒 (1835–1906) life exemplifies a different kind of artistic mobility in late Qing China. Born in Yangliuqing, he started his painting apprenticeship in an urban workshop at the age of 13. He had to take up his family business and do farm work but continued to produce paintings for local villagers on demand and eventually returned to painting as his major source of livelihood in 1864. In 1866, at the age of 32, he was drafted as a junior artist to work at the Hall of Self-Fulfilment (*Ruyi guan* 如意館) in the Imperial Palace. We don't know how many years Gao spent at the court, but we know that later he returned to Yangliuqing to continue working at local print workshops as a designer, now with the good reputation of an artist recognised by the court. In 1894, he established his own studio dedicated to producing New Year imagery inspired by his professional experience.[14]

The *nianhua* works that Gao Tongxuan produced in the years after his return to Yangliuqing show the skills and techniques he learned at the Palace workshops.[15] For example, many of the prints include supporting backgrounds with architectural elements drawn in a method described as 'filling the background with elements of architectural drawing' (*Jiehua bujing* 界畫補京). The use of texture strokes to shape the mountains, trees and rocks in the background and an emphasis on the lines in the depictions of characters is another feature of Gao's *nianhua* prints that originates in his exposure to court and literati-style painting at the Palace. One of his works in the Tianjin Museum exemplifies the incorporation of these features into a vernacular print produced for a festive occasion (**Fig. 105**). He also signed his *nianhua* designs and added lengthy inscriptions, which is not common for Yangliuqing New Year prints as they typically only indicated the name of the workshop. These and other new trends, such as the treatment of clothes, faces, furniture and so on, introduced by Qian Hui'an and Gao Tongxuan, were eventually incorporated into the standard Yangliuqing *nianhua* repertoire.

It is also assumed that during his stay at the Palace, Gao Tongxuan was assigned, together with other court artists, to work on the series of 18 wall paintings at the Palace of Eternal Spring (*Changchun gong* 長春宮)[16] featuring episodes from the popular novel *Dream of The Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng* 紅樓夢).[17] In her dissertation, German art historian Nicoletta Bauer discusses at length the difficulties of dating and authorship of these images but proposes some hints towards possible artists involved in the project through attentive visual analysis of separate images. One of the paintings she investigates has been identified as a composition illustrating chapter 38/1 from the novel, known as 'Four Beauties Fishing'. Among the extant prints created

Figure 106 Wu Baozhen 吳葆楨 (or his workshop), *Zhou Dunyi and Lotus Flowers*, Republican period, reverse glass painting, Shandong province, h. 46.9cm, w. 67cm. Mei Lin collection, Burghausen, Germany, A092

by Gao Tongxuan after his return to his hometown, there are two works illustrating the same episode that directly reference this wall painting. One of the prints, produced with ink and colour on paper and finished off with fine hand painting, shows unmistakable stylistic connections with the image in question. The distribution of characters in the composition of the print seems to have been replicated from another point of view, 'as if it has been turned 90 degrees to the right'.[18] There is also similarity in the types of buildings depicted in both images. The second undated print created by Gao Tongxuan in monochrome exhibits a different set of references through the positioning of architectural elements in the background.[19]

Case study three: Wu Baozhen

The personality of Wu Baozhen 吳葆楨 (Xi Tang 錫堂 or Xi Youren 西由人, *c.* 1872–*c.* 1940 or soon after) is a perfect example of the artist's mobility both geographically and transmedially. Wu held an official position as a court painter for many decades at the Hall of Self-Fulfilment in the Imperial Palace at the end of Guangxu era and, as the records tell us, excelled in figure and bird-and-flower painting.[20] Later he moved to Laizhou 莱州 in Shandong province and opened a shop selling mirrors and reverse glass paintings on mirrors produced by himself or his apprentices. The shop was active between 1910 and 1935.

To date, between 30 and 50 paintings signed by Wu Baozhen are known and more unsigned works exist exhibiting his or his students' style.[21] A German collector, Rupprecht Mayer, whose sizeable collection of late Qing and early Republican reverse glass paintings allows him to make some generalisations in this regard, goes as far as to suggest an umbrella term 'Laizhou style', primarily related to this artist, which can be characterised by a minimalistic background reminiscent of a Peking opera stage, golden outlines, richly decorated clothing and attention to detail.[22] However, the minimalistic background is much more than a reference to the operatic setting. The works by Wu and his apprentices focus on the painstaking execution of the main characters in the centre of the image surface and leave the rest of the mirrored space for the viewer to take in. The result of this visual game is an illusionary space with the viewer's own reflection as an active participant.[23] The golden and silver outlines also deserve our special attention, as together with a preference for bright clear colours, voluminosity and meticulous details they speak for Wu Baozhen's contact with, and absorption of, the court painting style and foreign painting techniques that he was exposed to in the Palace.

Some of the subjects that Wu Baozhen picked for his reverse glass painting extend beyond the popular vernacular narratives and immortals that dominate the genre and show his exposure to a more refined range of subjects. For instance, two examples attributed to Wu depict Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073), a Song dynasty Neo-Confucian scholar. Zhou Dunyi admiring lotus flowers is a known literati subject that can be seen in the paintings of earlier masters, on Jingdezhen blue-and-white porcelain, in the wall decorations of the Summer Palace and in the works of 19th-century masters of the Shanghai school, such as Shu Hao 舒浩 (1841–1901) and Ren Xun 任薰 (*c.* 1835–1893). In these glass paintings, Wu Baozhen strips the scene to the most essential elements: the scholar himself and his servant with a giant lotus pot; he keeps the rest of the pictorial space as a mirrored surface for the spectator's reflection and immersion into the scene (**Fig. 106**).

The transmedial connections we can observe in this artist's works are more subtle and are not represented by corresponding visual references in other media. They are products of the author's negotiation and processing of his artistic skills in painting acquired at the Imperial Palace workshops, his reinterpretation of the vernacular imagery he grew up with (as vernacular prints or paintings) and the emulation of the operatic set up enriched with the effect of immersion that glass painting enables so well.

Figure 107 Anonymous, ***Phoenixes Between Peonies*** **(one of a pair), 1890–1935, reverse glass painting, h. 21.8cm, w. 15.5cm. Mei Lin collection, Burghausen, Germany, D270.**

Figure 108 Anonymous, ***Auspicious Phoenix***, ***c.*** **1926, woodblock print, ink and colours on paper, h. 110cm, w. 62.5cm. Museum Rietberg, Zurich, Gift of Hilde Flory-Fischer, 2020.510**

Many glass artists from the late Qing and early Republican period worked originally with ink and pigments on paper or silk, or worked in parallel in both media. For example, Xu Bishan 許璧山 (Tingqi 廷琦, 1850–1912 or 1860–1922) is described as a well-known folk painter who once had the honour of making a portrait of Empress Dowager Cixi, and was particularly good at glass painting.[24] More research needs to be conducted about such artists to discover potential patterns of transmedial connections.

Image transmission and *huagao*

The parallels that can be observed between Chinese reverse glass paintings and Chinese popular prints are sometimes so close in terms of composition and handling of the main characters, it is as if they shared the same drafts.[25] This may, indeed, have been true, at least to some extent, if we consider the ways in which folk imagery was transmitted both within the trade and among consumers.

Image production by Chinese folk artists extensively relied on so-called sketches or *huagao* 畫稿, which often came bundled in a form of make-shift collection or *huaben* 畫本.[26] In printmaking, *huagao* – rough sketches outlining the composition and important details of the image – were used to help create a final design for subsequent carving and printing. A similar process was taking place in other genres of vernacular art. Pictorial samples (*huayang* 畫樣) were likewise used for simplifying the process of image creation as they contained different types of pictorial elements that could be included within larger designs ('types of foreign barbarians', 'types of bamboo', 'types of supernatural beings', etc.). We may assume that a wider circulation of these pictorial sketches happened at the points of connection between different media (for example, when artists changed 'industry' or the medium they worked in, as exemplified in the case studies of transmedial mobility discussed above). Similar looking pictorial elements recur in images on paper, glass and porcelain from different periods since artists would reuse these effective and recognisable pictorial elements established through generations of use not only for the sake of convenience, but also in order to follow conventional ways of depicting specific characters.

If we take a sample group of vernacular reverse glass paintings and a sample group of *nianhua* prints, we see a common pool of subject matter that already points to a shared customer base and their preferences. Very often the similarities between them go beyond sharing a preference for specific themes such as operatic narratives, popular legends, folk deities and images of mothers with infant sons

symbolising abundant male offspring. While direct copies of a certain design were not common even within the same workshop, there are many recurring and recognisable pictorial elements, either in the way certain characters are depicted or in the way the overall composition of the image is constructed.

This phenomenon is exemplified by a pair of images that depict phoenixes between tree peonies, often given as auspicious wedding gifts (**Figs 107–8**). While the colour scheme is completely different, the images correlate in a number of pictorial elements: the way the phoenix is depicted, the bird's position among the flower bushes on the rocks and so on. Another example, ubiquitous in rural households, is a popular pictorial scheme of the celestials riding a *qilin* 麒麟 and bringing male offspring to the family. Sometimes this motif is simplified and we see just young boys riding the *qilin*. The style of execution may vary depending on the region, but the general scheme with fixed roles for the depicted characters, their postures, attributes and overall composition always remains consistent. This subject matter in Chinese vernacular glass paintings shows strong parallels with its counterpart in vernacular woodblock prints. The genre of popular images based on folk narratives, literature or theatrical plays is another 'shared space' between reverse glass paintings and vernacular prints. The two media tap into a rich pool of well-known motifs loved by their consumers: among them are episodes from *The Legend of the White Snake* (*Baishe zhuan* 白蛇傳), *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義), *Li Taibai Writes Calligraphy while Drunk* (*Taibai zuixie* 太白醉寫), *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng* 紅樓夢) and many others.

The visual elements learned and practised via *huagao* collections in one medium could have been transmitted through the actual images produced by artists working across different media, even though this was certainly not the only means of their transmission. Research in this direction is complicated as very few records exist about the production of vernacular art in late imperial China.

Conclusion

The first unifying pattern in the case studies discussed above is the artist's agency to engage in artistic practices across different media. Artistic mobility plays an important role, changing not only the geographical setting of the practice and socio-economic circumstances of the artist, but also the medium in which they produced their works, either temporarily or permanently. Furthermore, the transmedial connections we observe may present themselves as individual or system-wide references. Such references are often discussed using words such as 'likeness', 'repetition', 'borrowing' and so on, often imbued with negative connotations. However, in the discourse on artistic practices in China, copying was not seen in a negative way, as exemplified in the famous 'Six Laws' of Chinese painting formulated by the early art critic and art historian Xie He 謝赫 (active *c.* 500–535?).[27] The sixth law states: 'Sixth, this is to transmit and convey by making copies'. Xie He, of course, is referring to the practice of painting as understood by elite intellectual circles of art practitioners and connoisseurs and he does not include vernacular art in this discussion. Did they have similar approaches in vernacular workshops? Folk art workshops manufactured their images with defined sets of rules in mind that were transmitted orally.[28] Often translated as 'precepts' (*huajue* 畫訣), these rules provided instruction for the design and production of folk imagery, touching on different aspects of composition, use of colour, drawing of certain details and so on. The precepts together with pictorial samples and sketches that were copied and reworked remained the basis of artistic transmission in vernacular art for generations. Copying samples or reworking and modifying successful works was seen as part of the normal artistic process of learning and art production. Transmedial artistic mobility amplified by the widespread copying and further circulation of vernacular works featuring popular motifs facilitated the likenesses and repetitions we see in vernacular art in China. The extent of this phenomena always depended on the media in which the artist was working, their skills and their individual choices. The agency of the artist was the driving force behind this intricate negotiation of transmedial exchanges. The intermedial references introduced by the artists in this context were instrumental in the success of these endeavours with a target audience of consumers.

Notes

1 Rajewsky 2005, 46.
2 Ibid., 53.
3 Dr Marius Rimmele considered such possibilities in his 2020 colloquium presentation at the University of Zurich (unpublished to my knowledge), 'Bilder mit Mehrwert: Gegenstücke und kombinierbare Gruppen in der Druckgrafik des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts'. I am indebted to him for drawing my attention to this aspect.
4 Cahill 2010, 35.
5 Ibid.
6 Curtis 2009, 51.
7 Aying 1982, 151; Wang 2015, 22.
8 Yang 1989, 77–8.
9 Wang 2002, 277–9 and translated in Chou and Brown 1992, 132–4.
10 Park 2012, 30.
11 Hay 1998; Clunas 2007.
12 Published in Liu *et al.* 1997, 62.
13 Ibid., 105.
14 Wang 1959, 19–20.
15 Wang 2022.
16 One of the so-called Six Western Palaces at the Forbidden City that served as a residence for imperial concubines and consorts, including Empress Dowager Cixi.
17 The wall paintings are not signed so any speculative attributions are based on conjectures and stylistic comparisons. See also Bauer 2004, 5, 8–10.
18 Bauer 2004, 129–30.
19 Both prints and photos of the mural are published in Bauer 2004, 219, 275–6. The current location of the prints is unknown to me.
20 Quoted after Wei 2010, 44.
21 Ibid.
22 Mayer 2022, 272–4.
23 Hong Kong 2022, 43.
24 Zhao and Liu 2006, 208.
25 Martimyanova 2023.
26 Liang 2019.
27 The so-called 'Six Laws' are mentioned in the preface to the *Old Record on the Classification of Painters* (*Guhua pinlu* 古畫品錄); see Bush 2012, 308, 365.
28 Lust 1996, 251; see also Wang 1982, 1.

Chapter 10
Spoilum emerges from the shadows: a tribute to Carl Crossman

Patrick Conner

The subject of Cantonese export art has only recently emerged as a recognised genre deemed worthy of serious study. Even the phrase 'Chinese export art' was scarcely heard until the publication in 1950 of Margaret Jourdain and R. Soame Jenyns's book *Chinese Export Art in the Eighteenth Century*. Since that slim volume appeared the subject has developed rapidly, both in its increasingly specialised literature and as a focus for museum collections in both China and the West.[1]

One book, however, has surely done more than any other to promote interest in the pictures and objects sent back from China to Europe and North America. This is *The China Trade: Export Paintings, Furniture, Silver & Other Objects*, by Carl Crossman (1940–2019), published in 1972. Carl Crossman (**Fig. 109**) was a remarkable man; he never regarded himself as an academic art historian, but he did possess what has been described as a deep grassroots knowledge of the porcelain, furniture and pictures that he examined closely.[2] Soon after graduating he worked as a volunteer at the Peabody Museum (now the Peabody Essex Museum) in Salem, Massachusetts, which has an unrivalled collection of Chinese export items, especially those related to the United States. He took a particular interest in a portrait of a Cantonese merchant, which had been described since the museum's early years as 'a Portrait of Eshing, a Silk Merchant in Canton, by a Chinese artist' (**Fig. 110**).[3]

Boston merchant Thomas Wren Ward, the donor of this portrait, knew the sitter well. In his account of the business conducted at Canton by his ship *Minerva*, Ward described Eshing as follows:

> Of outside Merchants Eshing is the first. He is a silk merchant but deals in Teas & Nanking likewise. His prices rather high – always has supported the character of an honest man, and many purchase of him without ever seeing their Goods. He is the most candid man in Canton – his goods will pass in the United States without opening.[4]

The artist of the portrait, on the other hand, was not identified – except as Chinese. In 1970 the work was included in an exhibition held at the Peabody Museum and again its artist was not identified.[5] But when Crossman's book *The China Trade* was published in 1972, this portrait was stated unequivocally to have been 'painted by Spoilum'.[6]

Figure 109 Photograph of Carl Crossman at the Peabody Museum in the 1960s

Figure 110 Spoilum, *Portrait of Eshing*, before 1809, oil on canvas, h. 64.8cm, w. 55.9cm. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Gift of Thomas W. Ward, 1809, M364

Figure 111 Spoilum, *Portrait of Samuel Blanchard*, *c*. 1790, oil on canvas, h. 43.2cm, w. 34.3cm. Martyn Gregory Gallery, London

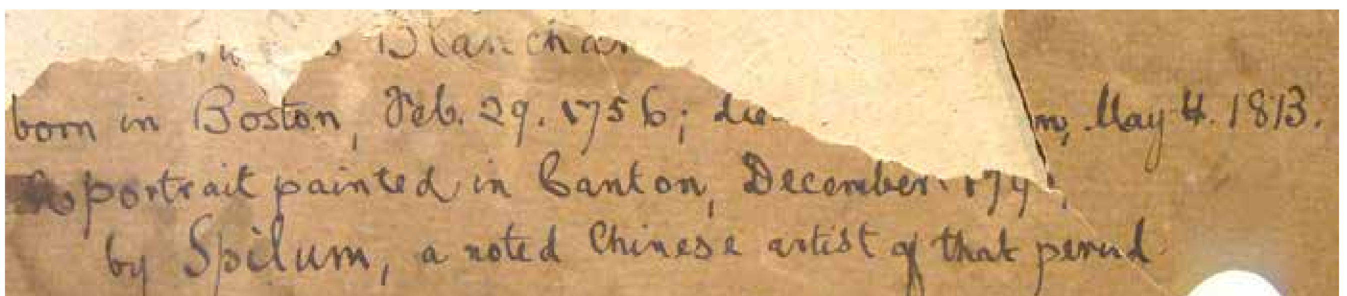
What had led Crossman to this attribution? 'Spoilum' was a name that did not appear in any art reference work of the time. Firstly, Crossman had consulted Helen Sanger (1923–2020) of the Frick Art Reference Library,[7] who had taken an interest in a group of portraits (most of them in New England collections) depicting merchants who traded at Canton in the years 1785 to 1805; they had been painted in a notably accomplished and appealing style and were apparently by the same hand as the Eshing portrait. Until this time their artist had not been identified, although certain portraits in the group had been attributed to various American and European artists. It was not initially clear that the creator could have been Chinese; as a first step the presumed artist was described as 'the China merchants' limner', or (by Crossman in particular) 'the Eshing painter'.

Crucially, however, one painting in the group – a portrait of Samuel Blanchard (1756–1813), a merchant based in Salem and Baltimore (**Fig. 111**) – was inscribed on a torn paper label attached to the back: 'A portrait painted in Canton, December 179 … / by Spilum, a noted Chinese artist of that period' (**Fig. 112**).[8]

A second vital clue was supplied by Francis Lothrop (1898–1996), a collector of whaling and sealing memorabilia who was also a Trustee of the Peabody Museum. Lothrop drew Crossman's attention to a travel book of 1791 by Captain John Meares, a British merchant who (in defiance of the East India Company) traded furs from the west coast of North America to China. While Meares and his crew were visiting the island of Kauai in the Hawaiian archipelago, they took on board a Hawaiian chief named Tianna (or Ka'iana) and brought him to Canton in 1789. He was apparently a dignified and impressive man, six feet five inches (195cm) in height. While at Canton, Chief Tianna had his portrait painted by an artist known as Spoilum:

> Of all the various articles which formed his present wealth, his fancy was the most delighted with a portrait of himself, painted by Spoilum, the celebrated artist of China, and perhaps the only one in his line, throughout that extensive empire. The

Figure 112 Inscription on the back of Figure 111



Blanchar
born in Boston, Feb. 29. 1756; de… …m, May 4. 1813.
portrait painted in Canton, December 179
by Spilum, a noted Chinese artist of that period

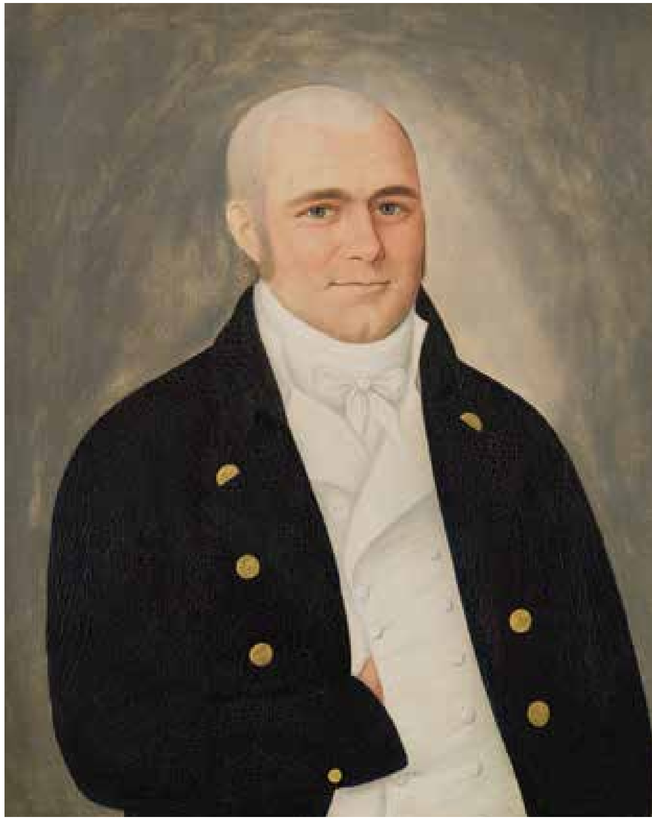


Figure 113 Spoilum, *Portrait of William Story*, 1804, oil on canvas, h. 68.6cm, w. 56.5cm. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, M393. Gift of the estate of Eliza Story, 1885

> painter had, indeed, most faithfully represented the lineaments of his countenance, but found the graceful figure of the chief beyond the powers of his genius. The surprise that Tianna expressed, as the work proceeded, was various and extreme, and seemed to follow with continual change every added stroke of the pencil.[9]

Spoilum's original painting of Chief Tianna is lost. A half-length portrait of him with a feather cloak, helmet and spear does appear as an engraving in John Meares's book, but this may be entirely unrelated to Spoilum's painting.[10]

On the basis of this evidence Crossman identified Spoilum as the painter of the Eshing portrait and of the others in what appeared to be the same hand, opening his 1972 book with a chapter on 'Spoilum and his followers'. This was indeed a bold step; one of the reviewers of the book referred to Crossman's 'discovery (?)' of Spoilum, putting a bracketed question mark after the word as if to suggest that the author's case was not yet quite established.[11] At this early stage Crossman had only three props to his argument: the apparent similarity of the portraits in the Frick records, the label on the back of one of them, and the printed reference to the Chinese artist Spoilum, described as 'perhaps the only one in his line'.

In his 'Spoilum' chapter Crossman illustrated the portrait of Eshing and also five other 'Spoilum' portraits, together with four comparable Chinese works which he considered (rightly, as we may judge half a century later) were not from the hand of the master. The defining characteristics of a Spoilum portrait, as illustrated in Crossman's book, were as follows: a plain background, often sketchily painted; a pale passage over the sitter's left shoulder; clearly drawn outlines; light modelling of the face; pale skin tones; one eye positioned a little lower than the other; small folds at each side of the mouth; and light folds under the eyes and mouth, but otherwise very few folds or wrinkles. Often (although by no means always) the sitter wears a slight smile or half-smile.

The excitement associated with the 'discovery' of Spoilum lay not only in the pursuit of clues and the making of deductions. There was also an aesthetic element: the portraits seemed to offer a boldness, a charm and sometimes an ambivalence of expression that appealed to Western tastes in the 20th century (although here one risks straying into the choppy waters of the subjective and the culturally specific). Some at least of Spoilum's portraits carry a mildly surprised or quizzical air, created partly by a slightly enlarged gap between eye and eyebrow. The effect is one of seriousness alleviated by a slight indication of good humour – a sense of wit, or irony, or self-deprecation perhaps. A comparable expression is often seen today (one might suggest) in promotional images of public figures and stars of stage and screen.

In most cases it is no longer possible to match Spoilum's portraits with the recorded personalities of their sitters. But the case of William Story allows us to make some comparison (**Fig. 113**). Story came to Canton in 1803 as captain of the Salem vessel *Friendship*. (A full-sized seagoing replica of this ship, reconstructed from a model given by Story to the Peabody Museum, is maintained at the Salem waterfront.) From his portrait we might infer that he was a powerfully built but amiable character, and indeed his obituary notice describes him in similar terms:

> In private life he was as tender, affectionate and true, as he was faithful, fearless and conscientious and energetic in his professional and public conduct…. His voice, which was in grand accordance with his herculean strength and generous nature, will be ever heard cheering, animating and rousing all to every duty, as when, in times of yore, its tones were heard in the assemblies of the people, and rose above the storm from the tempest-tossed deck.[12]

The enlarged edition of 1991

In the two decades following Crossman's groundbreaking publication of 1972, more references to Spoilum – or the variant forms Spilum or Spillem – came to light in institutions, exhibitions and auction sales. (The name 'Spoil…' seems not to have carried any derogatory overtones.[13]) One of these was an oval portrait of a figure whose red coat suggests that he was English: it carries an old label inscribed 'Spoilum Pinxit Canton Decr. 1st 1786'.[14] The date '1786' – the earliest recorded date for a Spoilum portrait on canvas – is a reminder that most, perhaps all, of Spoilum's portraits on canvas were done very soon after the newly independent United States entered the China trade in 1784. It does seem likely that, just as the American merchants gave a boost to the flagging trade in Chinese export porcelain, so did they stimulate the production of Cantonese export portraits, notably those painted by Spoilum.

Another reference appears in a diary written by the merchant Ralph Haskins of Roxbury, Massachusetts:

> While nothing else could be done, I went to Spoilum and sat for two hours for to have my portrait taken. He was $10 each and does a great deal of business in that line.[15]

These two references were included in the second, much enlarged edition of Crossman's book published in 1991, with the new title *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade*; in this new edition the sections devoted to Spoilum and his followers were more than four times as large as before. There could no longer be any doubt as to the existence of this Chinese artist. But the source (or sources) of Spoilum's style was by no means clear, and in this regard we have made little progress since 1972. If we consider the Cantonese artist known as Lamqua (關喬昌 1801–1860), who in the 1830s emerged as the most prominent Chinese 'export' portrait painter in Canton and Macau, we can confidently conclude that he borrowed (skilfully, successfully and overtly) from the Macau-based English artist George Chinnery (1774–1852). But for his predecessor Spoilum, whose sharp-edged style is closer (as Crossman observed) to contemporary North American portraiture than to British or European work, no particular artist seems to have served as a stylistic model.[16]

In other ways, however, the 1991 edition was able to incorporate fresh perspectives. An exhibition held in Brighton in 1985 included a reverse-glass portrait of a Western man, with a label reading 'Drawn October the [cut off] / at Canton in China / Spillem / In the year of 1774'.[17] In the light of this inscription it seemed reasonable to conclude that Spoilum had begun his career a decade earlier than previously suspected, as a painter in oils on glass, before graduating in the 1780s to painting in oils on canvas. And as a result of this inscription several other reverse-glass portraits of the 1770s (most of them involving silvered glass) were also attributed to Spoilum, most of them small full-lengths close in style to portraits by the contemporary British artist Arthur Devis (1712–1787).

Spoilum's Chinese identity

Although references to Spoilum were multiplying, no further evidence had come to light about his family or the circumstances of his life. Whether his name was spelt 'Spoilum', 'Spillem', 'Spilum' or 'Spoilam', this was the only name by which this artist was known to Westerners. His Chinese name was, and is, unknown. In 1982 a reference was found in a Cantonese gazetteer to a certain 'Guan Zuolin, a native of Nanhai who visited many places in Europe and America, where he was delighted by the realism of portraits in oil. He opened a painting studio in Canton after his return from abroad in the middle of the Jiaqing reign'.[18] At first it seemed that we now knew the Chinese name of Spoilum; but there are difficulties. The specified time – the middle of a reign occupying the years 1796–1820 – does not accord closely with the known dates of Spoilum's portraits. Nor is it likely that a Cantonese artist could have toured Europe and America without attracting attention. Although it is often assumed today that Guan Zuolin and Spoilum were one and the same (and are so described on a good many museum websites), this is far from proved.

In 1994 the Nantucket Historical Association mounted an exhibition entitled 'From Brant Point to the Boca Tigris, Nantucket and the China Trade', including seven male portraits by Spoilum, several of them published for the first time. One of these belies the assumption that the early 'China merchants' of New England were all of European descent (**Fig. 114**). It represents a man now thought to be Samson (or Sampson) Dyer (1773–1843), a merchant of mixed African and American Indian heritage, and the only Black and/or Native American officer known to have participated in Nantucket's trade with China. Dyer and his wife settled in the 1790s in Nantucket's community of free Black sailors and tradespeople. It is likely that his portrait (dressed in the uniform of a ship's officer in similar fashion to William Story) was painted by Spoilum in 1804, in the course of Dyer's voyage to and from Canton aboard the ship *Lady Adams* in 1802–5.[19] Later Dyer became a successful trader in sealskins and guano in South Africa; he was described as 'a most extraordinary man of uncommon industry, honesty and sobriety'.[20]

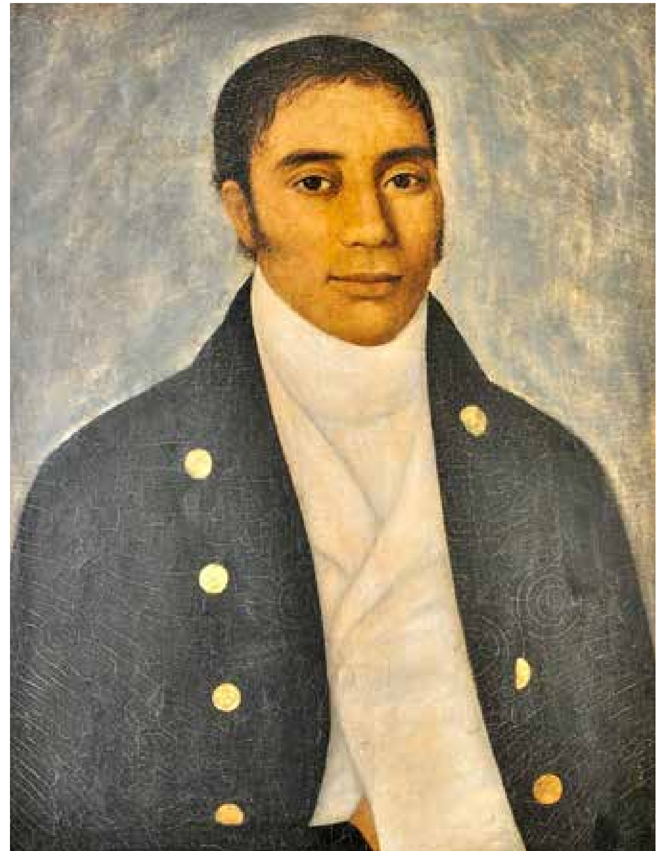


Figure 114 Spoilum, *Portrait of Samson Dyer*, *c.* 1804, oil on canvas, h. 58.4cm, w. 43.2cm. Nantucket Historical Association, 2013.0002.001

British sitters

Spoilum portrayed Chinese, European and North American merchants, as well as at least two visitors from the Pacific Islands. His British clients can often be identified as such by the East India Company's lion insignia outlined on their gilt buttons; some wear elaborate gold braiding along the collars and lapels of their dark blue coats.

Oval portraits of two less flamboyant Englishmen have emerged quite separately in recent years, although both portraits and sitters have a good deal in common. The first of these represents George Augustus Delanoe (1762–1802), who (like other British maritime officers of this era) served with both the Royal Navy and the East India Company as circumstances required (**Fig. 115**). Although Delanoe came to Canton as a Company officer, his claim to fame is

Figure 115 Spoilum, *Portrait of Captain George Delanoe, RN*, 1794, oil on canvas, h. 50cm, w. 42cm. Thomas Coulborn & Sons, London, 6658

Figure 116 Spoilum, *Portrait of Captain John Jones*, *c.* 1800, oil on canvas, h. 41.5, h. 34cm. National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, NMW A 24690. Gift of Mary Mumford, 2014

recorded in a later inscription painted on to the portrait: 'Lost his leg by a 32lb shot at the Mutiny of the Nore on June 10. 1797, when in command of His Majesty's Ship Repulse 64 guns'. Promoted to Captain as a result of this action, Delanoe did not survive for long enough to assume his new rank, but both the portrait and the 32-pound shot were preserved by his family.

The second portrait features Swansea-born John Jones (1751–1828) who, like Delanoe, served in both the Royal Navy and the East India Company, first visiting Canton in 1771 (**Fig. 116**). Jones and Delanoe would have known each other well, since they made at least one voyage to China together – as First and Second Mate on the East Indiaman *Deptford*, arriving at Whampoa (the anchorage for Canton) on 17 October 1788.[21]

If Spoilum's portraits could be relied on to represent the sitter's personality then we might suppose that Jones, like William Story above, was an amiable character, but what little contemporary evidence survives does not entirely bear this out: a younger citizen of Swansea recorded that the elderly Jones publicly 'called me so many Billingsate names that I determined to horsewhip him if he did not give me satisfaction'.[22] Perhaps the traditional assumption that a skilled portrait artist will (or should) 'capture' the sitter's personality is less securely founded than we might have hoped.

Jones's career does, however, illustrate the wealth to be gained from active involvement in the China trade. He made six voyages to China, three of them as Captain of the East Indiaman *Boddam* in 1790–2, 1793–4 and 1800–1. A ledger held by the West Glamorgan Archive Service reveals that for the first of these voyages Jones invested no less than £11,000 in goods (including a pack of foxhounds) to be sold at Madras (Chennai) and Canton, yielding a profit of almost £4,000. Together with other charges and consignments (including 40 chests of opium) he had made a profit of £7,500 before leaving China; much of this was reinvested in tea and other Chinese items. In 1794 he was able to buy St Helen's House, one of Swansea's most substantial buildings; later he had it rebuilt in neoclassical style and enjoyed a long retirement. When he died at the age of 77 it was not from any peril of the China trade but from a carriage accident near his home.[23]

Miniature portraits

When Crossman first revealed Spoilum as a portrait painter there was no particular reason to suppose that he also painted miniatures. But in the years since 1972 a number of miniature portraits have come to light whose composition and style is similar to that of the larger works in oil already ascribed to Spoilum.

The identification of Chinese export miniatures is often problematic. Since they are generally contained in Western mounts and cases, there is often room for debate as to whether they are by Chinese or Western artists. The larger export oil paintings, on the other hand, can often be recognised by their relatively coarse and loosely woven canvases, which are attached to light pinewood strainers; the carpentry joints in the strainers – and in the export frames, if they have survived – are characteristically Chinese, utilising small wooden pegs. In the case of oval pictures by Spoilum and his Cantonese contemporaries, the Chinese-made strainers and frames are laminated, comprising thin layers of soft pinewood bonded together.[24]

Figure 117 'Spoilum Junior', *Miniature Portrait of an Unidentified Westerner*, 1800, oil on ivory, h. 6.8cm, w. 5.5cm. Collection of Christa and David Pannorfi

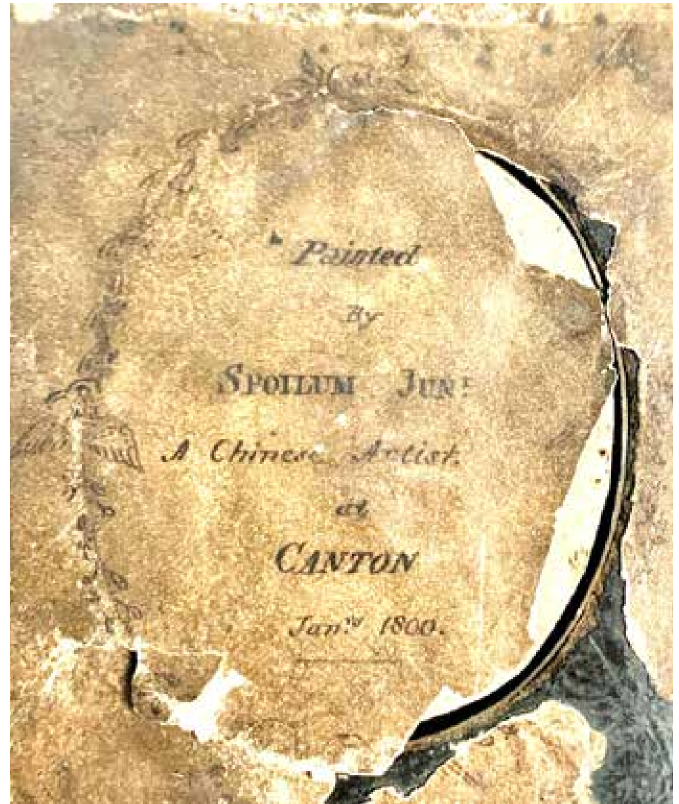


Figure 118 Inscription on the back of Figure 117

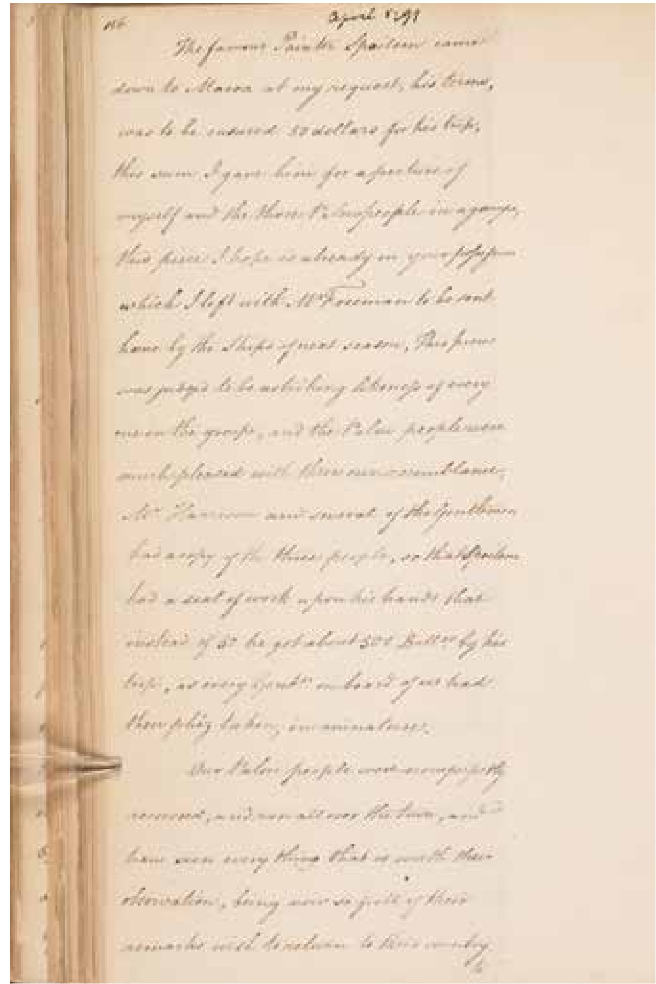
Despite this difficulty we can now be confident that Spoilum did paint miniatures as well as larger portraits. The Canton cashbook kept by the American trader Sullivan Dorr (1778–1858) shows that in 1801 he paid ten dollars for 'my miniature Spoilam'.[25] And in 1802 the Zeeland merchant Jan Bekker Teerlink (1759–1832) recorded in his cashbook that on 10 November he too paid Spoilum ten dollars for 'my portrait in miniature'.[26]

One of the most interesting miniatures to have appeared recently is a half-length figure of an unidentified man, inscribed on the back as 'Painted by Spoilum Junr, A Chinese Artist, at Canton, Jany 1800' (**Figs 117–18**). 'Spoilum Junior' suggests that there were two artists known as Spoilum (n.d.). This is confirmed by the account book of the American merchant John Bowers (n.d.), which shows that on successive days in 1797 he settled his accounts with 'Old Spoilum' and then 'Young Spoilum' (**Fig. 119**).[27] Both, then, were active at the turn of the century.

This raises questions for future research. We might well assume that 'old Spoilum' was the painter of reverse-glass pictures in the 1770s,[28] and it seems that both 'old' and 'young' were painting miniatures in the last years of the century. But which of the two was responsible for the larger portraits on canvas in the years 1785–1805 – the portraits

Figure 119 Account book listing purchases made in China by John Bowers, Supercargo, entry for 25 November 1797. John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, Brown Papers, Box 1131, F1

Figure 120 Spoilum, *Portrait of Three Micronesians, Palau*, c. 1791, oil on canvas, h. 90cm, w. 60cm. British Museum, London, Oc2006,Ptg.23



156 April 1791

The famous Painter Spoilem came
down to Macao at my request, his terms,
was to be ensured 50 dollars for his trip,
this sum I gave him for a picture of
myself and the three Palou people in a group,
this piece I hope is already in your possession
which I left with Mr Freeman to be sent
home by the Ships of next season, This piece
was judged to be a striking likeness of every
one in the group, and the Palou people were
much pleased with their own resemblance,
Mr Harrison and several of the Gentlemen
had a copy of the three people, so that Spoilem
had a deal of work upon his hands that
instead of 50 he got about 500 Dollars by his
trip, as every Gentn on board of us had
their phiz taken, in miniature.

Our Palou people were [illegible]
received, and been all over the town, and
have seen every thing that is worth their
observation, being now so full of their
remarks [illegible] to their country

Figure 121 John McCluer's logbook, entry for April 1791. British Library, London, Add MS 19 301, f.156

with which the name 'Spoilum' has become chiefly associated today? Did the younger Spoilum follow the elder closely? And were they father and son?

One recent (and perhaps surprising) addition to Spoilum's *oeuvre* is a triple portrait of three figures, a young man (described as a prince) and two young women from the Palau Islands (**Fig. 120**); these three had been brought to China in 1791 on a British ship, which had called at Palau in the course of a surveying voyage for the East India Company, and spent three months in Macao.

The provenance of this painting is uncertain.[29] It is unlike any of the other works that can be firmly attributed to Spoilum, and it may well be that the bodies were painted by someone else, but Spoilum's agency is well documented in the manuscript logbook of the ship's captain, John McCluer (*c.* 1759–1795), which is in the British Library (**Fig. 121**):

> The famous painter Spoilem came down to Macao [from Canton] at my request; his terms, was [sic] to be ensured 50 dollars for his trip. This sum I gave him for a picture of myself and the three Palou people in a group…. Spoilem had a deal of work upon his hands that instead of 50 he got about 500 Dollars by his trip, as every Gentleman on board of us had their phiz. taken, in miniature.[30]

McCluer's description of the artist as 'the famous painter Spoilem' – which parallels John Meares's reference to 'the celebrated artist of China' – suggests that it was the older of the two Spoilums (or Spoilems) who joined his ship in 1791.

If Carl Crossman was writing a third edition of his book today (a task that would surely require several volumes), in what ways would he revise his view of Spoilum? Since the publication of his 1991 volume, research has revealed a large number of Chinese individuals who worked as painters (of one kind or another) for the Western market.[31] Captain Meares's assertion that Spoilum was 'perhaps the only one in his line, throughout that extensive empire' can no longer be interpreted as meaning that he was the only artist working in a Western style. More probably Meares meant that Spoilum was the only specialist painter of portraits in a Westernised style; although background elements sometimes appear in Spoilum's portraits there is as yet no firm evidence that he painted anything other than portraits.

In this hypothetical third edition Crossman would also have to tackle the thorny but intriguing issue of the two Spoilums, elder and younger. But as he considered the abundant evidence (both pictorial and documentary) that has come to light in the last half-century, he could surely be justified in feeling that his audacious bet on Spoilum, made in 1972, had paid off in spades.

Notes

1. Notably the British Museum, London; Guangdong Museum, Guangzhou; Hong Kong Maritime Museum; Hong Kong Museum of Art; Musée de la Compagnie des Indes, Port-Louis, France; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museu do Oriente, Lisbon; Peabody Essex Museum, Salem; Stadsmuseum, Gothenburg, Sweden; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; and Yinchuan Museum of Contemporary Art, Ningxia province, China.
2. Obituary notice in *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, 17 December 2019.
3. Whitehill 1937a, 291 no. 50. The portrait of Eshing does not appear in the original manuscript catalogue kept by the East India Marine Society from 1799 to 1821. My thanks for elucidating the early history of this portrait are due to George H. Schwarz and Karina Corrigan, both of the Peabody Essex Museum; see also Schwartz 2020.
4. Whitehill 1937b, 309.
5. Crossman 1970.
6. Crossman 1972, 14.
7. In 1947 Helen Sanger joined the Frick Art Reference Library, of which in 1990 she became the library's first Andrew W. Mellon Chief Librarian. She retired in 1994. For the photographs of the portraits consulted by Crossman and Sanger, see the Frick Art Reference Library website: 'Spoilum' nos 2–13; see also Crossman 1972, 268–9.
8. The full inscription (which may have been copied from an earlier inscription) reads '…Blanchar… / born in Boston, Feb. 29. 1756; died …n May 4. 1813. / A portrait painted in Canton, December 179… / by Spilum, a noted Chinese artist of that period'. See also Ellery and Bowditch 1897, 1, 249–50, in which the inscribed date is given as 1790 – suggesting that more of the paper label was intact at that time.
9. Meares 1790, 8.
10. For this engraving, see Meares 1790, opp. 4.
11. Penrose 1973.
12. Quoted from the *Salem Register* of March 1864 in Putnam 1924, 30; see also Frayler 2003.
13. The word 'Spoilem' does appear occasionally in anglicised versions of China Coast pidgin, with the sense of 'killed' or 'injured'; see Low 1948, 36.
14. Illustrated in Crossman 1991, 38.
15. Quoted in Crossman 1991, 49, and see col. pl. 9.
16. The names of the New England artists John Brewster, J. Brown and William Jennys were tentatively suggested by Crossman 1991, 42–3. But the stylistic similarities are not close, and there is no evidence that portraits by any of these individuals reached China.
17. Brighton Museums 1985, cat. no.71, not illustrated; for an illustration see Conner 1998, 420. The inscription is included in Crossman 1991, but erroneously attached to an illustration of a different glass painting (34–5 and col. pl. .3).
18. Zheng Rong, *Xu Nanhai xianzhi*, 1910 ed., juan 21, 9a. This reference was first published in Joseph Ting's introduction to Hong Kong Museum of Art 1982, 10.
19. Information kindly supplied by Michael R. Harrison, Chief Curator and Obed Macy Research Chair, Nantucket Historical Association.
20. The portrait was reproduced (but not identified) in Jehle 1994, pl. xxv. For Samson Dyer see Oldham 2013, 19, stating that the portrait was formerly owned by Dyer's daughter Trelonia Dyer Pompey. See also Finley 2020.
21. Ledger of ship *Deptford* (1787–9), British Library IOR/L/MAR/B/426Q(1).
22. Quoted in Bowen 2010–11, 34.
23. Ibid.; see also Bowen 2010 and Fairclough 2015.
24. See Crossman 1991, 45, and Bradford 2005, 83–5.
25. 'Sundries to Cash April 1081', f.46, Dorr Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
26. Canton cashbook of Jan Bekker Teerlink, entry for 10 November 1802, National Archives H2653 part 2 (captured ship *Henriette),* HCA 32/1048. My thanks for this image and reference are due to Roelof van Gelder; see also van Gelder 2022.
27. John Carter Brown Library, Brown Papers, Box 1131, F1: Account Book of John Bowers, Supercargo, 1797. My thanks for this image and reference are due to Professor Winnie Wong.
28. On 14 March 2023 a reverse-glass portrait was sold by Elite Auctioneers LLC of Boca Raton, Florida, with an old label on the back inscribed 'The Portrait of Michael Turner aged 20 [?] years executed at Canton in China by Old Spoilum October the 9th 1774. … quitted this transitory life October… 1782 [?] aged 28'.
29. The most likely 19th-century source is the William Blackmore Museum, Salisbury, England. In the 1930s the museum was closed and its contents distributed to other museums; the British Museum received a number of objects, including a series of 16 paintings of American Indians, and may well have received this painting also, since the Museum also holds a pencilled copy of it (Oc-Dr128-Ano) which is annotated 'Blackmore Museum, Salisbury'.
30. British Library, London, Add. Ms. 19 301; see also Levesque 2000, 620.
31. Van Dyke 2019, 121–41.

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4 THE CIRCULATION OF MAPS, MONEY AND CULTURAL MEDIA

Introduction: the circulation of maps, money and cultural media

Shane McCausland

When and where is the 19th century? If it lies firmly in the past, as history, we are also in it here and now, as a collective of its historians from the conference *China's 1800s: Material and Visual Culture* held on 8 and 9 June 2023. As late moderns, we can certainly relate to and perhaps be inspired by the iconoclasm of late Qing China's creative actors and activists, their anti-Confucian and anti-canonical activism which has been so inspiring particularly for the female half of the audience, who have seen themselves represented in this display perhaps for the first time within a balanced history. Our having to be radical to make a properly balanced history become normal – how has it taken this long? In yet another way, the 19th century is in our future, or rather, *also* in our future since it is as much a part of our future as it is of the past and in the present. On the evidence of this meeting, it is certainly going to help launch the careers of some talented historians and art historians of the late Qing.

We have reached this point of a major exhibition on the late Qing in the British Museum not much more than a century after late Qing China hit a remarkable low point in the international value system for art. Consider that, shortly before he died here in London in 1908, art historian Ernest Fenollosa chose to remark about what he called 'Modern Chinese Art', that 'there has been no great art in China since early Ming' and that '[t]he long line of fall of Chinese art has not been exaggerated. The end may be seen to-day in any Chinese house or shop, where the most trivial brush scratches appear to deck the walls.'[1] What has changed fundamentally is our estimation of the quality, interest and value of late Qing art and its diverse makers and patrons. Collectively we have determined that the late Qing is worthy but that it is also complicated, even conflicted, being politically corrupted and yet resilient and innovative, artistically derivative and yet also creative, all at the same time.

The long 19th century will no doubt continue to be instrumentalised as the 'century of humiliation' or as marking the beginning of modernity at whatever date one wants to fetishise – 1919 (New Culture Movement), 1912 (new Republic), 1911 (fall of Qing), 1860 (Second Opium War), 1842 (First Opium War) and so on – but it can also be intrinsically a period of interest in itself.

I would contend that the 19th century we get will not emerge on its own or simply through revisionism, as valuable and necessary as that is as a precondition. What matters is what lies beyond, the collective vision for this history as its horizons come into view and its substance takes shape from the character, quality and interests of its researchers, among them the ones in this panel. Unruly, rigorous, playful, demotic, responsible, even decolonial – these words convey something of the texture of what we have seen and heard in these conference proceedings, in what is patently not a command economy for research.

The range of cultural media, of things that circulate, to be explored in this section moves the debate beyond even the usual realms of vernacular art or even visual culture, to include maps, books and book contents in the broadest sense, lithographs and photographs, and even money. The authors in this section continue the pattern of giving agency to things and to people who had the ability to condition their

Pages 120–1: Gold Taiping Heavenly Kingdom coin, inscribed with 'Taiping Heavenly Kingdom (太平天國)' and 'Sacred Treasure (聖寶)' on the reverse. 1860, Nanjing, gold, diam. 2.7cm, weight 8.74g. British Museum, London, 1980,0801.1

world, as well as giving voice to the subaltern, in a new canon beyond the patriarchal hierarchy, in a way which is not so much idealising as making a new reality. Doing this kind of research well is the shaping of cosmopolitan culture. It is labour of value and quality and the finest riposte to binaries and other kinds of rancorous claims to exceptionalism.

A binary approach is not very helpful for the materials or issues examined in this section, which have circulation, exchange or currency as their leitmotif – each a kind of world in itself, a body of knowledge. Take cartography, the topic of Xue Zhang: here is the mapping of places, topographic features (including rivers, which are strategically significant for security, agriculture, transport, trade and legitimacy), but perhaps more importantly for the Qing, people, especially indigenous people in the borderlands which served to define Qing's in/out, inner/outer, us/them, core/periphery. Zhang investigates the role of map representations in the visual culture of palace memorials intended for secure communication between the imperium and Manchu military officials on campaign. Here, the illustrated appendices speak in unexpectedly candid ways to the social-geographical challenges of military control and policy responses, including the plantation and settlement of agricultural Han workers in former forests and among indigenous peoples in the borderlands of Xinjiang. If Laura Hostetler's *Qing Colonial Enterprise* addressed this broad topic for the long 18th century, Zhang now looks at a case in the next and final dynastic phase. Here is the promise of discovering what high-level images of the fringes of empire were made and for whom, how they were used through fast, securitised channels at court, and what impact they had on late dynastic policy development.

With Emma Harrison's essay, we are in the cultural world of books, paper, script, writing and printing and their histories as material objects beheld by readers, containing knowledge and embodying knowledge in their forms. Harrison asks whether, across a diverse body of documents from the late Qing, there is evidence of a common human urge or desire to try to impose taxonomic and other order on knowledge and knowledge systems. Partly this would be as a practical way to amass and make sense of information, but it would also seem to have been a way to shape culture, or even a nascent sense of national culture. As an undercurrent, the pace of change in daily life was palpably accelerating, exemplified by the appearance of photography from late 1830s, of new technologies like rifling in guns, steam shipping and railways from the mid-century, and by the century's end, electricity and gas lighting, all giving context to the advent of mass media and newsprint as the foundations of a new public opinion.

Bringing us to the world of photography, and how the technology meshed with Victorian representations of others, Amy Mathewson explores how China and its people were represented by British Victorians in the popular imagination, as seen in the practice of a pioneering woman photographer. While travelling around China, Isabella Bird had to manage the many dozens of men upon whom she depended, including the Western missionaries and the ordinary Chinese who sailed her boat, carried her and her possessions and translated for her. How did she, already in a privileged position as a Westerner but also a subaltern one as a woman in a patriarchal world, refer to these men and deal with their moods, portray them in her photographs (and later, her magic lantern shows) and get them to do what she wanted?

Helen Wang and Joe Cribb show us the money, portraying through a detailed survey of brassy coins, lambent bars of silver and all manner of printed notes, the complex and volatile history of money in circulation over preceding centuries and into the late Qing period. We take particular note of the Qing having been drawn ineluctably into a wider early-modern global economy of silver and silver exchange, first through the Spanish trans-Pacific trade framework and later as the world's military powers coercively advanced their economic interests across their empires and spheres of influence. We learn also about the intersection of entrenched conservatism in Qing political thinking and its implications, with the shadow world of international counterfeiting of Qing money and with efforts to document and publish hard-won knowledge of the complex exchange mechanisms and monetary systems that prevailed as a result.

Since we are thinking in centuries, we might wonder what categories, in a century's time, future researchers will consider us to have omitted in this section on cultural objects in circulation. The time will surely come for stamps, light displays, postcards, *cartes de visite* and all manner of other things on the move.

Notes

1 Fenollosa 1912 (1921), vol. 2, 158.

Chapter 11
Managing borderlands through images: maps in memorials during the Daoguang reign

Xue Zhang

The palace memorial (*zouzhe* 奏摺), an innovative form of communication between the Qing emperor and senior officials, is a composite genre. Its main body is textual, and a palace memorial can be purely textual. However, it also possesses the capacity to incorporate non-textual information through attachments. Attached registers and rosters usually enumerate numbers and names while maps are usually added as visual aids. Palace memorials, which first appeared in the Kangxi reign, were one of the most important administrative innovations of the Qing empire. They largely bypassed bureaucratic organs and statutes and cultivated an extralegal relationship between the monarch and his ministers, providing a more streamlined conduit for addressing urgent or sensitive issues.[1] Once this channel was established, the emperor and his territorial ministers were able to leverage frontier management.

Scholars have spilled much ink over the textual content of palace memorials, while visual components, to a great extent, have escaped scrutiny. The First Historical Archives of China and the National Palace Museum in Taiwan respectively house 448 and 339 stand-alone maps and atlases that were attached to palace memorials.[2] These supplemented the text about ongoing military campaigns, hydraulic engineering in construction, a potential site for the imperial mausoleum, and other geography-related matters. A considerable number pertain to Xinjiang and other frontiers thousands of miles away from the capital.

During the Daoguang reign, the Qing stood at the brink of an unprecedented transformation. The Daoguang emperor ascended to the throne in 1820, reigning until 1850. During these three decades, Inner Asian and European contenders destabilised the Qing empire's inland and maritime borderlands. Prior to the First Opium War of 1839–42, which shook the south-east coast, Khoja Jahangir, a Tukic-Muslim chief, backed by the Kokand khanate, had thrown south-west Xinjiang into chaos (**Fig. 122**).[3] The emperor and his territorial officials continued to use the old means – palace memorials – to deliberate on future paths for the borderlands. In this chapter, two maps of south-west Xinjiang dated 1827 and 1836 are contextualised. The Qing rule there collapsed in the 1820s and was slowly restored beginning in 1827. This chapter argues that the absence of scale did not prevent schematic maps attached to palace memorials from being useful references in policy making. Malleable maps coupled with highly formatted texts together were efficient at transmitting information from the empire's margins to the centre.

A route from northern to southern Xinjiang

Prior to the Jahangir-led rebellion in the 1820s, the Qing court already possessed rather sophisticated maps of Xinjiang, such as the reknowned *Qianlong Atlas* (*Qianlong shisan pai* 乾隆十三排). Nevertheless, policy making required customised maps geared towards more specific needs. Khoja Jahangir began campaigning in Xinjiang in 1820, and his intermittent raids eventually culminated in the full occupation of south-west Xinjiang in 1826 (**Fig. 123**).[4] Jahangir was the grandson of Khoja Burhan al-Din, who with his younger brother Khoja Jahan revoked their allegiance to the Qing empire after a brief collaboration in

新疆總圖

South

Khotan

Yarkand

Yengisar

Kashgar

卷一 五

Figure 122 'Comprehensive Map of Xinjiang' (*Xinjiang zongtu* 新疆總圖) in *Imperially Commissioned Outline of Xinjiang* (*Qinding Xinjiang shilue* 钦定新疆識略), *c.* 1821, woodblock printed book, h. 27cm, w. 32cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 007488583. The dotted line roughly indicates the region in turmoil in the 1820s

Figure 123 Battle at Honbasi River (between the Qing and Khoja Jahangir) (*Hunbashi he zhi zhan* 渾巴什河之戰), *c.* 1826–30, copper engraving on paper, h. 89cm, w. 52cm. Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 711G4, South Australian Government Grant 1971

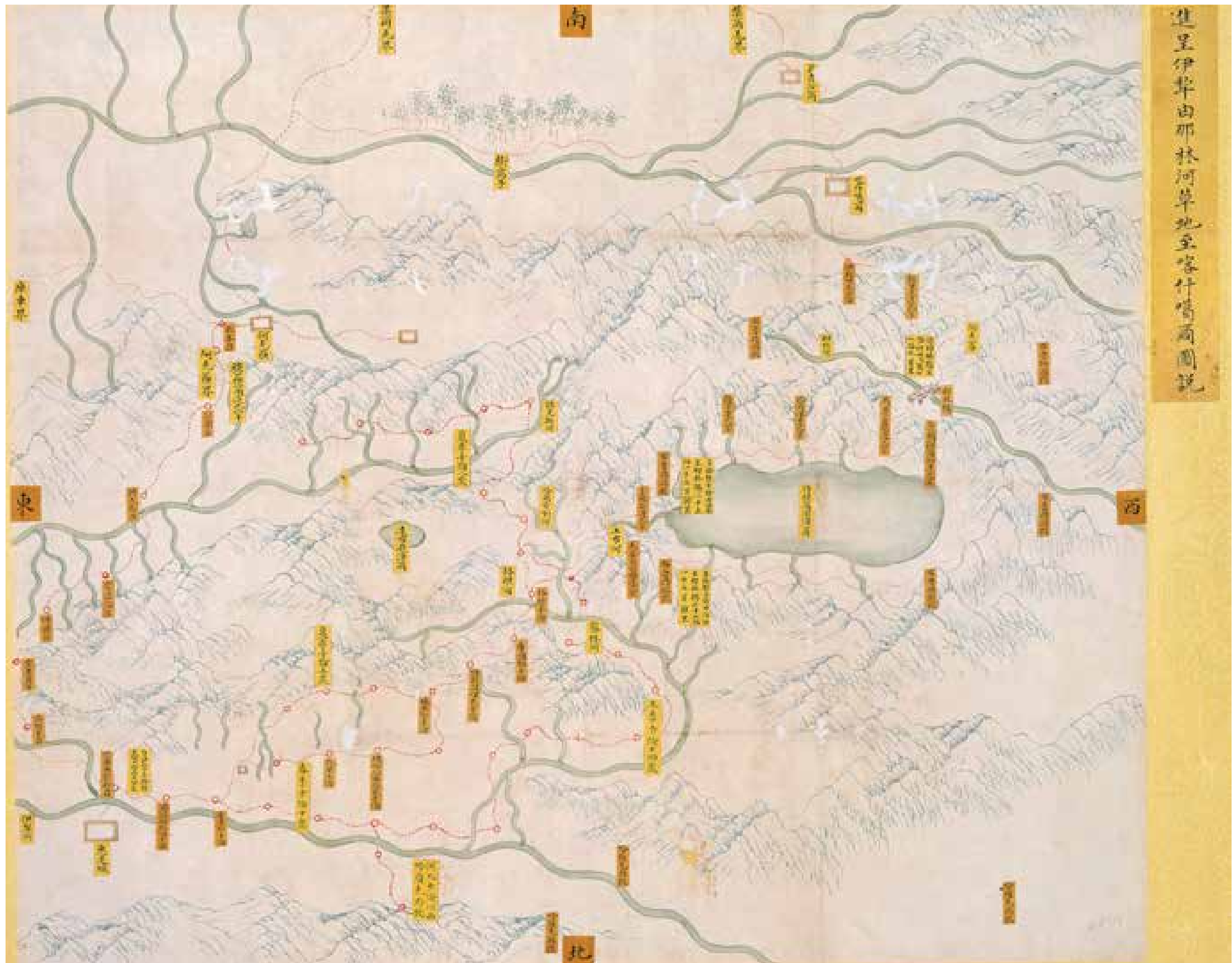


Figure 124 ***Explanative Illustration of the Route from Ili to Kashgar via the Naryn River*** **(*Yili you nalinhe caodi zhi kashigaer tushuo* 伊犁由那林河草地至喀什噶爾圖說), 1827, paper map, h. 79.5cm, w. 49.5cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 故機058804**

the 1750s. Khoja Burhan al-Din and Khoja Khan eventually succumbed to the Qing reprisals. They fled, and their bases in Kashgar and Yarkand in the south-west of the Tarim basin fell into the hands of the Qing. Burhan al-Din and Jahan were captured and executed, but a son of Burhan al-Din escaped. In 1826, Khoja Jahangir came back to reclaim his grandfather's territory in south-west Xinjiang. The geographical isolation of south-west Xinjiang prevented the Qing from taking swift action. The Daoguang emperor mobilised 6,000 forces in the north, 2,000 of which were in Ili and 4,000 in Urumqi. Only two major routes connected Ili, the seat of the Qing government in Xinjiang, to the southern regions. One required travellers to cross the Tianshan range via the Muzart pass. The other largely circumvented the Tianshan range and traversed the pasture either to the north or south of the Issyk Kul lake. The Muzart pass route was chosen, because the alternative criss-crossed the territories of nomadic Kyrgyz, many of whom had sided with Khoja Jahangir.[5] The reinforcements from Ili took almost a month to reach southern Xinjiang. On 1 August, they were reported as already on their way, but they did not arrive at the Qing base in southern Xinjiang until late that month.[6] Over that period, the upheaval continued to escalate, dealing a severe blow to Qing governance in south-west Xinjiang.

The Qing court retrospectively attributed the late arrival of reinforcements to the heightening of the rebellion in 1826. Since the route via the Muzart pass had proved a tortuous path, strewn with perils, the Daoguang emperor secretly commissioned an investigation of the alternative route via the Issyk Kul lake. Although by 1827 the Qing had basically restored its control, the emperor felt it necessary to act proactively. If the forces stationed in Ili were to be sent to southern Xinjiang again, he was eager to confirm that the route via the Issyk Kul lake was a feasible option. A plan for the installation of logistical facilities along the route to ensure that Qing soldiers had access to relay horses and other supplies was also needed. A month later, De-ying-a 德英阿 (1765–1829), the General of Ili, reported back.[7]

A map entitled the *Explanative Illustration of the Route from Ili to Kashgar via the Naryn River* (*Yili you nalinhe caodi zhi kashigaer tushuo* 伊犁由那林河草地至喀什噶爾圖說), in the National Palace Museum in Taiwan, has been identified as the attachment of De-ying-a's memorial (**Fig. 124**). Towards the end of the memorial, De-ying-a explicitly stated that he had made an explanative illustration (*tushuo* 圖說) and presented it as an attachment.[8] De-ying-a first introduced the three sections of the route: from Ili to the Gegen 格根 outpost (Man. *karun*), the Gegen outpost to the Naryn bridge, and

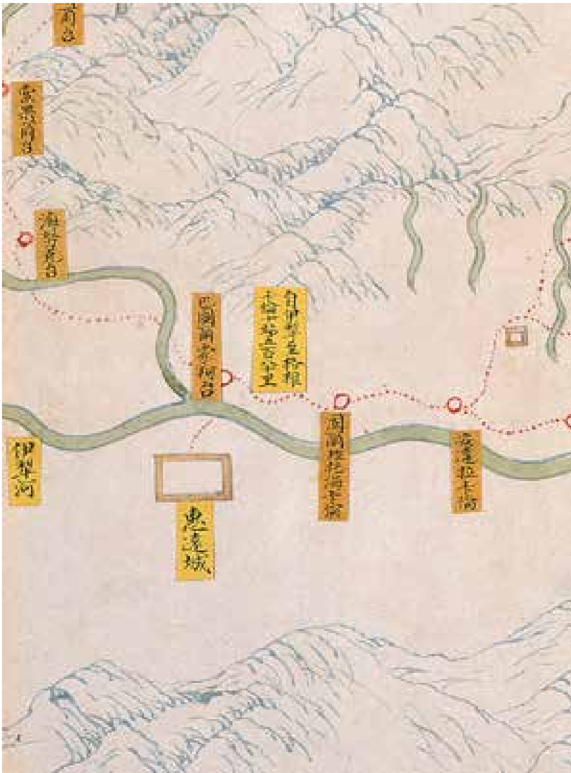


Figure 125 (left) The slips on *Explanative Illustration of the Route from Ili to Kashgar via the Naryn River* contain the detail of the route from Huiyuan garrison city to the Gegen outpost

Figure 126 (above) *Explanative Illustration of the Route from Ili to Kashgar via the Naryn River*, detail of the Issyk Kul lake and the southern and northern routes around it

the Naryn bridge to Kashgar. The three sections in total were 2,680 *li* (1,543km) in length, spanning 44 stages.

The south-oriented map visualised the detailed itinerary. It is scale-free, and thus does not reflect the absolute distances between places. The dotted lines and circles instead show travel distances, of direct concern to the Qing troops' logistical preparations. The red dotted lines indicate travel routes and the circles daily departure/arrival points, whose names are noted on orange slips. The length of a stage – the stretch of the route to cover every day – varies according to different topographical conditions. Corresponding to De-ying-a's textual description, this visual itinerary is divided into three sections by four yellow slips. The slip next to the Huiyuan garrison city (惠遠城) – the seat of the Qing military government in Ili – notes: 'From Ili to the Gegen outpost, ten stages, 2,680 *li* [334.08km]' (**Fig. 125**). The slips on the northern and southern banks of the Issyk Kul lake note the number of stages and the total length of the route from the Gegen outpost to the Naryn bridge via the respective sides. The northern route is about 300 *li* (172.8km) longer than the southern one, requiring an additional four days, but De-ying-a preferred the northern option, whose natural and road conditions were better (**Fig. 126**). Between the Naryn bridge and Kashgar, according to the yellow slip next to the former, ten stages cover 900 *li* (518.4km). All the figures on the four yellow slips agree with De-ying-a's memorial.

The map is a visual aid, but it does more than graphically repeat the information in the memorial. De-ying-a skillfully used images to supplement his textual description, thereby enhancing his claims regarding the advantages and disadvantages of travelling to Kashgar via the Issyk Kul lake. In the memorial, he confirmed the feasibility of travelling via the alternative route. The map visualised the detailed itinerary, but uncertainties existed when travelling deep into Kyrgyz territories. The middle section between the Gegen outpost and the Naryn bridge across the Kyrgyz pastures was most challenging, and occupies a pronounced position on the map. Without outposts providing logistical supplies, the itinerary became somewhat unpredictable. The Qing forces' access to rivers and firewood largely determined their daily pace. The departure/arrival points of the 23 stages in the section are absent; red circles are missing, and the orange slips only symbolically note the presence of the Kyrgyz tribes and landmark mountains. The northern route, which De-ying-a recommended, is relatively flat. Nevertheless, the two orange slips at both ends remind the viewers of the presence of the Kyrgyz, whose loyalty to the Qing was questionable. The southern route might only just intersect with the Kyrgyz territories, but it is mountainous. The landscape painting-style ranges with their names on orange slips indicate the precipitous topography.

Overall, the map served as a visual elaboration of De-ying-a's judgement of the alternative route via the Issyk Kul lake: it was possible to transport forces from northern to southern Xinjiang via this option. Meanwhile, he was mindful of the trip's hardships. In 1827, Xinjiang was once again at the crossroads. Khoja Jahangir's invasion in 1826 and the ensuing rebellion that momentarily restored Afaqi rule upended the Qing governance in Xinjiang. In the following year, despite the escape of Khoja Jahangir, the rebellion was almost subdued, leaving the Qing court to consider post-war reconstruction or indeed whether such reconstruction was necessary.

The Qing came to realise that maintaining direct control over south-west Xinjiang necessitated a significantly larger military presence, the cost of which they found unbearable. Nevertheless, shifting to indirect rule or even a complete withdrawal would compromise the Qing's grand claim for

Figure 127 ***Map of Agricultural Colonies in Barčuq and Kashgar*** **(*Baerchuke Kashigaer tuntian tu* 巴爾楚克喀什噶爾屯田圖), 1836, paper map, h. 62cm, w. 20cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 故機072168**

its superiority over all preceding Chinese regimes. Territorial vastness was the cornerstone of this claim. Moreover, the Kokand khanate and other adversarial neighbouring regimes might capitalise on the vacuum, thereby jeopardising the security of Qing rule in Inner Asia. Facing fiscal restraints and strategic concerns, Daoguang and his ministers vacillated. In the summer of 1827, the emperor secretly solicited advice from a handful of field officers about potential transition to indirect rule, which sparked a wide debate about whether to abandon south-west Xinjiang.[9] Daoguang asked De-ying-a at the height of the debate about the alternative route via the Issyk Kul lake, which suggests that the strategic location of south-west Xinjiang made it hard for the Qing to entirely sever its control of the region. Even if the Qing were to militarily retreat from south-west Xinjiang, the routes connecting Ili and Kashgar would ensure that they could swiftly transport sufficient forces to the region as necessary.

Agricultural colonies in south-west Xinjiang

The debate in 1827–8 concluded with increased Qing military presence in south-west Xinjiang. New agricultural colonies were accordingly installed in the hope of partially covering the additional costs. The *Map of Agricultural Colonies in Barčuq and Kashgar* (*Baerchuke Kashigaer tuntian tu* 巴爾楚克喀什噶爾屯田圖) in the National Palace Museum in Taiwan depicts Qing agricultural colonisation in south-west Xinjiang (**Fig. 127**). The south-oriented map, dated 1836, is an attachment to the joint palace memorial of Te-yi-Shun-Bao 特依順保, the general of Ili, and three resident councillors (大臣, Man: amban) – Išan 奕山 (1794–1878), Hingde 興德 (dates unknown) and Guan-fu 關福 (dates unknown) – in northern and southern Xinjiang.[10] Both parties in the debate, those opposing and those advocating indirect rule, concurred that if the empire eventually decided to continue direct rule and augment its military presence, it would be essential to expand the local revenue base, in other words its agricultural colonies. The financially strained empire had no spare money to pay the additional expenses. Ulungga 武隆阿 (1776–1831), who had participated in the suppression of the rebellion, favoured a full-scale withdrawal. If garrison forces had to stay due to geopolitical concerns, Ulungga conceded, the spacious south of the greater Kashgar region must be reclaimed. Dense forests separated the southern part from Turkic settlements, and developing agricultural colonies thus did not need to dispute with Turkic Muslims. More importantly, the region had the Ulan usu River (烏蘭烏蘇河), upstream of the Kashgar River, and its branch, the Hun River 渾河 (also known as the Hunshui, 渾水河), to irrigate new lands.[11] Barčuq was to the east of Kashgar, sharing water resources with it. Within a few years, the Qing filled Barčuq and Kashgar with garrison soldiers and Chinese agriculturalists.

By 1836, a decade after the Khoja Jahangir-led rebellion, the tax revenue levied from new agricultural colonies could still not offset the extra cost of strengthening border defences. In that year, the Daoguang emperor commissioned the Xinjiang government to reassess the post-war rehabilitation. The emperor sent Išan and Fafuri 法福哩 (*c.*1782–1853), the resident councillors in Ili and Ush, to Barčuq and Kashgar. They then travelled to Yarkand to meet the resident councillors Hingde and Guan-fu.[12] Over the years, the Qing had steadily carried out agricultural colonisation in south-west Xinjiang. Te-yi-Shun-Bao's memorial based on the councillors' on-site survey stated that in Barčuq alone, more than 24,000 *mu* (1474.56ha) of land had been reclaimed.

To address the labour shortage in south-west Xinjiang, the Qing permitted and even encouraged Chinese migration to sparsely populated regions. This marked a departure from the long-standing policy of confining Chinese settlers in the north and keeping them separate from Turkic Muslims, who predominantly resided in southern Xinjiang. The Qing first recruited over 300 Chinese males to cultivate Barčuq's land. In 1835, the Chinese migrants were permitted to bring their families to Barčuq. Kashgar was inhabited by more than 500 Chinese households. This policy was rolled out cautiously to avoid the breakout of conflicts along ethnic lines: Barčuq had a sparse population of Turkic-speaking Muslims; in Kashgar, the Qing made sure that the newcomers would not encroach on the Turkic Muslims' land and properties. Nevertheless, this policy shift in the long-term favoured the Chinese taxpayers in contrast to the 'unruly' Turkic-speaking Muslims who largely fell under the jurisdiction of the *begs* – local headmen – and paid minimal taxes, if any, to the empire. The demographic change, the

Figure 128 (left) *Map of Agricultural Colonies in Barčuq and Kashgar*, detail of the network of canals in the Kashgar region

Figure 129 (above) *Map of Agricultural Colonies in Barčuq and Kashgar*, detail of the Yushui and Hunshui Rivers in Barčuq

Qing officials hoped, would bolster 'the [empire's] sway over southern Xinjiang'.

The 1836 palace memorial revealed that the Qing's agricultural colonisation did not yield sufficient revenue to maintain the status quo. In Barčuq, the 24,000-*mu* newly reclaimed land in total generated 1,400 *dan* (145,000l) of grain as taxes for 1834 and 1835, on average 700 *dan* per year. However, the stationed forces required 4,800 *dan* (497,000l) yearly. Around 85 percent of military provisions came from elsewhere, and a considerable portion was transported from Kashgar. Kashgar annually produced 60,000 *dan* (6,212,500l) of tax grain, which barely sufficed to support local garrison forces, and could not withstand emergencies. Natural disasters in 1832 and 1833 cost more than one third of Kashgar's revenue, and the government had to appropriate grain reserves. By 1836, there was still over 8,000 *dan* of deficit.[13] To balance the books, the memorialists concluded, the Qing had to simultaneously downsize border defence and continue expanding agricultural colonies.

The map attached to the 1836 palace memorial visualises the ministers' plan for continuing agricultural colonisation in Kashgar and Barčuq. The density of the hydraulic infrastructure on the lower left of the map visually suggests that agricultural colonisation was underway in the Kashgar region, which was ready to accommodate more Chinese labour. Barčuq, encircled by trees, occupies a more central position on the map, where much still had to be done. Rivers were the lifeline of arid southern Xinjiang. Accordingly, the ministers' plan was organised around the engineering of three rivers, the Ulan usu, Hunshui and Yushui (玉水). In the Kashgar region, the map shows, the primary focus was on harnessing the Ulan usu. North of Kashgar city, seven agricultural colonies had recently been installed. The yellow slips next to them note their names. These colonies were invariably connected the Ulan usu River via a network of canals. One such canal first connected to the river to the south and then bifurcated as it flowed across the south-western edge of Kashgar city. The two branches formed two concentric semicircles in the city's northern suburb and extended further with more branches to irrigate all existing agricultural colonies in Kashgar. The map used a thick vermillion line to denote the Ulan usu, alternatively knowns as the Qili river (七里河) in Kashgar. The thin lines were for the canals, weaving a vermillion, crescent-shaped web (**Fig. 128**).

The agricultural colonisation of Barčuq mainly relied on the Yushui River in the south and the Hunshui River in the north (**Fig. 129**). At the very centre of the map, clusters of trees are depicted, either in blue or green. The city of Barčuq was on the eastern verge of the forest, and much of this region was still heavily forested and awaited cultivation. To the east of the city, six agricultural colonies were indicated, their names provided on the yellow slips next to them. Correspondingly, six canals, denoted by thin green lines, channelled the Yushui River northwards. This hydraulic arrangement offered a temporary solution to the water needs of the agricultural colonies. However, the ministers warned that irrigation would remain the bottleneck of local agriculture, if the larger volume of Hunshui River was left untapped. Characterised by its limited discharge and unpredictably changing course, the Yushui River was hardly a stable source of fresh water. It was probably unable to provide sufficient water for the existing agricultural colonies on the northern bank, let alone land still to be reclaimed.

To further agricultural colonisation, the Hunshui River flowing past the north of Barčuq had to be exploited. Some arable fields, as the map showed, were scattered in the forest between Barčuq and Kashgar, while others were concentrated in the forest to the west of Barčuq city. Such a scale of agricultural colonisation required careful hydraulic planning. In 1833, the local government began digging canals to divert the Hunshui River south-eastwards. This network of canals partitioned the forest between Barčuq and Kashgar. Along the canals were the prospective and newly reclaimed areas. The canals were designed to link the Hunshui River with the Yushui River, with the aim of jointly irrigating the existing agricultural colonies to the east and the west of Barčuq city as well as further colonies to be installed. The memorialists reported that the 800-*li* (460km) of canals watered more than 4,000 *mu* (245ha) of newly

reclaimed land. The remaining cultivable land in the Barčuq region was estimated to exceed 100,000 *mu* (6,145ha). Three yellow slips – two on the eastern edge of the forest between Barčuq and Kashgar and one on the northern edge of the forest to the south-east of Barčuq city – stated: 'The amount of cultivable land here remains large'. The map showed that the hydraulic construction guaranteed a stable water supply from the Hunshui River to the three highlighted places.

Maps as useful tools

Palace memorials containing maps only account for a tiny portion of the collections in the First Historical Archives of China and the National Palace Museum in Taiwan. However, the surviving maps encompass the most sensitive themes concerning the empire's core interests – military campaigns, taxes, disaster relief, infrastructure construction and so forth. The colourful, scale-free maps found in palace memorials are reminiscent of landscape paintings. The blue-green palette of the *Map of Agricultural Colonies* reminds viewers of the use of two mineral pigments, azurite and malachite, in traditional Chinese paintings. The practice of using azurite and malachite to depict mountains and rocks, termed 'the green-and-blue manner' after centuries of evolution, grew to maturity in around the 10th century and persisted through to the Qing dynasty.[14] The Qing court avidly collected green-and-blue landscape paintings of previous dynasties, and the imperial artists continuously produced paintings in this style. The blue-green foliage and blue mountains tinged with light crimson in the *Map of Agricultural Colonies* blurred the line between maps and paintings, which fell under the umbrella term of *tu* (圖).[15]

Aesthetics were in no way the principal concern of memorialists, whose maps were meant to be administratively informative. Their picture-like creations were inaccurate by the standards of modern quantitative maps. Nevertheless, inaccuracy did not compromise their utility, partly due to the composite nature of palace memorials. Maps as the graphic components of palace memorials were complemented by the textual elements and vice versa. Only when considered together did they provide comprehensive geographical information.

The utility of attached maps results primarily from their flexibility. Despite the extra-bureaucratic nature of palace memorials, their textual components, from format to content, had been standardised by the mid-18th century. Even memorialists' handwriting had to conform to protocols.[16] In contrast, maps attached to palace memorials had few rules to follow, and were the least regulated component of the palace memorial system. Memorialists could freely tailor their maps based on their specific needs. For instance, the *Map of Agricultural Colonies* used vermillion, an unconventional colour for bodies of water, to indicate rivers and canals. The water of the Ulan usu River was said to be red.[17] The vermillion lines thus delineate the drainage system of the Ulan usu, which encompassed the Hunshui River, the Qili River and two canal networks in Kashgar and Barčuq. Rivers and canals outside this system are shown in green. As its title suggests, the *Map of Agricultural Colonies* focused on land reclamation and revenue increase. Hydraulic engineering served merely as the means, not the goal. Only the relative locations of canals relative to farmland and the Yushui and Hunshu Rivers are depicted. In contrast, many contemporary maps provided detailed information on the structure of canals, dykes, and so on, in line with the themes of palace memorials.

The flexibility of cartography significantly enhanced efficiency. Most of the maps attached to palace memorials are schematic maps. While they might still require on-site investigation, the turnaround time was much shorter compared to scale maps. The *Map of Agricultural Colonies* was largely based on Išan's survey of Barčuq and Kashgar and was completed in just two weeks.[18] The map, along with the palace memorial, was submitted to the Daoguang emperor two months later. Scale maps were comparatively time- and resource-consuming. The *Kangxi Atlas* (*Huangyu Quanlan tu* 皇與全覽圖), for example, a Jesuit-led cartographical project in the early 18th century, involved the measurement of latitudes and longitudes, and to this end, from May to September 1709, imperial mapmakers took four months visiting various sites in Manchuria, the Qing empire's north-east frontier.[19] The Qianlong Atlas updated the *Kangxi Atlas* with newly annexed Xinjiang. In 1756 and 1759, imperial cartographers respectively investigated northern and southern Xinjiang. The general survey of south-west Xinjiang, from Aksu to Kashgar, lasted 24 days.[20] In addition to on-site surveys, both cartographical projects took years to complete. Few maps attached to palace memorials had a spatial scope comparable to that of the *Kangxi Atlas* and *Qianlong Atlas*, but it is reasonable to assume that scale maps would require much more investment in personnel, expertise and time than non-scale maps of similar scopes.

How accurate does a map have to be to be useful? This is largely determined by how it is used. Maps in palace memorials were not designed to stand alone; they illustrated palace memorials. 'Drawing a map and adding a textual explanation' (*Huitu tieshuo* 繪圖貼說) is a phrase that memorialists used to describe palace memorials containing maps.[21] In this way, non-scale maps continued to be useful to the Qing administration in the 1820s and 1830s and, indeed, withstood the transformations in the second half of the 19th century, and were still in use until the collapse of the Qing empire in the early 20th century.

Notes

1 For the extra-bureaucratic nature of the palace memorial system, see Bartlett 1991.

2 For the numbers, see Li Xiaocong 2019, 3–4 and Feng Mingzhu 2008, 112.

3 This article follows the division of Xinjiang in Songyun 1821. Northern Xinjiang was north of the Tianshan range. The important garrisons and cities in northern Xinjiang included Barkol, Gucheng (古城), Urumqi, Kurkara usu (庫爾喀喇烏蘇) and Tarbagatai. Southern Xinjiang was south of the Tianshan range. The important garrisons and cities in southern Xinjiang included Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, Aksu, Ush, Kuqa, Karasahr, Turfan, and Hami. South-west Xinjiang covered four main regions: Kashgar, Yengisar, Yarkand and Khotan.

4 For a full account of the Khoja Jahangir-led rebellion, see Newby 2005.

5 Ingge's 英和 1826 memorial claims that four routes connected western Xinjiang and northern Xinjiang: one was from Urumqi to Turfan; two were through the Muzart pass; one crossed the Issyk Kul lake. See Cao *c.* 1830, vol. 97: 97–8.

6 The dates in this chapter use the Gregorian calendar; see Cao *c.* 1830, vol. 97: 238, 484.

7 The emperor sent the letter to De-ying-a on 1 October 1827; see Cao *c.* 1830, vol. 100: 128–30. De-ying-a's memorial is dated 2 November 1827; it is in the Grand Council Archives in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (see De-ying-a 1827). Manchu ministers' names are provided based on their Manchu spellings. The Chinese transliterations are offered when Manchu names are unavailable. To distinguish Manchu spellings and Chinese transliterations, hyphens are added to Chinese transliterations.

8 The National Palace Museum call number of the map is 故機 058804. Feng Mingzhu claimed that it was attached to a palace memorial during the Daoguang reign, but did not identify the corresponding memorial; see Feng Mingzhu 2008, 114–15. Wang Qiming has argued that the map is the attachment of Deyinga's routine memorial on 2 November 1827; see Wang Qiming 2021, 119–20.

9 Changling's 長齡 memorial first quoted the emperor's edict and then responded to the issues brought up by Daoguang; see Changling *et al.* 1827.

10 Te-yi-Shun-Bao *et al.* 1836b.

11 Ulungga 1827; the Kashgar rivers have two sources, one of which is the Ulan usu River; see Zhu Yuqi 2005, 20–3.

12 For their itinerary, see Te-yi-Shun-Bao *et al.* 1836a; in Barčuq, Išan and Fafuri were joined by Guan-fu, see Te-yi-Shun-Bao *et al.* 1836b.

13 Te-yi-Shun-Bao *et al.* 1836b.

14 For the evolution of the 'blue-and-green manner' in medieval China and its regentship with Daoism, see McNair 1997.

15 There were less generic terms such as *yutu* 輿圖 or *ditu* 地圖 reserved for maps, but more often maps, including those attached to palace memorials, were simply referred to as *tu*.

16 For the uniformisation of palace memorials, see Chuang Chi-fa 1979, 69–75.

17 Zhu Yuqi 2005, 25, 28.

18 For their itinerary, see Te-yi-Shun-Bao *et al.* 1836a.

19 For the process of mapping Manchuria, see Cams 2017, 111–13.

20 For the itinerary of the 1759 survey, see Jin Yu 2014, 249–66.

21 De-ying-a used this phrase in his 1826 memorial; see De-ying-a 1827. The Daoguang emperor forwarded Te-yi-Shun-Bao's memorial and the attached map to the Grand Academicians [of the Grand Secretariat] (大學士) and Grand Councillors (軍機大臣). His vermillion rescripts said: 'Let the Grand Councillor discuss [the memorial] and memorialise [their opinions]. Send the text and map together.' The ministers' reply used the same phrase as De-ying-a to refer to Te-yi-Shun-Bao and his subordinates' work. See Changling *et al.* 1836.

Chapter 12
Missionaries, Manchus and the military: the transmission of knowledge during China's long 19th century, as told through British Library collections

Emma Harrison

China's long 19th century is an incredibly complex, interesting and multifaceted period of history. Contemporary thinkers and modern scholars alike have taken a range of approaches to negotiate the many tensions that characterise the period – between traditional values and nascent modernity, the familiar and the foreign, continuity and change, and so on. As a result, it has been variously described as both late imperial and early modern, and continues to raise intriguing questions about the criteria we use in our definition of such terms.[1] It was a time of conflict, in both a literal and ideological sense, but it also saw a great deal of hybridity and experimentation. Knowledge flowed in all directions, manifesting in a variety of different forms and contexts, as people sought the means to orientate themselves within a rapidly changing world.

The transmission of knowledge is more than just a clinical exchange of dry facts and information. Any definition of knowledge has a human dimension that refers to not only the existence of information but also an individual's perception or awareness of it. When knowledge is set forth in a document of some kind, the knowledge that document conveys is influenced not only by authorial intent but also by the mindset of the recipient and the manner in which the information is presented. As such, the written materials that survive from this period can offer fascinating insights into the nature of intellectual exchanges, the preoccupations of those involved and the wider trajectories that link them together.

The following discussion will focus on a small selection of items from the British Library's diverse and significant collection of materials relating to 19th-century China, namely: an imperial manuscript dictionary, a large scroll map, a printed book, a handwritten letter or essay and a lithographed magazine. These five objects include a variety of formats and collectively span most of the long 19th century. They range from the imperial to the everyday and were used to communicate several different types of knowledge – linguistic, geographical, technological, religious and topical. They also reflect the context in which the collection itself was created, given the significant presence of British government officials, military personnel, business people, missionaries and their families, travelling to and living in China at this time.

Although they differ in many ways, all five items are motivated by a specific purpose, aiming to persuade an audience or project an image. As such, the knowledge they contain is subjective, inherently biased and highly contextual. While each individual object offers only a snapshot of a specific moment or interaction, they all act as enduring reminders of both individual human experience and the broader themes that shaped this important transitional period.

The Pentaglot Dictionary, *c.* 1794

To set the scene for the 19th century, we begin by looking at a late 18th-century multilingual dictionary. Commissioned and completed during the latter years of the Qianlong period, the Pentaglot Dictionary (*Yuzhi wuti Qing wen jian* 御製五體清文鑑, Manchu: *Han-i araha sunja hacin-i hergen kamciha manju gisun-i buleku bithe*, or 'Imperially-

commissioned, five-part mirror of the Qing language') is a large manuscript work in 32 sections, plus an additional four-section supplement (**Fig. 130**). It comprises 2,580 pages and a total of 18,671 terms, which are divided into 318 categories, including heaven, earth, flora, fauna, warfare, transportation, literature, religion, food and clothing. The status of the work is reflected in the use of distinctive yellow silk brocade covers, which is reminiscent of previous imperial commissions such as the Ming-dynasty *Yongle Encyclopaedia* (*Yongle dadian* 永樂大典).

In this dictionary, each term appears in Manchu, Chinese, Mongolian, Tibetan and a Karluk Turkic language spoken in Uyghur regions. It was the latest in a series of imperially commissioned, multilingual dictionaries that can be traced back to the late 17th century. It represents the final stage in an evolution of these 'Manchu mirrors' (*Qing wen jian* 清文鑑), which appeared in two-, three- and four-language versions. At first, Manchu was combined with Chinese, then Mongolian, then all three together, followed by the addition of Tibetan and finally Turkic.[2]

Following the territorial expansion of the period, these became the five official languages of the Qing empire under the Qianlong emperor.[3] As a non-Han conquest dynasty ruling over the former Ming territories, the Qing had always sought to strike a balance between 'maintaining Manchu distinctiveness' and demonstrating cultural continuity within the wider lineage of Chinese dynastic rule.[4] As an Inner Asian empire, it was also strategically important for the Qing to employ similar legitimising techniques to reinforce historical, cultural and religious links with Mongolians and Tibetans, and to assert its authority over the Turkic-speaking Muslims in recently conquered Central Asian territories such as the Tarim Basin and Dzungaria.[5]

Knowledge of these languages and the ability to translate between them would certainly have been important for those who worked in the administration of the Qing empire, especially the borderlands. However, the role of this particular dictionary is likely to have been more symbolic than functional. For a start, it is a very large work and probably less practical to use than the various texts produced around this time to aid translation between just two or three languages. It also lacks an index and would not have had a wide circulation as it appears to have been made in only a small number of manuscript copies.[6] Whether set in stone as a monumental inscription or committed to the page in an imperial dictionary, the use of all five languages in a single work acted as a political statement that represented the 'five peoples' together and projected an image of unity across the empire. As historian Pamela Kyle Crossley describes, these works were 'deliberately designed as imperial utterances in more than one language', and reflect the role of the emperor in bringing the diverse parts of the empire together into a coherent whole.[7]

However, this was a difficult balancing act and not always successful. Even a carefully constructed document such as the Pentaglot Dictionary is not necessarily as inclusive as it initially seems. Firstly, there are various cultural and linguistic groups, including in south and southwestern China, that are omitted from or

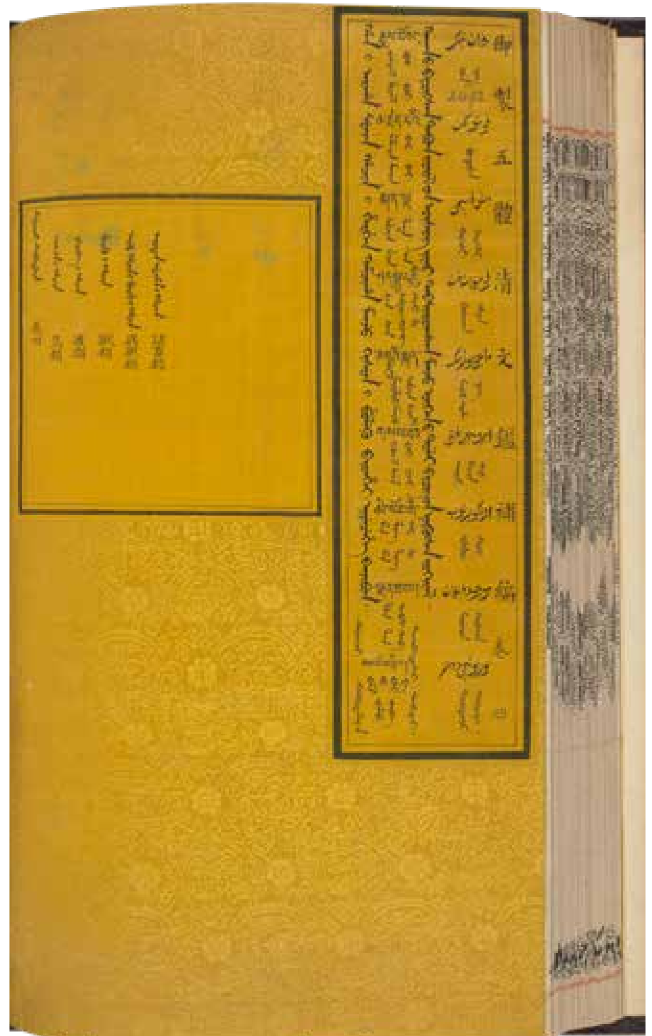


Figure 130 The Pentaglot Dictionary (*Yuzhi wuti Qing wen jian* 御製五體清文鑑), front cover of a supplementary volume on animals, *c.* 1794, ink on paper with yellow silk cover, h. 40.9cm, w. 24.2cm (page). British Library, London, Or 8147

controversially subsumed within the officially designated 'five peoples'.[8] Secondly, the dictionary itself contains some indications of an implicit hierarchy amongst the languages that are represented, or at least a subtle suggestion that some were considered more central to the Qing administration than others. On the cover page, for example, the title slip on the right is in all five scripts, whereas the contents are only described in the two 'main' official languages, Manchu and Chinese.

The whole work also favours the orientation and reading direction of the Manchu script, with each entry being displayed in vertical columns and progressing from left to right. The sequence of languages used throughout the work starts with Manchu, then Tibetan, Mongolian, Turkic and finally Chinese (**Fig. 131**). This order does not follow the evolution of the multilingual Manchu mirrors mentioned above, as Manchu and Chinese are first and last respectively, with Mongolian in the middle, and the later additions sandwiched in between. It is also interesting to note that the second and fourth entries (Tibetan and Turkic) have additional transcriptions in Manchu script. The Tibetan actually has two, owing to differences between the spoken language and its written form. The fact that these

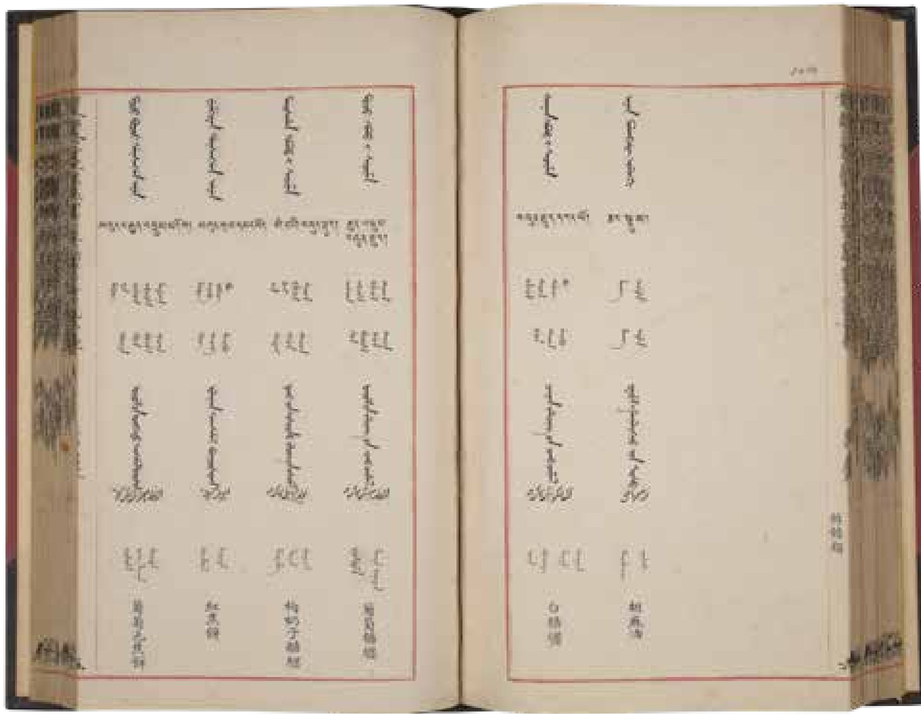


Figure 131 The Pentaglot Dictionary, double-page opening showing the names of foods, including a fried snack called *sachima*

transcriptions were deemed necessary implies that these languages were not as well-known within the Qing bureaucracy, and the fact they are in Manchu once again places Manchu at the top of the pecking order.

In this way, the Pentaglot Dictionary acts as a deliberate, symbolic representation of the multilingual and multicultural nature of the Qing empire. Less intentionally, it also hints at the disparities between different groups and the degree to which they were reflected in the Qing administration.

A map of the empire, *c.* 1800

The next item continues the theme of empire with an even more visual representation of the Qing's idealised notion of itself. It is a map of the Qing empire consisting of eight scrolls that, when placed side-by-side, measure more than one metre tall and two metres wide (**Fig. 132**). There is some debate about whether to define this work as a rubbing or woodblock print,[9] but however the image was transferred, the end result is a visually striking and sizeable map in deep, blue ink with the texts and geographical features picked out in negative space. A series of symbols described in the introductory text are used to indicate different administrative units and gradations of colour help to distinguish the land from the sea. Visible down the right-hand side is the title, *Complete Geographical Map of the Everlasting Unified Great Qing Empire (Da Qing wannian yitong dili quantu* 大清萬年一統地理全圖), which itself acts as a clear expression of the map's primary purpose: to represent the full extent of the Qing empire in all its glory.

The map was produced in the Jiaqing period, though the exact dating is uncertain. The colophon only says that it was based on a map of 1767 by Huang Qianren 黃千人 (1694–1771). As with the Pentaglot Dictionary, this map has its origins in the Qianlong reign and its period of great territorial expansion. Maps like this were often commissioned by the court to document the growing empire following major conquests, such as the Qianlong emperor's 'Ten Great Campaigns' (*Shiquan wugong* 十全武功).[10] However, it is interesting to see the same information reproduced in a slightly later period, which had already seen internal conflicts such as the White Lotus Rebellion beginning to undermine the overall stability of the empire. At any time, a map like this would serve as an explicit reminder of 'the Great Qing', but in the context of the Jiaqing reign, it could also be seen as an attempt to rehabilitate the Qing's public image and reassert imperial authority across the empire.

A great deal of geographical knowledge is included here, but maps, of course, are never neutral, so not all of this information can be taken at face value. What we see here is a Sino-centric, or more precisely Qing-centric, view of the world focused on portraying the imperial might of the Qing and all of the lands that had been brought under its dominion. The map includes mountains, rivers, deserts, settlements and internal administrative boundaries, but no external borders as the point is to depict a single, universal empire. It is also very selective about the information it chooses to include about adjacent lands, with the representation of these peripheral states reflecting their relative importance to the Qing. For example, Korea, as an important tributary nation, gets a whole paragraph on the right-hand side.

In the north-west corner, we can see an example of what Howard Nelson, who curated an exhibition on Chinese and Japanese maps at the British Library in 1974, referred to as 'fringes of fantasy' (**Fig. 133**).[11] These areas are incidental and only included for the purpose of situating the main subject of the map within its broader geographical context. As a result, they are distinctly vague and loosely defined. Russia receives some attention in a short paragraph at the top of the penultimate scroll, but west of this, the world

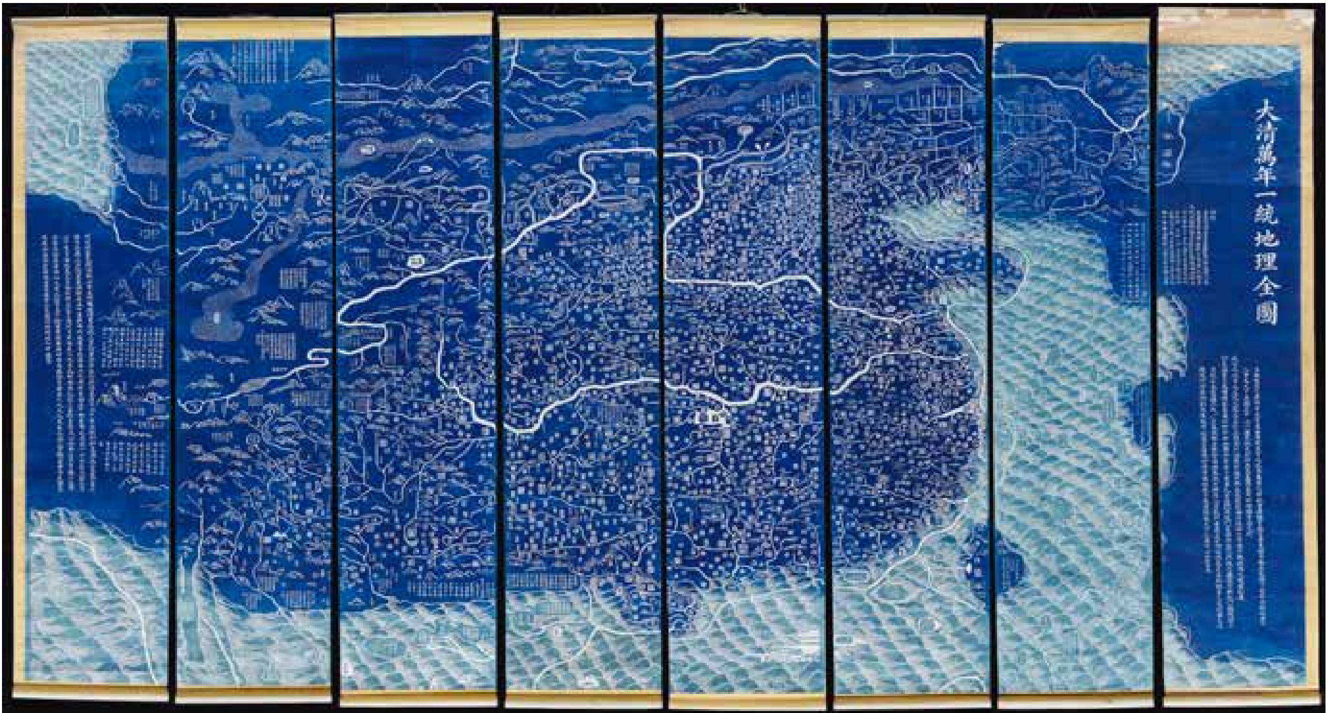


Figure 132 ***Complete Geographical Map of the Everlasting Unified Great Qing Empire*** **(*Da Qing wannian yitong dili quantu* 大清萬年一統地理全圖), probably Beijing, *c.* 1800, blue ink on paper, h. 132cm, w. 231.6cm. British Library, London, 15406.b.14**

beyond the Qing is depicted as a large body of water in which a handful of labels float like a small string of islands. These include the 'Great Western Ocean' (Da xiyang 大西洋) and 'Small Western Ocean' (Xiao xiyang 小西洋), which have come to be associated with the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean respectively. Nestled among them are a smattering of placenames rendered phonetically – such as England (Yingguili 英圭黎) and France (Helanxi 和蘭西) – as well some longer descriptions that mention Holland (Helan 荷蘭) and Islamic states (Huihui zuguo 回回祖國).

Nelson also states that 'accuracy in a map may be measured by the efficacy with which it conveys the information it sets out to convey, rather than by the extent to which the cartographer is minutely faithful to his terrain'.[12] By this token, this map can be said to be accurate in as much as it reflects the intentions behind its creation. The density of detail of some areas and the sparsity in others is a conscious choice to depict no more and no less than is necessary to keep the viewer's attention focused on the territory of the Qing. However, without contemporary accounts of how it was

Figure 133 ***Complete Geographical Map of the Everlasting Unified Great Qing Empire*****, detail of the north-west corner showing the representation of lands beyond the Qing empire**

雷櫝送至船底位置

海國圖志 卷五十八 攻船水雷圖說 十

洋船大者長十五六丈次者長十一二丈八九丈不等其繫錨之索擲在水面離船約二三丈水雷引繩須長七八丈方合用計搭於錨索放去尚可入船底四五丈間適當大桅之下矣若錨索或偏左偏右度其勢順流放去不能適當船底之中則須另製小鐵錨繫定引繩至敵船上流安挿務使雷櫝恰順流浮在船底中間地位不可差失然洋船身重泊定後風吹不甚動移且首尾俱有錨索若用兩雷器將引繩之稍結連一從船左一從船右順流而下引繩遇錨索挂住兩雷器恰在船

Figure 134 ***Illustrated Treatise on Maritime Countries*** **(*Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志) (stitched image showing an illustration of a Western vessel and the accompanying text, overleaf in the original), 1849 edition, ink on paper, h. 29.2cm, w. 18.6cm. British Library, London, 15275.a.5**

received in its original context, it is difficult to measure the map's true efficacy and therefore its accuracy. Instead, we are left with an object that gives us one side of the story. The geographical and political knowledge demonstrated here is presented unilaterally – as a statement, not a discussion. It is an example of a powerful state projecting its own self-image as a prosperous and all-encompassing empire.

Within a few decades, however, these blurry 'fringes of fantasy' would be thrown into sharp relief by the violence of the First Opium War. This was the first of several international conflicts that would cause many to question the inward-looking tendencies described above and seek a more nuanced understanding of the world as a whole, as well as Qing China's place within it.

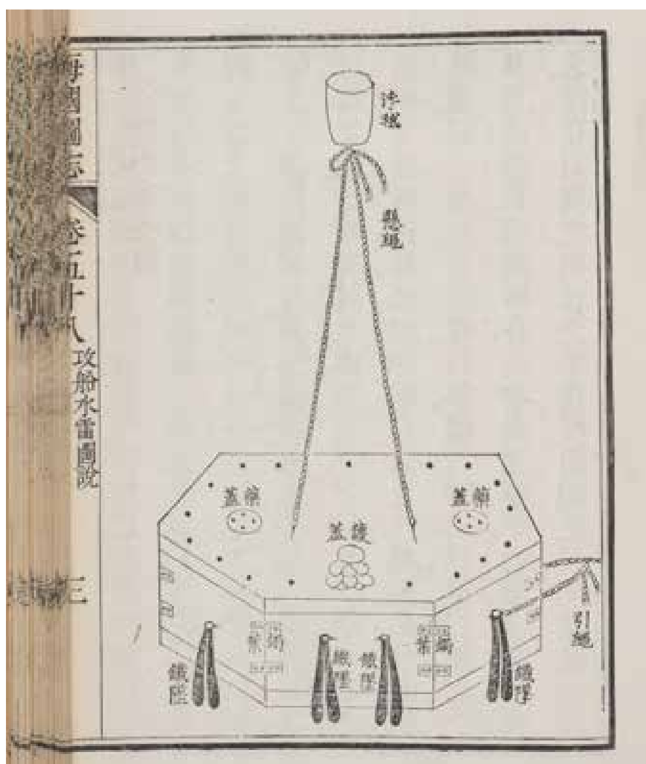


Figure 135 Detail of submarine mine from *Illustrated Treatise on Maritime Countries* (see Figure 134)

A response to the Opium War, 1849

The third item is the printed book *Illustrated Treatise on Maritime Countries* (*Haiguo tuzhi* 海國圖志) by Wei Yuan 魏源 (1794–1857). The first edition of this work was completed within a year or so of the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, which marked the end of the First Opium War, ceded Hong Kong to the British, and opened up several treaty ports along China's southern and eastern coastlines. It is a detailed and expansive work of mid-19th century geopolitics, which drew upon not only Chinese sources but also foreign texts in translation to create 'the earliest and most systematic postwar exploration of [China's] geographic and strategic predicament'.[13]

Wei Yuan was a philosopher, geo-strategist and loyal supporter of the Qing. He was mentored by Lin Zexu, the man charged by the Daoguang emperor with the task of suppressing the opium trade in Canton (Guangzhou). The *Illustrated Treatise* builds upon research and translations of European texts that Lin Zexu first started to compile during the early years of the Opium War. Wei then added to these sources over several years, expanding the original work from 50 to 60 *juan* and then to 100 *juan* by 1852.[14] The two scholar-officials studied various aspects of countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas – their geography, history, politics, economics, law, science, technology, religion and customs – not only to gain a better understanding of them as opponents or allies, but also with the aim of adapting foreign knowledge to help strengthen China from within.

One section discusses European naval warfare, including the construction and deployment of submarine mines, explained using text and diagrams. In one illustration, the mine is visible directly below the hull of a Western vessel, to

the left of an anchor descending from the bow, showing how it should be positioned in relation to the ship (**Fig. 134**). The preceding pages provide technical details of the mine itself, including its internal mechanisms (**Fig. 135**).

As can be seen from this example, this work takes a very technical and research-driven approach to the issue of defending the empire against foreign powers. Wei Yuan was not the only Chinese scholar using foreign sources to find out more about the wider world after the Opium War, but the scope and scale of the *Illustrated Treatise* made it one of the most significant intellectual responses to the war at this time.[15] When it was published, the work received a mixed response. There were many who criticised it as inaccurate, or even dangerous on the grounds that Qing China was not yet strong enough to carry out the bold and broad-scale geopolitical strategies that it outlined.[16] The potential impact of the *Illustrated Treatise* was even acknowledged in an issue of the missionary periodical *The Chinese Repository* from September 1847. Although this review names Lin Zexu as the author and is often quite critical of the content, it also claims that the *Illustrated Treatise* was 'without anything to equal it in the history of Chinese literature'. It notes approvingly that the publication marks a renewed interest in geography among higher-ranking officials, which could be considered 'the commencement of better things however insignificant the beginning'.[17]

In the end, the *Illustrated Treatise* can be said to be both timely and ahead of its time. Wei Yuan believed that the application of Western knowledge in the modernisation of military and naval technology was the key to the Qing's survival. His book combined recent and traditional knowledge and techniques in order to situate Qing China within a global maritime context and offered potential solutions to the problems it faced at that time. Many of these ideas were later echoed in the Self-Strengthening movement and the other reformist policies of the latter half of the 19th century. For the Qing, these measures proved to be too little too late, taking place only after it had been further weakened by the Second Opium War and significant internal conflicts such as the Taiping Civil War. Nonetheless, it marked the beginning of a shift in attitudes and laid important foundations for post-dynastic Chinese geopolitics.[18]

A theological debate, 1861

Further examples of the importance of terminology and translation can be found in an essay on the immaterial nature of God by the British protestant missionary Joseph Edkins (1823–1905) (**Figs 136–7**). The main text is in black ink and is overwritten by bold, red annotations added by Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1814–1864), the Taiping leader and founder of the 'Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace' (*Taiping tianguo* 太平天國). As the only surviving discussion of Hong's theological perspective in his own handwriting, these annotations offer incredible insight into the mindset of the Heavenly King himself.[19] The document as a whole is a unique, first-hand account that speaks to the heart of the millenarian movement that threatened to overthrow the Qing in the mid-19th century.

The conflict between the Taiping followers and Qing forces constitutes the bloodiest civil war in history. It was predicated on a particular version of Christianity espoused by Hong Xiuquan, a Hakka man from Guangdong province. Hong was one of many at this time who spent years of his life trying, and failing, to pass the civil service examinations. After one such attempt, and influenced by a Christian pamphlet he had read, Hong is said to have entered a divine trance in which he met the Christian God and was revealed to be His second son and the younger brother of Jesus Christ. According to this revelation, Hong was also entrusted with a holy mission to destroy the Manchu Qing and other evil demons who were plaguing China and usurping the position of the 'one true God' in the minds of its people. In this 'radically monotheistic, non-trinitarian' version of Christianity, neither Jesus nor Hong were divine but rather served God as part of a traditional – and recognisably Confucian – hierarchy between father and son.[20] Over the coming years, Hong's mission would escalate into a widespread and violent revolt against the Qing dynasty in which upwards of 20 million people died and countless others were displaced. Meanwhile, Hong himself became ever more entrenched in his religious worldview, as well as his own unassailable position within it.

This manuscript was created in the spring of 1861, when Reverend Joseph Edkins visited the Taiping capital of Nanjing in the hope of re-educating Hong Xiuquan in a few fundamental matters of Christian theology. Here, Edkins has copied out one of his essays in Chinese for the personal consultation of the Heavenly King, writing in large, clear characters to allow for Hong's failing eyesight. He cites the Gospel of John – 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him' – and other elements of scripture, in order to explain that all references to God's physical form should be taken figuratively.[21] Hong, however, had chosen to understand these passages literally in order to support his own account of having seen God in person. In fact, any concession to Edkins's viewpoint ran the risk of undermining the basis of his ideology, so instead he set about refuting these references one by one.[22]

Hong made his corrections directly over Edkins's text using thick, red brushstrokes. They included changing terms such as 'figurative' (*yu* 喻) to 'real' (*shi* 實) and removing references to Jesus being God's 'only son' (*duzi* 獨子). Even the title of the essay, *On the Corporeality of God Being Figurative and His Incorporeality Being Real* (*Shangdi you xing wei yu wu xing nai shi lun* 上帝有形為喻無形乃實論), has been crossed out and replaced with: 'The Sacred Countenance of Shangdi Only the Son of God Can See'[23] (*Shangdi shengyan wei shenzi de jian lun* 上帝聖顏惟神子得見論).[24]

On the second page, Hong composes a poem further clarifying his position:

> The Elder Brother and I have personally seen the Father's heavenly face;
>
> Father and Sons, Elder and Younger brother, nothing is distinct.
>
> The Father and the Elder Brother have brought me to sit in the Heavenly Court;
>
> Those who believe this will enjoy eternal bliss.[25]

Figures 136–7 Reverend Joseph Edkins, with annotations in red by Hong Xiuquan, *On the Corporeality of God Being Figurative and His Incorporeality Being Real* (*Shangdi you xing wei yu wu xing nai shi lun* 上帝有形為喻無形乃實論), March 1861, black and red ink on blue paper, h. 33cm, w. 41.3cm (each page). British Library, London, Or 8143

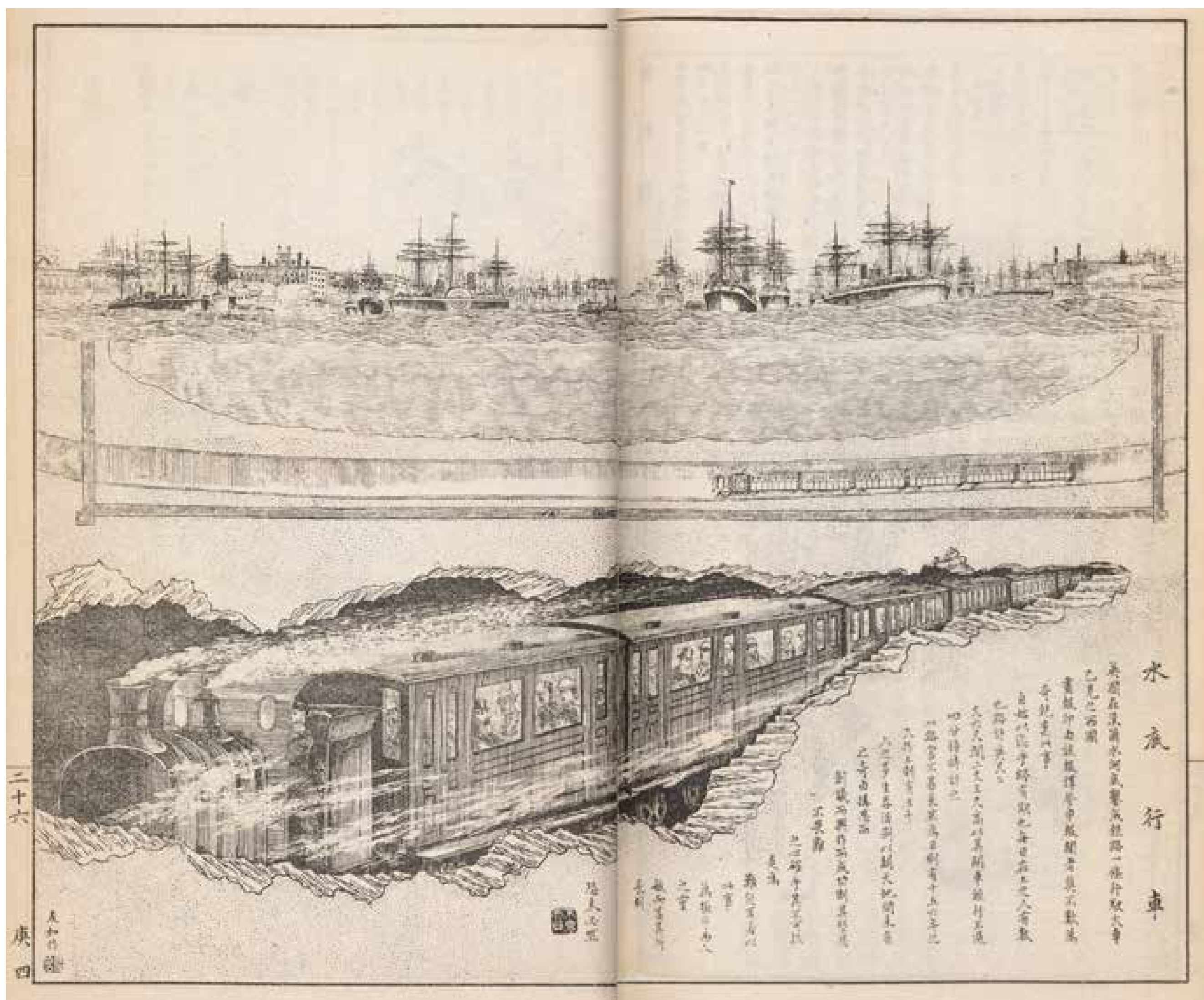


Figure 138 Wu Youru 吳友如 (artist), ***A Train that Runs Under Water*** (***Shuidi xingche*** 水底行車), lithograph illustration, ***Dianshizhai Pictorial*** (***Dianshizhai huabao*** 點石齋畫報), 1886, ink on paper, h. 22cm, w. 12cm (approx. closed). British Library, London, 15298.e.1

This item is a rare and significant survival as both sides of the debate are preserved within a single document. Although it does not represent the full extent of interactions between Edkins and Hong, this stark juxtaposition of viewpoints is an accurate reflection of the theological stalemate that they reached in real life. Each of them saw an opportunity to use their superior knowledge of religious matters to convert the other to their way of thinking, but ultimately their respective versions of this knowledge were so diametrically opposed that they could not be reconciled.

A Shanghai lithograph, 1884–98

One of the people displaced by the violence of the Taiping Civil War was a young Wu Youru 吳友如 (*c.* 1840–1894), who fled his native Suzhou for the relative safety of Shanghai's foreign concessions. By the 1880s, he had proven himself to be a talented artist and would soon emerge as an important figure in the burgeoning field of reportage art, or 'newspainting', in China.[26] By extension, he would also play a role in the early development of China's lithographic print industry, when the status of woodblocks as China's pre-eminent printmaking technology faced its first credible threat in centuries.

In 1884, Wu Youru was hired as the primary contributor to the newly established *Dianshizhai huabao* (點石齋畫報, 'Dianshizhai pictorial'), an illustrated news magazine that reported on contemporary events and cultural curiosities occurring in China and beyond. It was produced by a lithographic studio of the same name that was owned by the British businessman Ernest Major (1841–1908), who had founded the first modern Chinese-language newspaper, *Shenbao* (申報), in 1872. The pictorial was issued from 1884 until 1898 as a supplement to the *Shenbao,* as well as a standalone publication, and featured more than 400 illustrations by Wu Youru during its run.[27]

Magazines like the *Dianshizhai huabao* represented the beginnings of a new visual genre in China. It has been noted by the sinologist Rudolf Wagner that images had always been secondary to text in traditional Chinese book culture, and realistic depiction was generally limited to the tradition of complex diagrams in technical works, as seen in the *Illustrated Treatise on Maritime Countries*.[28] The *Dianshizhai huabao* inverted this traditional relationship between text and image and offered a more popular outlet for factual illustration. Also like the *Illustrated Treatise*, war acted as a catalyst in its creation, with early reporting focussing on the

Figure 139 Wu Youru 吳友如 (artist), 'Wonderland under the Sea' (*Haidi qijing* 海底奇境) from *Random Jottings of a Wusong Recluse* by Wang Tao, lithograph illustration, *Dianshizhai Pictorial* (*Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報), 1886, ink on paper. h. 22cm, w. 12cm (approx. closed). British Library, London, 15298.e.1

Sino-French War of 1884, and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5 receiving widespread attention later on. Over time, the events featured in the *Dianshizhai huabao* ranged from familiar to foreign, from factual to fun and occasionally a bit fantastical. They included images as diverse as sailors facing fearsome sea dragons, portraits of government officials, women being rescued from burning buildings, submarines, hot air balloons and gentlemen playing cricket.[29] Combining international affairs with news and stories from closer to home, the *Dianshizhai huabao* proved to be 'the first long-lived supplier of industrially produced, mass-marketed images of contemporary Chinese politics and society'.[30]

The two examples illustrated here reflect some of the different content types featured in the publication – one commemorating the opening of the Mersey Tunnel in England in 1886 (**Fig. 138**) and the other depicting a scene from *Random Jottings of a Wusong Recluse* (*Songyin manlu* 淞隱漫錄) (**Fig. 139**). The latter is a collection of short stories by the reformist, author and world traveller Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897), which was serialised in the pictorial in 1884–7.[31] The *Dianshizhai* hired Chinese artists, printers and editorial staff but also took inspiration and content directly from foreign publications such as *The Illustrated London News* and *Harper's Weekly*. This introduced China to a global community of illustrated news reporting.[32]

However, the significance of the *Dianshizhai huabao* goes beyond the undeniably eclectic and internationally sourced content. Pictorials like this played an important role in establishing lithography as a print technology to rival woodblock printing, which had held sway in China since at least the 8th century. Following the arrival of stone-based lithographic printing in Shanghai in 1876, it became clear that lithography had certain advantages over traditional Chinese printing methods.[33] Not only did it preserve the aesthetic qualities of the original – something which movable type had never been able to achieve – but lithographic editions also had lower costs, longer print runs, and arguably greater visual appeal than their woodblock equivalents.[34] In the years that followed, several Chinese lithographic publishing houses were established and began applying this technology to the reproduction of traditional materials such as civil service examination texts, artworks and calligraphy manuals. While many studios continued in this vein, the *Dianshizhai* chose to experiment and create materials that would appeal to a wider demographic. Although its readership was not necessarily as working class as some contemporary accounts may have claimed, the novelty and affordability of the *Dianshizhai huabao* allowed it to gain widespread popularity and reach new audiences. By combining classical themes and literary allusions with vivid imagery and topical content, it catered to an increasingly diverse literate community.[35] It tapped into the consumer culture of cosmopolitan Shanghai and also reached further afield, offering thousands of people a window onto current affairs and the world beyond Qing China. On the basis of the industrial and social change it engendered, print historian Christopher A. Reed notes the role of lithography in helping to establish a strong association between Shanghai and 'the technological innovation that underlies modernity'.[36]

In terms of form, content, outlook and audience, the *Dianshizhai huabao* represents a convergence of the old and the new by making use of foreign influences to produce something uniquely Chinese. It was a landmark publication and a technological turning point in the development of a distinctly new media for China. Against a backdrop of cultural curiosity, social change and innovation, the *Dianshizhai* appealed to both traditional and modern tastes and satisfied a growing desire for both information and entertainment. Though it occasionally favoured sensationalism over accuracy, it nonetheless widened the horizons of its reading public.

Conclusion

Whether viewed together or individually, it is clear that the five items described above can be used to answer a lot of questions we may have about the social, cultural, political, technological and intellectual developments of the long 19th century. They also raise many new questions about the nature of the knowledge they convey, whether it can be relied upon, and how effective or impactful it may have been at the time. They reflect the importance of adopting a discerning approach to the consumption and dissemination

of knowledge that keeps in mind both authorial intent and potential audience.

Another striking feature of these items is their interconnectedness. They were all made at different times, by different people, in different parts of China, and yet they represent more than just a series of individual, isolated occurrences. The knowledge that they transmit is closely tied to external factors and historical context. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to map networks of causation and correlation that may not have been evident at the time. We can also indulge in various counter-factual enquiries, such as: would the Taiping Civil War have happened if Hong Xiuquan had not picked up that Christian pamphlet? Would Wu Youru have found his way to Shanghai and the *Dianshizhai huabao* if it were not for the Taiping Civil War? Or, how would Shanghai have developed differently without the influence of the international community?

Whether produced by Manchus, missionaries, military personnel, mapmakers or media outlets, manuscripts and publications like those featured in this chapter bear witness to important historical events and wider social trends. They are evidence of the kind of 'world-shrinking technologies' that brought more of society into contact with each other and widened participation in global communities of knowledge exchange.[37] Although each item is limited in the stories it can tell, these stories can be combined and interrogated in order to build a more detailed and nuanced understanding of China's long 19th century and the people that experienced it first hand.

Notes

1 For an account of the periodisation of the Qing dynasty and the various ways in which it can be situated within the wider historical context, see the introduction to Rowe 2012.
2 Rawski 2007.
3 Rawski 1996.
4 He 2017.
5 Rawski 1996.
6 Three copies are known to exist. Aside from the one now held at the British Library, there are two manuscript copies in Beijing, which were previously kept in Beijing and Shenyang respectively. See Osterkamp 2016.
7 Crossley 2006.
8 Rawski 1996. She notes: 'the Qing tried to preserve the cultural boundaries separating these five peoples, while attempting to sinicize the ethnic minorities living in south and southwest China'.
9 Bao 2014.
10 Pegg 2014.
11 Nelson 1974.
12 Nelson 1974.
13 Mosca 2013.
14 Leonard 1984.
15 Mosca 2013.
16 Mosca 2013.
17 Bridgeman 1847.
18 Leonard 1984.
19 Spence 1996.
20 Kilcourse 2020.
21 Spence 1996.
22 Kilcourse 2020.
23 Kilcourse 2020.
24 Mao 1984.
25 Spence 1996.
26 Wagner 2006.
27 Zhang 2023.
28 Wagner 2006.
29 Wasserstrom and Nedostup 2015.
30 Reed 2000.
31 Lu 2003.
32 Wagner 2006.
33 Reed 2000.
34 Reed 2000.
35 Ye 2003.
36 Reed 2004.
37 Wasserstrom 2023.

Chapter 13
Intercultural interactions: Isabella Bird and her Chinese interpreter and guides

Amy Matthewson

In 1895, the intrepid Victorian traveller Isabella Bird (1831–1904) had her photograph taken in China. Poised in front of her camera, the incident occurred in the southern port of Shantou [Swatow], where a 'Mr. Mackenzie secured a snapshot of her, as she arranged a group of natives to be photographed'.[1] There is no further explanation but the eye is attracted not only to Bird, but also the Chinese people positioned at the edge of the photograph (**Fig. 140**). One looks directly at the camera; the others appear to be chatting amongst themselves, unaware of the camera capturing this candid moment. As Bird did not speak the language, how, as Bird's first biographer Anna Stoddart writes, did Bird manage to 'arrange her subjects'? Was Mr Mackenzie fluent in Chinese or was communication through a Chinese interpreter, someone not within view of the camera or perhaps one of the 'natives' Stoddart refers to?

In January 1894, at the age of 63, Bird (whose married name was Bishop) set out on an extensive three-year journey through Korea, Japan, Manchuria, Siberia and China. She was equipped with two cameras, eager to use her newly discovered passion for photography to substantiate her claims of 'truthful impressions' of the countries and people she met along the way. She was already a celebrated author with bestselling books detailing her globetrotting adventures. Bird not only wrote compellingly, she was a woman exploring the world alone, thereby defying the rigid gendered roles defined by Victorian society. Her status as a founder member of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) and the award of an Honorary Fellowship in 1890, along with her election as one of the first female members of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) a couple of years later, added to her standing as a valued and respected explorer.[2]

The life and travels of Bird have attracted much attention and she has been praised as an independent woman who disregarded expected gendered norms and behaviours; however, more recent scholarship approaches Bird's travel writings with critical nuance, recognising the precariousness of her status as a woman while acknowledging her investment in British imperialist attitudes.[3] Bird's travels in China and her subsequent books, *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond* (henceforth *YVB*) and *Chinese Pictures: Notes on Photographs Made in China* (*CP*), have also attracted the interest of scholars but little has been written about the Chinese men that Bird employed as guides, servants and interpreter.

As a woman travelling alone, at least part of the time, through unfamiliar remote areas in a foreign land without the ability to communicate in the native language, Bird would have been dependent on the assistance and continued goodwill of her entourage. An analysis of how she chose to represent these men reveals Bird to be both sympathetic and reproving, providing a fascinating case study of transcultural interactions during the late 19th century. This chapter focuses on Bird's written and visual representation of the men she hired. The aim is to investigate the ways in which she navigated the complexities of a foreign culture while translating her experiences for her British audience, engaging both cultures through the prisms of her own frameworks of understanding.

Figure 140 'Mr. Mackenzie secured a snapshot of her, as she arranged a group of natives to be photographed', Anna M. Stoddart 1906, *The Life of Isabella Bird,* London, John Murray. 297. National Library of Scotland

In situating Isabella Bird within her 19th-century world, her photographs and textual accompaniment not only reflect her worldview, but also the systems of knowledge that she drew upon within 'fluid spaces in the converging worlds of alterity'.[4] Here, post-colonial discussions on ideas of fantasy, desire and stereotyping provide useful but limited frameworks, even the work of the cultural theorist Homi Bhabha (b. 1949) and his theory of ambivalence with its disruption between dichotomies of coloniser and colonised.[5] While Bird certainly exhibited some of these tendencies, she also deviated and complicated the process of 'othering' in many ways. Perhaps a more useful model is provided by language and literature researcher Mary Louise Pratt and her view of imperialism as a complex collision of cultures in a 'contact zone'.

Pratt connects European travel writing 'to forms of knowledge and expression that interact or intersect, both within and outside of Europe'.[6] She argues that the European gaze on colonial spaces and subjects is a form of possession and she connects European travel writing with the creation and circulation of knowledge on 'the rest of the world'. Pratt points to colonial writing expressing a view of 'improving' the landscape by 'emptying' both space and peoples in order to make way for a profitable, capitalist future.[7] Here, however, we must approach with some hesitation. Bird did not travel through uninhabited land; rather, she was aware that China had its own rich history and as academic Susan Schoenbauer Thurin notes, the awareness of a long-standing Chinese civilisation complicated the process of 'possession' for British travellers.[8]

Bird was acutely aware of the longevity of Chinese history and she used it as justification for her irritation with some of the educated Chinese men she encountered. When she visited the China Inland Mission house in Sichuan [Sze Chuan], she remarked that she found it difficult to be patient with the literati 'because of their overweening self-conceit'. She explained that it was 'passable in Africa, but not in these men with their literary degrees, and their elaborate culture "of sorts," and two thousand years of civilisation behind them'.[9] There is quite a lot that can be deconstructed in this one sentence but for the purposes of this chapter, her comment here as well as others throughout *YVB* reflect Bird's particular worldview, and her temperament, as well as the parameters in which she was navigating as a single woman travelling in a foreign land, at a specific point in time, with the intention of engaging with a (primarily) British audience.

Bird displays a self-conscious awareness of her position as a woman and foreigner in China. She needed to depend upon, and operate with, people whose socio-cultural frameworks were different than hers and then relay her experiences in such a way as to sell books to a Western readership. With all these considerations, it is perhaps more fruitful to approach Bird's engagement with, and representations of, the Chinese men she hired in two distinct but connected ways: firstly, as a woman resisting the constraints placed upon her by a patriarchal Victorian society while remaining very much a woman of her time, acting out her sense of class and racial superiority while simultaneously developing an affection for China and its people. Secondly, to consider Bird's representations as a node in the wider processes of global interconnections during the late 19th century. Rather than a 'clash of cultures', Bird's interactions are a result of broader global encounters situated within specific frameworks of understandings, both individually and geopolitically.

Transcultural encounters: Isabella Bird and the Chinese men she hired

Isabella Bird's East Asian travels started in Korea in 1894. She travelled extensively around the country until the declaration of war between China and Japan that summer

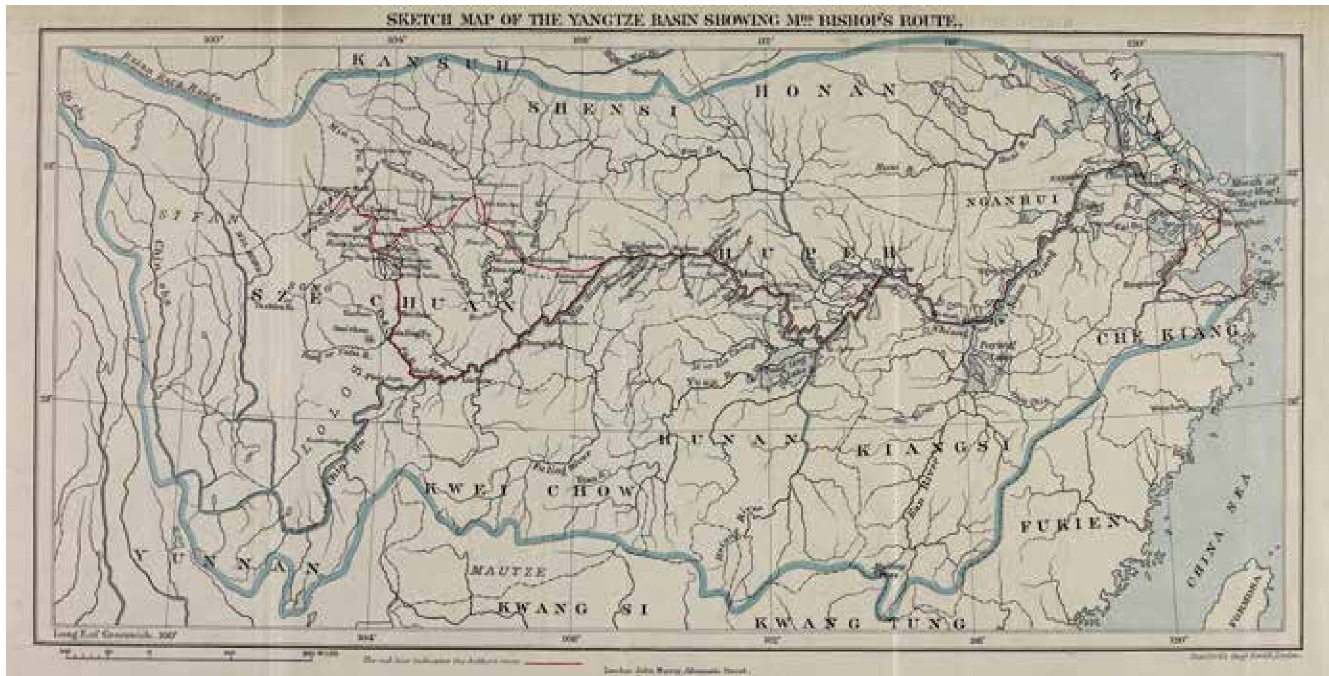


Figure 141 Map of Isabella Bird's travels in China, in '*The Yangtze Valley and Beyond'.* John Murray Archives, National Library of Scotland, MS.42033

forced her to leave. She went on to Manchuria then to Russian Siberia before going back to Korea when it was occupied by the Japanese, then onto Shanghai in 1895. She then spent 15 months in China from 1895 to 1896, moving from Hong Kong to Shanghai where she stayed with missionaries before journeying around China. She travelled to Hangzhou (Hangchow) by boat, then into the Chinese interior before finally deciding to embark on an adventure up the Yangtze Valley in January 1896 (**Fig. 141**).

The first time we read about Bird hiring a Chinese servant is in Shanghai, when she wanted to visit a friend in Hangzhou. She hired a boat with three men for six dollars and paid for the servant separately, but dismissed him a few days later for 'gross dishonesty', details of which are not further explained.[10] Financial transactions with the Chinese men she hired are not mentioned again until much later, when she was in Sichuan. Bird wrote of the damp, muddy roads that she traversed on foot, as the steep mountain trail was too dangerous for her to continue being carried on a sedan chair. She wrote that her 'well-paid chair-men travelled "like gentlemen," for labour is so abundant and cheap that they found plenty of coolies to carry my chair for forty *cash* for four miles (about a penny), and even for less!'.[11]

Bird is not only commenting on the abundance and cheapness of Chinese labour, but also bringing attention to the ability of the men she hired to engage others to shoulder her belongings because she paid them well. Over the course of her 15 months in China, Bird hired a total of 134 men[12] to carry her 'plates, films, and general photographic outfit, journals, a few necessaries, and a few things of fictitious value, in a waterproof bag'.[13] She knew that without these men, she would not have been able to undertake her journey, but her comments underscore her desire to convey to her readers that she was both independent and the one in charge. The implications of her financial independence, through her frequent assertions that she is not only able to afford to travel but also able to pay handsomely for any hired help, reveal her class consciousness.

When she set off across the Chengdu plain, she decided against the company of missionaries and diplomats, which she had previously depended on. In order to venture 'alone' (meaning without a European companion), she tells her readers that she decided 'to buy [her] own experience', reinforcing her persona of an independent woman in terms of financial means and self-reliance.[14] She tells her readers that her favourite axiom comes from General Charles Gordon (1833–1885), the much-acclaimed British army officer, who said 'I am my own best servant',[15] and dotted throughout *YVB* she reiterates that she 'depended on [herself]'.[16]

Bird's courage and independence are extraordinary. During a time when women's mobility was constrained, she travelled along a route in China that would be considered treacherous even by today's standards, and so it is understandable that she has generated so much interest and fascination. However, the Chinese men she hired rarely receive attention despite them travelling the same route as Bird with the addition of being loaded down with her belongings as well as her weight when she was carried on a sedan chair. Her descriptions of her interactions with these men provide some of the more intriguing aspects of *YVB* and *CP* because they reveal the complexities of intercultural relationships based on personal understandings that arose from broader global interconnections. Bird declared that the belief in Britain was that the Chinese character was 'cruel, brutal, heartless, and absolutely selfish and unconcerned about human misery' and that these ideas were 'so saturated' that she found herself reacting with surprise to find that 'the reverse [was] the case'.[17] She admits that her biases were constantly being challenged but her writings demonstrate that her preconceptions were never fully overturned.

Figure 142a–b (left) 'Our river boat', 1895, Zhejiang, h. 10.2cm, w. 15.2cm. The Royal Geographical Society, S0012355; (right) Author's house boat at Kuei Fu, from Isabella Bird's travel photographs. National Library of Scotland, MS.42033, fol. 29

Early in her account, she described the trackers, the men that navigated her small houseboat up the Yangtze, as 'too low to be human', adding that they were 'just such men as would wreck and loot foreigners' houses with violence'.[18] The skipper[19] of her hired houseboat was described as 'craftiness, greed, and avarice personified' with a face 'like very old, yellow, mildewed parchment'.[20] Reflecting on the rural Chinese people, she wondered, 'Could these people ever have come "trailing clouds of glory"? Were they made in the image of God? Have we "all one Father"?'.[21] While we have her account of the Chinese men she encountered, we can only speculate on how she was received as we do not have their perspective of Bird to provide a balanced account of their interactions (**Fig. 142a–b**).

There are indications, however, of how she was received and Thurin quite rightly points out that Bird encountered many forms of 'othering' from the Chinese. Her boatmen explained to their compatriots when asked why they remained stationary during ideal weather conditions that they had 'foreign devils as passengers, who, though they did no work and were always eating, must sleep one day in seven!'.[22] She also frequently found herself the object of the Chinese gaze by curious onlookers, which she found vexatious, being prepared only to look and not be looked upon. Bird's unwillingness to reciprocate is exemplified when she was invited by a 'mandarin proprietor' to stay a few days and take photographs of his family. She declined the offer, feeling a dread for the 'stifling curiosity' that the family may display towards her.[23]

Bird did not expect 'the racial pride of the Chinese or their more serious challenges to her sense of superiority to them'.[24] The trackers provide one such example. At first, the boatmen would not put a plank for her to disembark and instead, she employed the use of a pole. This resulted in her tumbling into the water, 'being extricated to live in wet clothes for the day in a windy temperature'.[25] The experience caused Bird to both contemplate and observe her trackers. She later remarked that while they were 'rough and brutal… not one of them was ever drunk' and 'they worked hard' (**Fig. 143**). Her change in attitude must have been reflected

Figure 143 'Author's trackers at dinner' in *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond*, 154. John Murray Archives, National Library of Scotland, MS.42033

Figure 144 'Sick unto death' in *The Yangtze Valley and Beyond,* 414. John Murray Archives, National Library of Scotland, MS.42033

in her demeanour for she wrote of the trackers subsequently assisting her onto the boat and she made an effort to be amiable by showing them some of her photographs.[26] As the voyage continued, Bird reported that 'their honest work, pluck, endurance, hardihood, sobriety, and good-nature won my sympathy and in some sort my admiration'.[27]

At times, Bird expressed her pleasure of being in their company. She frequently made note of their good nature, describing them as 'full of fun, antics, and frolic', 'loving a joke; and with a keen sense of humour'.[28] On one occasion, she was in a sedan chair when the seven men she hired came across 'a portly man' in his ornate chair with his two bearers who refused to move out of the way. The road was only wide enough to traverse single file, and when the mandarin and his bearers would not move to the edge of the path where it widened slightly, Bird's men managed to tip the man over into the water. This was met with 'peals of laughter' and her bearers ran off yelling, leaving the man floundering in the water 'roaring execrations'.[29]

Bird wrote that an understanding developed between her and the men she employed. Their consideration of her was displayed by small acts of kindness: putting a cloak over her shoulders or bringing a wooden stool for her feet to ensure her comfort. She claimed that there was a 'growing interest in photography' and that they would sometimes point out objects as suggestions for pictures.[30] Whether or not they were truly interested in photography or simply being polite is impossible to know but they certainly tried to make things easier and more comfortable for her. However, this did not mean that they were willing to succumb completely to her command. The men chose 'their own place for breakfast and the midday halt of one hour'[31] and it was they who decided when to stop several times a day 'for a drink and smoke'.[32] Contrary to her attempts at positioning herself as the one in charge, it was her Chinese employees, and not Bird, who were in control of when it was time to eat and to rest, leaving her alone to wait for them in order to continue the journey.[33]

Bird's encounters with the Chinese people she met on her travels were also not without their challenges. At one mission station, she was knocked cold by a rock and several times during the course of her travels, she was yelled at and pelted with mud. These experiences not only put Bird in danger but the men she employed were also placed in the direct line of fire. In the city of Liangshan, Bird and her bearers found themselves surrounded by an 'angry Chinese mob' who struck her chair and shoulders with sticks while mud and other 'unsavoury missiles' were thrown at her. Bird's bearers were 'shoved to one side' but they did their utmost to protect her. One 'dived into an inn doorway' in pursuit of protective shelter and another ran to the *yamen*[34] with pleas for assistance. The official eventually sent soldiers to calm the situation and Bird was left bruised and badly shaken by the violence. Two of the men were beaten by the crowd for 'serving' a foreigner and Bird remarked on how they 'bore some ugly traces of it' the following day.[35]

Bird's narrative of the incident attempts to convey a semblance of stoicism; during the onslaught, she admits that she did her best 'not to appear hurt, frightened, or annoyed, though [she] was all three'.[36] With no written record, we can only speculate how the men experienced the assault as they tried to protect Bird while fending off attacks directed at them. Did the experience bring the assembly of men closer to Bird in feelings of shared difficulty or did it drive a wedge between the outsider and the men choosing to be under her employment? They must surely have been equally frightened by the mob but Bird makes no mention of their emotions, thoughts or concerns. Indeed, none of the men she employed are named in her writing, with the exception of her interpreter, Be-dien. Indeed, throughout her time in China, Bird gives the impression that she has little interest in the men on a personal level and when they do make an appearance in her writing, she oscillates from maintaining stereotypes to challenging them.

The photograph Bird took of a feverish man laid under a tree is explained by drawing on familiar tropes of 'latent Chinese brutality' (**Fig. 144**).[37] She describes the man as someone who fell sick and although he had been 'working, sleeping, and eating' with the other hired men for twelve days, they had no care or sympathy for his condition, telling her to 'let him die; he's of no use'.[38] Bird placed her wet pocket handkerchief on his forehead as a symbol of *her* care for the sick man, while his compatriots 'laughed at his sufferings, at [her] for bathing his head, and, above all, at [her] walking to let him ride'.[39] There is no mention that it was her itinerary and her belongings that burdened the man and may have caused his condition.[40]

On another occasion, while travelling in the mountains on the border of Tibet, Bird and her entourage experienced a snowstorm, 'dense and blinding, with a strong wind'. She

Figure 145 'Types', 1895. h. 10.2cm, w. 15.2cm. The Royal Geographical Society, S0022420. Be-dien is at the back, right

needed to be 'dragged rather than helped along, by two men who themselves frequently fell' and her interpreter, Be-dien, 'staggered and eventually fell, nearly fainting'.[41] Bird recorded the event as a 'death struggle' and writes that the men eventually 'declined to carry [her]' but after they argued with her 'servant', the men eventually 'took up the chair'.[42] When they reached shelter, she described her retinue as 'exhausted, shivering, starving, drenched to the skin, and all alike in frozen clothes'.[43] The events of that snowstorm demonstrate the obvious physical hardship they encountered but rather than developing a sense of camaraderie, Bird appeared to have reverted to her earlier disdain. She offered little in the way of sympathy when one of the men fell seriously ill and wrote with exasperation when one after the other '[broke] down from fever' and became 'the bane of [her] journey'.[44]

Bird's fluctuating attitude towards the men she employed reveals the complexities in transcultural interactions, further complicated by personal frameworks of understandings situated within a specific geopolitical context. There were times she recorded her surprise at the disjuncture in reality, what she saw and experienced, versus the fantasy, her preconceptions and previous notions of China and the Chinese. At other times, Bird only reiterated stereotypes that were prevalent in the British imagination. The men she hired remain nameless and without a record of their thoughts and experiences, we are only left with fragments of the encounters, provided through Bird's narrative. She did, however, write on a more personal level about her relationship with her interpreter, Be-dien, a man from the east coast of China (**Fig. 145**).

Be-dien: interpreter and cultural intermediary

From the outset, Bird's introduction of Be-dien reveals both her sense of superiority and her insecurities. She wrote of her 'difficulties of getting a reliable interpreter servant who had not previously served Europeans'.[45] Bird was in search of an interpreter *servant* and she wanted someone who had no

previous experience working with Europeans, thereby eliminating any chance of comparisons with a 'previous model of authority'.[46] With the help of friends, Bird hired Be-dien, whom she described as:

> a tall, very fine-looking, superior man… who abominated 'pidgun,' spoke very fairly correct English, and increased his vocabulary daily during the journey. He was proud and had a bad temper, but served me faithfully, was never out of hearing of my whistle except by permission, showed great pluck, never grumbled when circumstances were adverse, and never deserted me in difficulties or even in perils.[47]

Bird required someone docile and loyal, with a lack of experience so that she could train him, responding to her whistle and never straying too far without her permission.[48] She comments on his bad temper, and she will continue to highlight this trait throughout their journey; however, one cannot help but wonder if his temper stemmed from her treatment of him. Bird compliments his English, which must have been of a high standard as she deplored the 'abominable vocabulary known as "Pidgun"',[49] but she never fully gave him credit for his language skills; at one point, Bird went as far as to take credit herself, declaring that 'at all events, *I made him so*!'.[50]

The relationship between Bird and Be-dien was fraught, with Bird constantly trying to maintain control even as a woman and as a foreigner. This power struggle was further complicated when a European male companion joined the group for brief periods of time. Bird wrote that Be-dien made 'himself unpleasant all round',[51] and while staying with missionaries in Sichuan, she complained that 'he seemed helpless, useless, lazy, unwilling, and objectionable'. Her host, Mr Thompson, concluded he was trying to annoy her 'into sending him back', but Bird acknowledged she needed Be-dien in order to continue her travels.[52] When Mr Thompson accompanied them, Be-dien remained 'as sullen and disobliging as could be'.[53]

The relationship is intriguing in its power dynamics. Mr Thompson was a clear authority figure and this was demonstrated when the best rooms at various inns suddenly became available. Bird wrote how she was much 'better off than usual'.[54] However, his presence was overwhelming. Upon his departure, Bird cheerfully noted that she was once again left on her own. Her retinue must have felt the same as they suddenly became 'energetic' and were 'constantly laughing'. Most surprising was Be-dien who, as soon as Bird was 'bereft of Europeans', became 'active and attentive', never leaving her on her own, 'showed great pluck, never grumbled', and generally changed into 'a tolerable travelling servant'.[55] Mr Thompson represented 'a symbol of China's conquerors to whom those such as Be-dien resentfully submitted'[56] and with his departure, her relationship with Be-dien shifted.

Bird acquiesced to Be-dien and she relied on his continued assistance; but she also constantly negotiated her position as a woman in charge. While travelling in a torrent of rain, her leather shoes slipped on the muddy roads and 'even with a stout stick and *Be-dien's help*', she struggled to remain on her feet.[57] When officials entered her room one evening to check her passport, Be-dien was much offended on her behalf as Chinese etiquette dictated that a man should never enter a woman's room.[58] On another occasion, a rock was thrown with precision at the back of her head and Be-dien stayed with her until she regained consciousness before heading to the *yamen* to file a complaint.[59]

Her opinion and treatment of Be-dien fluctuated, which is consistent with her interactions with the Chinese people throughout *YVB*. When Bird wanted to travel into the mountainous border between China and Tibet, she claimed that 'there was little use in undertaking such a journey without a more efficient interpreter than Be-dien' and, following the suggestion of a missionary, she was accompanied by a member of the Church Missionary Society with 'considerable knowledge of colloquial Chinese'.[60] The sting of Bird's assessment that a foreigner who speaks conversational Chinese was more useful an interpreter than Be-dien was too much for him. In the days that immediately followed, Be-dien was 'in a shocking sulky fit for two days, and would not answer anyone who spoke to him'.[61] Bird does not further elaborate on Be-dien's mood nor does she take the time to contemplate the reasons that may have provoked him into such a state.

There is only one perspective that prevails in *YVB*, and this is Bird's, even though she laments the fact that the creation and repetition of only one viewpoint constructs 'an unfair and one-sided impression'.[62] Indeed, throughout *YVB*, she draws from Western sources, such as the missionaries Archibald John Little (1838–1908) and Arthur Henderson Smith (1845–1932), to explain the Chinese 'character'.[63] Bird's constant challenging of stereotypes while simultaneously maintaining them reveals how complex late 19th-century transcultural interactions were. But however fragmented the information we are able to glean when exploring these cross-cultural encounters, *YVB* remains invaluable in demonstrating the ways in which individual personalities and frameworks of understanding interact and intersect with cultural biases and geopolitical conditions.

Notes

1 Stoddart 1906, 297.
2 Bell and McEwan 1996, 296–7.
3 Morgan 2007, 111.
4 Chatterjee 2012, 59–60.
5 Bhabha 1994, 66–84.
6 Pratt 1992, 5.
7 Pratt 1992, 61.
8 Thurin 1999, 20.
9 Bird 1899, 173–4.
10 Bird 1899, 29–30.
11 Bird 1899, 245.
12 Thurin 1999, 144–5.
13 Bird 1899, 113.
14 Bird 1899, 190.
15 Bird 1899, 355.
16 Bird 1899, 203; Thurin 1999, 158.
17 Bird 1899, 177.
18 Bird 1899, 131.
19 Bird used the Chinese 'lao pan' to describe the man in charge of the boat. She translated this to mean 'skipper' in English; however, Bird was calling the man 老板 (*lao ban*) meaning 'boss' – this word being used in various ways. Thomas Wade and Herbert Giles disagreed over the Chinese use of the word for 'captain' of a warship: Giles arguing that it should be 兵船主将 rather than the term for a merchant captain, 船主. I am grateful to Professor Tim Barrett for bringing this to my attention.
20 Bird 1899, 128.
21 Bird 1899, 119.
22 Bird 1899, 146.
23 Bird 1899, 227.
24 Thurin 1999, 146.
25 Bird 1899, 131.
26 Bird 1899, 131–2.
27 Bird, 1899, 155.
28 Bird 1899, 145.
29 Bird 1899, 239.
30 Bird 1899, 203.
31 Bird 1899, 193.
32 Bird 1899, 198; 204.
33 Bird 1899, 248–9; Thurin 1999, 145.
34 The Qing county *yamen* were administrative centres that performed a wide variety of tasks, including general administration, tax collection, and public security.
35 Bird 1899, 215–18.
36 Bird 1899, 216.
37 Bird 1899, 414.
38 Bird 1899, 414.
39 Bird 1899, 415.
40 Chang 2010, 171–2.
41 Bird 1899, 420.
42 Bird 1899, 423.
43 Bird 1899, 423.
44 Bird 1899, 435.
45 Bird 1899, 53.
46 Thurin 1999, 143.
47 Bird 1899, 53.
48 Thurin 1999, 143.
49 Bird 1899, 20.
50 Bird 1899, 258 (emphasis mine).
51 Bird 1899, 151.
52 Bird 1899, 191.
53 Bird 1899, 192.
54 Bird 1899, 201.
55 Bird 1899, 203.
56 Thurin 1999, 144.
57 Bird 1899, 241 (emphasis mine).
58 Bird 1899, 241.
59 Bird 1899, 327.
60 Bird 1899, 355.
61 Bird 1899, 356.
62 Bird 1899, 85–6.
63 Bird 1899, 138; 181–3.

Chapter 14
The British Museum collection of money and medals of the Qing period

Joe Cribb and Helen Wang

The monetary history of the Qing period, especially during its most complex phase in the 19th century, is most vividly understood through the wide range of objects which served as currency at the time.[1] This complexity in the late Qing is well illustrated by the collections held by the British Museum's Department of Money and Medals, among which there are several thousand coins, monetary ingots, paper money notes, tokens and financial documents of the period. Alongside the monetary items, the Museum also holds a large collection of money-like items which equally serve to illustrate Chinese popular engagement with money culture, including coin-like charms, religious medals, money for the dead and civil and military awards. The aim of this chapter is to show how the breadth of the collection provides superb coverage of China's monetary history as the country sought both to maintain tradition and modernise in the 19th century. The Qing monetary and coin-like objects at the British Museum were acquired from well-known collectors, such as Imperial Maritime Customs officer Hosea Ballou Morse (1855–1934),[2] British consul Christopher Thomas Gardner (1842–1933)[3] and Austrian banker Eduard Kann (1880–1962),[4] all of whom had long careers in China, and from missionaries and other individuals, whose expertise and experiences provide context to the collection.[5]

An outline of the monetary history of the Qing period

When the Manchus gained control of China, replacing the Ming dynasty and establishing their own Qing dynasty in 1644, China's monetary system was in a poor state. Under the Ming, after a brief attempt to re-establish a coinage system based on the cast bronze coins of the Song period, the first emperor had resorted to the issue of paper money, following the practice of the Yuan dynasty, but this also floundered as inflation was the consequence. The people resorted to circulating old coins and illegally minted ones, while the government turned to the monetary use of silver.[6] The amount of silver available was limited until quantities from Japan were exported into China via Korea and Portuguese ships, and then silver from the Spanish Empire in America began to reach China, again via Portuguese traders, then directly from the Americas via the Philippines.[7] By the last decades of the Ming dynasty, about 70 tonnes of silver were being imported annually.[8] From 1503–5 until the end of the dynasty, the Ming government tried again to re-establish the issue of copper alloy coins; in order to decrease the cost of production, zinc was gradually introduced in place of the more expensive lead and tin used in the copper alloy, shifting it from leaded bronze to brass.[9] Although hundreds of millions of coins were cast each year, the coinage system could not be fully reinstated as the imperial government failed to control the quality of the coinage and to prevent illicit coining.[10]

Establishing a new coinage

Once the Manchu government began gaining control of China a new coinage was instituted, continuing the brass coinage system of the late Ming. This time, 27 mints were set up throughout the empire, which, through five stages of reform, gradually evolved a rigorous standard for the quality and weight of new coins. Each coin bore the inscription

Reign name	Reign date	Coin inscription		
Shunzhi 順治	1644–1661	順治通寶	*Shunzhi tongbao*	current money of Shunzhi era
Kangxi 康熙	1662–1722	康熙通寶	*Kangxi tongbao*	current money of Kangxi era
Yongzheng 雍正	1723–1735	雍正通寶	*Yongzheng tongbao*	current money of Yongzheng era
Qianlong 乾隆	1736–1795	乾隆通寶	*Qianlong tongbao*	current money of Qianlong era
Jiaqing 嘉慶	1796–1820	嘉慶通寶	*Jiaqing tongbao*	current money of Jiaqing era
Daoguang 道光	1821–1850	道光通寶	*Daoguang tongbao*	current money of Daoguang era
Xianfeng 咸豐	1851–1861	咸豐通寶	*Xianfeng tongbao*	current money of Xianfeng era
		咸豐重寶	*Xianfeng zhongbao*	heavy money of Xianfeng era
		咸豐元寶	*Xianfeng yuanbao*	main money of Xianfeng era
Qixiang 祺祥*	1861	祺祥通寶	*Qixiang tongbao*	current money of Qixiang era
		祺祥重寶	*Qixiang zhongbao*	heavy money of Qixiang era
Tongzhi 同治	1862–1874	同治通寶	*Tongzhi tongbao*	current money of Tongzhi era
		同治重寶	*Tongzhi zhongbao*	heavy money of Tongzhi era
Guangxu 光緒	1875–1908	光緒通寶	*Guangxu tongbao*	current money of Guangxu era
		光緒重寶	*Guangxu zhongbao*	heavy money of Guangxu era
Xuantong 宣統	1909–1912	宣統通寶	*Xuantong tongbao*	current money of Xuantong era

* On the accession of a new emperor following the death of the Xianfeng emperor in 1861, the reign title Qixiang was adopted. However, this title was dropped two months later and the official reign title became Tongzhi. Qixiang coins were prepared but not officially issued.

Table 3 Qing dynasty brass coin inscriptions

Shunzhi tongbao (順治通寶), stating that it was the current money (literally 'circulating treasure') of the Shunzhi era (1644–1661) of the first Qing emperor. The initial impetus for the rapid production of coins was to meet the demands of military expenditure as the Manchu armies unified China under the rule of the Qing dynasty. The coins were known as *qian* (錢) or *wen* (文) in Chinese, 'cash' in English and 'sapèques' in French. They were mass produced, cast in sand moulds with multiple impressions made with specimens, known as mother coins (*muqian* 母錢), themselves cast from hand-carved models known as ancestor coins (*zuqian* 祖錢) to ensure uniformity.[11] The name of the mint was inscribed in Manchu on the reverse of the coins from 1657, creating a coin style which continued until the end of Qing rule (**Table 3**; **Fig. 146**). Each mint was capable of producing hundreds of millions of coins, so that the Qing authorities were able to create a massive supply of the new coins, estimated at over 2 billion coins a year during the period 1651–7, while simultaneously removing the old coins of the Ming emperors from circulation.[12] Alongside the new coins, silver continued to play an important role as the large-scale imports of silver from the Americas continued. The Qing authorities tried to impose a relationship between the brass coins and silver, setting a notional ratio at 1000 coins to one ounce/tael (*liang* 兩) of silver, but this standard was rarely adhered to in actual exchanges.[13] The idea of paper money still had its supporters and in 1651 about 128,000 notes denominated at 1,000 coins each were issued, but their use was abolished by 1662.[14]

The system of coinage established during the first reign of the Qing dynasty continued through the following reigns until the 19th century. The coins were cast with new inscriptions naming the imperial era of each emperor and their function as money (**Table 3**). The production of coins at numerous mints continued, often at a high level, with an average of about 2 billion coins a year during the Qianlong, Jiaqing and Daoguang periods. Although such a level of production seems remarkable, when compared with the size of the population, it diminishes in scale, representing an annual production of less than ten coins per person.[15] This suggests that the monetary economy was limited and many transactions at the lower levels of society and in rural areas were conducted in kind or through credit; however, the ready availability of a stable brass coinage made the use of coins popular in many contexts.[16] The copper needed for this level of production was immense and was sourced from Chinese mines, particularly those in Yunnan province, and from Japan. As with the import of silver, much of the Japanese copper was brought to China on Dutch ships.[17]

The growing use of silver

As more and more imports arrived from the Americas, silver became increasingly important in government and mercantile payments and taxation. Silver was used as money in the form of ingots, reckoned by their weight and fineness. The imperial and provincial governments used silver in many types of payment but, apart from regulating standards for the collection of taxes (e.g. in 1724, 2nd year of the Yongzheng period), did not attempt to control its production or use, other than to license money shops to act on its behalf in the production of ingots. The money shops employed foundries to cast the silver into ingots, as well as shroffs (money specialists) to check and value it (**Fig. 147**). The shops of each region agreed upon standard sizes, shapes and fineness of the ingots they used.[18] This aspect of the Qing money system began to change as the foreign silver coins coming into southern China started to be used in their original forms, as silver coins struck at the Spanish imperial mints.[19] These were 8-real coins ('pieces of eight'), also known as pesos and dollars. At first, the silver was imported by Portuguese and Spanish traders, but soon Dutch, British

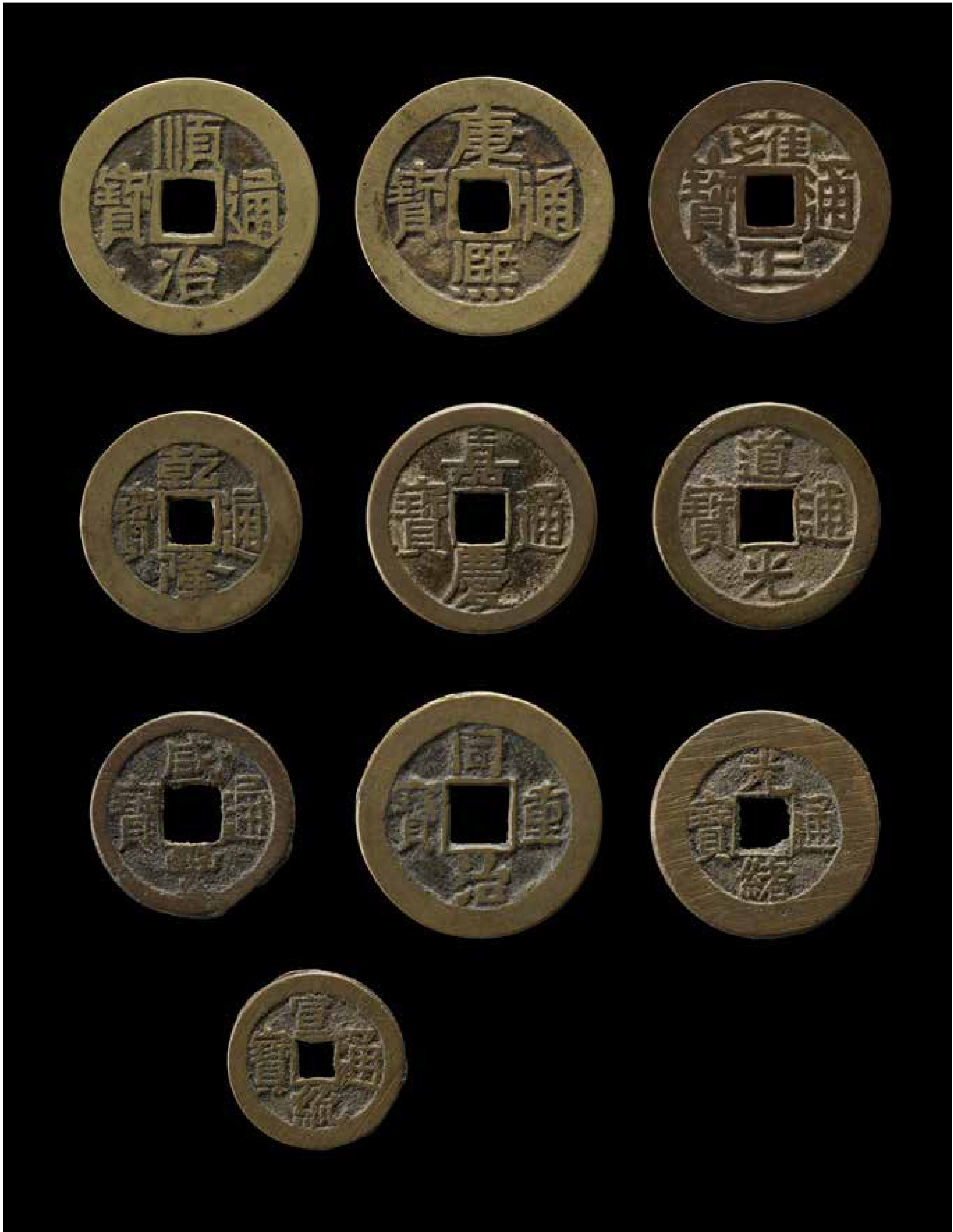


Figure 146 Standard brass coins (*qian* 錢 or *wen* 文) and a multiple brass coin, worth ten standard coins, inscribed with reign period names (see Table 3); cast at the Imperial Board of Revenue mint, Beijing, identified by Manchu mint mark *boo ciowan* on the reverse: (from left to right, top to bottom) a) Shunzhi period (British Museum, London, M319, pre-1870 acquisition, 4.73g d. 28mm); b) Kangxi period (1975,0929.26, ex S. Cribb collection, 4.42g, d. 28mm); c) Yongzheng period (1883,0802.1911, ex C. Gardner collection, 4.08g, d. 25mm); d) Qianlong period (1996,0217.1039, ex E. Box collection, 4.08g, d. 24mm); e) Jiaqing period (1882,0601.961, ex H. Morse collection, 4.39g, d. 25mm); f) Daoguang period (1979, 0507.33, ex C. Eimer collection, 4.07g, d. 24.5mm); g) Xianfeng period (1883,0802.2228, ex H. Morse collection, 3.47g, d. 22mm); h) Tongzhi period (multiple coin; 1976,0916.51, ex E. Box collection, 4.64g, d. 25mm); i) Guangxu period (1882,0601.343, ex H. Morse collection, 4.95g, d. 24mm); j) Xuantong period (1975,1122.6, ex S. Cribb collection, 2.29g, d. 19mm)

Figure 147 Silver 50 ounce/*liang* Sycee currency ingot (*yuanbao* 元寶), Shanxi province, made to pay the tax of Taigu county (*Taiguxian*太谷縣) by the Tianchangde foundry (*Tianchangde* 天長德), with shroff's ink marks on its face. Daoguang period, 1877.38g, h. 10.7cm, w. 6.6cm, d. 8.1cm. British Museum, London, 1978,0638.81, ex E. Kann collection

and French merchants joined in, buying up Spanish silver coins in Europe and taking them to China to trade for porcelain, silk, gold and tea.

The earliest record of local use of imported silver coins comes from hoards found in Fujian province containing examples from the Spanish mints at Potosi in Bolivia and Mexico city, minted in the 1640s–1650s, together with a coin struck at the Segovia mint in Spain in 1590. The coins from these hoards were clearly used locally as money as some bear stamped Chinese characters ('chopmarks'), added by local money shops, and some have been cut in half, quarters or other sizes, in order to make payments of a specific amount of silver.[20] From the second decade of the 19th century, the Spanish coins were superseded in the China trade with issues of the new republics which had replaced the Spanish provinces in Central and South America.[21] As with the monetary use of silver ingots, the imperial and provincial governments did nothing to control the circulation of foreign silver. However, a number of 19th-century Chinese merchants' guides to foreign coins have survived. These explained how to recognise the different issues, what their various weights and attributes were and how to detect forgeries.[22]

Changes to the monetary system

In the first half of the 19th century, further changes to the monetary system began to be instituted. During the Daoguang period, some money shops started to issue paper money denominated in the standard brass coins (**Fig. 148**),[23] and from 1837 there were a few local issues of silver dollars in Taiwan and Fujian province.[24] In 1845 the Qing authorities set up five of their own money shops in Beijing to issue paper

Figure 148 Private paper money for 500 standard brass coins; issued by the Wanheng (萬亨) money shop, Beijing, 1842, h. 24.2cm, w. 9.5cm. British Museum, London, 1991,0641.1, ex Simmons & Simmons

Figure 149a–b a) (top): Brass multiple coins worth 1,000 standard coins, cast at the Imperial Board of Revenue mint, Beijing, identified by Manchu mint mark on the reverse; denomination on the reverse 當千 (*dang qian*). Xianfeng period, 1854, (left) 79.07g, d. 62mm, (right) 73.72g, d. 63mm. British Museum, London, 1883,0802.3322, ex C. Gardner collection, 1883,0701.406, ex H. Morse collection;

b) (bottom) 'Official note of the Board of Revenue' (*Hubu guanpiao* 戶部官票), paper money issued by the Imperial Board of Revenue mint, Beijing, denominated 3 ounces/*liang* of pure silver (on the *erliangping* 二兩平standard). Xianfeng period, 1854, h. 25.7cm, w. 15.3cm. British Museum, London, 1997,1046.2, ex Wei Yuewang

notes also denominated in brass standard coins.[25] Further changes came during the Xianfeng period (1851–1861), when Hong Xiuquan, inspired by Christian missionaries and believing himself to be the younger brother of Christ, initiated the Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864), installed himself as king of the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace (*taiping tianguo* 太平天國). He confronted Manchu authority, with several other rebel groups joining in, and successfully attacked Qing forces sent to suppress the rebellion. The impact of this war on the monetary system was dramatic, as the rebel forces cut access to the Qing mints' main source of copper in Yunnan province. In 1853 the imperial government resorted to the issue of paper money, valued both in brass coins (500–100,000 coins), and in silver (1–50 ounces/*liang*) (**Fig. 149a**). These issues had ceased by the end of 1858, their value reduced to almost nothing by inflation.[26] Alongside the notes the imperial mints also issued high denomination coins, with values expressed in multiples of the standard brass coins (**Fig. 149b**), worth 5–1,000 coins, and inscribed 'heavy money' (*zhongbao* 重寶) or 'main money' (*yuanbao* 元寶), following the model of Song period multiple issues, but weighing much less than the standard coins they represented. Like the notes their values fell rapidly, as the people would not accept them at their denominated level. Some mints also tried alleviating the shortage of copper by issuing iron coins, but these were also unsuccessful. The Heavenly Kingdom issued its own coins, cast in brass like the Qing coins, but inscribed with the name of the kingdom (*Taiping tianguo* 太平天国[27]) and usually stating that they were 'holy money' (*shengbao* 聖寶); none mention the Qing reign name or the mint.

Another disruption to the Qing monetary system during the mid-19th century was the increasing interference by the British empire in the trade with China. The British had a need for silver in their Indian possessions, so sought a market in China for opium grown and processed in India; the trade led to a reverse in the flow of silver. Eventually Chinese merchants and officials resisted this imposition, not least because of the terrible effects of opium addiction on the Chinese population. The Chinese resistance prompted the British to attack in 1839, beginning the First Opium War. The superior naval power of the British gave them victory and they forced the Qing government to pay indemnity in the form of silver,[28] tons of which were then shipped back to Britain to be melted down to make British coins. China was

Figure 150 Silver tael trial coin struck at the Hong Kong mint, 1867, 36.69g, d. 39mm. British Museum, London, 2014,4002.1, ex W.F. Puffett (via J. Jerome)

also forced to transfer ownership of the island of Hong Kong to the British crown and to allow foreigners to be based at various 'treaty' ports such as Shanghai.

After the Taiping Civil War, the government continued to issue standard brass coins, but also retained the 'heavy' coins that were worth ten standard coins. The official standard, however, was reduced, the notional weight of the standard coin of *c.* 4.2g dropping to *c.* 3.6g in 1892, then to *c.* 2.88g in 1899 and to *c.* 2.16g in 1905, although the actual coins often weighed less. The heavy value-ten coins were always lighter than the weight of ten coins, so normally circulated at a discount.

The Qing monetary system gradually deteriorated in the face of these pressures. Its problems were exacerbated by a growing number of illegally made coins entering circulation, many of which were made in Vietnam. The illegal coins were normally made of brass, as they were often made from melted down official coins, and are easily recognised by their low weight. The importers of forgeries also brought into China lower value coins made in Vietnam and Japan. The imperial government had little ability to control the circulation of forgeries and foreign imports alongside its own coins, and reducing the weight of the official coins was probably intended to match them to the forgeries. The money shops and merchants had to work out their own way of enabling monetary transactions to continue by setting the limit of the percentage of illegal coins[29] in any payment or exchange with silver. A string of brass coins in the British Museum collected in 1897 in Taiwan only contained 963 coins instead of the official 1,000, of which only 30 per cent were official Qing coins, with the remainder made up both of forgeries and imported Vietnamese coins.[30]

Foreign traders who were now able to do business in China via the treaty ports were at a great disadvantage in such a chaotic monetary system and began to urge the Chinese government to adopt a western style silver coinage. Having established a brand new mint in Hong Kong in 1866, the British sent trial coins to the Chinese court in 1867 as suggestions of what a new Chinese imperial coinage might be like, hoping that the Hong Kong mint could make them for the Qing authorities. The coins were denominated by their weight and had shared Chinese and British designs. The front of the example illustrated in **Figure 150** shows the Chinese imperial dragon within a rayed belt and the inscription *Shanghai yiliang* 上海壹兩 (Shanghai [standard] one ounce/tael); the reverse shows the British royal coat of arms surmounted by the imperial crown and surrounded by the royal garter, with an English translation of the Chinese inscription on the front, and the name of the mint 'Hong Kong' and the weight 'G[rains] 566' and fineness '982[/1000]' added. The proposal was rejected,[31] and the Hong Kong mint equipment and staff were transferred to Osaka. In 1887 the Chinese provincial government of Guangdong gained permission from the imperial government to open its own mint to make silver dollar coins and fractional denominations using machinery and technology bought from the coin-makers Heaton of Birmingham, UK, and supervised by Edward Wyon (1837–1906) who had already set up new mints in Burma and Colombia.[32] The mint opened in 1889 and the first issues were ready and put into circulation in 1890 (**Fig. 151a**).[33] Most of the other provinces followed suit and by 1899 machinery had been bought to open an imperial mint in Beijing. The Boxer uprising in 1900–1 delayed this and it was only in 1903 that the Qing central mint started to make silver coins, at a facility in Tianjin. The new mints also started making copper coins, apparently as cents to the silver dollar, but denominated as value-ten standard brass cash-coins and circulated at values relating to silver as determined by the market. Attempts were also made to strike brass cash (previously these had always been cast in moulds), but the cost far exceeded the nominal value of the coins, so they were never a success, with only the pieces minted by the Guangdong mint gaining any significant circulation (**Fig. 151b**).

The new silver coins were issued in large numbers but never completely replaced the silver ingots and imported

Figure 151a–b Coins stuck by machine at the Guangdong provincial mint, Guangzhou:
a) (left) silver dollar, 'made in Guangdong province' (*Guangdongsheng zao* 廣東省造), denominated 庫平七錢二分 *kuping qiqian erfen* ('0.72 ounce/*liang* on the Treasury standard'). Issued 1890, 26.94g, d. 39mm. British Museum, London, 1899,0901.2, ex W.G.K. Barnes collection;

b) (right) brass standard coin inscribed with its weight 庫平一錢 *kuping yiqian* ('0.1 ounce/*liang* on the Treasury standard') on its reverse, together with its mint name in Chinese (*guang* 廣) and Manchu (*guwan*). Guangxu period, 3.74g, d. 24mm. British Museum, London, 1979,1030.47, ex E.J.T. Bristow collection

foreign dollars. Alongside the coins from the Central and South American republics, the United States of America, Japan and France had also started making silver dollars for the China trade. In many parts of the empire these imported coins, known as 'trade dollars', competed strongly with the new Chinese coins and the earlier imports. With the opening of the treaty ports the Qing government was also obliged to allow the circulation of paper money issued by foreign banks. The first of these was the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, which began issuing notes from its branches in Shanghai, Hankou, Fuzhou, Xiamen (Amoy) (**Fig. 152**), Tianjin and Zhifu from 1866.[34] In 1907 it gained permission to issue notes from a branch in Beijing.[35]

The establishment of foreign paper money in China also prompted the imperial and provincial governments to print and issue their own notes (**Fig. 153**). As with the silver coins, they adopted western technology for their manufacture. In 1898 branches of the Imperial Bank of China were opened in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou to issue banknotes,[36] in 1896 the Imperial Chinese Railways also issued paper money[37] and in 1907 the imperial government's Board of Revenue opened its own bank (*daqing hubu yinhang* 大清戶部銀行).[38]

In its final decades the Qing court had to abandon many aspects of its traditional monetary system, having lost significant control over the country due to civil war and foreign intervention. Nevertheless, the money shops and merchants who controlled the day-to-day currency kept a distorted version of the Qing system working. Foreign traders tried to cope with this complex situation,

Figure 152 Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation banknote, for Amoy (Xiamen), denominated 'FIVE DOLLARS or the equivalent in the Currency of the Port'. Unissued specimen, printed 1877–8, h. 12.3cm, w. 23.0cm. British Museum, London, 1984,0605.8592, ex W. Barrett collection. This specimen has been cut in two and pierced by a triangle and the word 'CANCELLED' added for security reasons

Figure 153 Paper money dollar issued by the Hubei provincial silver mint (*Hubei yinyuanju* 湖北銀元局), decorated with the obverse and reverse of a silver dollar, issued by the same mint, supported by imperial dragons. 1899, h. 20.3cm, w. 12.5cm. British Museum, London, 1932,0801.18, ex W.L. Hildburgh collection

but many had to employ Chinese money specialists (compradors and shroffs) in order to conduct business. Bankers and other foreign residents in China wrote guides to enable their colleagues to understand the variations in the system that had developed, so that they would be able to understand the use of money in the many local markets.[39] Many forgeries entered the system, including some made with the ingenious method of electrotyping, a technology developed by modeller and seal-maker Robert Ready for making educational facsimiles of coins at the British Museum.[40]

There were two regions, Xinjiang and Tibet, which retained monetary systems with regional aspects after they had come under the control of the Qing empire. In Xinjiang, starting from the Qianlong period (1759), standard cash was cast with Chinese reign names but in leaded copper rather than brass and with their mintmarks in both Manchu and Uyghur on the reverse. When a war of independence was waged against Chinese rule in the early Guangxu period, the rebels struck silver coins, denominated in terms of the Chinese weight system as 0.05 of the liang and inscribed in Uyghur.[41] Once Qing control had been re-established, the Chinese authorities continued to strike these five-fen coins but with Chinese, Uyghur and Manchu inscriptions (**Fig. 154a**).[42] As in the rest of China, multiple denomination cast copper alloy coins ('heavy coins') were issued in Xinjiang in response to

Figure 154a–b Silver coins from the Qing dynasty's western territories: a) (top left and right) silver tanga of Yarkand mint, denominated on the reverse as five fen *(wufen* 五分), 0.05 ounce/*liang*, inscribed on the obverse 光緒銀錢 *Guangxu yinqian* ('silver coin of the Guangxu period') and with the mint name in Uyghur (*Yārkand*) and Manchu (*Yerkiyang*). Guangxu period, 1.75g, d. 17mm. British Museum, London, 1881,1101.9, ex C.J. Rodgers collection;

b) silver tanka of Tibet, inscribed in Chinese 道光藏寶; 二年 *Daoguang cang bao*; *ernian* and in Tibetan *rD'o-kwong Dang-po; dnyis pa*, both meaning 'Daoguang period, Tibet mint, year 2'. The weight is the same as the Chinese 0.1 ounce/*liang*, i.e. one *qian*. Duoguang period, 1822, 3.73g, d. 28mm. British Museum, 1989,0904.386, ex C. Valdettaro collection

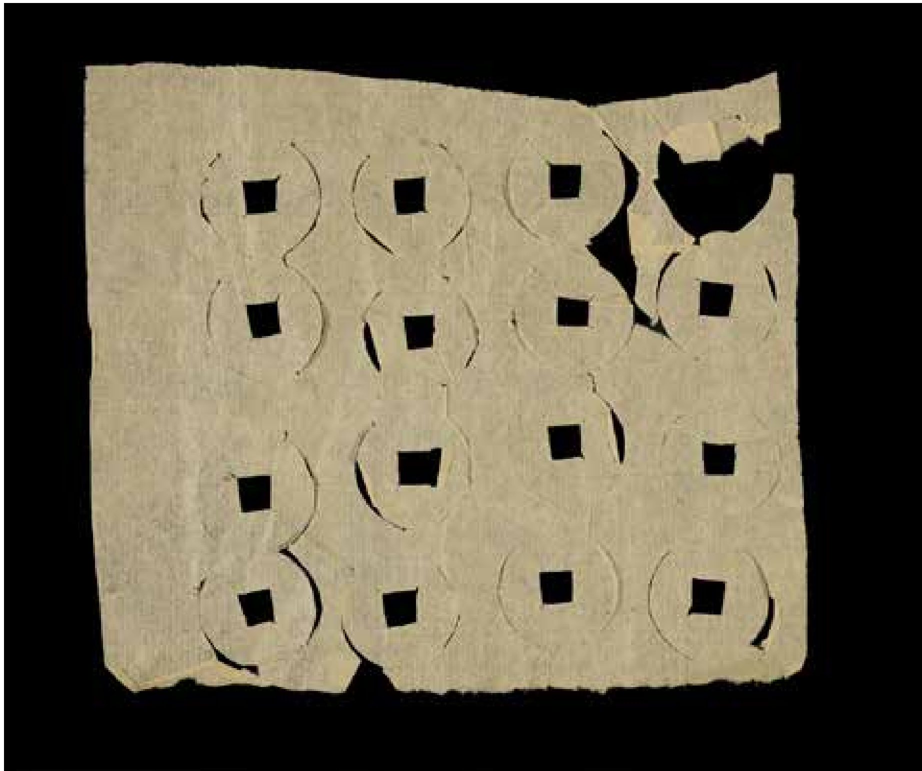


Figure 155 Paper money for the dead, collected at Hankou, 1940s–1950s, h. 11.5cm, w. 13.1cm. British Museum, London, 1996,0217.2480, ex E. Box collection

the crisis created by the Taiping Civil War, and when minting machinery was introduced to Xinjiang, silver and copper coins were struck, but continued to have bilingual Chinese and Uyghur inscriptions from 1889 until the fall of the empire.[43] In Tibet, a monetary system of silver and copper coins based on Nepalese coins was current until the end of the Qing empire. Coins with Chinese reign names, struck on the Tibetan standard, were also issued from the late 18th century (**Fig. 154b**). Silver rupees ('Sichuan rupees'), made on the British Indian standard and bearing a portrait believed to be that of the Guangxu emperor in place of Queen Victoria, were made in Sichuan for use in Tibet from 1902.[44]

Social and cultural uses of Chinese money

The standard copper alloy round coins with square holes, which had been in use in China for 2,000 years, since the Qin period (221–206 BC), hold a special place in Chinese culture. Images of them have been used to symbolise wealth in many contexts since the Han period. In the Qing such symbolic use continued and was widespread. For example, pieces of paper stamped or printed with the shape were used as *joss* (the pidgin English term from the Portuguese *deos*, meaning god; the Chinese name is *mingbi* 冥幣, 'money for the afterlife', unfortunately known in English as 'hell money'), to be transmitted through burning for the deceased to use in the other world (**Fig. 155**). Later, *joss* took the form of imitation banknotes and cardboard silver dollars. In the Qing period, coin-shaped charms were used to ward off evil and to bring good fortune. They were normally cast in brass or hand-fashioned in silver, and carried inscriptions and images wishing the owner protection and blessings.[45] The practice was so widespread that the official Qing mints also made such propitious coins (**Fig. 156**),[46] and official coins could be engraved and decorated with designs by private individuals to transform them into charms.[47] Official coins were also tied together to make exorcism swords, the coins of the Kangxi and Qianlong periods being preferred to invoke the longevity

Figure 156 Official brass coin-like good luck charm, made at the Imperial Board of Revenue mint, Beijing, inscribed on reverse with the motto *tianxia taiping* 天下太平 ('peace under heaven'). Guangxu period, 39.21g, d. 47mm. British Museum, London, 1993,0639.35, ex Simmons & Simmons

Figure 157 Silver reward plaque; the inscription 閩浙總督部堂賞 *Min Zhe zongdu butang shang* identifies it as a reward from the governor of Fujian and Zhejiang provinces; the weight is equivalent to one *liang* on the Chinese standard. Daoguang period, 33.5g, h. 19.0cm, w. 15.0cm. British Museum, London, M.9102, ex. A.M. Montagu

Figure 158 Enamelled silver Qing imperial Double Dragon award, with sapphire and coral, designed to be worn suspended from a blue and white ribbon around the neck; awarded to a British diplomat after 1897, inscribed in Chinese 御賜雙龍寶星 *yu ci shuang long bao xing* ('imperially bestowed Double Dragon precious star') and in Manchu *amoi dakjyng kurun ilan jergi emuci* ('Great Qing third class first division'); this division of the Double Dragon award was for foreign diplomats and Chinese colonels and professors. 1897–1911, h. 10cm, w. 9.4cm. British Museum, London, M.6994

of these two emperors.[48] Some privately made charms include the inscriptions from official coins to induce good fortune: for example, sets of imitation coins with the names of all the mints were made for use as travellers' charms. Some coin imitations were made for use in religious ceremonies such as exorcism or the blessing of a new building.[49]

The bestowal of silver as a reward for military valour or service by the Qing court[50] led to the creation of specific forms of silver medals called rewarding service plaques (*shang gong pai* 賞功牌).[51] These were made to specific weights of silver.[52] One example held by the British Museum was issued by the governor of Fujian and Zhejiang and captured by British forces at Amoy (Xiamen) in 1841 during the First Opium War (**Fig. 157**).[53] During the Taiping Civil War military awards in gold and silver, more closely modelled on European military medals, were awarded by the Qing authorities and provincial governors.[54] These were adapted in 1882 into a whole series of civil and military awards known as Double Dragon awards (**Fig. 158**). Alongside these, lesser medallic awards following the European model came into existence, often made using minting machinery from Europe. European missionaries also had religious medals made specifically for Chinese Christians.[55]

Conclusion

When European traders were able to enter China after the First Opium War and conduct direct business for the first time, they found a monetary system in apparent chaos. In the face of civil war and foreign imperialism the Qing government continued to adhere to the centuries' old system within which the only official imperial coins were those made of brass and individually of little value (each coin was notionally valued at about 0.06 of a British penny). They were theoretically current in strings of 1,000 coins, but each string held less than that number according to the convention of each local marketplace and unofficial and foreign (Vietnamese and Japanese) coins were often mixed in. Alongside the strings of coins people could also use foreign silver dollars of varying weight and fineness as well as a wide range of silver ingots made locally within China. The local merchants had no difficulty with these complexities and it was from among the employees of such local merchants that the foreign traders had to recruit money specialists to assist them in making transactions. Many manuals were written by experienced traders to assist practical understanding of the Chinese monetary system, such as that written in 1926 by Eduard Kann, an Austrian banker based in Shanghai.[56]

In this chapter we have used the British Museum collection to show the development of the Qing monetary system and how this apparently chaotic situation in the late Qing period came about. This is possible due to the diligence of all those whose collections were given to or bought by the Museum, especially in the 1880s, in particular the Morse, Gardner and Masatsuna collections, and to those who were putting together and cataloguing collections of world coins. This deepened and broadened the extent of the collection of Chinese coins. Reginald Stuart Poole (1832–1895), head of what was then the Department of Coins and Medals, pushed ahead with the famous British Museum Catalogues (BMC) of coins, and was keen to have a permanent curator of East Asian coins on his staff, but was unable to persuade the Trustees. At that time, the focus in numismatics was on coins, but, as we have shown in this chapter, it is impossible to understand the Qing monetary system without considering the various other forms of money that were in use. A growing awareness of the complexity of the objects used to make payments in China during the Qing period, particularly during its last hundred years, has prompted a renewed effort since the 1970s to diversify the Museum's collection to better reflect the late Qing system by adding important coins, silver ingots, paper money, financial documents, charms and other pieces.

The complexity of money in the late Qing was a reflection of the conservative attitude of the imperial government and the increasing scale of foreign incursions into China's markets. Since the Han period, the imperial government had seen the provision of low value coins as its primary role in the management of the monetary system. This concept was embedded in the mythology of the origin of coinage. The *Guanzi* (管子)[57], a philosophical work from *c.* 26 BCE but itself based on pre-Qin texts, explained the invention of coins as a response to the needs of the people during famine, so they could buy food rather than sell their children, and this ancient concept remained central to the Qing approach to coins – that the government's only responsibility with regard to coinage was to serve the people's needs.

When foreign silver arrived in China in abundance, it was incorporated into the monetary system but remained outside government regulation apart from the collection of taxes. When market forces and foreign governments tried to persuade the Qing administration to change to a system still under their control, but based on Western monetary philosophy, there was resistance until the 1880s when the Qing government finally gave in to the pressure which had been exacerbated by the Taiping Civil War. By this stage the governance of China was in such disarray that the use of non-coined silver was locally controlled by merchants and money changers and the adoption of Western-style coinage and paper money was the initiative of local governors, meaning that the Western-style money also became fragmented. Even the centrally controlled brass coinage was impaired as the illicit production of forgeries within China and those imported from Vietnam undermined the official currency. The end of the Qing did little to improve the situation. The first half of the 20th century would see numerous shifts and changes in the monetary system, prompted and impacted by politics and war, until the establishment of the *renminbi* ('人民幣 the people's money') in 1948, and its revaluation in 1955.

Notes

1 We are grateful to the specialists in Chinese numismatics who have visited the collection over the past 50 years and who have shared their opinions and insights with us. We are particularly grateful to Dr Tong Yu and Dr Alex C. Fang, who are both currently working on the collection of the late Werner Burger in Hong Kong, which is the largest private collection of Qing coins and charms, library and archive, containing over 20,000 pieces. The largest international project on Qing monetary history was headed by Hans Ulrich Vogel (in Tübingen), see Vogel (2010–18) We also remember with affection and gratitude Steve Cribb (1944–1993), whose interest in Chinese coins and banknotes, initiated our work on the British Museum collection over the last 50 years.
2 British Museum 1882,0601.1–1013.
3 British Museum 1883,0802.1–3663.
4 British Museum 1978,0636.1–200.
5 For more details of Chinese coin collections at the British Museum and other institutions, see Cribb 1987, 2022; Jankowski 2018a, 2018b; Stroobants 2022; Thierry 1986, 1995, 1997, 2003; Wang 2010, 2013, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2023.
6 von Glahn 1996, 70–88; Cribb 1987, 101–26.
7 Cribb 1987, 113–41.
8 Cribb 1987, 136–9.
9 Wang *et al.* 2005, 63–6.
10 von Glahn 1996, 187–97.
11 Burger 2016, 20.
12 Burger 2016, 191–4. See also Hartill 2003.
13 The *liang* is known in pidgin English as tael, but can also be spoken of as an ounce as at *c.* 36g it is the closest Chinese weight to the UK ounce (28g).
14 Burger 2016, 39–41, 193.
15 Burger 2016, 196–223.
16 von Glahn 1996, 253–5.
17 Cowell and Wang 1998.
18 Cribb 1992, 15–16.
19 von Glahn 2019.
20 Cribb 1977; von Glahn 2019.
21 Cribb 1987, 113–19.
22 Wang 2018.
23 Smith and Maltravers 1970, 219–20.
24 Yang 1952, 49–50; Kann 1966, 15–23; Burger 2016, 107–8.
25 Burger 2016, 143.
26 Burger 2016, 137–44; Yang 1952, 68–9.
27 In the inscriptions on the coins, the character 國 is written as 国, highlighting the element 'king' (wang 王), see Wang 1994, 187.
28 Wang 2023b.
29 Cribb 1987, 10.
30 British Museum 1976,0114.1–963.
31 Cribb 1987, 10–11 and 34–6.
32 Forrer 1917, 17–18.
33 Wright 2012, 134–44.
34 Cribb 1987, 133–66.
35 Cribb 1987, 161–5.
36 Smith and Maltravers 1970, 56–7.
37 Smith and Maltravers 1970, 158; for an example, see British Museum CIB,EA.296.
38 Smith and Maltravers 1970, 172.
39 Kann 1926.
40 See British Museum 1996,0103.10 for a copy of an 1884 Mexican dollar collected in north-eastern China in 1907.
41 Yi and de Kreek 1995–6.
42 Dong and Jiang 1991, 73–5.
43 Dong and Jiang 1991, 87–109.
44 Bertsch 2013.
45 Cribb 1986; Burger 2015; Fang 2008; Fang and Thierry 2016; Thierry 2021.
46 Burger 2016, 59, 88–9.
47 Burger 2016, 64, 90.
48 For example, British Museum 1978,0908.2.
49 Burger 2015, 312 and 335.
50 Cribb 1992, 31; Theobald 2015, 413–14.
51 Cribb 1992, 407.
52 Birch 1845.
53 Forbes 1848, 64.
54 For example, British Museum 2008,4098.1.
55 Cribb 1978; Petit and Frangville 2022a and 2022b; for an example, see British Museum 1977,0706.2.
56 Kann 1926.
57 Peng 1965, 9, n.6.

5 COMMERCE AND FASHION

Introduction: commerce and fashion

Dorothy Ko

One of the enduring myths about fashion in China is that there is no such thing: by definition, fashion could not have existed in China because the clothes of the Chinese people never changed. According to a story reiterated in 19th-century European accounts, Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715) once sent for drawings of Chinese costumes. Some 30 or 40 years later, when readers familiar with these images sailed to China, they were shocked to discover that the men and women were still wearing clothes identical to those in the drawings. One writer exclaimed: 'How different amongst the Europeans! The dress of the present year is not only unlike that of the last, but perhaps as different from it as those of twenty years before were to the fashions of the century preceding. But we not only change the fashions, but [also] the terms, or rather the jargon of them'.[1] To the Victorians, the lack of fashion in China was symptomatic of its lack of dynamism and the impossibility of progress without outside help.

Recent scholarship has troubled this stereotypical image of a stagnant China theoretically and empirically. In a crucial conceptual intervention, cultural studies specialist Jennifer Craik shifted the focus of fashion studies from clothing to the dynamic relationship between clothes and bodies of all sizes, shapes and colours, hence directing the attention of fashion scholars from the elite trendsetters to the everyday lives of people in multiple cultures and time-places.[2] Economic historian Antonia Finnane has discerned complex domestic forces that sustained a robust fashion system in modern China, from the tailor trade, the sewing machine and other new technical devices, to the popularity of the military uniform. Changing political regimes constituted a particularly salient factor, introducing new national styles such as the Nehru/Sun Yat-sen suit and the Jiang Qing dress. Although the core of her study is the 20th century, Finnane's survey of fashion in the Qing dynasty reveals a surprising picture in the 18th and 19th centuries, when imported woollens became exotic items favoured by savvy consumers in southern cities such as Yangzhou.[3]

Fashion historian Rachel Silberstein has continued where Finnane left off, reaching new heights in her dedicated study of the 19th century, aptly entitled *A Fashionable Century*. In this transformative book, Silberstein brings the methods of art history and material culture studies as well as ecological awareness to bear on the study of fashion. She locates the motor of fashion in late-Qing China in a vibrant circular economy that encompassed networks of commercial embroidery workshops, pawnshops, needleworkers' guilds, female subcontracted workers and second-hand clothes dealers whose creed was creative reuse and no waste. Episodes and characters in drama – depicted in vernacular prints, performed on stage and embroidered on fabrics – constituted a multimedia loop that stoked consumer desires and transmitted information about novel styles and materials.[4] Taken together, these and other studies have made a strong case that fashion did exist in the Chinese empire before significant contact with the West, even as early as the Tang dynasty.[5]

European observers perpetuated the myth of the absence of fashion in China in part because they were looking in the wrong places. In the 19th century and earlier, fashion in

Pages 162–3: Woman's headdress, 1800–1900, kingfisher feather and semi-precious stones, w. 22cm, h. 19cm. Teresa Coleman Collection

China is most visible not in the silhouette or shape of garments – the locus of fashionable change in Europe – but in the more subtle realms of ornaments, accessories, fabric design and shades of colour. Such marginalia as the embroidered border of a robe or the pattern of woven roundels on silk fabrics constituted the focus of incessant innovations; the speed of change in the design, manufacture and materials of hairpins was particularly rapacious (as described by Sarah Cheang in this section). New technologies of weaving and dyeing were powerful forces that propelled fashion in China. So, too, were long-distance trade and cross-cultural exchanges, which brought new weaving techniques and patterns from Central Asia in the Tang, new dyestuff in the Qing (covered by Rachel Silberstein in Chapter 16), and new imports such as Japanese artistic textiles in the age of world expositions (investigated by Mei Mei Rado in Chapter 17).

How did such a dynamic fashion system come about? It all began with money. Scholars have estimated that as much as one-third of the silver mined in the New World was brought to China in the 17th and 18th centuries by way of maritime and overland trading networks, in exchange for the coveted goods of silk, porcelain and tea. The Taiwanese historian Wu Ren-shu 巫仁恕 argues that a 'consumer society' had begun to take shape in the southern cities of the late Ming empire in the 16th century. Its salient characteristic was a shift from people producing everyday necessities such as shoes, socks, headdresses, garments and meals in the household to purchasing them with cash at the market. So-called 'luxury goods' became more and more available. Not only did the variety of luxury items grew, but also there was an increasing number of consumers, now hailing from the middle classes, who could afford the dazzling array of delicate clothing of gauze in the summer and fur in the winter, furniture wrought of precious hardwoods from South and South East Asia, banquets featuring bird's nest and shark fin from South East Asia, garden villas, and decorated sedan chairs borne by four porters that violated sumptuary restrictions.[6] Not limited to clothing, fashion was a full-body sensory experience for both males and females.

Intellectual and social upheavals ensued. The Ming philosopher Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1528) advocated a new concept of vocation that accorded moral worth to each of the four occupational groups – not just scholars but also farmers, artisans and merchants. In a blatant put-down of the scholarly group's exclusive claims on moral authority, Wang wrote: 'The four categories of people were engaged in different occupations but followed the same Way'.[7] Scholar Lu Ji 陸楫 (1515–1552) upended the age-old valuation of frugality in favour of extravagance, thus promoting commerce as a social good. He averred that when big merchants 'are extravagant with their meals, farmers and cooks will share the profit; when merchants are extravagant with their silk garments, cloth dealers and weavers will share the profit'.[8] Eccentric Confucian thinker Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602) went one step further in espousing a desire-based moral philosophy that elevates private desire to be on par with public good. He insisted that 'to clothe one's body and to fill one's belly', not to mention sexual gratification, are basic human needs that cannot be denied.[9]

The extravagant consumption and indulgence of the body-self since the 16th century extracted a toll whose disquiet could no longer be ignored by the 19th century. As newly rich merchants cultivated exquisite tastes in urban mansions and village daughters vied to stitch the latest dramatic scenes onto silk satins, a storm was gathering above the land and waters of the empire. Centuries of over-farming, deforestation and exploitation of scarce resources to clothe and feed an exploding population – 436 million in 1850 – led to a negative spiral of environmental degradation. Exhausted farmland was abandoned; itinerancy began to be routine for the precarious millions. Hydraulic works also became too onerous to repair; the Yellow River changed course three times in the 19th century, bringing massive floods, famine and death. Historian Robert Marks argues that this culminative crisis was alleviated (or one may say delayed, even prolonged) only by the widespread introduction of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in the early 1980s; the chemical regime remains the dominant mode of agriculture in China today.[10]

One can only conclude that for a fashionista in China, the long 19th century was the best of times and the worst of times. Indeed, if readers of Dickens had cared to look in the right places in China, they would have recognised the common ground that the ancient empire shared with Victorian England in its long-term trajectory, despite obvious differences. Perhaps the stimulation of escalating desires is a dynamic intrinsic to fashion systems in China as in Europe; but this aspiration for everlasting growth is neither realistic nor sustainable on a planet of finitude. In our age of climate change crisis, as we search for an alternative future by way of slow fashion, revival of artisanal values and other pathways to sustainable development, may this recognition of a certain parity between East and West usher in a new awareness, that China can figure as a part of the solution to our common crisis and not just as part of the problem.

Notes

1 De la Martiniére n.d. [1812]; cf. Ko 1997.
2 Craik 2004.
3 Finnane 2008.
4 Silberstein 2020; cf. Silberstein 2019.
5 For Tang fashion, see Chen 2019. Chen identifies three precursors of the modern fashion system in Tang society: (1) a new consciousness of time; (2) a game of imitation and emulation; and (3) a change in modes of production.
6 For the applicability of the term 'consumer society', developed in McKendrick *et al.* 1982, see Wu Renshu 2007, 11–16, 40. For studies in English, see Clunas 1991 and Brook 1999.
7 Wang Yangming 1978 [1525], 454.
8 For Lu Ji, see Zanasi 2020, 73–81 (translation adapted from p. 75). She argues that what historian Jan de Vries calls an 'industrious revolution' had occurred in China in the mid-1500s.
9 Li 2016, translation adapted from p. 8.
10 Marks 2012.

Chapter 15
Flowers, feathers and fashions: hair, nature and design innovation in late Qing China

Sarah Cheang

Histories of Chinese fashion and 'Chinese fashion thinking' often begin with the 20th-century *qipao* (旗袍) (the classic 'Chinese gown'), yet it is clear that many China-centred fashion systems existed before the Republican era.[1] One problem has been the way in which models of modernity, focused on western narratives of fashion, have tended to occlude the innovation that was present in Qing dress and adornment.[2] An image by Scottish photographer John Thomson sets out the stakes for the fashionable female body in the late Qing (**Fig. 159**). How wide can a sleeve go before it feels anachronistic or bizarrely ostentatious? How many layers of ribbon and embroidery can you add before the decorative borders encroach too far onto the main body of the garment? What colours to select? What embroidery themes? What buttons? What accessories? What shoes? What make-up and earrings? And, how to dress the hair?

This chapter explores Qing women's hairpins of the 1880s as they were captured in visual culture and collected in European international exhibitions and museums, where they featured not as fashion, but as exemplars of Chinese customs, craft and industry. Hair itself is 'both a means of strong institutional control and an instrument of liberation from and critique of social and institutional controls'.[3] The dressing of hair is also an intricate part of human subjectivities.[4] Hairpins can provide a provocative approach to Chinese women's lives that involves thinking across numerous ecologies which place the material culture of hair within global and local contexts of fashion, design reform, the natural world and appreciation of Chinese art and design.

Hair, hair accessories and fashion

Thomson's photograph shows two kinds of hairstyle, conventionally read as Han (on the left) and Manchu (on the right). The woman on the right has begun with a simple centre parting, but then the bulk of the hair is bunched, plaited, wrapped, folded, tied and pinned to produce a high Manchu shape that was assisted by the use of heavy wooden

Figure 159 John Thomson, *Manchu Ladies* (detail), China, 1869, gelatin silver print. Wellcome Collection, London, 19669i

boards as well as lighter metal frames, and additional hairpieces. The woman on the left has probably been posed in order to display the complexities that the Han round-headed look could involve.[5] There are multiple partings, and different sections of the hair used to create a range of shapes at the back. Oils and sticky gels were used to keep the hair smooth, luxuriantly shiny and in place. Both women have finished their hairstyles with decorative flowers and pins.

Such elaborate styles could not be produced without assistance as well as hours spent at one's toilette, but women of more modest means were still able to combine neatly pulled-back styles with severe partings, buns that created projecting shapes and added decorations. While Thomson's photograph may have been carefully staged to show cultural variety and extremes, export paintings of Chinese occupations provide sound evidence of the day-to-day reality of women's hairstyling. For example, in a depiction of an itinerant silk thread seller plying his wares by the Beijing Zhou Peichun (周培春) workshop, the use of decorative hairpins is captured as an incidental detail (**Fig. 160**). In this everyday scene, a woman buying thread is shown with her hair pulled tightly with a bunched projecting shape at the back and a narrow flat hair decoration above her right ear. By her left ear, the painter has placed two red circles that denote the use of eye-catching decorative hairpins.

Figure 160 Zhou Peichun 周培春 workshop, Beijing, *Man Selling Cotton and Silk Thread*, (detail), 1885, ink and colours on paper, h. 23cm, w. 32cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, D.1572-1900

Although simply rendered in the painted representation as two colourful red splashes, even hair decorations of this type could be quite complex. An example in the collections of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW) in the Netherlands simulates a sprig of blossoms, while perched on the stem is a butterfly with metallic and pearly antennae (**Fig. 161**). The red pom-pom shapes suggest two large blooms, and are attached to the hairpin by long coiled metal springs, bringing to mind the effects used in opera costumes.[6] It is clear that, for artists recording daily life in Beijing in the 1880s, adding two large red dots to the side of a woman's head was an effective way to evoke the everyday drama of fashions in hair decoration. In this hairpin, the use of pith paper to create flowers, and the incorporation of false pearls, places pleasure in skilled artifice centre stage. The ingenuity of things made out of other things, that trick the eye or invite speculation on their artistry, offers a certain kind of aesthetic delight. On a more practical level, cheaper lighter materials may be substituted for heavier treasures, and fresh flowers can be replaced by artificial ones that are less wasteful and can outlast the current season.

Fashion is an inescapable dynamic of cultural change and cultural identity, and an integral aspect of innovation in material culture. Fashion concepts are intensely bound up with ontologies as well. These are themselves time and place specific because of the unique role that fashion plays in materialising and experiencing selfhood in relation to the moment of now which is modernity.[7] Getting dressed each day is an act of 'becoming' that, however habitual, still involves consideration of how others see us. As well as

Figure 161 Hairpin, China, 1860–1900, materials, l. 20cm, w. 8.5cm (at widest). Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands, RV-412-20

Figure 162 John Thomson, *Manchu Lady at Toilet* (detail), China, 1869, photoprint. Wellcome Collection, London, 19667i

reflecting the specific tasks we need to perform, fashion and dress involve a wider negotiation between what we are and are not allowed to be or do. Social rank, gender and ethnicity are signalled through the dressed body, and those bodies in turn are trained to perform and conform to the social norms, and engage in a further performance of selfhood in relation to those norms through style trends. For Qing women, fashion choices in motif, colour, material, style and price point ran the risk of social embarrassment if these were deemed too vulgar, immodest, commercial or poorly made for the wearer's station.[8] In this way, fashion as 'becoming' is anxious as well as celebrational, and because of their associations with ephemerality, commerciality and women's 'foibles', fashion objects have sometimes been anxiously regarded by museums and academics alike.[9] Hairpins such as the one shown in **Figure 161**, and many others in the stores of European museums, are made of cheap materials and were often collected as ethnographic examples of everyday Chinese women's culture, rather than valuable examples of Chinese art.[10] While hairpins made of precious materials, especially of earlier dynasties, can be seen in museum galleries of Chinese art, design and material culture, late Qing 'fashion' hairpins are not usually placed on display.[11]

Stories of hairpins in China

The hairpin played a part in the production of Chinese womanhood for millennia. For example, although they were worn by both men and women in the Han period, men's and women's hairpins differed in style and materials.[12] In the Qing dynasty, the transition of girlhood to marriageable womanhood was still marked by the Han tradition of putting up of the hair and the use of decorative hairpins.[13] The status of a woman was conveyed by the quality and materials of her hair decorations, and sometimes quite literally how many jewels and intricate things were attached to the shaft of the hairpin.[14]

It is therefore not surprising that hairpins featured prominently and highly symbolically in many tales of romance involving ladies of high rank from the Tang to the present day. Literary historian Yuanfei Wang writes that hairpins came increasingly to stand for their wearers; for example, a hairpin of crimson, semilucent and lustrous crystal implies the 'virginity, romantic and sensual inclination, and flawless royal status' of the heroine of a Ming romantic tale.[15] Hairpins were directly compared to their owners and embodied social obligation and emotional/sensual self-expression, being given as love tokens. Plays had titles such as the *Tale of the Jade Hairpin* (*Yuzan ji* 玉簪記), *The Purple Jade Hairpin* (*Zichai ji* 紫釵記), and *The Romance of the Lost Hairpin* (*Zhuichai ji* 墜釵記), with dramatic scenes such as 'The Gold Hairpin Disaster (*Jinchai yihuo* 金釵遺禍)'. Such stories were told and retold (and are still being told now via historical costume dramas).[16] As art historian Rachel Silberstein's work clearly shows, fashionable Qing imagery in embroideries drew on these and other stories, such as *The Story of the Hairpin and the Bracelet* (*Chaichuan ji* 釵釧記), and while we cannot know how women interpreted these stories, it seems certain that wearing hairpins in the Qing period would still have been charged with centuries of metaphor around chastity, virtue, duty and sexuality.[17]

Another social expectation that Qing women quite literally bore on their heads was the painful tightness, and weight, of their hairstyles. Even if caps were worn and decoration was more minimal, hairstyling still involved severe pulling and twisting (**Fig. 162**). The exercise of control in the use of fashion and in deportment of the body takes on particular resonance in relation to concepts of womanhood in Qing China. Neo-Confucian values made shopping for fancy and expensive goods immoral, and simplicity in hair decoration demonstrated filial piety.[18] A respectable lady never had a hair out of place, and it has been argued that, in the Korean context, the binding of women's hairstyles became tighter the more Confucianism was embraced.[19] How respectable, therefore, was it to add flowers, springs and pom poms? This is an interesting question if we consider that late Qing women's hair emphasised a tightly pulled and secured neatness that kept the body under control but then added fanciful projecting hairpins that seem to imply to a certain freedom, self-celebration and movement.

Discussing control and discipline in patriarchal societies, feminist philosopher Sandra Bartky asks, 'Do women's "libidinal" bodies, then, not rebel against the pain, constriction, tedium… and constant self-surveillance to which they are… condemned?'[20] Studies of western fashion and hairstyling in the 19th and 20th centuries hold that

Figure 163 (far left) Hairpin, China, 1886–90, silver and kingfisher feathers with artificial pearls, l. 20.5cm, w. 7cm (at widest). Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands, RV-971-22

Figure 164 (left) Hairpin, China, 1886–90, silver with kingfisher feather inlay and strings of artificial pearls, l. 22cm, w. 6cm (at widest). Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Netherlands, RV-971-21

women have been forced to use accommodation and resistance strategies based in the body, in a daily struggle with cultural ideals of femininity.[21] But these strategies, for example adopting a non-gender-conforming hairstyle, do little more than signal that a woman wants to distance herself from dominant ideologies. While non-gender conforming fashions may ultimately shift what can be considered feminine, they tend to challenge rather than change the ideologies against which women might be struggling.[22]

This kind of conceptualisation of hair, body and womanhood is useful, but needs to be further reformulated if we consider that neo-Confucianism also involved a body etiquette of minimal body movements, a controlled, attentive, quiet stillness that implies total control over women and their bodies.[23] In relation to this, the movement that was designed into so many hairpins is striking. The shaft of the hairpin was often mounted with a coiled metal spring, itself branching more springs on which artificial leaves, flowers and butterflies were placed (**Fig. 163**). The entire assemblage was designed to tremble and shake, to appear independently animate of the wearer. As well as projections on springs, hairpins also used ornaments that dangled, such as strings of false pearls that were specifically designed to swing freely (**Fig. 164**). The model of good womanhood, therefore, included a demonstration of skilled hairpin wearing, in which cascades of tiny pearls might tremble and sway as gently and as silently as possible. Turning the head needed to be done in a particularly controlled manner because it was not 'lady-like' to allow your hair decorations to swing about.

Hairpins such as these are called *buyao* (步搖, literally 'step shake') because they were designed to move each time a step was taken. Questions of the libidinal body are raised by these hairpins, and the body etiquette of fashionable dress in general in late 19th century China. When moving about in wide sleeves, heavily pleated skirts and *buyao*, it could be hard to not feel like a dancer. Qing women's sexuality now looks like a spring-loaded thing, held in tremendous tension. This potential energy was caught on camera: in the photograph shown in **Figure 159**, there is a blurring of the hair decorations of the woman on the left, betraying that while she was holding a static pose, her *buyao* were still moving. While watching costume dramas and trying on reproduction hairpins is also instructive for the historian, encountering *buyao* in the archive brings this animation home most powerfully. Handling 19th-century *buyao* in the collections of the NMWC, I was struck by the apparent impossibility of holding or moving them without causing excessive motion in their delicate structures. Even when trying to hold them as still and as carefully as possible, there was movement, as if a light breeze were blowing through the room.[24] There was constant confirmation, through a trembling and swaying, that they were held by a living hand.

Material substitutions and the value of fakery of fashion

Observations on the dynamic design of hairpins point to the role of the technologies of artifice in creating the desiring female body in late Qing China. What further role did the act of adding false flowers to the hair play for elite and less extravagantly dressed women? Silberstein points out that

Figure 165 Zhou Peichun workshop, Beijing, *Itinerant Vendor of Artificial Flowers*, (detail), 1885, ink and colours on paper, h. 23cm, w. 32cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, D.1651-1900

Figure 166 Zhou Peichun workshop, Beijing, *Man Selling Artificial Flowers, Butterflies and Other Ornaments for Ladies' Hair* (detail), 1885, h. 23cm, w. 32cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, D.1650-1900

itinerant pedlars, such as the sellers of artificial flowers, were a major feature of Chinese life and would also have been the crucial suppliers of materials needed to create fashionable styles for women who couldn't move about the streets freely (**Fig. 165**).[25] In **Figure 166**, an itinerant seller of artificial flowers offers potential hair decorations – flowers, butterflies and pom pom-like flowers. This scene is closely corroborated by a Thomson photograph that depicts a hair decoration seller and his customers in action (**Fig. 167**). Across these images, the fake flowers in the boxes, in the women's hands and in their hair bear a close resemblance to extant examples in the NMVW and the Victoria and Albert Museum.[26]

Accessories of these kinds were made from *tongcao* (通草) or pith paper, sometimes also referred to by westerners as 'rice paper', and waste silk transformed into 'silk paper' (*sizhi* 絲紙).[27] Pith paper came from the Taiwanese plant *Tetrapanax papyrifera*, grown in many places in East Asia, is a substitution of one kind of plant matter (thinly sliced pith) for another (flowers); similarly, silk took the place of leaves and petals. Laid on card for museum photography, the artificial blooms bear a strange resemblance to botanical specimens (**Fig. 168**). Indeed, Chinese pith flowers can also be found in the 19th-century Economic Botany Collection at Kew Gardens, London, mounted as a bouquet of chrysanthemums beneath a glass dome and labelled 'artificial flowers made of rice-paper by the Chinese'.[28] Technologically, though, pith and silk flowers were an ingenious method of replacing fresh flowers with lightweight and longer-lasting alternatives, and hence a more frugal way for Chinese women to ornament their hair.

Another aspect of the nature and artifice spectrum of Chinese hairpins can be seen in the use of kingfisher feathers. In one late Qing example, silver-gilt ornamentation around a horseshoe shape is decorated with kingfisher feathers, while tiny longevity characters are threaded onto strings of imitation pearls and red glass beads (**Fig. 169**).[29] Mention of kingfisher feathers as decoration appears as early as the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), although none exist from this time, so scholars are reliant on literary sources as evidence.[30] The feathers were used to decorate prestigious cloaks, imperial crowns and the bed coverings of lovers. In the Qing dynasty, they were a familiar sight on imperial and elite jewellery and hats as well as bridal headdresses. An association with the phoenix made the kingfisher particularly apt for women of the late Qing.[31]

Hair, fur and feathers are all made from keratin, a fibrous structural protein also found in horns, hooves, nails, claws and beaks. Hair and fur are chemically indistinguishable. Hair and wool are comprised of about 17 different amino acids, in slightly varying amounts, which creates the difference in the textures between the two, but they are chemically very similar, and the same is true of hair and feathers.[32] Keratin and chitin (a pliable but tough long-chain polymer) are the ubiquitous components of both feathers and butterfly wings, essential to their form, texture and colour, and making them light, tough and insoluble. Drawing attention to these connections at the biochemical level challenges and destabilises both Western and Chinese cosmological differentiations between human and animal, nature and culture, and suggests a very basic material reason why feathers provided an effective medium for hair decorations.

To make the kingfisher hairpins, individual feather filaments were cut and glued onto a metal wire framework

Figure 167 John Thomson, *Manchu Women Being Sold Hair Ornaments* (detail), China, 1869, photograph. Wellcome Collection, London, 19654i

Figure 168 (far left) Hairpin, China, 1850–1900, silk and metal, l. 25cm, w. 9cm (at widest). Victoria and Albert Museum, London, FE.23-2021

Figure 169 (left) Hairpin, Bao Cheng's mark, China, 1880–3, silver-gilt, kingfisher feather, imitation pearls, glass, silk thread, h. 10.8cm, w. 8.9cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1238-1883

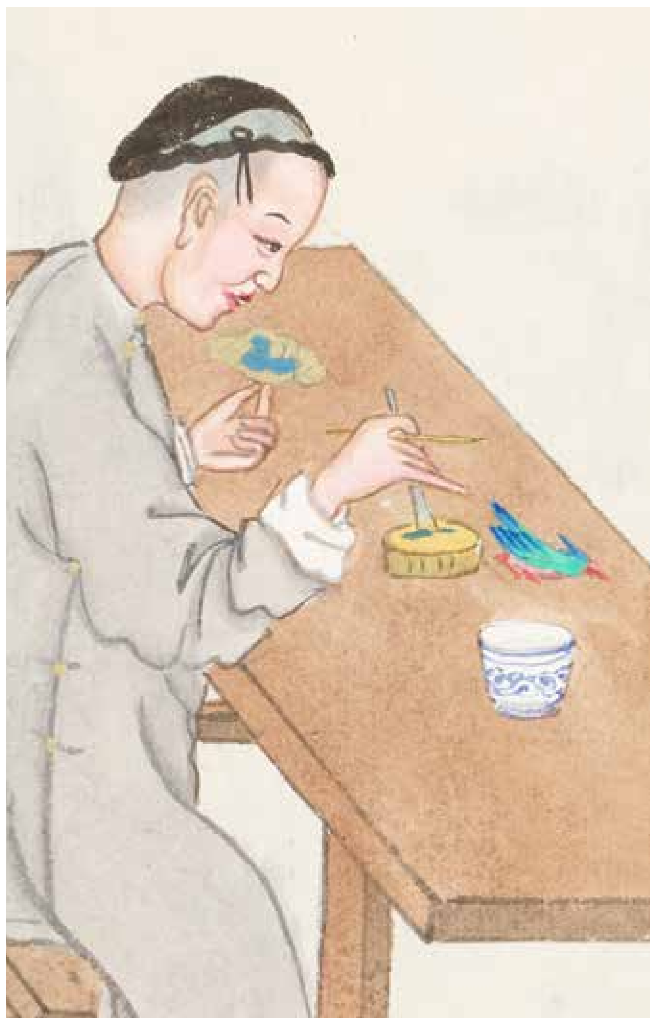


Figure 170 Zhou Peichun workshop, Beijing, ***Jeweller Pasting Kingfisher Feathers on a Silver-gilt Frame*** **(detail), 1885, ink and colours on paper, h. 23cm, w. 32cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, D.1652-1900**

(**Fig. 170**).[33] This was, therefore, not a process of sticking down feathers, but a delicate craft of feather inlay. Kingfisher blueness is more than just a colour. The fascinating lustre is an effect of manipulated light. All pigments work by scattering and absorbing light, but iridescence is an additional light scattering phenomenon that mammals don't naturally tend to possess.[34] Common to peacocks, hummingbirds, ducks, possibly dinosaurs and even the humble pigeon, iridescence in feathers is due to nanostructures within the tiny filaments that amplify different wavelengths in the light, depending on the angle of view.[35]

Qing hairpins can also be seen in blue enamel which echoes the blues of the kingfisher. Enamel has its own kind of shine that might not catch the eye in quite the same way as iridescence, but still offers a surface with depth and reflection (**Fig. 171**). The white details on one hairpin could even be a reference to pearls, which implies that they are a copy of a copy, since many pearls used in hairpins were actually crafted from hollow glass beads coated on the inside and then filled with wax.[36]

The hairpins shown in **Figures 169** and **171** were acquired for the South Kensington Museum, now known as the Victoria and Albert Museum, from the International Colonial and Export Exhibition held in Amsterdam in 1883. Hairpins made up over half of the 40 items of Chinese jewellery purchased by the Museum, some of which bear the mark of Bao Cheng (寶成), a name associated with Beijing enamelled silver boxes and bowls, and a wider group of silver merchants.[37] The story of their acquisition suggests that the museum was interested in acquiring so many Chinese women's hairpins at this time because of matters related to innovation, and in particular, substitutions of one material for another within fashion.

The hairpins were first selected for purchase by Caspar Purdon Clarke (1846–1911), an architect who was involved in the design of interiors and displays at the South Kensington Museum, becoming the Keeper of the Indian department, and finally the museum's director. During the 1870s, he had travelled in Europe and the Middle East to buy artefacts for the museum, and following this, he quickly became responsible for the exhibition of the Indian collections.[38] In 1879, the collections of the East India Company, known as the India Museum, were officially transferred to the South Kensington Museum, and gaps in that collection were identified.[39] Unlike the South Kensington Museum, the India Museum had never had ambitions to create a comprehensive representation of art and manufacturing, so, in 1880, Purdon Clarke was sent to India on a two-year collecting mission. Metalwork, including jewellery, was one of the four categories of objects that he was specifically instructed to acquire.[40]

In July 1883, the manager of the Indian department of the Amsterdam exhibition told Purdon Clarke that he would reserve all sales in the Indian court for ten days to allow the South Kensington Museum first choice.[41] The museum therefore sent Purdon Clarke there as quickly as possible with £150 to spend on Indian material, and without the expectation of there being anything else there of interest.[42] But when he arrived in Amsterdam, he found that the particular items he had intended to buy – a set of life-size clay figures of South Asian people – had already been sold. In a letter to the museum, he reported that he then looked at the Indian jewellery but there was nothing that the museum did not already have. In other words, he saw no Indian jewellery in Amsterdam that he hadn't already collected or rejected in India the year before.[43]

Purdon Clarke then took a look around the rest of the exhibition's oriental departments where he saw a large collection of jewellery in the Chinese section, writing: 'In this collection all objects usually made in silver are of silver, but all usually in gold are in silver gilt to save expense.'[44] It is clear that what drew his attention to this Chinese collection was the element of fakery, material substitutions and artifice, and he sent examples back to London with an estimate for the cost of the entire collection.

In response, Thomas Armstrong (1833–1911), Director of Art at the museum, was sent over to Amsterdam to purchase the Chinese jewellery, together with two Japanese jars and some carpets, 'as examples for the Schools', a reference to the various training schools of art and design for which Armstrong was responsible.[45] It is worth noting that the hairpins were also being acquired as examples of material substitutions in the art of the silversmith at a time when the

Figure 171 Hairpin, China, 1880–3, enamelled silver-gilt, h. 11.8cm, w. 13.5cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1265-1883

new invention of electrotyping was being actively invested in by the museum to make metallic replicas as part of a wider mission to make art more available and more affordable and to elevate public taste.[46] In October 1883, Armstrong produced a detailed list of the specific items of Chinese jewellery that were recommended for purchase, complete with tiny sketches. The words 'imitation', 'false' and 'silvergilt' occurred multiple times across these pages, and although this description of materials and techniques is a normal part of a curatorial and connoisseurly appraisal, the effect is to create a recommendation list focused on the quality of material deception.[47]

Conclusion

Late 19th-century pith paper, kingfisher, silk and enamelled hairpins can be seen in many European museum collections. Just as Purdon Clarke and his contemporaries were interested in the use of silver-gilt rather than gold, it is possible that, alongside ethnographic interests, this wide variety of contemporary late Qing Chinese hairpins were collected because they could also be related to the late 19th-century trade of silk flower-making in the European fashion industry, where artificial flowers adorned women's dresses and hats.[48] Indeed, pith paper hairpins have recently been re-examined in the Victoria and Albert Museum in relation to a new 21st-century agenda, that of the need for designers to tackle the climate change crisis and refocus commodity consumption on recycled and/or renewable resources.[49]

Aesthetic systems in Chinese art and design, not to mention wider Chinese cultural systems involving homophones, are full of playful and skilful substitutions and doubled visual and material effects of which literati visual culture might be at one end of the artistic spectrum, and hair ornaments another. Scholars of Chinese women's history are often reliant on literary sources and metaphorical devices to try to understand Qing women's experiences. By focusing on what Chinese hairpins tell us about innovation when this falls into the realms of fashion, the body, self-expression, creativity, commerce, surface effect and ephemerality, ideas of ugly or unnatural crazes and sex appeal are brought together with questions of conformity and resistance. These are ideas that failed to travel with the hairpins in their journey from China to the Netherlands and thence to England, when they passed directly from silversmith to exhibition officer to museum keeper, out of contact with Chinese women's bodies. Nevertheless, this is a fashion

history capable of moving in and out of narratives of design reform, and matters of national taste, morality and progress in relation to art and industry, as much as what it meant to be a good *and* modern woman in late Qing China. The presence of hairpins on both women's heads and museum shelves is united by a delight in artifice that spans both control and presentation of the body and innovation and education in design.

Notes

1 Jie 2023, 23–6.
2 Finanne 2007, 1–67; Silberstein 2020.
3 Olivelle 1998, 41.
4 Cheang and Biddle-Perry 2008.
5 Wilson 1986, 65–7.
6 Bonds 2008, 229–30.
7 Eicher and Roach-Higgens 1992, 8–28; Craik 2004, 1–16; Wilson 1985.
8 Silberstein 2020, 147.
9 Taylor 2002, 64–9; Breward 1998; Miller 1994, 71–2.
10 For example, British Museum AS1977,09.14-15, and NMVW A-7621c .
11 For example, compare the exhibition histories of British Museum 1938,0524.273 and V&A FE.18-2021, the latter object having been left unaccessioned for over a century.
12 Li, Liang and Zhang 2022, 384.
13 Lullo 2019, 235.
14 Li, Liang and Zhang 2022.
15 Wang 2021, 14.
16 Zhang 2016, 162–3.
17 Silberstein 2020, 147–8.
18 Silberstein 2020, 45–75; Lin 2018, 39–40.
19 Nelson 1998, 117.
20 Barkty 2003, 43.
21 Weitz 2004; Bordo 2003.
22 McLaren 2002, 19–52; Holland 2004; Weitz 2003.
23 Barlow 1994, 260; fashion and other examples of women's culture challenge this notion of Confucianism and neo-Confucianism as a total patriarchal subjugation by creating room for some degree of female struggle and agency; see Ko, Haboush and Piggott 2003.
24 I am grateful to Daan van Dartel, Maria Rey-Lamslag, Wendy Boham, Francois Janse van Rensburg, Karwin Cheung, Cathelijne Beckers and Willemijn van Noord for their assistance in the research and analysis of Chinese hairpins in the NMVW collections in Rotterdam, Leiden and Amsterdam.
25 Silberstein 2020, 68–9.
26 See, for example, NMVW RV-412-20, V&A FE.38-202 and V&A FE.21-2021.
27 Chan 2023, 44–9. Krüger 2019.
28 Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, Economic Botany Collection 71871.
29 Chan 2023, 42–3.
30 Kroll 1984; Milburn 2020.
31 Kroll 1984, 248.
32 American Museum of Natural History n.d.
33 Wu 2020, 26–30; Clark 2013.
34 Doucet and Meadows 2009.
35 Kelly 2021; Nordén, Eliason and Stoddard 2021.
36 Chan 2023, 34; for the hairpin, see V&A 1256-1883.
37 Von Ferscht 2015, 134–46.
38 Raheja 2023. I am grateful to Ekta Raheja of the V&A for her assistance and lecture notes on Purdon Clarke's collecting in India and interactions with the museum.
39 Mitter 1997, 222–5.
40 Raheja 2023.
41 Science and Art Department minutes, 4 July 1883. Amsterdam: International Exhibition of Colonial Objects of General Exportations, May to October 1883. V&A Archive MA/35/65.
42 Science and Art Department minutes. 4 July 1883, 9 July 1883.

Amsterdam: International Exhibition of Colonial Objects of General Exportations May to October 1883. V&A Archive MA/35/65.

43 Caspar Purdon Clarke, letter, 17 July 1883. Amsterdam: International Exhibition of Colonial Objects of General Exportations May to October 1883. V&A Archive MA/35/65.

44 Caspar Purdon Clarke, letter, 17 July 1883. Amsterdam: International Exhibition of Colonial Objects of General Exportations May to October 1883. V&A Archive MA/35/65.

45 Science and Art Department minutes. 25 July 1883. Amsterdam: International Exhibition of Colonial Objects of General Exportations May to October 1883. V&A Archive MA/35/65.

46 Grant and Patterson 2018; Cormier 2018.

47 From these records, we can see that, when sold at an international exhibition in Europe, these pins cost between 3 and 5 shillings. A more ornate kingfisher hair ornament was 9 shillings. An enamelled hairpin with spiral wires in blue enamels was 13 shillings. The kingfisher horseshoe-shaped hairpin in **Figure 169**, with cascades of false pearls, cost £1–2 shillings. Science and Art Department minutes. 29 October 1883. Amsterdam: International Exhibition of Colonial Objects of General Exportations May to October 1883. V&A Archive MA/35/65.

48 Behlen and Fenner 2016.

49 I am grateful to Sau Fong Chan and Anna Jackson of the V&A for their assistance and discussion of the hairpins and related museums records discussed in this article.

Chapter 16
Fish belly white and capital blue: naming and taming textile colours in 19th-century China

Rachel Silberstein

> (Dye) colours change according to the dyer, or the weather, or the humidity, or the dexterity of the technique. Often a colour that you were able to obtain yesterday will change if you try and obtain it today, and a colour that you were able to obtain today will again change if you try tomorrow. The changes are infinite, for colour is not easily named or tamed….
>
> Late Qing professional dyer[1]

One of the largest obstacles to studying the clothing of Qing people is the gulf between historical experience (what people in the Qing period actually wore) and material survival (what people in the late Qing and early Republic collected).[2] This gulf is particularly problematic when it comes to understanding the clothing consumption of ordinary people, because so few artefacts have survived: even though most of 19th-century China's population of more than 400 million people would have worn cotton, ramie or hemp, silk dominates museum collections. This has especially obstructed our understanding of fabric colours and dyes. Museum and private collections lead us to imagine who got to wear colourful dress in 19th-century China as two extremes: at one end, the brightly coloured silks worn by the imperial family, the nobility and elites, and at the other, the millions of ordinary people who wore varieties of indigo-dyed or undyed cotton. But evidence suggests the early to mid-Qing witnessed a large expansion in the dyeing of both cotton and silk, creating the possibility of a middle ground – a group of consumers who were able to purchase cotton in a range of colours. Given the absence of surviving objects, this chapter uses fabric colour descriptions as an alternative approach to reconstructing this material culture history. By comparing lists of dye terms in a cotton merchant's manual, a confiscation text and a dowry listing, as well as references to dye colours from novels and local gazetteers, two key technological changes in the Qing period and their impact on the clothing cultures of different consumers are explored: improvements to cotton dyeing and the introduction of aniline dyes. The chapter begins with an investigation of the discourse evidencing the changes in dye colours during the late Ming and early Qing, with a brief overview of the causes of these changes. It then turns to a comparison of the colour names, and what we can learn from the terms that emerged in the late Qing compared to earlier periods. Finally, the chapter considers how aniline dyes transformed the process of colouring fabrics for consumers and producers alike.

Colour as luxury and control

The subject of textile colours in Chinese history evokes notions of elite luxury and power: imperial yellow over commoner blue. Indeed, to think of fabric colours in this period is to call to mind an image of imperial control, as represented by an early to mid-15th-century handscroll, *Amusements in the Four Seasons* (*Siji shangwan tu* 四季賞玩圖), depicting an early Ming emperor and his palace ladies (**Fig. 172**). They wear clothing of deep and dark colours – reds, greens and blues – which mark their imperial status just as much as their luxurious silk fabrics or gold-woven patterning.

The Ming dynastic founder had implemented sumptuary regulations that sought to confine expensive dyes to the

Figure 172 Anonymous, *Amusements in the Four Seasons* (*Siji shangwan tu* 四季賞玩圖), Xuande to Chenghua period (1426–1484), handscroll, ink and colours on silk, h. 35cm, w. 780cm. Chou Hai-sheng collection

imperial family and to control what colours officials and the ordinary population could wear. For example, in 1371 it was stipulated that the wives of scholars and other ordinary families could only wear *tuanshan*-style (团衫) robes of certain silks in pale, dull colours; only princesses, imperial concubines and 'ladies of rank' could wear *tuanshan* of any colour, excepting yellow.[3] In 1373, it was regulated that commoner women were forbidden from using gold embroidery, and their clothing could only use purple, green, peach red and all pale colours; they could not wear crimson, duck blue or bright yellow.[4] In 1392, officials were forbidden from wearing clothing or using curtains that contained black, yellow or purple colours (as well as woven or embroidered dragons or phoenixes) and notably, along with the guilty offender, the dyer responsible would also be punished.[5]

These laws were rooted in ancient precedent, both literally in that they imitated laws first promulgated in the Han and Tang dynasties, and more indirectly, in that their colour values followed hierarchies first established in the Shang and Zhou periods through the development of the 'Five Colour System'(*wuse xitong* 五色系统), which invested symbolic power in the primary ritual colours of white, black, blue, red and yellow, with each colour correlated to the 'Five Directions' (*wufang* 五方), 'Five Elements' (*wuxing* 五行) and 'Five Planets' (*wuxing* 五星).[6] However, the laws also reflected the capabilities of Ming dyers: the reason why bright or dark shades like crimson, duck blue and bright yellow were prohibited to ordinary women is that they could only be achieved by using expensive dyestuffs and repeating the dyeing process. The higher status of these colours derived from their higher cost.

Contemporaneous texts from this period also suggest an image of privileged groups wearing darker and deeper shades like those seen in **Figure 172**. The inventory of the official Yan Song 嚴嵩(1480–1567), *A Record of Heavenly Waters Melting the Iceberg* (*Tianshui bingshan lu* 天水冰山錄), listed his possessions forfeited to the state after political disaster in 1562. It includes 14,300 bolts of fabric and more than 1,300 silk garments, in up to 40 different colours, including reds (peach red, crimson, silver-red, water red), greens (jade, willow green, black-green, oil green, sand green), blues (sky blue, black-blue), and browns (agarwood colour, reed catkins, tea brown, sauce brown), with darker shades dominating.[7]

To only read Chinese fabric palettes through this lens of imperial regulation and control, however, is to miss much of the dynamic change that occurred in the Qing period, with a far wider colour palette offered to consumers.[8] A good entry-point to this insight comes from an early Qing text, *Casual Expressions of Idle Feelings* (*Xianqing ouji* 閒情偶記), published in 1671 by the playwright Li Yu 李漁 (1611–1680). A collection of 300 short essays on a range of topics spanning theatre, gardens and beauty, *Casual Expressions* is considered by many scholars as a manual of taste. Li Yu covers fabric colours in several of the essays, but the most focused discussion is found in a section entitled 'Clothing' (*yishan* 衣衫), where he begins by extolling the virtues of simplicity, which seem to include, rather surprisingly given the Ming regulation texts, pale colours:

> Women's clothing should value the simple and elegant, rather than the refined and pretty; women should value matching one's features, rather than matching one's family status. Clothing of woven gauze and embroidered patterns that is obscured by dirt cannot rival the fresh beauty of plain cloth: this is what is meant by valuing the simple rather than the refined. Dark shades of reds and purple violate the fashions and cannot rival the suitability of pale shades: this is what is meant by valuing the elegant rather than the pretty.

Li Yu proceeds to explain his preference for pale colours by distinguishing between family status and facial complexion as competing factors for determining one's clothing colour. His basic argument is that all women have different complexions, and these complexions suit different shades of clothing; that is to say, 'if you were to take a colourful outfit and let a few young women try it on one after another, there would sure to be one or two whom it would suit, and one or two whom it would not suit'. This distinction would be entirely based on the interaction between complexion and colour, hence he concludes, 'do not value what suits one's family, value what suits one's complexion'. He then outlines some basic principles for how to match one's complexion and clothing colours before reminding the reader that his words are intended for all: 'my intention of cherishing beauty can be equally applied to all… decorated doors and humble doors'.[9]

Figure 173 Lü Tianzhi 呂天值 workhop, *Two Beauties Playing Music* (*Shuangmei zouyue tu* 雙美奏樂圖), 17th century, coloured ink (two tones of black, grey-blue, yellow-ochre and red) on paper, h. 25.8cm, w. 26cm (printed area). Collection of Christer von der Burg

In conceptualising dye colours in this inclusive way, Li Yu's ideas clearly present a viewpoint quite different to the control of colour found in the imperial regulations. He was an outlier in early Qing society, and often dryly satirical, as in the following account of the fashion changes that followed the fall of the Ming:

> I remember when I was young, observing how young women liked silver-red and peach red, and those who were a little older liked moon white. Soon afterwards, [the preference for] silver-red and peach red changed to crimson and for moon white to light blue, and then they again changed so that crimson became purple, and light blue became stone blue. Following the change in dynasty, neither stone blue nor purple were much seen, for no matter whether old or young, male or female, all wore clothing of '*qing*' [blue-green].[10]

By punning on the word '*qing*', the name of the new dynasty (清) and the term for blue-green (青), Li explores how the tremendous political change that bridged his youth and adulthood – the fall of the Ming and the Manchu ascent to power – manifested in fashion (a theory he elaborates on elsewhere). But his attention to colour makes him an informative commentator, and in turning to factors like age and complexion as being of equal consideration to social status (family background) when selecting clothing colours, he was presenting a radically new vision, particularly striking in its revaluation of the 'pale, dull colours' denigrated by the sumptuary regulations. Nor was Li alone in observing a more individually guided rationale for selecting fabric dyes. The early 17th-century Songjiang writer Ye Mengzhu 葉夢珠 (1623–*c.* 1693) also observed how, while the formal dress of the 'ladies of rank' was determined by the rank of their husbands, their informal dress was worn in a variety of fibres and weaves, and their colours were chosen 'according to the seasons and their inclination', rather than coming from court.[11]

An elegant woodblock print of two beauties playing musical instruments indicates the aesthetics of this new trend for pale colours (**Fig. 173**). The print encloses the scene of the two women playing a small gong and bell in a refined garden within a leaf-shaped cartouche. The header character 'gold' (*jin* 金) suggests that it was one of a set of four prints relating to one of several possible auspicious phrases involving gold. Though the print is undated, the workshop that produced it, Lü Tianzhi (呂天值), belonged to a renowned 17th-century Suzhou family of printmakers, and similar themes of 'two beauties playing music' were popular in this period.[12] The women's fashions provide a further dating mechanism. Their high hairstyles (*boyu tou* 钵盂头) were associated with Suzhou fashions of the Kangxi era: they are similar to the '*Songbin bianji*' (松鬓扁髻) style (hair styled into high buns with the hair on the temple curled) seen in a Yu Zhiding 禹之鼎 (1647–1716) painting dated to 1676. The pale blues and beige colours of their silk *bijia* (比甲) waistcoats and robes also visualise the fashions described by Li and Ye for this period.[13]

These two writers were amongst the first to offer a non-political representation of colour in dress; prior to this, sumptuary laws and imperial edicts are the main source on fabric colours. Although their vision might be thought surprising in the context of imperially mandated colour

choices, they were responding to an early 17th-century expansion of clothing colours, as charted in a 1630 gazetteer text from Songjiang, which identified more than 20 newly fashionable colours:

> At first the following reds were used: crimson, peach, out of the kiln silver-red and mauve red. Now we use clear pale pink, golden pink, lychee red, orange red and eastern red. In the past we had deep green, cedar green and light green. Now we also have pale green, bright green, orchid green. In the past we used bamboo shoot green, peacock blue; now we have sky blue, jade green, moon green and pale green. At first, we used incense, tea brown and soy brown; now we have ink black, rice colour, hawk colour, deep incense and lotus tint. In the past we had ginger yellow; now we use canary yellow and pine flower yellow. In the past we used purple, now we also have grape blue.[14]

The text works its way through the main colour groups – reds, greens, blues, browns, yellows, purples – contrasting between the colours they used to have, and the colours they have now. It follows a section devoted to cotton cloth and the new types of fabric now available. Given that Songjiang was at the centre of the Chinese cotton industry, the account suggests that the new shades were becoming more accessible not only to elites who wore silk but also to more ordinary people who wore cotton, the major clothing fibre for most Chinese families during this period.

The development of dyeing technologies

To understand the observations of Li Yu or the Songjiang gazetteer, we need to consider the expansion of colouring options that resulted from developments in dyeing during the early to mid-Qing period, and the commercialised expansion of the cotton industry more generally. Chinese textile dyers used numerous natural dyes, which were primarily taken from plants (roots, bark, wood, fruit and flowers) as well as lichens and insects.[15] Jing Han and Anita Quye's survey of historical dyeing manuscripts demonstrates how the range of dyestuffs and mordants changed over time.[16] One of the most important sources on dyeing is *The Cloth Classic* (*Bujing* 布经), a late 18th-century cotton merchant's manual that records useful knowledge for merchants trading cotton from the Jiangnan region.[17]

Three main categories of technical improvements emerged over the course of the late Ming and Qing periods that impacted on the dyeing of both cotton and silk.[18] Firstly, there were improvements to earlier stages of the dyeing process around preparing the fabric, including scouring to remove sericin from silk fibres and pectin from cotton fibres, as well as degumming and bleaching, which made it easier to achieve brighter, whiter shades. Secondly, there was an expansion in the number of dyestuffs used, with more intensified use of certain dyestuffs and mordants. Thirdly, the use of 'set dyeing' (*taoran* 套染) expanded. This practice, which combined varying quantities of different dyes and mordants, in order to create colours of varying tones, had a dramatic impact in expanding fabric colours and seems to have developed particularly in the 18th century. The increase in colours made possible by these technologial changes is evident in the comparison of *The Cloth Classic* with earlier works.[19] The most commonly used dyestuffs were

Figure 174 Xu Yang 徐揚, *Qianlong Southern Inspection Tour Scrolls* (*Qianlong nanxun tu* 乾隆南巡圖) (detail of dyeworks), 1770, handscroll, ink and colours on silk, h. 68.8cm, w. 1994cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Dillon Fund Gift, 1988, 1988.350a–d

sappanwood (*sumu* 蘇木), safflower (*honghua* 紅花), smoke tree (*huanglu* 黄栌), Chinese cork tree (*huangbai* 黄柏), pagoda bud (*huaihua* 槐花), indigo (*landian* 蓝靛), Chinese gallnut (*wubeizi* 五倍子) and acorn (*zaodou ke* 皂斗壳). The expanded trade in cotton fabrics led producers in different provinces to grow indigo, safflower and other dyestuff plants as cash crops, and in turn, the success of these dyestuffs caused others like turmeric or gromwell to become obsolete.[20]

All these developments derived from the commercialisation of cotton, China's second most important industry after grain. The majority of tasks involved in producing the approximately 600 million bolts of cotton cloth that were made each year during the mid- to late Qing period – ginning, fluffing, spinning, sizing, weaving – were rural household activities done by women. Most cloth, even when produced for the market, was sold in villages or towns within local markets. But the Jiangnan region, where commentators like Li and Ye were based, was unusual in that much of its output went onto the long-distance market. This commercialised production had begun early on, but Jiangnan was able to maintain its market output even after cotton cloth production expanded to other areas of China, due to improvements in the finishing processes of dyeing and calendering that maintained its reputation for high-quality cloths.[21] These finishing steps were not done by women, nor were they conducted in the home. Instead, they took place in large-scale urban workshops, many of which were located in Suzhou, employing thousands of male day labourers, sometimes paid by the piece.[22]

We catch a glimpse of these urban workshops in the late 18th-century *Qianlong Southern Inspection Tour Scrolls* (*Qianlong nanxun tu* 乾隆南巡圖) by artist Xu Yang 徐揚 (*c.* 1712–after 1779) and his team (**Fig. 174**). In one scroll, many of the depicted cotton shop signs in Suzhou promote their wares through colour, for example: 'All kinds of bright colours, we dye cotton cloth for customers', 'Venerable establishment selling cloth, especially indigo-coloured cloth', 'Store buying and selling piece-goods, dyeing fabrics – blue, crimson or green – weaving extra-long textiles, and selling cotton cloth from Chongming', 'Our cloth store dyes cloth in true-blue, extra-long bolts of *suobu* cloth'.[23] Notably none of the silk

shops mention colour, likely because silk was dyed in the thread by this period.[24] The Suzhou dyeworks were renowned for their finishing expertise, even to the extent that adding this place-name to blue, perhaps the most common dye colour, could convey value. For example, in the mid-19th-century novel *Dreams of Wind and Moon* (*Fengyue meng* 风月梦) by Hanshengmengren邗上蒙人 (active 19th century), a female character of 22 or 23 with unbound feet is described as wearing 'a bleached white silk tunic with a black, double-embroidered lute design on the breast, and over it a Suzhou blue (*sulan* 苏蓝) sleeveless jacket of Shanghai cotton lined with white imported cotton'.[25]

The naming of textile colours

The naming of textile dyes over time reveals much about Qing society.[26] **Table 4** compares the fabric colours listed in three texts: *A Record of Heavenly Waters Melting the Iceberg* of 1562, *The Cloth Classic* of the late 18th century, and *A Complete Record of One Hundred Blessings and One Thousand Fortunes* (*Baifu qianxiang zong lu*百福千祥總錄), a record of the 1888 trousseau of Zhejiang gentlewoman Yu Qingceng俞庆曾 (dates unknown). Several differences between the texts should be noted in making this comparison. For example, both the *Heavenly Waters* and *One Hundred Blessings* list silk dye colours, whereas *The Cloth Classic* lists cotton colours, and there are technical differences involved in dyeing silk and cotton.[27] Another issue is semantics: the slippery nature of colour terms makes them hard to compare. Colour terms are, as the art historian Guolong Lai observes, 'extremely vague unless their unstable semantic fields are anchored by specific objects or materials with a stable colour'.[28] For this reason, clothing labels, such as those found in imperial garments, are an important source, allowing correlation between textile colour and historical name.[29] But these labels typically only exist for elite clothing, which makes *The Cloth Classic,* a source that informs on the consumption of ordinary people, of great value.

Most of the colours mentioned in the earlier *Heavenly Waters* inventory can be described as having basic names, such as crimson, peach red, purple, black-blue, blue, sky blue, green and black-green, but the names in the later records involve references to culture, place and nature. One way of considering colour names is in terms of satisfying the fashion sector of the market: the expansion of colour names met the demand for differentiation. Hence while some of the colours in *The Cloth Classic* are traditional ones known from classical poems or early historical texts, such as 'crimson' , 'lotus flower', 'lychee branch', 'water red' and 'sauce colour', others are new and apparently unique to *The Cloth Classic*, or at least rarely seen in other texts. These include 'sandstone', a neutral beige; 'wildflower', a pale pink-purple colour; 'blood tooth', a whitish-pink; and 'double blue', a deep blue. Naming, as I've argued elsewhere, was largely concerned with recognition: Jiangnan's textile producers could only sell throughout China if they were able to target designs and dimensions to different tastes across different provinces, and if they could achieve recognition and reputation for their products.[30] Thus, like branding, achieving a distinctive name was one means of succeeding in a competitive market. Accordingly, naming often carries cultural associations. For example, a notable contemporary figure, Fu Kang'an 福康安(1754–1796), was referenced by Yangzhou writer Li Dou 李斗 (1749–1817) when he described how Yangzhou people 'previously favoured the 'three blues', vermillion, ink black, warehouse grey, gold-leaf yellow; but recently [people] use 'rich food' red and cherry red, and they call this 'fortune colour' – it is named after the great General Fu, who, when he suppressed the Tai bandits, came past Yangzhou wearing this colour.'[31]

Some of the terms used in *The Cloth Classic* might also be classified as drawn from culture: for example, both 'capital blue' and 'capital red' are likely so named because of the prestige of the capital, as appropriate for these dark shades containing more dyestuffs. Nevertheless, what is striking about the colour names listed in *The Cloth Classic* is the preponderance of names that come from nature rather than from culture. Perhaps this reflected the way dyers reshaped the resources of their natural environment into cloth: in addition to the above dyestuffs, Jiangnan dyers used local products like acorn shells (*zaodou* 皂斗) and smoked plum (*wumei*乌梅) to form new shades and variations.

The role of nature in the lives of dyers is especially seen in the names given to indigo-dyed blues: 'blue lotus', 'swallow tail blue', 'lake colour', 'shrimp blue', 'sky blue', 'stone blue' and 'moon blue' are all taken from features of the natural environment. We know that dyeshops were organised by colour: Zhu Hua 褚華 (1758–1804), the author of an early 19th-century treatise on cotton-making, recorded, 'Among dyers there are blue dyeshops (*lanfang* 蓝坊), which dye sky blue, deep blue and moonlight blue; there are red dyeshops (*hongfang* 红坊) which dye deep red and pink; there are bleaching dyeshops (*piaofang* 漂坊), which turn coarse yellow into white; and there are miscellaneous colour dyeshops (*zase fang* 杂色坊), which produce yellow, green, black, purple, old copper, grey, scarlet, camel, toad green and Buddha-gold.'[32] But as the many names given to blue dyes in *The Cloth Classic* suggest, indigo was the most important single dyestuff: firstly because the dyers used it to create a span of blues, from the faint tinges of 'fish belly white' and 'moon white' to the inky depths of 'Buddha blue' and 'double blue';[33] and secondly, because the dyers used cloth already dyed indigo to create other shades, especially yellow and green. Accordingly, indigo dyeshops were the most common, something vividly described in a Shanghai 'bamboo ballad' 竹枝詞 style poem: 'Of the five colours, indigo is the most (produced), its dye transforms cotton and silk cloth. On the high scaffolds of the workshops hang thousands of lengths, (I) am just afraid that a strong wind will cause them to blow down.'[34]

Enter aniline dyes

Many of the colours listed in *One Hundred Blessings* were not new: 'powder lotus' (pale red), 'silver-red', 'tea green', 'lake colour', 'bamboo green', 'sunflower green', 'sky blue', 'moon white', 'reddish blue' and 'blue lotus' can all be found earlier. But one category was completely new and this was the terms for the new aniline colours.

These synthetic dyes, imported from Europe, represented one of the largest changes to Qing clothing and textiles. Foreign natural dyestuffs had been imported in small

Figure 175 Handkerchief, after 1870, aniline dyes on silk, h. 30cm, w. 30cm. Chris Hall collection

quantities through the East India Companies and private traders from the late 18th century onwards, and foreign dye terms do appear earlier. However they are quite vague, referring only to somewhere outside China, rather than a specific source.[35] But following chemist William Henry Perkin's (1838–1907) discovery of the first synthetic chemical dye, mauveine or Perkin's Purple (*pajinsi zise* 帕金斯紫色), in 1856, aniline or coal-tar products began to enter China.[36] These new shades were known by a variety of names, but the popular term used in Chinese was 'first class colours' (*yipin se* 一品色).[37] Hence in *One Hundred Blessings* we find 'first class red', 'first class blue', 'first class green' and 'first class pale blue'.

Aniline products first entered as dyestuffs, dyed thread and dyed fabric, initially manufactured by German companies like I.G. Farben, and later also made by Chinese companies including Dafeng. They very quickly gained ground: in 1886, aniline dye imports amounted to 698 *liang* (taels); just ten years later this figure had doubled to 1,546.[38] The process by which these new colours transformed the urban dyeing workshops has most often been studied by economic historians interested in the modernising and industrialising impact of Western industry on the Chinese textile sector.[39] But the effect of aniline dyes on consumers is also worthy of investigation, for they received a range of responses, something poorly captured by contemporary and later Western scholars and curators' judgement of these colours as garish and crude, or as collector-scholar Bernard Vuilleumier put it, 'the complete decadence of an art'.[40]

The harsh judgements of Western scholars do not reflect the reaction of popular society towards these new hues. Two types of responses to these low-cost, fast and bright colours can be seen in late Qing society. The first, from embroiderers and guild leaders, presents a conservative

Figure 176 I.G. Farben, tin box for aniline dye, 1875–1900, printed inks on paper label and dye, h. 5cm, w. 14cm, d. 7cm. Chris Hall collection

Figure 177 Dechang Dye Factory, cardboard box for aniline dye, 1875–1900, printed ink on paper and dye, h. 6.8cm, w. 13.5cm. Chris Hall collection

force. The guilds appear to have been particularly opposed to novelty and saw such innovations as a challenge to maintaining the quality of their craft. For example, a hatters' guild stipulated that artisans had to use native dyes rather than imported ones because the latter were supposedly considered of lower quality.[41] And for purists working in the artistic mediums of embroidery or *kesi* 緙絲 tapestry, anyone desiring artistic merit could not possibly engage with the new foreign colours. As the influential female Suzhou embroiderer Shen Shou 沈寿 (1874–1921) advised: 'certainly one should not use the mineral dyes (commonly called foreign dyes)'.[42] Modern Chinese art historians followed suit: embroidery specialist Wang Yaorong wrote that Perkin's Purple (or mauveine) was 'noted for its superficial showy effect and a lack of quiet simplicity'.[43]

In these sources we see the roots of the Western scholars' critique, but they don't capture the second type of response to the new shades, which was one of enthusiasm: the new shades were evidently welcomed in wider society for both men's and women's clothing.[44] They were judged attractive for both their bright, pure shades and their colourfastness, especially in purple and red shades, which had been hard to achieve with cotton dyes. Nor does there appear to be concern with their Western roots. Perkin's Purple, which the Canadian curator Helen Fernald described as 'vicious violet', was termed 'foreign lotus purple' (*yanglianzi* 洋莲紫), and the deep aubergine colour was apparently especially popular with Empress Dowager Cixi.[45] The handkerchief illustrated in **Figure 175** well demonstrates the colour's vibrancy, in this case used together with new printing techniques to create a pictorial cartouche of beauties in a garden on a bright purple ground printed with butterflies and other insects.[46] This type of scenery had long been possible through woodblock printing (see **Figure 173**), and was also created earlier using embroidery techniques, but now new dye and printing technology made such imagery available on more ordinary woven textiles.

Two aniline dye packages provide a sense of how consumers were encouraged to buy these new products. **Figure 176** shows a tin box for the aniline dye Magenta 27083 produced by German manufacturer I.G. Farben, known in China as the Big German Dye Factory or Dade (*Dade yanliao chang* 大德颜料廠), and which operated in the country in the 1920s. Decorated with an image of the Prussian king and queen and the phrase 'Produced in Germany' (*Deguo zhi* 德國製), it uses images of European royalty – the last emperor and empress of Germany, Wilhelm II (r. 1888–1918) and Auguste Victoria (1858–1921) – to establish a reputation for quality.

A cardboard box containing aniline dyes produced by the Dechang Dye Factory (*Dechang yanliao chang* 德昌顏料廠), however, features rather different visual associations – two men carrying buckets of water in a field – as well as the phrases, 'Bringing wealth brand' (*jincai pai* 進財牌), 'First class dyestuffs' (*toudeng yanliao* 頭等顏料), and 'Never fading in colour' (*yong bu bianse* 永不變色) (**Fig. 177**). On the back, a longer text section extols the virtues of the product, combining traditional marketing lines such as 'high quality at an honest price' 貨高價廉with a new emphasis on how the product was informed by the development of chemical research and the use of functional packaging.[47] The product underlines how, aside from the bright shades, the appeal of aniline dyes also involved more practical factors. Chemical dyes created new commercial and material possibilities of colourfastness and convenience, something seized upon by merchants and dyers.[48] In an account written in the 1930s, the old dyeworks (*ranfang* 染坊) of Beijing still numbered around 20, but there were 60 new ones (*xifa ranfang* 西法染房). The trend appears obvious, for not only were the new imported dyes cheaper, they were also easier to use, only requiring washing and dyeing once before use, as compared to the old dyestuffs which required repeated washing and dyeing, and were thus more labour intensive.[49] In 1909, author and traveller Emily Georgiana Kemp (1860–1939), while visiting Sichuan province, commented on how the natural red and yellow dyes and indigo, despite being grown locally, were being quickly discarded, displaced by the aniline dyes due to their improved fastness.[50] Later, when the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45) interrupted the importation of aniline dyes, some dyers returned to these traditional natural dyes.[51] This change appears to have been short-lived, but further scholarship is needed to understand the historical process of adopting aniline dyes, for it was not necessarily smooth or linear.

Conclusion

The introduction of aniline dyes to China's textile industry and their potential for bright colours of 'high quality at a honest price' are a reminder of how trade and commercialisation slowly improved people's living standards, achieving a promise conceptualised by Li Yu centuries earlier, of everyone being able to 'cherish beauty', regardless of social status. This trajectory is not necessarily visible in historical textiles, which often echo the elite bias of imperial regulations and paintings. Instead, by using a range of sources which inform upon the naming of dyes and colours, it becomes possible to illuminate aspects of textiles and clothing consumption that are otherwise concealed. The new names seen in *The Cloth Classic* tell us about commercialisation and the need to sell one's wares far afield; about cultural authority and who got to determine names; about change and how new shades and techniques were processed and categorised. The terms given to the aniline dyes imported in the late Qing reveal how the technologies creating new material and visual forms were mediated to consumers and producers. Most of all, naming informs upon a material culture which was not considered worthy of saving and, indeed, largely did not survive. Behind these expanding lists of shade options, we can read, at least implicitly, consumer demand, providing a counterweight to the unrepresentative material archive and a way of highlighting the forgotten consumer and their coloured garments.

Table 4 Textile colour naming in texts from the 16th–19th centuries

Colour (English translation)	Colour (Chinese term)	*A Record of Heavenly Waters Melting the Iceberg* (1562)[51]	*The Cloth Classic* (*c.* 1795–1810)[52]	*A Complete Record of One Hundred Blessings and One Thousand Fortunes* (1888)[53]
Reds (21)				
1. Aniline "first class" red	品紅			*
2. Begonia red	海棠紅		*	
3. Blood tooth	血牙		*	
4. Capital red	京紅		*	
5. Crimson	大紅	*	*	*
6. Double red	雙紅		*	
7. Drunken immortal shade	醉仙颜		*	
8. Lotus flower	荷花		*	
9. Lychee branch (red)	荔枝（紅）		*	
10. (Out-of-the-kiln) silver-red	（出炉）銀紅	*		*
11. Palace brocade red	宫锦紅		*	
12. Pale rose	銀紅		*	
13. Peach red	桃红（色）	*	*	
14. Pink	粉紅			*
15. Powder lotus	粉荷			*
16. Shiny red	亮紅		*	
17. Shrimp colour	蝦子色		*	
18. Silver strip	银條	*		
19. Water red	水紅	*	*	
20. Western red-white	西洋紅白	*		
21. Wildflower	野花		*	
Purples (8)				
1. Lotus colour	藕色/合	*	*	
2. Grape purple	葡萄紫/青		*	
3. Snow blue (lilac)	雪青			*
4. Purple	紫	*		
5. Purple flower	紫花		*	
6. Sauce colour	醬色		*	
7. Rose purple	玫瑰紫		*	
8. Aubergine flower	茄花（色）	*	*	
Blues (18)				
1. Aniline 'first class' blue	品藍			*
2. Black-blue	黑青	*		
3. Blue	蓝	*		
4. Blue	青	*		
5. Blue lotus	青蓮		*	
6. Swallow tail blue	燕尾青		*	
7. Glue blue	膠青		*	
8. Lake colour	湖色			*
9. Aniline 'first class' pale blue	品月			*
10. Shrimp blue	蝦青			*
11. Sky blue	天青	*		*
12. Stone blue	石蓝		*	
13. Treasure blue	宝蓝		*	
14. Buddha blue	佛青		*	
15. Moon blue	月蓝		*	
16. True blue	真青		*	

17. Capital blue	京青		*	
18. Double blue	双藍		*	
Greens (21)				
1. Green	綠	*		
2. Aniline 'first class' green	品綠			*
3. Bamboo (stalk) green	竹(竿)綠		*	*
4. Bean green	豆綠		*	
5. Black-green	黑綠	*		
6. Bright green	明綠		*	
7. Capital green	京綠		*	
8. Duck green	鴨綠		*	
9. Gourd green	瓜綠		*	
10. Jade	玉色	*		
11. Lake colour	湖色			*
12. Official green	官綠	*	*	
13. Oil green	油绿	*	*	
14. Pear green	梨青			*
15. Sand green	沙绿	*		
16. Sunflower green	葵綠			*
17. Tea (leaf) green	茶(葉)綠		*	*
18. Water green	水绿		*	
19. Willow green	柳綠	*	*	
20. Autumn rose (okra green)	秋瑰/葵[54]		*	
21. Seedling colour (green)	秧色		*	
Yellows and browns (26)				
1. Yellow	黄	*		
2. Apricot yellow	杏黃		*	
3. Autumn colour	秋色		*	
4. Bright yellow	明黃		*	
5. Bronze	古銅		*	
6. Agarwood colour	沉香	*	*	
7. Gold yellow	金黃		*	
8. Goose yellow	鵝子黃		*	
9. Guest yellow	客黃		*	
10. Foreign yellow	番黃		*	
11. Mouse colour	鼠色	*		
12. Ox wool	牛羢		*	
13. Preserved egg (yellow)	松花(黃)		*	
14. Red ink	硃墨		*	
15. Reed catkins	芦花色	*		
16. Rice colour	米色		*	
17. Sandalwood apricot	檀杏		*	
18. Sauce brown	酱色	*		
19. Tea brown	茶褐色	*		
20. Willow yellow	柳黃	*		
21. Beige	米色		*	
22. Brown	棕色		*	
23. Camel wool	駝羢		*	
24. Chestnut (shell) brown	栗色/殼	*	*	
25. Sandstone	沙石		*	
26. Shell colour	殼色		*	

Blacks and greys (6)				
1. Ink black	墨色		*	
2. Black	黑把		*	
3. Eagle back	鷹背		*	
4. Iron colour	(西洋)铁色	*	*	
5. Pearl ink	真珠墨		*	
6. Sheep wool	羊羢		*	
Whites (8)				
1. (Below the) moon white	月(下)白		*	*
2. Blue lotus	青蓮		*	*
3. Eastern shine	東方亮		*	
4. Fish belly white	魚肚白		*	
5. Jade belt white	玉带白		*	
6. Scallion white	葱白	*		
7. Western white	西洋白	*		
8. White	白色	*		
	Total	**32**	**75**	**19**

Notes

1 Quoted in Shen Shou 1919 (1994), 816.

2 My heartfelt thanks goes to Chou Hai-sheng, Christer von der Burg and Chris Hall for their generosity in sharing objects from their collections. This paper began life as a presentation at the 2021 'Colour of Clothes' conference organised by Giorgio Riello, Ulinka Rublack and Maria Hayward. I would like to thank these organisers, as well as Jessica Harrison-Hall for the opportunity to develop this research, and BuYun Chen and Jacob Eyferth who generously shared sources.

3 Zhang Tingyu 1974 1650, 1645.

4 Ibid., *juan* 67, *zhi* 43, 1650.

5 Ibid., 1638. Instead, for their 'audience dress' (*gong fu*), officials of fourth rank and above could wear dark red (*fei*), fifth to seventh ranks could wear dark blue (*qing*), and eighth rank and above could wear green, providing a grading of these 3 colours (Ibid., 1636).

6 See Guo Longlai 2015, 35; Zhao Feng 2010.

7 Anonymous 1966.

8 Dress colour was still used to control and differentiate status in the Qing period, but primarily among the imperial family and officials. For example, the *Illustrations of Imperial Ritual Paraphernalia* (皇朝禮器圖式) of 1759 regulated that bright yellow (明黄) be used for the court robes and dragon robes of the emperor and empress, apricot yellow (杏黄) for those of the crown prince and golden yellow (金黄) for other princes.

9 Li Yu 1671 (2000), 154–5. On Li's conceptions of beauty, see Kile 2013, 248–50.

10 Ibid., 156.

11 Ye Mengzhu 1981, *juan* 8, 'neizhuang', 180–1.

12 I am extremely grateful to Christer von der Burg for his generosity in sharing examples of woodblock prints depicting female fashions from his collection (accession no. CvdB-247). Catalogue reference is no. 3 in *Landscapes, Ladies and Legends – Qing Dynasty Prints from Gusu-Suzhou. The von der Burg Collection.*

13 For further discussion of the fashions in the Yu Zhiding painting, see Silberstein 2023.

14 (Chongzhen) 1631, 7.186a.

15 Cheng Weiji 1992, 102–3.

16 Han and Quye 2018.

17 Silberstein (in progress), 'The Seventy-Two Kinds: *The Cloth Classic* and the Jiangnan Cotton Finishing Sector'.

18 On these developments, see Han and Quye 2018, Fan Jinmin and Jin Wen 1993, 386; Cheng Weiji 1992, 305–20.

19 Han and Quye 2018.

20 Cape jasmine (栀子) was replaced by pagoda bud for yellow; turmeric (姜黄) was no longer used for silk dyeing because it had poor lightfastness, though it was used in *The Cloth Classic* for dyeing cotton yellow; Indian madder (茜草) was replaced by safflower for red; gromwell (紫草) was replaced by sappanwood for purple.

21 Lu Hanchao 1992, 493.

22 Chinese historians have accordingly viewed the cloth-processing industry as the location of 'embryonic capitalism', though this conclusion is disputed. See Dixin and Chengming 2000 and Zurndorfer 2011.

23 For a complete list of the shop signs in Chinese and English, see Silberstein 2020, Appendix 2. For the *Qianlong Southern Inspection Tour Scroll*, see the Columbia University website annotated version from the Metropolitan Museum collection: https://projects.mcah.columbia.edu/nanxuntu/html/scrolls/index.html (accessed by the author in 2016; unfortunately 'Scroll 6' on the left-hand side uses software that is no longer supported).

24 Fan Jinmin 2008.

25 Hanshang Mengren 1848 (1886), ch.5, 34–5.

26 For another tabular analysis of Ming colour names, see Fan Jinmin and Jin Wen 1993, 383, table 12-3. The work of Hubei natural dye practitioner Huang Songhua 黄荣华, is invaluable in understanding the technical and cultural references in this text. Huang has worked his way through the dye recipes in *The Cloth Classic,* defining their exact shades and correlating the terms to historical textual records. His book, *A Study of the Colours of The Cloth Classic* (布经色彩考), does not seem to be available outside China, but much of the content is available online.

27 On the difference between dyeing proteinaceous silk and cellulosic cotton, see Han and Quye 2018, 51.

28 Guolong Lai, 2015, 26.

29 For examples of these labels, see Yan Yong and Fang Hongjun 2008.

30 Silberstein 2020, ch.5.
31 Ibid., 170.
32 Zhu Hua 1796–1820, 10.
33 According to the scholar and editor Ping Buqing 平步青 (1832–1896), fish belly white also went by other names: 'Scallion white color is popularly known as fish-belly white, and it is also called lake color, or Eastern shine'. Ping Buqing 1995–9, *juan* 10, 3, 'Scallion white millet colour'). Both Song (1637 (1936)) and Li (1793 (1960)) describe 'moon white' as a pale colour made from indigo. It had apparently referenced a pale yellow in the early Qing, but had become pale blue by the mid-Qing. See Song 1637 (1936), *Zhuse zhiliao*; Li Dou 1793 (1960).
34 'Dyeworks', in Yi'an zhuren 1906, *juan* 3, 146.
35 For example, He Jinfeng *et al.* (2019, 109–14) note that *The Cloth Classic* has a 'foreign yellow' (番黄) and *Heavenly Waters* has a 'Western iron brown pueraria cloth' (西洋铁色葛).
36 Exactly when synthetic dyes were introduced is unclear. Some evidence suggests that as early as 1873, Jiangnan dyers were using aniline dyes and artificial indigo; see He Jinfeng 2019.
37 Other terms included 亚仁林染料, 苯胺染料, 安呢林色料, 五色洋染料. See Fan Jinmin and Jin Wen 1993, 387.
38 Hsiao Liang-lin 1974, 35–7.
39 See, for example, Brasó Broggi 2015; aniline dyeing could be up to a third cheaper – according to Odell (1916, 187), dyeing aniline light blue cost 0.3 cents per yard, dyeing dark indigo cost 1.25 cents per yard.
40 Cammann 1962, 34; Vuilleumier 1939, 33.
41 Bradstock 1984, 198, n.52.
42 *Xue Shen Cixiu tushuo*, 105.
43 Wang Yaorong 1986, 23, n.27.
44 He Jinfeng 2019, 112.
45 Yingchen Peng 2014, 101; Fernald 1981, 510.
46 For more on this handkerchief and others in the same collection, see Hall 2019.
47 Though duplicating the character *de* (德), for Germany, the company was likely Chinese: its factory was in Hebei but the sales office was located in 'Second-hand Clothes Street' in Beijing, where many textile and embroidery sellers had shops.
48 Strong ties developed between the dyeing workshops of the Yangzi Delta and the Ningbo compradores of Shanghai, and many of the founders of new industrial companies came from traditional dyeworks, such as Dafeng. See Brasó Broggi 2015, 25–6; Zhang Zhenhou 1965 (2001).
49 Chi Zehui 1932, 291, 'The Dyestuff trade'.
50 Kemp 1909, 155.
51 Sewell *et al.* 1939, 412.
51 Anonymous 1562 (1966).
52 Anonymous *c.* 1795–1810.
53 Yu Yue 1888.
54 Huang argues the second character is a typo, and should be okra not rose (https://weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404717469351936498).

Chapter 17

The Japan connection: Meiji decorative arts and the late Qing 'New Policies' reforms

Mei Mei Rado

Historian Douglas Reynolds claims that 'the real revolution of modern China, which dismantled China's 2,100-year imperial form of government and its philosophical underpinnings, was not the political Revolution of 1911. … Rather, it was an intellectual and institutional revolution centered on the Xinzheng… Reforms of the late-Qing government, 1901–1910'.[1] Initiated by Empress Dowager Cixi and implemented by court officials and provincial gentries, the Xinzheng (新政) or New Policies significantly transformed the late Qing political, social and educational infrastructures, laying the foundation for a modern system that continued to develop during the Republican period. In this process, Japan played an indispensable role, acting as China's close collaborator and providing successful models of various institutional systems, which Japan had established during its recent reforms since 1868. However, this remarkable period of experiments and innovations has received limited scholarly attention, and even less focus has been turned to the new dimensions in arts and crafts during this time.[2] Research on the Japanese impact in this last decade of the Qing dynasty has been hindered by the dominant historical discourse that highlights the Sino-Japanese conflicts as well as the conventional narrative that focuses on the revolution and regime change in the watershed year of 1911.

As an attempt to address this neglect, this chapter presents a preliminary inquiry into a group of artworks from the Japanese Meiji period (1868–1912) in the collections of the Palace Museum in Beijing.[3] Largely unstudied to date, these magnificent works range from metalwork, *shippō* (七宝) or cloisonné ware, porcelain and lacquerware, to screens and textiles. Mostly dated to the turn of the 20th century, they belonged to the special categories of export and diplomatic arts and were closely associated with world's fairs and Japan's domestic expositions. The Qing court's collections of Meiji artworks, as this chapter will show, embodied the new attitudes and pursuits central to the Xinzheng reform agendas. They reflected the open-minded diplomatic stance and international policy of the Cixi court, while offering the late Qing government useful examples through which it could envision a modernised handicraft industry and a revamped national profile in international exhibitions.

Following the aggression of American Commodore Matthew Perry (1794–1858) in Tokyo Bay in 1853, Japan was forced to enter direct trade with Western countries and concede to unequal treaties. Soon after, domestic turmoil, intensified by external pressures, led to the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868 and the establishment of a new regime that restored the emperor to the supreme position, an event known as the Meiji Restoration (*Meiji ishin* 明治維新). In the following decades, the Meiji government carried out extensive reform measures guided by an overriding objective to modernise and strengthen the nation. By the mid-1890s, Japan had largely achieved its goals: it obtained revisions to the unequal treaties, established a Western-style constitution and a parliament, modernised the army and navy, developed advanced infrastructures for industries, the railways and telegraphic communication, and created a centralised educational system.[4] At the same time as the country enthusiastically adopted Western standards for its political and social institutions, from the 1880s a sense of

nationalism embracing traditional Japanese culture had also gained traction.[5] Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–5) marked a turning point of Meiji politics, ushering in a new era of ascending imperialist ambitions that led to its colonisation of Taiwan (1895) and Korea (1910). As a powerful modern nation, Japan now viewed itself as the equal to the West and the leader of Asia.

Decorative arts figured prominently in Meiji reform agendas; their transformations were inextricably linked to Japan's political and economic pursuits. From the 1860s to the 1910s, Europe and the United States were swept by a craze for Japanese things and styles – a wave known as Japonisme – which was greatly propelled by Japanese displays at world's fairs as well as readily available Japanese goods in the Western market. The Meiji government actively exploited this trend for the benefit of Japan's commerce and international reputation, and decorative objects responding to Western demands constituted a crucial part of Japanese industries; they comprised about ten per cent of Japanese export goods from 1877–96.[6] The Meiji government heavily invested in world's fairs as an effective means to propagandise Japan's international image as a prosperous and civilised country. Japanese objects were already shown in the 1851 Great Exhibition and the 1862 International Exhibition in London, but the selections were made by the British commissioner Rutherford Alcock (1809–1897). The shogunate participation in the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1867 marked Japan's first active involvement in such an event. The Meiji government's debut participation in a world's fair took place in Vienna in 1873 with a large and successful programme, and it organised ever grander and more engaging displays in subsequent international exhibitions.[7]

Decorative objects were the most significant genre of Japanese artworks in foreign trade and at fairs, and it was primarily these works, together with *ukiyo-e* (浮世絵) woodblock prints, that shaped Western perception of Japanese art and culture.[8] The government's policy oriented towards international expositions also had a profound impact on the manufacture and conception of decorative arts in Japan. In the early Meiji period, decorative objects targeted for abroad tended to be gaudy and overly ornate, reflecting the Japanese interpretation of Western taste. From the 1880s onward, however, with the government's promotion of Japanese artistic traditions, the styles of export decorative arts had grown more refined, combining technical virtuosity with themes increasingly drawn from Japanese heritage.[9] Overall, Meiji decorative arts for the foreign markets closely echoed the taste of Japonisme in Europe and America; their designs often highlighted essentialised classical motifs and aesthetics that signified Japan.

Within Japan, the Meiji government sponsored a series of National Exhibitions for Encouraging Industry (Naikoku Kangyō Hakurankai 内国勧業博覧会, often translated as National Industrial Exhibitions), as an extension to the world's fairs, and these events introduced the mechanism of competitions to promote production. Five exhibitions took place during the Meiji reign – 1877, 1881, 1890 in Tokyo, 1895 in Kyoto and 1903 in Osaka.[10] As Japanese art historian Satō Dōshin points out, the domestic exhibitions ultimately served the goal of 'connecting Japan's regional products with the international marketplace' and they carried a hidden agenda to centralise government control through 'the centralisation of economic and cultural power'. At these events, exhibits were organised and displayed in a way deliberately similar to that in world's fairs.[11]

The need to classify and present exhibits at international and national fairs led Japan to adopt Western concepts and vocabulary for categorising its art forms and crafts. Created in the context of economic strategies, these new terms were in turn institutionalised in Japanese administrative and educational systems. Historically, Japanese arts were divided into calligraphy and painting (*shoga* 書画), furnishing objects (*chōdo* 調度), everyday utensils (*dōgu* 道具), carving (*horimono* 彫物) and other categories, as well as various medium-based handicraft types. In 1873, the word *bijutsu* (美術, 'fine art') was coined as a direct translation of *schöne Kunst* or *beaux arts* when Japan was preparing for the Vienna International Exposition. By the late 1870s, *bijutsu* came to exclusively refer to painting and sculpture and was regarded as the top of the hierarchy of art, a notion aligned with the contemporary Western system. Most relevant to this chapter is the term *kōgei* (工芸, 'crafts' or 'decorative arts'), which was an ancient Chinese word but only became widely used in Japan after appearing in the 1871 mission statement of the Ministry of Industry. At first, *kōgei* was used interchangeably with another term, *kōgyō* (工業, 'industry'), both referring to home-based handicraft manufacture. The definition of *kōgei* in the mid-1870s subsumed weaving, masonry, ceramics, woodwork, metalwork, leatherwork, lacquerwork, paperwork, work made of animal horns and tusks, and technical painting. When mass production using machinery became more widespread, the meanings of *kōgei* and *kōgyō* began to separate, and towards the mid-1890s the former came to indicate solely artisanal handicrafts. The subcategory *bijutsu kōgei* ('fine art craft') emerged in the mid-1880s. As part of *bijutsu*, it shared the same top position as painting and sculpture in the new value system of Japanese art. Satō Dōshin notes that the boundary between *bijutsu kōgei* and *kōgei* was not always clear, but the former implied a certain level of quality.[12]

In Japan, high-end decorative arts oriented towards trade and expositions had limited clientele, comprising elite patrons who celebrated the 'progress and global relevance of Japanese fine art'.[13] Most importantly, they fulfilled a function as formal imperial gifts for distinguished Japanese persons and foreign dignitaries. In 1890 a system known as Imperial Craftsmen (*teishitsu gigeiin* 帝室技芸員) was established: leading artists who were conferred with this honorific title received commissions from the Imperial Household for producing fine works that would be used as formal gifts.[14]

Meiji decorative arts, especially finely crafted *bijutsu kōgei* intended for international exhibitions and imperial presentations, were politically charged objects. Not only were they central to Japanese national industries and economy, but they also embodied the Meiji government's vision of Japan's position in between the West and Asia, and traditional and modern. In their commercial and diplomatic roles, these works propagandised to the world the strength

Figure 178 Vase depicting irises, Japan, *c.* 1900, cloisonné enamel, h. 48cm, d. 18cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00221372

and artistic achievements of Japan as a country at once rich in cultural heritage and modernised. It is these types of 'fine art decorative objects' that comprised the majority of the Qing court's 19th-century Japanese collections. Most of them show late Meiji style and can be dated to around 1900–10, indicating a surge of Qing imperial interest in Japanese arts during this specific moment. Among the Qing court's Meiji objects, cloisonné enamel ware and fine art textiles (*bijutsu senshoku* 美術染織) figured prominently. Both were newly developed art forms that enjoyed significant technical and stylistic innovations during the Meiji period; their quantity echoed their status as the most celebrated types among Meiji arts for export and diplomacy.

Cloisonné enamel was one of the most successful categories in Meiji-period manufacture and export trade. With a rather obscure history, cloisonné enamel began to develop rapidly in Japan only in the 1860s, and during the period from 1880 to 1910 it reached the apogee of technical and artistic perfection.[15] To produce cloisonné was a laborious and complicated process. Fine wires (brass, gold or silver) were first glued onto a metal (generally copper) body following the outlines of the design; then, after covering the body with fine solder filling or a thin layer of flux, it was fired at a low heat to fuse the wires and body together. Next, vitrified enamel pastes of various colours were filled into the cells delineated by the wires through multiple steps and successive firings at different temperatures. The finished product was finally polished to create a smooth, glimmering surface.[16] Having largely moved away from Chinese ornamental patterns and the dominant blue shade that were strongly featured in earlier works, late Meiji cloisonné often had sophisticated pictorial designs of birds and flowers. The greatly expanded palette and technical improvement benefitted from European chemical compositions and more controlled firing methods introduced by German scientist Gottfried Wagener (1831–1892), one of the foreign specialists appointed by the Meiji movement.[17]

An important technical breakthrough, wireless cloisonné (*musen* 無線), was the key to attaining perfect painterly effects and the trademark of the renowned cloisonné artist and entrepreneur Namikawa Sōsuke 濤川惣助 (1847–1910). For this technique, wires were not fused to the vessel body through heating, and after the enamel pastes applied to the cells were dried, the wires were pulled out before the work was fired. This process of attaching wires, applying pastes, removing wires and firing was repeated several times until a desirable painterly effect was achieved.[18] It enabled the execution of colour gradation, thereby reproducing the outline-less, wash effects seen in ink painting. Another cloisonné master, Namikawa Yasuyuki 並川靖之 (1845–1927), excelled at the artful manipulation of wires to form an integrated part of the pictorial design. With Wagener's assistance, Yasuyuki also developed the 'finest bright opaque and translucent coloured glazes'.[19] Both Sōsuke and Yasuyuki received the title of Imperial Craftsman in 1896.[20]

The Palace Museum holds a wide range of Japanese cloisonné objects, including examples with a copper or silver base, employing wire, wireless or 'few-wire' (*shōsen* 省線) techniques, and featuring various flower and bird motifs such as cherry blossoms, wisterias, chrysanthemums, eagles, and cranes – typical 'Japanese symbols' in Meiji decorative arts. For instance, a pair of vases combining wire and few-wire techniques are decorated with robust irises in white and iridescent purple shades on a deep blue ground (**Fig. 178**). The dynamic composition, vivid naturalism and nuanced rendering of light and colour in these vases showcase how the newly perfected cloisonné techniques lent a modernised expression to a time-honoured motif. A few pieces in the Palace Museum can be identified as Namikawa Sōsuke's work by his seal that reads *kai* (魁). They share the character of less packed compositions and images adapted from paintings. One bowl depicting mandarin ducks in a lotus pond bears the Japanese imperial emblem of chrysanthemum, indicating that it was an imperial commission and official gift to the Qing court.[21] The other works by Sōsuke – a pair of vases – feature a pictorial theme of a hen and a rooster with chicks among sparse grass (**Fig. 179**). The images strongly resemble those adorning another pair of vases with the Japanese imperial emblem in the Khalili collection, which were presented by the Imperial Household to the governor of the Fukuoka prefecture.[22] The images on the Sōsuke vases resonated with the familiar Chinese motif of young chicks being fostered, a politically charged theme in Qing court arts alluding to benevolent governance.[23]

Figure 179 Namikawa Sōsuke, pair of vases depicting rooster, hen and chicks, with 'Kai' seal on base, Japan, *c.* 1900, cloisonné enamel, h. 55cm, d. 24cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00221338

The so-called 'fine art textiles' were another special *kōgei* category produced for foreign trade, international expositions and the Japanese Imperial Household, but not used for furnishings in typical Japanese homes. Similar to cloisonné, this genre thrived from the late 1870s to around 1910. The Kyoto-based houses of Nishimura Sōzaemon (西村総左衛門) and Takashimaya (高島屋) were two leading manufacturers. Fine art textiles primarily consisted of *yūzen* (resist-dyed) velvet (友禅ビロード) panels as well as silk embroidered screens and large hangings with pictorial themes such as birds-and-flowers, animals and landscapes. Kyoto *Nihonga* (日本画, Japanese school) painters indeed played a major role in designing underdrawings for fine art textiles.[24] The formats, techniques and image repertoires of fine art textiles made them closest to painting. In the *yūzen* technique, rice-paste resist is applied freehand onto silk with a funnel, and dye is applied with a brush, which permitted the creation of complex and detailed pictorial designs. *Yūzen* dyeing was already perfected during the 18th century; in 1878, the Nishimura company began to use it on cut and uncut velvet, and in 1879, it introduced Western chemical dye to improve the dyeing process.[25] The several *yūzen* velvet hangings in the Palace Museum feature atmospheric landscapes of rivers, trees and fishing boats. This special technique enabled a pictorial effect that resembled ink painting while creating pronounced chiaroscuro.[26]

As a painting medium and type of furniture with a long history in Japan, screens were traditionally made of paper instead of textiles. The success of small-sized embroidered *fukusa* (袱紗, 'gift-wrapping fabrics') among foreign consumers inspired Japanese textile producers to explore large formats for pictorial embroideries – including screens and wall hangings – that appealed to the Western market.[27] Meanwhile, embroideries for the foreign market developed a naturalistic style and frequently employed a padded layer to create a low-relief effect. Among the Japanese embroidered screens and hangings in the Palace Museum, a six-panel folding screen made by the Takashimaya company in around 1903 provides a magnificent example (**Fig. 180**). It depicts two peacocks among bushes of pink and white peonies against an open background: one coils its neck attentively towards a flower, while the other gracefully turns its head and sweeps its train. A variety of stitch techniques and a delicate control of silk colour threads achieve a strikingly realistic representation, vividly capturing the texture and iridescent sheen of the peacocks' down and feathers. On the tips of the petals and the plumes of the peacocks, padded embroidery is used to create a tactile effect. This particular composition of peacocks and flowers was a signature model of the Takashimaya company. It appeared, for instance, in another screen exhibited in the 1904 world's fair in St. Louis in the United States, and as late as 1935, in a panel (probably made much earlier and remaining in the company's stock) presented by the Japanese government for the Silver Jubilee of King George V (r. 1910–1936). Most likely a gift from the Meiji emperor to Cixi in 1903, the screen in the Palace Museum served as a backdrop for a number of Cixi's photographic portraits that she commissioned in that year.[28]

Figure 180 Takashimaya company, folding screen depicting peacocks among peonies, inscribed 'made with the supervision of Iida Shinshichi of Takashimaya in Kyoto of the Great Nippon', Japan, *c.* 1903, silk embroidery on a silk ground (small birds and the sun: ink and colour on paper, cut and pasted at the Qing court later), w. 456cm, h. 268cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00210763

Meiji-period artworks at the Palace Museum were largely collected in the context of the Qing court's new diplomatic policies and foreign missions at the beginning of the 20th century. There were three major channels which contributed to their acquisition: as official gifts from the Japanese Imperial Household (on behalf of the emperor, the empress or other members of the royal family) or from other dignitaries; as purchased industrial samples in Japan by Qing court officials during diplomatic or investigation tours; and as personal presents from Qing officials to Empress Dowager Cixi and the Guangxu emperor upon their return from Japan.

Up until the end of the 19th century, Cixi adhered to notoriously xenophobic and conservative policies. She suppressed the Hundred Days' Reform (*bairi weixin* 百日維新) led by Guangxu in 1898 and indulged the attacks of foreigners during the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901). But her political stance changed dramatically in the aftermath of the aggression of the Eight-Nation Alliance in 1900. In January 1901, Cixi initiated what would become a ten-year reform known as New Policies, with a goal to modernise and strengthen the Qing empire, while adopting a more friendly and open strategy for foreign affairs. The institutional reforms swept through many domains of social and political infrastructures, and included the establishment of a constitution and a parliament, however short-lived due to the sudden collapse of the Qing dynasty. Modernising the educational system and industrial base also constituted a fundamental part of the agenda.[29] The successful reforms in Japan carried out by the Meiji government provided the Qing court with a perfect model for cultural and institutional transformations. Although the Sino-Japanese relationship was tense during the First Sino-Japanese War and the subsequent settlement during 1894–5, it changed quickly and soon entered a 'Golden Age'. The period from 1898 to 1907 saw a pro-Japanese sentiment in China and a close, productive connection between the two countries. This harmonious and collaborative relationship was predicated on mutual benefits: the Qing government saw in the Japanese experience a practical shortcut to advanced Western systems and an East Asian paradigm for escaping Western aggression, whereas Japan viewed China as an important ally in resisting Western domination, and mentoring China was as an essential step for Japan as it sought to position itself as Asia's leader.[30]

Following the example of the Japanese in the early Meiji period, the Qing court sent diplomatic missions consisting of members of the imperial family and high government officials to Europe, the United States and Japan. They were responsible for investigating these countries' advanced policies and infrastructures, while paying respects to foreign sovereigns and leaders. In April 1902, Cixi sent a mission headed by Prince Zaizhen 載振 (1876–1947) to London to congratulate King Edward VII (r. 1901–10) on his coronation, followed by a five-month trip around Britain, Belgium, France, the United States and Japan. Zaizhen and

his entourage studied the constitutions, governmental structures, commerce and cultural facilities in these countries.[31] World's fairs especially caught the attention of Zaizhen. In his diary and the official memorandum that he submitted to the Guangxu emperor, Zaizhen stressed that expositions were crucial to the development of trade and had a profound, immediate impact on commerce. He urged the Qing court to mobilise provincial resources and to prepare itself appropriately for future international exhibitions.[32] Visiting marketplaces and purchasing manufactured goods abroad formed an integral part of the investigations. An entry of 15 September 1902 in Zaizhen's diary, for instance, records that he found the silks in the Kyoto market excellent in quality but not compatible with Chinese taste in terms of colour; he then went to the Takashimaya store and bought several 'embroidered pictures'.[33] Corresponding documents in the Takashimaya archives reveal that these acquisitions were likely intended as birthday gifts for Cixi.[34]

Cixi and Guangxu took Zaizhen's advice on the international exhibitions seriously. In April 1903, the Qing court dispatched another imperial mission led by Zaizhen to Japan to attend the fifth National Industrial Exhibition in Osaka and to investigate Japanese finance, manufacturing and education. Zaizhen, now promoted to Minister of the newly established Department of Commerce (*shangbu* 商部), was appointed by the Qing court as the official commissioner for the Chinese exhibit at the Osaka fair. The last and largest exhibition of this series held during the Meiji period, this event featured a semi-international scope with 14 participating foreign countries, including Australia, Germany, the United States and Canada.[35] The Meiji government's ambition was clearly spelled out in the official guidebook: 'the day is not far distant when Japan will be able to boast of a large World Exhibition, which will compare favourably with those held in other parts of the world.'[36] The Department of Foreign Affairs of Japan and non-governmental Japanese organisations with ties to China cordially invited Chinese officials and provincial gentry-merchants to attend the Osaka fair, and the event was attended enthusiastically and much reported in Chinese newspapers.[37] For Chinese elites and intellectuals who might not have the resources to travel as far as Europe or America, this fair offered them first-hand experience of an international exhibition – one that epitomised the achievement of Japan's reforms and modernisation while also serving as a prism that refracted the powerful impact of expositions on various industries.

During the trip, Zaizhen and his retinue diligently collected information for the Qing court that would be useful for future expositions and reform strategies. According to the diary of Natong 那桐 (1856–1925), Deputy Minister of Revenue (*Hubu shangshu* 戶部尚書) and a core member of Zaizhen's entourage, the envoys spent 33 days in Japan. They visited the Osaka fair on eight consecutive days before heading to Tokyo to pay their respects to the Meiji emperor and empress. Natong remarks on the spacious exhibition halls, the dazzling electric light and fountain, and the extraordinary range and refinement of the works on display. During the trip, the emissaries also inspected the Osaka Mint Bureau (*Osaka zōheikyoku* 大阪造幣局), the

Figure 181 Silk with patterns of cranes and pine boughs, Japan, *c.* 1900, woven with supplementary polychrome silk wefts and gilt paper threads, w. 72cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00017686

Morimura (森村) Ceramic Factory in Nagoya and the Imperial Education Society (*Teikoku kyōikukai* 帝国教育会) in Tokyo, among other manufactories, banks and schools. They also tasted Western cuisine in the famed restaurant Seiyōken in the Ueno Park (*Ueno Seiyōken* 上野精養軒).[38] The officials eagerly purchased Japanese objects that they deemed worthy as industrial samples or gifts for the Qing monarchs, from the fair as well as from shops and museums. For example, Natong notes that in Nagoya they spent a fortune on cloisonné enamel vases, and in Kyoto they purchased silk embroideries at the stores of Takashimaya and Nishimura Sōzaemon.[39]

The wide range of objects that Natong acquired during the trip is evident from the list of gifts he presented to Cixi and Guangxu upon returning from Japan: cloisonné enamel wares, porcelain wares, 'a sculpted silver basin', 'an inserted screen with bejewelled inlaid design', 'a pair of glass mirrors with ornamented borders', 'a pair of glass table lamps', multiple 'Japanese gold brocaded silks' and 'Japanese polychrome satin-ground silks', and two 'finely embroidered velvet landscapes', which were probably *yūzen* velvets misidentified as embroidery.[40] Among the extant textiles at the Palace Museum are items that match Natong's descriptions: for example, a bolt of orange silk with cranes and pine boughs woven with metal threads are typical 'Japanese gold brocaded silks' featuring traditional motifs (**Fig. 181**). Some other Meiji decorative objects in the museum collections, showing the quality of products targeted at the mass export market, may have been acquired

Figure 182 Vase depicting peonies and swallows, signed 'made by Kasugai', Japan, *c.* 1900, porcelain with overglaze decoration, h. 46cm, d. 29cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00220873

from trade stores (for foreign tourists in Japan) during this mission or other similar trips. One example, a Yokohama ware porcelain vase with the mark 'Made by Kasugai' (*Kasugai zō* 春日井造), in a shape inspired by a Qing imperial vessel type, features elephant-head handles and overglazed decoration of peonies and swallows (**Fig. 182**).

On 21 May 1903, Zaizhen and his retinue paid a formal visit to the Meiji emperor and empress at court. The prince sang a eulogy, in which he summarised the purpose of the mission as for 'inspecting all aspects of Japanese policy and industry (*kōgei*)' and praised 'the grandeur and refinement of Japanese manufacture (*kōgyō*)', using the two terms interchangeably.[41] The Japanese imperial gifts for Zaizhen (for the Qing monarchs) comprised 'an embroidered screen' and 'a pair of silver vases bearing the Japanese imperial emblem', and those for Natong included 'a large silver bowl' and 'a gold coffer'.[42] In the Palace Museum, a number of objects carrying the Japanese imperial insignia, the chrysanthemum, exemplify formal diplomatic presentations of this kind. The silver vessels that Zaizhen and Natong received may have resembled a high-footed silver bowl marked with a chrysanthemum and decorated with paulownia leaves and four phoenixes with protruding heads along the rim (**Fig. 183**). It has a red Qing court label indicating 'given by the Japanese emperor'.

On 5 June 1903, shortly after the Zaizhen mission returned to Beijing, Cixi and Guangxu received the prince and Natong at the court and inquired about the Osaka exhibition.[43] Zaizhen described the magnificent displays and honestly expressed his regret over the inferior state of

Figure 183 Bowl decorated with chrysanthemum emblem, paulownia leaves and phoenixes, Japan, *c.* 1902, silver, h. 25cm, w. 36.2cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00221128

Figure 184 Court lady's informal under-robe decorated with cranes and clouds, early 20th century, silk embroidery on a silk ground, w. 137cm, h. 134cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00045721

Chinese exhibits compared to the 'updated, innovative' objects from other countries. Cixi was displeased and concerned,[44] and this discontent may have spurred her to improve the quality of Qing exhibits and to promote the empire's image in future international exhibitions. For the 1904 world's fair in St. Louis, she displayed unprecedented enthusiasm and involvement, allocating enormous funds for the event, three times more than the total sum that the Qing court had previously spent on all the international expositions in which it had participated.[45] Zaizhen's memorandum to Cixi and Guangxu clearly stated that the Osaka exhibition could serve as a 'foundation' for the Qing court's preparations for future expositions.[46] The first-hand knowledge of the Osaka fair obtained during Zaizhen's trip would have provided a standard for the Qing court in its organisation of the Chinese pavilion at St. Louis, and the exquisite Japanese objects brought back by the mission stood as concrete examples of 'updated, innovative' foreign products to which the Qing court could aspire. They gave Cixi a material basis for imagining the representation of the Qing empire on the international stage. Investing in world's fairs became an essential component of Qing imperial reforms, as the monarchs came to realise their significant role in promoting domestic industry and in conveying the new international image of the empire.

At the Qing court, the designs and aesthetics of Meiji Japanese works introduced fresh vocabulary to Qing imperial decorative arts. New trends in women's informal

Figure 185 Box decorated with 'longevity' character, lotus flowers and birds with blossoms of the four seasons, marked 'made by the Bureau of Industry of the Great Qing', 1906–1911, cloisonné, h. 17.3cm, d. 29.6cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 新00044100

court dress in particular attest to the intriguing outcome of Sino-Japanese exchange. For instance, the embroidered motif of cranes among clouds on a lilac-coloured under-robe, illustrated in **Figure 184**, closely resembles the pattern of the Japanese brocaded silk in **Figure 181**. In another example – a pair of winter and summer robes with related designs – a diagonally hovering phoenix and peacock recall a common compositional scheme in Meiji fine art textiles and cloisonné vessels.[47]

Many investigative trips to Japan were sponsored by the Qing court or organised by provincial gentries and entrepreneurs during the decade of the New Policies. The scope and impacts of these endeavours went far beyond the two Zaizhen missions examined in this chapter. In this late Qing wave of learning from Japan, the Meiji works collected as industrial and commercial samples offered reform-minded Chinese a window into the achievements of modernised *kōgyō* or *kōgei*. These *kanji* words, written in Chinese as *gongye* (工業) and *gongyi* (工藝), respectively, and their associated concepts were directly adopted by Qing reformers in their plans to restructure the handicraft industry, redefine the domains of manufacture, and systemise related educational programmes. Scholars have noted the wholesale transplant of Japanese terminology into modern Chinese vocabulary during the late Qing wave of translating Japanese works and adopting Japanese systems. These loan words and concepts infiltrated many segments, including science, law, modern thought, political systems, culture, education and so on, resulting in an 'intellectual revolution' that profoundly shaped the 'mental universe' of Chinese society.[48]

Before the New Policies decade, as part of the Self-Strengthening Movement of the 1880s and 1890s, Qing government officials such as Zuo Zongtang 左宗棠 (1812–1885) and Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837–1909) had already promoted the education of *gongyi* as key to improving manufacture and commerce. Courses related to *gongyi* were established in newly opened military schools for Western learning.[49] As in the early Meiji period, the term *gongyi* used in late Qing leaned towards industry and had a component of technical training, such as mechanical drawing and machine design. Similarly to Zaizhen's eulogy for the Meiji emperor, *gongyi* and *gongye* were often used interchangeably to refer to light industry and handicraft. During the New Policies period, under the guiding principle of 'promoting and reviving industry' (*zhenxing shiye* 振興實業), the Qing government established a number of bureaus in Beijing and in the provinces, which restructured and oversaw existing handicraft manufactories and institutionalised the required training. These governing entities were called Bureaus of Industry (*Gongyi ju* 工藝局) or Bureaus of Encouraging Industry (*Quangong ju* 勸工局).[50] In the latter case, the word *quangong* is directly related to *kangyō* (勧業, 'encouraging industry') in the literal title of the Japanese National Industrial Expositions – National Exhibitions for Encouraging Industry.

Many of these bureaus focused on a central mission to counterbalance the flooding of Western goods into China and to restore China's economy and sovereignty through institutionalised manufacture. They concentrated on two major categories: household items and light industrial goods for Chinese consumption, which could replace foreign imports; and specialised decorative arts and regional specialties intended for China's export trade.[51] The organisations often had a charity function to train the poor and vagrant in a useful skill for making a living following the damages caused by successive crises and wars in China. The Beijing Bureau of Industry in the Aftermath (*Beijing shanhou gongyi ju* 北京善後工藝局) was founded for this purpose in the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion and the invasion of the Eight-Nation Alliance. It focused on the craft specialties of Beijing, including embroidery, cloisonné, pile carpets and carved works that appealed to the foreign market.[52] The mission statements of various Bureaus of Industry show that reorganising craft and industrial manufacture was unmistakably viewed as a key approach for strengthening the nation and as an effective social measure for cultivating the people. In 1904, Zhang Zhidong issued a new pedagogical regulation (*guimao xuezhi* 癸卯學制) following the Japanese model, which listed ceramics, textile weaving and dyeing, lacquerwork, metalwork, woodwork and so on under the subject of *gongyi*.[53] A series of professional schools dedicated to these crafts opened subsequently.

The Palace Museum holds a number of objects that exemplify the products made under this new governmental system of *gongyi*. A rounded cloisonné box bearing the mark of the Bureau of Industry of the Great Qing (*Da Qing gongyi ju* 大清工藝局), founded in 1906 under the new Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce (*Nonggong shangju* 農工商局), features a conventional decorative scheme of auspicious motifs – five bats surrounding the character 壽 ('longevity'), and lotus flowers and birds with blossoms of the four seasons (**Fig. 185**). Another example, a sedan curtain made of pile carpet, contains the woven inscription 'respectably made by the Bureau of Encouraging Industry in the Gansu Province' (*Gansu quangong ju* 甘肅勸工局), a regional establishment founded in 1906 (**Fig. 186**). Its craftsmanship was not very refined, but it incorporated chemical dyes and demonstrated an effort to modernise a time-honoured production method.[54]

Embroidery was another traditional form of craftsmanship that underwent significant transformations spurred by the New Policies strategies. Shen Shou, the female embroidery master, played a pivotal role in modernising Suzhou-school embroidery and embroidery education for women. In 1904, Cixi dispatched Shen Shou and her husband on a mission to Japan to inspect textile workshops and schools in order to prepare for the reform of the Chinese embroidery sector. During the tour, Shen paid special attention to female embroidery schools as a successful model to train women to gain financial independence, and she was impressed by their curriculum grounded in painting techniques and colour theory.[55] Inspired by Meiji fine art embroidery, Shen invigorated Suzhou embroidery with the 'lifelike' (*fangzhen* 仿真)

Figure 186 Sedan curtain depicting a phoenix and a dragon, inscribed 'respectably made by the Bureau of Encouraging Industry in the Gansu Province', *c.* 1906–11, pile carpet, w. 85cm, h. 192cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00211910

Figure 187 Shen Shou, *Jesus*, 1913, silk embroidery on a silk ground, w. 32.7cm, h. 54.8cm (framed). Nanjing Museum

approach, and in 1906 she came to serve as the chief instructor of the embroidery school under the new Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce, promoting modern teaching methods.[56]

Shen Shou's embroidery programme was inextricably linked to the promotion of women's professional education. Interestingly, in Japan, male artists and artisans dominated the production of fine art textiles in the top echelon from the process of underdrawings to executing embroidery; by contrast, in China, especially in Shen Shou's programme, it was a female domain. At the same time as reinforcing the deep-seated notion of embroidery as woman's work in the Confucian system of gendered labour division, she also challenged the traditional conception of femininity and boudoir activity by turning embroidery into a modern enterprise. Cixi enthusiastically supported this connection between reform-minded womanhood and institutionalised embroidery education; in 1904, she even founded a Female Bureau of Crafts (*Neiting nü gongyi ju* 內廷女工藝局) within the Forbidden City, which recruited skilled female embroiderers from the Zhejiang region to coach court ladies in needlework.[57] This project was part of Cixi's larger reform effort to establish formal education for noble women.[58] Shen Shou's career and educational enterprise continued to thrive after the fall of the Qing dynasty. One of her representative works created in 1913 – a bust portrait of Jesus based on a reproduction of an oil painting by Italian Baroque artist Guido Reni (1575–1642) – showcases her 'lifelike' embroidery style and virtuosic skills in capturing the light and volume of Jesus's flesh and hair through dynamic stiches (**Fig. 187**). The piece won the first-class award at the Panama–Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915.[59]

The Palace Museum's collections of Meiji-period decorative arts offer a window into the visions and strategies of the Qing court's diplomatic and industrial reforms at the turn of the 20th century. These objects indexed the close interactions between China and Japan and encapsulated Qing efforts towards self-strengthening and industrial transformation by following Japanese steps. The embedded notion of *kōgei* or *gongyi* in these works helped shape the late Qing agenda of modernising and institutionalising the craft industry. Indeed, the modern concept, institutional system and pedagogy of *gongyi* rooted in the New Policies reforms continued to exert a long-term influence during the Republican and Communist eras. It is hoped that this preliminary study will lead to more scholarly inquiries on the collections and impacts of Japanese decorative arts in late Qing China, both within and outside the court.

Notes

1 Reynolds 1993, 1.
2 For scholarship on Cixi's portraiture projects, see Wang 2012 and Peng 2023, ch.1. For the role of Japan in modern Chinese art from *c.* 1870s to 1930s, see Fogel 2012.
3 Part of this chapter expands on a section in my previous article on Cixi's Japanese screen, see Rado 2021.
4 Foxwell 2023, 23.
5 Hunter 1995, 52.
6 Bailey 2023, 28.
7 Satō 1995, 58.
8 Ibid., 64.
9 Ibid., 60.
10 Kunaichō 2012.
11 Satō 1995, 60.
12 Satō 2011, 66–72.
13 Foxwell 2023, 17.
14 Harris 1994, 18.
15 Irvine 2006, 10–11.
16 Ibid., 17–18.
17 Harris 1994, 111.
18 Ibid., 111; Bailey 2023, 35.
19 Harris 1994, 111.
20 Kunaichō 2012, 76; Kyōto-shi Kyōsera Bijutsukan 2022, 104.
21 See Gugong bowu yuan 2002, 203, cat. no. 97.
22 See Harris 1994, 128, cat. no. 91.
23 On the Qianlong emperor's copies and multi-media reproductions of Li Di's painting *Two Chicks* (Southern Song dynasty), see Nie 2017.
24 On Meiji-period fine art textiles, see Vollmer 2016a.
25 Nakagawa 2016, 84.
26 For an example, see Palace Museum, Beijing, gu00221270.
27 Vollmer 2016b, 37–38.
28 See Rado 2021.
29 On the Xinzheng reforms, see Reynolds 1993.
30 Ibid., 5–11.
31 The details of this trip are recorded in Zaizhen 1903.
32 Ibid., vol. XI, 5; Zaizhen 1902.
33 Zaizhen 1903, Guangxu 28-8-14 (15 September 1902), vol. XII, 23.
34 I am grateful to Kawakami Kazuo, former curator of Takashimaya Historical Museum, Osaka, for providing this information. Email correspondence with the author, 4 August 2015.
35 Kunaichō 2012, 62.
36 Osaka 1903, 118.
37 For Chinese newspaper reports on the Osaka exposition, see Claypool 2012.
38 See Natong 1903, vol. 1, 460–6.
39 Ibid., vol. 1, 463, 465.
40 Ibid., vol. 1, 471–2.
41 Kunaichō 1968–77, vol. 10, 435.
42 Ibid., vol. 10, 436.
43 *Dezong jing huangdi shilu*, Guangxu 29-5-bingchen (28 May 1903).
44 *Dagong bao* 1903, 2.
45 Wang 2003, 421.
46 *Dezong jing huangdi shilu*, Guangxu 29-5-bingchen (28 May 1903).
47 See Palace Museum, Beijing, gu00049557; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 27.33.
48 Reynolds 1993, 123–6.
49 Liu 2022, 74–5.
50 On the historical documents related to the establishments of these bureaus, see Peng 1957, vol. 2, 502–76.
51 Ibid., vol. 2, 506–74.
52 Ibid., vol. 2, 516.
53 Liu 2022, 75.
54 Wan 2011, 307.
55 Sung 2024, 37–41.
56 On Shen Shou and her embroidery, see Ko 2009; Sung 2024, 27–82.
57 Peng 1957, vol. 2, 515.
58 On this education project, see Barish 2018.
59 Ko 2009, 39.

6 TEXTILES

Introduction: textiles

Yuhang Li

What role did textiles play in China during the 19th century? How do they help us to understand 19th-century China? These two simply stated questions encompass a wide range of practices and conceptual issues related to textiles. The answer to the first question seems to be straightforward: textiles penetrated every corner of Chinese society. This phenomenon is not unique to this time, but it intensified greatly in the period. We are more familiar with the fact that human bodies and their living spaces were covered with layered fabric; however, the same could be said of co-existing spaces outside of residential areas, such as temples, theatres, temporary structures installed on the façades of shops and restaurants, temporary arches and tents on the street during festivals, and so on. Textile, in other words fibre-based material woven in a wide range of techniques, was cut, sewn, wrapped or pleated for garments, furnishing pieces, temporary structures and decorative arts, or mounted and pasted over hard surfaces. Such a wide range of ways to use textiles suggests the communicative power embedded in the medium that can bind people, space and time.[1]

For instance, in 1796, the first year of the reign of the Jiaqing emperor, the governor of the Huguang region and his fellow officials miraculously found 1,600 gunpowder iron balls designed to be fired from a cannon in the Temple of Lord Guan in Jingzhou during the White Lotus Rebellion. With the help of the unearthed projectiles, the local army successfully defeated a group of rebels. The emperor then rewarded the temple by providing funding to renovate its south gate as well as a ceremonial robe for the statue of the Lord Guan, an incense burner, a valance set, banners and a pair of plaques with couplets written personally to express his gratitude.[2] The robe and a set of shrine valances and banners, along with other imperial votive objects, were essential artefacts endorsing Lord Guan's righteousness.

Another example comes from an illustration in the *Dianshizhai huabao* entitled *A Wrongfully Killed Soul Became a Malicious Ghost*, which illustrates a memorial service in a private household (**Fig. 188**). It shows how a temporary ritual space could be constructed using assorted textile items such as shrine valances, banners, altar fronts and prayer mats. These two sources suggest that textiles were not only used as apparatus for venerating a deity and revealing its perfection, but also served as material objects in communications between the court and local officials, between the emperor and Lord Guan, between worshipped and worshipper, between monastic clergy and lay people and between the living and the dead.

When Qing China encountered the turmoil of the Opium Wars, the Taiping Civil War and the invasions launched by western and Japanese imperial powers, textile production underwent both rupture and regrowth. The latter was instigated by the industrialisation of silk, cotton and wool production, imports of foreign raw materials such as cotton yarn, and the adoption of western technology including silk reeling machines.[3] There is no doubt of the impact of modernisation on textile production, nor the changes in the consumer market when China was forced into a global system; however, from the perspective of material culture, we also need to address the medium

Pages 200–1: Woman's red jacket with border showing steamships, 1860–1900, China, silk, cotton and embroidery, h. 130cm, w. 152cm. British Museum, London, 2022,3030.3. Purchased with the Brooke Sewell Permanent Fund

Figure 188 Wu Youru 吴友如, *A Wrongfully Killed Soul Became a Malicious Ghost* (*Qiang si wei li* 強死為厲), lithograph illustration, *A Treasury of Wu Youru's Illustrations* (*Wu Youru huabao* 吳友如畫寶), 1929, w. 27cm, h. 20cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, 61782344

specificity of textile in relation to its wide consumption. There is a communicative power embedded in textile design and manufacture.[4] In this section, Nancy Berliner explores the lay patchwork garments, which were influenced by monastic practice. Her research demonstrates the fluidity of textiles, the life cycle of fabric, and communication during a collective making process. Chi-Lynn Lin's chapter shifts to wool fabric in the late 19th century. Her research on the Chinese carpet industry allows us to understand the competition between Western imperialism and Chinese nationalism, and how through such competition, a modern tradition was created.

In the 19th century, textiles were also used as a convenient means to transform a space for spectacles. The bright colours, light weight and foldability of fabrics made them suitable for constructing temporary spaces associated with various ritual and religious festivals. Art historian Jonathan Crary makes an important point when he asks about the historical conditions for spectacle in a Western context and how it is connected to industrial society. The spectacle of colourful fabric for temporary structures, large-scale tapestries and silk-panelled screens for birthday celebrations and religious festivals, removable textile room partitions, backdrops on stage, and shared symbols on garments and furnishing fabrics allow us to see the logic of visuality specific to 19th- and early 20th-century China. In 19th-century Europe, signs were destabilised, which undermined hierarchy.[5] In this context, signs refer to the entrenched values and hierarchies of the pre-modern and medieval regimes that preceded them. Mimesis, reflecting power, played a key role in destabilising society. This paradigm allowed 'newly empowered classes to overcome "this exclusiveness of signs" and to initiate a "proliferation of signs" on demand'.[6] In short, the sign became dislocated from hierarchy. In the Chinese case, the mobility of signs as well as medium that destabilises hierarchy only partially takes place.

This moves us to answer the second question: how do textiles help us to understand 19th-century China? Asking what textiles do should cause us to pause. Do textiles do anything? People wear and use textiles every day, but do they do anything on their own? Here we must rethink the importance of material objects and the agency or effects of materials. After so many years of Chinese scholarship being immersed in historical materialism, we are now only beginning to understand the problem of the social life of

textiles, and to show how textiles themselves are agents in history. It is precisely because of their agentive dimension that examining textiles can inform the period in which they were made and used. How did the materiality of textiles entail such interfaces in the historical context of the 19th century? At least one aspect is that textiles serve as an important medium to enable a new spectacle and add theatricality to a setting.

This problem of textiles and materiality provides us with a new perspective on the historical transformations of the 19th century. Scholars of China are quick to periodise Chinese history based on major events such as the Opium Wars and the rise of the nation state, but they rarely note how materials such as textiles made the experience of the nation and even the subjectivities connected to new political forms possible. For example, we might agree that the nation state required a new form of theatricality, in which citizens identify with the nation, but we often overlook how textiles served as a medium for such theatricality. From the standpoint of nationalist ideology, textile as a medium must vanish after enabling identification. Nonetheless, by focusing on the material dimension of textiles, we see that the medium remains and can be reshaped and re-explained to generate new structures of theatricality and subjectivity.

Notes

1 Langlois 2024.
2 Kuai and Liu 1877, *juan* 52, 60b–61a-b.
3 For an inspiring discussion on the impact of commercial embroidery during the 19th century, see Silberstein 2020.
4 Tanaka Yuko 2013.
5 Baudrilliard 2016.
6 Crary 1989.

Chapter 18
From monks to mothers: evolutions of patchwork textiles in China

Nancy Berliner

A Daoist priest poses in front of a wooden door dressed in patchwork robes (**Fig. 189**). The patches of fabric are cut into a variety of shapes and sizes, dark and light in colour, and randomly organised across the surface of his outfit. He stares off into the distance, over the photographer's shoulder, seemingly unaware of his striking appearance. Another Daoist wearing a capacious, chequered patchwork robe stands outside a temple (**Fig. 190**). Painted on the wall behind him, a wild guardian deity brandishes a sword.

No doubt, walking down a narrow lane in Beijing, Shanghai or any town in China during the 19th century, donning such an outfit would not have been an unusual or surprising sight for local people. As in many religions around the globe, the robes identified the wearers' belief systems within a diverse population. And though it may not have been an unusual sight, the unexpected juxtapositions and irregular shapes of the patchwork would have stood out in a crowd. Indeed, patchwork door curtains in rural China today – distant descendants of Buddhist and Daoist attire – hanging against the backdrop of a drab adobe or grey brick home, still jump out and catch the eye of any passer-by. Now, as both these striking textile traditions are beginning to fade from view – due to the low costs of manufactured fabrics and a diminishing interest in handmade and homemade decor – it is time to explore the evolutions of these dynamic abstract aesthetics, their origins and their relationships, within the Chinese traditions of art.

The beginnings of patchwork textiles in China

Daoist priests were only one group on the long timeline of patchwork textile wearers in China. In the home of a 19th-century Beijing family, a young boy might also have been wearing a colourfully patterned cotton or silk (depending on the family's wealth) patchwork jacket or vest. And in Buddhist temples, monks and priests wrapped themselves in patchworked mantles. These individuals were intentionally wearing patchwork attire to reflect specific aspirations.

Patchwork clothes, of course, do not always carry symbolic meaning. The patching of fabric is a functional necessity around the world for those with limited resources. And clothes created with bits of cloth stitched together into patterns have also been a natural inclination for millennia as humans strived for aesthetic variety and visual stimulation. Archaeological excavations have brought to light examples of ancient decorative patchworking. For instance, decoration seems to have been the primary aim of a red and white patchworked design on a child's dress discovered in a 5th- to 3rd-century BCE tomb in the southern Taklamakan desert of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of western China.[1] From about the same time period, but further east, in the royal Zhongshan tombs in Hebei province, came small human figures carved from jade. Incised lines in the jades clearly define chequered and contrasting fabrics on their clothes.[2]

Beyond functional and decorative patchworking, there also evolved in Asia, among some groups of religious disciplines, the intentional and meaning-laden patchworking of textiles. The spiritual practitioners' employment of patchwork then impacted secular culture, eventually leading to a new form of domestic decoration – and an outlet for

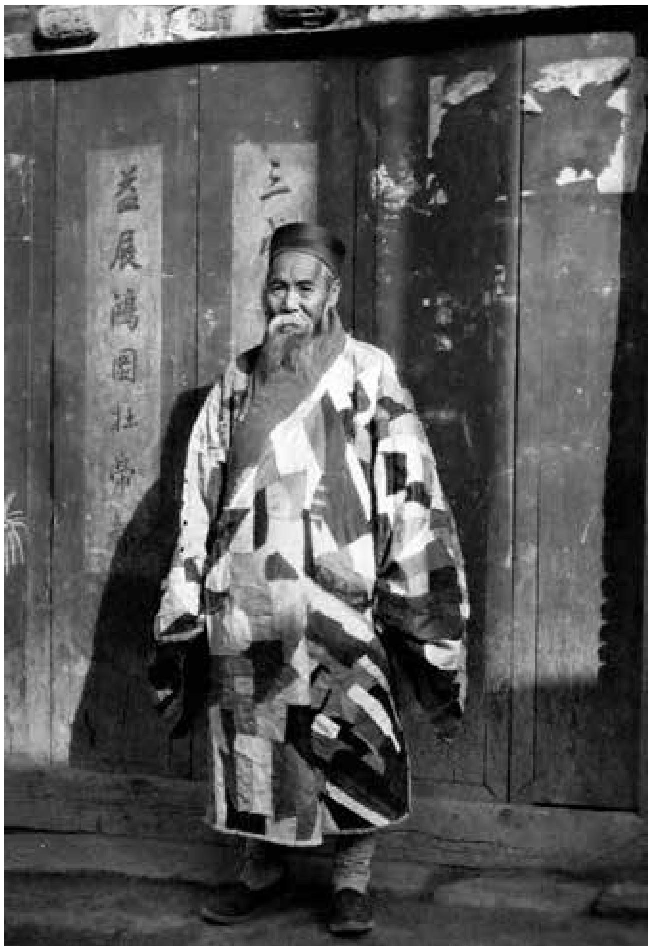


Figure 189 Daoist priest in patchwork robes, *c.* 1930

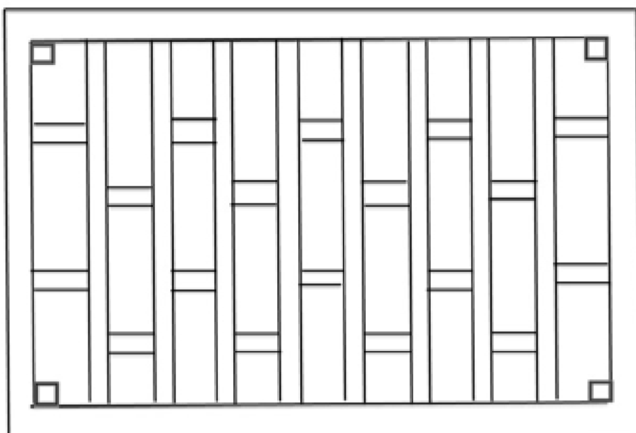
Figure 190 Photograph by Michael Lindsay of Daoist priest Li Yuantong in patchwork robes, 1942

artistic ingenuity – that continues in some areas of China's countryside today. To excavate the history of patchwork's transitioning from one religion's intentional meaning to domestic decoration necessitates searching backwards over 2,000 years and beyond China's borders.

The Sakyamuni Buddha's instructions on patchwork clothing

An intimate connection between patchwork and meaning emerged from the teachings of Buddhism. In the 6th century BCE, in northern India, the Sakyamuni Buddha gathered disciples around him to preach a new path to enlightenment that included the donning of patchwork clothes.

Figure 191 Diagram of the layout of patches forming the *kashaya*



The Vinaya texts, probably first assembled 13 years after the death of the Buddha, recorded his precepts and rules, including those on dress.[3] The Buddha preached that his disciples should don *kashaya* to distinguish themselves from other seekers. The *kashaya*, he detailed, should be constructed of discarded rags including those chewed by rodents or used for menstruation, childbirth or to wrap corpses. In conversation with Ananda, his devoted attendant and disciple, the Buddha further delineated that these rags should be stitched together in a design of rectangles that would resemble the pattern of rice paddies. The decreed pattern consisted of cloth strips (in Mahayana Buddhism, the number of strips varied from five to 25 depending on the importance of the individual and the ritual), with each strip constructed of a line of rectangular cloth pieces, surrounded by a frame, with a square in each corner (**Fig. 191**).[4] This 'robe' or 'mantle', following Indian dress at the time, was a flat rectangular textile, wrapped around the body.

The root of the word *kashaya* in Sanskrit means a mixed or muddy colour, which would have been the colour of the rags the Buddha had deemed appropriate for monks' garb. Despite the original intended attributes of the robes – brown, repulsive and patched in a specific grid pattern – these characteristics would vary over time and culture.

Figure 192 (far left) Buddha in Abhaya Mudra, Kushan period, Sandstone, h. 20.5cm. Archaeological Museum, Mathura Museum, Uttar Pradesh, India, no. 15.514.

Figure 193 (left) Sculpture of the subjugation of Nalagiri, from Bhutesvara stupa, 2nd century CE, Kushan Empire, red sandstone, h. 30cm, w. 28cm. Indian Museum, Kolkata

Visual evidence of patchwork mantles worn by early Buddhist followers appears as early as the 2nd century CE. Prior to the 1st century CE, Buddhist art did not depict human forms; the Buddha was represented by non-figural imagery such as his footprints, an empty throne, a dharma wheel or a bodhi tree. By the latter half of the Kushan period (2nd century BCE–3rd century CE), artisans were creating sculptural depictions of the Buddha or monks. And in several extant works the patchwork mantle – following the precise patterns prescribed by the Buddha – is visibly defined. A Kushan-period sandstone sculpture of the Buddha in the Government Museum of Mathura in Uttar Pradesh depicts him seated cross-legged, his right hand raised with its palm facing outward in the Abhaya Mudra gesture of fearlessness (**Fig. 192**).[5] A mantle fits tightly around his body and the patched pattern is delineated as strips of rectangles carved into the stone. The overall pattern is not dissimilar to the pattern known as a 'running bond' in brick walls.

Another sculpture from the Mathura region also displays the Buddha dressed in a patchworked robe. The detail is within a group of decorated railing pillars that surrounded the Bhutesvara stupa (now in the Indian Museum in Kolkata). On the front of the pillars are images of yakshis, female nature spirits, while on the back are illustrations from the life of the Buddha. One scene depicts the story of the evil king Ajatasattu setting a wildly drunk elephant – Nalagiri – upon the Buddha who ultimately, as seen in the image, subdues the raging animal (**Fig. 193**). Again here the Buddha is dressed in a mantle created from distinct vertical strips of cloth rectangles.

In a 3rd-century CE limestone panel illustrating the conversion of the Buddha's half-brother Nanda, there is a monk, off to the side of the central narrative, draped in a long *kashaya* (**Fig. 194**). Here we see not only the rectangles, but also the thin fabric strips dividing them. These strips become more prominent in later Chinese depictions.

Figure 194 Panel depicting the conversion and ordination of Nanda (detail), 3rd century CE, limestone, h. 27.9cm, w. 227.3cm (entire panel). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1930, 30.29

Figure 195 *Eight Men Ferrying a Statue of the Buddha*, Mogao Cave 323, Dunhuang, 7th century, colours on unfired clay, h. 50.8cm, w. 94cm. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, First Fogg Expedition to China (1923–1924), 1924.41

Figure 196 Sculpture of a monk, Mogao Cave 285, Dunhuang, dated 538–9 CE, h. 80cm. Dunhuang Academy

No doubt there were many more Indian sculptures depicting the Buddha, and his disciples, in *kashaya*, but the polychrome paint that would have delineated the patchwork has long since faded in most instances. (In the Buddhist caves at Ajanta, dating from the 2nd century BCE to the 5th century CE, the remains of colour are still visible on stone sculptures.)

Interestingly, a 7th-century Chinese mural from the extensive Buddhist cave complex in Dunhuang, Gansu Province, in western China (of which more below), now at the Harvard Art Museum, depicts what was believed at the time to be a 3rd-century BCE Indian bronze statue of the Sakyamuni Buddha dressed in a yellow and red patchwork mantle (**Fig. 195**). The mural records a 4th-century CE event in which the Indian sculpture had been discovered outside of the town of Yangzhou and then carried into town. In the scene, eight men are accompanying the statue on its journey across a river. Two of the men, monks, are also clad in full red and yellow patchwork mantles. Representations of the Buddha did not yet exist in the 3rd century BCE, however they would have been in existence by the 4th century CE when the believers purportedly discovered the statue.

Buddhist patchwork arrives and thrives in China

As early as the 1st century CE, Buddhist beliefs and practices were spreading from India to China via trade routes stretching through south and central Asia. Among the many Buddhist customs, imagery and beliefs, came the practice of wearing the patchwork rice-paddy patterned robe. Along the trade routes in the western reaches of China are the lavishly painted cave temples of Dunhuang, most notably at Mogao, their colours protected by the dry desert climate. Carving out Buddhist cave temples from desert cliffs likely

Figure 197 (far left) Mural of the bodhisattva Dizang, Mogao Cave 205, Dunhuang, 7th–8th century, polychromy on unfired clay. Dunhuang Academy

Figure 198 (left) Mural of the Medicine Buddha, Mogao Cave 446, Dunhuang, 8th century, polychromy on unfired clay. Dunhuang Academy

began at Dunhuang in the 4th century and continued for around a thousand years. These cave temples – covered with murals and filled with clay sculptures – provide abundant evidence of the Chinese adoption of the patchwork garb in early Chinese Buddhism.

A multicoloured patchwork mantle wraps an early 6th-century sculpted, almost life-size monk, meditating within a niche on the west wall of Mogao Cave 285 (**Fig. 196**). Red, brown and blue-and-green rectangles are laid out in the orderly stripped pattern first described by the Buddha a millennium earlier.

In the following centuries, the *kashaya* increasingly appears as garb for a variety of beings depicted in the Dunhuang caves. The bodhisattva Dizang is represented in Cave 205 alongside the Medicine Buddha and the bodhisattva Guanyin, painted during the early to high Tang era (618–781) (**Fig. 197**). While most bodhisattvas, such as Guanyin, are usually depicted as princes, with crowns and elaborate jewels, Dizang's typical visual manifestation is as a monk with a shaved head and wearing a brown, beige and green-dotted *kashaya*. In Cave 446, decorated during the 8th century, the Medicine Buddha also dons the patched mantle (**Fig. 198**).

In Cave 45, created during the early to high Tang period, larger-than-life-size, three-dimensional representations of Buddhist sacred figures stand in a niche on the western wall. Surrounding the central figure of Sakyamuni Buddha are disciples, bodhisattvas and guardian kings. Just to the proper left of the Buddha is Kasyapa, an elderly disciple of the Buddha. Draped around his body is a *kashaya*, its mottled, colourful fabric blocks outlined in black strips (**Fig. 199**). Each block seems to be made from the same fabric, possibly depicting mountains against a pale green and white sky; it is remarkably similar to extant *kashaya* from the same time period, preserved today in Japan.[6]

Figure 199 Sculpture of Kashyapa, Mogao Cave 45, Dunhuang, 7th–8th century, polychromy on unfired clay. Dunhuang Academy

Figure 200 Tang patchwork, late 8th to 9th century, silk, h. 130cm, w. 160cm (mounted). British Museum, London, Sir Aurel Stein Collection, MAS.856

The Dunhuang site also preserved several examples of actual patchworked textiles. One of the most glorious of these, from the Tang period, is now at the British Museum (**Fig. 200**). It is also an excellent demonstration of the Chinese Tang dynasty's departure from the original Vinaya-prescribed muddy-coloured rags. The textile is composed of over 40 luxurious and variously decorated silk fabrics – some resist-dyed and some embroidered.[7]

The specific function of this patchwork textile is still in debate. Archaeologist Sir Marc Aurel Stein (1862–1943), who collected the object during his 1906–8 visit to Dunhuang, called it 'a votive textile'.[8] The later Dunhuang specialist Roderick Whitfield also analysed the object, conjecturing that it was a *kashaya* and the owner was a powerful religious man. 'The presence of the purple silk, clearly available only in tiny pieces and most precious, suggests that the wearer of this robe was a monk of high rank: we should recall that Hongbian, chief of monks in Hexi, who was commemorated in the small cave where all these textiles were found, was accorded the right to wear purple by the Emperor when Chinese rule was restored in the Dunhuang area.'[9] Alan Kennedy, the author of numerous articles on the history of Japanese *kesa* (*kashaya* 袈裟), endorses the notion that the textile had ritual meaning, but has more recently retreated from the conclusion that it is a *kashaya*.[10] A document dated 958, found during the excavation of the Famen Si pagoda and listing temple property, included mention of a patchwork cloth for wrapping sutras, confirming that patchwork textiles were, by the Tang dynasty, already being employed for functions beyond the *kashaya*. Scholars have surmised that a second patchwork found at Dunhuang – from the Tang or earlier – was possibly a cloth to cover an altar table.[11]

During the Tang dynasty, after Caves 45 and 446 were under construction, Japanese Buddhist monks and priests were visiting China to pursue a greater understanding of their adopted religion. Ennin, Saichō (794–864) and Kūkai (774–835) recorded their experiences in texts as well as bringing back to Japan knowledge about rituals and ritual objects.[12] A *kashaya* preserved today in the Enryakuji Temple on Mount Hiei just outside Kyoto (**Fig. 201**) – said to have been brought back to Japan from China by Saichō – follows the same construct of rectangles with dark outline fabric strips as well as the same mottled fabric to Kasyapa's *kashaya* from Cave 45.[13] The Shōsō-in, the treasure house of Tōdai-ji Temple in Nara, also preserves several similar-looking Tang period *kashaya*.[14]

Numerous Sanskrit Buddhist texts address the origins and meanings of the *kashaya*. The profound focus is testimony to the deep theological importance of this item of

Figure 201 ***Kashaya*** **from Enryakuji Temple, Kyoto, Tang period, *c.* 804, linen and silk, h. 132cm, w. 260cm. Enryaku-ji, Shiga, Japan**

clothing.[15] Chinese translators and interpreters of the texts justifiably then developed a rich vocabulary to refer to the garment. The word *kashaya* was transliterated into Chinese as *jiasha* (袈裟), but by the Tang dynasty there were additional alternatives. The term *shuitianyi* (水田衣, 'rice-paddy clothes') – appearing at the latest in the Tang period – was not a transliteration from the Sanskrit, but instead carried the meaning of the Buddha's prescribed pattern of the *kashaya*. By the Tang dynasty, poets were also using the term *baina* (百衲, 'one hundred patches'), or *bainayi* (百衲衣,'one hundred patched garment') to refer to the same garment. The mantle was such a visually defining attribute of monks that the word *baina* was used often enough to denote a Buddhist monk.

Poetry from the Tang period conveniently and fortunately preserved references to these multiple terms. For instance, the poet Zhang Wei 張謂 (d. 779), in his poem 'Sending off the Monk' (*song seng* 送僧) uses the word *jiasha*.[16] Another example comes from the early 9th-century poet Xiong Rudeng 熊孺登 (b. *c.* 768), who wrote in his poem 'Sending off the Monk to Roam the Mountain' (*songseng youshan* 送僧遊山), 'the snow flakes fly covering the rice-paddy clothes' (*rimu hanshan tou gusi, xuehua feiman shuitian yi* 日暮寒林投古寺，雪花飛滿水田衣).

The practice of wearing *jiasha* continued among Buddhist monks in China basically uninterrupted through to the 20th century, except of course, during anti-Buddhist campaigns. Paintings, poems, literature and photographs, reign period after reign period, offer beautiful evidence that Chinese Buddhist monks were devoted to the format and tenets of the *jiasha* mantle. A small Southern Song fan painting at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, for example, depicts a group of *luohan* wandering in the mountains (**Fig. 202**). Several of them don patchwork mantles in the regulated grid pattern, with rectangular patches of red, blue, yellow and white. About a century later, the Yuan period essayist Liu Tingxin 劉庭信 (dates unknown) wrote in the voice of a monk, 'Eating a bowl of "thousand family rice", wearing a one-hundred stitched outfit, my pillow a chunk of a hard rock, I fall into a secure sleep'.

From the Ming period, there are more examples of well-preserved *jiasha*. In 2009, inside the Zhiti Temple of Ningde county in Fujian, a Ming *jiasha* was discovered.[17] The luxurious mantle is constructed from multicoloured patches of *yunjin* (雲錦) silk brocade including some with five-clawed dragon designs, leading some locals to wonder if it had

Figure 202 Unidentified artist, *Sixteen Luohan Worshipping the White-Robed Guanyin* (*Shiliu luohan ye Guanyin* 十六羅漢謁觀音) (detail), Southern Song dynasty, ink and colour on silk, h. 23.3cm, w. 23.2cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Waldo Ross Collection, 17.737

Figure 203 Child's primer showing the characters and image for *jiasha*, *Newly Compiled Illustrated Four-Word Glossary* (*Xinbian duixiang siyan*, 新編對相四言), woodblock-printed book, 1436, h. 31cm, w, 19cm. Columbia University Library

originally belonged to an emperor. The commonness of patchwork mantles is demonstrated by the inclusion of the word *jiasha* in the world's earliest child's primer, *Xinbian duixiang siyan* (*Newly Compiled Illustrated Four-Word Glossary*, 新編對相四言), that matches words with illustrations. The word *jiasha* pairs with an image showing the distinct patchworked fabric patches of the mantle (**Fig. 203**).

In an 18th-century painting on silk in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, entitled *Luohan Seated on a Rock*, a tonsured luohan, dressed like a monk, wears a fine multicoloured silk patchworked *jiasha* over his white robe (**Fig. 204**). Green, aqua, red and rice-coloured silk damask rectangles fill a grid, outlined by black strips with gold embroidery.

Not all of the extant Buddhist *jiasha* are so sumptuous. In Taiwan's Lingyuan temple, the *jiasha* of the 20th-century monk and teacher Lingyuan 靈源 (1902–1988) is preserved. Born in Linhai, in Zhejiang Province, he became a monk at the age of 25.[18] After taking his vows, he wrapped around himself a crudely stitched assemblage of rags preserved today as a relic.

The Daoist adoption of patchworked robes

Throughout the first millennium CE, as Buddhists continued to wear the prescribed *jiasha*, their concept of being dressed in patchwork would also inspire other groups in the Chinese population. Sinologist Eric Zürcher (1928–2008) made a major study of the influence of Buddhism on Daoism – particularly in the textual field,[19] but visual influences were also profound. Daoists did not have sculptural or painted images of revered teachers until encountering Chinese Buddhism. Most interestingly, Daoists also adopted the concept of wearing patchworked robes.

The exact timing of the Daoist adoption of patchwork clothing has yet to be determined. The practice would have spread among Daoists over time, but by the Ming period, textual sources are describing Daoist masters, divinities and devotees as being clothed in patchworked robes. For instance, Ming descriptions of the Heavenly Master Sa 薩天師 or Sa Zhenren 薩真人 – referred to as one of the Four Celestial Masters of Daoism (*sida tianshi* 四大天師) and known for his skills in exorcism[20] – often note his patchwork clothes and demon-subduing fan. The Ming Daoist treatise *The Supreme Yuanyang God and the Heavenly Lord Without A Beginning Tells*

Figure 204 Unidentified artist, *Luohan Seated on a Rock* (*Luohan tuzhou* 羅漢圖軸), 18th century, ink and colours on paper, h. 110.5cm, w. 67.8cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, gift of Mrs. Richard E. Danielson, 48.1275

Recites the True Sutra of the Spiritual Officer Wang (*Taishang yuanyang shangdi wushi tianzun shuo huoche wang lingguan zhenjing*, 太上元陽上帝無始天尊説火車王靈官真經) describes him as holding a 'five-lamped ghost-subduing fan' in his hand and wearing over his body a patchworked *baina* evil force-subduing item of clothing (*wuming xianggui shan* 五明降鬼扇 and *baina fumo yi* 百衲伏魔衣).[21] Born Sa Shoujian (*c.* 1141–1178) in the early Southern Song dynasty in western Sichuan, Sa was a physician who became a Daoist priest and exorcist.[22] Though he is discussed in earlier Daoist writings, it is only in the Ming texts – and presumably imagery – that the descriptions include the patchworked robe.[23]

Paintings and woodblock prints also testify to the inclusion of the patchwork robe as a visual attribute of Heavenly Master Sa. Sa is not wearing patchwork in all representations, but he clearly dons a patchwork outfit in a large Ming or Qing work in the collection of the Museum of World Religions in Taiwan (**Fig. 205**). In the image, the white-haired, moustached and bearded Sa is wearing a patched robe with sleeves – distinguishable from the Buddhist *kashaya*, which is a large rectangular length of cloth that wraps around the body. Embroidered or painted onto each of the red, blue, yellow and green rectangular squares that comprise the robe is a *wanzi* (卍字), the swastika design

Figure 205 Heavenly Master Sa (detail), *Portrait of the Western River Saviour from Distress Sa Zhenren* (*Xihe jiugu sa zhenren tu* 西河救苦薩真人圖), Ming dynasty, h. 187.5cm, w. 84cm. Private collection, on loan to Museum of World Religions, Taiwan

Figure 206 Tang Xuanzang, illustrated in a Jiaqing era edition of *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji* 西遊記), 1796–1820 (1819 edition), woodblock printed book, h. 24cm, w. 15cm. Shanghai Library

that travelled to China with Buddhism, and was, as evident here, also adopted by the Daoists.

Also worthy of notice at this point is that the term used in the Ming Daoist text for the patchwork is *baina*, the same word used to describe Buddhists' wardrobe since at least the Tang period. This Daoist adoption of the originally Buddhist practice and its term was not a singular event. Numerous Ming and later instances confirm the word became integrated into the Daoist regimen and into the non-secular vocabulary to refer to patchwork.

The beloved, popular Ming dynasty novel *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji* 西遊記), despite its dominant Buddhist theme, reveals more details about Daoist patchwork robes during the Ming – confirming that the Daoists were wearing patchwork clothes, and additionally demonstrating the distinctions between the Daoist and Buddhists' patchwork attire. The supernatural tale, most likely composed by poet, novelist and scholar-official Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩 (1506–1582), was first published, anonymously, in 1592 and tells of a Buddhist monk, Tang Sanzang 唐三藏, travelling to India in search of Buddhist sacred texts. The hero is modelled after the journeys of the actual Tang period monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), who travelled from Chang'an to India during the years 629 to 645, to study and retrieve original Sanskrit texts. In the fictional version, the monk is accompanied by three characters, Sandy, Sha Wujing (沙悟淨), Pigsy, Zhu Bajie (豬八戒) and Monkey, Sun Wukong (孫悟空), all with magical powers. These extraordinary beings assist him along the treacherous journey and through encounters with adversarial beings.

The early chapters of the novel describe events and doings of the historic monk Tang Xuanzang. Chapter 12 tells of his meeting with the emperor Taizong of Tang 唐太宗 (r. 626–49) who bestows upon him a 'five-coloured *jiasha*' before heading off on his journey. An illustrated edition of the book from the reign of the Jiaqing emperor includes a section with images of the novel's main characters. Xuanzang, with the five-coloured *jiasha* draped around his body, and referenced in the accompanying text,[24] stands by his horse at the start of his journey (**Fig. 206**).

In the novel's Chapters 32 and 33, Sanzang and his companions, as they are travelling through a high mountain range, hear about two demon king brothers, King Silver Horn and King Gold Horn, living in the area. Eager to capture Sanzang, the evil King Silver Horn magically transforms himself into an elderly – and injured – Daoist priest to trick the monk. Sanzang, falling for the disguise, sympathises with the old Daoist and agrees to assist him. 'Sir', Sanzang says, 'You and I share a common destiny. I am a Buddhist priest and you are a Daoist. Although we wear different robes, we cultivate our conduct according to the same principles.'[25] Several paragraphs and numerous plot turns later, we hear that Sanzang's monkey companion, Sun Wukong, has also transformed himself into a Daoist. 'The Great Sage [Sun Wukong] shook himself into an old Daoist Master. Do you know how he made himself up? On his head, his hair was wrapped into a pair of buns, and on his body he wore a *bainayi*.' Within the space of this one chapter, the author has clarified that – from the perspective of a Ming dynasty observer – there was a difference between the clothing of a Buddhist monk and the robes of a Daoist but, at the same time, both wear patchworked apparel.

Two Qing period woodblock-printed illustrated children's primers provide a sense of how the Buddhist and Daoist patchwork outfits differed. The images for the character *na* (百衲衣) do not conform to the Buddhist *jiasha* pattern. Instead of the regulated and orderly rectangles forming a rectangular textile, the depicted *bainayi* is constructed of irregularly shaped fabric pieces assembled into a robe (**Fig. 207**). Since Buddhist monk's patchwork *jiasha* are worn as mantles, rather than robes or jackets, the drawing seems to be illustrating a Daoist's *bainayi*. And

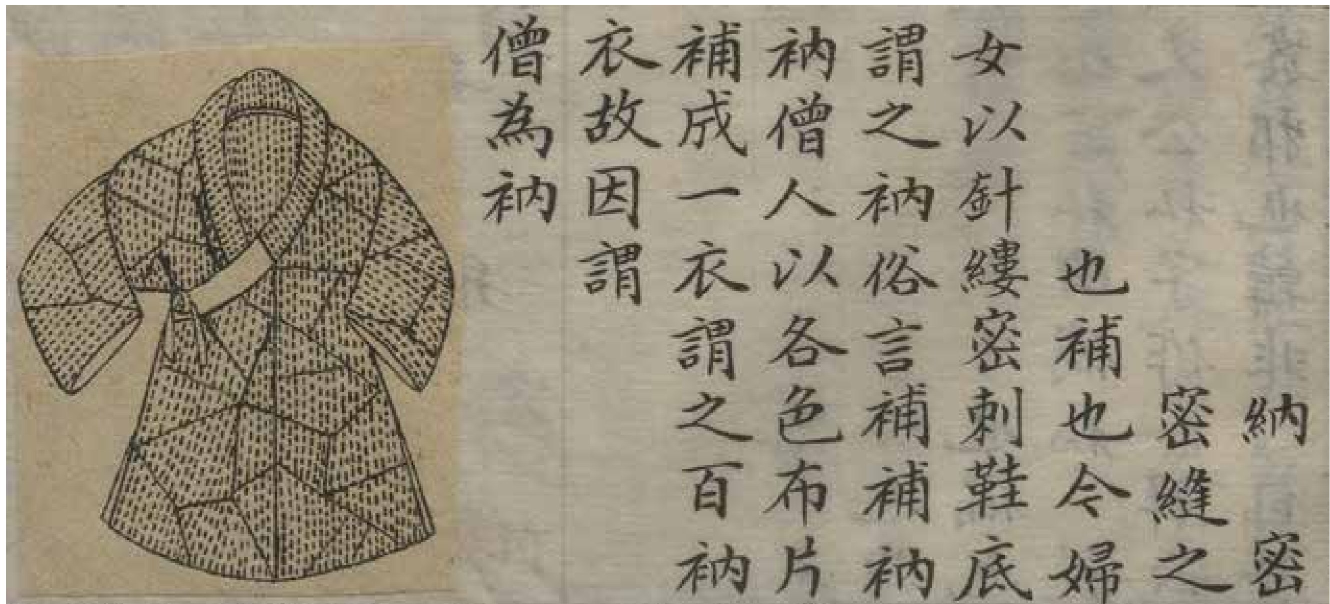

納密
密縫之
也補也令婦
女以針縷密刺鞋底
謂之衲俗言補補衲
衲僧人以各色布片
補成一衣謂之百衲
衣故因謂
僧為衲

Figure 207 Illustration from the *Instruction Book for Daily Life* (*Fanhui shu* 凡誨書), vol. 8, by Liu Xinyuan 劉心源 (1848–1915), late 19th century. Hubei Provincial Library, 善/384

numerous late 19th- and 20th-century photographs confirm that this irregular shape and patterning became a popular appearance for Daoists. In the 1910s or 1920s, for example, the American photographer John David Zumbrun (1875–1941), who was based in Beijing from the 1910s through to 1929, captured a Daoist waving a whisk (**Fig. 208**).

Communist soldiers in 1941, fighting the Japanese at Langyashan in southwestern Hebei, were assisted by the Daoist priest Li Yuantong 李圓通 (1878–1967). Sha Fei 沙飛 (1912–1950), a photojournalist who had joined the Red Army, photographed Li Yuantong wearing his robe, a patchwork assembled from contrasting-coloured squares. Its edging was formed of a series of zigzagging stripes. At least three photos of the acclaimed Daoist hero exist. In one he stands by the entrance to a Daoist temple, next to a wall painting of a guardian deity (**Fig. 190**). In another he stands with three Red Army soldiers (**Fig. 209**), and in the third he poses in a field (**Fig. 210**). In each photo, he dons the same robe and cap which loudly announce his Daoist identity.

Figure 208 Photograph by John David Zumbrun of Daoist priest, 1910s–1929

While the Cultural Revolution period policies probably prevented almost all Daoists from wearing these patchwork robes on the streets, many returned to the custom following the loosening of religious restrictions during the 1980s and 1990s. At a local festival at a Daoist pilgrimage site in Xianyang, just west of Xi'an, in 1992, this author encountered numerous Daoists sitting along the route dressed in patchworked robes and jackets. Several of them were offering their fortune-telling skills. One, who called himself Ma Xiaoxiao 馬孝孝, posed for a picture wearing a cap not dissimilar to the one worn by Li Yuantong many decades earlier (**Fig. 211**).

Ma Xiaoxiao's patchworked jacket was created with colourful and patterned cotton fabrics cut into squares and triangles. There are additionally several patches made up of thin strips formed into an octagon. The octagon shape resembles the Daoist *bagua* (八卦) (eight trigrams) symbol. While the *bagua* represents complex philosophical principles, the symbol also appears commonly outside rural homes in China even today to ward off evil forces. A *bagua* symbol, including the detailed eight trigrams, was additionally embroidered on Ma Xiaoxiao's cap. Other Daoists attending the fair wore similarly designed attire.

Ma Xiaoxiao, who is deaf and mute, explained that a woman devotee had crafted the jacket and donated it to him. Pointing to a bag, he noted that he had numerous such jackets. Women had also given him patchworked bags in which he carried his belongings. The custom was not an anomaly. Danish architect Johannes Prip-Møller (1889–1943) describes a Buddhist hermit he met on Mount Jiuhua, in Anhui province, wearing a robe of 108 patches, created for him by a group of 108 devotees.[26]

Figure 209 (above) Photograph by Liu Feng of Li Yuantong with three Eighth Route Army soldiers, 1942.

Figure 210 (right) Photograph by Sha Fei (1912–1950) of Li Yuantong on Mount Langya, *c.* 1940–1

Figure 211 Daoist Ma Xiaoxiao at a pilgrimage site in Baoji county, Shaanxi province, January 1992

The photograph reveals that Ma Xiaoxiao's presentation was conceptually Daoist combined with some Buddhist attributes. Among the images in his framed collection of photographs was a print of the Buddhist bodhisattva Guanyin (**Fig. 212**). A certain amalgamation of Buddhist and Daoist practices has evolved in the folk culture of China over the centuries, and the Daoist adoption of the patchwork habit is a prime example.

The fabrication of the patchwork jackets and bags by village women for the Daoist practitioners reveals a conveyance of patchwork-making directly into the hands of the non-secular segment of society. Though further research is needed to determine exactly when this transfer happened – and it could have been quite early – this relationship may have instigated the non-secular patchwork customs.

Figure 212 Ma Xiaoxiao exchanging written communications with devotees, Baoji county, Shaanxi province, January 1992

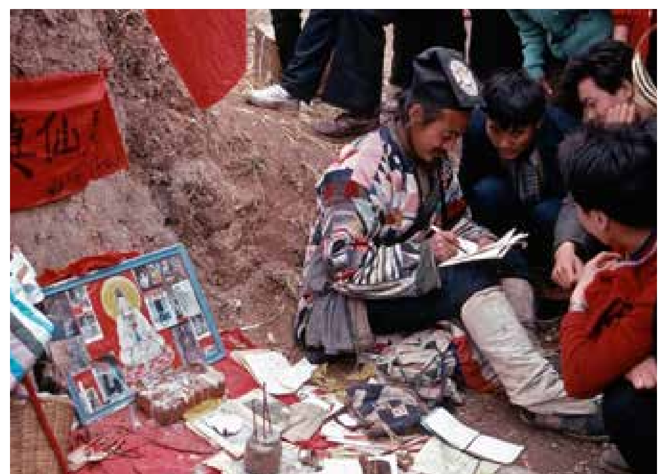


Figure 213 Su Hanchen 蘇漢臣, *One Hundred Children in the Long Spring* (*Changchun baizi tu* 長春百子圖), ink and colours on silk, h. 30.6cm, w. 521.9cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 故畫 001453

Patchwork outside religious establishments

The earliest known images of non-priestly peoples wearing patchwork robes are from the Song period. Paintings depicting children – and particularly large groups of children playing – became popular during the Southern Song, reflecting the hope for many sons. While some of the children frolic in these charming creations, many are imitating adult activities. In these gatherings of children, there are frequently one or two individuals wearing patchwork jackets. In a work attributed to Su Hanchen 蘇漢臣 (1101–1161) in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, a group of children crowd around scrolls that have unrolled, as if they are scholarly gentleman (**Fig. 213**). Off to the side is a younger child clearly sporting a red, blue, white and green patchworked jacket. Each patch is hexagonal in shape.

Figure 214 Boys at play (detail), late 16th–early 17th century, silk and metal thread tapestry (*kesi*), h. 46.4cm, w. 38.1cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Fletcher Fund, 1936, 36.65.30

In a Ming dynasty *kesi* (緙絲) tapestry at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a child among a cluster of playmates dons a black and white patchworked jacket, the pattern created from regularly checked diamond shapes (**Fig. 214**).

The custom of young boys wearing patchwork jackets would become integral to Chinese urban and rural life. Late Qing silk examples from museums demonstrate the care that went into these children's robes. A late Qing child's jacket at the Saint Louis Art Museum, comprised of yellow, purple, white, blue, red and peach-coloured hexagon-shaped embroidered silk fragments, is strikingly similar to the child's jacket in the Song painting (**Fig. 215**). Among the embroidered flower and butterfly decorations on the silk hexagons is a *bagua* symbol in its fully detailed form with eight trigrams surrounding a *yinyang* (陰陽) design. The presence of this design on a hexagon suggests that the hexagon, like the octagon, is intended to be mimicking the apotropaic *bagua* symbol. And the presence of the *bagua* symbol as a central panel on another silk patchworked child's jacket at the Art Institute of Chicago suggests that these children's jackets, like the *bagua* symbol, had taken on an apotropaic meaning in non-secular society – as they still do today (**Fig. 216**).

The custom of making patchwork jackets for children – now called *baijiayi* (百家衣) (One Hundred Family Clothes) – still continues in many villages in northern China today. The jackets are intended to protect children and ensure that they survive the risky period of being a toddler. In many villages, the tradition is that the mother constructs the *baijaiyi* from fabric bits donated from each household in the village, bringing collective good fortune for the child. Many of these jackets, like one from a village in Binxian county in Shaanxi province, incorporate the

Figure 215 Child's jacket, Guangxu period, 1875–1908, silk embroidered with silk and metallic threads, w. 100.5cm (arm span). Saint Louis Art Museum, gift of Julius A. Gordon and Ilene Gordon Wittels in memory of Rose Gordon, 112:1989

Figure 216 Child's patchwork jacket (*baijiayi*), with *bagua* and *yinyang* symbols, 1850–1900, silk, w. 114.6cm (arm span). Art Institute of Chicago, Robert Allerton Endowment, 1998.321

Figure 217 (above) Huo Yingyang, Child's jacket, 1980s?, Binxian county, Shaanxi province, cotton, h. 38.1cm, w. 33cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Joel Alvord and Lisa Schmid Alvord Fund, 2020.35

Figure 218 (right) Family with a child's sleeping mat, Shanxi province

bagua hexagon or octagon to magnify the protection (**Fig. 217**).

In addition to the *bagua* and the patchwork technique of these children's outfits, the term *baijiayi* also ties them to the Buddhist and Daoist patchwork traditions. As noted above, the Buddhists and then the Daoists called their robes *bainayi*. Most likely, lay people borrowed and adjusted the word to fit the family function.

The employment of the patchwork technique expanded from children's jackets to children's bed pads (**Fig. 218**), to adult bed coverings, to window and door curtains, and even to children's buttock aprons that covered the openings in split trousers. Today, in a diminishing number of villages in Shaanxi, Shanxi and Hebei provinces, patchworked door curtains still hang in doorway after doorway, interjecting bright colours and energy to the otherwise drab adobe cave or brick facades.

Many of the patterns that appear in village patchwork textiles today derive directly from Buddhist and Daoist designs and textiles. The *bagua* hexagon and octagon patterns mentioned above appear as well as on couch covers (**Fig. 219**). Swastikas and endless knots also frequently

Figure 219 Zheng Yunyang, patchwork couch cover, Binzhou county, Shaanxi province, 2019, h. 83.8cm, w. 210.8cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Joel Alvord and Lisa Schmid Alvord Fund, 2020.38

Figure 220 (left) Unidentified artist, patchwork bed cover, Shandong province, cotton, c. 1980s, h. 142cm, w. 180cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2024.2846

Figure 221 (above) Door covering, Chen Family Mountain, Qikou county, Shaanxi province, cotton, photo taken in 2019

appear. One of the most common patterns consists of four triangles arranged as the corners of a square, and creating a second smaller square within (**Fig. 220**). This same pattern can be seen on the patchwork altar cloth found at Dunhuang mentioned above,[27] as well as in murals imitating patchwork canopies on the ceilings of Dunhuang temple caves.

However, the most striking thing about the patchwork textiles in villages today is not just their echoing of Buddhist patterns, but their tendency to diverge from and play against them. Instead of sticking tightly to a systematic pattern, many makers today create variations on these compositions – changing colours at unexpected corners, altering scales in different sections of the work, and shunning anticipated symmetry. Some makers swerve completely from a consistent pattern, piecing together irregular shapes of colour and fabrics, creating dynamic abstract compositions (**Fig. 221**). While these haphazard designs may at first appear to be anomalies made by impatient makers too restless to stick to a pattern, they are in fact descendants of a Chinese aesthetic tradition of irregularity. Among literati this interest in irregularity expresses itself in numerous decorative objects from 'strange' and 'awkward' rocks to 'cracked-ice' patterned windows with wooden lattice slats forming a variety of different shapes, and Guan ware ceramics with unevenly patterned glaze crackles.

The concept of patchwork as a potent symbol ultimately traces back to Buddhist roots; however, today's secular patchwork tradition more likely drew its immediate inspiration from wandering Daoists with their more free-form aesthetics and philosophy. Interestingly, in conversations with this author over the years, makers of these patchworks have denied any intentional references to Buddhism or Daoism. A separation from any dedicated belief system and its tenets has perhaps further freed them to innovate and express themselves in more purely aesthetic terms.

Notes

1 Wang Bo *et al.* 2016.
2 See, for example: https://www.yeeyi.com/news/details/500356/
3 *The Rules of Purity in the Chan Monastery* (禪苑清規), compiled in 1103 by Chinese monk Changlu Zongze 長蘆宗賾 (d. *c.* 1107), was a distillation of the Vinaya rules for the Buddhist community set out by the Buddha for ordination. More recently, the tenets are further elucidated in Yifa 2002, 64–5.
4 Kieschnick 1999.
5 I am grateful to Dessi Vendova for directing me to these sculptures.
6 Shosoin Jimusho 1987, 24–9. See also https://shosoin-ten.jp/articles/detail/000309.html
7 Stein 1921, 1069–70.
8 Ibid.
9 See Whitfield 1983–5, 3.
10 Pers. comm., 30 December 2023.
11 Yang Rulin 2013.
12 Alan Kennedy has noted (pers. comm., December 2023): '*Kashaya* can be considered as a physical embodiment of the Buddhist teachings, and the transmission of a *kashaya* from a Buddhist master to a disciple serves as an acknowledgement that the disciple has attained a suitable level of understanding of the dharma. Many of the Japanese Buddhists who travelled to China received a *kashaya* from their Chinese masters, and a number of these robes are preserved as holy objects in Japanese Buddhist temples to this day.'
13 A *kashaya* in the Kyoto University Research Institute Repository is believed to have been brought back from China by Kūkai, who travelled to China in 804, and stored in Tōji, a Buddhist temple in Kyoto. Called the 'Kenda Kokushi kesa' (健陀穀子袈裟), it was given to him by his teacher Huiguo 惠果 of the Qing Long Temple in Chang'an. See https://doi.org/10.14989/145839.
14 Kennedy 1983. I am deeply grateful to Alan Kennedy for his deep scholarship on the history of the *kesa* and also for his reviewing and assistance with this article.
15 See note 3 above.
16 童子學修道，誦經求出家。手持貝多葉，心唸優曇花。得度北州近，隨緣東路賒。 一身求清淨，百衲納袈裟（'A child, learning the Way, recites scriptures, seeking monkhood. Palm-leaf sutras held in hand, Thoughts dwell on the Udumbara bloom. Ordination is sought in the northern lands, following destiny, the eastern path stretches far. Seeking purity for this one body, A hundred blemishes are covered by the *kashaya*'; translation by the author with assistance from Gemini Google.)
17 See https://wmf.fjsen.com/wmcl/2009-09/09/content_1820771.htm
18 Shi 1988.
19 Zürcher 1980.
20 Ganany 2022.
21 The same description appears in 薩祖寶誥 as well as novels of the time.
22 Li 1997.
23 Xiong 2016.
24 Xi You Yuan Zhi http://www.xyjg.com/0/01/01d/01_d%20ml.htm
25 Wu 1592.
26 Prip-Møller 1937, 189.
27 Yang Rulin 2013.

Chapter 19
Invented tradition: the transformation of Chinese carpets in the 19th century

Chi-Lynn Lin

> Formerly, when the Red Hair country was permitted to trade with China, the officer in command of the coast defences would not allow them, on account of their great numbers, to come ashore. The Red Hair people begged very hard for the grant of a piece of land such as a felt carpet would cover for them to disembark; and the officer above-mentioned, thinking that this could not be very large, acceded to their request. A carpet was accordingly laid down, only big enough for about two people to stand on; but by dint of stretching, it was soon enough for four or five; and so they went on, stretching and stretching, until at last it covered about an acre, and by-and-by, with the help of their knives, they had filched a piece of ground several miles in extent.[1]

The story 'Red-haired felt' (*hongmao zhan* 紅毛氈) was written by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640–1715) and collected in his famous *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio* (*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異), an anthology of hundreds of tales of the miraculous from the late 17th to early 18th centuries. The title connects to 'red-haired' (紅毛) people, a term used for the Dutch or Westerners more generally, as well as one of the trade goods that they brought to China – woollen textiles. Among these, one of the most common and premium types was scarlet broadcloth, which was called 'orang-utan red felt' (*xingxing hong zhan* 猩猩紅氈) in Chinese because the bright red colour was believed to have been dyed with orang-utan blood. However, the cloth was not felt, nor was it related to orang-utan blood; it was a dense, plain woven, woollen textile dyed with cochineal.[2] European merchants had sent broadcloth, camlet and carpets to the Qing court since the 17th century; the Qianlong emperor actively ordered Western carpets from Dutch and British merchants through Canton Customs.[3] The popularity of Western woollen textiles in 19th-century China has attracted the attention of many scholars, such as historians Rachel Silberstein and Lai Hui-min.[4] Although 'Red-haired Felt' was written in the late 17th century, it presages the tension and conflicts between China and Europe, mainly England, surrounding the trade of wool products in the second half of the 19th century. The story addresses the nuanced metaphor of carpet as territory and sovereignty, as well as the potential threat to the empire of foreign imported goods.

Carpet, or floor covering, is called *ditan* (地毯) in modern Chinese, but this word was not used frequently before the 20th century. In the middle period, it was called *quyu* or *qushu* (氍毹), a term from Hu dialect, meaning wool cloth for floor covering.[5] In Han Chinese society beyond the frontier nomads, *quyu* was only used for particular occasions, such as dance and theatre performances, rather than common domestic decoration, unlike today's concept of carpets. Rug weaving or using rugs had never been indigenous to Han Chinese but belonged to nomadic tradition. Most Chinese records of using rugs are from the dynasties established by northern nomadic ethnic groups, such as the Tang, Liao, Yuan and Qing dynasties. Yuan Mongols, in particular, laid the foundation of court workshops for making various types of rugs, carpets and felts in Dadu (modern Beijing), mainly relying on Muslim carpet-makers and imported dye materials from Persia.[6] The Ming dynasty inherited these workshops and systems. The Hongzhi emperor ordered the carpets for the imperial court. Wool was obtained from northern China and carpet-makers were sent to the Suzhou

Figure 222 Printed curtain from a Mongolian yurt, 1767, printed woollen, h. 372cm, w. 540cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00212472

and Songjiang areas to make carpets with dragon patterns, the symbol of Chinese emperor and imperial family.[7] This was an early example of rug-weaving craft entering the Yangtze basin.

The privileged status of 'carpet to the court' (*gongtan*, 宫毯) continued during the Qing dynasty. To the Manchus, who were closely linked to the Mongols, fur and felt were essential in building and decorating royal tents. Qing emperors strongly supported the wool industry after they began ruling China. They hired the carpet makers at the court workshop in Beijing, and even ordered carpets and felts from the frontier regions.[8] In most Qing archives, the fabrics used for floor coverings and bed coverings (*kang*, 炕) were not distinguished by their terminologies – all of them were referred to as *zhan* (毡) or *tan* (毯), or a combination of the two, *zhantan* (毡毯). Although these terms were used indiscriminately in the Qing dynasty, nowadays they indicate different techniques: *zhan* is made with the felting technique, while *tan* is made with knotting or weaving techniques. Felting was a traditional craft of the Mongols and, consequently, was familiar to Manchus. Many items in the Qing court, including yurts, raincoats, soaks, hats and jackets, were made of felt.

However, after centuries of development, to most Chinese commoners, wool carpets were still related to nomadic people, theatre stages or imperial palaces, instead of practical furnishing in commoners' domestic environments. Although the Mongol, Tibetan and Xinjiang people made and used felt and woollens, these indigenous fabrics had never become popular in the main cities of central regions, especially to the south of the Yangtze River. The term *ditan* for floor coverings only became widely used after the export of Chinese knotted pile carpets to Europe and America intensified in the late 19th to early 20th century. Before that, it was European carpets, blankets and broadcloth that comprised the majority of woollen commodities on the Chinese market. Scholars in both the English and Chinese worlds have tended to concentrate their attention on the flourishing of Western woollen imports in the 18th and 19th centuries or else the popularity of Bejing carpets in the Republican period,[9] neglecting the booming of the indigenous carpet industry in China at the turn of the 20th century.

We may wonder how carpet-making came to evolve from a 'nomadic' craft to one of the 'Eight Handicrafts of Beijing' (*Yanjing bajue* 燕京八絕), and even to become a representative art of China. This process has often been described as a phenomenon wholly driven by colonialist powers in the treaty ports of China; however, this chapter argues that in the late 19th to early 20th century, the Qing government also promoted and invested in the local carpet industry. This interest in carpet-making was closely related to China's participation in world's fairs, which also helped to coalesce the concept of 'Chineseness'.

Woollen fabric in Qing China

Foreign woollen fabrics began to enter China during the late Ming to early Qing dynasty, mainly as tributary gifts. The

Brief Account of the Sights of the Imperial Capital (*Dijing jingwu lue* 帝京景物略), published in 1634, mentions the goods sold in the market in front of the Chenghuang Temple (*Chenghuang miao* 城隍廟) including 'the things that foreigners pay tribute to, such as… red broadcloth (*xingxing zhan* 猩猩氊), broadcloth (*duoluo rong* 多羅絨)…'.[10] Most of these wool fabrics came from the Dutch and English East India companies. The most well-known examples are a record of broadcloth in the tributary gifts from the Netherlands to the Kangxi emperor in 1667,[11] and an international order involving the Netherlands and Britain for printed woollens for the Qianlong emperor through Canton Customs in 1778.[12] Some of the latter material was used in the creation of a curtain for an imperial yurt (**Fig. 222**), suggesting a connection to nomadic traditions. These fabrics first entered the local markets when officials who were responsible for purchasing foreign woollen goods for the emperor sold them in Beijing. The Qianlong emperor once criticised the official Li Yongbiao 李永標 (who served as the Director of Canton Customs during the period 1751–9) that he and his family should not purchase more woollens in Canton Customs and sell these fabrics in Beijing when he was on duty ordering woollens for the court.[13] Li must have been welcomed since the British merchants were required to sell woollens to Asia by their governments to protect native woollen and worsted manufacturing.[14] Worsted yarn is comprised of gilled and combed long wool fibres that have a smooth and fine quality. The British merchants were willing to sell wool fabric at lower prices and even directly exchange them for cheap goods.[15] Although Qianlong's command shows that the wider circulation of foreign woollen goods was unwanted by the court, restrictions were not enforced thoroughly and even increased people's curiosity and desire for the textiles.

The taste of the court was influential not only in Beijing but also among the aristocracy and merchants in the metropolitan areas in the south, such as Huizhou, Yangzhou and Hangzhou.[16] Wealthy families that were closely connected to the court were the first to enjoy the luxury foreign woollens. Rachel Silberstein cites the *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng* 紅樓夢) by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1710–1765) as evidence of the wide use of woollens by such families; the author's grandfather was the Commissioner of Imperial Textiles in Nanjing.[17] In the novel, one of the main characters, Xiangyun 湘雲, wears a crimson felt 'Zhaojun' (昭君) hood lined with yellow brocade and gold thread (*erhuang pian jinli dahong xingxing zhan zhaojun tao* 鵝黃片金里大紅猩猩氈昭君套).[18] 'Zhaojun' indicates the famous 1st-century BCE historical figure Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, who married Chanyu Huhanye 呼韓邪單于 of the Xiongnu Empire to establish a friendly relationship between the Han dynasty and Xiongnu. She is often described as wearing a nomadic-style hood to resist strong winds at the northern frontier.[19] A similar 'wind hat' (*fengmao* 風帽), made of the same imported broadcloth as the yurt curtain in **Figure 222**, is held in the Palace Museum in Beijing (**Fig. 223**). Aside from its windproofing uses, foreign woollens were often chosen to make exotic objects. Even though the fabric was manufactured in Europe instead of Mongolia or Xinjiang, it perfectly conveyed an exotic style that was not achievable with local materials. The research of Lai Hui-

Figure 223 Wind hat, Qianlong period (1736–95), printed woollen, h. 57cm, w. 43cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00273913

min indicates that imported woollens from Russia and Britain were increasingly used in the urban centres of China, as the imperial taste for exoticness spread.[20] Fashion historian Beverly Lemire argues that illegal trades were one of the most important means of foreign woollens entering China, resulting in the underestimation of the amount of imported woollens in China by historians and economists.[21]

Another usage of foreign woollens was for furnishing fabrics, such as hangings, tablecloths and floor coverings. The most common method of decoration was to apply local embroidery to imported plain woollens. This process made foreign fabrics better fit the traditional taste of Chinese consumers. The embroidered motifs were often auspicious images and decorative plants, similar to those seen on traditional furnishings made of red satin silks. Since wool is steadier and stronger than silk, it is more suitable for furnishings. The long tradition of using fabric hangings during festivals, celebrations and holidays offered promising opportunities for sales of foreign woollens in China. Embroidered carpets frequently appear in popular literature. For example, in *Destiny of Rebirth* (*Zaisheng yuan* 再生緣), when the main character Meng Lijun 孟麗君 visits the empress dowager at the palace, she is amazed by the 'wool carpet with an embroidered dragon and phoenix' in Gu style (*guxiu,* 顧繡) on the floor.[22] Similar fabrics were listed among the tribute gifts sent to the Qianlong emperor from the governor of Guangxi province as 'carpets with Gu embroidery for warm bed' (*guxiu kangtan*, 顧繡炕毯).[23]

According to the archives, such embroidered wool carpets were often used as bed coverings or *kang* in the Qing court. The red imported woollen cloth of an example in the

Figure 224 Bed covering (above left) and detail of floral medallion in the centre (above right), Qianlong period (1736–95), silk embroidery on woollen textile, h. 372cm, w. 271cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00212108

Palace Museum is decorated with Canton embroidery, but the style is a hybrid of Islamic and Chinese floral patterns (**Fig. 224**). This unique fusion is best observable on the floral medallion in the centre, with meticulous geometric patterns forming a flower pattern. Since the availability of foreign woollens was not stable in the 18th century, craftsmen often used Zhangzhou velvet as a substitute; the bed covering illustrated in **Figure 225** exhibits a subtle three-dimensional effect similar to that of European printed woollens, while its pattern is dragons and lotuses, typical of the imperial Han style. Painting was also a method used to create patterns on wool cloth that had been frequently

Figure 225 Bed covering, early Qing dynasty (1680s–1720s), silk embroidery on Zhangzhou velvet, h. 185cm, w. 253cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00235249

Figure 226 Bed covering, Qing dynasty, painted felt, h. 92cm, w. 197cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00212176

practised since the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods.[24] One painted felt carpet (**Fig. 226**) shows Western influence in its design: the petals of red floral patterns are filled with grids, a common feature of printed patterns on imported woollen textiles (seen, for example, in **Figures 222–3**). These examples embody the eagerness and attempts of the Qing court to imitate foreign woollens and give foreign wool desirable decorations. The manufacturing of woollen textiles in China, however, did not happen until the end of the 19th century.

Failure of the woollen factory

In the 1850s, woollen textiles were the third largest class of commodities imported into China from Western European countries;[25] in first and second place were opium and cotton fabrics. Foreign fabrics beat indigenous fabrics for their good quality and lower prices, and this became a serious threat to local fabric industries. The Second Opium War (1856–60) made the Chinese imperial court and intellectuals acknowledge the danger of the popularity of foreign goods. They initiated the Self-Strengthening Movement to carry out a series of reforms, learning foreign scientific knowledge and industrialising local manufacturing. Compared to shipping, railways and mining, the textile industry was not focused on assisting the military, but was involved in a commercial war in pursuit of profits to fight against foreign goods. The first woollen factory in China was established in this context. In the 1870s, General Zuo Zongtang made preparations for the establishment of Lanzhou Mechanized Woollen Factory (*Lanzhou jiqi zhini ju* 蘭州機器織呢局). He asked Hangzhou merchant Hu Xueyan 胡雪巖 (1823–1885) to contact German firm Telge & Schroeter (*Tailai yanghang* 泰來洋行), hiring 13 German mechanics and craftsmen, including Franz Storm, Ph. Lieder and H. Mandel, as well as ordering whole sets of wool-processing machinery from Germany.[26]

In September 1880, the factory started producing woollens and felt, but operations were abandoned in 1883. Some possible reasons suggested for this were insufficient water (for dyeing), the low quality of the wool, the expensive shipping and processing costs, and the lack of know-how in the use of the machinery.[27] US diplomat William W. Rockhill (1854–1914) attributed its failure to 'carelessness and rascality'.[28] The factory's closure was not surprising though, since the level of technology involved far exceeded contemporary knowledge in China. According to a *Shen Bao* article from 1879, the majority of the Chinese Han people were unaware that sheep wool could be spun for textile purposes prior to the establishment of treaty ports.[29] The author suggests that the Han Chinese population regarded wool as coarse stuff used by nomadic minorities.[30] The products produced by Mongols, Xinjiang and Tibet were either felts or knotted rugs, instead of the finer worsted woollens of the West. Chinese wools were purchased by European merchants at very low prices and sold back to Chinese consumers as finished woollens, which was typical of the mercantilist system of the colonial economy, using colonies as both sources of raw materials and markets for manufactured goods.[31]

Foreign-printed woollen textiles in vibrant colours depicted fashionable motifs such as rococo scrollwork, Indian-style flowers and oriental geometry (**Fig. 227**). The printing technique used could be seen as a precursor of roller printing. It involved the application of colloidal dye onto wool using high-temperature metal plates. The visual effect of the resulting slightly embossed patterns resembles that of damask fabrics. Scholar of textile history Philip Sykas, who specialises in British printed fabrics, finds that this printing technique was invented in the United Kingdom first and introduced to France in about 1740, after which it spread to the rest of Europe.[32] Although the Lanzhou factory was capable of producing worsted carpets, it still needed to overcome the technical threshold of printing technology to imitate the foreign products. A high temperature was required to strengthen the dye effect, but the Chinese

Figure 227 Furnishing fabric, London, England, 1700, printed worsted wool, h. 72.4cm, w. 44.5cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, given by Viscountess Hampden, T.45-1981

workers could not perfect the technique and found it difficult to maintain a consistent temperature, especially when working with large-scale fabrics. After the failure of the Lanzhou factory, it was not until the establishment of the Rihui Woollen Factory (*Rihui zhini chang* 日輝織呢廠) in Shanghai in 1907 that the Chinese woollen industry began to develop afresh.

Many scholars have stated that the imports of British fabrics, especially cotton, into Asian markets led to the decline of local industries in China and India.[33] It is true that indigenous handicrafts and small workshops were almost all destroyed by the arrival of machine-made cloth imported from Europe in the late 19th century. Chinese cotton fabrics were replaced by similar British cotton fabrics but with better quality and lower prices. Popular foreign woollen textiles – broadcloth, worsted fabrics and camlet – were very different from the existing carpets and rugs made in northern and western China. But in the case of woollens, foreign goods did not replace local products; instead they stimulated a new demand and taste for wool fabrics in China. The lack of a woollen industry in China became an advantage in that the Chinese turned to focus on developing knotted pile carpets, the manufacture of which did not rely so much on Western machinery and techniques. Although the Chinese carpet industry was not wholly industrialised, carpets became one of the most popular export products around the turn of the century. Local carpet workshops did not need to make huge investments in new machinery, which may have needed the involvement of the government or large-scale firms – but this does make it difficult for scholars to trace the history of the carpet industry in 19th-century China. While scarce documentation exists, tracing the items that were displayed, traded and collected in the foreign market can still provide evidence of the development of Chinese pile carpets.

Chinese carpets on the world stage

Although few textual records of Chinese carpets before the 20th century are known, they still appear in many catalogues of expositions and auctions. In 1884, having been invited to participate in the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans, the Chinese government entrusted this matter to Robert Hart (1835–1911), the Inspector-General of the Imperial Maritime Custom Service (*Haiguan zong shuiwu si* 海關總稅務司). Despite the fact that the exposition was chiefly for the cotton industry, the Chinese exhibit included numerous wool carpets and saddle rugs and noted that these products were wool works 'over the cotton ground'.[34] Clearly the Chinese intention was to give more exposure to Chinese wool carpets at the Exposition. Although the catalogue does not include illustrations, the remarks indicate that these carpets depicted 'the wild goose; the stork, the emblem of longevity; the phoenix, the emblem of the Empress; (applied to her poetically as incomparable); and the lion, which is supposed to be a felicitous animal, and used in wedding decorations and presents.' The additional remarks on the connection between phoenix and empress, reflected the political atmosphere of China at the time as Empress Dowager Cixi already ruled from behind the curtain. The conventional understanding is that the Imperial Maritime Custom Service, a product of Western imperialism, controlled the presentations of China at world expositions in the 19th century.[35] However, as is clear from the choice of carpets in the exhibition, this 'control' was still more or less penetrated by the social and political background in China at the time. Chinese carpets had still not been widely acknowledged by the foreign market: in *Rugs and Carpets from the Orient*, published in 1895 and one of the earliest monographs on oriental rugs and carpets, the author clearly points out that 'the Chinese have not learned the rudiments of what has been an exact science in Constantinople for ages with the Persian and the Armenian'.[36] To promote Chinese carpets to the Western market, it was necessary to build an impression of a long history – one that could match that of the competition. One way to achieve this goal was to highlight traditional auspicious Chinese motifs and imperial emblems that were often seen on Chinese silk and were familiar to the foreign market.

One of the first displays of Chinese carpets in the West occurred at the International Inventions Exhibition, held in

South Kensington in 1885, as described by Stephen Bushell, the author of the 1906 volume *Chinese Art*.[37] The Victoria and Albert Museum still has in its collection one carpet that was shown in this exhibition, and its silk piles and geometrical pattern suggest a Xinjiang origin (**Fig. 228**). Numerous carpets in the Palace Museum in Beijing possess a similar style and technique: knotted in silk pile on cotton warp, with strictly arranged floral and geometrical patterns (**Fig. 229**). The reasons for choosing a Xinjiang style, rather than a carpet with a more easily recognised 'Chinese style', for the exhibition are probably complex. First of all, 'Persian' or 'Turkish' carpets were the most famous types of carpets in Europe at the time. Rodris Roth (1931–2000), a curator of upholstery and furnishings, indicates that 'Turkish' carpets were not necessarily related to Turkey but rather were based on a fanciful European view of the oriental lifestyle.[38] The prototype of Turkish-style furnishings was largely based on 18th-century French artworks, and this style was revived in the late 19th century when European forces established direct commercial and political control over multiple areas in Asia. While Chinese carpets had just appeared in the global market, the 'Turkish' stylistic reference helped to introduce Chinese carpets to Euro-American customers. Xinjiang carpets had for a long time been considered related to Turkish tradition. Additionally, the long-standing association between China and silk increased the attractivity and authenticity of Chinese carpets, as mentioned in a 1910 volume titled *Oriental Rugs and Carpets*: 'It is more reasonable to believe that it was the Chinese; who first conceived the idea of making a rug; with a pile tied around the warp threads, and it is probable that they used knots of silk at first'.[39]

Xinjiang carpets were of great cultural significance to the Qing rulership. Carpets had long been valuable assets as diplomatic gifts in early modern Central Asia and Europe; a famous example is Safavid's gifting of carpets to Venice.[40] After Qianlong conquered Xinjiang, a significant number of Islamic weavers entered the court workshop to produce carpets, and Qianlong even directly ordered carpets from Yarkant for Zhengda Guangming Hall (*Zhengda guangming dian* 正大光明殿) in Yuanmingyuan.[41] These carpets played a role in demonstrating imperial power: Zhengda Guangming Hall was the place where foreign envoys, Mongol nobles and high officials were received. The large painting *Ayusi's Victory at the Military Camp* (*Ayusi desheng yingpan tu* 阿玉錫得勝營盤圖) by Giuseppe Castiglione was once hung on the east wall of the hall. Ayusi was a meritorious officer crucial to the pacification of Xinjiang. As such, Xinjiang carpets were not merely there to show off the emperor's rich material possessions but also implied sovereignty over the lands in the new territory. Decades after the conquest, Islamic *begs* still sent carpets with gold and silver threads to the Qianlong emperor to celebrate his birthdays in 1789 and 1794 respectively.[42]

International exhibitions were no doubt one of the factors that caused the 'boom of oriental carpets' in the 1870s, as described by economic historians.[43] A recent study by historian of material culture Dorothy Armstrong argues that the oriental carpet boom was a period in which Western collectors, curators and scholars assessed and defined the value, category and history of 'authentic' oriental carpets. Meanwhile, indigenous workshops and private producers in South Asia manifested a more flexible attitude to technical innovations, style integration and commercial opportunities, which became a means of resistance against colonialist powers.[44] Similarly, the integration of Chinese and Xinjiang styles should not be understood as simply catering to Euro-American tastes. In 1864, Muslims rebelled in Xinjiang, leading to the establishment of an independent Islamic state under Yaqub Beg (*c.* 1820–1877), until General Zuo Zongtang regained control of the region in 1877, subsequently establishing Xinjiang as a province in 1884.[45] In this context, presenting a Xinjiang-style carpet in the International Inventions Exhibition in 1885 might have been not only a strategy for marketing Chinese carpets but also a means of reclaiming the bond between Chinese and Xinjiang cultures on an

Figure 228 Carpet, China, 1884, silk pile on cotton warp, h. 345cm, w. 178cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 201-1886

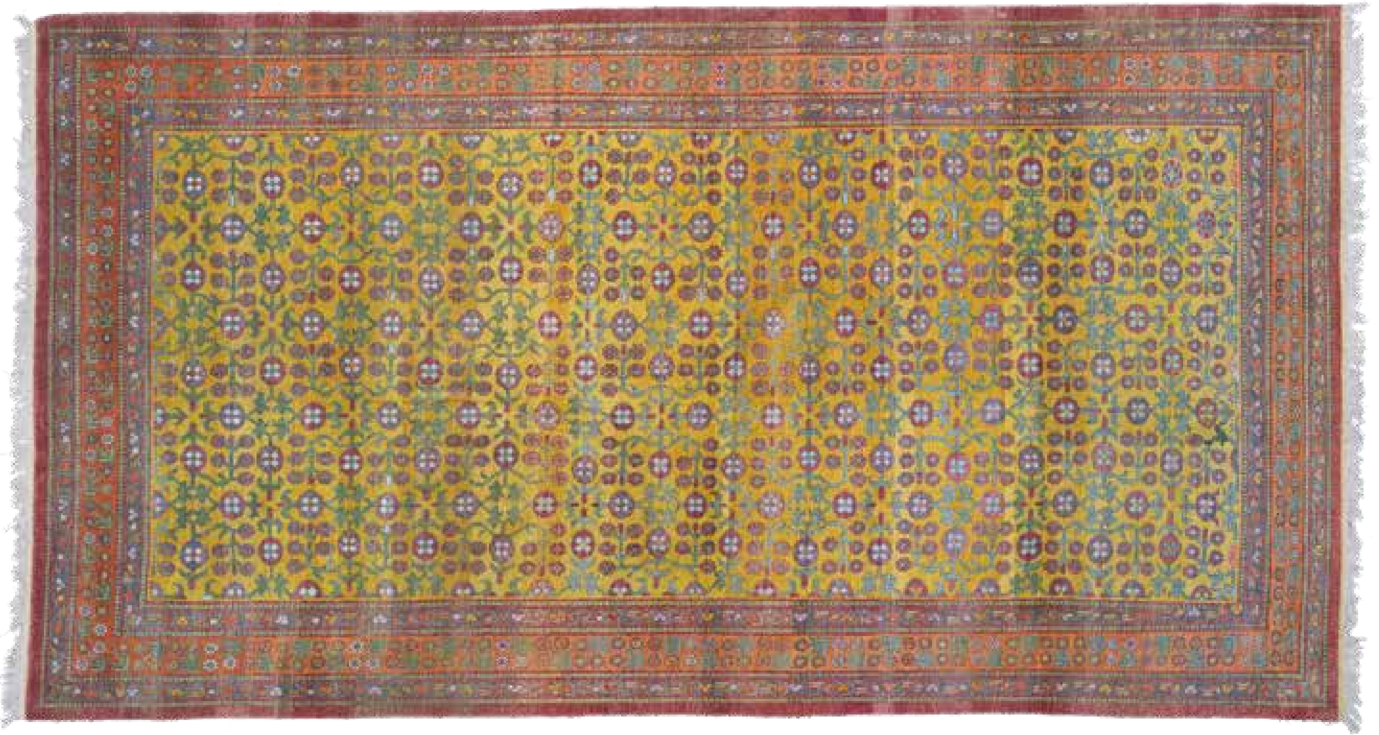


Figure 229 Carpet, late Qing, silk pile on cotton warp and weft, h. 310cm, w. 169cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00212061

international stage. American journalist John K. Mumford (1863–1926), in his 1900 monograph *Oriental Rugs*, discussed Chinese influence on Central Asian carpets: 'It is not strange, again, that Chinese fretted patterns should be found scattered over the central fields and ranging in the borders of the rugs of Samarkand, Kashgar, and Yarkand, and in the borders of some other Central Asian carpets. These regions… have always been affected by the Chinese influence'.[46] Thus, the origins of aesthetic styles were one of the most important strategic targets in claiming sovereignty over the frontier territory of Xinjiang.

Inventing the origin story

The most widespread narrative about the origin of China's rug industry involves two Tibetan lamas who accompanied the Dalai Lama to Beijing and presented the emperor with Tibetan carpets and rugs as tribute gifts; the emperor was delighted and allowed the two lamas to fund the Rug-Making Training Centre (*Ditan chuanxi suo* 地毯傳習所) at Baoguo Temple (*Baoguo si* 報國寺). This temple is located near the famous Niujie (牛街) area, the location of the oldest mosque and the largest Muslim community in Beijing. In different versions of the narrative, the identity of the protagonists varied from Muslim craftsmen from the court

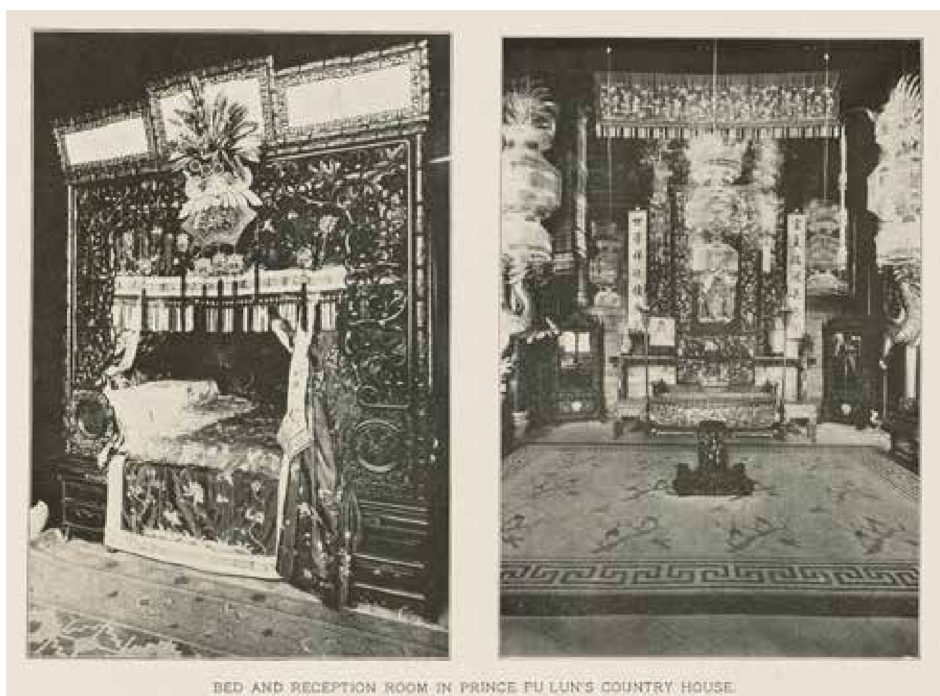


Figure 230 Bed and reception room in the Chinese Imperial Pavilion, from *The Greatest of Expositions Completely Illustrated* (Louisiana Purchase Exposition 1904, 87)

workshop to Ningxia artisans and Xingjiang Muslims. The specific timing of the story ranges from the Qianlong to the Guangxu periods.[47] Consistent throughout the various versions are the name of the training centre and its location. The term 'training centre' only appeared in the early 20th century hence, the Rug-Making Training Centre at Baoguo Temple was most probably established in the Guangxu period. The existence of the centre was confirmed by Sarah Pike Conger (1843–1932), a writer who went to Beijing with her husband, the American diplomat Edwin H. Conger (1843–1907). In 1904, she wrote a letter mentioning her visit to a rug factory in the Imperial Industrial School.[48]

Continuing the typical origin myth, Chinese carpets began gaining popularity in Western markets in 1900, when the German firm Reuter, Brockelmann & Co (*Lulin yanghang* 魯麟洋行) purchased two carpets – one of wool and one of silk – from Jichangyong (繼長永), a Beijing carpet manufacturer. The carpets were sent to Berlin for an exhibition and received good responses from German audiences. The Chinese government then presented carpets at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis – also known as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition – and won the first prize, which attracted the American market, and there followed a considerable number of foreign orders. After being exposed and promoted at this and other international occasions, carpets became one of the most important Chinese export goods of the 20th century. Regarding this origin myth, Elizabeth LaCouture, a historian of 20th-century China, stresses that English-language authors Gordon Leitch and H.D. Fong (Fang Xianting 方顯廷, 1903–1985) played an important role in emphasising a 'foreignized influence' over the Chinese carpet in the narrative.[49] Leitch published *Chinese Rugs* in 1928 and Fong published *Tientsin Carpet Industry* in 1929;[50] both monographs were influential at that time. LaCouture argues that the origin myth of Chinese carpets in the works of Leitch and Fong implies that America controlled China's performance at the St. Louis World's Fair and the reconfiguration of global markets. She argues that both men were affiliated with American developmental projects – Leitch was at the Rockefeller Foundation-funded Peking Union Medical College and Fong was at Tianjin's Nankai University.[51] Their origin myth thus concealed colonial violence and imperialist profit, characterising the West as the engine of global history and the leading factor in the development of the Chinese carpet industry.

In this narrative, the most important transition point, the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, was the first international exposition to which the Qing government dispatched official commissioners. Prince Pulun 溥倫 (1874–1927), a nephew of the Guangxu emperor, led Huang Kaijia 黃開甲 (1860–1906), one of the first batch of Chinese students who had studied in the United States, and ten other local officials to participate in the exposition.[52] Chinese carpets were specifically mentioned in the *History of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition*:

> the Industrial Institute of Peking [北京工藝商局] exhibited… a rich and interesting display of carpets, rugs, tapestries and fabrics for upholstery unlike anything ever before seen in a World's Exposition. Rugs and carpets measuring from two feet square to twenty by thirty feet, made from wool alone, wool and silk, and from pure silk, were shown.[53]

Figure 231 Carpet, China, before 1911, knotted pile in coloured wool on a linen warp, h. 150cm, w. 74cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, T.39-1911

The products submitted by the Peking Industrial Institute, under the direction of Prince Pulun, were mainly cloisonné and rugs, two crafts widely associated with the Ming and Qing imperial workshops. In the Exposition's Chinese Imperial Pavilion, modelled after Prince Pulun's country house, a wholly decorated bedroom and reception room were put on display; the rugs also caught viewers' attention: 'the Chinese rug maker's art is also to be noted in the floor covering' (**Fig. 230**).[54] The rug in the reception room was likely an example of the blue and beige rugs that were popular around 1890–1920 in Beijing; a similar carpet produced in a later period can be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum (**Fig. 231**). Even though the raw materials were still supplied by foreign firms, as noted in a contemporary investigation which noted the utilisation of 'foreign yarns',[55] the carpets of the Peking Industrial Institute were regarded as representative of the carpet craft

Figure 232 Skins, rugs and tapestries exhibited by Messrs. Vrard & Co., of Tientsin, from the *History of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (Bennitt *et al*. 1904, 297)

of China. The whole furnishing ensemble represented not only Prince Pulun's imperial taste but also the latest fashion in Qing interior decoration.

The imperial connection was also drawn upon by foreign merchants in promoting Chinese rugs. Dragon rugs displayed at the exposition by a Swiss company from Tientsin (Tianjin) caught the attention of attendees and were highlighted in the caption, 'the tapestries and Imperial Dragon rug to the right, the latter, made entirely of silk, are exhibited by Messrs. Vrard & Co., of Tientsin' (**Fig. 232**).[56] This description may indicate the second rug from the right that shows two dragons with curly bodies. The emphasis on silk suggests that this feature of Chinese rugs had already been established in the international market. The most common design of such carpets bears the inscription 'designed to be used in the Palace of Supreme Harmony' (*Taihe dian yuyong* 太和殿御用), indicating apparent usage in the palace (**Fig. 233**). Similar carpets with the inscriptions of different palaces in the court can be found in various museums and in the records of auction houses; the MGM Cotai hotel in Macau exhibits 28 imperial carpets in its gallery. The inscriptions and styles suggest that such carpets date to the reign of the Qianlong emperor. However, as court documents and old photographs indicate, the rug used in the Palace of Supreme Harmony depicts two dragons chasing a flaming pearl, and is now held by the Palace Museum in Beijing.[57] In addition, there is no textual record or surviving carpets from the court workshop showing any inscriptions. An alternative potential source of these carpets, as indicated by the Victoria and Albert Museum website, is the 'Street of the Embroiderers' in Beijing in the 20th century.[58] This street was located in the Xihuying hutong (西湖营胡同), an area known as 'embroidery street (*Xiuhuaji*e 绣花街)' to the south of the Zhengyang Gate.[59] However, the major workshops there specialised in embroidery rather than carpet-making, so the definitive source of these carpets requires further investigation.

Figure 233 Carpet, 19th–20th century, silk pile with wrapped metallic threads, h. 250cm, w. 157cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Addis Bequest, FE.140-1983

Combining the objects and the narrative regarding the origin of Chinese knotted pile rugs, it is evident that their development features three stages: (1) rug-making craft was presented to the court by non-Han subjects of the Qing empire; (2) the rug industry was established under the imperial sponsor in the late Qing; and (3) knotted pile rugs became representative of Chinese crafts owning to the presentation of Chinese rugs in overseas markets and at world's fairs. Returning to LaCouture's argument about Leitch and Fong's narratives, which emphasised the actions of Western countries and international events and neglected local accounts, the establishment of the Chinese carpet industry did not wholly rely on colonialist power. LaCouture does not take into account a crucial Chinese source – an

essay in *Shen Bao* in 1921 that has almost identical content but was published much earlier than Leitch and Fong's narratives.[60] From the exhibitions of Chinese carpets at various world's fairs, it could be argued that the Chinese had a certain degree of agency in presenting local products to the global market and situating themselves within international power structures. 'The Qing Empire' also played an important role in all narratives concerning the establishment of the carpet industry in China. In the beginning, the use of rugs as tributary gifts embodied a 'universal empire', indicating that surrounding countries and tribes were all subordinate to China; however, operating in the modern nation-state system, the Qing government first needed time to transform these 'frontier tributary' goods into 'national representations' and to compete with other nations with their local specialities.

Conclusion

The 19th century was characterised by the recognition and repositioning of traditions worldwide. As historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger indicate, '[invented traditions] are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situation'.[61] In China, knotted pile carpets and their craft belong to these 'invented traditions', originally regarded as exotic and nomadic objects. The perceptional changes towards rugs and carpets happened in the 19th century, when Western woollen products became popular among Chinese customers and the Qing government attempted to develop its own woollen industry. However, due to a lack of stable technical and financial support, it faced difficulties in establishing such an industry from the ground up. Meanwhile, foreign firms took significant advantage of the situation by providing twisted wool yarn to Chinese workshops involved in making knotted pile carpets, and they exported the final products to Europe and North America through China's treaty ports. This profitable business attracted both local Chinese merchants and the Qing government to participate and invest as well. Although the understanding of Chinese carpets and the original purpose for promoting this craft to Chinese and foreign firms differed considerably, the Chinese carpet industry achieved significant success in global markets. At the turn of the 20th century, carpet-making techniques, as a heritage of the High Qing era, became a 'Chinese craft' recognised by both the Qing government and Western countries.

Notes

1 Pu 1766.
2 Song 2021, 55–64; Fu 2011, 310–20.
3 Lin 2018, 101.
4 Silberstein 2018, 231–58; Lai 2013, 1–46.
5 Xu 1812.
6 Zhao 2013, 227–38.
7 Wan *et al.* n.d.
8 Palace Museum *et al.* 2010, 8.
9 Li 2018, 49–67.
10 Liu n.d.
11 Ji 1983, 93: 14b.
12 Lin 2018, 103.
13 *Gaozong chun huangdi shilu* 1986, vol. 593, 乾隆二十四年 (1759) 七月甲戌 (the eleventh day of the seventh month in the twenty-fourth year of Qianlong's reign), 16: 603.
14 Morse 1926, 1: 109.
15 Morse 1926, 1: 124.
16 Wu 2017.
17 Silberstein 2018, 273.
18 Cao 1985, 49: 679.
19 Chen 2018, 227–47.
20 Lai 2010, 1–35.
21 Lemire 2018, 159–89.
22 Chen, 1822.
23 'Guangxi xunfu song bangsui jindan' 廣西巡撫宋邦綏進單 (the tribute list of the Guangxi Provincial Governor, Song Bangsui), *Qinggong ciqi dangan quanji*, 1766.
24 'jishi lu' 記事錄 (notes), 1780, the twenty-eighth day of the tenth month, Chinese University of Hong Kong and the First Historical Archives of China 2005, vol. 44, 214.
25 Yao 1962, 1:259.
26 Wu and Xu 2007, 2: 295.
27 Anonymous 1913, 312.
28 Rockhill 1891, 36.
29 Anonymous 1879.
30 Chin 1937, 81.
31 Veracini 2023, 55–72.
32 Sykas 2005, 101–12.
33 Feuerwerker 1970, 338–78; Guo 2014, 133–43.
34 *Catalogue of the Chinese Collection of Exhibits for the New Orleans*, 1884, 32–4.
35 Hur 2012, ii.
36 Winters 1895, 46.
37 Bushell 1904–6, vol. 2, 103–4.
38 Roth 2004, 25–58.
39 Review Publishing Company, 1910, 3.
40 Guliyev 2023, 24–45.
41 Junjichu 1760; Junjichu 1762.
42 Palace Museum 2010, 9–10.
43 Ittig 1990.
44 Armstrong 2022, 19–39.
45 Zeng and Chen 2021, 56–64.
46 Mumford 1900, 64.
47 Fan and Gong 2005; Cao 2012.
48 Conger 1909, 298.
49 LaCouture 2017, 300–14.
50 Leitch 1928; Fang 1929.
51 Chiang 2001.
52 First Historical Archives of China 1995–6, 112, 116–17.
53 Bennit *et al.* 1904, 294.
54 Louisiana Purchase Exposition 1904, 87.
55 Tang 1909, 113.
56 Bennitt *et al.* 1904, 297.
57 The Palace Museum, accession number 故199882.
58 'Carpet', https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O74307/carpet-unknown/ (accessed 26 December 2023).
59 Zhao 2006, 45.
60 Anonymous 1921.
61 Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 2.

7 DECORATIVE ARTS

Introduction: decorative arts

Cheng-hua Wang

Pages 232–3: Rice bowl, Daoguang mark and period, 1821–50, Jingdezhen, porcelain with overglaze enamels, h. 6.6cm, diam. 9cm. British Museum, London, Franks. 633.+a. Donated by Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks

In this section, devoted to the decorative arts, the four chapters respectively discuss aspects of furniture, glass, ceramics and *cloisonné* in 19th-century China. They cover multifaceted dimensions related to the production of these objects within the context of the complexities that characterise this period of Chinese history. This introduction is intended to set the scene for 19th-century Chinese art and to provide some thoughts on common themes across the four articles.

These chapters were originally papers presented at the conference organised as a major highlight of the *China's Hidden Century* exhibition at the British Museum. While we may debate whether the 19th century was indeed a 'hidden' century in Chinese history, it has certainly received less attention from art historians in the China field, being that it is bookended between the glorious 18th century of the High Qing and the unquestionably 'modern' Republican era of the early 20th century. It is also uncertain whether these two 'bookends' are the reason why the 19th century in China has not been studied very much in and of itself. It has, though, often been seen either as an afterglow of or a pale comparison to the High Qing or as a stage in between the pre-modern and modern period that teleologically led to the modernity of 20th-century China. While High Qing and 20th-century Chinese art provide crucial comparative perspectives for the study of art in the 19th century, we cannot overlook the fact that the period spanning the Jiaqing reign to the end of the Qing dynasty – the mid- to late Qing – has its own trajectories, fine fabric and minutiae. Such details require in-depth investigations in order to be revealed and discovered, and they may challenge the presumptions and premises of art-historical studies with new problematics, issues and perspectives. For example, while 19th-century Chinese art may not be marked by a definable series of great artists, artistic virtuosity or technological breakthroughs (except in photography), there arose new mechanisms of patronage, new ways of social bonding between artists and patrons, new modes of artistic production, a diversity of art seen in multiple centres, and new meanings in the arts with complicated sources and traditions.

While scholars no longer view the 19th century as the post-Qianlong era, taking that so-called 'golden age' as a benchmark, the mid- to late Qing as a historical period presents a fascinating degree of diversity in itself. The long 19th century in China was a period defined by continuous change: indeed, the two halves of the 19th century are considered saliently distinct from each other and some even think of them as two completely different periods in the study of Chinese history. We can also trace important differences even on a reign-by-reign basis. Although we do not usually think of history as changing dramatically by means of a single incident or even over several years, historical consciousness does often mark an incident or a certain number of years as a watershed for periodisation. For instance, the First Opium War that took place from 1839 to 1842 has long been held as such a moment, marking the beginning of China's modern period. The advent of full-scale contact between China and Western powers in the second half of the 19th century is thus highlighted, as well as

the introduction of new ideas, technologies and ideologies to China and the resultant reforms on all fronts of Chinese society and politics. This may account for the relative gap in research on the first half of the 19th century, a seemingly lacklustre period to some that witnessed the erosion of the central authority of Qing rule. Fortunately, thanks to recent research on mid- to late Qing art, including the chapters presented here, we have come to see how the disintegration of Qing court sponsorship and control in art and culture fostered the development of multiple centres for artistic production in the 19th century, the most conspicuous examples being the rise of Canton, Hong Kong and Shanghai. The diversified nature of 19th-century art, either from the perspective of diachronic agency or that of regional differentiation, poses new challenges for us in terms of how to grasp a broad and comprehensive picture of it.

On top of this, the West came back upon the scene in the second half of the 19th century with a new imperialist face, at least compared to the Sino-European interactions in the 18th century that were conducted on a more equal footing. The Western – or global (including Japanese) – factor proffers one thread or framework to perceive 19th-century Chinese art, but we may also wonder how this factor played out in the different tempo-spatial units of the period. In particular, what happened in the early decades of the 19th century in terms of Sino-European artistic interactions? The peak period for Suzhou prints demonstrating conspicuous European stylistic elements, for example, lies in the mid-18th century, and towards the early 19th century such styles were in evident decline. The impact of European art in Chinese art-making thus fluctuated within China's long 19th century and did not proceed in a linear fashion.

The four chapters in this section share a number of common features and reflect many of the same issues and themes described above. The first link between them lies in the exploration of 19th-century material production in contrast to that of the High Qing court in similar art mediums. Such a comparison provides a clear historical framework for research and shows us the historical transformation from the Qianlong period to the later Qing reigns. The second feature in common is the shift in production from the imperial court to the local level, in places such as Canton and Shanghai, in the transition from the High Qing to the mid-Qing or even the late Qing period. The shift from a centralised node to dispersed local centres also provides a discursive framework for researching 19th-century Chinese history and art. In all four chapters, Sino-European artistic interactions also loom large in the picture.

Lastly, the authors of the chapters in this section do not merely underscore new decorative patterns, skills and types of artefacts in 19th-century Chinese decorative art but also analyse technological transformations and evolving modes of production. These issues not only echo the scholarly trends of how to look at the 19th century in Chinese history and art but also push forwards the discussion of 19th-century Chinese decorative arts to a new level of topical acumen and intellectual depth.

Chapter 20
Drawers of knowledge, embodiment of modernity: the hybridity of Cantonese-style furniture

Xiaoxin Li

It is convenient to apply the term 'Western influence' to explain the changes in the style and technique of Cantonese arts and crafts that were associated with the maritime trade that passed through the port. Cantonese-style furniture (*Guang shi jiaju* 廣式家具), a domestic furniture style developed in the late 19th century, is primarily characterised by the inclusion of elements of European decorative arts such as the rococo scroll.[1] The side effect of the word 'influence' is not a novel topic, the risk being undermining or even eliminating the maker's subjectivity in the creative process. This chapter examines Cantonese-style desks with drawers to reconsider the term 'influence' by investigating the origin of their popular name, 'doctor's desks', and the conditions around their production and popularisation.[2]

A desk for the doctor: Western medical space in 19th-century Canton

Cantonese-style desks with drawers can be categorised in two styles, one following the aesthetics of traditional Chinese furniture and the other having a 'Western' curved silhouette. The latter evolved from Western prototypes, as such designs were accessible to Cantonese cabinetmakers as early as the late 18th century.[3] By the early 20th century, desks with drawers had come to be fashionable in all kinds of living spaces in Canton. Numerous images of this form of furniture appear in the Pictorial of Current Events (*Shi shi huabao* 時事畫報), depicted in a variety of environments – from private homes to public schools (**Figs 234–5**). In addition, large numbers of desks with drawers survive in public and private collections in the Pearl River Delta area today, attesting to their immense popularity in the late Qing to early Republic period.[4]

However, desks with drawers were seldom seen in a scholar's study before the 19th century. In his ground-breaking research on Ming-style furniture, art historian Wang Shixiang 王世襄 (1914–2009) described two types of Ming-style writing desks with drawers, after which he commented: '…[desks with drawers] made during the Ming period or of the Classical form, are extremely rare'.[5] However, similar forms did appear in other parts of the household. The *Classics of Lu Ban* (*Lu Ban jing* 魯班經), written in the 16th century, includes a type of table with drawers which appeared in various sizes and functions.[6] In graphic sources, such items were depicted as dressing tables, altar tables or as workstations used by craftspeople (**Fig. 236**).[7] As the independent researcher Richard Latham points out, furniture changed more in decorative style (fashion) than in form (function) in the context of market-town networks.[8] So what happened in 19th-century Canton that sparked new demand for desks with drawers, to the point that the form eventually replaced the writing table which had dominated the scholar's study for centuries?[9]

In Canton and modern-day Guangzhou, the popular name for a desk with drawers is the 'doctor's desk' (*yisheng tai* 醫生枱). This term is used by cabinetmakers, dealers and collectors because it is said that this type of furniture was originally made for physicians, with the drawers used to keep medical instruments. Some examples in private collections even come with such provenance.[10] But what is the origin of the 'doctor's desk'? Western medicine was on

Figure 234 Tan Yunbo 譚雲波 (act. early 20th century), ***Women's Patriotic Actions*** **(*Nüshi ai guo* 女士愛國), lithograph illustration, Pictorial of Current Events (*Shi shi huabao* 時事畫報), 1906, issue no. 25. h. 21cm, w. 26cm. Cornell University Library, Asia Rare DS701 . S567 +**

Figure 235 ***Should the Conservative People follow this?*** **(*Shoujiu zhe bu dang rushi* 守舊者不當如是), lithograph illustration, Pictorial of Current Events (*Shi shi huabao* 時事畫報), 1906, issue no. 7. Reprint, Guangzhou Museum and Sun Yat-Sen Library of Guangdong Province, 2014**

the rise in 19th-century Canton. As the maritime trade developed, medical missionaries arrived and began to establish hospitals, dispensaries and medical schools, the most well-known example being the Canton Hospital (later renamed Boji Hospital, 博濟醫院), founded by Yale University-trained medical missionary Dr Peter Parker (1804–1888) in 1835. There is evidence that early medical missionaries had carefully articulated the environment of their workspace from the choice of location to furnishings, as a means of mediating the relationship with local patients.[11] For example, the Canton Hospital was initially situated in one of the Hong buildings with its doors opening to Hog Lane (*Xindou lan* 新豆欄), the busy shopping street. Dr Parker justified this decision by reasoning that:

> Its retired situation, and direct communication with a street, so that patients could come and go without annoying foreigners by passing through their hongs, or excite the observation of natives by being seen to resort to a foreigner's house.[12]

Inside the Canton Hospital, rooms were equipped with furniture of 'strange appearance', and the receiving room had portraits arranged on the walls depicting patients 'with their

Figure 236 Lantern maker, 19th century, watercolour on paper, h. 52cm, w. 39.7cm. British Library, Or. 2262

different appearances before and after the operation'.[13] These portraits probably belonged to a group of commissions painted by Lam Qua, depicting Chinese patients who suffered from various tumours.[14] They must have been a striking sight for people waiting in anxiety and desperation.

Although little literature is dedicated to the furnishings used in these early Western medical spaces, images from pictorials provide some clues. In 1892, the *Dianshizhai huabao* (點石齋畫報) published an illustration of China's first caesarean section, which had been performed at the Canton Hospital by Dr John Swan (1860–1919) (**Fig. 237**). In the image, the operation room is furnished with a tall cabinet filled with bottles of various sizes; next to it, although mostly obscured by the figures in the foreground, is a desk with drawers, on top of which two large bottles stand. Similar settings can be seen in other illustrations of Western medical space in the *Shi shi huabao* (**Fig. 238**). Even though these images may not be faithful representations of the spaces they describe, the furniture depicted clearly shows some commonalities, which remarkably also conform to photographic evidence. For example, a photograph of a classroom at the Hackett Medical College in Canton shows a desk with drawers (**Fig. 239**).

Drawers of knowledge, embodiment of modernity

Although it is not clear how many Western clinics or hospitals in Canton were furnished with so-called 'doctor's desks', the pictorials reveal that the artists and editors, and probably their mass readers too, saw the desk with drawers to be a standard element in a Western medical space, clearly indicating an association between the object and the medical profession. But how did this specialised piece of furniture become fashionable beyond hospitals and clinics? Departing from Richard Latham's observation, we may answer this question by looking at form (function), and specifically the component that differentiates the object from a traditional writing table – the drawer.

As previously discussed, in traditional Chinese furniture tables with drawers were rarely used in a scholar's study. This phenomenon can be demonstrated by a painting of a mandarin's household in Canton in the early 19th century: whilst the outer section is furnished with a writing table, the inner section (bedroom) is furnished with a dressing table with drawers (**Fig. 240**). Interestingly, in previous centuries, some scholars had attempted to promote the use of drawers in the study. The first lengthy discourse was raised by scholar and playwright Li Yu:

> The drawer is something which the world has long possessed, but which is often taken lightly – some have them, some are ignorant of them and do without. Yet to have them is to be at ease, to be without them is to be fatigued, as they provide the grounds on which one can cope with one's idleness and conceal one's incompetence. The necessities of a life of letters, such as paper and knife, inks and glues cannot always be to hand even though one has servants, since they will have their own places for storing them. And yet they are used as much as one's own two hands. I have a testy temperament, and often when I call the boy and he does not come I do the job myself. In the study, to get up on one's feet is invariably a nuisance whatever the distance involved. Yet once you have drawers all the things which you will need in a hurry are contained within – no need to send for them specially. It is as if there were a genie within, which obeys its master's commands, sweeping away and disposing of all old straw and papers as if they were fallen leaves or dust. It performs the labour of keeping the table tidy, temporarily containing anything until it is consigned to the flames.[15]

Figure 237 He Mingfu 何明甫, ***A Caesarean Surgery*** **(*Poufu chu er*** 剖腹出兒**), lithograph illustration, Dianshizhai pictorial (*Dianshizhai huabao*** 點石齋畫報**), 1892, volume 3 (II), no. 71. Shanghai Library.**

Figure 238 Tan Yunbo 譚雲波 **(act. early 20th century), *The Doctor's Anger* (*Yisheng fen nao*** 醫生憤惱**), lithograph illustration, *Pictorial of Current Events* (*Shi shi huabao*** 時事畫報**), 1912, issue no. 9. h. 21cm, w. 26cm. Cornell University Library, Asia Rare DS701 .S567 +**

Figure 239 Hackett Medical College, 1921. Collection of the Third Affiliated Hospital of the Guangzhou Medical University, Guangzhou

Figure 240 Unknown artist, Bedroom, in 'Mansion of Liu, the Metropolitan Graduate', *c.* 1800–15. watercolour on paper, h. 41.9cm, w. 54.6cm. British Library, London, Add. Or. 2190

This argument presents an interesting attitude towards the function of the drawer: that it is to make life easier. The contents of the drawer, although categorised as 'necessities', are nothing of high importance or value. The drawer is used not to protect, but to conceal the undesirable and inelegant aspects of scholarly life – idleness, incompetence, messiness. The same perspective can be observed in other sources. Chapter 81 of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* accounts for 'a small table in *huali* [花梨] wood', where Jia Baoyu 賈寶玉 asks his attendant to 'put away paper, ink, brushes and ink stone in the drawer to hide'.[16] Li Yu's view was also seconded by the scholar and poet Cao Tingdong 曹庭棟 (1700–1785), who wrote:

> …A *shu ji* [書幾, a writing table] can be used for the display of books, brushes, and ink stones, where one sits by all day…. Those suitable for use should bear two or three drawers to contain necessities of the study.[17]

Cao Tingdong's comment appears in his monograph about promoting longevity. When he uses the phrase 'suitable for use', he is really implying that having drawers is a means of increasing comfort and nurturing good health to extend life expectancy.

Both authors' ideas of the drawer, ironically, explain exactly why it had not gained more popularity: its function in the study was no different from that in the bedroom. What really mattered to the Chinese literati was what was displayed on the surface of the writing table – the stationery which was used to create works of art and literature, and the collectibles which demonstrated the owner's good taste. An ideal setting for a scholar's study should include such elegant displays, as well as 'a clean table by a bright window', whereas a desk with drawers is not considered essential.[18]

Although rare, drawers used in an intellectual context did exist. Art historian Craig Clunas has discussed a few examples in which the drawer is closely associated with information storage and management. One of these is a specially constructed cabinet used by Song dynasty scholar-official Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) to aid the writing of his *Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance* (*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑).[19] Drawers also had a prominent presence in traditional Chinese medicine in the form of medicine cabinets (*yaogui* 藥櫃). In these examples, the drawer's association with information storage and management echoes the Western idea of the human mind as a cabinet full of ready-to-open drawers, symbolising a rigid, artificial classification, and is closely related to some of the essential skills in Chinese intellectual studies – memorisation and articulation of knowledge.[20]

The drawers in a doctor's desk in Western hospitals functioned in a very different way. Firstly, they contributed to the construction of a professional space alien to many

Chinese patients. Secondly, they were understood to be the storage space for Western medical instruments. Both aspects were important in establishing the Western doctor's authority and in forging a doctor–patient relationship different from the predominant power struggle in traditional Chinese medicine.

Like many other things Western, medical practice faced various obstacles in its early days in China, from institutional restrictions on the activities of missionaries, to cultural bias and superstition from local patients.[21] To quote the renowned Chinese physician Yu Yunxiu 余雲岫 (1879–1954):

> The introduction of modern medicine into China was led by Western missionaries, their appearance of blue eyes and red hair had never been seen by the Chinese; their writing scripts are crooked and had never been learned by the Chinese; their acts of praying and Christening had never been practiced by the Chinese; their God Jesus had never been heard of by the Chinese. Therefore, the Chinese had doubts and fears towards their teaching. The operations they performed with knives and needles were seen as a disguise of murder.[22]

The American merchant William C. Hunter (1812–1891) wrote about an intriguing incident during his numerous encounters with Hong merchant Pan Youwei 潘有為 (1755–1820): Dr Cox, a physician with the American trading house Russell & Co., attended Pan's invalid son at the merchant's home; the patient was soon recovering, but not through Cox's help, because a ritual ceremony deemed that the medication Cox had prescribed was 'inauspicious'.[23]

This curious incident and similar stories recorded by Western travellers reveal the circumstances faced by Western doctors working in 19th-century China. Firstly, the patients were cared for in their own homes and attended by servants rather than professionals. Secondly, the patients (or their families) had a subjective choice over the doctor's prescription. These two factors reflect the problematic power struggle in the doctor–patient relationship in traditional Chinese medicine,[24] as historian Lei Hsiang-lin (雷祥麟) puts it:

> In pre-20th century China, the subject of medicine was the patient: the patient could choose the doctor freely, whilst the doctor passively provided medical service. The whole family of the patient would participate in the medical process, (over) which they had the ultimate authority.[25]

With the introduction of Western medical space, this power dynamic was profoundly changed. Patients were removed from their homes to be seen at a hospital, where they were surrounded by alien objects and professional staff; diagnosis was not made by pulse-taking – the preferable method of mainstream literati physicians in China – but by physical examination; cure was not provided in the familiar vocabulary of traditional medicine, but in Western medication and surgeries.[26] At all times the patient was distanced from understanding and interfering in the medical process. To gain the trust of the locals, early missionary doctors often preferred to perform surgeries that were quick, effective and easy to recover from, such as cataract surgery and tumour removal.

In this process of establishing the new doctor–patient relationship, the role of medical instruments must not be underestimated, especially through their function in the investigation and cure of the human body. As mentioned above, pulse-taking had been the primary method of diagnosis in mainstream traditional medicine, whilst manual and surgical skills were marginalised, probably due to the value placed on the integrity of the body by Confucius.[27] Physical contact between the doctor and the patient was minimal, as illustrated in a painting by the workshop of Zhou Peichun 周培春 (active *c.* 1880–1910) (**Fig. 241**).

Under these circumstances, the strange-looking Western medical instruments and their power over the human body inevitably attracted fascination and reverence from locals. In numerous sources of the late 19th to early 20th century, instruments were used to demonstrate the dominant superiority of Western medicine. For example, the Guangdong-born reformist Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應 (1842–1923), in his 1893 volume *Words of Warning to a Prosperous Age* (*Shengshi weiyan* 盛世危言), wrote:

> …Surgical treatments involve cutting, bandaging, dressing, cleansing, which all require the surgeon's devotion. One must be skilful to fit the job, and must have excellent instruments at hand, such as clamps and forceps. The lancet is used for scraping and cutting, the dilator is used for expanding and dilating; clamps and the silver pellet are elaborately used,[28] therefore [Western medical science] excelled in surgical treatments. For internal illness, there is an instrument used on the wrist to test one's voice; a thermometer is to be placed in the mouth to measure one's temperature.[29]

This fascination and reverence towards medical instruments can also be observed in graphic materials. In the images depicting Western hospitals in pictorials, medical instruments are often an indispensable element. For instance, the *Dianshizhai huabao* illustration of a caesarean session includes a tray that contains six instruments (**Fig. 237**). The artist has seemingly put some effort into picturing the objects accurately – to the point that some of them are shown as if they were floating above the tray, as if a clear view of their form and variety was important.

These literary and visual materials reflect the fact that medical instruments were considered a physical embodiment of the power of modern medicine. In this context, the drawers in doctor's desks became the storage space of the desirable and not of the undesirable, not of the known but the unknown – the advanced, scientific and modern intellect from the West and its power over the human body and, perhaps more deeply, over Confucian ideology. Compared to a traditional writing table, which puts the emphasis on what it displays, the core value of the doctor's desk lies in what it conceals, changing the significance of writing furniture from the table surface to the drawer.

A desk for the modern man: manifesting an urban identity

The western suburbs in Canton, where most furniture workshops were situated, was also the area where institutions such as Western hospitals and clinics thrived in the late Qing. This probably contributed directly to the production of furniture in the doctor's desk style for the local market.

Figure 241 Zhou Peichun 周培春 (active *c.* 1880–1910), *A Chinese Doctor Taking the Pulse of a Patient*, *c.* 1890, watercolour on paper, h. 25cm, w. 34.5cm. Wellcome Collection, London, 571504i

But the impetus for its unprecedented popularity probably lies beyond the physical space.

The late 19th century saw the establishment of the rhetoric of the decaying Chinese nation being a 'body with illness' (*bingti* 病體). Towards the end of the century, the metaphor of China as 'the Sick Man of Asia' (*Dongya bingfu* 東亞病夫) became widely known within the country. After the Qing's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War, Chinese reformist intellectuals such as Yan Fu 嚴復 (1854–1921), Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) manipulated this concept to advocate for their political ideals. The sickness metaphor was gradually associated not with the Qing government but the Chinese people, and the source of the sickness transplanted from political leadership to the fitness of the people who had long suffered from opium addiction and foot-binding.[30] In this context, public well-being became an important topic in the political agenda, and the idea of promoting Western medicine as a means of 'saving the nation' (*jiuguo* 救國) appeared in different aspects of social, cultural and economic life.[31]

In Canton, two major incidents further sparked the aspiration for Western medicine at a societal level, one being a major plague which left 100,000 dead in 1894, the other being a conflict concerning the death of a Chinese passenger on a boat named Foshan lun (佛山輪), known as the Foshan lun incident. On 29 November 1908, a Chinese passenger died after being attacked by a Portuguese crew member on a boat which was operated by the British Taikoo (太古) firm. The autopsy commissioned by the Cantonese merchant council confirmed the attack to be the cause of death. However, a second autopsy by a doctor trained in Western medicine claimed innocence for the attacker.[32] This incident became the impetus of a major campaign, eventually leading to the founding of the first Western medicine school established by the Chinese people.[33]

The rise of Western medicine coincided with the rise of Western learning and the fall of Confucian classical learning, which is mirrored by the fate of institutions of the two strands in Canton. While Western hospitals and medical schools were blossoming, the Hall of the Sea of Learning (*Xuehai tang* 學海堂), the Confucius academy founded by historian and politician Ruan Yuan and central to the Guangdong literati, was shut down in 1903.[34] In 1905, the civil examination system was terminated altogether, meaning court service was no longer an option for students and they had to seek other career paths to fulfil their talents.

Moving into the 20th century, as political and cultural reform progressed, there was a rise of urban values in Canton, a 'manifold superiority' that manifested itself in modernity, material progress, freedom to love, democracy, modern education and science.[35] It was through such urban values that the Cantonese sense of 'self' developed, in contrast to the 'others' from outside the city/province.[36] This manifestation can be observed through the *Shi shi huabao* pictorial. Founded in Guangzhou in 1905 by Pan Dawei

潘達微 (1881–1929) and primarily a political publication, its mission and vision of creating images ‘to commemorate those who benefit society’ was explicitly stated in its first issue.[37] In addition, the founder and many of the contributors were involved in the revolution in one way or another.[38] Not surprisingly, topics deemed ‘progressive’ and ‘forward’ were the main themes of the pictorial, many concerning situations which reflect the urban values discussed above. As day-to-day objects of practicality and visual quality, furniture played a crucial role in exercising reforms in lifestyles. Therefore, the doctor’s desk and other types of furniture alike were included in the design of the *Shi shi huabao* (時事畫報) illustrations as ‘stages’ of those situations, and as a visualisation of modernity.

Cantonese-style furniture, the space it constructs, the lifestyles it is associated with, and the urban values it speaks of, complements a similar process that was exercised on the cityscape of Canton during the early 20th century, in which Western-looking buildings and political monuments were erected.[39] While the public landscape of the city was adorned by beautiful new multi-storey buildings flanking the streets, and by modern hospitals, schools and department stores, personal living spaces were furnished by fashionable Western furniture as well as Cantonese-style pieces such as the doctor’s desk. These interior, day-to-day objects serviced modern intellectual and professional lives, accommodated civilised social intercourse and resonated with reformed ideologies and political agendas. A new era had begun, one in which the values and aspirations of urban elites were turning towards new paradigms – Chinese scholars no longer needed a clean table to display their elegant collectibles, but a desk with drawers that contained the skills and knowledge of a modern intellectual.

Notes

1. Hu 1986, 13–18; Cai 2001, 69; Tian, Jiaqing 1996, 41.
2. A Chinese version of this essay was published in Li, Minyong 2019. The research derives from a chapter in my PhD thesis (Li, Xiaoxin 2019). The thesis explores the design of Cantonese-style furniture made between the late 19th century and the early 20th century, and through three case studies discusses how furniture contributed to visualising and materialising modernity in Canton by addressing issues in social politics, gender politics and identity politics in the formation of a modern Cantonese identity.
3. The private trade in furniture began around 1720 and turned into a commission-based system in 1740; two- and three-dimensional models were sent to China for furniture to be made in the European fashion (Bae 2016, 17 and 104). Examples of export to North America are discussed in Crossman 1991, 230. For more discussion on Western prototypes of the doctor’s desk, see Li, Xiaoxin 2019, 118–22.
4. A survey of public and private collections of Cantonese-style furniture in the Pearl Delta Area can be found in Li, Xiaoxin 2019, 35–53.
5. Wang 2013, 138.
6. English translation in Ruitenbeek 1992, 234.
7. An example can be found in a 16th-century illustrated edition of *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (金瓶梅詞話), ch. 97. See Wang 2013, 140.
8. Latham 2004, 308.
9. Some scholars (e.g. Clunas 1988, 81) have attributed its popularity to Western influence but have not elaborated on this statement.
10. According to various oral testimonies given in a survey conducted in November 2016. See Li, Xiaoxin 2019, 112.
11. For discussions on medical space and its role in the establishment of modern medicine in China, see Yang 2012. While this line of study looks at the general location, this essay looks at the interior elements of such space.
12. Bridgman and Williams 1832–51, vol. 4 (1835–6), 462.
13. Downing 1840, vol. II, 181.
14. Lam Qua collaborated with Dr Peter Parker to create a series of ‘before and after’ portraits of Chinese patients with disfiguring pathologies such as tumours. For more information on this series, see Heinrich 2008.
15. 一曰抽替，此世索原有者也，然多忽略其事而有設有不設。不知此一物也有之則逸，無此則勞，且可借為容懶藏拙之地。文人所需，如簡牘，刀錐，丹鉛，膠糊之屬，無一可少，雖曰司之有人，藏之別有其處，究竟不能隨取隨得，役之如左右手也。予性卡急，往往呼童不至即自任其勞。書室之地無論遠近迂捷，總以舉足為煩。若抽替一設，則凡卒急所需之物，盡內其中，非特取之。如寄殘牘，有如落葉飛塵，隨掃隨有除之不盡。順為明窗淨幾之累，亦可暫時藏納，以俟祝融，所謂容懶藏拙之地是也。 Li Yu, *Pleasant Diversions* (閒情偶記), 17th century. Translated by Craig Clunas (Clunas 1988, 85).
16. 代儒回身進來，看見寶玉在西南角靠窗戶擺著一張花梨小桌，右邊堆下兩套舊書，薄薄兒的一本文章，叫焙茗將紙墨筆硯都擱在抽屜裡藏著. Cao Xueqin, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, 1780–92, ch. 81.
17. …書幾乃陳書冊，設筆硯，終日坐對之。長廣任意，而適於用者，必具抽替二三，以便雜置文房之物. Cao Tingdong, *Remarks on Nurturing Good Health* (養生隨筆), 18th century.
18. For more discussion on the scholar’s table, see Handler 2001, ch. 13, 203–23.
19. Clunas 1988, 80.
20. Bergson 1911, 48.

21 For more on the power struggle in the doctor–patient relationship in Chinese traditional medicine, see Lei 2003; Yang 2012; Hao and Zhu 2010.

22 新醫學之流入吾國也,以西人教會為先導,碧眼紫髯,其形狀,國人所未見也;旁行斜上,其文字,國人所未曾讀也;祈禱洗授,其舉動,國人所未曾習也;稱道耶穌,其所崇信之教主,國人所未曾聞也。故其對於教育,已抱疑忌畏惡之心。加以醫治病人,動用刀針,乃目為殺人之凶慝矣. Cited in Hao and Zhu 2010.

23 Hunter 1885, 31–2.

24 A similar incidence of the patient 'choosing' the prescription can be found in Downing 1840, 150–1.

25 Lei 2003, 63.

26 Lin, Shing-ting 2015, 125

27 Ibid.

28 It is not clear what instrument 'silver pellet' (银丹) refers to.

29 其外症有刺割也、扎綁也、敷治也、洗滌也，事必躬親，非心靈手敏而器具又極精良不能嘗試，如自開鉗、血管鉗、曲鉸剪、直鉸剪。刀則曰鉤、曰割，針則曰探曰坑，以及手鉗、銀丹皆精巧利用，故於外症尤著奇功。其內症更持機器於腕中，以辯聲音之虛實；置寒暑表於口內，以察髒腑之寒溫. Zheng Guanying, *Words of Warning to a Prosperous Age*, 1893

30 There are numerous studies on the origins, formation and implication of this metaphor. See Yang 2010, ch. 2.

31 For example, drugs were given patriotic names and sentimental advertisements; see discussion in Fang 2011. Other examples of advertisements can be found in Jiang 2007.

32 For a detailed account of the incident, see Anonymous 2015.

33 See Liu, Ronglun n.d.

34 The Hall of the Sea of Learning was founded in 1825 in Canton. With a focus on Confucian classics, literature and philology, the academy undertook academic training, publications as well as scholarly gatherings, establishing itself a cultural centre and symbol in the region. See Miles 2006.

35 Ho 2005, 19.

36 Ibid.

37 'The mission and vision of this pictorial is to praise the good and to loathe the evil, with an initial intention to alert the masses with images, and to eventually reach deep into people's minds. Images will be created to commemorate those who benefit society.… Images will also be created to expose those who undermine public benefits and bring shame to the nation.…' 同人之創辦斯報也，本善善惡惡之旨，以繕繪警醒圖為最初目的，以深入人心為最後希望。有造福社會者，則繪以為紀念… 有敗壞公益與夫國家恥辱，則圖之以為水鑑.… Yin'an, 'The origin of the Shi shi hua bao', in *Shi shi huabao*, 1905, issue no.1.

38 For example, three of the main illustrators, Gao Jianfu 高劍父 (1879–1951), Gao Qifeng 高奇峰 (1889–1933) and Chen Shuren 陳樹人 (1884–1948), were active members of the Chinese United League (同盟會); see Hou 2011, 36. The *Shi shi huabao* and its contributors and images have been the subject of numerous studies; see Zhu 2014.

39 For the cityscape of early 20th-century Canton, see Ho 2012.

Chapter 21
From palace to folk: 19th-century Qing dynasty Chinese glass

Shelly Xue

Imperial glass of the Qing dynasty represented a culmination of cultural exchanges between Chinese court taste and European styles, reaching a pinnacle in Chinese glassmaking history. Nevertheless, little attention has been given to imperial glass production in the 19th century, after the Qianlong period. Key questions regarding the continued operation of the imperial glass workshops until the end of the Qing dynasty and the characteristics of late Qing glass remain unresolved.

This chapter aims to address these gaps by examining archives and glass collections from the Jiaqing to the Xuantong periods (1796–1912) at the Palace Museum, Beijing. By tracing the evolution of the imperial glass workshops and analysing the transformations in imperial glassmaking during the 19th century, it seeks to shed light on the reasons behind the industry's decline and to explore connections with folk glass production.

Evolution of the imperial glass workshops: *Boli chang* and *Boli zuo*

The establishment and evolution of the imperial glass workshops have been crucial yet unresolved topics in the study of Qing glass. The names *Boli chang* (玻璃廠) and *Boli zuo* (玻璃作), as found in the historical archives, have only served to compound the confusion surrounding this subject.

Recent research has shed light on the existence of two glassmaking workshops established by the Qing Imperial Household Department, both of which underwent significant evolution.[1] The first, *Boli chang*, was founded in the 35th year of Kangxi's reign (1696) and was situated at Canchikou (蠶池口). It encompassed a total of 12 rooms.[2] The second workshop, *Boli zuo*, located at Yuanmingyuan, is believed to have been established no later than the beginning of the fifth year of Yongzheng's reign (1727).[3] However, further investigation is required to ascertain the precise date, geographical location and layout of *Boli zuo*.

Both workshops specialised in glass-blowing, with *Boli chang* focusing on the production of larger objects and *Boli zuo* specialising in smaller ones due to the constraints of its furnace size. They operated in an interconnected manner, coordinating their efforts to meet the demands of specific tasks. From the Jiaqing period onwards, the primary responsibility of the imperial glass workshops was to craft 301 glass plates, bowls, incense burners, bottles and snuff bottles for the Dragon Boat Festival and the New Year.

Boli zuo continued to operate throughout the Jiaqing and Daoguang periods (1796–1850), with the latest possible operation extending up to 1860. As for *Boli chang*, originally located at Canchikou, it underwent two relocations during the 1860s. In the third year of the Tongzhi reign (1864), *Boli chang* moved from its initial location on the west side of the Catholic Church (*Tianzhu tang* 天主堂) near the Xi'an Gate (*Xi'an men* 西安門) to the north factory of the old *Tieqian* Bureau (*Tieqian ju* 鐵錢局) in *Jinyu hutong* (金魚胡同) of Dong'an Gate (*Dong'an men* 東安門), comprising a total of 24 rooms. The workshop resumed its activities immediately after the move. However, in the autumn three years later, due to the occupation of what is referred to in the imperial archives as the foreign gun camp (*Yangqiang ying* 洋槍營), *Boli chang* had to relocate once more to the oil salt shop on the

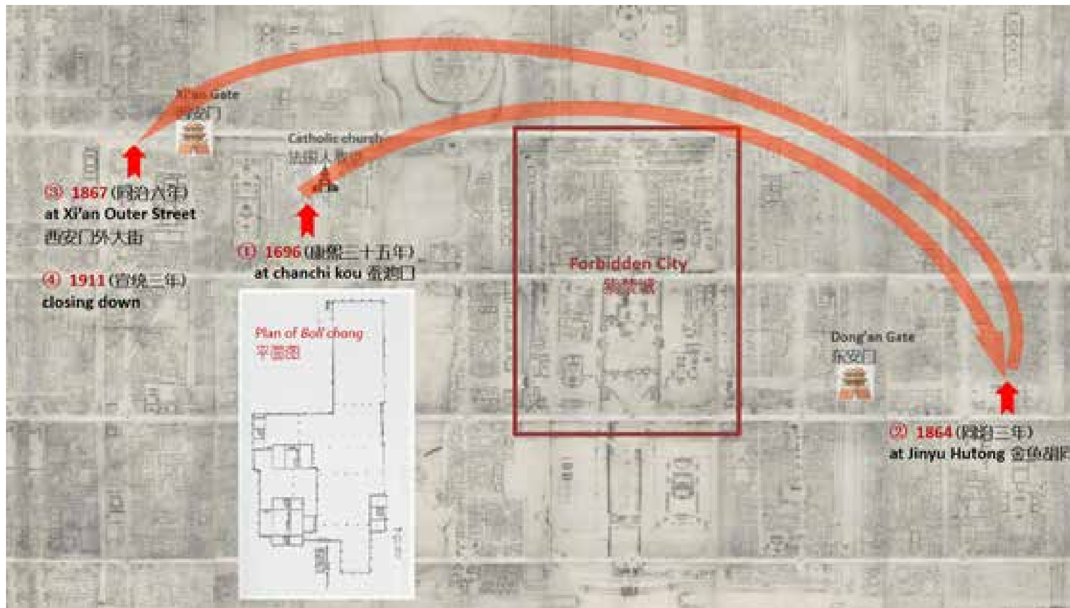


Figure 242 Map showing the original location of *Boli chang* and its two relocations in the 19th century

north side of Xi'an Gate Outer Street (*Xi'an men waidajie* 西安門外大街). Following these two relocations, *Boli chang* continued its operations until the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 (**Fig. 242**).[4]

Glass-blowers from Boshan

The historical references from *Memoirs of the Qing Palace* (*Qing gong shuwen* 清宮述聞), specifically in its third chapter, quoting a 'Memorandum of the Imperial Household Department' (*Neiwufu xianxing zeli*, 總管內務府現行則例), provide valuable insights into the operations of *Boli chang*. According to this source:

> *Boli chang*'s glassmaking operations ran from August to May annually, employing two skilled glass-blowers from Shandong.
>
> 玻璃廠每年八月開窯，五月止窯，熬煉玻璃，用山東縣玻璃匠二人。[5]

Over 30 glass-blowers from Boshan (博山)[6] in Shandong province were identified during an investigation of the archives from the Jiaqing to Xuantong periods at the First Historical Archives of China.[7] These skilled workers were selected and dispatched to the imperial workshops by the Shandong governor, who also provided them with a settling-in allowance. In addition to this, each glass-blower received 'Three *liang* (兩) of silver per month' for their services in the workshops, along with food provisions during their tenure.[8] According to the records, in the second year of the Daoguang reign (1822), and again the following year, *Boli chang* completed 301 glass objects.[9] Additionally, in June 1822, it was noted that two Boshan glass-blowers, Zhang Kun 張坤 and Li Kechen 李克成, were dispatched to Beijing.[10]

301 pieces of glass

In the Qing court, the art of glassmaking was known as *huoji* (活計). The 18th century witnessed a remarkable period of cultural and artistic prosperity, marked by the highest output and the finest quality of glassware. The pinnacle of glass production was reached in the mid-18th century. During the 20th year of Qianlong's reign (1755), for example, the imperial command commissioned 500 glass snuff bottles and 3,000 vessels, intended as reward objects for the Chengde Summer Resort.[11] Despite Jiaqing's 25-year reign, existing Jiaqing glass is relatively rare, with only seven known pieces in the Palace Museum. However, these and other pieces known from around the world demonstrate a continuation of the quality seen in previous dynasties. The Jiaqing era thus straddled the transition from the prosperous Qianlong period to the later decline.

In the 19th century, the scale of production at the imperial workshops significantly declined, mirroring the more general weakening of national strength. Glassmaking became a routine annual task, dedicated to the creation of two groups of objects: 141 pieces for the Dragon Boat Festival[12] and 160 pieces for the New Year.[13] Throughout the late Qing dynasty, total production remained relatively constant at 301 pieces each year, with less emphasis on innovation and more adherence to fixed procedures. Glassmaking during this period symbolised the preservation of court life and its associated etiquette. During the Jiaqing to Xuantong periods, more than 1,500 glass objects bearing reign marks were created and are now housed in the Palace Museum. These marked pieces account for approximately 4.5 per cent of the total production of around 35,000 items.

A prominent characteristic of 19th-century imperial glassware was its monochromatic nature, either in transparent glass (*liang boli*, 亮玻璃) or translucent or opaque glass (*nie boli*, 涅玻璃 / *dai boli*, 呆玻璃). Various glass types that thrived in the 18th century, such as aventurine and gold ruby-red glass, and sophisticated techniques like cased glass, cameo-carving, filigrana and enamel-painted glass, ceased to be produced from the Jiaqing reign onwards. During the 1800s, aside from wheel-engraving on monochrome glass, decorative techniques were rarely employed – and even wheel-engraving vanished after the Xianfeng reign (**Fig. 243**).

The archives from the 33rd year of Guangxu's reign (1907) reveal eight varieties of glass objects: dishes, bottles, bowls, tea cups, cups, 'spittoon pots' or *zhadou* (渣鬥), incense burners and snuff bottles. Bottles were further categorised into four types: *guanyin ping* (觀音瓶, guanyin vase), *baoyue*

Figure 243 Cup, Xianfeng period (1851–61), Beijing, blown and wheel-engraved glass, h. 3.9cm, d. 6.1cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00106869-12/38

ping (抱月瓶, moon-embracing vase), *baleng ping* (八楞瓶, octagonal bottles) and *zhichui ping* (紙槌瓶, paper mallet bottles). Bowls, on the other hand, were divided into two types: *dou wan* (鬥碗, measuring bowl) and *tang wan* (湯碗, soup bowls).[14] However, the Palace Museum's collection of glass made during the Guangxu period also includes additional shapes such as gourd bottles and hexagonal bottles. It remains unclear whether these discrepancies are due to recording errors, replacements of shapes, or if there were additional productions beyond the standard 301 pieces (**Fig. 244**).[15]

Colour revival

During the Jiaqing to Xuantong periods, the colour palette of monochrome glass was predominantly restricted to blues, greens and yellows. However, there was a brief revival of colour diversity during the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns.

Around 20 per cent of the 540 Tongzhi glass objects in the Palace Museum collection are *zhadou* vessels, the variety of which offers a comprehensive perspective on the colour palette of this period. In comparison to the colours seen in the first half of the 19th century, Tongzhi glass exhibited a greater variety of tones within the same colour range. The opaque colours, mimicking the appearance of jade,

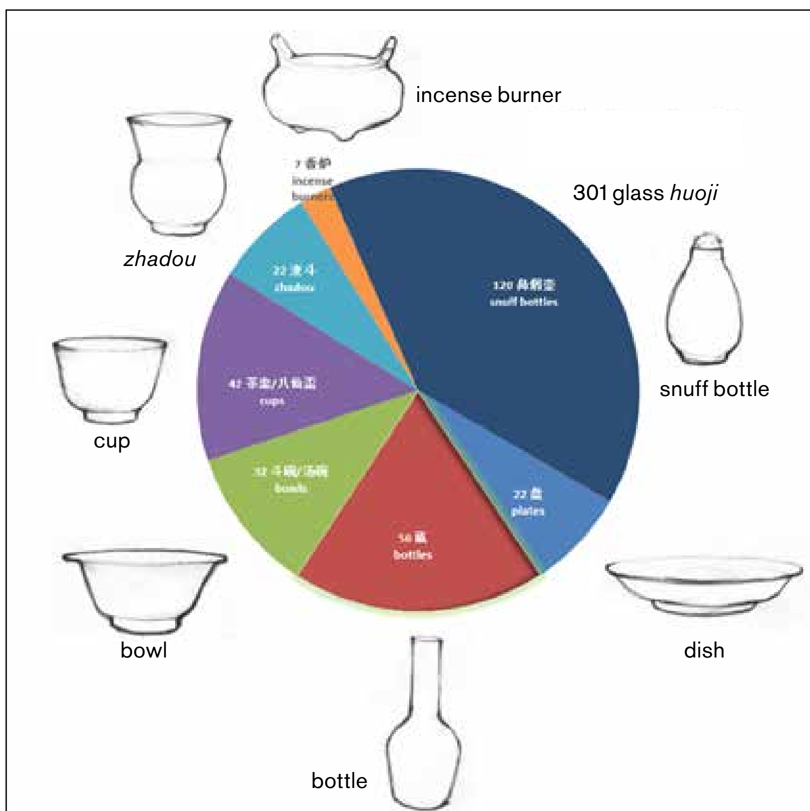


Figure 244 Breakdown of the types of glass object produced in the 33rd year of the Guangxu period (1907), according to the imperial archives

Figure 245 Selection of *zhadou*, Tongzhi period (1861–75), Beijing, mould-blown glass, approximately h. 9cm, d. 8cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00106812, 故00106813, 故00106814, 故00106817, 故00106526, 故00106527

displayed a subtlety and beauty of their own. While it may not have reached the same level as that of the Qianlong period, the traditional aesthetic pursuit of colour in imperial glassmaking was still upheld (**Fig. 245**).

Moreover, a few instances of red glass are known, signifying a revival of this colour in the late 19th century after the remarkable success of the gold ruby-red glass created by the court during the 18th century. A Tongzhi red glass shallow bowl, for instance, is currently held by the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.[16]

Figure 246 Bottle, Tongzhi period (1861–75), Beijing, blown glass, h. 17.5cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00106320-4/7

Additionally, the technique of 'cased glass' was revived, though with differences from the 18th-century style. Rather than cameo-carving the outer layer of the cased glass after blowing, as was typical in the Qianlong era, the glass would remain plain. This change can be attributed to the high cost and great difficulty associated with the time-consuming cameo-carving process (**Fig. 246**).

Snowflake glass

The study of Tongzhi *zhadou* reveals several intriguing factors. Among transparent glass pieces, the presence of a few bubbles is typical. However, in a small subset, numerous bubbles of varying sizes and densities can be observed. This is a common defect in glassmaking, but considering the significant number of bubbles in this particular group, the suggestion is that their presence was not accidental and instead a deliberate choice or a controlled aesthetic that emerged over time, possibly transforming from an initial defect into an intentional feature. In addition, there are rare instances of opaque glass with white inclusions and transparent glass featuring both bubbles and white inclusions in Tongzhi *zhadou* (**Fig. 247**). These visual characteristics evoke similarities with snowflake glass, a distinct category of Chinese glass production.

Snowflake (*feixue di* 霏雪地) glass is distinguished by white inclusions and air bubbles resembling falling snow. It was largely produced for 19th-century snuff bottles,[17] and usually acted as a background for cased and cameo-carved objects. This type of glass is also known as snowstorm (霏雪地),

Figure 247 *Zhadou*, Tongzhi period (1861–75), Beijing, blown glass, h. 9.7cm, d. 8.7cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00106812-5/15

lotus root powder ground (*oufen di* 藕粉地) and saliva ground (*tuomo di* 唾沫地). The earliest known literary reference to snowflake glass can be found in *Questions and Answers from the Yonglu Studio* (*Yonglu xianjie*, 勇廬閒詰), a work by Qing artist Zhao Zhiqian (1829–1884). Zhao cited a work by Shen Yu 沈豫 (dates unknown), *Miscellaneous Notes from the Autumn Shade* (*Qiuyin zaji*, 秋阴杂记), which is a collection of miscellaneous notes from the Daoguang period (1820–51), as the source of this mention. Zhao completed *Yonglu xianjie* in 1869, but it was not published until 1880, and described 'lotus root powder ground' glass as:

> A pale whitish glass with a colour resembling solidified fat or falling snow.
>
> 微白，色若凝脂，或若霏雪，曰"藕粉"。

In particular, Zhao noted the natural layering of the colours, which added to their unique and captivating appearance, and referred to the glass made by the Le 勒 family, who operated a private glass workshop in Beijing, as:

> Resembling ice and snow, overlaid with red, purple, blue and green.
>
> 勒家皮，藕粉地，若冰雪，設色亦異，紅紫蒼翠，天然間迭。[18]

A distinct group of bottles features a round body and a long neck, with a shared characteristic of snowflake glass as the base and a thick red glass overlay. Notably, each bottle showcases scenes from different but related stories, all derived from popular Beijing opera performances inspired by famous Chinese novels. These shared characteristics suggest that the bottles likely originated from the same private workshop, forming a stylistically cohesive group of Chinese cameo-carved glass. The stories depicted on the Corning Warrior Vase (**Fig. 248**), for example, are derived from the renowned 'Eight Hammers' (*bao dachui* 八大錘) repertoire of Beijing opera.[19] These stories were adapted from the 55th and 56th chapters of the popular novel *The Complete Biography of General Yue* (*Shuo Yue quanzhuan* 說岳全傳), which was published in either 1684 or 1744.[20] A pair of vases in the collection of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery[21] depict scenes from the 'Killing Hua Xiong' (*Zhan Hua Xiong* 斬華雄) episode from the fifth chapter of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義).[22]

Previously, this group of snowflake objects was attributed to the imperial glass workshops during the Qianlong period. However, the analysis of their iconographic images indicates a date in the mid-19th century, aligning with the emergence of Tongzhi snowflake *zhadou*. Although the origin of snowflake glass remains unclear due to a lack of conclusive evidence, it is true that it facilitated a direct exchange between the court and folk production in the realm of glassmaking.[23]

The decline of imperial glass production

Over the course of the 19th century, there was a notable decline in imperial glass production – initially in quantity but then also in quality – following the peak of Qianlong's reign. This decline is evident in the objects themselves, including the *baleng ping*, a common form of glass during the Qing Dynasty. These octagonal bottles, produced from the Yongzheng to the Guangxu periods, featured a consistent and complex shape. After being mould-blown, the eight edges required grinding and polishing to accentuate the beautiful lines and elegant profiles, showcasing a mastery of glass-blowing and cold processing. The production of octagonal bottles during the Jiaqing to Guangxu periods remained at 14 pieces per year, with each requiring seven days of cold processing.[24] After the Jiaqing period, however, the refinement and elegance of octagonal bottles significantly declined. The overall shape became asymmetrical, and the once refined and well-rounded profile lost its precision.

Figure 248 (left and above) Warrior Vase, *c.* 1825–75, cased and cameo-carved glass, h. 49.2cm. Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, New York, 57.6.10. Gift of Benjamin D. Bernstein

Figure 249 *Baleng ping*, Guangxu period (1875–1908), Beijing, blown glass, h. 13.7cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00106350

The cold processing was no longer as precise and delicate, leading to a lack of straightness in the eight edges. Furthermore, most of the bottles exhibited noticeable defects such as surface bumps and hollows (**Fig. 249**).

This deterioration of the quality of *ba leng ping* offers several pointers in terms of understanding the decline in quality of late Qing glass. Firstly, the production of imperial glass in the 19th century directly reflected the skill level of Boshan craftsmen, which proved to be insufficient after losing the support and influence of Jesuit missionaries.[25] Secondly, the presence of surface defects on the objects demonstrates a lack of attention and care towards the cold processing by Chinese craftsmen, who had a rich history of intricate jade carving.[26] Furthermore, compared to the Yongzheng and Qianlong periods, the emperors and officials of the late Qing dynasty showed reduced interest and involvement in the management and supervision of glassmaking.

Folk glass from the imperial archives

The Palace Museum houses a collection of 4,300 Chinese glass objects, with almost half of them bearing reign marks from the Kangxi to the Xuantong periods. The remainder are either court-produced or made by folk craftsmen. Additional records in the imperial archives mention glass from Guangzhou, including two Canton glass snuff bottles presented in the sixth year of Yongzheng's reign (1728)[27] and 16 Canton glass items recorded in the 41st year of Qianlong's reign (1776), including four cups, seven water containers, four brush washers and a vase.[28] However, these records lack specific descriptions of appearance or characteristics.

On 16 May in the 34th year of Guangxu's reign (1908), the imperial glass workshop recorded detailed information regarding the names and costs of 42 glass objects purchased for reward. The list comprised four large vases (*da huaping* 大花瓶), two large bowls in lotus form (*lianhua shi dawan* 蓮花式大碗), two narcissus flower pots (*shuixian hua pen* 水仙花盆), four plates in plum flower form (*meihua shi pan* 梅花式盤), two flower jars (*huaguan*花罐), four small vases (*xiao huaping* 小花瓶), four bowls in inverted bell form (*xin shi wan* 馨式碗),

Figure 250 Bowl, *c.* 1800–1911, China, blown and cameo-carved glass, h. 6.1cm. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, N4645

a bowl in lotus leaf form (*heye shi wan* 荷葉式碗), a bowl in begonia flower form (*haitang hua shi wan* 海棠花式碗), an incense burner (*xianglu* 香爐), two flower vases (*huacha* 花插), two cylinder cups (*huatong bei* 花筒杯), two tea cups (*huacha bei* 花茶杯), two double-ear bottles (*shuang'er ping* 雙耳瓶), a *baleng ping* (八楞瓶) and eight snuff bottles (*yanhu* 煙壺). The request for 600 *liang* in silver was eventually approved, but for a reduced amount of 480 *liang* in silver.[29]

The information includes notes about the purpose, scale and names of the purchased glass objects, without indicating their specific sources. It remains unknown whether they were produced within the capital or sourced from elsewhere. Further research is required to explore the origins and production of folk glass in relation to these findings.

The collection of glass objects from the Palace Museum and museums worldwide can offer valuable insights into the characteristics of late Qing dynasty folk glass. For instance, the Palace Museum holds two white glass cups in begonia flower and plum flower forms,[30] while the Corning Museum of Glass has a purple glass plate in lotus leaf form.[31] The Bristol Museum and Art Gallery houses red glass bowls and a yellow glass plate in lotus leaf form (**Figs 250–1**), which could potentially correspond to the Guangxu archive mentioned earlier. Furthermore, a limited number of double-ear glass bottles in white, pink, yellow and green can be found in the Palace Museum and European museums. Notably, the archives relating to two green double-ear bottles in the collection of the National Ceramic Museum in Sèvres, France,[32] record their entry into the museum in 1839,[33] suggesting a production date ranging from the late 18th century to the early 19th century.

Figure 251 Plate, *c.* 1800–1911, China, blown and cameo-carved glass, d. 29.8cm. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, N4751

Figure 252 Bowl, late Qing to Republic (1875–1920), China, mould-blown glass, h. 9cm, d. 10.5cm. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, E18380.AB, gift of Dr William Sturgis Bigelow, 1922

Boshan glassmaking

This chapter has already highlighted the involvement of Boshan glass-blowers in the court, which undoubtedly led to interaction and technical exchange with folk glassmakers. In the 1980s, over 80 pieces of Boshan glass entered the Asian collection of the Corning Museum of Glass. These pieces, ranging from the early 20th century to the 1980s, bear the incised mark 'CHINA' and include bowls, cups, plates and paperweights.

The mark 'CHINA' on Boshan glass pieces suggests that they were likely produced in the late 19th to early 20th century, in accordance with the US Tariff Act of 1930. This required a mark giving the country of origin in English, and provides a possible time frame for production.[34] Additional evidence from other museums supports this time frame, such as an octagonal bowl in imitation of lapis lazuli donated by Dr William Sturgis Bigelow (1850–1926) to the Peabody Essex Museum in 1922 (**Fig. 252**) and another piece donated to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1926.[35] Furthermore, the George Crofts (1871–1925) collection at the Royal Ontario Museum also includes mould-blown bowls, plates and cups, all likely to be Boshan glass products for export.[36]

In an article on Boshan glassmaking published by Professor Xie Hui (謝惠, 1895–1976) in 1934, various categories of glass products were listed (**Table 5**).[37] A green-to-white vase bearing a 'CHINA' mark (**Fig. 253**) and a

Figure 253 Jar, late Qing to Republic (1875–1940), cased and cameo-carved glass, h. 10.6cm, d. 10.2cm. Corning Museum of Glass, New York, 88.6.19, gift from the Estate of Zachary Taylor

花瓶類 **Category of vases**		
名稱 **Name**	種類 **Type**	價目 **Price**
黃色 yellow colour	33.3cm	75 *yuan* per pair
沖雞肝色 chicken liver	46.6cm	13 *yuan* per pair
白底紅花鳳尾 **red flower on white glass in Fengwei (phoenix tail) shape**	**33.3cm**	**45 *yuan* per pair**
美人瓶（內畫） in Meiren shape (inside-painted)	40cm	12 *yuan* per pair
美人瓶（內畫） in Meiren shape (inside-painted)	26.6cm	6 *yuan* per pair
美人瓶（內畫） in Meiren shape (inside-painted)	16.6cm	4 *yuan* per pair
鼻煙壺 snuff bottle	內畫套色 cased and inside-painted	2 *yuan* each
罈形瓶 vase in Tan shape	內畫 inside-painted 10cm	6.5 *yuan* per pair
彫花 **cameo-carving**	套色 **cased**	**50–100 *yuan* per pair**
假黃色 fake yellow	53.3cm	5 *yuan* per pair
白底綠花套色 **green flower on white (cased) glass**	**20cm**	**4.5 *yuan* per pair**
美人瓶（內畫） in Meiren shape (inside-painted)	46.6cm	20 *yuan* per pair
美人瓶（內畫） in Meiren shape (inside-painted)	33.3cm	8 *yuan* per pair
美人瓶（內畫） in Meiren shape (inside-painted)	20cm	5 *yuan* per pair
古銅色 bronze colour	內畫 inside-painted 13.3cm	1.5 *yuan* per pair
小藥瓶 small medicine bottle	內畫套色 cased and inside-painted	1 *yuan* each
小瓶 small bottle	刻花 engraved	2–5 *yuan* each

Table 5 Categories of Boshan glass products listed by Xie Hui in 1934 (text in bold refers to content mentioned in text)

化裝品類 **Category of cosmetic**		
名稱 **Name**	種類 **Type**	價目 **Price**
玻璃絲屏風 glass-rod screen	50cm（折, fold）	1 *yuan* / 5 pcs
棹屏 table screen	50cm 有畫 with painting	1 *yuan* / 5 pcs
棹屏 table screen	60cm 有畫 with painting	2 *yuan* / 5 pcs
棹屏 **table screen**	**66cm** 有畫 **with painting**	**2.2 *yuan* / 5 pcs**
掛屏 **hanging screen**	**66cm** 有畫 **with painting**	**0.5 *yuan* / 1 pcs**
掛屏 hanging screen	100cm 有畫 with painting	0.7 *yuan* / 1 pcs
掛屏 hanging screen	133cm 有畫 with painting	1.2 *yuan* / 1 pcs
掛屏 hanging screen	166cm 有畫 with painting	2.5 *yuan* / 1 pcs
地屏 floor screen	166cm 有畫 with painting	12 *yuan* / 6 pcs
地屏 floor screen	200cm 有畫 with painting	22 *yuan* / 6 pcs
折屏 folded screen	66cm	2 *yuan* / 5 pcs
棹屏 table screen	50cm 無畫 without painting	0.8 *yuan* / 5 pcs
棹屏 table screen	60cm 無畫 without painting	1.7 *yuan* / 5 pcs
棹屏 table screen	66cm 無畫without painting	1.85 *yuan* / 5 pcs
掛屏 hanging screen	66cm 無畫 without painting	0.35 *yuan* / 5 pcs
掛屏 hanging screen	100cm 無畫 without painting	0.52 *yuan* / 5 pcs
掛屏 hanging screen	133cm無畫 without painting	0.95 *yuan* / 5 pcs
掛屏 hanging screen	166cm無畫 without painting	2.1 *yuan* / 5 pcs
地屏 floor screen	166cm無畫 without painting	10 *yuan* / 6 pcs
地屏 floor screen	200cm無畫 without painting	19 *yuan* / 6 pcs

Table 6 Categories of Boshan glass-rod screens listed by Xie Hui in 1934

glass-rod panel at the Corning Museum of Glass[38] may correspond to the categories mentioned in Xie's paper.

According to Xie's research, cased and cameo-carved glass generally commanded higher prices compared to other types, typically ranging from 50 to 100 *yuan* per pair. A 20cm tall green overlaid glass vase with flower patterns was priced at 4.5 *yuan* per pair, and a 33.3cm tall red overlaid glass vase in *fengwei* (鳳尾, phoenix tail) shape was priced at 45 *yuan* per pair.

In the late Qing dynasty, Boshan was known for its production of glass-rod screens (*liaosi ping* 料絲屏).[39] These were created by sandwiching painted paper images between two layers of fine glass rods.[40] It is noted in the imperial archives that glass-rod screens were presented to the court in the eighth year of the Qianlong reign (1743),[41] although their specific place of origin was not specified. According to Xie, a 66cm tall hanging screen with a painting was priced at half a *yuan* per panel. As mentioned above, the Corning Museum of Glass houses a glass rod screen depicting a bustling 19th-century glass workshop, which closely resembles the dimensions mentioned in Xie's paper (**Table 6**).[42] It could be either a standalone hanging screen or part of a five-piece table screen set.

Conclusion

The study of 19th-century Qing dynasty Chinese glass offers valuable insights into the dynamic nature of glassmaking during this period. It outlines the glassmaking practice of the period and reveals the key features of glass production as well as its decline over time. The examination of imperial archives and glass collections from the Palace Museum highlights the changing trends and characteristics of Qing glass, while the exploration of distinctive styles like snowflake glass demonstrates the flourishing of folk glass. Additionally, the study of Boshan glass further emphasises the interplay between court and folk glassmaking. While more research is required, the findings presented in this chapter contribute to a better understanding of the rich history and artistry of Qing dynasty Chinese glass.

Notes

1 The author is indebted to the J.S. Lee Memorial Fellowship Programme (Bei Shan Tang Foundation, Hong Kong) for supporting the initial investigation. 本文為故宮博物院2021年開放課題"中國19世紀宮廷玻璃研究"的成果論文，該課題得到"中國青年基金會梅賽德斯—奔驰星願基金"的公益支持。
2 Curtis 2001, 82–4; Lam 2005, 29–32.
3 Xue 2023, 113–16.
4 Xue 2023, 116–18.
5 Zhang 1988, 165.
6 Boshan, Shandong province (formerly known as Yanshen or Yanshen zhen, 顏神鎮) had been one of the most important glassmaking centres in China since the late Yuan dynasty. Its glass production supplied the Ming and Qing courts.
7 Chen 1816; Zhou 1879.
8 Neiwufu 1907.
9 *Zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdan*, 1832, FHAC microfilm no. 2945 & 2947.
10 Qishan 1822.
11 *Zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdan*, 1755, FHAC microfilm no. 3465.
12 *Zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdan*, 1823, FHAC microfilm no. 2947.
13 *Zaobanchu gezuo chengzuo huoji qingdan*, 1822, FHAC microfilm no. 2945.
14 Neiwufu 1907.
15 Or it may be due to different individuals and a lack of communication between the recorders and makers.
16 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 11.9677.
17 Moss *et al.* 2002, 191.
18 Zhao 1880b.
19 The Warrior Vase is the largest snowflake glass vessel currently known, nearly twice as big as related vases, such as those in the collections of the Museum of Fine Art, Boston (26.713), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1962-84-9), the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (B81M42), Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (N4654 and N4655) and the Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo (G66).
20 Qian 2016, 464–77. The years 1684 and 1744 are two possibilities for the production of the book, as the date on the cover was written in the traditional Chinese dry-branch method, with a cyclical period of 60 years.
21 Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, N4654 and N4655.
22 Brewitt-Taylor 1929.
23 For more information on snowflake glass, see Xue 2021, 284 and van Giffen 2021.
24 Neiwufu 1798.
25 In the 35th year of Kangxi's reign (1695), when the imperial glass workshop was established, Bernard-Kilian Stumpf (S.J. 1655-1720), a German missionary skilled in science and glassmaking, was sent to the court by local officials. He was commissioned to oversee the establishment of the glass workshop, produce glass, and instruct Chinese artisans until his death in the 59th year of Kangxi's reign (1720). The French missionary Gabriel-Leonard de Brossard (1703-1758) arrived in China in the 5th year of Qianlong's reign (1740) and served at the glass workshop until his death in 1758. During this period, he was commissioned to produce various kinds of glass and, according to the emperor's requirements, blow glass objects in Western styles. For more information, see Curtis 2001, 81–6.
26 The glass cold-processing (grinding and polishing) was conducted by workers from the jade workshop.
27 '*Yongzheng liunian qi Yongzheng qinian*' in Chinese University of Hong Kong and the First Historical Archives of China 2005, vol. 3, 315–18.
28 '*Qianlong sishinian qi Qianlong sishiyi nian*' in Chinese University of Hong Kong and the First Historical Archives of China 2005, vol. 39, 479.
29 Neiwufu 1908.
30 Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00106508-15/20 and 故00106509-5/10.
31 Corning Museum of Glass, New York, 64.6.2.
32 National Ceramic Museum, Sèvres, France, MNC2825 and MNC2826.
33 '1 petit vase en verre colour verdatie translucide, dit pate de riz. De la Chine Chez N. Houssaye Negouoint de Paris(?), Rue de la Bourse Prix = 20', 28 December 1839, Sèvres-Service des Collections Documentaires.
34 'Chinese Paperweights for Sale', Allan's Paperweights, http://www.paperweights.com/paperweights/chinese.htm (accessed 15 March 2021); see also Hall 2001, 142. For more information about Boshan glass and Chinese export glass, see Xue 2022, entries 45–50.
35 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 26.601.
36 Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, 922.20.12 and 922.20.477–498.
37 Xie 1934, 15–19.
38 Corning Museum of Glass, New York, 2010.6.26.
39 Xue 2022, 128–31.
40 Knothe 2015, 43.
41 Zhang 2012, 232.
42 Corning Museum of Glass, New York, 2010.6.26.

Chapter 22
How innovative was ceramic production in China's long 19th century?

Jessica Harrison-Hall

Like most of the arts of the 19th century, pottery and porcelain have been understudied and largely dismissed. This is not for lack of exposure. For example, 1.3 million visitors went to see the *Art Treasures Exhibition* held in Manchester in 1857, three years before the sacking of the Summer Palace, which included Jiaqing mark and period porcelains in its displays.[1]

The much-respected scholar and ceramics expert, R. Soame Jenyns (1904–1976), Deputy Keeper of Oriental Antiquities (now the Department of Asia) at the British Museum, was typical in his view of the arts of the period, expressed in a 1963 article in the *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* entitled 'The Decline of the Manchu Regime':[2]

> Qianlong was a tremendous collector and an indefatigable cataloguer of the antiques he collected. The bulk of the ex-Imperial Collections as they exist today are the fruits of his interests…. On his abdication on February 9th, 1796, after he had ruled a complete cycle of sixty years, the shadows began to fall. He died three years afterwards. This decline is mirrored in all branches of the arts.

It is true that there was a strong continuity in certain types of court ceramics: the two blue-and-white ewers illustrated in **Figure 254**, for example, modelled on ancient bronze wine vessels, were made perhaps 100 years apart in the Qianlong and Daoguang eras and later still presented to Queen Victoria by the Guangxu emperor on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee in 1897. But there is remarkable innovation in other wares, made both for the court and for non-court markets. An inability to appreciate developments in 19th-century ceramics outside the Qing court may have been the reason that both Eastern and Western collectors believed there was nothing innovative made after the Qianlong reign, but now we know that this was a misconception.[3]

Dishes with Ming designs such as the 'Three Friends of Winter' (*suihan sanyou* 歲寒三友) – pine, prunus and bamboo, a visual metaphor for resilience in Han culture – were embraced by Manchu rulers throughout the 1800s. Despite the destruction of the imperial porcelain kilns at Jingdezhen during the Taiping Civil War in the early 1850s, there are also examples with the same design dating to the

Figure 254 Pair of pouring vessels with covers, Jingdezhen, (left) Qianlong (1736–95) and (right) Daoguang (1821–50) mark and period, porcelain with underglaze blue Buddhist emblems, h. 22cm, w. 23cm, d. 16cm. Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 58813

Figure 255 Porcelain dishes illustrating the 'Three Friends of Winter', Jingdezhen, with the reign marks of (top row, from left to right): Xuande (1426–1435), d. 17.8cm. British Museum, London, 1975,1028.17, gift of Sir John Addis; Jiaqing (1796–1820), d. 18cm. Bonhams, sold in Hong Kong, 24 November 2013, lot 240; Daoguang (1821–50), d. 18cm. British Museum, London, 1984,0202.61, bequest of Sir John Addis; (bottom row, from left to right) Xianfeng (1851–61), d. 18cm. Palace Museum, Beijing; Tongzhi (1862–74), d. 17.5cm. British Museum, London, 1984,0202.60, bequest of Sir John Addis; and Guangxu (1875–1908), d. 17.8cm. National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, Anonymous gift, F1978.45

immediate aftermath – and before reconstruction – in the Xianfeng era (1851–61) (**Fig. 255**).[4]

As far as ceramics are concerned, production in the 1800s can be thought of in two halves – before and after the Taiping Civil War.[5] The imperial kilns at Jingdezhen were flattened by the Taiping army, but emerged phoenix-like from the ashes 15 years later thanks to a massive court subsidy in 1865 of 130,000 taels, through the intervention of the diplomat-statesman Li Hongzhang who was then governor of the area in which Jingdezhen lay.[6] Official records, held at the Palace Museum, reveal that in the Xianfeng reign, the court tried to commission '55 kinds of ritual vessel and daily wares' from the local magistrate, who was unable to complete the order because the imperial kiln had been destroyed and the potters dispersed by the war. Yet it is clear from the surviving ceramic vessels that high-quality ceramics were still made in the Xianfeng era at Jingdezhen, perhaps in non-imperial kilns. The antiquarian Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826–1897) collected, published and exhibited one example, a high stem bowl painted with dragons chasing a flaming pearl, at the Bethnal Green Museum in East London in 1876 (**Fig. 256**). The imperial kilns were rebuilt during the reign of the boy emperor Tongzhi and thrived through the revitalising patronage of Empress Dowager Cixi.

Compared to other historical eras, there is a relative sparsity of 19th-century archaeological finds at kiln, tomb

Figure 256 Porcelain stem bowl with overglaze painting of two dragons and a flaming pearl, Jingdezhen, Xianfeng mark and period (1851–61). British Museum, London, Franks.341, given by Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks in 1876

Figure 257 (far left) Blue-glazed porcelain vase excavated in 1964 in Guiyang from a tomb of an occupant with the surname Zhu, Jingdezhen, Daoguang period (1821–50), h. 42cm. Guizhou Museum, Guiyang

Figure 258 (left) Unidentified artist, a young woman seated beside a table with a blue porcelain vase and European-style clock, 1873, coloured woodblock print, Tianjin, image h: 54cm, w. 32.3cm; with mount h: 68.5cm, w. 51cm. British Museum, London, 1954,1113,0.2, given by Mrs R.E.A. Hughes-Jones

and domestic sites. There are some interesting ceramics in burials and hoards from the Jiaqing and Daoguang eras, but little from the second half of the century (this is completely understandable as deliberate excavations of burials of the late 1800s is considered distasteful). A blue-glazed, fine bodied porcelain vase in the Guizhou Museum dating to the Daoguang reign was excavated in 1964 in Qingshanpo 青山坡, Guiyang from the tomb of an individual with the surname Zhu 朱 (**Fig. 257**).[7] We can visualise its context by comparing the vase to one depicted in a popular print from Tianjin of a seated young woman wearing a red robe and pleated skirt; the vase is filled with fruiting orange branches and placed next to a European-style clock (**Fig. 258**).

Contextualising the ceramics of the 19th century is vital as their acquisition by private collectors, dealers and museum curators separates them from their original functions.[8] We have become used to seeing cups, for example, without their accompanying covers and saucers made in matching ceramic or in complementary silver or gold, paktong (an alloy of copper, zinc and nickel that

Figure 259 Wine cup painted with a dragon in overglaze iron-red, Jingdezhen, Tongzhi mark and period (1862–74), h. 4.9cm, d. 6cm. British Museum, London, PDF,B.711, Sir Percival David Foundation

Figure 260 Unidentified artist, detail of a painting showing a matriarch with a tea cup in a gold stand and with silver cover, c. 1853, *Tieluo*, ink and colours on paper, h. 185.5cm, w. 384cm. Mactaggart Art Collection, 2007.23.1, University of Alberta Museums, Edmonton, Gift of Sandy and Cécile Mactaggart

Figure 261 Porcelain altar vessels for the Temple of Heaven, Beijing, made in Jingdezhen. Gui: Qianlong mark and period (1736-95) and tazzas Daoguang mark and period (1821–50): *gui*: h. 23.4cm, w. 28.2cm; tazzas: h. 23.4cm, d. 15.3cm, British Museum, 1925,1021.1 and 2, given by Francis Capel Harrison

resembles silver) or brass (**Fig. 259**).[9] In a large painting of a family in a richly furnished home, by way of contrast, a matriarch is shown accepting birthday gifts and salutations; she is served with tea in a porcelain cup with a gold saucer and covered with a silver lid (**Fig. 260**). For the court, classic Ming dragon designs were repeated – less so in copper-red, which had been revived in the Kangxi era, but more often in underglaze blue or as here in overglaze iron-red (which was cheaper and easier to make and can be identified through its orange-red hue). Court wine and food vessels made in specific colours indicated rank and are in many ways a continuation of High Qing enamel work incorporating pink, pale blue, yellow and deep blue grounds, roundels painted in enamels or *en grisaille* techniques (see pp. 232–3).

Ceramic ritual vessels for the court appear to change little from the mid-18th century, when their images were standardised and recorded in illustrated painted albums, to the end of the Qing dynasty. The *gui* and pair of altar vessels in **Figure 261** were made for the Temple of Heaven in the Qianlong and Daoguang eras. Such continuity is unsurprising; the recent British coronation of King Charles III, for example, used vessels and objects that legitimised his reign by linking him to rulers of the past thousand years.[10]

Rather like the contrast between official and festive robes, there is room for greater departure from past models in the court commissions for special events, such as weddings and birthdays, and in non-ritual objects made to decorate specific buildings. The bowl in **Figure 262** is part of a colourful porcelain dinner set made in 1842 at Jingdezhen for one of Daoguang's daughters, who married into the Mongolian Tumed banner. It is unusual not only for the base mark in Mongolian in iron-red but also for its vivid colour palette with rich overglaze pinks, blues, iron-red and gilding, as well as its Buddhist designs.

The first major court commission after the imperial kilns reopened at Jingdezhen was a set of bowls, tea and wine cups, dishes, teapots and spoons, made in yellow ground porcelain and decorated with plum blossom and magpies with a four-character Tongzhi mark. It was commissioned in 1868 and produced for the wedding ceremony in autumn 1872 of the teenage Tongzhi emperor and Lady Alute 阿魯特 (1854–1875) who became Empress Xiaozheyi 孝哲毅皇后. It took four years to produce the commission of 7,294 ceramics

Figure 262 Porcelain bowl with a mark in Mongolian, Jingdezhen, Daoguang period (1821–50), d. 16.8cm, h. 6.8cm. British Museum, London, Franks.1689, given by Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks

Figure 263 Pair of dishes from an imperial wedding service made for the Tongzhi emperor and Lady Alute, Jingdezhen, 1861–74, d. 6.7cm. British Museum, London, Franks.578.+, given by Sir Augustus Wollaston Franks

for the ceremony in 24 forms, which were used both for dining and decoration. The palace sent painted patterns to be copied, together with instructions on dimensions and numbers per shape and pattern.[11] Other wedding sets for the Tongzhi emperor and Lady Alute included one with iron-red bats, gold longevity *shou* 壽characters in roundels and blue *wan* 卍symbols (a Buddhist emblem encompassing all that is good) on a yellow ground (**Fig. 263**).[12] In the 1980s and 1990s, many Chinese restaurants had copies of the 1893 Guangxu mark and period 'Boundless Longevity' (*Wanshou wu jiang* 萬壽無疆) tablewares, and they continue to influence both ceramic and plastic designs today.

So much for special events. What about court ceramic commissions for buildings? It was revolutionary for a female member of the court to design and commission ceramics from the imperial kiln at Jingdezhen, but Empress Dowager Cixi did. Her patronage of the kilns led to the development of new creative styles in an innovative colour range. In 1885, for her 50th birthday, Cixi ordered porcelains from Jingdezhen to decorate the Tihe dian or Hall of Harmonious Conduct (*Tihe dian* 體和殿). These included flowerpots with matching stands in underglaze blue and with yellow ground with banana trees, peonies and pine (**Fig. 264**).[13] They echo the Jun sets ordered from Henan by the Yongle and Xuande emperors when the Ming imperial palace was first built in Beijing in the early 1400s. The Tihe dian designs connect to the Qing court through the pale yellow ground of Qianlong porcelains, but with a contemporary twist. On Qianlong examples, the designs are placed like embroidered motifs, yet the Cixi commissions are more like details from a flower painting. Also, the purple-coloured border may connect to the novel European aniline dyes and palette being used in the textile industry. Cixi's taste perhaps also incorporates the colours and arrangement of designs from contemporary 19th-century ceramics from Europe and Japan, which could have been found in rooms within the imperial spaces. Although gold on ceramics appears in the Yuan, Ming and early Qing, it is likely that a passion for sprinkled gold in the Guangxu era can be linked to contemporary 19th-century Japanese ceramics owned by the court (see Chapter 17).

Figure 264 Jardiniere with daylily pattern painted in enamels and Tihedian zhi mark, Jingdezhen, Guangxu period (1871–1908), h. 16.2cm, d. 24.7cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 故瓷000672

From both the Palace Museum's exhibitions and publications, we gain an understanding of Cixi's commissioned services. Trawling through museum databases yields some less well-known examples from these sets. A porcelain box, commissioned as part of a set for the reconstruction of the Garden of Perfect Brightness (*Yuanming yuan* 圓明園) features roses and wisteria on a turquoise ground (**Fig. 265**). It bears a red hallmark reading 'The Studio of the Greater Odes' (*Daya zhai* 大雅齋); within a small oval panel framed by two dragons, we find the motto 'The Whole World Celebrating as One Family' (*Tiandi yijia chun* 天地一家春); and on the base, there is a four-character mark, 'Eternal Prosperity and Enduring Spring' (*Yongqing changchun* 永慶長春). Cixi and her court artists no doubt took inspiration from the architecture and gardens of the imperial palace.[14]

Figure 265 Porcelain box painted in overglaze enamels with the mark 'The Studio of the Greater Odes' (*Daya zhai* 大雅齋), Jingdezhen, commissioned by Empress Dowager Cixi, 1871–1908, h. 19.5cm, d, 29.5cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 故瓷004657

Figure 266 Porcelain military parade celebration wine cup, painted in polychrome enamels, Jingdezhen, 1908 (34th year of Guangxu), h. 5cm, l. 19.7cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, FE.12-1972

As the art-historian Ying-chen Peng has written, on 25 January 1874 the Embroidery Workshop (not the painting workshop) was ordered to provide designs for porcelain for Cixi. The order was completed in 1876. Some 31 designs were originally commissioned for her 40th birthday and new residence, construction of which had to be abandoned because of the cost. As an imperial consort, Cixi had a special bond with the embroidery workshop, and this perhaps accounts for her unique means of commissioning porcelain through them. There are also obvious links between Cixi's own painting and the court circle of female artists who 'ghost-painted' for her, including these seasonal designs.

Moving on from the court to the military, it is interesting to consider whether the Taiping made their own ceramics. It is surprising, perhaps, that they created their own imperial textiles, printed their own Bibles, cast cannon, issued their own New Year prints, and minted their own coins but apparently saw no value in firing ceramics. Qing soldiers, by contrast, drank wine from tiny commemorative porcelain cups, such as the example shown in **Figure 266**, which is in the form of a peony flower, painted with enamels in pink with a yellow calyx, and with a green stem dotted with black enamel. The stem is hollow like a straw for drinking the wine. The military drill mentioned in the inscription took place in Taihu county 太湖縣, Anhui province, on 21 September 1908. The Guangxu emperor did not attend but ordered the Manchu military officials Yinchang 荫昌 (1859–1928) and Duanfang 端方 (1861–1911) to represent him at the event.[15] Yin Chang had been reappointed as the Chinese Ambassador to Germany by September 1908, but because of these autumn military manoeuvres in Anhui he delayed his departure for Europe. Both the Guangxu emperor and Cixi died two months later in November 1908.

Many elite military men of both Manchu and Han origin had fine collections of antique ceramics, jades, bronzes and paintings. Duanfang, who would have possessed one of those pink military cups, also owned Song vases[16] and a Neolithic jade *cong* on which they were based.[17] As well as collecting antique ceramics, the elite literati commissioned and bought ceramics with designs that reflected their interests in both scripts and forms of the ancient past. For example, in the 19th century, interest in epigraphy and collecting seals created a fashion for seal impressions as a pattern on porcelain. Ceramics were relatively cheap, and the glazed exterior of porcelain vessels provided a blank white surface for a less exclusive version of loftier paintings, calligraphy and rubbings. The fragmented *bapo* (八破 'Eight brokens') texts accompanying the ancient bronze inscriptions on one vase may be from *Rubbings of the Inscriptions from the Archaic Bronzes of the Past Dynasties* (*Lidai zhongding yiqi kuanzhi fatie*, 歷代鐘鼎彝器款識法帖), compiled during the Southern Song dynasty by Xue Shanggong 薛尚功 (fl. 12th century) (**Fig. 267**). The highlighted inscription is from inside the cover of the Zhong Ju *dui* 仲駒敦 (a type of ritual bronze vessel) illustrated in the *Catalogue of Antique Treasures in Xuanhe Hall* (*Xuanhe bogu tulu* 宣和博古图录). The text on the vase says that the *dui* was in the collection of Zhang Guanwu 張官五(dates unknown), the governor of Dongchang 東昌 in Shandong province, which matches the record in Ruan

Figure 267 Porcelain vase with *bapo* decoration in overglaze enamels, Jingdezhen, *c.* 1850–79, h. 19.1cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 79.2.662, purchase by subscription, 1879

Figure 268 (far left) Bottle painted to evoke a Shaoxing wine container with *bapo* style calligraphy and imitation bamboo casing, *c.* 1821–1850, h. 20cm. Formerly in the Weishaupt Collection

Figure 269 (left) Inscribed *zisha* stoneware inkstone with signature of Huo Ziye, possibly Yixing, Jiangsu, *c.* 1800–50, l. 10.7cm, w. 7.2cm, h. 2.4cm. Private collection – Whang Shang Ying

Yuan's *Epigraphic Register of Shanzuo* (*Shanzuo jinshizhi* 山左金石志).

Innovative colours – dusky pink, lime green and cornflower blue – based on a newly invented palette for textiles were embraced by ceramic producers in the second half of the 19th century. A bottle in the new colours modelled after a Shaoxing wine bottle has *bapo*-style calligraphy cartouches reading: 'Top Scholar Red (*zhuang yuan hong* 狀元紅)[18], 'Zhe[jiang] and Shao[xing]' (*Zhe Shao* 浙紹), a trademark with certificate of excellence' (*Derun zhengji* 德潤徵記) and 'old wine of Shaoxing' (*Shaoxing laojiu* 紹興老酒) (**Fig. 268**).[19]

In the 19th century, there are many examples of 'Stele School' (*beipai* 碑派) calligraphy, a style of calligraphy evolved through the study of ancient writing on artefacts used as decoration on Yixing stonewares or on *zisha* 紫砂 clay objects made by potters in Fujian, Yunnan and Guangdong. Such writing styles are also incised or painted on white porcelains from Fujian and Jiangxi. A beautiful inkstone with the signature of Huo Ziye 霍子冶 (1780–1850) is incised with a text from a Western Zhou dynasty bronze vessel *zun* 尊that was commissioned by Guo Shu 虢叔 (dates unknown), who is said to be the younger brother of King Wen of Zhou 周文王 (*c.* 1152–1050 BC) (**Fig. 269**). The eight large characters on the right read 'Bronze *zun* commissioned by Guo Shu' (虢叔作叔殷勃尊朕); the line at the left reads 'Inscription on the *zun* of Guo Shu' (*Guoshu zun ming* 虢叔尊铭).

Figure 270 Liang Shitai 梁時泰 (active 1870s–1890s), photograph of Yixuan, Prince Chun and children, *c.* 1886–8. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, 1981,PH23.3

In the 19th century, potters introduced innovative shapes to ceramic production. New forms include cylindrical hatstands made for the court as well as elite and urban markets, many with carved out shapes. The new forms with their missing segments perhaps relate to *bapo*.[20] A Jiaqing period example with a yellow ground and dragons is in the Palace Museum in Beijing.[21] Thanks to the advent of photography, we can literally see that these objects were sometimes used as hatstands – one image shows Aisin-Gioro Yixuan 愛新覺羅 • 奕譞, Prince Chun (醇親王 1840–1891), father of the Guangxu emperor, resting his summer hat on one (**Fig. 270**). Alternatively, as an illustration in the *Dianshizhai huabao* shows, they would also have been used in pairs as ornaments, besides modern clocks, paintings and calligraphies (**Fig. 271**). An example in the private collection of Trevor Ford is quite rare: it is inscribed 'Made in Changjiang at the east foot of Mount Zhu (Jingdezhen), after the style of Wang Hui, during the last ten days of the eighth month of the *guiyou* 癸酉 year (1873). Made by Wang Shaowei 王少维 [*c*. 1817–1887]' (**Fig. 272**). The enamels are not as fixed as earlier enamels and are quite easily damaged. Presumably, they were fired at lower temperatures to save on time and fuel.

Figure 271 Detail of Jin Chanxiang, *Civilisation in vain* (*Siwen tu tan* 斯文塗炭), lithograph illustration, *Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報, 1884, Shanghai. SOAS Library University of London, E Per 81267.

A completely new style of ceramic developed in the second half of the 19th century, with close connections to paintings and the widely circulating prints by popular artists of the day. These sorts of decorative ceramics, with portraits of beautiful women learning out from behind draperies or curtains of flowers, became fashionable following the painting styles of artists such as Ren Bonian (**Fig. 273**). The porcelains inspired by these portrait images often included inscriptions and seals, like a literati painting. They were also made in the most fashionable dusky pink and fresh green overglaze enamel colours (**Fig. 274**).

The image of the held-back curtain in thick pink or yellow enamel, showing women emerging from rooms, quickly spread in the late 1800s and early 1900s, appearing on pillows, cups, teapots, bowls and spoons, often with poems inscribed in thick black enamel (**Fig. 275**). Perhaps this mirrors the way in which more women emerged into the public sphere as the Qing dynasty drew to a close. Women depicted in this way are also often shown as literate – reading, writing, painting or with writing equipment.

Sets of nesting porcelain vessels in diminishing sizes were an invention of the 1800s. Of course, earlier vessels were stacked in descending sizes for transportation, but specifically made sets in diminishing sizes were introduced in the 19th century. The covered medicine jars in **Figure 276** belong to a very popular 19th-century style of design that shows historical images of men and women accompanied by bespoke texts. The palette and style of

Figure 272 Wang Shaowei王少维(*c*. 1817–1887), porcelain hatstand with landscape in pale enamels, Jingdezhen, 1873. H.28.5cm, d. 12cm. Private collection of Trevor Ford, 2015.05-14.4. The seal reads Huancui Area of Zhushan Factory which was within the Imperial Factory area

Figure 273 (far left) Ren Bonian, *Lady and plum blossom*, 1884, Shanghai, ink and colours on paper, h. 96cm, w. 42.6cm. Liaoning Provincial Museum

Figure 274 (left) Wang Zhang 汪章 (active 1875–1908), hat stand, Jingdezhen, 1890, h. 27.9cm, d. 12.4cm. Private collection of Trevor Ford, 2005.01-22.4

depiction are very similar to popular prints with blank backgrounds and accompanying texts – in this case modelled after 'Peerless Historical Figures' (*Wushuang pu* 無雙譜), which was first published in 1694, depicting 40 famous people (**Fig. 277**). The individuals include some female figures, such as Empress Wu Zetian 武则天 (624–705), and Cao E 曹娥 (130–143, filial daughter of the Eastern Han period).

After the Taiping were finally quelled, potters from the imperial kilns were redeployed at commercial kilns. Life must have been very tough for the porcelain decorators, as a painted tile (**Fig. 278**) demonstrates through its inscription, written by Cheng Men 程門 (active *c.* 1862–1908) from Anhui:

> Eating thin porridge and wearing hardly enough clothes during chilly winters for decades.
> Having no beautiful premises or official positions.
> Keeping the brush for unknown reasons.
> Painting besides the riverbank and old restaurants.

More and more potters sign their work at Jingdezhen in Jiangxi, at Yixing in Jiangsu, at Dehua in Fujian and Shiwan in Guangdong, presumably because they were trying to create a market for their ceramics. But is our picture of ceramics manufacture distorted by these great centres of production?

Figure 275 Small pillow and teapots showing women behind pulled-back curtains, *c.* 1890–1910. Pillow: h. 12cm, w. 14.5cm; teapot (middle): h. 7.5cm, d. 9.8cm; teapot (right): h. 17cm, w. 12cm. British Museum, London, 1910,0606.13 and 14, given by Charles Lund, and 2013,3007.15, given by Dr Alfreda Murck

Figure 276 Set of five nesting containers with historical figures, Jingdezhen, 1850–80, h. 11.5cm (max.), 3.3cm (min.). British Museum, London, 1996,1005.4.a–e, given by Miss Helena Mott in memory of her father, Henry Mott

Figure 277 ***Album of Peerless Historical Figures*** **(*Wushuang pu* 無雙譜), 1895, ink and colours on paper, album leaves, h. 25cm, w. 16.5cm. Private collection**

Figure 278 Painted porcelain round plaque, possibly depicting the West Lake in Hangzhou, inscribed by Cheng Men. C.1885-1890, d. 26cm. Private collection of Trevor Ford, 2015.05-14.2

That a country the size of Europe was only supplied by these kilns seems unlikely. At the very end of the imperial era, porcelain factories were established across China, perhaps the most celebrated of which is the Hunan Porcelain Factory (*Hunan ciye zhizao zong gongsi* 湖南瓷業製造總公司). However, the Jiangxi Porcelain Company (*Jiangxi ciye gongsi* 江西瓷業公司) was more influential over time, set up to reinvigorate the production of 'fine porcelain', in the final years of the Qing.[22] Kilns and workshops produced innovative wares for the court, military, elite, other city dwellers and global markets. New colours and novel forms were introduced. Increasingly 'art' porcelain decorators signed their work as they competed for clients and built their reputations.[23] By contrast, anonymous craftsmen churned out utilitarian crockery for a population of 400 million people in kilns across the empire.

Figure 279 Zhou Peichun workshop (active *c.* 1880–1910), Beijing, porter carrying ceramics encountering a female customer (detail), *c.* 1900, leaf from an album, ink and colour on paper, h. 25.5cm, w. 34.5cm. British Museum, London, 1938,1210,0.8, given by Mrs Alfred Wingate

Perhaps because of the vastness of 'ceramics' as a category, our understanding of it is far from complete. Interest in the ordinary by painters and photographers helps us better visualise the impact ceramics made in daily life. Images of people pursuing their routine occupations proliferated in the 19th century – many made in response to demand from foreign clientele.[24] A watercolour album image from the workshop of Zhou Peichun shows a Beijing street-trader around the turn of the 20th century, with two large woven baskets, lined with blue cotton, and balanced on a bamboo T-frame, which could be easily reshouldered after a customer had made a purchase (**Fig. 279**). These paniers are filled with ceramics, which entice an approaching woman clutching an official's winter hat, perhaps indicating that she has money to spend. When you look inside the overloaded baskets, you may ask yourselves, 'Where are the plain, green-glazed teapots, green-glazed chamber pots, and green bowls in concentric sets today? Where are the everyday overglaze red-on-white and blue-on-white sets of dinner wares?' Just as with the textile collections, the bias for court ceramics among curators and collectors has shaped our ideas about what 19th-century Qing ceramics should look like, restricting our understanding of the creativity of 19th-century potters.

Ceramics had long been global commodities. For the European market, private commissions of porcelain with coats of arms, or in European shapes or with European designs, continued to be made throughout the first half of the 19th century, as evidenced by surviving heirloom pieces and shipwreck finds, including the *Diana* cargo (a ship which sank in the Malacca Straits in 1817).[25] The shapes, colours and styles of painting were bespoke for the different markets, whether the porcelain was bound for Europe, America, Japan, Russia, Indonesia, Malaysia or Singapore. For example, for the Vietnamese courts of Minh Mang (1820–1841) and Thieu Tri (1841–1847), blue-and-white ware porcelain sets were made at Jingdezhen. These included distinctive lime pots with round bodies and overhead handles to store powdered lime for betel chewing.[26] By contrast colourful enamelled and gilded wares for the Thai market were produced in two basic types: Bencharong with heavy overglaze enamels in patterns from Southeast Asian textiles and sometimes figures from the Ramayana, and Lai Nam Thong style where in addition to the extensive gilding, the vessels themselves were more finely potted with thinner walls and a finer paste.[27]

The aim of this chapter has been to look at 19th-century Chinese ceramic production across the court, military, elite, city dwellers and global communities in order to bring some of the porcelain out of the shadows and into the light, and demonstrate the incredible resilience, innovation and creativity of the ceramics industry in the late Qing. Our view of the 19th century is biased by photography, which we assume gives us the full picture. However, when we see the original colours, we realise that 19th-century ceramics are not all shades of grey nor indeed blue-and-white but survive in both bright colours and subtle hues.

Notes

1 Now in the Royal Collections Trust; see Ayers 2016, vol. 1.
2 Soame Jenyns 1963.
3 Compared to the vast body of literature on the earlier Qing and Ming court commissions, the 19th century has been underrepresented. Notable exceptions include Kwan 1983.
4 A Xianfeng example was sold by Sothebys in 2017 (https://www.sothebys.com/zh/auctions/ecatalogue/2017/chinese-art-hk0754/lot.600.html).
5 Meyer-Fong 2013; Platt 2012.
6 Eberhard 2023a.
7 Zhang 2008, no. 223.
8 Tythacott 2011.
9 Stuart 2006–7.
10 Iain M. Clark in his 2015 thesis describes a sinification of the Manchu rulers through the use of these state ritual vessels (Clark 2015).
11 Ronald 1996.
12 Xu Huping and Nanjing Museum 2003, 435.
13 Peng 2023.
14 Guo Xingkuan and Wang Guangyao 2007, 145–7.
15 Wilson 1998.
16 British Museum, London, PDF.233, Sir Percival David Foundation.
17 British Museum, London, 1945,1017.157, bequeathed by Oscar Raphael.
18 Zhuangyuan Hong is a type of wine. Families in Shaoxing would bury a jar of rice wine in the ground to mark the birth of a baby boy. They hoped that the boy would grow up to be well-educated and go to the capital to succeed in the exams. The family would then open the buried wine to celebrate if he was successful hence the name of the wine Top Scholar Red.
19 Avitabile 1987, no. 35, 41.
20 Berliner 2018.
21 Tie and Xi 2012, vol. 3, 668.
22 Lai, Dayi 2012, 233; Wilson 1998, 75.
23 Wain 1998.
24 Clunas 1984b.
25 Ball 1995.
26 See Trần Đức Anh Sơn 2008, 117, fig. 60.
27 Woodward 2022. For an example of Bencharong see https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_Franks-1392. For an example of Lai Nam Thong see https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_2004-0628-3.

Chapter 23
Gifts to Tsar Nicholas II from the Guangxu emperor in 1895 and in 1896

Maria L. Menshikova

The State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg holds a number of masterpieces of decorative arts made in the Qing imperial workshops. During the 20th century their provenance was completely forgotten. In recent years, however, this author has been able to reconstruct their history of acquisition into the Tsar's collection in the 1890s. This chapter focuses on the official gifts presented by two Embassies Extraordinary in 1895 and in 1896 from the Guangxu emperor to Tsar Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, relations between China and Russia were cordial. The first Orthodox Spiritual Mission was founded in Beijing in 1715. Trade and cultural contacts were maintained, with caravans travelling overland across the boundless steppes. From 1727 (when the Treaty of Kyakhta established diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries) trade was booming, especially on the border in Kyakhta and Troitsko-Savvsk on the Russian side and in the town now called Altanbulag on the Qing side in modern Mongolia which was at the time referred to in Chinese as literally 'buy-sell town' (Maimaizhen 買賣鎮). In the second half of the 19th century, the countries showed genuine interest and curiosity in each other. Russian archaeological and research expeditions were equipped to study the history and nature of China. Russian tea companies were founded in mainland China. And Russian sea voyages included visits to ports in East Asia, even by representatives of the royal family: in 1872 Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich (1850–1908) visited China, and Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich (1866–1933) went to China and Japan in 1886 and 1890–1 respectively. By the end of the century, the question of more fundamental routes of trade, and even the construction of a railroad arose.

The penetration of European powers into China since the 1840s could not but worry Russia. Although envoys were regularly sent to the country, in addition to the presence of the Spiritual Mission, Russia's diplomatic contacts with China in the 19th century were relatively insignificant until the 1890s. Among the official representatives was the diplomat A.G. Vlangali (1823–1908), who was in China during the difficult 1860s. Russia did not take part in the Taiping Civil War or the sacking of the Summer Palace, so the countries remained on good terms. The result was that China's policy became orientated towards its northern neighbour. Japan's attempts to establish itself on the mainland also contributed to China's friendly relations with Russia.

Some events in China in the second half of the 19th century were even mentioned in the Russian press, evidenced by a page from an 1861 edition of a pictorial called the *Russian Art Gazette* (**Fig. 280**).[1] General N.P. Ignatiev (1797–1879), who was an envoy to China in 1859–60, is depicted at the top of the page. His role is important because in 1860, after the Second Opium War, he signed the Treaty of Peking, in which lands along the right bank of the Amur River and up to the Pacific Ocean were ceded by the Qing to Russia. The image below shows the 'Emperor and Empress of China'. Given the dates, this is presumably Xianfeng and his wife Ci'an (1837–1881), though the representation of the couple is certainly imaginary. The three-quarter angle of the portrait is contrary to traditional Chinese portraiture

Figure 280 Page from the *Russian Art Gazette* (Русский художественный листок), with illustrations of General Ignatiev, the Xianfeng emperor and Ci'an by Vasily Timm, 1861, no. 23. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, ЭРГ-32687

Figure 281 Portrait of Wang Zhichun (1842–1906) from *Illustration of the Whole World* (1895). Saint-Petersburg State Theatre Library

positioning, and Xianfeng, let alone his empress, had no visual exposure to foreigners. The pictorial was printed in the spring of 1861, well before the emperor's death on 22 August 1861 and the establishment of the tripartite regency on 7 November 1861 by Ci'an, Cixi and Prince Gong (the late emperor's brother; 1833–1898).

Russia needed to strengthen its position with the Qing. In 1874–5, a scientific and commercial expedition led by Colonel Y.A. Sosnovsky (1842–1897) took place. P.Ya. Pyasetsky (1843–1919) was seconded to it as a doctor and artist. From his drawings Pyasetsky compiled a scroll-panorama entitled 'From the middle of China to Western Siberia'. Photographer A.E. Boyarsky (d. 1878) also took numerous pictures. In addition, Pyasetsky assembled mineralogical, botanical, zoological and ethnographic collections, and wrote the book *A Journey Through China*, which was awarded a gold medal by the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. On 24 March 1876 the Chinese objects brought back by this expedition were displayed to Tsar Alexander II (r. 1855–81) in St George's Hall at the Winter Palace. Alexander 'was very pleased with the exhibition'.[2] Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to identify these items. Spurred by Russia's interest in Siberia, Central Asia and East Asia, Alexander III (r. 1881–94) sent his son, Tsesarevich Nikolai Alexandrovich, the future Nicholas II, on a world tour in 1890–91 for the sake of 'his political development'. In China, as an heir to the throne, he was received with special honours.

Embassy of Wang Zhichun in 1895

After the Tsesarevich's trip, Qing China now had first-hand knowledge of its neighbour: the Russian Empire and the 'White Tsar'. Important missions were sent to the capital of Russia on special occasions. An embassy from the Guangxu emperor was thus sent to express condolences on the death of Alexander III in November 1894. The diplomats, led by Wang Zhichun 王之春 (1842–1906) (**Fig. 281**), travelled first by sea from Shanghai to Marseilles, and then overland through Paris and Berlin to the Russian capital. They arrived in Saint Petersburg on 4 February 1895. Nicholas had married Alexandra Feodorovna (1872–1918) soon after his father's death, and his coronation was to take place in 1896, and so gifts were brought and presented to mark these important events. The offerings were luxurious and expensive; among them were *ruyi* sceptres made of gold and green jade. The most precious were:

> the symbol of 'good wishes', of a very fine work representing three medallions made of whitish jade with carved relief characters and images, linked by a gold wire and filigree in one like a sceptre with golden silk tassels and silver enamelled pendants, two staffs carved of green jade, a set of chopsticks, fork, spoon, cups and saucers, made of gold and ivory, panels

Figure 282 ***Ruyi*** **sceptre, late 18th–19th century, gold (750–800 proof), jade, silver, painted enamel, silk tassels and cord, l. 60cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛС-288**

> made of carved bone and stones, and especially noted luxurious articles of *cloisonné* enamel, made in bright colours of enamel, distinguished by excellent workmanship.[3]

The *ruyi* sceptres were very precious and were kept in the Winter Palace. In 1903 they were taken by the Tsar personally to his private rooms. According to an inventory in 1909, they were still in his cabinet at that time. A gold example was described as:

> Chinese sceptre of three parts, connected with each other by means of a rod of gold filigree work, decorated with a silver ornament of coloured enamel, on the cord with tassels. On a rosewood stand, brocaded with silk and Chinese characters on the sides. Covered with a glass case.[4]

Today this object is on display in the Hermitage Museum's Gold Room (**Fig. 282**).[5] It is the largest Chinese gold *ruyi* known to this author (60cm long without the tassels, and weighing 1200g). It is decorated with large semi-spherical ovals of 'mutton-fat' jade carved with stylised 壽 shou (long-life) characters and auspicious symbols. It was customary in China to give precious sceptres to rulers on special occasions: on ascension to the throne, on the full cycle of 60 years, or on a birthday, for example. Two dark green jade sceptres carved as tree trunks with *lingzhi* fungus as a symbol of longevity were transferred from the Hermitage to the palace museums in Pavlovsk and Oranienbaum in the mid-20th century.

Traditional items from a Chinese imperial dining set were also gifted to the Tsar: chopsticks, a fork with two tines, spoons, and small cups and saucers. They are made of very expensive materials, unusual for everyday sets. The chopsticks and fork, for example, are carved from ivory and set in gold; 'Quite elegant are two cutlery in cases: gold chopsticks used for eating, miniature cups and spoons'.

Contemporaries noted especially the 'luxurious *cloisonné* enamel pieces in bright colours, distinguished by excellent workmanship'. Among the offerings brought by Wang Zhichun, they record that 'The first place is undoubtedly occupied by two huge vases, representing a rare example of the most beautiful and large size *cloisonné*. These vases are placed on carved stools of black wood'. 'The distinct enamel pattern and large size does not allow to make even a rough estimate of both large vases, and two other much smaller, but relatively large table vases, placed on the interlaced bodies of dragons, on the legs of which stand vases. The gilded bronze dragons are moulded very skilfully, finely and chiselled, and the vases themselves are double *cloisonné* – outside and inside – of different shades of turquoise enamel'.[6] Unfortunately the whereabouts of the two larger vases are unknown, but the two paired table bowls mounted on bronze dragons with five claws on their paws – symbols of imperial power in China – are now kept in the Hermitage.[7] The bowls are indeed decorated on both sides with *cloisonné* bluish turquoise enamel of superb quality, depicting black and white sea plants and creatures such as fish, crabs, tortoises and shells (**Fig. 283**).

The Qing delegation laid a silver wreath of Russian manufacture on a Chinese cushion of golden patterned silk (possibly together with a gold *ruyi* sceptre) on the tomb of Alexander III in the Peter and Paul Cathedral. The rest of the gifts, meanwhile, were officially presented to Nicholas II.

Embassy of Li Hongzhang in 1896

The next significant arrival of Chinese artefacts is associated with the coronation of Nicholas II in May 1896. The Qing government intended to send an embassy to Russia headed by Wang Zhichun, who had already been to Saint Petersburg, but Count A.P. Cassini (1835–1919), a Russian ambassador to China in 1891–96, insisted on the politician and diplomat Li Hongzhang instead and a telegram from the Tsar confirmed this selection.

Nicholas II and Li Hongzhang were supposed to meet during the Tsesarevich's trip to China in 1891. However, the meeting did not happen because the route was changed: the

Figure 283 Large bowl with sea creatures, supported by two entwined five-clawed dragons (one of a pair), Qing dynasty (end of the 18th century to the first half of the 19th century), bronze, double-sided *cloisonné* enamel, h. 50cm, w. 90cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛМ-580

planned trip to Tianjin, where Li Hongzhang was Viceroy of Zhili province, did not take place. Li then sent a gift to the Tsesarevich – a bronze vase made in imitation of an ancient vessel for storing wine (**Fig. 284**). Further signs of attention were given in absentia: in Canton the Tsesarevich was met by the brother of the Viceroy, Li Hanzhang 李瀚章 (1821–1899), and when an assassination attempt was made on the Russian heir in Japan, Li Hongzhang sent a sympathetic message, which was delivered by his adopted son Li Jingfang 李經方 (1855–1934).

The journey through China made a significant impression on the Tsesarevich. When he was back from his trip, a vast exhibition of 1,313 pieces was mounted in the Hermitage in 1893–4. Many objects acquired by, or presented to, him in China, were kept in 'his privy apartment' in the Winter Palace until the last days of the his life. Others were kept in different palaces in Saint Petersburg and its suburbs. His diaries noted, for example: 'December 1. Thursday… At 3 o'clock I went with Alix [his wife] to the Winter Palace, where we chose samples of furniture and fabrics for our future apartment; then we also examined my Japanese, Chinese and Indian things'.[8] Moreover, Li Hongzhang later recalled that at one of the receptions in Saint Petersburg, the conversation was always about the Tsar's journey to East Asia. He had then learned quite a number of Chinese expressions, some of which were even long and pithy, and which he repeated from time to time. The Tsesarevich also returned with some private presents; among them was a wedding costume consisting of a pink satin jacket and blue satin skirt, heavily embroidered with five clawed dragons, which was probably bought for

Figure 284 Archaistic vase with taotie masks, 17th–18th century, cast bronze, h. 80cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛМ-156

Figure 285 Pink jacket and pale blue skirt with five-clawed dragons, 1870s–1891, satin silk, gold thread couched embroidery, l. 100cm (jacket), 105cm (skirt). The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. nos ЛТ-7876, 7877

his favourite dancer Mathilde Kschessinska (1872–1971) (**Fig. 285**).

Many officials and guests arrived in Russia in 1896 for the coronation. The Chinese party was described as a group of people in strange clothes of the 'colours of yellow-brown autumn leaves', hats with balls and ribbons, of unusual 'oriental' appearance. People in the streets stopped to gaze at them. The embassy was headed by Ambassador Extraordinary Plenipotentiary Li Hongzhang, who decided to travel with a coffin in case of his death on the trip. The embassy pursued different goals: in addition to congratulating the 'White Tsar' on the occasion of his accession to the throne, it aimed to find in Russia an ally against Japan and, in addition, to negotiate on the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway. An agreement was reached.

> Gifts from the Guangxu emperor were presented by Li Hongzhang in Tsarskoye Selo, in the palace in the outskirts of the capital, even before the coronation: 'April 22. Monday. … At 2.30 pm received the famous Li Hongzhang with a large retinue. A representative old man! …April 25th. Thursday. Received Li Hongzhang, who gave me gifts on behalf of Bogdikhan as well as his own. Then had a long talk with him in the study, through the medium of his son Lord Li!'[9]

On the same day, the gifts were transferred to the Winter Palace. Lists of the most valuable items have been preserved:

> Gifts delivered by the Ambassador Extraordinary Li Hongzhang to His Majesty from the Chinese Emperor on 25 April 1896:
>
> – White jade rock
>
> – White jade vase

– Porcelain vase

– Ancient bronze vase with cover

– Two plates under the *cloisonné*

– Blood-coloured porcelain vase

– Antique bronze quadrangular vase

– Two stork candlesticks, *cloisonné*

Gifts presented to His Majesty by Ambassador Extraordinary Li Hongzhang:

– Two carved lacquered boxes

– Two filigree bouquets

– A silk embroidered carpet

– Two *cloisonné* screens

– Two vases in the form of *cloisonné* bottles

– Bronze incense bowl, *cloisonné*

– Ten boxes of tea

– Ten pieces of silk cloth

– Two *cloisonné* coolers[10]

During the 20th century the pieces were many times transferred from one place to another (and some may even have been sold). The circumstances of their acquisition and their history were forgotten. But many have survived and have now been identified in the collection of the State Hermitage Museum by this author. Various memoirs, archival documents, marks and numbers on the objects helped in the investigations.

Li Hongzhang's memoirs record his first audience with Nicholas II:

> The Minister escorted the distinguished guest to an outbuilding for a short rest; the tutor changed into ceremonial dress and arrived in a small hall for an audience with the Russian royal couple. The Tsar and Tsarina rose from the throne and welcomed [the guest]. *Jiexiang* (节相) [one of the official titles by which the text refers to Li Hongzhang] made three bows, presented his credentials and respectfully handed to the great emperor the highest Order of the Double Dragon brought from afar, studded with precious stones, skilfully made by a French craftsman, a pair of large candlesticks, a pair of discs of white jade, one carpet decorated with embroidery in the Gu style [possibly the bed cover illustrated in **Figure 293**], a pair of ancient bronze vessels, various inlaid vessels and saucers of *cloisonné* enamel; all these pieces were extremely valuable.[11]

Comparing Li Hongzhang's information with the lists of things that entered the palace collection in 1896, we can only regret that in many respects they do not coincide, and that the information is incomplete. Thus, the Winter Palace list does not include jade discs, known as *bi* (璧), which were a symbol of Heaven and the imperial power given from Heaven, and which signified recognition of the ruler of Russia. However, today the museum does hold two similar discs with dragons and phoenixes on wooden stands.[12]

The fate of the gifts that arrived at the Winter Palace probably varied. We were unable to identify a number of items based on their extremely general description and/or the absence of similar works of art in the museum storerooms. The tea from the ten cases was, of course, drunk; the ten pieces of silk cloth were probably used. As to the artistic qualities and characteristics of the objects, they were precious and at the same time traditional offerings, from the Chinese point of view. None of the rulers of other countries at that time had received such an honour. The gifts, mostly brought in pairs, each had a symbolic auspicious meaning, perhaps a wish of prosperity to the state, or for the Tsar's long life and happy reign.

From the Winter Palace lists, 'Ancient bronze vase with cover' is a sacrificial *gui* vessel – a rare example of ancient Chinese bronze (**Fig. 286**). According to Li Hongzhang, it

Figure 286 (below left) *Gui* vessel with cover, 12th–11th century BCE, cast bronze, h. 23.2cm, d. 20.2cm (mouth). The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛМ-20

Figure 287 (below right) Rubbing from the late 1800s of the inscription inside the bronze *gui* illustrated in Figure 286

Figure 288 Archaistic *gui* vessel, 12th–14th century, and stand with Qianlong period inscription, 18th century, cast bronze, rosewood stand incised with gold, h. 25cm, d. 28cm (bowl with bronze stand). The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛМ-642

was more than 2,000 years old; today we can date it quite precisely to the 12th–11th century BCE. This *gui* vessel was included in an imperial compendium of ancient Chinese bronzes, and was an offering from the palace collection. It was traditional for such a vessel, which was both a ritual object and at the same time a document, to have an inscription in archaic Chinese script on the cover and inside the vessel, in the form of a dedicatory formula; this one reads '*Que of Shi* made this precious vessel to pay homage to his father and mother so that he might be granted longevity' (**Fig. 287**). Sacrificial bronze vessels, dating back to ancient times, were placed in burials, as documents passed from generation to generation, and later they became objects to be collected. They were also symbols of inherited power and property, such as land. Therefore, such a gift was a purely Chinese expression of a wish for a prosperous and long reign. A second bronze *gui* vessel among the coronation gifts and now in the Hermitage collection was initially believed to be ancient, but it is now attributed to the 12th–14th century (**Fig. 288**). It has a more recent rosewood stand ordered by the Qianlong emperor and with an incised gold inscription.

Among the gifts were magnificent works of gilded bronze, decorated with lavish *cloisonné* enamel, which became a 'trademark' of China. Especially symbolic was the offering of a pair of candlesticks in the form of Manchurian white cranes with red caps (in Russian they were called 'storks') – they are made of *cloisonné* enamel, have white and black plumage, and *lingzhi* (靈芝) mushrooms grow at their feet (**Fig. 289**). In addition to the imagery having an association with notions of immortality and longevity, two such birds usually stood in the reception halls on the sides of the throne of the Chinese emperor, expressing the benevolent formula 'ten thousand years of reign of the ruling dynasty'.

Two vases in the form of moon flasks (**Fig. 290**) are decorated mainly in *cloisonné* imperial yellow enamel. The depiction of bats (*fu* – 福 happiness) supporting a stylised character (*shou* – 壽 longevity) as well as jewels, flowers and butterflies (prosperity in old age), again reads as homophones and rebuses of good wishes. On the bottom of both flasks red paper labels of the imperial palace collection are preserved. Two *cloisonné* ice chests or coolers are of extremely fine work: the rose colour is made with colloidal gold and the enamel is polished to a shiny mirror-like surface. The main imagery is auspicious: stylized *shou* (壽) characters and *fu* bats on a gilded *leiwen* geometric meander background (**Fig. 291**).

Two imperial eight-lobed red boxes for sweets or candied fruits also symbolized a wish for longevity (**Fig. 292**). They are made of priceless natural lacquer, the sap of the lacquer tree *Toxicodendron vernicifluum*.. The lacquer is coloured by cinnabar and ochre, applied in many layers and then

Figure 289 Pair of standing cranes, late 18th–early 19th century, bronze, *cloisonné*, gilding, h. 128cm, 130cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. nos ЯМ-1158, 1159

Figure 290 Pair of moon flasks with auspicious symbols, late 18th–early 19th century, bronze, *cloisonné*, gilding, h. 28cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. nos ЛМ-575, 576

carved. The theme of the carving is a landscape with the Daoist Eight Immortals standing on a heavenly terrace with a tree with ripened peaches and a pine tree growing near. They are greeting Xi Wangmu – the Queen Mother of the West – who can be seen descending to them on a flying phoenix. The boxes are paired and the design on them is carved in reflecting symmetry. Their interiors are covered with black lacquer and painted with gold lacquer flowers, typical of the style of the palace workshops.

The embroideries among the Guangxu emperor's gifts were of a superb quality and perhaps some were of the Gu type, as indicated above. A bed cover of 'tea-dust' satin silk with an embroidery of white ducks and ducklings under a flowering apricot tree, at the water pond, could be one such example (**Fig. 293**). A pair of 18th-century *cloisonné* screens (**Fig. 294**) featuring a riverscape and a terrace in the land of immortals were also presented by Li Hongzhang – examples of court craft from the High Qing.

Figure 291 Ice chest (one of a pair), late 18th–early 19th century, bronze, zinc, *cloisonné*, gilding, rosewood stand, h. 64cm (with stand). The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛМ-495

Before leaving Moscow on 21 June 1896, Nicholas II gave Li Hongzhang an audience in Ilyinsky village north of Moscow and awarded the Guangxu emperor with the Order of St Andrew, the highest honour in Russia, and presented an accompanying charter, in Russian and also translated into Chinese. Both texts were bound in mauve velvet with a gold embossed double-headed eagle. The Russian version was signed by Nicholas II and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince A.B. Lobanov-Rostovsky (1824–1896). Together with other documents kept in the Palace in Beijing, they were transferred to Taiwan in 1949, and they are now in the collection of the National Palace Museum in Taipei.[13] The fate of the Order itself is unknown.

From the text of the charter, we learn that it was a reciprocal gesture. The Qing emperor congratulated Nicholas on his coronation, awarding him the Order of the Golden Double Dragon First Class, given only to persons of imperial blood, as well as an accompanying document. Li Hongzhang also mentioned the significance of these awards. When the Tsar was pleased to put on the ancient imperial headdress (crown), the ambassador bowed to him with a letter from the emperor and the Order of the Golden Double Dragon. When and where it was presented is not certain, but

Figure 292 Large box and cover with Xi Wangmu and the Eight Immortals (one of a pair), Qianlong period (1736–95), carved and gold painted lacquer, h. 18cm (with cover), d. 43cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛН-159

Figure 293 Bed cover with ducks, ducklings and flowering apricot tree, 1850–1890s, satin silk, untwisted and twisted silk threads, embroidery in Gu style, h. 224cm, w. 180cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛТ-8703

Figure 294 Pair of double-sided screens (originally with stands, now lost), 18th century, bronze, *cloisonné*, gilding, h. 64.5cm, w. 44cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. nos ЛМ-627, 628

Figure 295 Medal commemorating the embassy of Li Hongzhang (by medalist Avenir Grilikhes, 1822–1905), stamped Saint Petersburg Mint, 1896, silver, d. 2.9cm. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. РМ- 8032

it was most likely during the coronation in Moscow. As with Guangxzu's Order of St Andrew, the whereabouts of the Order are unknown and similarly there is no existing image or description of it. It did not enter the Winter Palace, and it is not in the collection of the Moscow Kremlin Armoury. While we know what it could look like from reference books of awards and similar orders, it is sad that one of the most important and rarest historical objects related to the Chinese embassy of 1896 has been lost. In recent years, a gold Order of the Double Dragon, decorated with blue enamel, has been on display at the Fabergé Museum in Saint Petersburg, but its history is unknown.

The State Mint in Saint Petersburg issued two silver medals of different diameters with pairs of relief dragons facing the centre, and with relief Chinese inscriptions, commemorating the Embassy of the Great Qing dynasty (**Fig. 295**). None of the guests who arrived in Russia in 1896 was similarly honoured.[14]

The Russian government, hoping to authorise the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway through Mongolia and northern Manchuria, treated this embassy with special attention and tried to keep secret everything that did not concern the official coronation ceremony (the visit was not even published in the newspapers), so as not to attract the attention of foreign countries to the signing of the treaty concerning the railway's construction. In any case, an agreement was reached, albeit somewhat later, and the

railroad was built. Many authors claim that Li Hongzhang received a large cash bribe while in Russia or that there was an agreement for an incentive payment to Li personally. Count Sergei Witte (1849–1915), the Russian statesman, wrote that the only occasion on which in negotiations with the Chinese he tried to interest them by means of payments was much later, when discussing the cession of the Guangdong (Kwantung) region to Russia in 1897. Li was offered 'considerable gifts – 500,000 rubles'.

The Ambassador received many memorable offerings, but unfortunately, we have not yet been able to find any inventories of the gifts. After a long stay in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, Li travelled to Europe and America, thus becoming the first Chinese person to circumnavigate the globe. On his return to China, Li delivered a message sent to the Guangxu emperor, and had an audience with Empress Dowager Cixi. After this reception, he fell into great disfavour because of his praise for the child-bearing ability, beauty and behaviour of the Tsarina. He received a notice not to appear at court for a year. In 1901, Li Hongzhang was once again summoned by Cixi to perform a task of national importance – to sign a treaty with the powers of Europe, Russia and America after the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion. He was the only person whose signature the Allies agreed to. In November 1901, Li passed away without having seen his beloved Empress Dowager before his death.

Li Hongzhang fondly remembered the Tsar and Tsarina, and his trip to Russia, realising that thanks to the invitation to the coronation he was able to see the world. Nicholas also remembered the great 'Chinese representative'. The presents brought by the 1896 embassy as well as those from the embassy in 1895, were carefully kept in the Winter Palace on the first floor of the Admiralty section and on the Saltykov staircase. Various items were also given to the Anichkov Palace and to the Ethnographic Department of the Russian Museum of Alexander III, founded in 1898. The memoirs of Li Hongzhang, published in London in 1913, were also to be found in the Tsar's personal library.[15] The book is today in the library of the State Hermitage Museum.[16]

The hope remains that it will be possible to identify further exhibits at the Hermitage and in other Russian museums and institutions that were originally among the gifts sent from the Guangxu emperor to Nicholas II.

Notes

1 *Russian Art Gazette* (Русский художественный листок), 1861, no. 23.
2 Milutin 2016, 204 (note on 24 March 1876).
3 *Illustration of the Whole World* 1895, no. 1361, 172, 209 (published by Goppe Publishing House; Всемирная иллюстрация. СПб, изд. Эд. Гоппе. 1895 г. no. 1361).
4 Archives of the State Hermitage Museum 1909.
5 State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛС-288.
6 Menshikova 2019, 172–7.
7 State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. no. ЛМ-579, 580.
8 Nickolas II 2011.
9 Nickolas II 2011, vol. 1, 26.
10 Archives of the State Hermitage Museum 1909; Menshikova 1996.
11 Li Hongzhang 1982, 42.
12 State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, inv. nos ЛО-894, ЛО-895.
13 National Palace Museum 1992, no. 172.
14 Postarnak 2019.
15 Li Hung Chang [Hongzhang] 1913. Many historians now consider this book to be a forgery. See Hess 1982, 155–67.
16 The State Hermitage library, Saint Petersburg, КВ.no. 55785.

8 CRAFT TECHNOLOGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Introduction: craft technology and the environment

Ching-fei Shih

Pages 280–1: Archaistic ivory seal with text from Xu Huaisheng 徐淮生 (*c.* 1869–1926), 1800–1900, China, ivory, h. 6cm, w. 4.5cm. British Museum, London, 2018,3005.200. Given by The Sir Victor Sassoon Chinese Ivories Trust

The development of craft technology in 19th-century China has not received sufficient attention in past research. Today, new approaches inspired by material culture, global history and environmental history may help us reassess and examine this important period.

During the 18th century, imperial court patronage played a crucial role in pushing many Chinese craft technologies to their peak. However, with the decline in national political control and economic conditions in the 19th century, the operations of imperial workshops dwindled significantly. Workshops disappeared or were consolidated, and many southern craftsmen returned to their home towns. The Taiping Civil War inflicted significant damage on craft centres in Jiangnan and Jingdezhen, and the development of many craft technologies came to a standstill. It wasn't until the late 19th century, with the resurgence of imperial sponsorship and new demand from the international trade market, that development gradually resumed. This revival was especially notable in the production of high-end crafts using precious materials such as rosewood, silk, lacquer and ivory. Some craft specialities that thrived in the export market gained dominance in terms of technology and style.

Taking Guangzhou ivory crafts as an example, during the Qianlong period, ivory craftsmen employed in the imperial workshops became proficient in satisfying court taste. They produced highly intricate ivory works that, beyond showcasing technical prowess, still possessed an elegant and restrained style. But after the decline of imperial workshops, many ivory workers returned to their home towns. Designs were increasingly determined by the demands of the Guangdong region. While ivory spheres, lanterns and fans were presented as tributes to the imperial court, distinguishing objects made for the court from contemporary export pieces is challenging due to their similarity. The movement of craftsmen also included overseas migration to Southeast Asia, which brought about not only the transfer of techniques, but also the fusion of styles across different regions.

After the emergence of the world's fairs in the mid-19th century and the development of the commercial culture of the treaty port, Chinese crafts stepped onto the international stage. As scholars have noted, Western critics evaluated a country's status based on its industrial technology, producing a negative, stereotyped impression that China's craftsmanship lagged behind Western products.[1] China was seen to excel in imitation, but lack creativity. At the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial International Exhibition, Chinese ivory products such as spheres and boats were criticised by Western viewers as a waste of effort. The perceived decline in standards of craftsmanship was used as evidence for the more general decline of Chinese culture.[2]

Case studies of the Western reception of Chinese crafts reveal a more nuanced set of assessments than the prevailing narrative suggests. At the 1915 Panama–Pacific International Exposition, ivory spheres crafted by Guangzhou artisan Weng Zhao 翁昭 (?–1974), whose grandfather was a court ivory artisan, received a first-class medal. Susan Eberhard's chapter in this section discusses design innovation in the Guangzhou silversmithing trade after the First Opium War. One account by a French

diplomat described Cantonese silversmiths as 'real artists' who rivalled British goldsmiths not only in craft technique, but also in originality of design.

Thus, viewed differently, world's fairs and foreign patronage may have instead provided significant inspiration for the development trajectory of Chinese craftsmanship. With active participation from the Chinese government, expositions became a driving force for cultural exchange and trade benefits, and the advancement of industrial technology. The revival of crafts like Guangzhou ivory carving, Beijing *cloisonné* enamel and Suzhou embroidery can be attributed to exposure on the international market.

In the late 19th century, China began modernising its industries and infrastructure. The country imported technologies such as electricity, telecommunications, trains and steamships. In 1906, the Bureau of Crafts was established under the newly formed Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce. In industries such as printing and silk production, the adoption of new technologies and machinery marked a departure from traditional methods, offering enhanced productivity and economic benefits. In the Guangzhou fan trade, artisans actively introduced new designs and the concept of the division of labour. Fans combined components from various materials, including ivory, tortoiseshell, paper, sandalwood, silk, lacquer, silver and *cloisonné* enamel. The practice of combining different materials required uniform specifications for each component for easy replacement. This modernised method of manufacturing not only showcased the flexibility of craft techniques but also demonstrated how trades and industries integrated traditional skills with modern concepts. In this vein, Yijun Wang's chapter on the mining industry in Yunnan province demonstrates how Qing bureaucrats transformed from Confucian scholars into modern technocrats, acquiring on-the-ground technical knowledge to increase managerial efficacy. Their view on natural resources also shifted, from one of minimal state interference to exploitation for the profit of the state.

Relatedly, environmental issues demand attention in the context of 19th-century industrial modernisation, which as Jonathan Schlesinger's chapter reminds us, came hand in hand with a rapid increase of carbon emissions due to the burning of fossil fuels. Over the past few decades, humanities disciplines such as history, literature and cultural studies have taken on the urgent task of 'thinking ecologically'. This ecological turn reflects a heightened awareness of the interconnectedness of human activities and their impact on the environment. Schlesinger compellingly demonstrates how objects such as ivory baskets and sandalwood card cases link Chinese craft to global networks of resource extraction and consumption. From the standpoint of environmental history, he marks the apex of craft production as a tipping point towards the slow exhaustion of their natural raw materials.

Within the larger context of changes in craft organisation, shifts in market demand and modern reform, the chapters in this section delve into technological change, industrial knowledge and environmental entanglements throughout China's 'long 19th century'. While they each chart previously overlooked aspects of innovation in Chinese craft and industry, they also trace the regional and global consequences of resource extraction. The exploration of these historical dimensions sheds light on the nuanced transformations that shaped China's industrial evolution.[3]

Notes

1 Gerritsen and McDowall 2012.

2 Pitman 2002.

3 Many thanks to Susan Eberhard for her careful edits.

Chapter 24
Wu Qijun: transcribing mining technology for the empire

Yijun Wang

On the ninth day of the fourth month of the 24th year of Daoguang's reign (1844), the emperor issued a secret imperial edict to his provincial governors. In this edict, the emperor began by celebrating the greatness of the laissez-faire approach to mining that had been carried out by his ancestors:

> Since ancient times, the way to ensure the prosperity of a state lies first and foremost in satisfying the needs of its people…. The beneficence of heaven and earth are intended to be used for the benefit of all people. Only with proper management can the implementation proceed without any drawbacks. In the case of mining, in the previous dynasty [the Ming], mining was repeatedly carried out, and as a result, [corrupted] officials took advantage of the situation to engage in wrongdoing for a long time. Consequently, both the state and the people suffered from it. In our dynasty [the Qing], there have always been silver mines in Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Guangxi and other regions, from which a silver tax is collected regularly. Over the years, this tax has been collected as usual, without causing any disturbance or burden to the people. This process [i.e. mining] has not caused any burden or disturbance to the people. This demonstrates that when officials are in charge of management, it may not be as effective as allowing the people to engage in mining on their own. This is a way to store wealth for the people.[1]

For readers in today's Europe and America, the Daoguang emperor may sound like a classic liberal politician who supported minimum intervention from the state with his Confucianist rhetoric (**Fig. 296**). Believing that the greedy Ming court's active engagement in mining was part of the reason for its collapse, the Qing rulers tried to distance the state from direct involvement in the industry. Before the middle of the 19th century, the Qing mainly relied on merchants to supply mineral resources. European traders, Hong merchants, private investors and special commissioners of the Qing state established an integrated system that allowed access to mineral resources.[2] This system worked smoothly in the 18th century, thanks to the increasingly interconnected global and domestic market.

However, this approach was no longer viable in the mid-19th century. By the time the emperor issued his edict, the Qing government was facing several challenges. They had just lost the Opium War and paid Britain a large indemnity. The opium trade soaked up the silver of the Qing empire, creating a scarcity of silver in the China market, which led to the so-called 'Daoguang depression'.[3] In addition to external pressures, the Qing empire was also facing long-term internal crises. Population growth and over-farming was leading to ecological degradation. The endless internal rebellions and uprisings further depleted the state treasury.[4] So, after the Confucianist opening of his edict, the Daoguang emperor went on to reveal his true intention:

> Considering in Yunnan and other provinces, besides the current mining areas, there are still many places that can be exploited, thus I order Baoxing 寶興 [the governor-general of Sichuan], Guiliang 桂良 [the governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou], Wu Qijun 吳其濬 [the commissioner of Yunnan], He Changling 賀長齡 [the commissioner of Guizhou], and Zhou Zhiqi 周之琦 [the commissioner of Guangxi] to investigate the local situation, prospecting the potential mining sites…. It is strictly forbidden to rely on corrupted clerks, as it

would lead to negative consequences such as encroachment, disturbance and obstruction…. The ultimate goal is to benefit the livelihood of the people and the development of the state, as these are mutually beneficial concerns.[5]

The emperor was clear about his goal: he wanted to use mining resources to increase the income of the state. This was a drastic shift from the previous policy of minimum intervention. By the second half of the 19th century, the Qing state's active engagement in mining production became a central topic that was publicly discussed in the court.

Upon receiving the secret edict, Wu Qijun (1789–1847) quickly responded to the emperor by submitting a series of court memorials to report the most up-to-date situation at the mining sites of Yunnan.[6] Moreover, during the period of his appointment in Yunnan (1843–45), Wu compiled a mining treatise, titled *An Illustrated Strategy of the Mines in Yunnan* (*Dian nan kuangchang tulue* 滇南礦廠圖略). The book included 14 illustrations of mining and smelting technology and 23 maps contributed by Xu Jinsheng 徐金生 (active 1840s), the prefect of Dongchuan (東川) prefecture since 1840. Historian Peter Golas (1937–2019) considered Wu's mining treatise to be 'the single most useful account of mining practice by an official in traditional times'.[7] The detailed information in *An Illustrated Strategy of the Mines in Yunnan* make it the most important text for historians to study the mining technology in 18th- and 19th-century China.[8] However, Wu Qijun, the author of the treatise, as well as his motivation for writing it, remained understudied.

In this chapter, Wu's treatise will not be employed simply as a source of information about mining. Rather, it will be used as a window to explore the knowledge culture of its contributors and intended readers. What motivated Wu Qijun to compile such a mining treatise? What inspired him to combine illustrations and texts? This chapter posits that Wu Qijun aimed to transmit the practical knowledge from the mindful hands of county level clerks to the knowledge system of the state officials. In this way, he centralised local knowledge about mining and codified it into state knowledge. Simultaneously, Wu endeavoured to make less accessible knowledge about the frontier more readily available to ordinary Han bureaucrats by employing the latest frontier maps. To better grasp Wu Qijun's contributions and motivations, this chapter will begin by reviewing mining treatises from before his time.

Copper administration and monetary laws: Mining knowledge before the 1840s

Throughout the 18th century, bureaucrats produced a steady flow of texts recording knowledge about mining administration. These were either presented as copper administration manuals or dispersed within local gazetteers. The Qing bureaucrats used 'copper administration' (*tongzheng* 銅政) and 'monetary laws' (*qianfa* 錢法) to categorise the knowledge about mining in these texts.

County magistrates and clerks in Yunnan province were the major contributors of knowledge about mining. The most influential book on copper administration was *A Comprehensive Manual on Copper Administration in Yunnan* (*Yunnan tongzheng quanshu* 雲南銅政全書), compiled by Wang Chang 王昶 (1725–1806), the administrative commissioner of Yunnan province. This manual is divided into eight sections, on taxation, mining sites, the transportation of copper to the imperial mint, monetary policy, procurement, debts and loans to the copper merchants, the evaluation of clerks and an appendix.[9] Wang Chang's work set up the prototype for later copper administration manuals. In the first half of the 19th century, the clerks in Yunnan provincial government compiled two more manuals, *A History of Copper [Mining] in Yunnan* (*Yunnan tongzhi* 雲南銅志), and *A Convenient Guide to Copper Administration* (*Tongzheng bianlan* 銅政便覽). Both shared the same structure as Wang's manual.[10]

Figure 296 Unidentified court artist, ***Portrait of the Daoguang Emperor in Ceremonial Armour Riding a Horse*** **(*Minning rongzhuang xiang* 旻寧戎裝像). 1825, hanging scroll, ink and colours on paper, h. 281cm, w. 172.5cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00006555**

In sum, by the first half of the 19th century, the Qing officials' knowledge of mining, as reflected in the mining administration manuals, was primarily centred around the administration of copper and monetary laws. Although county magistrates and clerks acquired technical knowledge about mining during their administrative work, such details only existed sparsely in appendices and notes.[11] Moreover, the circulation of knowledge was limited to the provincial level. None of the copper administration manuals mentioned above were circulated widely before the 20th century. Wang Chang's manual was lost in the 20th century,

Figure 297 Wu Qijun, illustration from *An Illustrated Strategy of the Tools of the Mines and Smelters of Yunnan* (*Yunnan kuangchang gongqi tulüe* 雲南礦廠工器圖略), showing the different shapes of underground mining tunnels and miners working on the excavation surface, 1844, woodblock printing, h. 30cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, MA, 009250072

and other administrative manuals were kept in provincial government archives for internal reference. Therefore, only county-level officials and clerks who had immersed themselves in the mining administration for years possessed knowledge about mining technology and management. Practical information about the production process had never been incorporated into the knowledge system of scholar-officials before Wu Qijun published his mining treatise. As will be demonstrated below, this knowledge gap posed challenges for Qing bureaucrats.

Expanding the scope of knowledge: from policy administrators to technocrats

Wu Qijun's mining treatise broadened the comprehension of mining among Qing officials, encompassing not only administrative policies but also the technological aspects of mining production as well as daily management at the mining sites. It is presented in two parts. Part two, *An Illustrated Strategy of the Areas and Roads of the Mines and Smelters of Yunnan* (*Diannan kuangchang yucheng tulüe* 滇南礦廠與程圖略), is similar to earlier mining treatises in its focus on copper administration and monetary policies. It contains 23 maps which show the location of mines and shipping routes from Yunnan to Beijing. Following the maps are textual explanations that provide the detailed locations of copper, silver, gold, tin, iron and lead mines, the annual tax quota, transportation methods, and the costs of shipping and procurement.

Part one of Wu's mining treatise, on the other hand, introduces a new field of knowledge to Qing officials. Titled *An Illustrated Strategy of the Tools of the Mines and Smelters of Yunnan* (*Yunnan kuangchang gongqi tulüe* 雲南礦廠工器圖略), it documents both mining and smelting technology as well as the social organisation of miners. It has 16 chapters that introduce prospecting for ores, the opening of a mine, the tools used for mining, the differentiation of the ores, the smelting and refining furnaces, the provisions and other necessities for the miners, the types of labourers that worked in the mines and smelters, the control of the workforce, the types of different mining disasters, and the miners' rituals and beliefs. It equipped its readers, primarily other Qing officials, with the knowledge to understand the day-to-day operations of mining production, both above ground and below.

In addition to being comprehensive, Wu Qijun's treatise is also highly empirical. Instead of adhering to the geological wisdom passed down from Confucian classics, Wu collected the vernacular knowledge of miners and used their language to describe mining technology. The work is structured in a dictionary-like format, with each entry explaining specialised terminologies used by miners and smelters. For instance, Wu Qijun used the character *dong* (硐) to refer to the underground mining tunnels, which are depicted in **Figure 297**. This character is a combination of the semantic compound representing 'stone' and phonetic compound presenting the sound 'dong'. It is mostly likely a transliteration of the miner's dialect as its usage was not standardised before Wu's mining treatise. In court memorials in the 18th century, officials sometimes used *dong* 洞, a more commonly used Chinese character with a different semantic compound to refer to the mining tunnels.[12] The different shapes of mining tunnels are depicted in **Figure 297**, accompanied by captions that elucidate their names in local dialect.

Wu Qijun also put a lot of effort recording the labour management and social organisation of the miners. For instance, when introducing the water pump, he explained at length the labour management for water drainage: 'two miners take turns operating one pump in each shift, with three shifts per day, making six labourers in total per day…. In the most extreme conditions, miners might use 13 to 14 pumps in a row at the same level and install up to 50 to 60

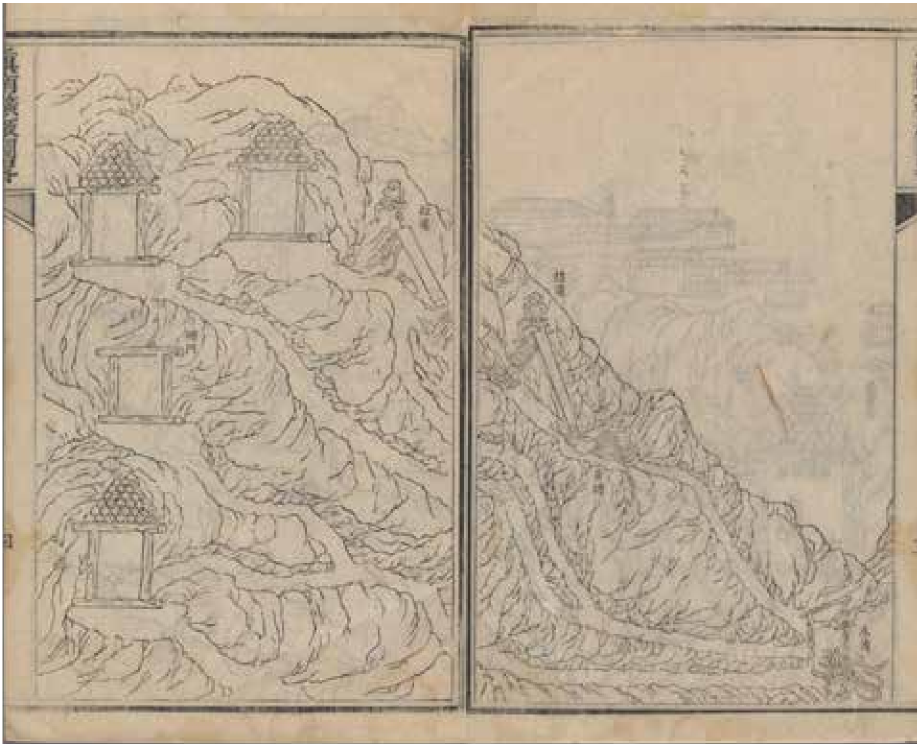


Figure 298 Wu Qijun, illustration from *An Illustrated Strategy of the Tools of the Mines and Smelters of Yunnan* demonstrating miners pumping water from an underground mining tunnel, 1844, woodblock printing, h. 30cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, MA, 009250072

Figure 299 Wu Qijun, illustration from *An Illustrated Strategy of the Tools of the Mines and Smelters of Yunnan* showing miners sorting the ores (upper right), using panning and sifting methods in the river (lower right) and carrying the ores (lower left), as well as the taxation of refined ore (upper left), 1844, woodblock printing, h. 30cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, MA, 009250072

levels of pumps in a deep shaft. It became very difficult to implement beyond this depth for drainage'.[13] Drainage constituted the most labour-intensive and consequently the most expensive aspect of mining; since it directly influenced the potential depth of excavation, it often became the pivotal factor in determining the profitability of a mining site. Therefore, effective drainage necessitated skilful labour management and precise cost calculations. Given the importance of drainage, Wu dedicates an entire page to illustrating how miners construct a terraced water pumping structure, drawing water from the bottom of the underground mining tunnel to the mountain surface (**Fig. 298**). The emphasis on labour management, cost control and social organisation underlines the nature of Wu's mining treatise – it was more about managerial technology than anything else. The treatise did not aim to teach readers how to excavate ores with their own hands, but rather how to *manage* day-to-day production, raise funds and maintain security at mining sites.

The nature of managerial knowledge also affected the illustration of mining technology in Wu's treatise. The illustrations are nothing close to modern technical drawings. The structure of the tools is inaccurately depicted, and there is a mix-up of perspectives. In **Figure 299**, the artist combines scenes of sorting the ores, the panning process, ore transportation and the taxation of refined ore together.

However, in reality these actions could not have occurred simultaneously in one location. Historian Francesca Bray has explained the 'non-realism' character of technical illustrations in China, pointing out that they were meant to encode processes and relationships, translating sequences into spatial terms.[14] Therefore, the layout of such illustrations was not intended to inform viewers how to practice each process or how to build a certain tool. Rather, they were designed to help managers to understand the complete production process. The coexistence of various mining stages depicted in **Figure 299** serves as a *chaîne opératoire* diagram, helping readers of the book comprehend both the technical processes and social relations involved in mining production. Furthermore, all the scenes in the illustrations are depicted from an overhead angle, providing the panoramic viewpoint of a manager overseeing the mine.

In conclusion, Wu Qijun's mining treatise expanded the scope of knowledge of Qing officials in the areas of mining administration, technology and management. It provided officials with the means to comprehend the language of the miners and enough technical details to carry out their management duties. In this way, Wu's treatise transformed the Qing officials from policy-savvy administrators to technocrats with a mastery of managerial technology. But what motivated Wu Qijun to pay attention to the technical aspect of mining? What influenced his empirical approach? What led to his transition from a conventional administrator to a technocrat? We have to look into his career and life experience to find the answers.

The birth of a Confucian technocrat

Wu Qijun was born in Beijing in 1789 to a prominent Confucian gentry family from Gushi county in Henan province.[15] His father Wu Xuan 吳烜 (1760–1821) and elder brother Wu Qiyan 吳其彥 (1779–1823) received *jinshi* (進士) degrees, the highest degree in the civil service exam, and began their careers as Compilers in the Hanlin Academy (*Hanlin yuan bianxiu* 翰林院編修), responsible for drafting and editing ceremonious imperial pronouncements and imperially sponsored histories. Both served as provincial education commissioners for years.[16] Stemming from the family learning tradition, Wu Qijun was awarded a *juren* (舉人) degree in 1810 and became his father's colleague as a secretary in the Grand Secretariat (*Neige zhongshu* 內閣中書). Seven years later, he emerged as the highest-scoring candidate in the metropolitan examination and was appointed to a prestigious position in the Hanlin Academy. From the 1820s to 1840, Wu Qijun's major activities were in the central court in Beijing, serving as the compiler of the *Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty* (*Qing shilu* 清實录) and as the emperor's personal secretary in the Southern Study (*nan shufang* 南書房). In the late 1830s, he received several promotions within the central court, becoming a member of the Board of Revenue and the Board of War, all the while occasionally overseeing the provincial examinations of the empire.[17]

While Wu Qijun's educational background marked him as a typical Confucian scholar, he had a keen interest in knowledge about nature. From 1821 to 1828, he took leave due to filial mourning and returned to his hometown in Henan. During this period, he purchased a farm named 'Eastern Villa' (*dongshu* 東墅) and indulged himself studying plants with the local farmers.[18] Wu's approach to botanical knowledge strongly relied on the first-hand experience that he gained from interactions with local farmers. In his botanical treatise *Illustrated Investigation of the Names and Facts of Plants* (*Zhiwu ming shi tukao* 植物名實圖考), he frequently references information provided by elderly farmers and gardeners, and proudly calls himself 'the farmer of Yulou' (Yulou nong 雩婁農) – Yulou being the historical name for his home town.[19] This approach to scholarship was applied in his mining treatise, leading him to collect and codify the empirical knowledge of the miners.

Aside from his personal interest, Wu Qijun's father Wu Xuan's career also influenced his interest in technical knowledge. In 1814, four years after Wu Qijun joined the Qing bureaucracy, Wu Xuan became the head of the Archives of Yellow River Management (*Zhihe fanglue guan* 治河方略館). He compiled archives of hydraulic engineering along the Yellow River, which led him to become an expert in hydraulic engineering and water management.[20] Wu Xuan's job had a significant impact on Wu Qijun. After his father passed away, Wu Qijun continued to search for solutions to manage the floods. During his deferment due to mourning, Wu Qijun even conducted on-site inspections of the frequently flooded areas along the Huai River. Based on his fieldwork, Wu Qijun wrote 'An Essay on Upper Huai River Management' (*Zhi huai shangyou lun* 治淮上遊論), in which he proposed shifting the focus of river management from Jiangsu to the Huai River's upper and middle reaches in Anhui.[21]

His personal interests and his father's influence made Wu Qijun a Confucian scholar who became interested in collecting and codifying knowledge about nature, technology and engineering. Continuing along this trajectory, Wu could have become a conventional Confucian scholar-official who had a keen interest in hydraulic engineering and agriculture. So what was it that triggered his interest in mining? The answer lies in a suicide in Hunan province in 1841.

A tragic suicide due to a gap in knowledge

Wu Qijun's career took off from 1840 when he was dispatched to Hunan province to be the provincial commissioner. Soon after his arrival, he encountered a suicide case that had drawn the attention of the emperor. It involved a bannerman named Hengshan 恒善 (?–1841), who had killed himself within ten days of taking up a new position as the prefect of Guiyang. As the provincial commissioner, Wu Qijun was responsible for investigating the matter. Wu summoned Hengshan's personal assistant and discovered that Hengshan had taken his own life due to extreme anxiety over the possibility of being unable to collect the merchants' repayments on the loans.[22]

To better understand Hengshan's anxiety, some context is required regarding the problematic copper administration policy that ensnared him. In order to secure the copper supply for mintage, the Qing government provided loans to merchants for investing in copper mines. In return, these merchants were expected to repay the loans from their

Figure 300 Sungyūn, military map of the border between Tibet and Gurkha (current Nepal) from *An Illustrated Strategy for Pacification and Administration of Tibet* (*Xizhao tulüe* 西招圖略), 1798, woodblock printing, h. 27cm. Library of Congress, Asian Division, Chinese Rare Books, Washington, D.C., 2011457097

profits after selling the copper. However, in some cases, merchants defaulted on the loans, either due to the depletion of mining deposits or the rising costs of operating mines. Failure to repay created issues for local officials, since they were responsible for managing the loans.

There was an underlying problem within this system. To prevent regionalism, the Qing government tended not to appoint local individuals to govern their home town. As a bannerman who previously served in the Imperial Household Department, Hengshan had spent all his life in Beijing before coming to Hunan.[23] He had very little knowledge about mining. While he could acquire knowledge of taxation policies through the copper administration manuals, he had no means to judge whether a mining business was losing money or in good condition. The necessary information regarding mining production and its management was monopolised by local clerks. This knowledge gap created space for embezzlement and corruption – the mine owners could collude with local clerks to falsify mining output to evade taxes and avoid loan repayment.

When Hengshan arrived in his office, he found the situation to be grave. The copper merchants had accumulated a significant amount of debt, and most of them had been relentlessly pursued for payment without any success. The local clerks were 'unusually cunning and malicious, and had used their leverage to exert control over the official in charge for years'.[24] The experience of Hengshan's predecessor, Cunfen 存棻 (active 1821–1844), made him even more fearful. Cunfen was also a bannerman and, like Hengshan, lacked any prior experience in mining. Failing to recover overdue copper debts and taxes, he was subsequently dismissed from his office. To make matters worse, his entire family's assets were confiscated to cover the debt shortfall.[25] Witnessing the misfortune of his predecessor, Hengshan realised there was little chance for him to avoid a similar fate. Overwhelmed by despair, he took his own life.[26]

The fate of these two Manchu officials demonstrates that an absence of technical and managerial understanding could be fatal. The challenge posed by this knowledge gap was shared by all state appointed officials, including Wu Qijun himself. After his investigation, Wu Qijun concluded that it was very likely that the local clerks and tax collectors colluded with the merchants to create fraudulent information to resist the collection of debt. Therefore, he ordered all clerks to be brought to the provincial government to be interrogated.[27]

The Daoguang emperor could not have agreed more with Wu Qijun. Three years later, in his edict on mining in Yunnan, he instructed his provincial governors that 'it is strictly forbidden to rely on corrupted clerks, as it would lead to negative consequences such as encroachment, disturbance and obstruction…'.[28] The emperor had learned from the case in Hunan and tried to get rid of the middlemen who mediated between the state and the local mining community. At this point, the codification of mining and smelting technology became urgent. As already mentioned, before Wu's mining treatise, technical knowledge about mining was limited to local clerks and the circulation of mining knowledge never went beyond Yunnan province. Now Wu Qijun's goal became clear: he was aiming to transfer technical and managerial information from the hands of local clerks to the knowledge system of scholar-officials and eliminate intermediaries between the state and local society.

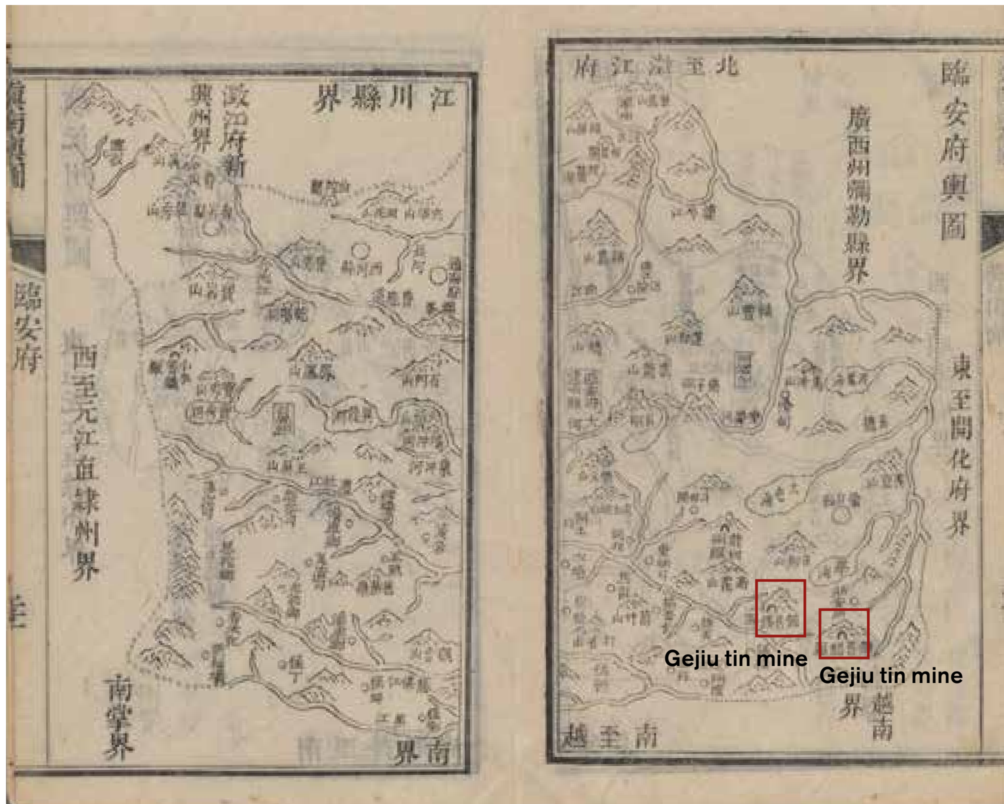


Figure 301 Wu Qijun, map of Lin'an 临安 prefecture from *An Illustrated Strategy of the Areas and Roads of the Mines and Smelters of Yunnan*, with locations of copper, tin and iron mines marked, 1844, woodblock printing, h. 30cm. Harvard-Yenching Library, Cambridge, MA, 009250072

In order to do this, Wu Qijun employed an innovative method to encode practical knowledge. Unlike in previous mining manuals, none of which contained illustrations, Wu Qijun utilised both technical illustrations and maps to visualise mining technology and shipping routes. The answer to why he chose to do this lies in part of the title that he picked, *tulüe* (圖略), which we can translate as 'illustrated strategy'.

Tulüe: creating an illustrated strategy for mining

The term *tulüe* is common in the modern Chinese language, but it was more unusual during Wu Qijun's time. Only two books with '*tulüe*' in their titles were printed before Wu's mining treatise. One is a Yuan dynasty work titled *An Illustrated Strategy of Controlling the Yellow River* (*Zhihe tulüe* 治河圖略). It records past river management strategies in order to provide a reliable outline for hydraulic works in the future. Six maps were included to illustrate the courses of the Yellow River, with each accompanied by a detailed description.[29] The other book is *An Illustrated Strategy for the Pacification and Administration of Tibet* (*Xizhao tulüe* 西招圖略). It was compiled by Sungyūn 松筠 (1752–1835), the Manchu resident minister in Tibet in 1798. It includes 12 maps, each of which marks mountain passes, rivers, military garrisons and borders, providing information for military strategic planning (**Fig. 300**). All the maps are complemented by a detailed description of military strategies and routes.[30]

By comparing the contents of these two books, we can gain insight into what Wu Qijun meant by 'illustrated strategy': the provision of visualised information for future strategic planning. He probably took inspiration from both books. His father's job in the Archives of Yellow River Management must have familiarised Wu with the visual language in *An Illustrated Strategy of Controlling the Yellow River*. It is likely that Wu Qijun applied the same approach to the management of mining and transportation. Songyun's illustrated strategy of Tibet, on the other hand, inspired Wu Qijun to make the lesser-known geographical information of the frontier, which previously had been locked in the archives of the imperial court, more accessible.

The maps Wu Qijun included in his mining treatise were appropriated from an album created by a Manchu official called Belin 伯麟 (1747–1824), who was governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou.[31] In 1818, Belin submitted two albums to the Jiaqing emperor. These featured coloured illustrations depicting ethnographic groups and detailed maps of Yunnan, accompanied by introductions written by Belin.[32] When comparing the map of Lin'an (临安) in Wu's treatise (**Fig. 301**) to Belin's album (**Fig. 302**), it becomes evident that Wu not only relied on Belin's map but also adopted the same legend, using an upside-down U shape to represent mining sites. Belin's two albums belong to a genre known as the Miao Album, which was part of the imperial project that allowed the Qing empire to bring the southwestern frontier regions into its administrative fold.[33] However, like many other cartography projects on the Qing frontier, Belin's albums were kept in the imperial archives as imperial knowledge that was only accessible to a few officials from the Manchu military elite class. It is highly probable that Wu Qijun gained access to these frontier maps during his service as the compiler of the *Veritable Records*. He likely made a deliberate choice to disseminate imperial knowledge about the frontier geography, making it accessible to other ordinary Han Chinese scholar-officials.

Through a combination of texts, technical illustrations and maps, Wu Qijun was able to reduce the monopoly of local clerks, turning their local mining knowledge into state knowledge. Conversely, he made formerly confidential

Figure 302 Belin, map of Lin'an prefecture, with locations of tin, silver and copper mines, from an *Album of Geography and Maps of Yunnan* (*Diansheng yudi tushuo* 滇省輿地圖說, Beijing, reprint 2009), 1818, coloured album painting with handwritten text, h. 33.4cm, w. 48.4cm. Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

geographical knowledge about the southwestern frontier more accessible to average Han Chinese scholars. Wu Qijun's mining treatise was an attempt to save the empire through practical learning. By collecting and systemising practical knowledge, Wu tried to turn Confucian bureaucrats into technocrats who could efficiently exploit mineral resources for the sake of the empire.

Saving the empire through practical learning

The protagonist of this chapter is not just Wu Qijun. He is representative of his colleagues, the bureaucrats who were originally trained in Confucian classics but learned to be technocrats to supervise mining operations. Scholar-officials like Wu Qijun could no longer comfortably rely on clerks and merchants to extract natural resources. They had to be able to oversee the day-to-day management of mines and thus they were forced to absorb more technical knowledge. For instance, Wu's contemporary Lin Zexu extensively utilised technical knowledge related to mining, including the rising costs of drainage, in his palace memorial to address the reform of mining policies, written when he assumed the position of governor-general of Yunnan and Guizhou.[34] Wu Qijun was also not alone in collecting, codifying and disseminating practical knowledge. His son's father-in-law and close political ally, He Changling 賀長齡 (1785–1848), published *Collected Essays about Statecraft of the Qing* (*Huangchao jingshi wenbian* 皇朝經世文編) in 1827, which started the trend of practical learning in the late Qing. The shift from Confucian administrators to knowledgeable technocrats marked a changing understanding of statecraft among Qing bureaucrats. Wu Qijun and his like-minded colleagues were undoubtedly predecessors to the reformist scholars who advocated for industrialisation in the latter half of the 19th century.

The transition to technocracy was accompanied by changing attitudes towards natural resources among Qing elites. Historian Shellen Wu has pointed out that by the end of the 19th century, Qing intellectuals began associating natural resources with state sovereignty and China's position in the international competition among nations.[35] During Wu Qijun's era, the Qing elites had not yet made such a sharp transition. Nevertheless, their attitudes towards natural resources had already evolved from regarding them as benevolent resources for the people, which the state should avoid interfering with, to perceiving them as profitable assets that demanded skilled and knowledgeable management by state bureaucrats. The beneficence of nature had become what historian Peter Lavelle has called "the profits of nature."[36] As demonstrated by the edict quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the Daoguang emperor and his officials were no longer hesitant to discuss harnessing natural resources for profit. To save the empire, they had shifted their approach to nature and governance to one that was more technological and economically centred.

Notes

1 First Historical Archives of China 2000, vol. 49, 114–15.
2 Rowe 2012, 57. For instance, in the case of copper and tin, the mining was mostly managed by private merchants. The Qing government had access to copper through a combination of taxation and procurement from the market.
3 Rowe 2010.
4 Rowe 2012, 149–58.
5 First Historical Archives of China 2000, vol. 49, 114–15.
6 Wu 1844a.
7 Golas 1999, 35.
8 Golas 1999; Chen 2018.
9 Wang 2002, 324–6.
10 Fang 1984, 728–30.
11 For instance, in the appendix of Wang Chang's mining manual, there is an essay titled 'Responses to the Consultation about Each Mine' (咨詢各廠對). In this essay, county magistrates explain technical knowledge such as the property of ores, mining tools and smelting costs, in a question and answer format. See Wu Qijun's quotation of Wang Chang's mining manual, Wu 1844b, 37b–50b.
12 Bandi 1746.
13 Wu 1844b, 4b.
14 Bray 2007, 3.
15 *Wushi yi xian pu* 2006, vol. 3, 3.
16 Luo, early 20th century.
17 Guoshiguan 1928, vol. 38, *juan* 38, 26–9.
18 Wu 1881, 76.
19 Wu 1957, 2.
20 Luo, early 20th century.
21 Wu 1881, 67.
22 Wu 1841.
23 Libu 1840.
24 Wu 1841.
25 Neiwufu 1841.
26 Wu 1841.
27 Wu 1841.
28 First Historical Archives of China 2000, vol. 49, 114–15.
29 Wang 1987.
30 Sungyūn 1798.
31 Liu 2016.
32 Belin 1818, 1–3.
33 Hostetler 2005.
34 Lin 1849.
35 Wu 2015.
36 Lavelle 2020.

Chapter 25
Extractive romances: crafting silver mythologies in treaty-port China

Susan Eberhard

Plumed warriors on foot and on horseback stream down two sides of a single register of low-relief ornament on a gleaming silver surface. They thread through rocky outcrops on mountain paths. Several warriors lift banners with flame-like jagged edges, others carry shields with human-like faces. Many heave weapons aloft. As they converge, they navigate around an empty oval reserve: a polished, shiny surface created for the engraved initials or crest of the European or American owner, in this case left unmarked. Cantonese silversmiths embossed this scene by hand around the entire body of a monumental lidded soup tureen (**Figs 303–4**). Embossing, also known as repoussé in English and French, and *chuidie* (錘鍱) in Chinese, is a silver-working technique that creates low surface relief designs. The design, drawn from illustrated martial legends and theatrical operas such as the vernacular Ming novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義), continues onto the domed lid, where more warriors skirmish between hillocks and mountains. This particular soup tureen was purchased by the American merchant Abiel Abbot Low (1811–1893) from the silver retailer Hoaching.[1] Like many items of silver tableware, as well as trophies and other forms produced in the mid- to late 19th century by Chinese silversmiths for foreign consumption, the tureen mythologises conflict in a context of European imperial violence along the southeastern coast of China.[2]

Why were such theatrical scenes of war in the landscape pictured in the medium of silver? How did the subject matter on the surface pertain to its material basis? Silver was also the subject of myth, and specifically myths about its sourcing and extraction. The scenes romanticise colonial disavowal around silver as commodity, and as currency circulating between China and the world. This chapter explores a set of tensions revealed through the Chinese production and foreign consumption of silverware ornamented with scenes of violence produced at least since the First Opium War. Objects ornamented with similar designs, as part of a larger figural decorative programme that included peaceful scenes from theatrical dramas, were produced into the late 19th century. Focusing on scenes of fighting, this chapter positions both subject matter and medium within the larger transcultural contexts of romanticised conflict and mystified extraction.

The resolution of the First Opium War dissolved the single-port trading system at Canton and opened up additional Chinese ports for trade and foreign settlement. As victors, the British negotiated the opening of treaty port cities, the ceding of Hong Kong as a British colony, and an indemnity payment of $21 million silver dollars from the Chinese government. Subsequently, other Western powers negotiated trading and extraterritorial settlement privileges through their own treaties, which included the privileges and other concessions granted to the British by including 'most favoured nation' clauses. These are often called 'unequal treaties' due to the concessions they extracted from China in an effort to, ironically, enforce China's equal treatment of foreign nations. They represent a concerted effort to compel China to concede to a Western view of international relations between modern nation-states.[3]

As trade along the coast shifted out of the control of the Chinese state and its private intermediaries, many Chinese

Figure 303 (left) Soup tureen with lid, retailed by Hoaching, Guangzhou, *c.* 1865, silver, h. 25.4cm, w. 42.5cm (max.). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Robert G. Goelet Gift, 1967, 67.109a, b

Figure 304 (below) Detail of soup tureen from Figure 303 showing a design from martial legends and operas

scholar-officials and economic observers of the period saw the value of silver itself increasingly, and dangerously, determined by the vagaries of the market.[4] The government set official rates of transaction between its two circulating currencies – that is, high-value commodity silver, exchanged by weight and fineness, and low-value cast copper coins, exchanged by face or fiat value. Disparities between the government rates and the fluctuating market rates led to economic issues throughout the 19th century, including unchecked inflation and currency scarcity.[5] Historians have identified silver as a critical factor in 19th-century social unrest and political instability, detailing the domestic impact of external changes in the global silver supply.[6] The use of imported silver as a dominant commodity currency tethered the fate of the Chinese economy to much wider economic shifts.

Silverwares such as the soup tureen described above thus engaged with global histories of supply and extraction at a material level. They were produced at the standard of imported American dollars with remarkable consistency across most of the 19th century, suggesting that their raw material originated in the form of Spanish colonial and later post-independence silver dollars.[7] Exploiting native silver mines at only a small scale, for centuries the Chinese demanded the high-quality desirable silver coins mined and minted in the Americas as payment for resource-intensive handicraft export goods such as silk, tea and porcelain. Though importing silver coins came with a high shipping cost, the Chinese economy effectively outsourced the labour of mining, refining and producing the high-value component of its bimetallic money supply.[8]

Cantonese silverwares were produced out of the material extracted and traded globally through European colonialism and international shipping networks. Moreover, they were extractions from the Chinese money supply, freezing silver in a non-monetary form and recirculating it as a crafted commodity. It is the latter dimension of extraction that this chapter will consider, first by exploring the transcultural perceptions of the repoussé conflict iconography through its production and Euro-American consumption, then considering how silver in this form mythologised conflict. The last section turns to a case of British erasure of the Chinese consumption of American silver to ask, in return, how conflict mythologised silver. 'Extraction' operates as a lens for considering material exchange mystified, in these specific cases, through a romantic narrative rooted in landscape.

Making military epics in relief

Cantonese silversmiths produced goods to suit foreign needs and tastes throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. From at least the 1780s, silverwares were being made in European-

style forms. The wares replicated the appearance and function of semi-luxury objects produced for the British taste in metalworking centres around the world, following Georgian and Regency designs developed in Britain, and included tea and coffee sets, tablewares, trophies, jewellery, buttons and other goods.[9] Silverwares were produced on a much smaller scale than bulk export goods such as tea and silks and other textiles, and were purchased by mercantile personnel for port-based use, for their own purposes, or on behalf of clients abroad. During and after the First Opium War, silver retailers continued to market and sell goods to foreign traders, whose presence increased as additional countries negotiated treaties with the Qing government. The multivalent figural images described above emerged in the 1840s, as entrepreneurial designs created by Chinese silversmiths and silver retailers.[10]

The images of war that appear on objects such as the soup tureen were drawn from woodblock-printed scenes of legendary military dramas, such as the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Cantonese silversmiths likely first adapted the designs for regional consumption on objects for Chinese use, as they are also common in handicraft carving media. Scenes from *Three Kingdoms* also commonly appear in woodblock-printed New Year prints.[11] On silver vessels, some scenes include flags inscribed with the names of generals and kings from the novel. Though it is often difficult to identify specific scenes, some can be clearly deduced; for example, curator Bai Fang has written about a tankard embellished with relief scenes from the tale 'Three Heroes Battling Lü Bu' (*Sanying zhan Lü Bu* 三英戰呂布).[12] Many scenes, such as the one that winds across the front of the soup tureen, seem to be general evocations of dramatised military skirmishes. The jousting figures on horseback, and the mountain setting, recall illustrations from *Three Kingdoms* scenes relating to the battles of generals Jiang Wei 姜維 and Deng Ai 鄧艾, who skirmished in the region around Mount Qi in present-day Gansu province (**Fig. 305**).[13] While not a depiction of this particular story from the novel, the dress and modes of battle represented on the tureen, with figures shown fighting in a precipitous landscape, are comparable. The pose and gesture of the general on the horse to the right of the empty reserve recalls the warrior on a horse in **Figure 305**, who lifts a spear overhead in both hands. Meanwhile, a figure on the left side of the reserve holds a sword as his horse pivots, in a similar posture to the second general on the print. Such shared characteristics and conventions of *Three Kingdoms* imagery create links between narrative in different media.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms has been attributed to Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中, who was active in the latter half of the 14th century and based the story on the much earlier *Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi* 三國志) by Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297 CE). Luo's work was a new type of historical fiction that served as part history, part entertainment and part myth.[14] The chronicle told the story of feudal lords, their generals and ministers from 169 to 280 CE, who fought to take power from the declining Han dynasty.[15] On New Year's prints the depiction of scenes would have also carried specific messages about Confucian morality. Cultural historian Anne McLaren has written,

Figure 305 'Jiang Wei battles Deng Ai at Mount Qi' (*Jiang Wei Qishan zhan Deng Ai* 姜維祁山戰鄧艾), from *Illustrated Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi tuxiang: Dakui tang* 三國志圖像大魁堂), woodblock print, *c.* 1644–1735, h. 19.4cm, w. 13.9cm. National Central Library, Taipei, 000517909

however, that the events of the period were revisited throughout Chinese history at points of civil war and political fragmentation, and particularly during periods of anxiety over invasion by nomadic foreigners.[16] *Three Kingdoms* scenes were a common theme on so-called 'Transitional-period' porcelain, which was produced at the kilns at Jingdezhen in the mid- to late 17th century, during the transition from the Ming to the Qing periods. When the Ming court suspended its patronage of the kilns due to the military advances of the nomadic Manchu from the northeast, the kilns sought new markets among Chinese, Japanese and European buyers, leading to the creation and popularisation of new vessel forms and design programmes. If, as McLaren suggests, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* served an oblique political function during periods of nomadic threat, it would have had special resonance during the Manchu conquest of China. Furthermore, as a decorative programme popularised on the southeastern coast during the 19th century, it is possible that initially it held similar meaning for a Cantonese consumership.

Scenes were modified by specialist silversmith embossers and chasers to exploit the format and properties of the silver medium. Anthropologist and curator Henry Ling Roth (1855–1925) described how Chinese silversmiths in Malaysia in the early 20th century made repoussé reliefs. They would first fix a shaped piece of sheet silver onto pitch or resin on a

Figure 306 Studio of Tingqua (Guan Lianchang 關聯昌, active in Guangzhou 1830–79), *Wansheng Silverwares and Jewellery Shop* (*Wansheng hao yinqi shoushi duihuan,* 萬盛號銀器首飾兌換), from an album illustrating the shops of Canton, mid-19th century, watercolour and gouache on paper, h. 27.9cm, w. 36.8cm. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, gift of Mr. and Mrs. B. Rionda Braga, 1977, E80607.9

worktable, to keep it in place and to create a malleable yet supportive surface against which to hammer the metal. They either painted designs onto the interior using ink, or else a drawing on paper was pasted onto the interior wall, which became a guide for the embosser.[17] They used different punches, or chisels with differently shaped heads, to tap out the designs from the back. The silversmiths would periodically remove the vessel from the pitch and chase it from the front, annealing it with a flame several times to soften the silver.[18] Cantonese silversmiths were attentive to how different scenes would interact with the curved surfaces of vessels to create specific visual effects – in the case of the soup tureen, they used the oblong curved vessel body to simulate the recession of the mountainous landscape.

Both embossed silver and woodblock prints of figures at war in a mountain environment used the potentials of their respective mediums to convey the drama of the battle, but similar to carved versions, silver offered a more immersive approach to the natural setting. The mountainous landscape of Mount Qi in **Figure 305** is indicated economically through line, as for example towards the centre of the page, where the jagged edges of mountain peaks morph into swirling clouds. It is also indicated through composition: beneath the two sparring generals at the bottom right, a line of marching soldiers is visible through their lifted weapons and standards, yet their bodies are masked by a rocky landscape and cut by the edge of the frame. The placement of this marching army indicates that the generals are sparring at a high altitude. The embossed silver version on the tureen, however, offers more details of the scenery, including the bark of pine trees, odd rocky formations, low-lying plants underfoot and textural chasing that distinguishes different mountain peaks from each other. The curve of the body of the vessel creates a sense of distance between registers of attacking figures in a similarly mountainous landscape. The form of such vessels and the malleability yet resilience of silver offered a dynamic medium for the depiction of theatrical scenes of conflict.

Evaluating the 'true art' of the port

The market ultimately co-opted any politics of anti-barbarian sentiment in such imagery, as the scenes found an eager consumership among foreigners. Accounts of visits to Cantonese silver shops provide a glimpse of how these objects were understood by foreign consumers. They viewed them not as replacements for the silverwares they could purchase in England, France or North America, but rather as fine craft objects reflective of their context of making. While negotiating the Treaty of Whampoa (1843) for the French, diplomat Charles-Hubert Lavollée (1823–1913) visited several Guangzhou shops, including one selling silverware, recording his impressions of the shops in his travel memoir. A gold and silverware and jewellery shop is one of a series of retail premises included in an album of Canton trades in watercolour and gouache; its banners identify it as the Wansheng (萬盛) jewellery and silverwares shop (**Fig. 306**).[19] The interior may be similar to the shop visited by Lavollée in its appearance, though such images are visual shorthands condensing essential physical components and the workmen's tasks in each shop. While there is room to spare, the space is nonetheless pictured as a centre of activity focused on the working and selling of silver. A man at the back is working silver at a desk, and a Chinese woman patron stands at the counter, apparently either buying some jewellery or having it appraised for exchange. Most of the visible wares are jewellery, while the rest are contained in boxes; many such boxes with shop labels are still extant. The image of the shop, as well as Lavollée's account, reveals the Cantonese silver shop as a space of intercultural transaction selling to both domestic and foreign markets.

Lavollée and others were laudatory of the wares that they saw for sale in the shop. As Lavollée wrote, 'here are true artists!' ('*Voilà de véritables artistes!*'). Furthermore, 'We could judge… by some fine pieces which were to be sent to England how the Chinese workmen are skilled in the art of sculpting on metals. The shapes of teapots, sugar bowls, beer pots, etc., modelled on those of Europe, have a remarkable originality of design, and the Chinese subjects which decorate them are perfectly rendered.'[20] In 1868, an unnamed Western visitor recorded an account of a visit to the Lee Ching (利升) silverwares shop in *The China Magazine*. This shop (also romanised as Leeching and Lee-ching) originated in Guangzhou, but opened a branch in Hong Kong after it developed under British colonial rule. In around 1870 it was photographed by the Scottish photographer John Thomson (**Fig. 307**). The anonymous chronicler described the 'carved work' of the Chinese silversmith as 'Admirable and spirited', before writing, 'their historical bas-reliefs are really strikingly good'.[21] He compared the work to English and French silver and lamented that often when Cantonese silver is imported into England, it incurs an enormous duty payment, or is smashed by the Customs House. 'If the Chinese can beat [the silver retailers] Mssrs. Hunt and Roskell in a fair field… why not let him do so?'[22] he asked. The account suggests that relief-covered Cantonese silverwares were viewed by foreign sojourners as a fine handicraft that could not be better made by British metalworkers.

The chronicler also described the imagery as 'historical', which raises the question of how the shop owners explained the designs to their foreign clients. Did they connect them directly to *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and other theatrical military epics? Or did the consumers judge by the dress of the warriors, their weaponry and the mountainous setting that the scenes were depictions of ancient Chinese battles? From a foreigner's viewpoint, casting them as 'historical' displaced them from directly bearing on the conflicts of the present. Rather than seeing the designs as a political commentary on foreign invasion, the figures are cloaked in the romance of a mythic past. The distance of time was likely enhanced by the dramatic landscapes that place them well outside of the contemporary urban settings and the water-adjacent sites of Opium War conflicts.

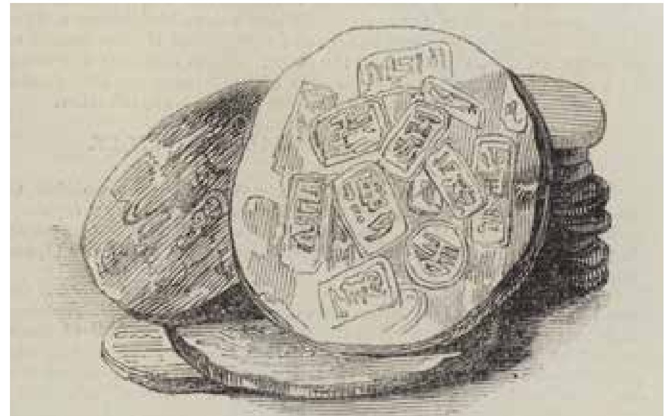
The silver used to make the vessels was extracted from the circulating money supply, but nonetheless, silver in any form could be converted into payment. *The China Magazine* article began with a discussion of the importance of silver in China:

> Silver is the universal medium of payment throughout the Chinese Empire, and a thorough acquaintance with it, in all its forms, is indispensable even, for the smallest trader. Everywhere a lump of silver may be used as money without the slightest inconvenience…. A person landing at Southampton [in England] with a pocket-full of teaspoons and silver forks, but otherwise without resources, would find it difficult to obtain either bed or board…. Not so in China. A Chinaman would pay his hotel-bill with a spoon, his tailor with an assortment of old bowls and handles, and his fare in the passage boat with a prong. Little packets of 'broken silver', that is, dollars chopped and chopped until they are chopped to pieces, with the value written outside, became a kind of currency….[23]

Figure 307 John Thomson, *Queen's Road West, Hong Kong* (detail), 1868/1871, photographic print made from wet collodion glass plate, h. 102mm, w. 202mm. Wellcome Collection, London, 18746i

Chinese money specialists and informal bankers known to Anglophone traders as shroffs would apply chopmarks (*ziyin* 字印 'character stamps') to silver coins as part of a process of assessment, indicating their authenticity. Because silver was a commodity money exchanged by value and weight, imported American coins could also be clipped with scissors to create the necessary value. As a result, coins in southern China could circulate as broken pieces, or as discs with faces punctuated or obliterated by chopmarks (**Fig. 308**).[24] Foreign observers visiting silverware shops noted that items were produced at the standard of imported American dollars; indeed, an alloy study of Chinese silver produced for foreign consumption confirms the observation, if on a limited sample of silverwares.[25] Effectively, the 'true art' of the port was made out of the very material of trade, with chopped and fragmented trade dollars re-smelted and hammered into soup tureens and trophies. Vessels for foreign consumption thus served to extract the material of exchange from Chinese domestic circulation. Meanwhile, craft displaced the contemporary context of violence by mediating violence instead through the lens of 'historical' conflict. Instead of bearing on current social and material concerns, they projected conflict into a romantic past.

Figure 308 Silver dollar (eight *reales*) with Chinese chopmarks, minted Mexico City, 1758, weight 27.13g. British Museum, London, donated by Lady Banks, SSB.177.23



CHINESE DOLLARS.

The Chinese dollars are mere rough pieces of silver, rudely circular, and having no impress save that placed upon them by various merchants through whose hands they pass. Each trader into whose possession they fall stamps them with his mark, and thus such of the pieces as have had long currency are completely covered by the names or signs of successive owners.

Figure 309 'Chinese Dollars', from 'The Chinese Tribute', *The Illustrated London News*, 11 March 1843, 196

Picturesque extraction — picturing the source of the indemnity

If Chinese silverwares participated in the concealment of the material basis of their medium for foreign consumers, how did the British regard the silver that was collected for the post-Opium War indemnity payment? According to a full-page story titled 'The Chinese Tribute' in *The Illustrated London News,* the first shipment of the Chinese payment was delivered to the London Mint in 1843. It consisted of 20 tons of silver valued at 750,000 dollars. The article related the processes of physical and cross-cultural transmutations that the silver would undergo in order to circulate in England. It described how the silver would be given a new form, 'impressed with the image of the British monarch', and subsequently 'pass current amongst a people widely different to those who first cleansed it from its parent earth'.[26] Arriving via the Southampton Railway, the silver was described in two forms: cast ingots and 'Chinese dollars'. The former were notable for stamped Chinese characters that, in an imperialist gesture, the article related to the characters that appeared on the treaty that concluded the war. The latter were chopped dollars, described as circular but uneven, with no struck images except the marks of various merchants (**Fig. 309**).[27] These 'Chinese dollars' were American dollars physically altered through their circulation to the point where they were unrecognisable. Yet such coins were the major import commodity of the British to China for centuries.[28] Was the identification of the coins

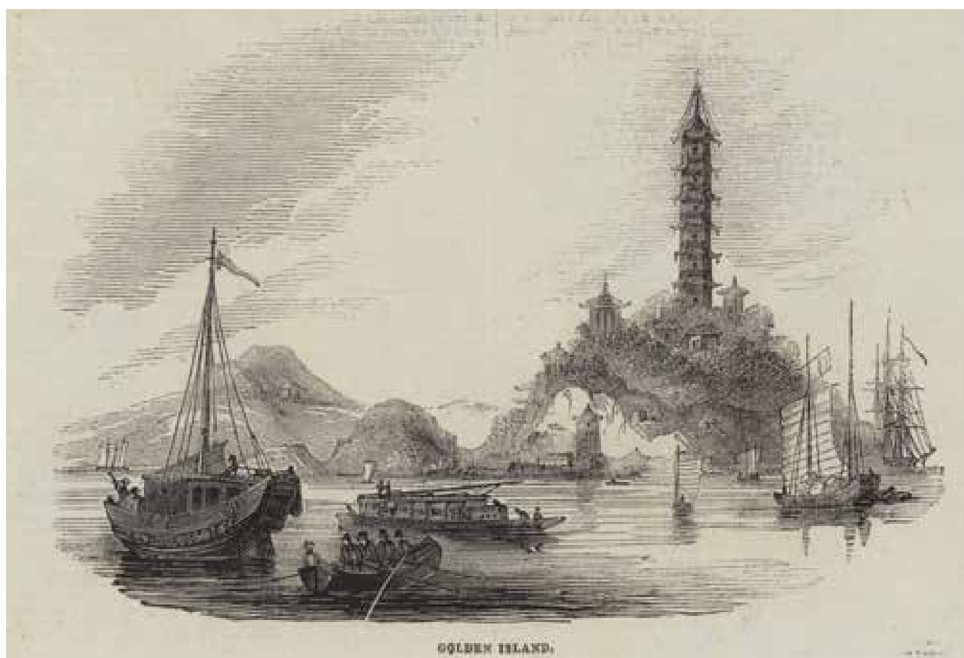


Figure 310 'Golden Island', from 'The Chinese Tribute', *The Illustrated London News*, 11 March 1843, 196

as 'Chinese dollars' a form of colonial erasure, premised on the defacement of the Spanish colonial coin?

The 'Chinese Tribute' article applied the British imperial trope of the 'picturesque' to the Chinese landscape, in order to mythologise the source of the silver indemnity payment. British travellers developed the picturesque as a visual and literary mode in order to homogenise the global differences of the empire into a coherent, romanticised view of the other. Historian Jeffrey Auerbach has argued that particularity had no place within the picturesque. Rather, the picturesque was used to conceal colonial extraction by 'beautify[ing] the frequently unpleasant surroundings that characterised life in the imperial zone', condensing people, places and specific conditions 'through a single, formulaic lens'.[29] The article evoked the picturesque in relating the story of the indemnity payment's extraction. The high-purity Chinese silver that was cast into ingots, it claimed, was obtained from the 'valuable mines of the celebrated Golden Island', known in Chinese as Jinshan (金山). It illustrated the island because 'it possesses… great interest, from the fact that the deepest recesses of its long-wrought caves are now undergoing busy searches for precious metals to aid the payment of the tribute to England' (**Fig. 310**).[30] A romantic image of the island includes a tall pagoda and several shorter temple structures in a river landscape. The island of Jinshan was located in the Yangzi river close to the city of Zhenjiang (鎮江), which is situated where the river meets the Grand Canal. The island was the site of a Buddhist temple since the Eastern Jin dynasty (266–420 CE).[31] Jinshan was never mined for gold or silver. However, its aesthetic and poetic evocations were a frequent subject of Chinese literati painting, as well as Japanese painting.[32] The Song artist Li Tang 李唐 (*c.* 1050–1130), for instance, analogised the island to a floating jade in an ink painting, which showed the island as a small, steep mountain jutting out of a rolling river current, with temples and small outcroppings of trees tucked into its stony sides (**Fig. 311**). The beauty of the island was not lost on British travellers once they were able to infiltrate China's interior during and after the First Opium War, as it was frequently sketched and painted.

Figure 311 Li Tang, *Great River and Floating Jade* (*Dajiang fuyu* 大江浮玉), early 12th century round fan mounted as album leaf, ink and light colour on silk, h. 20.8cm, w. 22.2cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 故畫 001248

The selection of Jinshan as an imaginary mining site was not arbitrary. In the article, the picturesque drew on extraction itself as a romantic myth to conceal British imperial violence. Jinshan was the starting point of the bloodiest battle of the First Opium War at Zhenjiang (romanised as Chin-Keang-Foo or Chinkiang), which was also the final major battle that led to the capture of Nanjing.[33] On 21 July 1842, the British approached

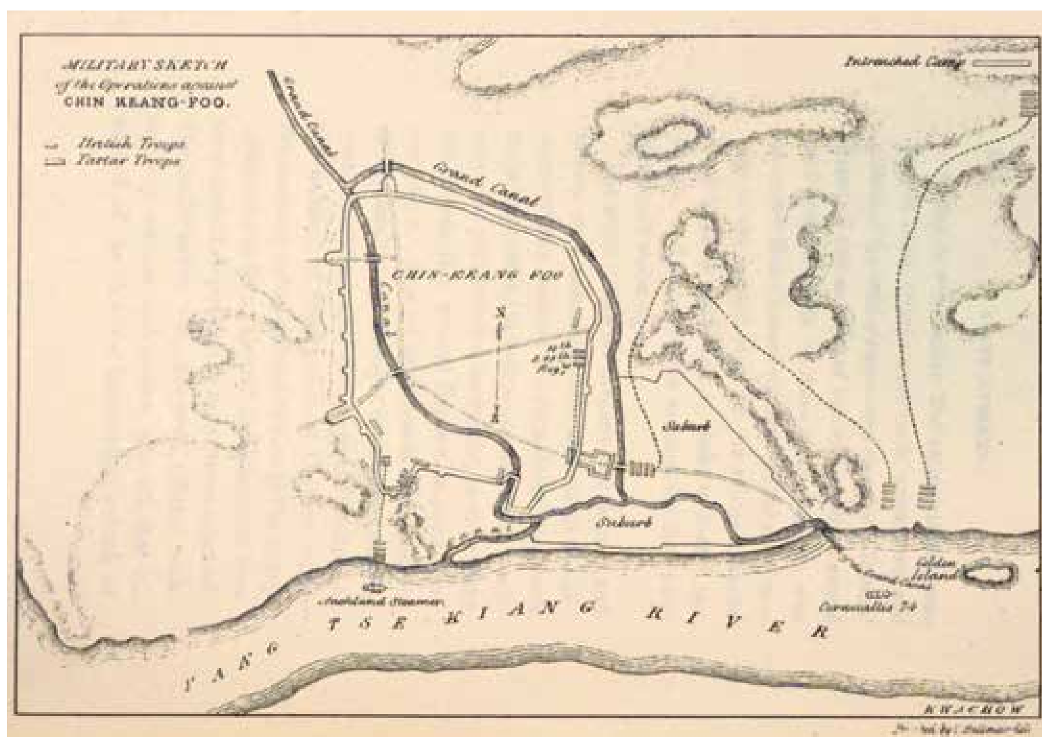


Figure 312 'Military Sketch of the Operations Against Chin Keang-Foo', in John Ouchterlony's *The Chinese War*, 1844

Zhenjiang by ship, landing on the bank, according to one account, nearly across from Jinshan.[34] As depicted in a map of the invasion, 'Golden Island' appears at the lower right, as the point where the British troops approached the city from the water (**Fig. 312**). The walled city was defended by Manchu and Mongol bannermen, many of whom were brutally killed in the conflict, and the British heaped their bodies inside the city. The battle was never visually depicted in the British press; it was not until the Second Opium War that European imperial violence in China was pictured in the illustrated media. Instead of a representation of human conflict, the public was supplied with the colonial imaginary of a picturesque island, narrated as the site of extraction of the indemnity silver. Silver mining was rendered into a moralistic endeavour, as the Chinese were imagined scraping the bowels of 'Golden Island' in extracting their tribute to the British. Violence and death was obscured through the Chinese exploitation of landscape.

The Chinese silver scenes of romantic military legends and the British picturesque imaginary of 'Golden Island' created visual alternatives to violence in coastal regions. They also disavowed the spectres of stamped and broken American silver dollars. The longstanding British presence in China due to trans-shipping networks, the silverisation of the late imperial Chinese domestic economy, and the Cantonese silversmithing trade were all materially based in American silver, as well as the labour extracted through Spanish colonialism in the Americas. Through craft and through narrative, these dollars were mystified through theatrical scenes of conflict and tales of extraction. Ultimately, the examples together demonstrate how landscape could serve as a theatre of violence to naturalise, and neutralise, conflict. If the oval reserve on the body of the soup tureen had been etched with a cypher, it would have positioned its merchant owner at the conjunction of the conflict, as well as the meeting of human violence with a tumultuous landscape. The Cantonese retailer of the vessel, who also profited from the scenes of violence and the transformation of chopped silver dollars, might also be located at that nexus. Produced and consumed amidst an ongoing context of conflict, the tureen reveals a complex set of economic and social relations through both its relief surfaces and its material.

Notes

1 Crosby Forbes *et al.* 1975, 109–10, figs 164, 218.
2 Silverwares made for Western consumption by Cantonese silversmiths in Guangzhou are often called 'Chinese export silver'; see Chan and Wan 2017; Chen Zhigao 2015 ('export', 外銷).
3 The classic account of the treaty-port era is Fairbank 1964; also see Bickers and Jackson 2016.
4 Lin 2006, 12.
5 Ibid.
6 von Glahn 2016a, 367–74; Irigoin 2009; Flynn and Giráldez 2002.
7 Carlson 1993, 4–5.
8 Flynn and Giráldez 1995, 201–5.
9 On Cantonese silverwares in the 'British taste', see Eberhard 2023, 167–200.
10 The earliest dated silverwares with theatrical military scenes date to the 1840s; see, for example, the trophy discussed in Huang Chao 2018.
11 Pagani 2007, 87.
12 Bai Fang 2017, 185–6.
13 Brewitt-Taylor 1929, vol. 2, 530–6.
14 Besio and Tung 2007, xxii.
15 Ibid.
16 McLaren 2006, 295.
17 Roth 1910, 9.
18 Ibid., 11.
19 The shop might alternatively be transliterated as Wongshing, a well-known silverwares shop selling to foreigners. Crossman 1991, 239.
20 'Nous pûmes cependant juger, par quelques belles pièces qui devaient être envoyées en Angleterre, combien les ouvriers chinois sont habiles dans l'art de sculpter sur métaux…. Les formes de théières, des sucriers, des pots à bière, etc., calquées sur celles d'Europe, présentent une remarquable originalité de dessins, et les sujets chinois qui les décorent sont parfaitement rendus.' Lavollée 1852, 363–4.
21 Anonymous, 1869, 89.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 88.
24 von Glahn 2007, 51–78.
25 Renouard 1810, 197; Carlson 1993.
26 'The Chinese Tribute', *The Illustrated London News* 45, vol. 2 (11 March 1843), 174.
27 Ibid.
28 Chaudhuri 1978.
29 Auerbach 2004, 48.
30 'The Chinese Tribute', *The Illustrated London News* 45, vol. 2 (11 March 1843), 174.
31 Due to land reclamation, today Jinshan is a hill in the city of Zhenjiang.
32 McKelway 2001, 42–3.
33 Elliott 1990, 36–9.
34 Bingham 1843, 344.

Chapter 26
China's 1800s and global environment history: some visible intersections

Jonathan Schlesinger

The 19th century was a pivotal period in Chinese history; it also marked a watershed moment in the history of the Earth. The 1800s witnessed the first concerted shift to fossil-fuel energy, the advent of electrification, exponential population growth, a pulse of biodiversity loss and extinctions, the birth of the modern environmental movement, and the creation of the first environmental NGOs and national parks. Where do the histories of 19th-century China and the global environment intersect, then, and what archives might preserve these histories' interconnections?

Earth's archives are many and varied. Climatologists put ice cores and foraminifera to work; geologists and palaeontologists have sedimentary layers and the fossil record; entomologists set Malaise traps. An enterprising environmental historian might draw on all such sources, if they so choose, while casting still wider nets; all texts and artefacts, in their own ways, offer insights into environmental history.[1] Whether in ordinary bricks or tiles, or in extraordinary ivory carvings or fur-trimmed coats, evidence of environmental transformation suffuses the 19th-century record. Taken together, these things not only document change over time but also help demarcate the contours of the Anthropocene, an era marked by profound human impact on the Earth, with deep roots in history, but which has expressed itself with ever greater clarity over the past 200 years.[2]

The term Anthropocene derives from the natural sciences. When the atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen first proposed it as a new geological era, he based his claim on studies of carbon dioxide (CO_2) levels in the air.[3] By this measure, the Industrial Revolution marked a turning point: CO_2 levels rose from 282 ppm (parts per million) in 1800, to 285 ppm in 1850, to 296 ppm in 1900. If this growth left a relatively faint imprint – CO_2 levels today stand at 424 ppm – the 1800s mark the point when the 'pre-industrial' period in the carbon cycle ended.[4]

Using CO_2 levels in the atmosphere alone as a standard, of course, does injustice to the century's transformations, and to the centrality of fossil-fuel power within them. Consider steam-powered gunboats. Perhaps the most apt icon of the age, they have represented at once British dominance, Western imperialism, and the coming of the modern era more broadly.[5] First deployed as transport vessels in the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824–6), coal-powered gunboats only saw combat, and gained their greatest fame, in China in the First Opium War. The most celebrated ship of that war, in turn, was the *Nemesis*: an ironclad engineering marvel, with twin 60-horsepower Forrester engines that required 175 tons of coal for 15 days' worth of travel.[6] When it set sail in January 1840, *Nemesis* was the largest ironclad ship ever built.[7] It joined in British attacks off Canton in 1841, and, in 1842, campaigned up the Yangzi as part of a group of ten steamers.[8]

The ship gained fame almost immediately; the *Nemesis* legacy was as a symbol, not just a ship. Just two years after the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing, William Dallas Bernard (1808–1866) wrote of it in his two-volume *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the* Nemesis *from 1840 to 1843*, using the ship's captain, William Hutcheon Hall, as a key collaborator and informant. The book resonated and was

Figure 313 Edward Duncan (1803–1882), 'The Hon. E.I.Co. Iron Steam Ship Nemesis… with boats of Sulphur, Calliope, Larne, and Starling, destroying the Chinese War Junks, in Anson's Bay, Jan 7th 1841 (Chuenpee near Canton)', 30 May 1843, coloured print, h. 55.5cm, w. 80.7cm (mounted). National Maritime Museum, London, PAH8192

rapidly printed in three separate editions.[9] Likewise, one of the most reproduced images of the First Opium War was a coloured print of the *Nemesis* in action by artist Edward Duncan (1803–1882); it depicts the ship's Forrester engines firing, and exhaust billowing from its smokestacks, as a Chinese vessel explodes from a decisive attack (**Fig. 313**). The image taught a key lesson: the future belonged to steam power and the British navy.

Attaining 'wealth and power' (*fuqiang* 富強) has entailed harnessing fossil fuels ever since.[10] As part of the Self Strengthening Movement, the Qing state oversaw the construction of 27 coal-powered steamships at the Fuzhou Shipyard and the Jiangnan Shipyard.[11] The Kaiping Mines (*Kaiping meikuang* 開平煤礦) – a state-backed colliery – likewise began unearthing coal in 1881. The state supported the construction of coal-powered railways, iron foundries and cotton mills shortly thereafter.[12] In retrospect, the scale of these projects was relatively modest; in 1895, only 195 miles of railroad track had been laid in China, and the empire's carbon emissions were miniscule.[13] Yet where the carbon record suggests but a modest shift in environmental history, a momentous change had taken place all the same; fossil fuels and the goals of modern development had become inseparably entwined.[14]

Figure 314 Unidentified artist, untitled depiction of shipping off Canton, *c.* 1849–56, oil painting, h. 94cm, w. 189.2cm. National Maritime Museum, London, Caird Collection, BHC1777

Figure 315 Tripod incense-burner with dedicating inscription, Hexiang county, Shuntian prefecture, 18th–19th century, cast iron, h. 32cm. British Museum, London, 1990,1122.1

Indeed, from initial encounters with Watt's engines in the 1790s to the first steamer's arrival off Canton in 1828, coalsmoke would mark China's landscapes with accelerating frequency.[15] Artists and writers took note. Steamships would more regularly ply the waters off Canton from the late 1840s.[16] One anonymous artist recorded the change in the local landscape accordingly (**Fig. 314**). In their painting, a steamer with four smokestacks and a gleaming paddlewheel, bathed in sunlight among more ordinary vessels, takes centre stage. This was just the beginning; steamships would frequent all of China's major waterways by the century's end.[17]

Not everything about the 1800s was novel, of course – not even the use of fossil fuels in China. Ordinary people on the North China Plain had been using coal for centuries as an everyday fuel. Deforestation had encouraged the practice: by the 1800s, wood was simply too scarce and expensive to use for domestic heating. For this same reason, as historian Susan Naquin has shown, most homes and temples on the North China Plain were made from bricks and stone, not wood, and they had been for centuries.[18]

It had not always been so. 10,000 years ago, the North China Plain was largely covered with trees. But significant deforestation took place as early as 5000 BCE, and wood scarcity was a problem by the Spring and Autumn period (770–481 BCE); the North China Plain was all but denuded by the Han period.[19] At the same time, the region's mineral resources grew ever more depleted. Ming and Qing artisans, for this reason, tended to forge incense burners, bells, vats and other metal objects from iron, the primary metal that remained in the highlands surrounding the plain.[20] A Qing iron incense-burner from Hexiang county, in Shuntian prefecture, reflects this regional history – a history that played out over millennia, and that continued to manifest itself for centuries thereafter in material culture (**Fig. 315**).

Trade patterns changed over time as well as resources dwindled and what was once common became scarce in later times. The ancient forests of the North China Plain were rich in valuable resources and biodiversity, with elephants, rhinoceroses, green peacocks, tigers, herds of buffalo and other animals thriving in them.[21] That, too, changed over time. As documented by the historical geographer Wen Huanran 文焕然 (1919/20–1986/90) and historian Mark Elvin (1938–2023), humans gradually extirpated Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in what is today China.[22] In 5000 BCE, elephants roamed by the Yellow River; by 1000 BCE, they had 'retreated' to roughly the Huai River valley; by 500 CE, their range extended to the central Yangzi; by the Ming period they were limited to the empire's southernmost provinces; today Asian elephants survive only in the most distant borderlands of Yunnan province.[23] The history of the Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*) is similar; over the span of three millennia, its northern range, too, shifted south. Sumatran rhinoceroses once extended up to the Yellow River, but none live in China anymore and fewer than 80 survive anywhere in the wild today; only isolated habitats remain in pockets of Borneo and Sumatra.[24] In the 19th century, rhinoceros horn carved in China thus derived exclusively from Africa and Southeast Asia.[25] Peacock feathers had to be imported as well; just like elephants and rhinoceroses, green peafowl (*Pavo muticus*) had made the North China Plain their home in prehistory, but survive today only in the remotest parts of Yunnan (**Fig. 316**).[26]

Their rarity in China, in fact, was part of what made elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn and peacock feathers so valuable. As the historian Wang Gungwu once argued, demand for rare 'luxury goods like ivory, pearls, tortoise shells, kingfisher and peacock feathers, rhinoceros horns and cinnamon and scented woods… may have been the strongest single motive for the southward expansion of Chinese political power' into what is today southern China during the first millennium BCE.[27] Because they were of interest to imperial elites, such products appear frequently in the textual archive. Using these records, historians have surmised that ivory crossed the South China Sea from at least the Han period, and it circulated still further across

Figure 316 Two peacock feather hat ornaments and their lacquer box, max h. 37cm. British Museum, London, As1944,07.1.a-c, collected by Sir Edmund Backhouse (1873–1944) and given by his sister Lady Findlay

continents and the Indian Ocean as well. The *Book of the Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書) records that an emissary from as far afield as Rome (*Daqin* 大秦) submitted a tribute of elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn and sea-turtle shell to the Han court in 166 CE.[28] Later histories likewise testify to tributes of ivory and rhinoceros horn and other exotic products in later times, including by Thai, Vietnamese, Burmese and others during the Qing.[29] In *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*, a 10th-century Abbasid geography and history book, the author al-Mas'udi (896–956), claimed that 'ivory would abound in Muslim lands' if not for the trade with India and China.[30]

While ordinary people on the North China Plain in the 1800s warmed their homes with coal, and Qing elites imported ivory from Africa, both were living in the same, ever-deforested world, one where elephants, rhinoceroses and other creatures survived only in distant lands. Both everyday and elite material cultures, in their own ways, came to embody this shared environmental history over the course of millennia. Were the 1800s simply another century among others, positioned amidst 'three thousand years of unsustainable growth' in China, to borrow the historian Mark Elvin's memorable phrase?[31]

The *Nemesis* points us to the future; rhinoceros horns and iron incense burners evoke a deep past. Yet the 19th century was more than just a prelude to the modern era or another passing moment in deep time; in many ways, historians now know, it was an unprecedented period in China's environmental history for reasons that extend beyond the introduction of steam power.[32] Natural disasters, most notably, plagued China during these years. Flooding became commonplace on the Yellow River, which breached its dykes with growing frequency in the 1820s and 1840s. Then, in 1855, after a major breach opened downstream from Kaifeng, the river switched course, jumping from a channel south of the Shandong Peninsula to one north of it. Only in 1884, after three decades of flooding, did authorities manage to stabilise the flow.[33] Amid this upheaval, a second disaster struck: three years of drought between 1876 and 1878, triggered by an El Niño event. When the weakened Qing government failed to provide adequate relief, the Northern Chinese Famine ensued; between 9 and 13 million people died, as many as one in ten people in the affected region.[34]

Playing out amid the devastation of the era's civil wars and the Qing defeats in the Opium Wars, few have understood these disasters, either then or now, to be purely natural; rather, most historians have framed the famine in terms of the crippling effects of foreign aggression or technological shortcomings.[35] At the time, the floods and the famine led horrified observers to dub the Yellow River 'China's sorrow' and China the 'land of famine'. Both terms suggested that the era's disasters stemmed from the failure of Chinese tradition itself. Amidst the upheavals of the age, it seemed, imperial institutions and traditional knowledge had become antiquated, and only Western science and more centralised forms of state control would help China escape the calamities.[36]

China's empires and experts had not always proved so incapable; the 'retreat of the elephants' notwithstanding, the story of China's environmental history is not simply one of overexploitation. Historians are often struck by the creativity with which people responded to the environmental challenges of their times. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, as the historian Ian Miller has shown, early states took the initiative to conserve forest resources.[37] In the 12th century, in contrast, market-based institutions arose to encourage the conservation of forests in southern China, and local property owners over time developed a unique, robust, and sustainable system of sericulture that thrived into the 19th century.[38] Still other methods of conservation predominated in Manchuria and Mongolia, where the Qing state worked to protect imperial hunting grounds, sacred mountains, and land allocated for the collection of ginseng, furs, freshwater pearls and other resources.[39] The Yellow River, for its part, was not always 'China's Sorrow'; recent histories have documented how periods of effective management were just as remarkable as those of acute crisis across China's long history.[40]

When the institutions and systems that encouraged conservation buckled in the 19th century, they did so due to pressures that had been mounting since the 18th century, not across millennia, and not because of anything latent within Chinese traditions. The introduction of new crops to China from the Americas, such as maize and sweet potatoes, and a broad expansion in the Ming and Qing

Figure 317 Unidentified artist, *Ten Thousand Miles Along the Yellow River* (*Huanghe wanli tu* 黄河萬里圖) (detail), 1690–1722, two handscrolls, ink, colour and gold on silk, h. 78cm, w. 1285cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2006.272a, b. Purchase, W. M. Keck Foundation Gift, The Dillon Fund Gift and gifts from various donors, in memory of Douglas Dillon, 2006

economies, undergirded unprecedented demographic growth. The economy grew as well: China's population roughly tripled between 1700 and 1850.[41] The amount of cultivated land doubled in this period, as settlers converted forested highlands, wetlands and pasturelands into farms.[42] With the clearing of upland forests came unprecedented levels of erosion and siltation. The geological record testifies to the massive environmental pressures of the age: studies of the Yellow River's bed confirm that upland farming contributed to a doubling or tripling of the average sediment load carried by the river in the 1800s compared to levels that had predominated since the Tang–Song transition, roughly a thousand years earlier (**Fig. 317**).[43] This outpouring of silt, in turn, necessitated ever greater quantities of silver and labour to maintain the dykes and levees downstream. With the outbreak of the Taiping Civil War, the defeats in the Opium Wars, and the decades of violence that followed, there simply was not enough human or material resources to deal with the intensifying problem. Disasters resulted.

Maize and potatoes were essential elements in the unfolding of this history, as the introduction of American crops from the early 1500s helped spur demographic growth across much of Eurasia, a key part of the process that the environmental historian Alfred Crosby named the 'Columbian Exchange'.[44] The European colonisation of the Americas, and the environmental transformations that ensued, mark a turning point in Chinese history. An ivory snuff bottle carved in the shape of a cob of maize could only exist from the 16th century onwards (**Fig. 318**). No maize and no tobacco existed in China before then.

The elephant ivory used for the snuff bottle, for its part, embodied the age as well. Though its history is ancient, the ivory trade entered a new phase from the 16th century, when European traders, capitalising on colonial expansion in Africa and Southeast Asia, began introducing unprecedented quantities of elephant ivory to global markets. As the supply of elephant tusks grew, and carvers applied themselves to the material with ever greater ingenuity, so too did the number and variety of technical and artistic exchanges across continents. New types of ivory carvings emerged through these exchanges, from ivory figurines to puzzle balls to works, as Ching-fei Shih has documented, crafted with rose engine lathes.[45] In the 18th and 19th centuries elephant ivory ultimately settled into what the art historian Craig Clunas described as a 'context of quiet, late Qing domesticity'.[46] Qing carvers crafted ivory not only into exquisite works for scholars, such as wrist rests or brush-pots, but more playful things, such as gaming pieces and cricket cages (**Fig. 319**). Such pieces, in turn, generated new conversations. Were ivory cricket cages frivolous or respectable? At least one mid-18th-century gazetteer intervened to argue that they had a prestigious pedigree, as 'the wealthy of Chang'an' during the Tang

Figure 318 Carved ivory snuff bottle in the form of a maize cob with insects, early 19th century, elephant ivory, h. 9.6cm. British Museum, London, 2018,3005.317, donated by The Sir Victor Sassoon Chinese Ivories Trust

Figure 319 'A cricket cage formed from a natural gourd with a pieced ivory lid carved with the image of two rats on grape vines', 1644–1912, gourd and elephant ivory, h. 12.5cm, w. 6.5cm. British Museum, London, 2018,3005.484, donated by The Sir Victor Sassoon Chinese Ivories Trust

Figure 320 Carved ivory basket from the collection of William Fullerton Elphinstone (1740–1834), Director of the East India Company, Guangzhou, early 19th century, elephant ivory, h. 56cm, d. 29cm. Private collection on loan to National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, IL.2006.50.1

period used carved ivory in their cricket-cages.[47] Perhaps they had. Yet the sheer scale and prominence of ivory consumption after 1500, and particularly after 1800, had no antecedents in Chinese history.

It was also only from the 16th century, moreover, that Chinese ivory carving traditions won the attention of collectors beyond China. Carvings for the export market grew markedly in popularity during the 18th and 19th centuries, as Cantonese craftsmen began fashioning ivory baskets (**Fig. 320**), fans, pagodas, chess sets, erotica and other pieces for European and North American markets. The unworked elephant tusks imported into China were thus often exported back out as finished works for foreign buyers. Officially, the port of Canton imported 46 metric tons of elephant ivory (753 piculs) in 1865, valued at 126,277 taels of silver. That same year, it exported 9 metric tons of worked ivory (147 piculs), worth 92,099 taels, during that same year.[48] By the book, at least, perhaps one-fifth of all ivory imported to Canton that year was shipped back abroad.

Registered ivory imports at Chinese ports ultimately grew by a factor of ten in the period 1860–1920, undergirded by booming exports from Zanzibar and other colonial ports.[49] The trade's consequences during this period were staggering. In the early 19th century, the population of African savanannah elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) was perhaps 26 million. By the start of the 21st century, roughly 630,000 remained.[50] Today there are 50,000 Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*); in the late 18th century, there were perhaps as many as 200,000 in Siam alone.[51] Consumers in North America and Europe, and the advent of industrial factories in towns like Ivoryton, Connecticut that manufactured ivory billiard balls and piano keys, drove this trade from the 1860s onwards. Qing consumers did not; they accounted for a small fraction of the overall global trade in ivory during the period between 1860 and 1920.[52] Yet Chinese demand for ivory grew all the same in this period. The violent expansion of the global ivory trade, it seems, stimulated the remarkable expansion in ivory imports to China, not just *vice versa*.

The era's fur trade was remarkably different in this regard. While fur clothing had some popularity to varying degrees in earlier eras in Chinese history, the Qing embrace of fur culture marked something new. In the mid-17th century, at the time of the Qing conquest, furs served as symbols of the court and the Manchu elite. Furs also functioned as a source of wealth and power, as controlling Manchuria entailed, in part, creating state institutions to administer and monopolise the exchange of high-end sable pelts and other regional products. The Manchu language contained a rich lexicon for the differing fur-bearing animals and clothing types – a lexicon that lacked a one-to-one analogue in Chinese in the early Qing period. Only after the Qing conquest, when furs became part of a broader imperial fashion, and the court issued sumptuary laws for differing ranks and occasions, irrespective of whether one was Manchu or Han Chinese, did that begin to change.[53]

Figure 321 Reversible man's jacket, *c.* 1795–1820, damask, sable, h. 70cm, w. 155cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, 故00044967

Through the course of the 18th century, however, consumers throughout the Qing empire increasingly adopted fur fashion of their own accord, and the fur trade with China boomed as a result (**Fig. 321**). Markets from Manchuria and Mongolia to Hokkaido, Sakhalin Island, Alaska, Siberia and the Pacific coast of North America oriented themselves towards the surging demand in China. By the late 1700s, most furs trapped from the Ural Mountains in Russia east to the Rocky Mountains in North America were funnelled to Kyakhta, the trade emporium on the border of the Russian and Qing empires, or by sea to Canton. Sable populations declined through the early 19th century. So too did sea otter populations, which were decimated across the Pacific Rim; the species had almost gone extinct by the early 20th century.[54]

Other trades boomed in similar fashion in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The trade in tortoiseshell – focused on species such as the hawksbill turtle, now an endangered species – thrived in maritime Southeast Asia. The trade in sea cucumbers (sometimes called trepang or *bêche-de-mer*) proved even more intense and lucrative; a series of rushes for sea cucumbers swept through maritime Southeast Asia in the 1760s, reaching northern Australia, Fiji and other parts of Oceania in the early 1800s.[55] The sandalwood trade similarly engulfed the region in the same period. Consumed in the Qing for everything from incense and medicine to furniture and business card cases (**Fig. 322**), the sandalwood trade only took off after 1804, when European and American merchants realised stunning profits selling Fijian sandalwood in Canton. When Fiji's sandalwood stands were cleared, merchants turned to the Marquesas and the Hawaiian Islands. In the 1830s, with most Hawaiian sandalwood felled, traders moved to the islands that compose modern Vanuatu, before they, too, were laid bare by the 1860s.[56] As with the trade in sea otter furs, sandalwood trade with China during the 1800s had no clear precedent, with European and American merchants forging commodity markets across the Pacific where none had previously existed.[57]

The sheer volume of things like fur-trimmed clothes, ivory cricket-cages and sandalwood business card cases help us to locate 19th-century China in time. In no other period were these products so readily available. By the early 20th century, there simply were not enough surviving otters, elephants or sandalwood trees on Earth to allow it.

Judged by the archive of CO_2 levels in the atmosphere, only faint signals emerge from the 1800s; it was not until the mid-20th and 21st centuries humans transformed the carbon cycle so dramatically. Nevertheless, depictions of steamships like the *Nemesis* remind us that while carbon emissions have only spiked in relatively recent times, the ambitions and stakes of the fossil-fuel age became clear enough in the 1800s, as coal-powered gunboats imprinted themselves on the historical imagination. If the carbon clock ticks so ominously and loudly today, it was wound and set in the mid-19th century, in the age of imperialism, amidst the Opium Wars.

At the same time, far from China, a rash of extinctions swept through the Indian and Pacific Oceans during the 1800s, on the islands where European and American merchants ventured in search of products like sea cucumbers and sandalwood. The extinction rates of the islands' vertebrates – the most visible creatures whose history we thus understand the best – 'increased sharply' from 1800 onwards, at a pace comparable to that found in the mass extinction events captured in the fossil record: the End Ordovician (445–444 million years ago), the Late Devonian (372–359 million years ago), the End Permian (252 million

Figure 322 Business card case, Guangzhou, 19th century, sandalwood, h. 10.5cm, w. 7cm, d. 1cm. The Guangzhou Thirteen Hongs Museum, Guangzhou

years ago), the End Triassic (201 million years ago) and End Cretaceous (66 million years ago). By this standard, then, the 1800s bore witness to the so-called the Sixth Extinction event, which has only gained pace in the 20th and 21st centuries.[58]

Not all creatures have experienced this event alike, of course. The larger the animal, on average, the smaller its population size, the slower its reproduction rate, and so the less resilient when endangered.[59] Broadly speaking, since *Homo sapiens* has existed, the average sizes of species have tended to shrink in response to human pressures. Today, more large creatures are endangered than smaller ones; endangered animals are mostly smaller than extinct ones; and the recently extinct are smaller than their forebears.[60] Thus, by determining the average size of the vertebrates facing extinction, the environmental historian can locate us in time: elephants and rhinos began their 'retreat' in ancient times; sea otters, sables, sea cucumbers, sea turtles and other animals came under pressure in the 1800s; insect and amphibian populations are under duress today.

Ghostly demarcations of our planet's environmental history abound, then, when we choose to look for them. Steamships puffing coalsmoke; iron incense-burners; ivory snuff-bottles carved in the form of maize: all are products of China's 19th century. Some presage the future, others speak to the deep past. Yet each connects, in its own way, to a planetary history: the rise of fossil fuels; the retreat of the elephants; the globalisation of trade; the Columbian Exchange; the age of imperialism; the Sixth Extinction. Each object, in its own way, helps situate China's 1800s within the Anthropocene; each is a source of not only Chinese history, but also of a planet transformed.

Notes

1 Morten 2007, 5.
2 cf. Ellis 2018. In March 2024, the International Union of Geological Sciences rejected a proposal to define the Anthropocene as a geological epoch with a starting point in the mid-20th century. Geological time is a measure of isochronous, planetary-wide changes in rock strata. Going beyond the disciplinary confines of geology, this chapter borrows insights from the humanities and human sciences and allows that anthropogenic changes to the global environment have often been 'cumulative, continuous, heterogenous, diachronous, and complex'. Ellis 2018, 102.
3 Steffen *et al.* 2007.
4 IPCC, 2018, 541–62; European Environment Agency 2019; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2023.
5 Headrick 1981, 18, 54.
6 Marshall 2016, 62.
7 Headrick 1981, 35, 47.
8 Ibid., 48–52.
9 Ibid., 55, n10. Bernard 1846.
10 Seow 2022, 7.
11 Elman 2004, 294–5, 297–8.
12 Wu 2015, 106; Seow 2022, 38–9.
13 Köll 2019, 19.
14 Wu 2015, 11.
15 Wang 2010, 36.
16 Ibid., 46, n42; Blue 1973, 51-53; 'Shipping Off Canton', https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-13257 (accessed 10 August 2024).
17 Reinhardt 2010, 21–62.
18 Naquin 2019, 363–79.
19 Lander 2022, 6; Marks 2012, 86.
20 Naquin 2019, 366–9, 375.
21 Lander and Brunson 2018a, 291.
22 Wen Huanren 1995; Elvin 2004, 9–10.
23 Wen Huanren 1995; Elvin 2004, 9–10; Lander and Brunson 2018a, 302.
24 Lander and Brunson 2018b, R252-R253.
25 Ibid., R253.
26 Yan *et al.* 2021, 11723.
27 Wang 1958, 4–5.
28 Ibid., 12–13; Fan 1981, 88: 2919.
29 See, for example, *Da Qing huidian shili* (GX), 503: 8b.
30 Pavet de Courteille and Barbier de Meynard 1864, 323.
31 Elvin 1993.
32 Marks 2012, 223–54.
33 Mostern 2021, 233–8; Pietz 2015, 64–9.
34 Edgerton-Tarpley 2013, 138. The El Niño event of 1876–8 produced some of the most extreme warming of the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans in recorded history, and the Great Northern Famine belonged to a broader Global Famine, when an estimated 50 million people died across much of South America, Africa, India and China. Singh *et al.* 2018; Davis 2017.
35 Edgerton-Tarpley 2013, 138, 174–5.
36 Pietz 2015, 71, 79–91.
37 Miller 2017.
38 Miller 2020; Zhang 2021.
39 Schlesinger 2017, 2021.
40 Mostern 2021, 10; Pietz 2015.
41 Ho 1959, 279.
42 Wang 1973, 7.
43 Mostern 2021, 45–7; Xu 1994, 423.
44 Crosby 2003, 165–207.
45 Gillman 1984; Shih 2007; Shih 2018.
46 Clunas 1984a, 121.
47 Shen 1722–35, 18: 81b.
48 *Zhongguo jiu haiguan shiliao* 2001, 2: 294, 323.
49 Schlesinger 2020; Beachey 1967; Sheriff 1987.
50 Milner-Gulland and Beddington 1993, 27–37; Douglas-Hamilton 1987, 11–24; Chase *et al.* 2016, 1–24.
51 Sukumar 2011, 319; Stiles 2009, 2.
52 Schlesinger 2020.
53 Schlesinger 2017.
54 Ibid., 17–46, 129–66; Gibson 1992.
55 Sutherland 2011, 177–8, 185–6; Warren 2007, 62; Gibson 1992, 255.
56 Marks 2012, 224; Gibson 1992, 255.
57 Giráldez and Richard 2023.
58 Ceballos *et al.* 2015.
59 Blackburn and Gaston 1999, 201.
60 Dirzo *et al.* 2014, 403; Williams *et al.* 2015.

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