



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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CHINESE EXPORT PAINTING IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF RUSSIA

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: HUMANITIES
WP BRP 112/HUM/2015

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Throughout history Chinese artistic culture has developed a fairly complex system of diverse art forms and styles. Chinese export art, being created particularly to satiate constantly growing appetite of the Western world for Chinese goods, holds a specific place among them. In spite of being considered as insignificant in terms of artistic merits, nevertheless, Chinese export painting succeeded to cover a modest segment in the European market in the XVIII – XIX centuries. Unlike most other types of Chinese decorative and applied arts, Chinese export painting until recently has never been taken as a subject of scientific research. The collection of the National Library of Russia possesses a number of Chinese painting albums. Comprehensive study of these art works might bridge lacunas for research of other multitudinous kinds of Chinese export arts and crafts of the XVIII-XIX centuries.

JEL Classification: Z19.

Key words: Chinese export painting, 19th century China, collection of the National Library of Russia, Canton, watercolors on pith, Tetrapanax papirifer, wove paper, laid paper, Whatman.

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² This article is an output of the research project "Minority" vs "Majority" in the Historical and Cultural Continuum of Asia and Africa, implemented as part of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE).

Introduction

Art is a central link in the chain of social culture. In history of any artistic culture there are several basic subjects which form its foundation. However, quite often minor phenomena in culture are of equal significance. A concept of ‘Minority vs. Majority’ [CMvsM] includes an aspect of art studies that directly refers to classification of art works. The concept [CMvsM] becomes particularly essential in the study of small fine art forms evolution, which attained considerable development in the cultures of multiple Asian and African states. Moreover, trends and genres of small forms of sculptural, pictorial and graphic arts affect almost all domains of human life. They become reflections of specific features common to an extensive group of art works belonging to a particular era, nation, or social group. The analysis of various art forms and styles performance in the context of artistic culture within the framework of the concept [CMvsM] contributes to identification of both internal regular patterns, as well as external determinants of its development.

Throughout history Chinese artistic culture has elaborated a fairly complex system of diverse art forms and styles. Chinese export art, being created particularly to satiate constantly growing appetite of the Western world for Chinese goods, holds a specific place among them. Consideration of Chinese export art as a ‘minority’, in relation to historically fostered traditional forms of Chinese pictorial art, in the framework of the concept [CMvsM] determines the focus of the present article. It should be noted, despite being regarded as insignificant in terms of artistic merits Chinese export painting, nonetheless, managed to cover a modest segment in the European market in the XVIII – XIX centuries. Unlike most other types of Chinese decorative and applied arts, Chinese export painting until recently has never been taken as a subject of scientific research. Moreover, it is essential, that the total number of works which are kept in funds of museums and libraries in Russia, Europe and the USA, that could be referred to Chinese export art, is still unknown (Tseshinskaya 2007: 211–40).

In China ample genres and styles of drawings, compiled in albums or made on single pieces of paper for marketing use, managed to win public’s affection. However, they have always been considered marginal in relation to traditional pictorial arts (Vinogradova 2004: 207). This happened due to the fact, that in the Qing period these albums were produced mostly with a particular cognitive objective. For instance, ‘albums of the ethnic group Miao’ dated the first third of the XVIII century, which included images of the Miao, the Hmong and other ethnic minorities inhabiting the south-eastern part of China (modern province of Guizhou), were designed for imperial officials. Other albums that can serve as example are: ‘The Qing imperial paintings representing the peoples-tributaries’ of 1751, pictures of folklife (民俗画 *minsu hua*)

and other illustrated catalogues with ethnographic subject matter. In a blink of an eye they gained popularity among various social groups inside of the country and, what is more important, they were taken for mass production specifically for the Western market (Vinogradova 2013: 33; Popova 2009: 6–11). The overarching ideology of Chinese art rooted in great antiquity was maintained by all social classes; however, it almost did not affect such dynamically replicated form of pictorial art in the XVIII–XIX centuries, which had as its main function representation of everyday life scenes of Chinese people. This particular kind of knowledge tremendously attracted the Europeans. From aesthetic point of view, according to the Chinese tradition, export pictorial art could be positioned in a rank of ‘minority’, because in the XIX century the artistic manner of albums’ creators was considerably westernized. The anonymity of the authors indicates low rate of artworks artistic value, whether they were full-featured albums or separate watercolor paintings performed on European paper, or miniatures on pith. Unfortunately, the authorship is very difficult to discover, however, today we know few names of artists such as Lamqua, Tingqua, Sunqua, Youqua, who set up their workshops in Canton, where the ‘paintings for strangers’ were manufactured (Clunas 1984: 81–83). Besides that, both European and Chinese scholars until the beginning of the XXI century had never perceived Chinese export painting, particularly watercolor miniatures on pith paper, as works of art. That is why there are no comprehensive academic studies on the subject (Chen 2001:10-11; 44). That adds complexity to the problem of attribution and overall research of Chinese export painting for modern art historians. According to this, the goal of the current research was set: the study of the watercolors collection in funds of the National Library of Russia (the NLR). The research process was aimed at solving the following set of tasks:

- determine the main plots and motifs of the artworks included in the collection of the NLR;
- compare the collection of the NLR with western collections of Chinese export painting;
- introduce unrenowned works of Chinese masters from the collection of the NLR for scientific use;
- determine the place of the NLR collection in the ranks of similar collections worldwide.

In the last twenty years a significant number of Chinese export albums was published. Specifically that concerns the miniatures on ‘rice’ or ‘edible’ paper, which, as a matter of fact, were executed on pith paper. However, as it was previously mentioned, a shortage in comprehensive works on the subject is still in evidence. One of the most notable works on different aspects of Chinese export painting written in the Russian language was done by E. A. Tseshinskaya. A remarkable insight on the historiography of the problem is presented in her paper: ‘Chinese export miniatures (*tongcao zhi*) from the collection of the Rybinsk museum-preserve’ (Tseshinskaya 2007: 211–40). In the last decade a number of researches on historical

aspects of Chinese export watercolors were conducted. These include the articles of O. V. Vasil'eva, T. I. Vinogradova, I. F. Popova, P. V. Rud', etc. The issues of Chinese export art, in general, are disclosed in the exhibition catalogue 'Chinese Export Art in the Hermitage Museum. Late XVI–XIX centuries' in the articles of N. G. Pchelin, M. L. Men'shikova and T. B. Arapova. Among modern western works the articles of Barry Till and Paula Swart, Frederik H. Green and Francisco de Santos Moro should be mentioned. In the context of the current study it is necessary to point out works of Cécile and Michel Beurdeley, M. Pirazzoli-T'Serstevens and L. I. Kuz'menko as well. Their researches focused on work of Italian Jesuit artist Giuseppe Castiglione. The authors speculate on the issue of European style establishment in Chinese pictorial art during the reign of the Qianlong Emperor in the XVIII century.

Albums of Chinese export painting in the collection of the National Library of Russia

The Manuscripts Department of the NLR possesses 300 Chinese, 70 Manchu, 60 Japanese, 160 Tibetan, 39 Mongolian and 14 Kalmyk written artifacts and pictures. As to the collection of Chinese export painting, currently, it is divided into two parts and, therefore, stored in two departments of the library: the Manuscripts Department and the Prints Department. The full inventory list of illustrated materials was completed in 1993 by K. S. Yakhontov (Yakhontov 1993: 185–204). The pictorial artifacts are being kept in three funds. The first fund 1272 presents the whole set of watercolors amassed by the renowned Russian sinologist Zakhar Fedorovich Leont'evkiĭ (1799–1874), which was acquired by the library in 1868. It includes separate pictures executed by Western and Chinese artists (the Manuscripts Department, fund 1272, № 1–84). The drawings were classified according to particular subject matters and allocated throughout several folders. The second fund bears the name of the orientalist, historian, librarian and head of the Oriental Department of the NLR (since 1850), academician Boris Andreevich (Berngard) Dorn (1805–1881). The fund contains several albums and scrapbooks with pictures. The third fund – 'The Chinese new series' (code: Kit.n.s.) is a collection generally comprised of single-sheet illustrated material painted by Chinese and Western artists. A special attention should be drawn to a collection of woodblock prints and a set of three albums stored in the Prints Department, which were transferred there in the second half of the XX century. Thus, the completed albums of Chinese export art are located in the fund of Dorn, 'The Chinese new series' and in the Prints Department of the NLR.

A matter of significance that should be emphasized is the range of surfaces used for creation of artworks comprising the Chinese export painting collection in the funds of the NLR. The

artists utilized such materials as Chinese and European paper, silk, and, exceedingly popular among Chinese masters of the XIX century, a sort of paper produced from a saw cut of *Tetrapanax Papyrefera*, known in the Western world as pith paper and in China as *tongcao zhi* (通草纸). A substantial part of the NLR's collection is manufactured using pith paper. There is no an irrefragable answer to explain reasons for such media diversity, however, to some extent it complicates the process of complete paintings attribution. Further work would demand the authorship attribution, sources of production and circumstances, under which the pictures and albums became the part of the library's funds. However, before proceeding to overall description of the collection, a specific notice should be brought to the materials used for the works production.

In the beginning of the XIX century, Europe was amused by extraordinary vividness and colorful imagery of Chinese watercolor paintings, executed on thin, smooth, translucent and velvety paper. Structurally it drastically contrasted with those two types of handmade paper that prevailed in Europe at the time – wove paper and laid paper.

Laid paper is also known in Europe as paper vergé, which means striped in French. Laid paper, when viewed by transmitted light, shows thin and thick lines (Fr. *vergeure* and *pontuseaux* respectively) at right angles to each other, owing to the layout of wires in the handmould. The thin wires are laid lines and the thicker wires are the chain lines (Kaye 2015). Initially, linen and hemp pulp, used in manufacturing, caused exceptional durability of paper, which affected the demand for it for over half a millennium. Its reign lasted until 1756, when, in Great Britain, the elder James Whatman revolutionized the paper-making industry. He invented, what is today known as wove paper (known in other parts of Europe as *Vélin*). Originally, it was woven on a textile loom, thus the name 'wove paper', moreover, when viewed by transmitted light it represents a cloth-like appearance. In twenty-five years the production of wove paper spread quickly to other paper mills in Great Britain, and was also being developed in France and America. Despite the popularity of wove paper, laid paper did not disappear, however, the fields of its application reduced significantly. Yet still in 1820s laid paper was manufactured under Whatman's trademark (Balston 1992).

Along with that, the glossy luminous material that arrived from distant mysterious China became a curios novelty for the sophisticated European society. Small in size, typically measuring about 20 by 30 cm, bright and colorful images of flowers, animals, birds, daily life scenes at once became best-selling souvenir among the Europeans. They were commonly presented under the lids of glass boxes or in albums upholstered with silk. Particularly for every single picture a foundation made of thick paper or silk was prepared, after being mounted on it, the picture was framed usually with blue silk ribbon or paper tape of average width of 1.5 cm.

Shortly after their emergence on the European continent, these paintings started to be recognized as ‘rice-paper watercolors’, but it was a misnomer (Green 2014: 2–5).

Smooth and glossy texture of this paper differs drastically from that slightly ribbed, rough surface of rice-paper. Moreover, it was missing a number of properties that made rice-paper so beloved and, thus, widespread among Chinese elite artists. Its surface could not absorb liquids instantly and well enough to be applied for the traditional rice-paper technique of ink washing. Neither this sort of paper was suitable for the classical European art of watercolors. The sheet surface structurally resembled a honeycomb. Paint applied in thick layers filled the hollows of the cells, it was not absorbed completely, even more, it did not spread around the surface causing some amount of paint being left on top, thereby creating a three-dimensional effect of the image. Scrupulous study of the sheet structure had shown that it is missing fibers, which are common for any other type of paper. This fact brought scientists and restorers to a conclusion: this material was not, what was called paper, in the conventional sense. Thus began the search for the source of the material, which initially was mistakenly accepted in Europe as rice-paper (Tseshinskaya 2007: 211–40).

The answer was not found until 1852, when the first Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, Sir William Jackson Hooker, was able to describe the origin of the material – an evergreen shrub, native to the marshlands of southern China and Formosa (modern Taiwan). Hooker named the rice-paper plant as *Aralia Papyrifera*. Despite this, already in 1859, the German botanist-dendrologist Karl Heinrich Emil Koch explored, that this type of plant was unique, so he separated it into a monotypic genus, though the species were within *Araliaceae* family. Thus, in the science of botany the plant attained its new and constant name – *Tetrapanax papyrifer* (Nesbit 2010: 71–79).

Nevertheless, in China and Taiwan the plant was known under the name of *tongcao* (通草). Prior to its appearance in the West, pith paper had also been used for manufacturing of toys, artificial flowers, butterflies and, when reduced to powder, was sold as Chinese medicine (Green 2014: 13). Expansion of trade and cultural exchange between China and Western countries had found a new application to the material. At once it boosted into a prosperous industry of pith paintings production.

In 1757, under an imperial decree Canton (modern Guangzhou) was declared to be the only port officially opened for foreign trade. The British, Americans, French and other European countries established their legations and trading headquarters there. Merchants, craftsmen, artists from all over China flocked to Canton eager to do business with the overseas partners. The city gradually turned into a major cosmopolitan location of the time. Wishing to bring back home from their journeys small not expensive souvenirs, mementoes that depicted scenery and customs

of mysterious and exotic country, the Western travelers turned their eye on vivid watercolors painted on pith paper. Cost-effective in production the material soon enough enjoyed greatest popularity among artists. Nonetheless, masters also could deal with European sorts of paper, predominantly manufactured under the trademark of Whatman. However, since being imported it was less circulated and more expensive than local pith paper. After signing the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, which brought to an end the first Opium War, other Chinese ports were forced to open for foreign trade. That accelerated expansion of the export paintings industry. Workshops, where the paintings on pith were produced, sprang up in other cities, chiefly in port cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai (Till 2015:111–2). Being economically-friendly in manufacture, with attractive appearance, the new sort of paper instantly won popular affections among the Chinese people themselves, and soon pith paper watercolors spread throughout the New and Old World.

This brings us back to the collection of export painting in the funds of the NLR. The study revealed that a significant portion of the collection was not executed on traditional Chinese paper, tracing paper or pile paper, as it was stated in a systematic catalogue ‘Chinese Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Public Library’ (Yakhontov 1993: 185–204), but on sheets of pith paper.

These include three albums that are currently stored at the Manuscripts Department. One of them is titled ‘Collection de costumes d’artisans chinois de toutes professions soit ambulantes soit en boutiques’ (code: Dorn 798). The first page bears an inscription of a date 1 April 1828, made by a hand of the linguist and orientalist Julius Heinrich Klaproth. The binding is carried out in the European style with hard cover of dark-blue color; there is a small gold lettering on a spine ‘Rel. chez ed. Vivet’. The front flyleaf has an ex libris with the text: ‘Librairie Orientale de Dondey-Dupré Père et Fils, Paris’³. The album of a size 33.5 X 43 X 3 cm comprises 85 sheets of thick paper, which were utilized as base sheets for 84 pith paintings measuring, in average, 26.5 cm by 36 cm. The drawings mainly portray Chinese commoners such as peddlers, craftsmen, street performers, etc. Each drawing carries an explanatory comment in French naming the profession. According to its grey color, it can be assumed, that comments were inscribed with pencil or silver stencil. As it was previously mentioned, similar pictures were not rare, as the subject matter was of great interest for foreign visitors, so these drawings were put in mass production. There are grounds to suppose, that the pictures were painted in a Chinese workshop in Canton, because most of them bear strong resemblance in postures of figures, as well as in motifs of images with those drawings, that were printed in the book by George Henry Mason

³ An issue of the album’s origin and its emergence in the NLR is the subject of an independent research; therefore it will be omitted in the current study.

‘The Costume of China, Illustrated by Sixty Engravings: with Explanations in English and French’, which was published in London in 1800. The matter of significance is that, under every single picture there is an inscription with the name of the artist and place of production ‘Pu-Qua, Canton, Delin’.

The next album (Dorn 799) entered the library’s funds in 1817 as a gift of the Empress Elizabeth Alexeievna (Report of the Imperial Public Library 1817: 77). The album was presented to the Empress by the notable explorer lieutenant commander Yu. F. Lisianskiĭ (1784–1837). Yu. F. Lisianskiĭ and his crew of the sloop ‘Neva’ together with the sloop ‘Nadezhda’ under command of I. F. Kruzenstern (1770–1846) took part in a voyage, which lately was named as the first Russian circumnavigation of the Earth. It started in Kronstadt in August 1803 and lasted till August 1806. The first circumnavigation was funded by the Russian-American Company. In September 1805 ‘Neva’ left the shores of Russian America and on 3 December entered the harbor of Macao, where a week earlier ‘Nadezhda’ dropped anchor. Since it was the first appearance of Russian ships in Chinese waters, the local population behaved cautiously in relation to Russian sailors. On 4 December 1805 ‘Neva’ arrived to merchant harbor of Whampoa (黄埔⁴), the intermediate station between Macao and Canton. ‘Nadezhda’, however, was banned to enter, because Kruzenstern accidentally mentioned in the conversation with officials that the ship under his command was military. Thus Lisianskiĭ alone conducted trade and ship repairs. Chinese goods, mainly, were embarked on the ship ‘Neva’ (Firsov 2002: 243). During his stay in Canton Lisianskiĭ visited the merchant Pankikva, where he celebrated the holiday of New Year. These events he described in his memoirs. In February 1806 ‘Neva’ and ‘Nadezhda’ departed from the Chinese coast, and then the ships took different routes. ‘Neva’ headed to Portsmouth and reached it in 140 days, on 28 June 1806, without calling at ports, after that, ‘Neva’ returned to Kronstadt on 2 August 1806 (Ibid. 246–52). The fact that I. F. Krusenstern and Yu. F. Lisianskiĭ entered significant ports of southern China was of grand importance, because that helped to broaden knowledge of the two countries about each other. The reports, logs, albums, souvenirs and stories of the first circumnavigators let the Russian society get acquainted with the unknown up to that moment part of China (Samoïlov 2013: 38–39). According to what has been mentioned previously, there is high possibility that the album, which later on was presented to the Empress as a gift, was purchased by Yu. F. Lisianskiĭ in Canton.

The album, measuring 36 X 42 X 2 cm, has no title. It is covered with dark-green silk decorated with the ornament of yellow right hexagons encircling yellow swastikas. There are red short ribbons attached to the three edges to keep the album tightly closed. It contains 46 sheets

⁴ 黄埔 in modern Chinese is read as *Huangpu* in accordance with the adopted in the People’s Republic of China pinyin system.

inside; however, there are only 39 drawings of diverse subject matters such as Chinese crafts, vessels, as well as images of local flora and fauna. The first nine pictures which can be gathered in one group titled as 'Crafts' are executed on sheets of thick paper. For the rest of the drawings pith paper with average size of 32.8 cm by 40.5 cm was used. Every image in a lower right corner has a caption written in Traditional Chinese characters. It should be noted, that in accordance with the Chinese writing tradition, the captions should be read starting from the right side and moving to the left side. Currently, seven images are missing (two of vessels; five of plants). As it happened with the previous album, the study of pictures' motifs again showed resemblance to those images from the book of George Henry Mason (e.g. ill. 'A woman making stockings', 'A money changer', etc.) (Mason 1800). However, the postures of the figures are also very similar to those drawn in a black and white sketchbook titled '市景三十六行' (36 City Professions) with a red stamp of Youqua's workshop on a front flyleaf in the upper left corner (e.g. ill. № 3 'Fishmonger'). Unfortunately, the sketchbook has no evidence of the production date; nonetheless, the images' similarity leads to an assumption that the album was manufactured in the first decade of the XIX century. It might be suggested as well, that the NLR album's pictures could have been made in different workshops. However, the main purpose of such thematic variety is doubtless – a complier was eager to demonstrate exotic life of China, as well as its flora and fauna.

There is a small scrapbook (code: Dorn 800), which has seven sheets equaling 16.5 X 21.5 cm with colorful hardcover. Pages contain small watercolor drawings on pith paper, with each depicting Chinese men and women in traditional costumes. On the front flyleaf of the scrapbook there is a scratched inscription: 'Compliments of Baron Heyking, brought from China during his trip to America. 28 July 1839' (Vasil'eva 2010: 18).

Another group of three albums with watercolors on pith is kept in the Prints Department of the NLR. One of them, of a size 34 X 23.3 X 0.8 cm (code: Э АлТх 784/2-7 ОХ, inventory number: Эи 33857) comprises 12 pictures of Chinese vessels (junks). The cover is bound in white silk. The first page has a pencil inscription in Russian in the center: 'Beijing, 189_ – 190_'. The drawings measuring 28.5 cm by 18 cm are mounted on base sheets of the same size and framed with a one-centimeter-wide blue silk ribbon. Moving forward a little, the binding of the other two albums are executed in a similar manner. The fact that several sheets of pith paper have insignificant defects, mainly cracks along the sheets' edges cannot be neglected. Restorers pointed out that over time cracks appear at the mounting spots, since silk, paper and pith paper

react differently to changes in temperature and humidity⁵. Despite these damages, the preservation can be considered to be in a good state. In terms of artistic value, the illustrations appearing in the album are repeated in a fair amount of collections, some of them could be found in the Internet. The differences between works of various collections are small and consist in the nuances of color palette and ability of an artist to draw in details. To take as an example an image of a bird on a junk's aft, displayed on one of the drawings in the album, which is stored at the Prints Department. From similar images it is distinct in the wrong representation of the right wing, choice of colors both of the bird and its background.

In the next album (code: ЭАЛИ34.354/2-1 ОХ, inventory number: Эи 11268), covered with red velvet, measuring 34 X 23.5 X 2 cm, a collection of 13 pictures is assembled. Out of all albums this one suffered the greatest damage. On many drawings cracks are clearly visible; in some places on pith paper dark stains had emerged.

The first 12 watercolors belong to the same thematic line. They represent noble Chinese women playing various musical instruments. Most of the scenes show the Chinese ladies sitting in a simple interior. Bright decorated floor in the pictures is executed in reverse perspective; however, the furniture is displayed in a linear perspective. The interior details repeat as pictures change: tables with vases of various shapes with different flowers in them, wooden shelves, sofas and stools. In each picture a young maid is bringing some objects such as a fan, a silver salver with tea on it, a pipe to her lady or just waits for lady's orders. None of the pictures repeat in colors, they differ in ornaments of a decorated floor and in garments of noble ladies. It stands to mention that the images of Chinese beauties playing various musical instruments are analogous to the drawing of a noble woman playing flute from the Suro Orientalia Collection stored at California State Library (Green 2014: 9).

The last page of the album could be referred to one of the most interesting works in the collection of the NLR. An official ceremony is displayed, where a Manchu Emperor and Empress are listening to a report (**Fig. 1**). Unfortunately, exactly this image has suffered the most damages: the sheet itself has deformed, what led to numerous cracks, which, consequently, resulted in losses of several elements. Despite these defects, the value of the drawing cannot be overestimated, since it is the only one of the type in the collection of the NLR. Its composition consists of two plans. In the foreground the attendants and musicians stand from the left and right sides of the Emperor and Empress. Between them there is a kneeling official shown in front

⁵ About the restorers' work with pith paintings from the collection of the Astrakhan art gallery and of the State museum of fine arts of the Republic of Tatarstan refer to the pages: <https://www.facebook.com/388038611282533/photos/pcb.751595074926883/751594928260231/?type=1&theater>; and Реставрационный центр имени Габаря. (Grabar's restoration center) accessed 20 August 2015.

of the ruling couple. In the background, towering over the audience, the seated on a throne Emperor and Empress are represented. An artist depicted them with their bodies turned in three quarters to each other. He tried to display their mute dialogue by making them look into each other's eyes. No less interesting is the gesture of the Emperor, who with his right hand is stroking his beard. It is worth noting that the right-hand side of the drawing looks like as if it was a copy of a composition depicted in a painting 'Detail of woman and runners at official ceremony' from the Sutro Orientalia Collection of California State Library. Similar situation can be observed with the kneeling official who closely resembles the kneeling Mandarin in the picture 'Detail of Mandarin and helpers during ritual ceremony' that comes from the same collection (Green 2014: 8; 10). The differences can be detected in details of men and women's garments as well as in the images of interior. Craig Clunas presented in his book 'Chinese Export Watercolors' a copy of a picture 'Wedding' from the collection of Victoria and Albert Museum (Far Eastern Series), which, although, does not have as elaborated décor as demonstrated in the drawing 'Manchu Emperor and Empress listening to a report', but the aged couple and officials, standing at the left and right sides of them, closely resemble those, painted in the 'Manchu Emperor and Empress listening to a report' (Clunas 1984: 69).



Fig.1 Manchu Emperor and Empress are listening to a report.

The third album from the Prints Department (code: Э АлИск459/2-1 ОХ, inventory number: Эи 5167) comprises a series of 12 watercolors, each measuring 31.5 cm by 17.5 cm, which is named in a systematic catalogue as 'The process of tea production and consignment'. It entered the NLR in 1940, as evidenced by a stamp indicating an Act of reception (D. Act № C177/7) at

the end of the album. It is worthwhile to say that the pictures are organized in the reverse sequence, so the first stage of tea production is represented on the last page. The album's binding is made of red silk with traditional Chinese cloud ornament, its size equals to 36.5 X 25 X 1 cm, pictures with no visible damage.

One of the most popular plots, adapted in Chinese export painting, was illustration of a manufacturing process of traditional Chinese product (e.g. tea, silk, china, etc.). Therefore, compositions and figures of such drawings sets are of great similarity. If not pay attention to albums' titles and inscriptions incorporated in the images (signboards, characters on boxes, etc.), it is easy to confuse tea plucking with collection of mulberry leaves.

The next album, which is kept in the fund of 'Chinese new series' (code: Kit.n.s.156), was enrolled on the list of the NLR in 1946 from the Imperial German embassy in Canton, and in 1947 it was handed over to the Manuscripts Department. It comprises a set of 15 pictures which gradually demonstrate the process of sugar production from sugar cane. The binding is executed in traditional Chinese style, however, instead of silk, which was commonly applied for this purpose, thick purple paper was used. Cover and sheets are stitched with red silk thread. The size of the album is 34.5 X 20.5 X 0.8 cm. In total, the album contains 15 thick sheets, each one on the back side holds a stamp of the Imperial German embassy in Canton. The album is paginated, numeration starts from 276. A remarkable feature of the album lies in the choice of paper utilized for the drawings. In this case, traditional Chinese yellowish rice paper was used. It was easy to determine it due to distinctive roughness and ribbed texture, as well as owing to thinness and flexibility of sheets. Every album sheet acts as a base, to which a sheet of rice paper with a picture of the following stage of sugar production is attached. It might be assumed, that the album from Canton, or, if to be more specific, a part of it, which is currently kept in the NLR, was created in the end of the XIX century; to date it more precisely 1860–1899⁶. Presently, the circumstances under which this and the French album, mentioned above, entered the collection are being defined.

Single sheets of Chinese export painting in the collection of the National Library of Russia

Among the materials kept in the NLR, that refer to Chinese export art, a collection of Zakhar Fedorovich Leont'evskiĭ (fund 1272) draws close attention. The history of the fund is known well enough; numerous times it was covered in works of Russian researchers (Report of the

⁶ To be more accurate, before escalation of military conflict and the murder of the German ambassador in China, Baron Ketteler in Beijing on 27 June 1900.

Imperial Public Library 1896: 196; Shubina 2001: 99–113). It is worth to remind, that in a period between 1822 and 1831 Z. F. Leont'evskiĭ was engaged in work of the 10th Russian Orthodox Mission in Beijing. Being a talented translator, he did not just translate from Chinese; he also was an expert in Chinese literature, so that is why he was asked to make a selection of literature for the collection of P. L. Shilling. He also was assembling a Chinese painting collection, and from time to time took a brush in his hand to draw some paintings and sketches himself. When he returned to Russia in 1831, the missionary brought myriads of curiosities, so, fairly soon, he opened a Cabinet of Chinese curiosities in Saint-Petersburg, which became the first private museum of Chinese culture and everyday life. It lasted until 1868 (Shubina 2001: 105–6). Before he moved to Yaroslavl', Z. F. Leont'evskiĭ sold a part of his paintings collection to the Imperial Public Library, making a list of contents in his own hand. According to the list, the whole collection is divided into several thematic groups: monuments, portraits, military scenes and views. The works were created by Chinese, European and Russian artists. Being a significant part of Chinese art segment in the funds of the NLR, nonetheless, these paintings go beyond the subject of the current article, that is why their description will be omitted, as well as the description of the scrolls with Chinese calligraphy samples. For example, in the section 'Monuments' (code: fund 1272, № 3) with the images of 'Tombstones of different social classes' a hand of a European master is recognizable. A woodblock tempera painting (code: fund 1272, № 2) granted from a Chinese prince to a doctor O. P. Voitsekhovskii on 14 November 1829 for 'miraculous treatment, worth to be put in line with (treatments) of Chang Sang (長桑妙術)' by its name cannot be considered as Chinese export art. The section 'Portraits' includes the images of Chinese Empress, khutukhtu Minzhu, the former Chinese minister Xi En and self-portrait of Z. F. Leont'evskiĭ (code: fund 1272, № 5–8). Three portraits of Chinese people also cannot be referred to Chinese export art (Shubina 2001: 106).

A matter of significance is that in a considerable part of the Leont'evskiĭ's collection, as it is observed in the group of works (№ 13–15, 21– 63 and 71(p. 2–5) –73, 74 (p.2) –77), the sheets of rice paper were mounted on the sheets of thicker pile paper. This work was done in such a thorough and accurate manner, that, despite magnificent size of the sheets (the largest one is 80 X 48 cm), it is barely noticeable. Only on closer examination in places where edges of sheets are slightly bent or erased attachment of two sheets to each other could be seen. This part of the collection, being referred to Chinese export painting, is of a particular interest within the framework of the current research.

A remarkable painting № 13 'Storming a fortress in front of a commander. The Manchu troops review. (Maneuvers of the eight-standard troops at foot of the Fragrant Hills in 30 li from Beijing. September 1827.)' was created by a master Bai Ruose (白若瑟) (**Fig. 2**). The materials

used for it are ink, tempera and whitewash. Characters and numbers in the picture indicate places and operating units. There is high probability, that the painting was drawn in Beijing and bought by Leont'evskii there. The segment of military scenes also include the following paintings: 'The Battle of Manchu troops with the Turkestans', 'The Manchu troops review' and 'The Manchu men-at-arms review' (code: fund 1272, № 11, 14–15). There is a stamp of Kyakhta's customs with an inscription 'Kyakhta. TA. PRI TO 1831' on the back side of № 11, which appeared, when the representatives of the 10th Russian Orthodox Mission crossed borders on their way back to Russia.

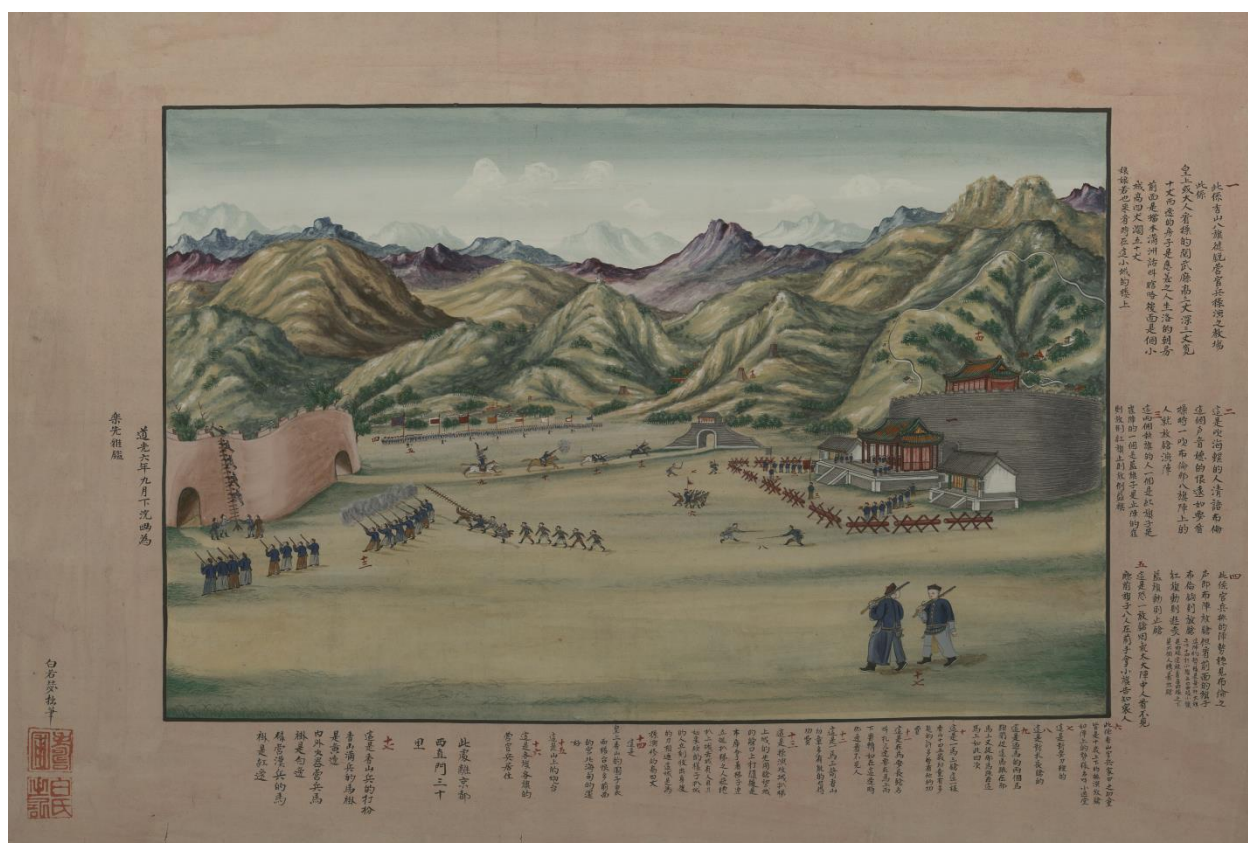


Fig. 2. Master Bai Ruose (白若瑟). Storming a fortress in front of a commander. The Manchu troops review. (Maneuvers of the eight-standard troops at foot of the Fragrant Hills in 30 li from Beijing. September 1827.).

The section 'Views' comprises scenes which, according to the catalogue (Yakhontov 1993:190–93), depict the Old Summer Palace known in Chinese as Yuanming yuan (圆明园) (code: fund 1272, № 20–22), the gates of the Beijing palace, the city gates, various monasteries and other places of the Chinese capital (code: fund 1272, № 27–45). № 21 under the title 'The Scene of the Beijing Suburban Palace Yuanming yuan Cindered by the British and French. Kunming Lake' (Yakhontov 1993:190) (**Fig. 3**) deserves a particular attention. It should be pointed out, that due to the searching scrutiny of the materials the attribution error was detected.

The picture caption denotes a certain place – Kunmin Lake (昆明湖). It is a well-known man-made lake located on the grounds of the Summer Palace in Beijing known as Yihe yuan (颐和园 ‘Garden of Harmonious Peace’). Its creation was commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor (the work being carried out between 1750 and 1764). Scenery presented in the painting is easily recognizable, since the depicted bridge still exists within the perimeter of the Summer Palace. Owing to the lettering made by the hand of the Chinese artist in the image, with complete certainty it can be said, that the painting represents one of the six most famous bridges of the Summer Palace – Wavy Tapestry Bridge (绣漪桥), which was built during the first stage of the garden complex construction.



Fig.3. Kunmin Lake. Summer Palace in Beijing known as Yihe yuan (颐和园 ‘Garden of Harmonious Peace’).

It was an important water and land passage between the East Causeway and West Causeway, the Long River and Kunming Lake. Known as the first bridge of Kunming Lake, the Wavy Tapestry Bridge was modeled as the stone bridge with a single opening in the water country of the south (Coming to the Summer Palace 2009: 266–67). The bridge spans in the east-west direction of Kunming Lake’s outlet where the water flows into the Long River. Several

architecture objects are recognized in the painting, such as the Seventeen-Arch Bridge at the left-hand side of the image, as well as the Government-Mirroring Pavilion, which was destroyed in 1887.

The fund of Z. F. Leont'evskii also possesses views of other cities such as Nanjing and Suzhou (code: fund 1272, № 45–49), ceremonies of Chinese weddings and funerals (code: fund 1272, № 23–26), one painting demonstrates a traditional Chinese play performed on a highly decorated stage (code: fund 1272, № 53). Stylistically the paintings are slightly westernized, that was common for Chinese workshops in the XIX century. Apparently, Z. F. Leont'evskii did not pay much attention to the multitude of genres while gathering them in one section. Therefore the scenic paintings come along with the genre paintings and portraits of people, belonging to various ethnic groups (e.g. 'Japanese man and woman' code: fund 1272, № 55), as well as the drawings of birds.

Within the framework of this study a small group of pictures, executed on paper measuring 19 X 23 cm, that demonstrates birds of China and instruments of labor draws special attention. (code: fund 1272, № 67, 71 (p.1), 74 (p.1), 78–82). A specific feature of this group is thick, white laid paper. When a sheet is viewed by transmitted light, watermarks are clearly visible in its center and at the margins. These watermarks are typical for the paper manufactured under the trademark of Whatman. In a lower part of a sheet a production date '1819' is indicated. The sheets size is also remarkable, since it does not match a typical sheet format. That can be easily explained by the fact, that the sheets were divided into two parts. This, to some extent, complicated their attribution, since the central watermark was also divided into two parts.

Two paintings demand special emphasis; they under unascertained circumstances had appeared in the collection of Z. F. Leont'evskii. The reason why they are of such significance lies, mainly, in the choice of materials which were utilized for their creation. The first painting titled 'The Chinese women binding their feet' (code: fund 1272, № 66 (p. 1)) is drawn on pith paper. Despite the fact, that in a systematic catalogue the material is called 'tracing paper', there are no doubts, that it is pith paper, owing to the typical structure of the sheet and cracks at the edges. Regarding this painting, two facts are captivating: firstly, a large size of the sheet (36 X 64 cm), which rarely can be found, because the average size of pith paper is 30 cm by 20 cm; secondly, a good state of preservation, although a painting comes as a single sheet, not as a part of an album set. It might be assumed that the painting was executed in the Beijing workshop, specialized on pith watercolors production, which Carl Crossman made mention of (Crossman 1991:199–200).

The second painting of grand significance within the collection is called ‘The Manchu women playing go⁷’ (code: fund 1272, № 57) (**Fig.4**). The medium used for it is not paper, pith, but a sheet made of thin silk measuring 48 X 46 cm. The image of a moment from lives of Chinese noble women is placed in a painted baroque frame, which at the same time serves as an entrance to the room, where the ladies are playing. The collection of Z. F. Leont’evskii contains one more picture which is done as if it was inserted in a painted baroque frame. An image of ‘The Manchu’s wedding [A wedding procession of an eight-standard troops’ officer]’ (code: fund 1272, № 25 (p.1)). However, in this case, the frame setting does not look as delicate, as it looks in the painting of ‘The Manchu women playing go’, moreover it was poorly inserted in the paper space.



Fig.4. The Manchu women playing go.

⁷ Go – (Chin. *Weiqi* 围棋 - literally ‘encircling game’) a traditional Chinese strategic board game, originated in ancient China more than 2500 years ago. Go is played on a grid of black lines (usually 19X19). Game pieces (stones) of black and white color are played on the line intersections. The objective of the game is to surround a larger total area of the board with stones than the opponent by the end of the game.

As to the painting on silk, four women are placed in a richly decorated room, which can be considered as a walk-through room. Three noble ladies are located in its center, sitting at the table on Chinese stools. Two of them are playing go. In the right corner of the painting a young servant girl is bringing tea for the ladies. At the left-hand side, in an adjacent room, two children are playing with each other. The composition itself impresses with its beauty, which is expressed in slow motions of the models, as well as in the concise color combination. This painting is unique within the collection of Chinese export art in the NLR. Unfortunately, there is no sufficient data to explain the two paintings (fund 1272, № 57 and 66(p.1)) emergence in the collection of Z. F. Leont'evskii. However, their authors undeniably were Chinese artists.

Though being the only one as a single sheet painting executed on silk, 'The Manchu women playing go' is not the only work of art created on silk in the collection of Chinese export painting in the NLR. The Manuscripts Department possess an album in the 'Chinese new series' (code: Kit.n.s. 157) of a small size 17 X 26 X 2.5 cm, a cover adorned with green silk. Inside, the sheets are made of cardboard, folded in a form of accordion between the front and back covers. Totally, there are eight images of Chinese beauties in traditional garments. Each of them is drawn on a piece of yellow silk, measuring 16.5 X 21.5 cm, and attached to a cardboard. Except for the images of beauties in the upper left part the pages contain vertically written heptasyllabic poems devoted to the ladies. Each poem is finished with the author's name (Chen Qingyuan (陳清遠)) and a stamp of his private seal. Two different stamps can be found on the album's pages: the first, of a size 1 cm by 1 cm, bears a full name of the author (陳清遠印 – a seal of Chen Qingyuan); on the second one, measuring 1.1 X 1.1 cm, his nickname is carved (藺仙 (Qu Xian)).

A thematic line of beauties in the funds of the NLR can be detected in five unique scrolls, each of a size 33 X 128 cm, with illustrations for the classic Chinese novel composed by Cao Xueqin 'Dream of the Red Chamber' (红楼梦) (code: fund Kit.n.s. 159–163). Initially, the novel had a second title 'The Story of the Stone' (石头记). It was first published in China in 1763–1791. It is known, that the first manuscript of the novel appeared in Russia was 'The Story of the Stone' stored at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, the Russian Academy of Sciences. It was brought by a student of the 11th Russian Orthodox Mission Pavel Kurlyandtsev, who left Beijing due to the illness in 1832. It is noteworthy, that the scrolls were brought to Russia in 1804 at the time of the 8th Russian Orthodox Mission in Beijing. Each scroll on the back side has a small Traditional Chinese character 紅 (red) at the top of the sheet, as well as the round stamp of Kyakhta's customs with an inscription 'Kyakhta. TA. PRI TO 1804'. At present, four of five vertical scrolls from both sides are attached to the small round poles. The edges, as it was common for pith watercolors, are framed with blue silk ribbons. All the figures in the scrolls

wear the costumes of the second half of the XVIII century, the period of the Manchu dynasty reign in China. The objects in the garden, where the novel takes place, are drawn in a very detailed manner. The artist paid close attention to the iconography of the novel's characters. The easiest for attribution was a painting with an image of Qingwen (晴雯) (code: fund Kit.n.s. 162). Courageous Qingwen is displayed ill, but in spite of it, mending her husband's cloak made of peacock floccus. A recognizable symbol for attribution, in this case, was the cloak of peacock's floccus in the arms of Qingwen and a lit candle besides her. The other illustration portrays Li Wan (李纨) and Shi Xiangyun (史湘云) standing near the Bulrush gazebo covered with snow, when Jia Baoyu (贾宝玉) was approaching to them with a branch of red plum in his hand (code: fund Kit.n.s. 163). In the next scroll two young ladies and a man are wandering around the garden, and two cranes are playing in the pond; these are the images of Lin Daiyu (林黛玉), Jia Tanchun (贾探春) and Jia Baoyu (贾宝玉) (code: fund Kit.n.s. 159). It would not be completely correct to refer these scrolls to Chinese export art. However, influence of similar artifacts on formation of China's image in Russia and Europe cannot be overestimated. According to the said above, it can be concluded that not all artworks of the collection in the National Library of Russia can be referred to Chinese export painting.

Conclusion

The history of the Chinese export art collection in the funds of the National Library of Russia on the one hand is inextricably linked to the history of relations between Russia and China in the XIX century and on the other hand connected with a cultural phenomenon in the 'Celestial Empire' such as artistic painting export to the West. The Imperial Public Library acquired these works of art in the XIX century. Nevertheless, Chinese export art in the funds of the NLR became a subject of scientific researches only in the 1980s. As it has been noted above, throughout last decades the main attention was drawn to the collection of Z. F. Leont'evkiĭ (fund 1272), the woodblock prints collection (年画 *nianhua*) studied by the Russian renowned sinologist B. L. Riftin, and the collection of albums created by N. Ya. Bichurin (Iakinf)⁸ (Myasnikov 2010; 2012). The selection of the albums and individual sheets referring to Chinese export painting among the pictorial works of the NLR and their study has been done for the first time. Based on the research results it can be concluded, that the whole collection of Chinese pictorial art presented in the funds of the NLR can be divided into several types of Chinese export painting. The first group embraces so called 'Chinese artisanal painting', i.e. export

⁸ In the period between 2010 and 2012 three albums by N. Ya. Bichurin (Iakinf) were published within the series 'Nontraditional Sources of the Qing Dynasty's China History' under the editorship of the academician V. S. Myasnikov.

pictorial works executed on pith paper. The next group that should be pointed out in terms of artistic and historical merits is a group of export pictures drawn on the traditional Chinese and European paper.

Provenance of art works in the collection of the NLR is a priority for the further research. However, with fair certainty it can be said, that the earliest artifacts were created in the beginning of the XIX century (circa 1800–1805). These works include the drawings made by Canton artists from the album brought to Saint-Petersburg by the first Russian circumnavigator Yu. F. Lisianskiĭ in 1806, as well as five scrolls with illustrations to the novel by Cao Xueqin ‘Dream of the Red Chamber’, which crossed the border between Russia and China in 1804. The creation of the second group of artistic paintings belongs to a period between 1820 and 1890. This group includes the pictures brought to Saint-Petersburg from China by Z. F. Leont’evkiĭ in 1831. In the fund 1272, predominantly, large drawings of the ‘Views’ section are similar in stylistic manner to those ‘westernized’ Chinese pictorial works manufactured in the middle of the XIX century. However, in perspective and details rendering, especially in the scenic images, the features of traditional Chinese fine art can be easily recognized. The new attribution of the painting № 21 ‘The Scene of the Beijing Suburban Palace Yuanming yuan Cindered by the British and French. Kunming Lake’ in the fund 1272 shows the significance of the initiated work with focus on determination of every imaged object in the ‘Views’ section. That can bring to light the most precious picturesque views within the collection of Z. F. Leont’evkiĭ. The circumstances, under which the rest part of Chinese export art albums dated 1820–1890 emerged in the NLR, have not been discovered completely. The comparative analysis of the NLR albums’ drawings with the pictures appearing in other Western collections allows to make some preliminary conclusions about the dating of certain images.

Undisputed remains the fact that the NLR collection is of special value. Considering correlation inequality of western and oriental traditions in the world, every album of Chinese miniatures, moreover, every single painting fosters not only exploration of Chinese export art, but also distinct character of Chinese people’s cultural history.

Abbreviations:

NLR – The National Library of Russia.

The list of illustrations:

1. Manchu Emperor and Empress are listening to a report. NLR. Code: ЭАЛИ34.354/2-1 ОХ, inventory number: Эи 11268.

2. Master Bai Ruose (白若瑟). Storming a fortress in front of a commander. The Manchu troops review. (Maneuvers of the eight-standard troops at foot of the Fragrant Hills in 30 li from Beijing. September 1827.). NLR. Code: fund 1272, № 13.
3. Kunmin Lake. Summer Palace in Beijing known as Yihe yuan (颐和园 'Garden of Harmonious Peace'). NLR. Code: fund 1272, № 20.
4. The Manchu women playing go. NLR. Code: fund 1272, № 57.

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