

Fine Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art

Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center (New Wing), Thu, 8 Oct 09, 10:30 AM, HK0308



LOT 1661

PROPERTY FROM A EUROPEAN COLLECTION

AN EXTREMELY RARE AND IMPORTANT COURT PAINTING OF THE BANNERMAN KE ER CHUN BATULU WAN TING

QING DYNASTY, QIANLONG PERIOD, DATED TO THE WUSHEN YEAR (CORRESPONDING TO 1788)

hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk

portraying the Third Ranked officer of the Imperial Guard active in the Taiwan Campaign of 1787-1788, with a distinguished weathered face and soulful eyes, donning a fur-lined hat marked by a clear blue glass bead and a peacock feather with a single-eyed plume, *dan yan hua ling*, dressed in a brown surcoat with a blue collar and lining, tied at the waist with a pair of plum-coloured brocade riding chaps covering the legs, shod with a pair of black silk boots with white soles, his hands clasped together over his right breast showing his white jade thumb ring worn on his right thumb, the simple blue silk belt suspending a ceremonial sword with an embellished gilt hilt and a shagreen sheath, eulogized with several lines of text written at

CATALOGUE NOTE

The inscription reading:

*hu jun can ling Ke er chun ba tu lu wan ting
wei bi zhong lin
chong zhen kong ji
duo ai hui chao
zhui ben zhu bei
chuo li wu qian
sou bu qian ni
xie zou fu kong jia zi yong li*

Qianlong wu shen xia yu ti

Seal: *Qinlong yulan zhi bao*

Translation of the Chinese inscription:

Colonel of the National Protection Army Keerchun Hero (*batulu*) Wan Ting

Thinking that you took the troops into the deep forest, fiercely fighting enemies in dangerous thorn bushes and jagged terrain

You gained absolute control and destroyed enemy hideaway, pursuing them relentlessly and expelled them up north

You faced unprecedented perils and overcame obstacles like never before, but managed to track down and apprehend those who fled and hid

Victorious triumphs were reported back and here I praise you for your heroism and bravery well deserved

Qianlong inscribed in the summer of the *wushen* year (corresponding to the year 1788)

Seal: *Qinlong yulan zhi bao* (treasure appreciated by the Emperor Qianlong)

The eulogy describes meritorious officer, Ka Er Chun Batulu Wan Ting, Colonel of the National Protection Army, as a heroic and brave warrior and praises his relentless pursuit of the rebels despite unprecedented obstacles. This portrait, and those of other officers in this series of Bannerman paintings, was commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor after the triumphant campaign in Formosa (Taiwan) against the Ming-loyalist rebels in the years 1787 to 1788. His excellence in the battlefield is unmistakable in the single-eyed peacock feather that hangs prominently from the back of his black fur-trimmed winter hat, an imperial gift bestowed only to officers who had distinguished themselves in a military campaign.

In 1786 a rebellion arose out of central Taiwan in the village of Daliyi, led by the Ming loyalist Lin Shuangwen. The brutality of the Qing army against the local populace sparked an uprising on 16th January 1787, and Lin organized an army that quickly seized Taichung, Hsinchu and Chunghua, which was established as their capital. He assumed the title 'King of the Ming' and extended his territory to Fengshan, but was unable to gain control of the capital city, Tainan. The rebels were able to defend their holdings despite Qing reinforcements from the mainland until Lin Cou, one of Lin Shuangwen's generals, defected to the Qing. On 10th February 1788, after ruling central Taiwan for over a year, Lin Shuangwen was captured and later executed, marking the end of the campaign.

This portrait, painting number 13 in the second set of portraits, was produced in 1788. Such Imperial bannerman paintings were housed in the Ziguange (Hall of Purple Splendour), a hall of fame for immortal heroes, located in the West Garden of the Imperial Palace Precincts in Beijing.

This painting embodies the imperial academy workshop style of the eighteenth-century, which combined traditional Chinese portrait painting with Western painting techniques introduced by Jesuit missionary artists at court. Dressed in a brown surcoat and plum-coloured riding chaps, the folds and vivid blocks of colour of the clothing are carefully outlined in black ink, which is typical of the Chinese style of painting. He assumes a standing frontal pose, traditionally reserved for iconic

ancestor portraits, and his slightly bent legs with feet placed apart, as well as his slight twist as he clasps his hands at his chest, imply imminent movement. In contrast, his face is rendered in a European-inspired style with layers of colour washes that model his leathery features in full, almost tactile, relief. These Western methods of painting were particularly favoured by the Qianlong emperor, who both perceived and utilised detailed, naturalistic painting as a means of propagating the magnificence of the Qing empire. Thus this style was particularly suited to such grand Bannerman paintings (see the exhibition catalogue, *Emperor Ch'ien-lung's Grand Cultural Enterprise*, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2002, p. 126).

Only seventy portraits depicting Bannermen from the Taiwan campaign were made, comprising of fifty from the first set and twenty from the second set. The only other known portrait of an official from this campaign, E Hui (also called General Chengdu) and number 11 of the first series, is in a private collection in the United States. Compare paintings of officers of the Eastern Turkestan campaign (Xinjiang 1755-59) dated to 1760; such as one of the Bannerman Zha Er Shan, sold in our London rooms, 13th May 2009, lot 136; a painting of the Bannerman Yisamu, attributed to Ai Qimeng and Jin Ting Biao, sold in these rooms, 9th October 2007, lot 1314, together with the portrait of Bannerman Tanibu, lot 1315, and Bannerman Dalhan, lot 1316. For further information on bannerman paintings see Nie Chongzheng, 'The Newly Discovered Bannerman Portrait Painting of Yisamu from Ziguang Pavilion', *Imperial Peking. The Last Days*, Sotheby's, London, 2007, pp. 112-3.

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