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### **Comments to the battle scenes of “Conquest of Western Region” of Emperor Qianlong.**

In 1764 Qianlong ordered copper engravings to the European masters in accordance with the battle paintings of the conquest of the Western Region. Castiglione + 3 other court artists painted sketches and sent them to France to Charles-Nicholas Cochin. This work was very difficult and prolonged till 1777 when the last lot of the order was delivered to the Qing court. The author of the paper analyses the history of the process. In the final part of the paper he discusses the possibility of re-print of the engravings by the Chinese artists basing upon original prints.

The album “Pingding xiyu zhan tu” is being kept in Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of Russian Academy of Science (Russ. IVR RAN) in SPb under the code H-54/I NOVA. It is 16 black-and-white engravings based upon sketches of Jesuit artists led by Castiglione. It includes the following pictures:

1. Yili capitulates.
2. Defeat of the Gedeng-Ola encampment of Oirats.
3. Battle in Olei-Zhalatu (Oroi-Jalatu).
4. The victory in Heluoguosi (Khorgos).
5. Battle of Kulonggui (Khurungui).
6. The lord of Wushi (Turfan) capitulates.
7. Relief of blockade in Heishui.
8. Great victory in Huerman (Qurman).
9. Battle of Tonggusiluke (Tonguzlyk).
10. Battle of Huosi-Kuluke (Hosh-Kuluk).
11. Battle of Aerchuer (Alichur).
12. Battle of Yixierkuernoer (Eshil-Kul).
13. Lord of Badakhshan capitulates.
14. Uighur prisoners being transferred.
15. Meeting of meritorious Generals and soldiers.
16. The banquet of Victory.

(the brief history of the war is omitted as non-significant).

The original paintings on the silk became the basement for these engravings. The “Great victory in Qurman” is the only survived painting on the silk from Ziguangge. It is in Hamburgisches Museum fur Volkerkunde now. But if compared with the engraving it is only the right part of the painting.

European technique of engraving on copper became known in China during the reign of Kangxi – it was introduced by missionary Matteo Ripa (Chinese Ma Guoxian 1682-1746). He created the first series of engraved prints in China dedicated to the famous sceneries of the country in 1714. P. Pelliot said in 1927 that he knows only 3 places in

Europe which possessed 5 printed albums of Ripa – the National Library of France, Vienna (accurate location is unavailable) and a book-store in London (accurate location is unavailable). He also took part in the creation of the first map of China made with usage of European cartographic technique “Huang yu quan lantu” (1714).

Qianlong decided to develop this initiative. He was inspired by the works of Georg Philipp Rugendas (1666-1752) from Augsburg – there was a mention of that fact in the P.S. of the letter which was sent to the Jesuits in Europe by Slovak missionary Augustin Hallerstein (Chinese Liu Songling 1703-1774) who was the Head of the Astronomy & Calendar Dept. in the court of Qianlong. The letter is dated by Autumn 1765. Hallerstein wrote: “having finished the war in the Western Region the Emperor ordered to paint 16 big battle scenes and decorated his palace with them. Then he acquired several works of Rugendas from Augsburg devoted to the same topic. He liked them as he just saw them. The Emperor ordered to our men – the Magister Joseph Castiglione (he is from Milano, he is 78 now and he is dwelling 49 out of them in Beijing, but he is still full of abilities and sharpness), the Father Ignacio Sichelbart from Bohemia, the Magister Dionysius Attire from France and the Father Damascenes from Roma (he is the preacher from the Order of St. Augustine) – to prepare the small copies of these paintings”. So the inspiration for the series of the engravings for East Turkestan battles was the personal acquaintance of the Emperor with the engravings of Rugendas.

The best of these copies were produced by Castiglione. Then follow works of Sichelbart and Attire and the works of Damascenes end this queue. The poor quality of Damascenes' works led to the prolongation of the fulfillment of the order in France.

The first lot of 4 sketches was sent to France via the Canton factory of French East-Indian Company – there were # 2 “Defeat of the Gedeng-Ola encampment of Oirats” by Castiglione, # 11 “Battle of Aerchuer” by Attire, # 1 “Yili capitulates” by Sichelbart and # 8 “Great victory of Qurman” by Damascenes. They were accompanied by the rescript of the Emperor, the letter by Castiglione and the message signed on behalf of the French East-Indian Company. The rescript was translated by Caastiglione in Latin and Italian languages and they were followed with the 5000 taels in Spanish coins as the payment in advance. Unfortunately the rescript survived only in French translation and the message survived only in Chinese copy.

The rescript was dated July 13, 1765. The same date is in the letter of Castiglione. Qianlong demanded to choose the best artists and make the work as soon as possible. Then he demanded to produce 100 copies of each print and send them to China with the original copper plates. Castiglione stressed in his letter that all engravings should be done as neat as possible in spite of technique of engraving chosen. He mentioned to repair the original plates before sending them to China to keep the ability to print more copies.

Nobody knew which country would make the engravings so the letter of Castiglione was addressed abstractly to the “President of the Academy of Arts”. It seems that Castiglione hoped to place the order in Italy. But the Jesuit French monk Lefebvre asked the Governor of Canton to send the letters to France.

Chinese sources make us think that France was designated to receive the order from the beginning. It is a letter which is in the First Historical Archive of PRC which states: “Order to Lang Shining to make sketches of 16 paintings of triumphal conquest of Yili and other places and provide them for acquaintance in time stipulated. Then to give

them one by one to the Customs Inspector in Canton to send them to France and find artisans to engrave copper plates in accordance with the sketches. The way to do it should be described by Lang Shining and all his explanations should be attached to the shipment with sketches". The letter is dated back to the end of 1764 – we see that Qianlong decided to place the order in France 8 months before the actual sending of sketches.

French East-Indian Company (FEIC) amended the initial order demanding to print 800 copies (i.e. 200 instead of 100 for each sketch) on the best paper and them back with copper plate on 2 different ships – 2 plates and 400 copies on each (i.e. 100 of each type). It also demanded to return to China all 4 sketches and 4 copies of Qianlong and Castiglione's letters in Latin and Italian languages.

Sketches and letters were sent by the ship "Baiye" and in the beginning of 1766 she left Canton. Cargo reached Paris in the autumn of 1766. French Minister of Internal Affairs Bertin (1719-1792) contacted with FEIC and ordered to Marquis Marigny (1727-1781), the President of the Royal Academy of Arts to supervise the process. Bertin tried to get some trade privileges from Chinese side by this way. Marigny got the Bertin's letter on Dec. 17, 1766 and the sketches in the end of that year. Marigny handed these sketches and prescription to the engraver Charles-Nicholas Cochin (1715-1790) as he had no match in the whole France at the time being.

Cochin chose 4 his best apprentices – Le Bas, Saint-Aubin, Prevot and Aliamet and conducted the general control over the process. The negotiations were successful and they started in Apr. 22, 1767. They planned to finish in Oct. 1768 in general and only the Saint-Aubin who dealt with the sketch by Damascenes (the poorest one) was allowed to finish in Nov. 1768. The rest 12 sketches were successfully delivered in the July 1767 and 4 apprentices added to the team: De Launay, Masquelier, Nee and Choffard. FEIC was very anxious regarding the terms and sent the letter which stressed that fact. But the first 2 plates were ready only by the Dec. 1769 and all others along with copies left Paris only in Dec. 1774.

Having studied the sketches Cochin understood that the order was very difficult. But he failed with terms. There were several reasons for that failure:

- 1) Some sketches had to be restored after the long seaborne journey (Cochin said 5 out of 16 had to be made again)
- 2) Men had to make the plates by combined technique unifying the erosion with acid and engraving with chisel and they had to repeat the chiseling several times making the image better and better. It took a lot of time.
- 3) Men had to work not more than 4-5 hours a day at winter as it was very difficult to work in dark rooms even with candles. And they had to stop the work if the weather was cloudy and foggy.
- 4) They had to import copper from England to make plates 55 x 95 cm. "Prudhomme" company got the order for the big-formatted paper "Grand-Louvois". Expenses were at least 400 livres per 1 copper plate. The printing was performed by Beauvais.

At first Cochin discussed with Marigny the printing of frames with floral pattern separately from the engravings but they did not embody that intention.

In the lower part of the engraved plate after finishing it the name of the author of the sketch and the name of Cochin were engraved along with the date of completion and

the name of the engraver. The name of Cochin and the engravers were compulsory and name of the author of the sketch and the date of completion – not.

Some of copies were later brochure into albums in China and those inscription were hidden as we can see on the album from IVR RAN.

Those engravings were the best deed of Cochin in his life. The catalogue of his works lists 320 entries for 44 years from 1727 till 1770. And these engravings are marked as # 316 under 1770 as “Seize estampes des Chinois” (16 Chinese prints). But the work was really finished only in 1774. The shipment was performed several times as often the whole set of 200 copies was not sent at once. Probably it was caused by the time of ship departures to China – Cochin tried to send copies which were ready at the moment. Chinese archives keep records of receipt – all 16 original sketches. 16 copper plates and 3200 copies were received completely on 20<sup>th</sup> day of 9<sup>th</sup> lunar month of the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of the reign of Qianlong (1777). It cost 204000 livres or 29000 liangs to China.

Then all copies were accomplished with verses written by Qianlong personally and bound to brochures. The Emperor granted those albums to the meritorious Generals and officials. There were 2 variants of the position of verses – 1<sup>st</sup> type with the separate list with verses, the foreword by Qianlong and afterword by Fu Heng (34 sheets totally). This album is in the Eastern Library (Toyo Bunko) in Japan.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> type with verses imprinted upon the sheet with the picture (totaling 18 sheets). The album from IVR RAN and the album from the Library of Manchu Railways in Dalian belong to this type. These albums were followed by the similar albums devoted to the victories in the next companies of Qianlong. In the resent edition of the “Secret materials about the battle scenes from the Western Region” (Qianlong Xiyu Zhantu bi dangcang zu) the mention of the fact that the illustration of the battle used in this edition was the “re-printed copy”.

Separate pictures from this series could be also seen in China e.g. in Gugong. Some pictures without verses could be seen too. Probably the source of origin of these copies is France. All copper plates were delivered to China. The elder brother of Attire asked Marigny to sell him the full set of the engraved pictures but failed. Some copies got to the members of the French Royal family and Bertin, but all of them were spread legally via Royal Academy of Arts or FEIC. But there are also several samples of pre-prints made by pure erosion (as the sets from Louvre).

In Europe these sets were famous but it was very difficult to find them and see. Isidore Stanislas Helman (1743-1806) made the small copies of them (4 times lesser) in 1783-1785. Helman was the apprentice of Le Bas. These small copies were bound into albums with inscriptions in French. The text contained a lot of mistakes as well as the very pictures Ishida Michinosuke studied it in 1919.

Qianlong planned to print additional copies in China. In 1769 Cochin addressed Michel Benoist (Chinese Jiang Youren, 1715-1774) a letter with the appendix to Qianlong. According to the text of the main letter the appendix contained the following information: Cochin said that to print new copies in China would be very difficult and tried to persuade Qianlong to order not 200 pieces of each picture in France but 1000. Qianlong rejected his proposal.

In 1772 the first 7 plates were received in Beijing along with the printed copies. And in the spring of 1773 Qianlong ordered Benoist to start printing the additional copies. We have no data if Benoist went on the printing of additional copies after reception of the rest of the plates and if the works were continued after his death on Nov. 23, 1774. It is a problem whether some prints made in China survived or not. Toriyama Kiichi studied the matter in 1938 but failed to make the matter clear.

We would rather agree with Toriyama that all plates were not really used in China for printing as there are no copies on Chinese paper. But several years ago the State Museum in Kyoto acquired 19 copies of the engravings of the first type. During the restoration it was supposed that these copies were printed on the high-quality paper from Xuancheng (see Nishikami, 2006). If it would be proved we could not deny the fact of the usage of plates for re-printing in China. But the matter should be studied further.

Unfortunately we do not know where the original sketches are kept. We have the information that the sketches existed in coloured version. The picture #4 "The victory in Heluogوسي (Khorgos)" is in the University of Tenri. It is simplified sketch only but it is remarkable due to the small stripes of yellow paper glued to it with Manchu inscriptions indicating the names of Qing warriors. Probably this sketch was not intended to be the sample to make plates and served as an explanatory material.

The copper plates were kept in the Imperial Palace in Beijing but disappeared during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. There are 34 copper plates in the Berlin's Museum für Völkerkunde which depicting the campaigns of Qianlong. The main part from them are of Chinese origin, but there are 3 plates (# 3, 9, 15) from the French set.

Separate copies could be found in the antique market but there are almost no full sets. Full albums are kept of course in the Museums of Beijing and Taipei, in Toyo Bunko and Yurinkan (Japan), in Guimet and Louvre (France). Then before the WWII a set was in Dalian – probably it was handed to the State Museum of Manzhou-Guo or it was further obtained by Imperial University in Taipei (Taiwan). We have no idea where it is now.

The album from IVR RAN belonged to the Far East State University in Vladivostok judging by the seal-print on it. In May 1932 6 albums (including this one) were given to the newly founded Far Eastern Dept. of the Academy of Science of USSR. In 1835 they were transferred to Leningrad by the initiative of the Academic V.M. Alekseev (1881-1951).