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Fine Chinese Ceramics & Works of Art

Sale: L09710 | **Location:** London**Auction Dates:** Session 1: Wed, 13 May 09 10:00 AM[Print Page](#)

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LOT 136

‡ - A RARE IMPERIAL PAINTING OF THE BANNERMAN
ZHA ER SHAN
QING DYNASTY, QIANLONG PERIOD, DATED 1760

40,000—60,000 GBP

[PLACE BID](#)

MEASUREMENTS

measurements note

145 by 71cm., 57 by 28 in.

DESCRIPTION

ink and colour on silk, mounted as a hanging scroll, portraying the officer of the Imperial Guard, his distinguished face with quizzical 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*, wearing a blue surcoat over beige leggings and shod with a pair of black silk boots, holding a sword and shagreen covered scabbard in his left and right hands, eulogized with several lines of text written at the top on the right side in Chinese in *kaishu* (standard script) and in Manchu on the left, with one seal of the Qianlong Emperor, *Qian Long Yu Lan Zhi Bao*

PROVENANCE

Acquired from Vallin Galleries, Connecticut (in the 1970s).

CATALOGUE NOTE

The eulogy describes meritorious officer, Zha Er Shan, Supervisor-in-Chief of Yuansulun, as a courageous and confident warrior whose achievements on the battlefield are laudable. On horseback he speeds across the 'Black Water', facing many on his own with his spear killing mercilessly and fighting with all his might to the end.

Bannerman Zha Er Shan distinguished himself in the Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang 1755-59) campaign, one of the major victorious campaigns of the Qianlong Emperor to control the Dzungar state and to secure the boundaries of Chinese Turkestan. This campaign helped eliminate Dzungar rivalry for control over the Dalai Lamas in Tibet and led to the pacification of the Islamicized, Turkic-speaking southern half of Xinjiang, thereby securing Qing imperial control over the vast region of Inner-Asia.

The present portrait is number 24 from Group II of the Eastern Turkistan, 2nd Series, painted in 1760.

The eulogies of the 2nd series of portraits were composed and written by eminent officials Liu Tongxun, Liu Lun and Yu Minzhong. Imperial bannermen 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.

The painting shows Zha Er Shan in his prime wearing a typical navy surcoat and a single-eyed peacock feather hanging 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. His vivid and energetic facial expression depicted in a three-quarter view, the added eulogy on a separate piece of yellow silk called *shitang* (poem hall) are characteristic of this type of traditional Chinese portrait painting. The thick ink brushstrokes outlining the body and the strong watercolours are typical of 18th century imperial academy workshop painting style. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that a close look at the face reveals the influence of Western painting techniques introduced by Jesuit missionary artists at the Qing court. The modelling of the face is intense and naturalistic, especially the eyes that are painted with white specs. For further information on bannermen 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. 112-113.

Other paintings from the 2nd series have been sold through auction; such as the painting of the Bannerman Yisamu attributed to Ai Qimeng and Jin Tingbiao, sold in our Hong Kong rooms, 9th October 2007, lot 1314, together with the portrait of Bannerman Tanibu, lot 1315 and Bannerman Dalhan, lot 1316. The painting of Dalhan is recorded as portrait number 43 in the 2nd series of the meritorious officers who helped pacify the Muslims in the Ili region that was part of the East Turkestan campaign between 1755-1759.

The portrait of Hu Er Cha Ba, of the first rank, was sold in our New York rooms, 3rd June 1986, lot 90; the portrait of the General Fu Heng, was also sold in our New York rooms, 23-25th April 1987, lot 56; and a set of ten paintings from a handscroll of fifty paintings of bannermen by Jin Tingbao, also commissioned by the Qianlong emperor in 1760, was sold in our New York rooms, 31st March – 1st April, 2005, lot 280. A group of bust size oil paintings can be found in the Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen in Berlin, illustrated in Herbert Butz et al., *Bilder für die 'Halle de Purpurglanzes'*, Berlin, 2003, pl. 12-17.