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London | 12 July 2005



LOT 148

| THE PROPERTY OF A EUROPEAN LADY OF TITLE FROM AN IMPORTANT EUROPEAN COLLECTION

AN IMPERIAL CARVED-LACQUER 'DOCUMENTARY' PANEL ⊛

WITH A GILT-BRONZE INSCRIPTION DATED TO 1788 AND OF THE PERIOD

Price realised

GBP 433,600

Estimate

GBP 50,000 - GBP 70,000

AN IMPERIAL CARVED-LACQUER 'DOCUMENTARY' PANEL

WITH A GILT-BRONZE INSCRIPTION DATED TO 1788 AND OF THE PERIOD

Finely carved with meticulous details through the cinnabar lacquer to reveal brown and two tones of black-lacquer layers, with a battle scene depicting a military fleet approaching a rocky promontory through breaking waves, attacking the fleeing enemies on the shore with firearms from their ships, the attacks reinforced and supported by charging cavalry armed with bow and arrows, and emerging from the woods, below a dated poetic inscription and seal cast in gilt-bronze, all within a *huali* frame set with hardstone double gourds borne on stained-ivory vines, and surmounted by a gilt-bronze bracket suspension loop formed by *ruyi* scrolls and bats centring on a *shou* medallion, losses to inlays, later glazing
29 x 43 in. (74 x 109 cm.) without bracket

Contact us

Contact Client Service

info@christies.com

New York +1 212 636 2000

London +44 (0)20 7839 9060

infoasia@christies.com

Asia +852 2760 1766

Lot Essay

The inscription can be paraphrased:

Fangliao is adjacent to Wulong,

Defeated, the rebels gathered on its hill.

They attacked the soldiers from behind along the mountain tracks,

But failed to anticipate the ambush in the depth of the woods.

Like a swarm of bees and ants they lost their courage,

They now regretted ever advocating a rebellion.

How many of these insects threw themselves in the sea?

Datian escaped into the mountains, but he would soon be caught alive.

The Battle of Fangliao, (composed) in the First Month of the *Wushen* Year (corresponding to 1788)

Seal: The Treasure of the Son of Heaven of Ancient Rarity

The poem is recorded in *Qing Gaozong Yuzhi shi wu ji* (The fifth compilation of Gaozong Emperor's poems), vol. 44, composed especially to accompany the scene depicted on this magnificent lacquer panel. The scene was taken from one of the twelve copper engravings commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor to commemorate the pacification of the rebellion in Taiwan led by Lin Shuangwen and Zhuang Datian between 1786 and 1788.

With his eyes firmly on posterity, these engravings provide pictorial records of the Qianlong emperor's successful military campaigns. Indeed in the preface to these poems, the Emperor wrote, 'Heaven has blessed me, the vassal I selected and the army I dispatched (to pacify the rebels). I will not do them justice if I do not record these events in pictorial images to honor their efforts.' Many sets of these documentary engravings were commissioned. The earliest

is a set of sixteen copper engravings usually known as *The Conquests of the Qianlong*

Emperor dating between 1769 and 1774 in the Palace Museum, Beijing. These were produced from drawings by four European missionary artists - Giuseppe Castiglione, Jean-Denis Attiret, Jean Damascène, and Ignacius Sichelbart. Eight of the sixteen, preserved in the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, Paris are illustrated in *From Beijing to Versailles - Artistic Relations between China and France, op. cit.*, pp 228-43, nos. 85-93.

They document campaigns to the west of the empire against the Dzungars and their allies.

The sketches for the Taiwan-Campaign engravings were made by Chinese court artists Jia Quan and Li Ming, and the series dates between 1789-90. These engravings look distinctly

different from the ones produced by European artists. The painting techniques employed, such as the treatment of the figures, rocks, trees and waves, are entirely Chinese, and it

creates an overall effect not unlike that of a woodblock print. A full set of the Taiwan-Campaign engravings is in the Palace Museum, Beijing, although it appears not to have been published. Another set, formerly in the collection of the 8th Earl of Elgin was sold at

Sotheby's Hong Kong, 27th April 2003, lot 35. Three engravings from this series are in the

Musée Guimet and one of them is illustrated in *From Beijing to Versailles - Artistic Relations between China and France, op. cit.*, pp. 244-5, no. 93. For a lacquer panel similarly decorated

with a battle scene taken from an engraving documenting the Qianlong emperor's campaign in Sichuan, see Derek Clifford, *Chinese Carved Lacquer*, London, 1992, p. 125, pl. 99; and

another from the same series, formerly in the collection of the Earl of Iveagh, sold in these Rooms, 23rd May 1984, lot 2537.

Other information

Special Notice

VAT rate of 5% is payable on hammer price plus buyer's premium.

Pre-Lot Text

THE PROPERTY OF A EUROPEAN LADY OF TITLE
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