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Legacies of Imperial Power: Two Exceptional Qianlong Scrolls

Sale: HK0282 | **Location:** Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (New Wing)**Auction Dates:** Session 1: Wed, 08 Oct 08 10:30 AM[Print Page](#)

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LOT 2101

O - JIN KUN (FL. 1662-1746), LANG SHINING (GIUSEPPE CASTIGLIONE) (1688-1766), ET. AL. THE EMPEROR QIANLONG'S REVIEW OF THE GRAND PARADE OF TROOPS
 QING DYNASTY, QIANLONG PERIOD

Estimate Upon Request

Lot Sold. Hammer Price with Buyer's Premium: 67,860,000 HKD

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MEASUREMENTS

measurements note

total: 68 by 1550 cm., 26 3/4 by 610 in.

ALTERNATE VIEWS:



DESCRIPTION

THIS IS A PREMIUM LOT. CLIENTS WHO WISH TO BID ON PREMIUM LOTS ARE REQUESTED TO COMPLETE THE PREMIUM LOT PRE-REGISTRATION 3 WORKING DAYS PRIOR TO THE SALE.

ink and colour on silk, handscroll

with fifteen collector's seals of the Emperor Qianlong reading *Sanxitang jing jian xi*, *Yizisun*, *Qianlong Jianshang*, *Zhonghua Gongjian cang bao*, *Qianlong Yulang zhi bao*, *Shiqubaoji*, *Baoji Dingjian*, *Baoji Zhongbian*, *Wufu wudai tang Guxi tianzi*, *Bazheng maonian zhi bao*, *Taishang huangdi zhi bao*, *Jixi you yu xiang*, *Luozhi yun yan*, *Hanying zhui hua*, *Biduan chun yu*, ending with an inscription depicting the events of the Review of troops

with an Imperial *kesi* scroll wrap of five dragons pursuing 'flaming pearls' amid swirling clouds, and a woven titleslip reading *Dayue Disan Tu*, *Yue Zhen* original Imperial gold ground brocade outer wrap with two dragons in pursuit of a 'flaming pearl'

PROVENANCE

Removed from the Shouhuangdian (Hall of Imperial Longevity), Beijing, 1900.

EXHIBITED

New Visions at the Ch'ing Court. Giuseppe Castiglione and Western-Style Trends, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2007, pl. 27.

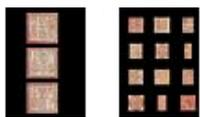
LITERATURE AND REFERENCES

Shiqubaoji, *Xubian*, 1799, pp. 1871-1875.

CATALOGUE NOTE



The Grand Review
Nie Chongzheng
Researcher, Palace Museum, Beijing



Click an image to load into the main image viewer

I first saw the original third scroll of *Dayue tu* (The Grand Review) in September 2001. The reason I found this work so interesting is that there is a painting of the same name in the collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing.

The Grand Review in the Palace Museum collection has been published in *Qingdai gongting huihua* (Court Painting of the Qing Dynasty), published by Beijing Wenwu Chubanshe in 1992, and *Qingdai gongting huihua* (Paintings by the Court Artists of the Qing Court), published by Commercial Press in Hong Kong in 2004. Just from the inscription on the painting, one can tell that more than one *Grand Review* scroll was painted. The Palace Museum has in its collection only the second scroll. When I edited the latter book, the whereabouts of the other scrolls were unknown. So when I gazed upon the third scroll in the *Grand Review* series, I was quite excited.

The inscription on the third scroll of *The Grand Review* indicates that this painting depicts the military review. Looking up this work in the supplement of *Shiqu baoji* (Catalogue of Treasures within the Moat, compiled Ruan Yuan et al., 1791), I discovered that there were four scrolls: scroll 1, "The Emperor Approaching the Army Base"; scroll 2, "The Troops in Formation"; scroll 3, "Reviewing the Troops"; and scroll 4, "Marching the Troops." The painters were Jin Kun, Cheng Zhidao, Wu Gui, Cheng Liang, Yao Wenhan, Lu Zhan, Zhang Tingyan, Jin Sheng, Ding Guanhe, and Chen Yongjia. The inscription at the end of the scroll was written by the high-ranking government officials Liang Shizheng, Wang Youdun, Zhang Ruoai, Ji Huang, and Zhuang Yougong.¹

The third scroll of *The Grand Review* is also a colored painting on silk, measuring 68 centimeters in height and 15.50 meters in length, and lacks painters' seals on the painting. At the end of the painting are six characters written in clerical style: "The Grand Review, third painting, Reviewing the Troops." The inscription below, written in neat, small regular-script characters, is the following description: On the day of the review, the units of the brigades of the Eight Banners were all in formation, and at the appropriate time the senior officials of the Ministry of War made a request of the emperor in his tent. The Court of Imperial Armaments had previously set up a tent for the emperor at Liangyingtai. The emperor emerged from his temporary quarters dressed in court attire and riding his steed Wanji. Zhang Qu, the officer of the Court of Imperial Armaments in charge of arrangements, managed the imperial canopy on horseback. Two senior officials of the Ministry of War and ten leading high-ranking officials, divided into left and right, led the party on horseback. Two grand ministers of the Imperial Household Department and their bodyguards lead guards—some holding leopard tails, others wearing long swords, and still others carrying bags and quivers—all on horseback and in formation. After the imperial sedan chair came a group of guards five deep, all on horseback. Only a formally instituted carriage escort was missing. All the rest was like the ceremony for the emperor's approaching the army base. The emperor came to the tent. Leopard-tail spearmen and imperial guardsmen of the three superior banners stood at attention in two flanks. Two dragon banners were planted behind the tent and were guarded by imperial guards not in formation. Senior government officials dressed in ceremonial court attire stood before the emperor's quarters divided into flanks and arrayed by rank. The aids and lieutenants of the Eight Banners, on horseback, were divided into left and right flanks and arrayed by rank below the dais. The guards of the Qianqing Gate [the main gate to the Forbidden City], on horseback, were divided into two flanks of six each and arrayed before the aids and lieutenants. Thirty skilled ethnic Suolun horsemen of the Mongolian imperial guard from New Manchuria, not wearing helmets or armor, were arrayed behind the imperial guardsmen to prevent anyone from fleeing on horseback. The emperor, in full armor, arrived at the tent, his retinue of nobility, high-ranking officials, and imperial guards in tow, all in full armor. Riding his steed Wanji, the emperor personally reviewed the troops. The two senior officials of the Ministry of War, on horseback and in full armor, guided him. The high-ranking officials in front led; those behind protected. The whole retinue performed like pageantry. The emperor went in toward the left flank, came out from the right flank, and proceeded along the path between the cavalry, guard, and vanguard units to the south and the firearms units to the north. Generals, aids, and soldiers to the south, all in formation, did an about-face to face north and hence the emperor. After the emperor had passed, they resumed their original positions. After the emperor completely reviewed the troops, he returned to his quarters at Liangyingtai and ascended his throne. The high-ranking officials, imperial guards, and assistants waited on the emperor as before. Then the conch horn sounded, and the army marched off.

This painting is stamped with 15 collector seals indicating that the work belonged to the Qianlong emperor's collection, including the following: "Thoroughly examined by the Sanxi Tang (Hall of Three Rarities)," "Suitable for sons and grandsons," "Examined and appreciated by Qianlong," "A treasure appraised and collected by the Chonghua Palace [i.e., the Qianlong emperor, since his private chambers were located there]," "A treasure viewed by Qianlong," "Catalogue of Treasures within the Moat," "Moat authenticated," "Catalogue of Treasures, second compilation," "A treasure reflecting the desire of an 80-year-old man when business presses from all around," "A treasure of the emperor emeritus," "The fragrance lingers on," "When brush is applied to paper, mist and clouds" (i.e., masterful brushwork), "To savor," "The tip of the brush yields spring rain" (i.e., masterful brushwork).

This scroll of *The Grand Review* depicts the grand spectacle of the Qianlong emperor's reviewing the troops of the Eight Banners at Nanyuan, near Beijing, in December 1739 for the first time since assuming the throne. Several years later, in 1746, the emperor commanded the independent painter Jin Kun (at the head of the list of painters) and the court painters Cheng Zhidao, Wu Gui, Cheng Liang, Yao Wenhan, Lu Zhan, Zhang Tingyan, Jin Sheng, Ding Guanhe, and Chen Yongjia to paint the four *Grand Review* scrolls depicting the imposing sight of the emperor reviewing the army. In the archives of the workshop of the Qing Imperial Household Department, I discovered a document of 1746 related to the *Grand Review* scrolls. It reads, On May 12, the eunuch Gao Yu transmitted the emperor's instructions: "What sort of experts did Hua Shan send? As for the mistakes in *The Grand Review*, have Hai Wang correct them. Jin Kun embellished the errors. What was turned over is completely false and inaccurate. Discontinue his compensation and wait until after *The Grand Review* is finished, for further instructions." On the 16th of the same month, Warehouse Manager Bai Shixu and Rank 7 Staff

Supervisor Samuha consulted with Imperial Prince Heshuo Yi and Imperial Household Department Grand Minister Hai Wang on how to report matters to the emperor. These ministers privately thought that having Foreman Hua Shan send some experts to supervise the painting of *The Grand Review* would be the appropriate and prudent thing to do. They could thus carefully supervise the painters so that they would produce an accurate painting. But it turned out that the flags in *The Grand Review* were painted incorrectly, and that the experts did not closely supervise. This would not do. The best thing to do would be to stop paying Hua Shan's salary, wait until *The Grand Review* is finished, and ask for the emperor's instructions on how to deal with everyone together. They wrote out a folded placard and gave it to the eunuch Gao Yu to present to the emperor, who indicated the course of action. On May 17 the eunuch Gao Yu conveyed the emperor's instructions: "Have Prince Yi and Hai Wang change the deadline for completing *The Grand Review*, and give Jin Kun and Hua Shan only half of their compensation and salary, respectively. After *The Grand Review* is finished, give Jin Kun and Hua Shan their full compensation and salary."

From this record one can thus know some interesting details about the process of painting *The Grand Review*.

In addition, in the archives of the workshop of the Qing Imperial Household Department, I also saw two documents, dated 1747, that are related to *The Grand Review*. These documents state the following: "On July 27 Warehouse Manager Bai Shixiu reported that the eunuch Hu Shijie transmitted the emperor's instructions: '*The Grand Review* is almost complete. For each scroll, make a sample box and present it for inspection. After *The Grand Review* is finished, have the painters who painted it paint a picture of Mulan.' On August 14 Warehouse Manager Bai Shixiu presented a sample labeled box to the eunuch Hu Shijie for inspection, and he received the emperor's instructions: 'Make four carved-lacquer boxes according to the sample. On the labels, have Dong Bangda write "Dayue tu" [The Grand Review]; and in the middle on the side, "Qianlong dingmao nian zhi" [Made in the 12th year of the Qianlong reign, 1747]; and at the bottom, one of four characters "yuan," "heng," "li," "zhen" on each of the boxes. Then give the boxes to the southern carvers.' On January 20, 1748, the four boxes were sent to the carvers." The four characters "yuan," "heng," "li," "zhen" come from the *qian* trigram of the *Yijing* (Book of Changes) and indicate the order of the scrolls. This manner of indicating the order, with the same four characters, was also used for *Yuanxi kaiyan tu* (Victory Banquet in the West Garden), which was sold at auction a few years before.

The picture's inscription says, "The emperor emerged from his temporary quarters dressed in court attire and riding his steed Wanji." This indicates that the Qianlong emperor rode a steed named Wanji. This pure white, high-headed large horse was also painted by the Italian missionary and painter Giuseppe Castiglione. In his painting (color on silk, 23.8 centimeters by 27.1 centimeters, and housed in the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum) this horse appears almost life-size. According to the inscription on the edge, the painting was painted in the spring of 1743, and the steed Wanji, 234 centimeters tall and 229 centimeters in length, was presented by the king of the Khalkha Commandery in Mongolia. In addition, the French missionary and painter Jean Denis Attiret also painted Wanji, in his album *Shi jun tu* (Ten Steeds) (Beijing Palace Museum collection).

In the painting, the Qianlong emperor wears military attire, a suit of armor, a helmet, a long sword, and a bow and quiver, thus appearing very imposing. Several years later, in 1758, the Qianlong emperor again reviewed the troops of the Eight Banners at Nanyuan outside of Beijing. After the review, Castiglione displayed his talent by painting the large work *Qianlong huangdi rongzhuang xiang* (The Qianlong Emperor in Military Attire) (now in the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum), expressing this monarch's soldierly bearing. If one inspects in detail the emperor Qianlong on horseback in *The Grand Review*, one can discover some noticeable peculiar features of the portraiture. Moreover, the emperor on horseback is precisely modeled and in proper proportion; most lines are short, there being few long continuous lines; and the painter exercises care in the expression of substance quality. Hence, I think that the portrait of the emperor Qianlong astride his steed Wanji in *The Grand Review* were without doubt painted by Castiglione, even though his name does not appear in the painters listed in the signature of the painting.

On the question of how such a large work as this, held within the inner recesses of the Qing palace, could make its way to Europe, we have no written records, but we can still draw some inferences. We know that the portraits of emperors, empresses, and consorts were all kept in Shouhuang Hall on Mt. Jing, as can be verified by checking records in the Qing palace archives. In 1900, when the army of the Eight-Nation Alliance occupied Beijing, Shouhuang Hall on Mt. Jing was in the area under the control of the French army. Hence, some portraits of royalty were likely plundered by French army officers (especially high-ranking army officers) and carried off to Europe as war booty. As a result, a considerable number of such paintings first entered the art market from France—a fact connected with this unfortunate episode of modern Chinese history. Since the four scrolls of *The Grand Review* include portraits of the Qianlong emperor, they should have been kept in Shouhuang Hall on Mt. Jing at the time, so they naturally could have fallen into the hands of the French army. The French author Pierre Loti, who was embedded with the French army when it entered Shouhuang Hall, left this description about what was perhaps *The Grand Review* in his book *Les derniers jours de Pékin* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1901): "Other scrolls, perhaps six to eight meters in length when unrolled on the stone slabs, depicted processions; court receptions; and formations of ambassadors, cavalry, soldiers, and standard bearers: thousands of tiny men, whose clothes, ornaments, and arms required a magnifying glass to discern. The history of Chinese costume and ceremony across the ages was captured in entirety in these precious miniatures" (p. 192). As I have written elsewhere, the most valuable aspect of Qing court paintings is that they are accurate representations of the people and events of the time. *The Grand Review* is a masterpiece of just this sort of painting. In an age before the invention of the camera, painting was without doubt the best means of accurately portraying people and events.

Still unknown are the whereabouts of the first scroll "The Emperor Approaching the Army Base" and the fourth scroll "Marching the Troops," the missing members of the series. These missing members are much like wild geese that drop out of the flock. Would it not be nice if the whole flock could be reunited again?

¹The second scroll of *The Grand Review*, in the collection of the Beijing Palace Museum, is a colored painting on silk measuring 68 centimeters in height and 17.57 meters in length, but there are no painters' seals on the painting. At the end of the painting is an inscription, and at the head, written in large clerical-script characters, is the title: "The Grand Review, second painting, The Troops in Formation." The inscription below, written in small, neat regular-script characters, is a detailed record of the troop formations of the Eight Banners reviewed by the emperor:

The troops were painted in the following troop formation. The Left Flank—consisting of the four banners Bordered Yellow, Plain White, Bordered White, and Plain Blue—were arrayed by rank with the west side being in forward position, and the Right Flank—consisting of the four banners Plain White, Plain Red, Bordered Red, and Bordered Blue—were arrayed by rank with the east side being in forward position, each banner forming a unit under its flag. At the forefront were the Chinese army firearms brigade, the Manchu guard firearms brigade, and the Manchu cavalry firearms brigade, each arrayed in their separate units. Placed in front of the Chinese army firearms brigade were 20 racks of deer antlers, leaning on the antlers were musketeer foot soldiers, and carrying deer antlers on poles were 80 men, with 4 men holding ropes. Ten fear-instilling cannons, each mounted on a carriage, were moved about by 110 armored soldiers, managed by 30 cannoners, and defended by 100 armored soldiers. There were 10 regiments, whose standards were held aloft by 30 armored soldiers, 20 squads, whose flags were worn by 20 corporals, and two teams, whose red team flags were marked on the armor of corporals. There were five gongs sounded by ten armored soldiers, a drum transported on poles by four soldiers and beat by two armored soldiers, and five conch horns sounded by five armored soldiers. The brigade was under the command of two commanders, ten assistant commanders, and ten cavalry. A musketeer brigade had one regiment, whose standard was held aloft by a corporal and three armored soldiers, and following along in the regiment were an assistant commander, two corporals, and 20 armored soldiers. There were five commander regiments, and their standards were held aloft by 15 armored soldiers. Following along in the regiment were 20 musketeer corporals and 200 armored soldiers. Two teams were lead by two corporals marked with red flags. There were five gongs sounded by 10 armored soldiers, a drum born on poles by four soldiers and beat by two armored soldiers, and 13 conch horns sounded by the same number of armored soldiers. The brigade was lead by two commanders, five assistant commanders, five aids, and ten cavalry lieutenants. Each banner was under the command of a vice commander-in-chief, and each flank was under the command of two commanders-in-chief. The Manchu guard firearms brigade had two regiments, whose standards were each held aloft by four guards, and twelve squads, each with a musketeer head wearing its flag. Ten conch horns were sounded by the same number of guardsmen. There were 120 musketeer guards. The brigade was lead by two commanders and 14 guard lieutenants. The cavalry brigade had one regiment, whose standard was held aloft by two armored soldiers. It also had six "mother and child" cannons (consisting of a mother gun and child gun), which it transported on horseback and fired on the ground in wooden frames covering the sides. Cannoners adjusted the height of these cannons to fire shot near or far. Each cannon was operated by a squad, whose flag was worn by a corporal, and he was assisted by nine armored soldiers. The brigade was lead by a commander, five assistant commanders, and five cavalry lieutenants. The musketeer brigade had two regiments, whose standard was held aloft by four armored soldiers, two red-flag teams, whose red flags were displayed on four armored soldiers, and twelve squads, whose squad flags were worn by the same number of corporals. There were 120 armored musketeers. The brigade was lead by two commanders, seven assistant commanders, and 14 cavalry lieutenants, and was under the command of five high-ranking officials of the firearms brigade. Throughout the eight banners, there were 17 high-ranking officials, 712 assistant officers, 8,376 foot and mounted armored soldiers. In the painting, the vanguard, guard, and cavalry brigades are each arrayed in their separate units. In the vanguard brigade, each banner had an assistant commander who was a member of the vanguard, there were eight vanguard lieutenants, and four guardsmen sounded conch horns. The number of musketeers depended on the number of vanguard soldiers. Accordingly, two members of the vanguard used muskets. For each member of the vanguard, there were eight squads, which formed a company (the colors of their flags blending together like the colors of the Eight Banners), and these squads took their places behind the respective firearm brigades of the Chinese army. The brigade was lead by a commander and an imperial guardsman, and each flank was under the command of a commander-general. In the guard brigade, each banner had two assistant commanders who were guards. Four guards formed a squad. For each banner, there was a guard commander-general regiment. The brigade was overseen by five guard commanders. Each flank was under the command of a guard commander-general. In the cavalry brigade, each banner had two armored assistant commanders or corporals. Four cavalry soldiers formed a squad. Each banner had seven conch horns and seven commander regiments. The brigade was overseen by two commanders (who were assisted by two assistant commanders and two cavalry lieutenants) and was under the command of a vice commander-in-chief. There were two commanders-in-chief for each flank. Throughout the Eight Banners there were 16 high-ranking officials, 276 assistant officers, and 4,410 soldiers. Only one-fourth of the high-ranking officials, one-fifth of the assistant officers, and one-fourth of the soldiers were painted, yet the painting still conveys an imposing spectacle. The final formation comprised the guard and the cavalry brigades, each arrayed in their separate units. In the guard brigade, each banner had three assistant commanders who were guards. Six guards formed a squad. For each banner, there was a guard commander-general regiment, with six conch horns, which was lead by three guard commanders. There were 505 spear guards. The brigade was lead by three guard commanders and overseen by 31 guard lieutenants. Each flank was under the command of a guard commander-general. In the cavalry brigade, each banner had an assistant commander, who was an armored soldier. Four soldiers formed a squad. Each banner had four commander regiments and four conch horns, each with a commander or assistant commander and a cavalry lieutenant, each regiment being lead by cavalry commander. There were 223 armored spearmen and their corporals. The brigade was lead by two cavalry commanders, two assistant commanders, four cavalry lieutenants, and one commander. Each flank was under the command of a commander-in-chief and two vice commanders-in-chief. At the two ends of the painting the two flanks spread out on the left and right. The ends of large brigades of the four banners, namely the guard and cavalry brigades, are diagonally lined up according to the colors of their banners. In the guard brigade, each banner had an assistant commander, who was a guardsman. Four soldiers formed a squad. Each banner had three commander regiments and three conch horns, each with a commander or assistant commander and a cavalry lieutenant, each regiment being lead by a cavalry commander. There were 218 armored spearmen and their corporals. The brigade was lead by two cavalry commanders, two assistant commanders, and four cavalry lieutenants. Each flank was under the command of a commander-in-chief and two vice commanders-in-chief. The

high-ranking officials, generals, aids, and soldiers who marched, commanded, and carried out the affairs of, the army totaled 49 high-ranking officials and 20,094 soldiers. Those depicted in the painting amounted to 944 high-ranking officials, officers, and assistants (three-fifths of the total) and 16,280 soldiers (four-fifths). In this splendid painting, the depicted elements of the Eight Banner army amount to the following: 120 racks of deer antlers, 240 spears, 4,000 muskets, 80 fear-instilling cannon mounted on carriages, 48 mother and child cannons carried on horseback, 16 Mongolian brass horns, 16 gongs, 8 drums, 552 conch horns, 64 regiment standards, 224 commander flags, 1,320 corporal flags, 80 small red team flags, and 64 vanguard flags. The flags of the Eight Banners were distinguished thus: the four plain banners were painted in their proper colors; Bordered Yellow, Bordered White, and Bordered Blue were all painted red, and Bordered Red was painted white [all in the color of their borders]. The shape of the banners were as follows: The four plain banners were square, the four bordered banners were square with a pointed edge, and the guard flags were pennant-shaped. The large regiment standards were embroidered with a golden dragon and were trimmed with red silk cut to resemble flames, in order to convey what the flags were intended to express. Red tassels were attached to the flags of the Chinese firearms brigade, their flags otherwise being the same. The flags of the Manchu firearms brigade and cavalry brigade had long streamers the colors of their banners. The flags of the guard firearms brigade and the guard brigade had long white streamers, otherwise being the same. The commander flags of the Chinese firearms brigade had golden dragons or tigers. Their flags were otherwise the same, though smaller by about half. The commander flags and guard-lieutenant flags of the guard firearms brigade were embroidered with golden dragons, trimmed with red silk cut like flames, embellished with red tassels and white streamers, and ornamented with a leopard's tail on top. The commander flags and corporal flags of the Manchu firearms brigade had streamers with colors of the unit's banner, otherwise being the same. The flags of the vanguard and guard were square, had colors of the units' banners, and were ornamented with a leopard's tail on top. The small squad flags of the guard commanders, guard lieutenants, cavalry commanders, and cavalry corporals were embroidered with golden dragons, trimmed with red silk (but not to appear as flames), and embellished with tassels. All of the regiment standards were embellished with red tassels except for two red flags, which were embellished with black tassels so as to be distinguishable. As for armor and helmet distinctions, those in the Chinese army firearms brigade carrying deer antlers wore sleeveless vests. When they helped the cannoneer regiment within the brigade, they wore long Chinese gowns and short mandarin jackets and no helmets in order to work faster. Guard soldiers wore blue armor with edges the colors of their banners, and guard lieutenants wore white armor with edges the colors of their banners. Cavalry soldiers and corporals wore armor the colors of their banners. Guard soldiers and lieutenants wore helmets ornamented with red tassels, and their officers wore helmets ornamented with black tassels. Cavalry lieutenants, corporals, and soldiers all wore helmets ornamented with black tassels, but their officers wore helmets with red tassels, and high-ranking officials wore helmets ornamented on top with a marten tail or goose feathers to show their authority.