

## 8 Beyond the ‘Ten Complete Military Victories’

### Images of Battle in the Late-Qing Period

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In the Introduction to an edited volume of essays entitled *Artful Armies, Beautiful Battles: Art and Warfare in Early Modern Europe*, Pia Cuneo writes of the challenges in store for the scholar who engages with the relationship between warfare and cultural production: that liminal position between accuracy and invention, evidence and aesthetics, patron/artist and audience and what can be realistically known of the past.<sup>1</sup> The challenges evident in the art of warfare in early modern Europe can be magnified in the context of China where the tradition of war as a subject of artistic practice or even plain illustration was severely limited. Although China was for most of its history militarily powerful and the pioneer of many technological advances in weaponry and strategy it was not until the eighteenth century that battle subjects appeared in Chinese painting. Even in the graphic arts and in book illustration, it formed part of either storytelling or theatrical spectacle, not as commemoration of a battle, or to promote military prestige. If we take the example of funerary art, where scenes of battle can occur, usually such imagery is there to point up a moral code or action, rather than celebrate a victory. This is the case in one of the earliest surviving scenes of battle in Chinese art, the so-called ‘Battle on the Bridge’, a bas-relief stone carving from the Wu Liang shrine of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220CE), built in 151 CE for an elite member of the Wu family. Its highly stylized figures in combat say more about the overall schema of images within the chamber than they relate to an actual conflict.<sup>2</sup> Although scholars have argued the case for ‘historical particularism’: that images on Han funerary art represent historical people and events, so that the Battle on the Bridge records the military feats of family member General Wu Ban, this interpretation has been countered by the presence of similar battle scenes more widely in Eastern Han funerary art. As Wu Hung has written: ‘None of these motifs is unique to a single tomb and thus cannot be related to a specific tomb occupant’.<sup>3</sup>

If historical battle subjects were a rarity in Chinese imagery, then so were visual records of historical events generally.<sup>4</sup> Court painters were sometimes given the task of recording imperial activities such as when the Ming emperor, Jiajing (r.1522–66), visited his ancestral tombs, but this was unusual, would have been produced solely for court consumption and not rated as high art.<sup>5</sup> It was not until the occupation of China by the Manchu, who established the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), that ‘history painting’ became an established genre, beginning with the record of the series of visits that the Kangxi Emperor (r.1662–1722), made to southern China in 1689.<sup>6</sup> Recorded on 12 lengthy scrolls, and again for court consumption, these sets of paintings would mark the beginning of similar projects commissioned by successive Qing emperors and which would also encompass other visual media.<sup>7</sup>

## The Qing Dynasty, the Jesuits, and the Importation of European Battle Painting to China

Increasing contact with western countries from the late-seventeenth century contributed significantly to the pictorial representation of historical and specifically military events in China. This formed part of a fashion that emerged for western subject matter and western-style design (expressed readily in porcelain production but also in a range of other materials) and experiments in mathematical perspective in painting and in prints, much of it generated under the influence of the Jesuits at the Chinese court.<sup>8</sup> In terms of a shift in China's representation of its military prowess and as a record of historical conflicts, western influence was paramount. Combined with the militaristic culture that the Manchus brought with them when they conquered China and established the Qing Dynasty in 1644, it is not surprising that images relating to martial skills, battle, conquest, and the celebration of military power should begin to permeate the Chinese arts. The Qianlong Emperor (r.1736–95) in particular promoted the image of the Emperor as commander and omnipotent ruler, having himself depicted in paintings as hunter and soldier as well as commissioning paintings of military reviews, campaigns, and his favoured officers. An exemplar of this hybrid genre of painting is manifest in the famous equestrian portrait of Qianlong in ceremonial armour, which captures the emperor much in the manner of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V or King Charles I of England. The portrait was executed by Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766), the leading Jesuit artist at the Chinese court, who would have been familiar with the western equestrian tradition of portraiture, but as Pamela Crossley has pointed out, the portrait of Qianlong also displays the iconography symbolic of the multiculturalism that was at the heart of the Qing empire – combining Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan people.<sup>9</sup> Indeed Manchu multiculturalism and the power of the Chinese state during the eighteenth century ensured that the country's encounter with the West was one where China's position was dominant, reversing the conventional postcolonial concept of the metropolitan centre and the periphery. At this time, Europe was the periphery with the partial view at the time being not European but Chinese, with the Jesuit synthesis of artistic practice (as with other areas of Jesuit expertise), being sought and accepted by China on its own terms. Only from the mid-nineteenth century, with China's increasing semi-colonial status, would this role be reversed.<sup>10</sup>

Giuseppe Castiglione is a major figure in the transmission of the battle picture to China, a genre that began in China in the eighteenth century as a record of victorious campaigns and would be replicated during later campaigns of the Qing during the nineteenth century. To reference Pamela Kyle Crossley: 'The Jesuit [Castiglione] was not merely an observer of the emperor at his work but a facilitator: He had helped design and engineer some of the most universalist of the Qianlong architectural projects, had contributed to the "unifying" (*yitong*) cartography of the whole empire, and before his death would participate not only in writing and illustrating the narrative of the conquest of Turkestan and south-west China but actually managed to have the plates for the edition cast in Paris'.<sup>11</sup> Crossley refers to the now-famous set of engravings, consisting of 16 large plates, that were designed to be a visual record of three successful campaigns prosecuted by Qianlong in Eastern Turkestan between 1755 and 1759, an area that bordered the

north-western region of China. As a result of these campaigns a new province, named Xinjiang (New Territories), was brought under Qing dynasty control and today constitutes the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.<sup>12</sup> Attempts by the Qing to challenge the power of the Mongolian Zunghars, who had control of the Tarim Basin and as far west as Kashgar and Yarkand, had previously been unsuccessful, so internecine struggles within the Zunghar state enabled Qianlong to intervene militarily in 1755. His troops embarked upon a campaign to defeat the Zunghars and this was followed by the suppression of a revolt of the Muslim Altishahr Khojas between 1757 and 1759.

Following the end of the campaigns, key battles and events were recorded through the commission of 16 large-scale paintings (approximately 8 × 4 metres), which were displayed in the Ziguanggi (Hall of Purple Splendour), a building situated on the western lakeside of Zhonghai (Middle Sea) in the imperial garden adjacent to the Forbidden City in 1761. Alongside these were displayed one hundred near life-size portraits of the key combatants.<sup>13</sup> The Hall was used for audiences and the reception of foreign envoys and so these paintings would have been a visible reminder of Qianlong's military power and success. Three Jesuits and one Augustinian were involved in the planning and execution of the sixteen paintings for the Ziguangge, Giuseppe Castiglione (Ch. Lang Shining, 1688–1766), Jean-Denis Attiret (Ch. Wang Zhicheng, 1702–68), Ignatius Sichelbart (Ch. Ai Qimeng, 1708–80) and the Augustinian, Jean Damascene Sallusti (Ch. An Deyi, d.1781) and this set would represent the first of a series of paintings of significant campaigns pursued by the Qing during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The record of the campaigns did not end here. Qianlong issued a decree on 13 July 1765, commanding that the 16 paintings be copied onto paper by Castiglione, Attiret, Sichelbart and Damascene Sallusti, and Chinese court artist, Ding Guanpeng (act. 1702–71), who had been trained by Castiglione, with the intention that these be sent to Europe for rendering into copper-plate engravings. Paris was chosen as the destination, at the time recognized as the premier centre for engraving and the project was considered as prestigious on the part of both the Chinese and the French.<sup>14</sup> Engraver to King Louis XV, Charles Nicolas Cochin (1715–90), was engaged and led a team of engravers that consisted of Jacques-Philippe Le Bas (1707–83), Augustin de Saint-Aubin (1736–1807), Benoît-Louis Prévost (1747–1804), and Jean-Jacques Aliamet (1726–88).<sup>15</sup> Two hundred impressions were printed from each plate and sent back to Qianlong in China in three separate consignments and the complexity of the project determined that it was not completed until 1775.<sup>16</sup>

Although as senior court artist and indeed teacher of painting to the emperor, the hand of Castiglione can clearly be seen in the project, Qianlong himself would have had his own reasons for commissioning these engravings and for having the project undertaken in Europe. As well as celebrating Qing marshal virtues, the commission would have broadcast 'the vision of imperial might around the world', as Peter C. Perdue has termed it and was a natural next step in promoting the ongoing Manchu conquest of China, which had begun in 1644 and which continued to enthrall Europe.<sup>17</sup> Replicated as engravings, the imagery would also allow Qianlong to disseminate Qing military success and conquest throughout the empire and as an imprimatur had poems he had composed himself added either to the plates directly or as separate woodblock printed sheets to each of the sets.<sup>18</sup>

### The French Connection: The Influence of the Engravings of Works by European Masters on Chinese Artists

Where Castiglione would most likely have been influential is in the depiction of battle as seen in the campaign paintings and their engravings and in selecting the models used. It is already known that Qianlong had seen engravings of battle scenes by Augsburg-born painter Georg Philippe Rugendas (1666–1743), which were in the possession of the Jesuit fathers in Beijing and which, according to Father Augustin de Hallerstein (1703–74), greatly pleased him.<sup>19</sup> There is also the evidence of Father Michel Benoist (1715–74), a Jesuit scientist in the service of the Emperor, who in 1773 claimed his employer was familiar with battle prints that celebrated the victories won by European sovereigns.<sup>20</sup> As I have written elsewhere, while Rugendas engravings must have been an influence, it is quite possible that other models were available to Qianlong and Castiglione.<sup>21</sup> The Emperor's battle engravings could have owed their antecedents to a number of other artists such as Philips Wouwermans (1619–68), Jacques Courtois (1621–76), and Adam Frans van der Meulen (1632–90).<sup>22</sup> Van der Meulen was the official battle painter to Louis XIV and was commissioned to paint the King's many campaigns. Travelling with the troops and sketching on the battlefield, the immediacy of this approach was influential in the development of a relatively new genre of battlescape, some of which were in turn engraved and used as the basis for Gobelins tapestry designs.<sup>23</sup> Van der Meulen's work was known in China as far back as the Emperor Kangxi when the French King sent the Emperor a gift of engravings of paintings from the royal collection.<sup>24</sup> As well as engravings of Raphael's *Saint Michael* (c.1504–5), Titian's *The Entombment of Christ* (1526), Guido Reni's *Saint Francis* (c.1610) and Nicolas Poussin's *Rebecca at the Well* (1648), there were also engravings of the tapestries *The Alliance of the Swiss* (1680) and *Tenture de 'Histoire du Roi', Defeat of the Comte de Marsin* (1680) (both Charles Le Brun (1619–90), after van der Meulen) and *The Siege of Tournai* ((1681) by Sebastian Le Clerc (1673–1714), after van der Meulen), together with sets of the *Fêtes de Versailles* (1668) *Views of Cities and Royal Houses* (1664), both by van der Meulen himself.<sup>25</sup>

The set of Qianlong battle engravings, as did the paintings, show both dynamic battle scenes (the majority of the set) and also images of repose – the reception and celebration of the victorious armies. A typical example of one of the former is the engraving: *The Victory of Qurman* (Plate VIII in the series), executed by Augustin de Saint-Aubin in the workshop of Charles Nicolas Cochin after a drawing by Jean Damascene Salusti, which depicts Generals Fude and Machang coming to the assistance of General Zhaohui who was being besieged by five thousand rebels (1770: fig. 8.1). A panorama, the engraving shows advancing Chinese troops to the left, including the units of *zamburak*, or swivel guns mounted on camels, decisive in the Chinese winning the battle and lifting the siege on 3 February 1759. The massed troops in the picture still allow for a large amount of detail, both of individuals and of vignettes reminiscent of western battle engravings. One detail is of General Machang (to the middle-right of the picture), who was unseated from his horse during the battle but continued the fight with his bow.<sup>26</sup> The landscape depicted provides the contours in which the action takes place but again owes a good deal to European prototypes rather than to either Chinese landscape painting conventions or to the topography of Central Asia. A comparison with one of the many van der



Figure 8.1 Augustin de Saint-Aubin, after Jean Damscene Salusti, *Battle of Qurman* (c.1770), engraving, 57.8 × 93.7 cm, no. 8 in a set of 16 engravings *Pingding zhunga'er Huibu desheng tu* (1765–75). The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

Meulen engravings illustrates the similarities of composition and of visual solutions to rendering battles in two dimensions. As with the Jesuit artists who served Qianlong, van der Meulen travelled with Louis XIV's army, sketching on the battlefield and working up his drawings first into paintings and then engravings. This print is one of a pair depicting cavalry engagements in Flanders (fig. 8.2) and the artist captures a dynamic scene of massed cavalry in combat but combined with elements of detail and localized incident.

The official marking of Qing military success did not end with the set of paintings and engravings depicting the Western campaigns. There followed campaigns against the Jinchuan minorities on the Sichuan-Tibetan border (1777), wars in Vietnam and Taiwan (1787–89), and against the Gurkhas in Nepal (1792) and Miao in Yunnan and Hunan (1795).<sup>27</sup> In 1792, Qianlong defined these campaigns retrospectively and collectively as the 'Ten Complete Military Victories' (*shi quan wu gong* 十全武功) and he himself as the 'Old Man of the Ten Complete Military Victories' (*shi quan lao ren* 十全老人). Following the earlier pattern, paintings and sets of engravings were commissioned (the latter this time produced in Beijing), as a record of all these victories, the last, over the Miao, which were printed between 1798 and 1803.<sup>28</sup> An engraving from the *Pacification of Taiwan* (*Pingding Taiwan chantu*), the 'Battle of Jilipu', reveals a closer relationship with Chinese conventions of representation with stylized rocks and little in the way of a panoramic recession seen in the Western Campaigns set (fig. 8.3). Detail and individuality are also missing from these later



Figure 8.2 Anonymous after Adam Frans van der Meulen, *Cavalry* (c.1670), engraving, from a bound volume *Oeuvres de engagements with dedication to the Duke of Chevreuse Vandremeulen*. The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.

sets, indicating the weakening of Jesuit influence on the Imperial painting workshop at the time.

### Imperial Decline: Representing the Suppression of Rebellion in Nineteenth-Century China

Qianlong's successors had neither his abilities nor the resources to wage active war and in fact were faced with a reversal of circumstances, witnessing insurgencies across the empire, including incursions by western nations and Japan during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Offensive military operations and imperial expansion, turned into a defensive stance as Qing power over its empire weakened and its ability to control events became evermore challenging. Direct imperial patronage of the arts also began to decline over the same period, although Qianlong's legacy of recording military successes as visual propaganda was established enough to survive, albeit in a far more limited capacity. During the reigns of emperors Xianfeng (1850–61) and Tongzhi (1861–75), China fought Britain and France in the Second Opium War (1856–60), having first faced Britain on a war footing in the First Opium War (1839–42) and was subject to the challenges of three fierce internal conflicts, the Taiping (1850–64) Nian (1851–68) and Muslim (1862–78) Rebellions, all of which risked toppling the Qing but which undoubtedly severely weakened the dynasty. The Taiping Rebellion, a military and quasi-Christian movement which sought to overthrow the Qing and establish the 'Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace', was geographically extensive and socially and



Figure 8.3 Anonymous, *Battle of Jilipu* (1789), engraving, 63 × 89 cm, from a set of engravings, *Pingding Taiwan chantu* (Pacification of Taiwan). © Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

economically devastating and was only suppressed with the help of Western mercenaries. The Nian Rebellion grew out of peasant discontent with the government's response to a series of natural disasters in an impoverished region of northern China, while the Muslim Rebellions in the South and North-west, were the result of economic injustices against the large concentrations of Muslim communities located in these regions.<sup>30</sup> Both were only overcome with the greatest of difficulty.

Although the Taiping, Nian, and Moslem rebellions revealed dynastic weakness, their eventual suppression was celebrated in the same way as former campaigns with sets of paintings recording particular battles and celebratory events. According to Hongxing Zhang, the commission of the paintings was initiated following yet another war, this time with the French concerning Vietnam the peace treaty to which was concluded in June 1885.<sup>31</sup> Documented in the Chinese First Historical Archives, the commission consisted of a total of 67 paintings, made up of 20 illustrating the Taiping Rebellion, 18 paintings of the Nian Rebellion, 12 paintings of the Moslem Rebellion in Yunnan and Guizhou provinces and 17 paintings of the Moslem Rebellion in Gansu and Shaanxi provinces.<sup>32</sup> The work commenced in the spring of 1886 and completed in 1890 and although there is no record of the artists involved, the project was placed under the charge of Qingkuan (1848–1927), an official and skilled painter who was responsible for many art commissions during this period.<sup>33</sup> As with the Qianlong Campaign paintings, the new sets were installed in the Ziguangge (Hall of Purple Splendour), replacing the former ones and remained there until the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, when many were either looted or presumably destroyed.<sup>34</sup>

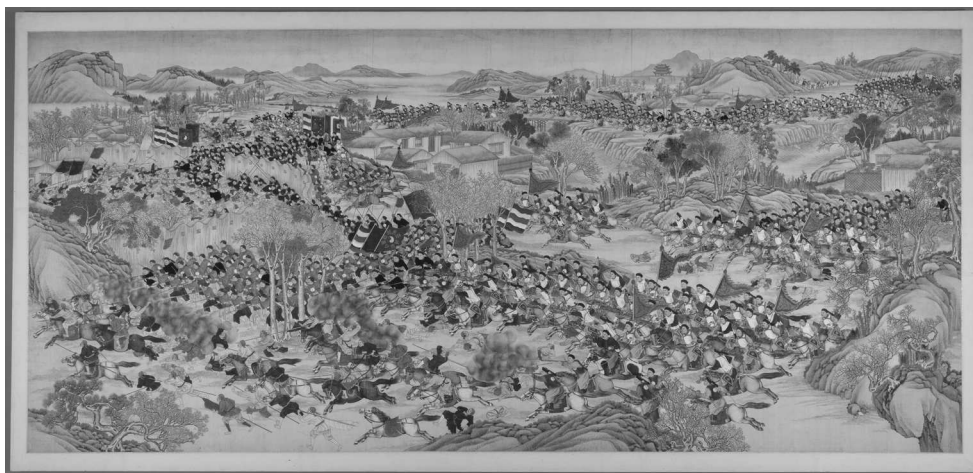


Figure 8.4 Anonymous, *Battle Scene from the Nian Rebellion* (late 1870s, although likely the ninth painting from the set of *Victory over the Taiping* (1886–90)), ink and colours on silk, 135.9 × 307.3 cm. MacTaggart Art Collection (2004.19.49), University of Alberta Museums, gift of Sandy and Cécile MacTaggart.

A surviving painting from this later series of paintings and one that has been illustrated a number of times is that now in the McTaggart Art Collection, University of Alberta (c.1890: fig. 8.4).<sup>35</sup> The work was identified by Hongxing Zhang as the ‘Regaining of Tongcheng, Hubei’, the ninth painting from the set of *Victory over the Taiping* (1886–90), however, in the online catalogue of the McTaggart Collection it is described as ‘A Scene from the Nian Rebellion’.<sup>36</sup> Either way, the painting bears a close resemblance to the earlier cycles, with a panoramic scene of contending armies but, as with the later Qianlong sets, a closer adherence to traditional conventions of Chinese landscape painting. The rendering of rocks and flora and the use of mist and stylized clouds create the illusion of depth and space. Compared with the later Qianlong battle sets (representing the Jinchuan campaign, the wars in Vietnam and Taiwan and those against the Gurkhas in Nepal (1792) and the Miao), this and the other surviving paintings, include more detail, closer in conception to the first Western Campaigns set. The identification of individual officers is made explicit with the inclusion of many small cartouches that identify them. One such is Luo Zenan (1808–56), a General in the Xiang or Hunan Army of Zeng Guofan (1811–72), who was at the forefront of fighting the Taiping, dying at the third battle of Wuchang in 1856.<sup>37</sup>

It seems that there were no engravings made of the paintings of these campaigns, although there may have been the intention to do so if the dynasty had survived. Embattled as the Qing were at the close of the nineteenth century, particularly after the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, the propaganda potential realized by Qianlong’s first engravings project had none of the élan of former times and, if pursued, would have had a distinctively hollow ring. With the decline of official commissions representing battle in painting, there was no tradition in Chinese literati painting to fill the void, nor any source of private patronage that would have considered such a genre worthy of support.



The representation of battle in Chinese art, however, did have a successor through an unofficial and popular pictorial form, which offered visual commentary on some of the later nineteenth-century conflicts, including the Boxer Rebellion and can be seen as evidence of a nascent nationalism. This was the medium of the *nianhua*, or New Year picture, a folk art tradition that had been produced for centuries using the woodblock printing method.<sup>38</sup> As the Chinese name would suggest, they were produced in their thousands in vivid colours to decorate ordinary homes during the New Year festival with a subject matter that symbolized good luck, longevity and prosperity, and protection of the home. They were also produced for the range of festivals throughout the year and, as will be seen, to portray other events. The nineteenth century witnessed a growth in production and popularity of *nianhua* due in part to technical advances in xylography and to the expansion of the subjects depicted and while there were major centres of production, these prints were produced all over China.<sup>39</sup> As John Lust has noted, ‘the designers of the prints came from the ranks of the common people, who were too their publics. They drew on the vast resources of popular art and the fascination for the historical and literary’.<sup>40</sup> These were mostly drawn from legend or taken from historical romances and dramas that were popular with all ranks of society. But from the 1840s onwards, with foreign encroachment and increasing internal conflicts that impacted upon the wider populace, subjects that recorded these encounters began to appear regularly in the repertoire of *nianhua* prints. The Taiping Rebellion in particular disrupted the lives of millions of ordinary people and the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), and the Boxer Rebellion, were conflicts that contributed to a growing sense of national identity in the minds of ordinary Chinese, which can be seen reflected in the subject matter of *nianhua* produced during this period. Though printed in smaller numbers than more conventional prints, battle subjects must have been commercially successful to have been produced at all. However, as Jane E. Elliott has observed, what is still unclear is the mechanism by which *nianhua* producers recorded the events they depicted, although western soldiers and their weaponry would have been a familiar sight in many parts of China and rebellion would have been even more immediate.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the idea of direct observation as a mechanism for transmission is not a fruitful approach, but looking at the conventions used in a different but related field, might prove more useful.

As a popular folk art, *nianhua* used conventions of representation that owed their origins to legend, theatrical performance, and the supernatural and this was equally the case for prints that recorded battle. So while these *nianhua* recorded actual events and can be accurate in many details, they were sourcing elements that were essentially stylized and symbolic. It can also be said that *nianhua* battle pictures had a very different intention to their imperial antecedents. Characters borrowed from Chinese opera, mythology, or popular stories and historical dramas would often be employed across the *nianhua* repertoire to point up actions or behaviour and these would be familiar enough to be instantly recognizable by a largely illiterate population. Actual battles therefore could be overlaid with mythical references or magical elements to reinforce the moral message or acts of bravery. To quote Elliott again:

Many hundreds of people in remote villages rarely saw an opera or witnessed a play. However, they may have had fairly regular opportunities to listen to itinerant storytellers, a large proportion of whose repertoires were heroic deeds of men and women in the great historical romances’.<sup>42</sup> For those viewers who could read, titles and commentaries were added to the image, providing a context and acknowledging

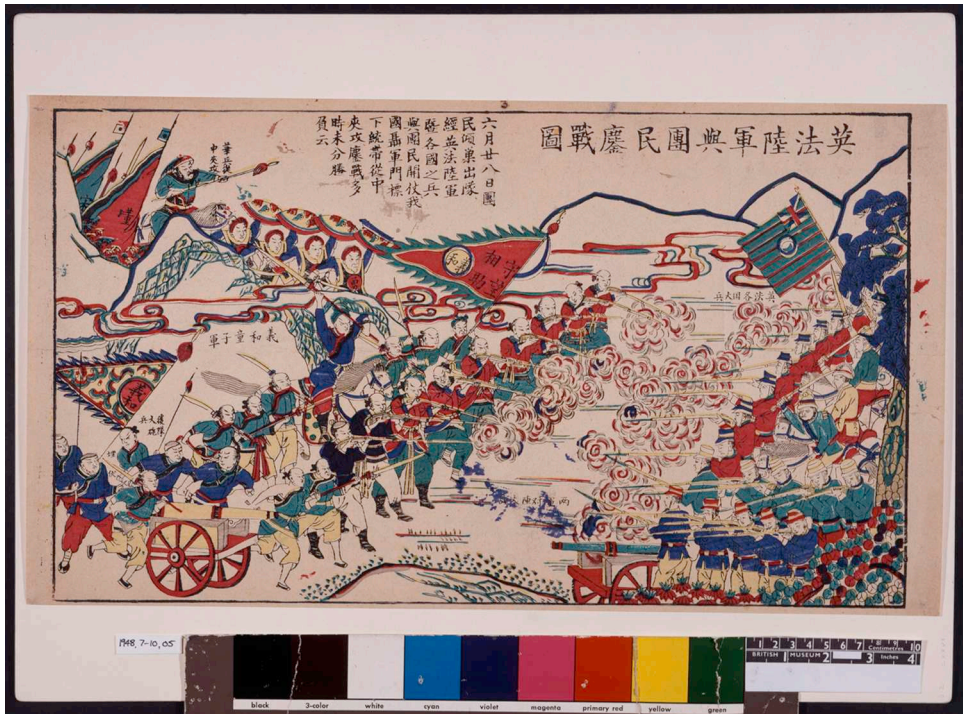


Figure 8.5 Anonymous, *The English and French Armies Engaged in Battle with the Boxers* (c.1900), woodcut print, colours on paper. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

a familiarity on the part of the consumer with China's current military challenges and how they were being met – even if there was an ever-present positive gloss applied to these encounters. So while these *nianhua* might have been representing contemporary and foreign encounters, their familiar tropes and visual vocabulary owed a great deal to established tradition.

The *nianhua* illustrated here (1900: fig. 8.5), shows the British and French armies engaged in battle with the Boxers. Here folk tradition depicting Boxer troops to the left emerging from stylized mountains and clouds, stacked one on another, their numbers implied by banners in the top corner, are combined with the prosaic ranks of front-line foreign soldiers firing on each other, the French and British troops clearly discernible by their differing uniforms. The print also illustrates the ubiquity of design as this same image was first used five years earlier to illustrate a battle of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. Certain details, such as the flags are different but the Boxer lines are substituted for female troops led by Liu Yuegu, the mythical daughter of a celebrated Triad chief, Liu Yongfu, who fought the Japanese invaders in Taiwan.<sup>43</sup> The image draws upon magical elements and historical stories of heroic sacrifice, this one likely referencing *Yang jia jiang* (the Generals of the Yang Family), a story set during the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127) and telling of how the women of the Yang family were trained for combat and fought against the army of the invading Khitans from Manchuria when all their men-folk had been killed.

The *nianhua* battle picture was not the first time that images from historical romance and legend had been used as a metaphor for contemporary events. Imagery from such literary works as the Water Margin (*Shuihu Zhuan*) and the Romance of the Three Kingdoms (*Sanguozhi Yanyi*), both written in the fourteenth century and containing heroic characters set during a time of upheaval and political uncertainty, appeared on porcelains made at Jingdezhen during the so-called Transitional period between the fall of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and the establishment of the Qing in the mid-seventeenth century. This was another time of political instability and unrest. For the customers of these ceramics – the so-called scholar-gentry – these stories from antiquity provided moral ideals which were lacking in their own Ming government during a period when they were in search of narratives and exemplars that would offer a positive future. As Stephen Little has written: ‘These can be tied to the profound questioning among the scholar class of the reasons behind the moral decay that led to the decline of the Ming house and the concurrent search for moral paragons in their own time’.<sup>44</sup> The sources used for this porcelain decoration were Chinese woodblock illustrations seen in the published editions of historical novels, romances, and dramas of the Ming period, but presumably transmitted through designs modified for three-dimensional objects, now lost.<sup>45</sup> Although the mechanics of transmission are unclear, it is recognized that two social groups were key players: the scholar or literati class and the merchant guilds, both of whom were situated around the Jiangnan region of southern China (Huizhou, Suzhou, and Nanjing, in particular). Together they formed the book designers, trade networks in books and porcelain and consumers of both.<sup>46</sup>

These dramatic stories of bravery and loyalty were also employed as propaganda on ceramics by the succeeding Qing during the reign of the Qing emperor Kangxi, who harnessed these themes and imagery in support of the correct and legitimate rule. A typical example of this style of porcelain can be seen in fig. 8.6, which shows an episode from ‘The Battle of Kunyang’ (*Kunyang zhizhan*), a drama telling of the fall from power of Wang Mang. In about 6 AD, Wang Mang (45 BCE–23 CE), seized control of China from the ruler of the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE) and established himself as Emperor of the short-lived Xin dynasty (9–23 CE). Wang instituted a number of radical reforms which included the nationalization of land and the introduction of a new monetary system and this led to widespread revolt. These revolts were initiated by the peasantry and the old Han nobility who called themselves the *Chimei* (Red Eyebrows). The revolts eventually led to Wang’s overthrow and the establishment of the Eastern Han dynasty by Liu Xiu, who ruled as the Guangwu Emperor (r.25–57 CE). The scene shows Liu Xiu on the walls of the City dressed in court attire (right), with his General Deng Yu who is dressed as a scholar (left). Left of the City wall, riding a lion and holding a sword is Wang Mang’s general, Wang Xin, sent to capture Kunyang City from Liu Xiu. With him are wild beasts: a wolf, tiger, and leopard, probably meant to represent his army. In hot pursuit is Liu Xiu’s army, in front of which is a Daoist immortal holding a pair of clubs and unleashing a magic cloud of blackbirds from a bottle gourd on his back which is engulfing General Wang Xin. The visual vocabulary here comes close to that seen in *nianhua* and betrays its origins in Chinese woodblock illustration, while the polychrome enamel decoration on the porcelain prefigures the vivid palette of colours seen in the later prints.



Figure 8.6 Anonymous, Vase depicting *The Battle of Kunyang* (c.1700), porcelain with overglaze enamel colours, 66 × 27.9 cm, Kangxi period. © The Victoria & Albert Museum.

## Conclusion

This essay has discussed a genre of art in China that has its roots both in Europe as well as China's literary and folk art traditions. On the one hand, it was a hybrid form, adopted by the imperial court as a vehicle of propaganda and hubris in the wake of lengthy campaigns prosecuted at its territorial borders at the end of the eighteenth century – a form which persisted into the nineteenth century; on the other, it utilized a popular art form – the *nianhua* or New Year print – produced for centuries and adapted to reflect and record the many political challenges facing the Chinese government and populace from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, not least military incursion and civil war. It drew on other forms, not least the stories and dramas familiar through theatrical and opera performances and storytellers and made visible through woodblock illustrated books and by extension, porcelain decoration. While scenes of battle and military subjects continued as images in *nianhua*, well into the twentieth century, used by the Chinese Communist Party in propaganda posters – an official vehicle loosely akin to an imperial project – such images found little favour with the revival of traditional Chinese painting (*guohua*), during the Republican Period (1912–1949), or the parallel experiments in Modern Chinese art – again a European hybrid – of the same era.

## Notes

- 1 Pia Cuneo, ed., *Artful Armies, Beautiful Battles: Art and Warfare in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002), 3–6.
- 2 For an in-depth study, see Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).
- 3 *Ibid.*, 59.
- 4 The aesthetic values of painting as established by the Chinese scholar elite from about the eleventh century onwards foregrounded a conceptual approach, with the pre-eminence of landscape over other genres of painting.
- 5 This long scroll painting is in the collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei: [https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04001152&lang=2#inline\\_content\\_intro](https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04001152&lang=2#inline_content_intro) [accessed 30 November 2019].
- 6 See Michael G. Chang, 'Historical Narratives of the Kangxi Emperor's Inaugural Visit to Suzhou, 1684', in Jeroen Duindam and Sabine Dabringhaus, *The Dynastic Centre and the Provinces: Agents and Interactions* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 203–24. See also the Michael G. Chang, 'Envisioning the Spectacles of Emperor Qianlong's Tours of Southern China: An Exercise in Historical Imagination', in James A. Cook, Joshua L. Goldstein, Matthew D. Johnson, and Sigrid Schmalzer, eds., *Visualizing Modern China: Image, History, and Memory, 1750-Present* (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 25–46.
- 7 Wei Dong, 'Art as Pictorial Record', *Orientalism* 26:7 (July-August 1995), 18–24.
- 8 There is an extensive literature on this development, particularly in relation to the Jesuits at court. For recent publications, see for example: Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, *Giuseppe Castiglione, 1688–1766, Peintre et architecte à la cour de Chine* (Paris: Thalia Edition, 2007); Kristina Kleutghen, *Imperial Illusions: Crossing Pictorial Boundaries in the Qing Palaces* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015); Jessica Rawson, et al., *China: The Three Emperors, 1662–1795* (London: British Museum Press, 2005); Hongxing Zhang, *The Qianlong Emperor: Treasures from the Forbidden City* (Edinburgh: NMS Publishing, 2002).
- 9 Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 272–80. For an illustration of this portrait and an overview of its significance, see Zhang, *The Qianlong Emperor*, 50–51.

- 10 Arguably China's reversals were largely economic and military. Its artistic traditions, even if modified, survived largely intact.
- 11 Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*, 271–72.
- 12 For a comprehensive history of the region and the Qing campaigns, see Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West, The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2005).
- 13 For details of these see Ka Bo Tsang, 'Portraits of Meritorious Officials: Eight Examples from the First Set Commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor', *Arts Asiatique* 47 (1992), 69–88. See also Herbert Butz, *Bilder für die Halle des Purpurglanzes* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, 2003).
- 14 The literature surrounding this collaboration is extensive, but the main published sources include: Jean Monval, 'Les Conquêtes de la Chine. Unecommande de l'Empereur de Chine en France au XVIIIe siècle', *La Revue de l'art ancien et moderne* 18 (1905), 147–60; Henri Cordier, 'Les Conquêtes de la Chine', *Mémoires concernant l'Asie Orientale* 1 (1913), 1–13; Paul Pelliot, 'Les Conquêtes de l'Empereur de la Chine', *T'oung Pao* 20 (Leiden, 1921), 183–274 and *T'oung Pao* 29 (1932), 125–127; M. Pirazzoli-T'Serstevens, *Gravures des Conquêtes de l'Empereur de Chine K'ien-long au Musée Guimet* (Paris, 1969); Tanya Szrajber, 'The Victories of the Emperor Qianlong', *Print Quarterly* 23:1 (2006), 28–47; Pascal Torres, *Les Batailles de l'Empereur de Chine: La gloire de Qianlong célébrée par Louis XV une commande royale d'estampes* (Paris, 2009).
- 15 Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, *Gravures des Conquêtes de l'Empereur*, 13: Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens lists the engravers including additional engravers employed by Cochin to complete the work: Louis-Joseph Masquelier (1741–1811), Denis Née (1732–1818), Pierre-Philippe Choffard (1730–1809), and N. de Launey (1739–1792).
- 16 The date when the final shipment arrived in China. See Pelliot, 'Les Conquêtes de l'Empereur de la Chine', 222–23, 209–10 and also Szrajber, 'The Victories of the Emperor Qianlong', 43.
- 17 Perdue, *China Marches West*, 443. European knowledge of and response to Manchu success is surveyed in Edwin J. Van Kley, 'News from China: Seventeenth-Century European Notices of the Manchu Conquest', *Journal of Modern History* 45 (December 1973), 561–82.
- 18 For details of this and the printing process, see Niklas Leverenz, 'Drawings, Proof and Prints, from the Qianlong Emperor's East Turkestan Copperplate Engravings', *Arts Asiatiques* 68 (2013), 39–60.
- 19 In a postscript to a letter to his brother, Weichard de Hallerstein, dated 27 October 1765, Hallerstein describes the events leading to the commission of the 16 paintings, the influence of Rugendas as a model, the involvement of Fathers Castiglione, Sichelbart, Attiret and Damascene and the sending of the reduced images abroad for engraving. See Pelliot, 'Les Conquêtes de l'Empereur de la Chine', Appendix, 268, where the postscript in its original Latin is quoted. For a translation, see Szrajber, 'The Victories of the Emperor Qianlong', 29–30. Although Georg Philippe Rugendas was German-born, he spent most of his career in Italy. His paintings were engraved by his son, Christian Rugendas.
- 20 Charles Le Gobien; Yves Mathurin Marie Tréaudet de Querbeuf; J-B Du Halde, *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses écrites des missions étrangères* (Lyon, 1819: 14 vols), 13:427.
- 21 Nick Pearce, 'Qianlong's Western Campaign Engravings', in Florian Knothe, Pascal-François Bertrand, Nicholas Pearce, and Kristel Smentek, *Imagining Qianlong: Louis XV's Chinese Emperor Tapestries and Battle Scene Prints at the Imperial Court in Beijing* (Hong Kong: University Museum & Art Gallery, 2017), 41–53.
- 22 Irma B. Jaffe and Gernando Colombaro, 'The Flying Gallop: East and West', *The Art Bulletin* 65:2 (June 1983), 183–200, 196.
- 23 I am very grateful to my colleague, Anne Dulau-Beveridge, for drawing my attention to van der Meulen as a source.
- 24 George R. Loehr, 'The Sincization of Missionary Artists and Their Work at the Manchu Court during the Eighteenth Century', *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 7:1 (1962), 796.
- 25 Cab. Est., Paris, Ye 144. *Registre des Livre de Figures et Estampes qui ont été distribuées suivant les ordres de Monseignr le Marquis de Louvois*. D 15e février 1685. Délivré aux RR. Pères Jésuites Missionnaires allans à la China. Cited in Loehr, 796.

- 26 Incidents like these were often captured in the individual portraits commissioned alongside the paintings and engravings of the campaigns. Machang's portrait of his attack on horseback, painted by Giuseppe Castiglione, is in the National Palace Museum, Taipei, and illustrated in Perdue, *China Marches West*, 270. Another portrait of Machang, this time of him on foot loosing an arrow, was sold at Sotheby's New York, in 2005.
- 27 For details of these, see Johanna Waley-Cohen, *The Culture of War in China: Empire and the Military under the Qing Dynasty* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003).
- 28 For a detailed discussion and a useful table of production, see Walter Fuchs, 'Die Entwürfe der Schlachtenkupfer der K'ienlung-und Taokuang-Zeit', *Monumenta Serica* 9 (1944), 101–22. See also Max Loehr, 'Engravings of Ch'ien-Lung's Formosa Campaign', *Bulletin of University of Michigan Museum of Art* 5 (1954), 12–15.
- 29 For recent approaches to rebellion and incursion afflicting China at this period, see Tobie Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013) and Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832–1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2016).
- 30 For in-depth studies of these conflicts, see Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (London: Harper Collins, 1996); Siang-tseh Chiang, *The Nien Rebellion* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1954); Wen-djang Chu, *The Muslim Rebellion in Northwest China, 1862–1878: a Study of Government Minority Policy* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966). For a potted history of these wars, see also Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), 170–93.
- 31 Hongxing Zhang, 'Studies in Late Qing Dynasty Battle Paintings', *Artibus Asiae* 60:2 (2000), 265–96.
- 32 *ibid.*, 267.
- 33 *ibid.*, 269.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 271–73: Zhang documents surviving paintings in the McTaggart collection, National Gallery in Prague, the British Royal Collection at Sandringham House, Norfolk and the Palace Museum, Beijing. He provides a useful table as an Appendix to his article. Other versions of the Taiping Rebellion paintings were also made, an album of twelve leaves in the National Palace Museum, Taipei and a handscroll with the same scenes, now in the National History Museum in Beijing. These are discussed by Zhang in the same article.
- 35 The painting was first illustrated in Claudia Brown and Ju-hsi Chou, *Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire, 1796–1911* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1992), Plate 5 and Claudia Brown, 'Transcending Turmoil: Painting at the Close of China's Empire, 1796–1911', *Orientalism* 24:4 (April 1993), 66–67.
- 36 Zhang, 'Studies', Appendix 1, 271 and fig. 1.
- 37 For a biography of Zeng Guofan and Luo Zenan, see Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Dynasty* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1943: 2 vols), 1:540 and 2:751–56.
- 38 Their predecessors were *zhihua* (paper pictures), that acted as amulets to ward off evil and bring good fortune. For a history of *nianhua*, see John Lust, *Chinese Popular Prints* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Wang Shucun, *Yangliuqing nianhua ziliao ji* (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1959); Wang Shucun, *Zhongguo minjian nianhua baitu* (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1988); Maria Rudova and Lev Menshikov, eds., *Chinese Popular Prints* (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1988).
- 39 Three main areas of production operated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Suzhou in the south, Yangliuqing in the north and Mianzhu in the far west but by the nineteenth century there was a proliferation of printers across China. For a history of popular print production, see Lust, *Chinese Popular Prints*, Chapter 2.
- 40 Lust, *Chinese Popular Prints*, 4.
- 41 Jane E. Elliott, *Some Did It for Civilisation, Some Did It for Their Country: A Revised View of the Boxer War* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2002), 110.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 118–19.
- 43 Lust, *Chinese Popular Prints*, 230. Lust illustrates the print, Pl.19.
- 44 Stephen Little, 'Narrative Themes and Woodblock Prints in the Decoration of Seventeenth-Century Chinese Porcelain', in Michael Butler, Margaret Medley and Stephen Little, eds.,

*Seventeenth Century Chinese Porcelain: From the Butler Family Collection* (Alexandria Virginia: Art Services International, 1990), 21–32, 23.

- 45 The literature on Transitional and Kangxi porcelains of this type is abundant. In addition to Stephen Little's chapter earlier (Little, 'Narrative Themes and Woodblock Prints', n.37), it includes: Richard S. Kilburn, *Transitional Wares and their Forerunners* (Hong Kong: The Oriental Ceramic Society of Hong Kong, 1981); Stephen Little, *Chinese Ceramics of the Transitional Period, 1620–1683* (New York: China Institute of America, 1983); Julia B. Curtis, 'Markets, Motifs and Seventeenth Century Porcelain from Jingdezhen', *The Porcelains of Jingdezhen, Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia* 16 (London: School of Oriental & African Studies, 1993), 123–49. Battle scenes are discussed in some detail in David T. Johnson, 'Narrative Themes on Kangxi Porcelains in the Taft Museum', *Chinese Ceramics: Selected Articles from Orientations, 1982–2003* (Hong Kong: Orientations Magazine, 2004), 328–33.
- 46 Michael Dillon, 'Jingdezhen as a Ming Industrial Center', *Ming Studies* 6 (Spring 1978), 37–44. See also Michael Dillon, 'Transport and Marketing in the Development of the Jingdezhen Porcelain Industry During the Ming and Qing Dynasties', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 35 (1992), 278–90.