

NEW MATERIAL ON CHINESE BATTLE-PAINTINGS OF THE 18TH CENTURY

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Among the manifold European influences on Chinese art during the 18th century, the engraving on copper had always attracted much attention of foreign scholars. I may just mention the names of Cordier, Ishida Mikinosuke, and Pelliot. They all made important contributions to the genesis of the first and most famous set of 16 engravings, depicting memorable events of the conquest of Ili and Turkestan between 1756 and 59, and known as "Les Conquêtes de l'empereur de la Chine". The plates were engraved in France from 1769 to 1774 after drawings done by Jesuit fathers at the court of Peking.

Prof. M. Ishida and Pelliot were the first to point out that these drawings, according to a letter of Father Hallerstein, were based on huge paintings executed on the walls of one of the palace halls, the Tzū-kuang-ko 紫光閣. However, Mr. Ch'en Shou-i and the present speaker could show that certain Chinese texts, not used by Pelliot, do not speak of wall-paintings in the strict sense of the word but of painted scrolls hung on the walls which date back to 1760.

However, these paintings, serving as model for the later copper-engravings, were thought no longer to exist, and, until to-day, nothing has been published on their whereabouts. I now would like to direct your attention to the fact that one of these original paintings—or more exactly speaking, only one half of one—is still preserved in the museum of Hamburg.

It is a painting in colors on silk, of almost square shape, each side about 4 m long. There is no date nor title on it. Fortunately, it bears on the upper edge a poem written in Kienlung's typical hand. This proves to be the clue to the identification of the painting

because the text is identical with the first half of the imperial poem on the *Victory of Qurman* (我師詩) as given in the Palace History (清宮史續編 97).

When compared with the corresponding engraving, our painting represents only the right half of it depicting the flight of Kirghis and Dsungar troops under Burhan ed-din. He was defeated by the Chinese in Eastern Turkestan near Qurman early in 1759. The left part which should show the Chinese cavalry attacking is missing here with the exception of one soldier standing near his fallen horse and just shooting off his arrow.

The painting gives us a good idea as to how much the sketch for the engraving was altered concerning the setting of the landscape and the representation of the combatants whose individual expressions have been lost on the copper plate.

The question of who had painted this and the other 15 huge original scrolls was left open until now. It was generally assumed that they were executed by the Jesuit fathers in collaboration with their Chinese painter-colleagues at the Imperial Academy.

There is, however, another original of this set, preserved in Russia, signed by Chiao Ping-chen 焦秉貞, the well-known court-painter famous for his illustrations in the work on Agriculture and Sericulture (耕織圖). Considering the striking resemblance of the whole representation in style and details it seems obvious that our painting, too, is to be assigned to this painter or his disciples at least.

It may be added that the museum in West Berlin possesses 3 copper-plates (Nos. 3, 9 and 15) of this set of engravings and, also, 31 plates executed in China later. In 1945, this museum lost

some 30 of the famous portraits of meritorious officers of the colonial wars during the Kienlung period. In this year, however, it acquired three other ones. I may also remark that the Ch'ing Shih-lu furnishes interesting details about the arrival of 232 of the French engravings in Canton. Following the example set by the conquest of Ili and Turkestan, 7 similar sets of engraving have been made by Chinese artists to illustrate battle scenes of the later campaigns under Kienlung.

The numbers of plates for these sets vary between 4 and 16. In this case, however, the procedure of designing the individual sketches was different and, up to the present time, is little known.

For at least 2 of these campaigns the individual battle scenes of the campaign were drawn on a huge scroll and when engravings of individual scenes were ordered by the emperor, only the required incident — with some alterations and additions — was copied.

2 sketches of drawings of this kind done in ink on paper are in the Historical Museum of Peking. They depict the pacification of Annam and Formosa, both in 1788.

The final execution of the Formosa painting on silk has been found in Hamburg recently. It shows 11 indi-

vidual scenes. It dates from 1788 and is signed by Tung Kao 董詒. In 1789, they were engraved on copper with many modifications.

In summary, we have, to-day, evidence of the following three phases of the genesis of battle-paintings done in the second half of the 18th century:

1. Sketches drawn in ink on huge paper scrolls to be hung up on the walls of the Tzū-kuang-ko, namely those for Annam and Formosa.
2. Final execution on silk, namely those for Formosa and for one half of one of the Turkestan paintings.
3. Preliminary sketches on paper in small size which served for the final drawings of the designs for the copper-plates.

In closing I may mention that recently I have found a battle-painting undated and mislabelled in a German provincial museum. Actually, it shows how the famous general Senggerincin accepted the submission of the Nien-fei 捻匪 leaders in 1863 who were closely connected with the Taiping rebellion.

The specific historical value of this painting lies in the fact that to each of these leaders their names are added and that their features are full of individual expression.

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