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WILLIAM ALEXANDER'S IMAGE OF QING CHINA

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William Alexander was the official draughtsman of the Macartney Embassy. His pictures of China covered a wide range of themes. Each theme represented a certain purpose. Landscapes, architectural drawings, and portraits constituted the majority of the drawings, which reveal the Embassy's enthusiasm for obtaining visual knowledge of a variety of aspects in the society of China. The drawings of still life, costume, native species, and religious ceremony occupied the remainder, and provided the audience with a more intricate impression of China. In comparison with other European and some earlier generation artists' works, Alexander's pictures convey a peculiar British idea of China at the time, and hint at the potential crisis between the two countries.

Keywords: *The Macartney Embassy, ethnographic tendency, image of China, cultural misunderstanding, orientalism*

Abbreviations

Authentic Account	George Staunton, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China: Including Cursory Observations Made, and Information Obtained, in Travelling through That Ancient Empire, and a Small Part of Chinese Tartary*. London: G. Nicol, 1797.
Picturesque Representations	William Alexander, *Picturesque Representations of the Dress and Manners of the Chinese*. London: W. Bulmer, 1814.

The Macartney Embassy

The British Macartney Embassy is believed to have been largely led by the arrangement of the Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, and the Treasurer of the Navy, Henry Dundas. The Embassy ostensibly congratulated the Qianlong Emperor on the occasion of his 83rd birthday, but in reality used the occasion to negotiate better conditions for trade and diplomacy. It was a huge undertaking, and consisted of a core team of 95 members and a backup support team of 600 people. The Embassy reached Beijing on 21 August 1793. The reception took place at the Chengde Mountain Resort in Rehe on 14 September.

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As for the requests of the British government, Qianlong rejected all of them, so the primary objectives of the British were unsuccessful. However, after the return voyage in 1794, the Macartney Mission won massive public attention in Britain because the party members published numerous journals and memoirs. While the embassy's voyage was aimed at a political objective, its journals were treated as leisure books by the public.

The Embassy's voyage must be understood within its complex sociocultural context. During the 18th century, a range of European Enlightenment ideas centred on society. With the orientation of the spirit of "objectivity," the European perception of China turned more realistic partially as a result of more authentic documentation. Painting for the purpose of pleasure, the earlier European Rococo artists, especially François Boucher, had been keen to construct their Chinese fantasy land. However, in the age of the Embassy, Europe was eager for Chinese images no longer for entertainment, but for objective scientific discovery. Consequently, the Macartney Embassy's visit to China was also an attempt to further the state of knowledge on China, informed by the patronage of explorers by Enlightenment-inspired figures.

In general, chinoiserie had lost its momentum by 1760. And yet European observations of China remained flexible. Back in 1719, Daniel Defoe had belittled the Chinese in his *Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.[1] In 1748, George Anson published *A Voyage Round the World*.[2] Both books gradually transformed the European idea of China into a remarkably contemptuous one. On the other hand, the premiere of Arthur Murphy's tragedy *Orphan of China* won great success in April 1759. William Chambers completed the famous Great Pagoda in Kew Garden in 1762. Whether positive or negative, all these cultural representations were simply parts of an adventure story not amenable to verification. As official identities, Macartney and his entourage obtained the opportunity to check these notions about China against their own observations. As a result, a negative attitude to China is the most emotional product that the Embassy disseminated to British society and its ruling class.

Influenced by the Enlightenment, from the mid-18th until the end of the 19th century, the study of natural history developed rapidly alongside the process of colonisation. The study expanded from the collection of ancient specimens to embrace botany, architecture, and social customs, all of which were seen as evidence of human social development. Drawing artistically sensitive images of local customs and specimens became an important additional task. According to Bernard Smith "[t]he pressure on the representational arts to move in the direction of naturalism was stronger than it had ever been, or would be again."[3] Although the process was complicated and periphrastic, images began to serve scientific and technological knowledge instead of being created for purely aesthetic reasons. That is why the Macartney Embassy purposely hired William Alexander as a draughtsman to

[1] As a widely-read, popular novel, the book served as an important text that furnished a negative idea of China. For instance, Defoe characterized Beijing as "miserably cultivated." His attitude reflected a largely Protestant and commerce-based perception of China.

[2] In this travel account, Anson constructed China as a bureaucratically oppressive and militarily weak empire. This book's far-reaching influence shaped concepts of China for at least a few of the philosophers of the Enlightenment period. Consider, for example, Rousseau and Montesquieu.

[3] B. Smith 1992, p. 32.

collect visual knowledge on China. In the meanwhile, other party members also painted various pictures of China in their leisure time. This practice was the best demonstration of how the function of images was transformed to meet Britain's desire to acquire knowledge of the world.

Life and Works of William Alexander

Although the Embassy's images of China are spread around the world, the main body of 1,102 sketches is concentrated in the British Library, the British Museum and the Yale Center for British Art, including 29 drawings by Lieutenant Henry William Parish (1765–1800, the Artillery officer of the Embassy), 23 by Sir John Barrow (1764–1868, Comptroller of the Household to Lord Macartney), two by Secretary Sir George Leonard Staunton (1737–1801), two by Thomas Daniell (1749–1840), two by Thomas Hickey (1741–1824, the official painter of the Embassy), one by William Daniell (1769–1837), and one by William Gomm (1754–1794). All the others have been attributed to William Alexander.

Alexander was born 10 April 1767 in Maidstone, Kent. He moved to London in 1782, aged 15, to study art under William Part and later Julius Caesar Ibbetson. He enrolled at the Royal Academy School in February 1784. Here he attracted the notice and approbation of Edward Dayes. Sir Joshua Reynolds greatly influenced Alexander's artistic style. In 1792, Ibbetson recommended his 25-year-old apprentice Alexander for the employment of draughtsman.

Chung Shu-huey remarks that "[a] draughtsman's position was like that of a photographer today. He was not expected to create works of art, but duplicate landscapes, buildings and views."[4] Since extended journeys at sea were dangerous, the draughtsmen going abroad were usually humble young men in poor circumstances with a vibrant sense of personal initiative.[5] They played an important role in the exploration by recording visual knowledge. Gradually accumulated wealth impelled the British to seek more trade opportunities abroad and explore foreign countries, and, as a result, the art works of the draughtsmen became more and more realistic through increasing first hand experiences or close encounters. In 1636, Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, employed Wenceslaus Hollar to make topographical drawings during Arundel's embassy to Germany. Hollar's project was an early important and influential example of employing a professional artist during an ambassadorial mission, and was a precursor to the Macartney Embassy's attempt to record visual images of China.

Since only a few people had the opportunity to voyage abroad, they controlled this special type of knowledge, and published their drawings for the popular market after their return to Britain. Examples of the drawings include Agostino Brunias's Dominica, Samuel Davis's Bhutan, Thomas Hearne's Caribbean, and Thomas Daniell's India. It is worth noting that Richard Wilson's topographical style of Italian landscapes in the 1750s and Thomas Patch's habit of using sketchbooks had great influence on later draughtsmen working abroad.

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[4] 畫師的地位類似于現在的攝影師，不能指望他創造藝術，多少只是複製地點、建築和景觀. Chung Shu-huey 2010, p. 64.

[5] For instance, the draughtsmen in James Cook's three voyages to the Pacific were all young artists in their twenties: Sydney Parkinson, 23; William Hodges, 28; and John Webber, 24.

During the mission to China, Alexander's position was not as exalted as that of an ambassador. Alexander accepted a salary of £100 per annum, or half the salary of the official painter and keeper of the painting equipment, Thomas Hickey. Sir John Barrow, the comptroller of the household to Lord Macartney, did not suppress his praise of this diligent draughtsman:

> Mr. Alexander drew beautifully and faithfully in water-colours, and omitted nothing that was Chinese, from the human face and figure, down to the humblest plant, and so true were his delineations, that nothing before or since could be compared with them.[6]

After the mission, Alexander began his reproductions from his Chinese sketches. Between 1795 and 1804, 16 of Alexander's works were exhibited at the Royal Academy, and "the first 13 of these were Chinese subjects."[7] He was appointed Professor of Drawing at the Royal Military College in Great Marlow in 1802. Three years later, he took the position of Assistant Keeper of Antiquities in the British Museum. In 1797 he finished his first commission: to produce illustrations for Sir George Staunton's official account of the Embassy.[8] In addition to the plates inserted into Staunton's text, an accompanying volume of engraved illustrations was also published. Alexander also provided paintings for John Barrow's *Travels in China* (1804) and *A Voyage to Cochin China* (1806).[9] In 1798, Alexander published his own volume of *Views of Headlands, Islands etc. Taken during a Voyage to, and along the Eastern Coast of China, in the Years 1792&1793, etc.*[10] which was without high aesthetic value. The publication that really won Alexander acclaim was *The Costume of China*, which consisted of 48 etchings. In 1814, he also published the album *Picturesque Representations of the Dress and Manners of the Chinese* (hereafter: *Picturesque Representations*). This was Alexander's final publication about China, issued two years before his death.

It is also necessary to mention John Nieuhof's depiction of China during the first Dutch envoy's visit to China between 1655 and 1657. This journey deeply inspired Alexander's creation in composition and taste for realism. Wu Hung argues that Alexander "adopted three other pictorial modes initiated by Nieuhof."[11] However, their works still manifest a different range of information and expressional preferences. Nieuhof emphasised the authentic representation of what he had seen, but Alexander

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[6] Barrow 1847, p. 49.

[7] Connor – Sloman 1981, p. 7. In contrast, Susan Legouix writes: "Fourteen of his pictures were hung at the Academy between 1795–1800." Legouix 1980, p. 5.

[8] The full title is *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China: Including Cursory Observations Made, and Information Obtained, in Travelling through that Ancient Empire, and a Small Part of Chinese Tartary.*

[9] The complete title of the text is *A Voyage to Cochinchina, in the Years 1792 and 1793: To Which is Annexed an Account of a Journey Made in the Years 1801 and 1802, to the Residence of the Chief of the Booshuana Nation*. Beside Alexander's 14 original plates, Samuel Daniell also contributed 3 illustrations. The last two plates on page 392 and 392 were drawn by Alexander from the sketches by Daniell.

[10] The collection consisted of nine topographic maps of China.

[11] Wu Hung 2012, p. 98.

was willing to deliver more comprehensive information of China in addition to conceptual authenticity.

Alexander provided more reliable detail in his images than his European audience was usually able to receive. According to Lu Wenxue, "[he] clarified some earlier Chinese elements transmitted to the West."[12] Some details are still highly valued as historical data in various fields. As Barthes points out, the major function of accurate detail is to announce: "We are the real."[13] The authenticity should be understood in two dimensions: more authentic visual detail and reliable first-hand images that no travellers had provided before.

Overview of the Research on William Alexander

In the research on Alexander and his works, two books provide the most solid foundational research on his drawings: Susan Legouix's *Image of China: William Alexander* and Patrick Corner's *William Alexander: An English Artist in Imperial China*. In 1990, Peyrefitte published a companion album, *Images de l'empire immobile par William Alexander*, and culled more than 2,000 copies to add to the image information.[14]

In addition, in the commentary "William Alexander: An English Artist in Imperial China," Judy Egerton trenchantly criticizes Alexander's works of China from a theme exhibition in Brighton. Frances Wood attempts to trace the transition process from manuscript to publication in her article "Closely Observed China: From William Alexander's Sketches to his Published Work." More importantly, she carefully examines the details of the manuscripts, and points out some mistakes in the pictures. She attempts to trace the transition process from manuscript to publication, and to determine the factors influencing the artist. Stacey Sloboda connects Alexander's pictures with early European chinoiserie art in "Picturing China: William Alexander and the Visual Language of Chinoiserie." Ulrike Hillemann innovatively analyzes the ways Alexander's interests engaged with, represented, and "manufactured China" for British metropolitan consumption in her monograph *Asian Empire and British Knowledge*. Elizabeth Hope Chang's *Britain's Chinese Eye: Literature, Empire, and Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* incisively perceives the expression and structure of the power of the empire in Alexander's speculative depiction of the Yuanming Yuan.

In recent years, Chinese scholars have paid closer attention to Alexander's works. On the basis of Legouix's contribution, Shen Hong published his *1793: Yingguo shituan huajia bixia de Qianlong shengshi* 1793: 英國使團畫家筆下的乾隆盛世 / *1793: The Flourishing Age of Qianlong in the British Embassy's Works*. The study *Diguo lüeying: Yingguo fang Hua shituan bixia de Qingdai Zhongguo* 帝國掠影——英國訪華使團畫筆下的清代中國 (A Glimpse of the Empire: Qing China

[12] 將早期西方所傳達的中國元素做適當澄清. Lu Wenxue 2003, p. 81.

[13] Nochlin 1991, p. 38.

[14] In the book, Peyrefitte groups the pictures into five sections: the way to China (*Vers la Chine*), the way to the Emperor (*Vers l'Empereur*), the Emperor's shadow (actually "Summer Resort in Jehol," *A l'ombre de l'Empereur*), the rural scene of China (*Dans la Chine profonde*), and the return to the West (*Retour vers l'Occident*).

in the British Embassy's Paintings) is a cooperative effort of Liu Lu and Frances Wood.

Also, "Yuedu he lijie: 17 shiji – 19 shiji zhongqi Ouzhou de Zhongguo tuxiang" 阅读和理解——17 世纪–19 世纪中期欧洲的中国图像 (Reading and Understanding: The Image of China in Europe from the 17th Century to the mid-19th Century) by Lu Wenxue and "Cong Tuxiang kan shiba shiji yihou Xifang de Zhongguo guancha: Yi Yalishanda he Tang Musun weili" 從圖像看十八世紀以後西方的中國觀察——以亞歷山大和湯姆遜為例 (Understanding China Observations through Images in the West after the Eighteenth Century: The Cases of William Alexander and John Thomson) by Chung Shu-huey, both include a study of the Embassy's pictures as an essential part, adding sociological criteria to the examination of the images.

In comparison, most of the work of earlier scholars on the Embassy consists of written documents. A new challenge exists in separating the research of the historical image from traditional historical study, and developing it into an independent branch of history with its own research paradigm and context. In the last twenty years, the use of images as historical evidence has become more prevalent. It is impossible for historians to carry out research in new fields if they limit themselves to traditional literal sources such as the British official instructions and the Qing court records. Imagery should have its place alongside written documents and oral testimonies.

Alexander's works of China, however, arouse scholars' continuing interest. The introduction of the basic image information and its historical background has generally overwhelmed the interpretation of the composition and the subject selection. Building upon the foundation of prior research, this study aims at deeply analysing the traits of different versions of Alexander's works, and identifying their relations, inspecting objective and subjective factors that affect the artist's image creation and theme choice. Special attention will be given to the observation of British visual interest in China in the 18th century.

Three Main Collections Featuring Alexander's Pictures

Alexander's pictures are now scattered in three main collection resources: the Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections of the British Library, the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, and the Paul Mellon Collection in the Yale Center for British Art. These collections cover most of the original sketches and subject selections.

The 870 sheets (most of them are field sketches) in the Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections of the British Library were mounted in two volumes in the early 19th-century, and then numbered by the Library. Although they are now rebound in three volumes, the original arrangement and numbering of the sketches have been retained. The volumes were catalogued in 1832. The pictures are all numbered on the upper middle or right hand corner, most by the same hand. The colours of the inks used to number them are black and red; some are pencilled, but never appear alternately. From the very beginning, the leaf numbers have been altered, which suggests that the pictures have been rearranged. The number on *View at Tobacco Village, Turon Bay-Cochin China* (WD 959 f. 5 34) changed twice: from black 22 to 12, then to red 34 (Fig. 1). Beyond this picture, the numbers are not altered further. However, the album WD 960 is an exception. The numbers in it are all

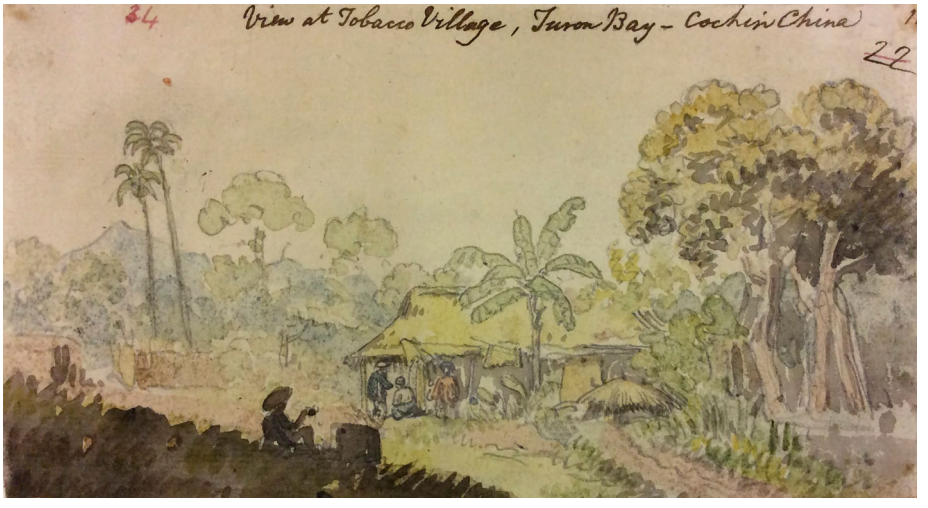


FIGURE 1. William Alexander, "View at Tobacco Village, Turon Bay-Cochin China," watercolour, WD 959 f. 5 34, The British Library.[15]

pencilled and circled, a difference we can see in the numbering of other pictures. Most of the images are quick drawings; consequently, the pictures may have been on-the-spot sketches created in China.

The Paul Mellon Collection in the Yale Center for British Art collected 31 undated works by Alexander. The state of completeness of the pictures differs. Some are finished watercolours, some are unfinished watercolours exposing a part of pencilled outline, and others are pure sketches. The collection contains the frontispiece of *The Costume of China* (B1975.4.985), suggesting the collection was part of the preparation for this album. The quantity of pictures is however not great. Most of the original sketches for the book's images can be found in the 870 sheets in the British Library. It is difficult to trace the visual source of a few of the pictures. "A Chinese Girl" (B1977.14.4961), "A Young Chinese Scholar" (B1977.14.4911) and "Chinese Neptune" (B1975.4.809) are rather vivid, and seem not to have been improvised, but they only appear once amid all of the Embassy's pictures. The collection in the British Library may not, therefore, be complete, and some sheets might have been lost. Another piece of evidence that suggests some collections in the British Library are incomplete is the "A Raree Show" (B1975.4.11). There are six characters: 杭美景故事州 (should be: 杭州美景故事) in the show box (Fig. 2). No image of these six characters can be found in Alexander's sketches. Alexander possessed no Chinese character literacy. Without the original source of these six characters, he was incapable of identification. Two possibilities present themselves: either some sheets in the British Library are missing or the pictures themselves are a part of a work. The picture "Fisherpeople on a Junk" (B1975.4.6), "Factory Canton" (B1975.3.1084) was signed as "W Alexander 1794." The dating indicates that the pictures were produced in China. If all the works in the collection were similiarly

[15] Many thanks to the British Library and the Paul Mellon Collection at the Yale Center for British Art, for permission to reproduce their image materials in this article.

FIGURE 2. William Alexander, "A Raree Show," pencil and watercolor, B1975.4.11, The Paul Mellon Collection, the Yale Center for British Art.

produced in China, the appearance of the frontispiece of *The Costume of China* suggests that Alexander prepared his album at that early date.

Eighty-two other watercolours by Alexander were packaged into an album, *Drawings Taken in China*, which is archived in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. The album was purchased from the Rev. Charles Burney (1815–1907). His father, the musicologist Dr. Charles Burney (1726–1814), was consulted by Macartney prior to the departure of the Embassy as to which musical instruments and compositions to take to China to impress the Chinese. Many of the leaves are stamped with the following watermark: "1794 J Whatman." Most of the pictures are without date, but a few are dated 1793, and only one (1865, 0520. 217) was dated "Jan. 8, 1794," which suggests that none of the pictures were created after January 1794. There are references to *The Costume of China* in the descriptive list of drawings bound at the front of the

volume, but none to *Picturesque Representations*, implying that the album was compiled at some point between 1805 and 1814. However, Picture 1865, 0520.206 appears as *A Boat Girl* in *Picturesque Representations*. All of the visual elements in the pictures collected by the British Museum, such as particular buildings, figures and vehicles, are present among the collection in the British Library. They were certainly well-selected. The Burney family probably presented them to the Embassy. Another possibility is that the family purchased them by auction.

In contrast to the variety of positions in the numbering of folios within the British Library, the numbers here are all found in the upper right corner. Legouix's supposition that Alexander compiled the album himself is doubtful, because the numbers on the British Museum and the British Library pictures share the same style of writing, and seem to have been written by the same person. The holdings of the British Library formerly constituted the bulk of the British Museum, so it is probable that, with the exception of album WD 960, one person numbered the pictures in the British Library and Museum. If Alexander did arrange the pictures, another explanation is possible: as Assistant Keeper of Antiquities in the British Museum, he might have asked other staff members to number the pictures for him. The album in the British Museum was purchased in 1865, so the pictures may have been numbered after that date. The pictures were then separated when the British Library and British Museum divided themselves into separate institutions.

The sketches in the British Library provided the basic visual material for the other two collections. The Paul Mellon Collection possesses several exceptional subjects, and the individual works display different levels of completeness. In comparison, the pictures in the British Museum are the most complete, and are all adapted from the manuscripts in the British Library. In short, the collection in the British Library provided visual materials for image reproduction, and the pictures in the British Museum represent the final modified version. The pictures in the Paul Mellon Collection show the transition between them. The arrangement is fluid, however, and the pictures in the Paul Mellon Collection and the British Museum do not perfectly coincide. Some pictures in the Paul Mellon Collection were already completed, and thus do not appear again in the British Library. Meanwhile, other pictures in the British Museum are direct adaptions from those in the Library. As a result, their transitional images cannot be found in the Paul Mellon Collection.

The Process of Publication

Alexander finished most of his published works following his departure from China on 8 March 1794, and after his return to Britain. In his first major project, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy* […] (hereafter: *Authentic Account*), most of the engravings are dated 1796, so the paintings must have been made within a year to eighteen months after his return home. Alexander based his Chinese pictures to a great extent on his diary, memory, and the sketches made in China. Some of these sketches evolved into the final engravings of his two published albums. He drew earlier sets of scenes and figures when his memory was still fresh. The works he drew from sketches were more reliable in content than the later ones. Under acute economic pressure, "this young man saw his works as a gold mine

which could be dug constantly."[16] Once Alexander could not rely on his memory and his sketches to produce final versions, he tended to search for ideas by observing compositions by previous painters. He also utilised limited prototypes repeatedly, and combined a number of sketches into one view as a way of producing more Chinese motifs.[17]

Prior to the Embassy's voyage to China, some visual elements (such as the pagoda, the willow pattern, rockeries, and junks) were seen as typical symbols of China, thanks to the contribution of chinoiserie artists. Gradually, European audiences came to believe that China looked like the pictures on their porcelain plates and chinoiserie furniture. While Alexander's original sketches represent his personal and more immediate impressions, not to mention his unique view as an artist, published versions accommodated the conventions, not to say expectations of the market audience. The China depicted in his manuscripts is more reliable due to his having sketched them on the spot, but such a work of art violated the standard image of China in the mind of the wider European audience. Thus, in several of his published compositions, he applied a variety of conventional chinoiserie visual elements to adjust his final publications to his audience's imagination. To a certain extent, Alexander was also part of the British audience. He could rely of course on his personal experience of China. That experience was limited though. In fact, he had been exposed to chinoiserie for a much longer period of time. His earlier exposure also influenced his decision-making.

Alexander's drawings fall into four categories according to their different presentation modes and audiences: on-the-spot field sketches, illustrations for official journals and other publications for Embassy members, Alexander's personal publications, and the pictures he presented to King George III. Their fidelity levels and identities are totally diverse. Put simply, the sketches are semi-finished products of the most authentic quality. The official publications, in contrast, are British historical records which reveal knowledge about China. Alexander's personal publications are the illustrations incorporating a personal visual taste. Finally, the drawings for King George III are novelties, a balance between information and artistic taste.

A practical visual comparison among several pictures of the same subject of the *jia* 枷 (*tcha* or *cangue*) helps illuminate the different intentions and aesthetic qualities of each of the categories. The visual samples are "The Cang, a Punishment Used in China" (WD 961 f. 69v 213) (Fig. 3) in the Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections of the British Library; "Punishment of the TCHA, or Cangue" (Fig. 4) in Alexander's *Picturesque Representations*; the 28th plate of Staunton's *Authentic Account*: "Punishment of the TCHA" (Fig. 5); and one picture in King George III's personal collection (Maps 8 TAB.c.8.17) (Fig. 6) in the British Library. The latter three images are recreations of an original sketch (see Fig. 3), which the artist did not complete in a pleasing fashion with pen and watercolour. The representation of the background and the tree are cursory, and neither the criminal's figure nor appearance are delicately depicted. His natural pose and figure are indications of the prudential observation of an on-the-spot field sketch. This is also shown by details like the labels on the *cangue* and the shadow of the head.

[16] 这位年轻人将他的这批作品视作了一个可以不断挖掘的金矿. Shen Hong 2006, p. 23.
[17] Frances Wood noticed this phenomenon in her article. See Wood 1998, pp. 109–110.

FIGURE 3. William Alexander, "The Cang, a Punishment Used in China," watercolour, WD 961 f. 69v 213, British Library.

The 28th plate in *Authentic Account* (see Fig. 5) offers additional knowledge about China. The main figure, the *cangue* and the tree, are undoubtedly borrowed from the original sketch. In addition, the artist has added four new characters on the left, and a Chinese scene on the right to balance the composition. The completed figure is obviously more refined than the sketch. Alexander adapted the official with the top hat and the details of the *cangue* from another sketch (WD 961 f. 69v 214) in the British Library's collection. Alexander used a *cangue* with holes for hands to replace the original one without holes in the official publication. In addition, he also threaded the criminal's right hand through the hole to illustrate precisely how the *cangue* operated. He purposely arranged the braid on the *cangue* to remind the audience that the accused is a Chinese national. The boat, temple and pagoda also imply the Chinese context. The composition in the official publication

FIGURE 4. William Alexander, "Punishment of the TCHA, or Cangue," engraving, *Picturesque Representations*. Plate 39.

not only represents a very particular form of punishment in China, in keeping with the original sketch. The work also displays more visual detail on China, including a landscape and the appearance of ordinary natives, altogether delivering a correspondingly documentary, informative effect. The manner in which Alexander portrays the natives, however, suggests that, to a degree, they are mere ornamentation.

Alexander's personal publication was different. "Punishment of the TCHA, or Cangue" in *Picturesque Representations* (see Fig. 4) represents the same subject, but with no original sketch. The most conspicuous distinction between this picture and the former two is what truly appears to be Alexander's consideration of the expectations of the audience. Three details deserve our attention: we observe the punishment itself, the Chinese characters on the board, and the criminal's physical position. The *cangue* in the picture is linked with a seat which is usually used in a court and should not appear outside. The characters on the red board are

FIGURE 5. William Alexander, "Punishment of the TCHA," engraving, *Authentic Account*, vol 3. Plate. 28.

unrecognisable, and represent a typical example of a common mistake a foreigner might make in trying to understand China. These two image distortions indicate that the picture's objective and documentary attributes are much weaker than those of the official publication. It is a completely different composition from the other presentation of *cangue*. The subject is pulled to the front, and the criminal's body takes up most of the picture to demonstrate the intention to offer a graphic illustration of the punishment. Alexander's drawings for King George III's personal collection do not usually show the artist's own aesthetic tendencies in such quantity. The selection was made after Alexander's careful deliberation. He maintained a fine balance between reliable visual images, artistic interest, and the quantity of knowledge he wanted to provide. The picture labelled "Maps 8 TAB.c.8.17" in King George III's personal collection (Fig. 6) is another adaptation of the sketch WD 961 f. 69v 213. Its use of pigments is peaceful and elegant. The similarities between it and the official publication are discernible, but due to the unknown creation time sequence of the two works, it is hard to assert which one used the other as a reference. In the King's collection, the artist compressed the horizontal composition in the official book to a vertical one, and trimmed the pavilion, the boat and a woman to draw audience attention to the criminal. But he still kept the temple and the boat as hints of the Chinese context. In addition to giving prominence to the subject, the artist retained as much impactful visual information as was possible in the smaller space. The movement between direct visual record, artistic illustration, historical document, and

FIGURE 6. William Alexander, "Maps 8 TAB.c.8.17," watercolour, British Library.

exquisite novelty demonstrates the diverse representation of Chinese scenes in Alexander's work.

Alexander's visual representation of China was not only determined by his personal will and the expectations of his audience, but also by the influence of the publishing market. Owing to the Enlightenment and geographical discovery, knowledge was a token of social rank and status in Britain. Knowledge and certain types of wealth were linked. Various ranks of society could only attain as much knowledge of China as they could afford. Visual information was an essential source of knowledge, but the expense of engraving and printing pictures was high in the 18th century. As befitted its official nature, the production of Staunton's *Authentic Account* was very sumptuous. Joseph Banks' personal supervision and the involvement of the famous engravers John Hall and Joseph Collyer demonstrated the publisher's high regard for this book, which is also attested by the great expense of publishing it. Banks gave an estimate of the expense of publishing 2,000 sets in 1797:

– 24 large engravings (458.2 mm x 304.8 mm) cost £2,016;
– 17 small engravings (203.2 mm x 139.7 mm) cost £267 1s 5d;

– Printing off 2,000 sets of large ones cost £630;
– Printing off 2,000 sets of small ones cost £178 1s 0d;
– Paper for the large ones (48 pages) cost £403 4s 0d;
– Paper for the small ones (17 pages) cost £89 5s 0d;
– Engraving 24 plans and charts cost £150;
– Printing of plans and charts cost £504;
– Paper for plans and charts cost £403 4s 0d;
– The vignettes of natural history may probably account to £200;
– Total expense: £4,841 1s 8d[18]

Consequently, only the wealthy and the upper classes could afford the volumes. In conformity with the high price and general audience expectation, the illustrations in the volumes had to be opulently published with many more visual details.

Without official authorisation and financial support, personal publications of the members of the Embassy essentially became a purely commercial activity. The main problems artists had to consider were marketing and expense. The bound edition of Alexander's *The Costume of China* was published in 1805 by William Miller, and was priced at six guineas, which obviously aimed at a mass market. The buyers' demand for authenticity was not as high as that of upper class intellectuals. As the result of budget restraints, the quality and authenticity of the publication was not at the level of an official one. The advantage of pure commercial publications, however, is that an artist could follow his own artistic taste without considering official suggestions.

Exceptional cases also exist. The artist's original sketches and the drawings for King George III were given as presents in accordance to particular audiences. This was notably true of tribute drawings: they were the most competitive works, a balance of authentic visual information, reasonable composition, abundant knowledge of China, and the specific function of individual exhibitions. The on-the-spot sketches highlighted the aspect of randomness. Publication was the recreation, choice and concentration of the sketches for a particular audience. In the case of those not intended for publication, the sketches were more authentic, unmodified, and cursorily depicted.

Both the sketches and tribute drawings recorded reliable visual information about China, but their artistic level and expression were quite distinct. According to Susan Stewart, this is the difference between souvenir and collection, metonymy and metaphor.[19] The sketches were souvenirs of the Embassy's journey in China. Due to the limited time of execution, most of the works were cursory, but they recorded a great

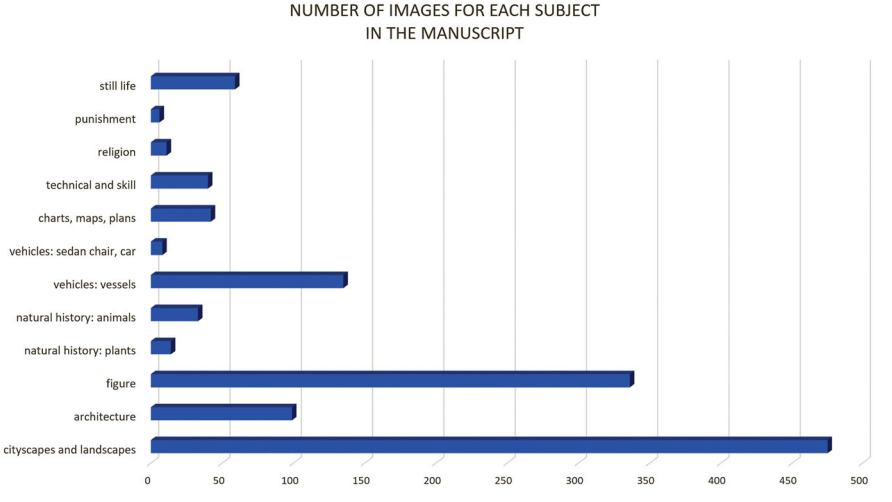
[18] Series 62.03: "Estimate of the Expense of Engraving, Printing Off, and Paper for Two Thousand Sets of All those Contained in the Annexed List 1," 1797, https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/banks/section-12/series-62/62-03-estimate-of-the-expense-of-engraving- (accessed July 10, 2019). The expense of the publication was really high at the time. As references, in the late 18th century, half of a loaf of bread costs 0.5d, a pound of butter costs 8-10d, and the weekly wage of a journeyman was 18-22d. As a "draughtsman" in the Macartney Embassy, Alexander's salary was £100 per annum. For Alexander's salary, see Cranmer-Byng 1962, p. 315. For the details of commodity price and wage in the 18th century, see Picard 2001.

[19] "In contrast to the souvenir, the collection offers example rather than sample, metaphor rather than metonymy. The collection does not displace attention to the past; rather, the past is at the service of the collection, for whereas the souvenir lends authenticity to the past, the past lends authenticity to the collection." Stewart 1993, p. 151.

deal of information about China, and provided authentic visual material for later reproductions. Chosen from among the souvenirs, the tribute drawings are the collections with the greatest quantity of reliable information, and the best in terms of artistic composition.

Alexander's visual publications kept a balance between the various demands of his identity as authority, businessman, intellectual, and individual artist. A single publication could not represent all these factors. Fortunately, the British market was anxious for visual knowledge about China, which allowed successive publications to satisfy different audiences. Bernard Smith argues that both art as taste and art as information could be adapted to the needs of power, mastery and domination, but they served in different ways.[20] Sketches, official publications, personal publications, and tribute drawings were simply among these "different ways" to convey distinct artistic taste and visual information.

Alexander's pictures of China covered a wide range of themes. The set "seemed to promise pictures of all aspects of Chinese culture to a British public eager for authentic Chinese imagery."[21] The main collection of the Embassy's drawings contains 1,101 leaves.[22] Sometimes several sketches share the same sheet of paper, so the actual number of images is 1,224.



[20] B. Smith 1992, p. 179.

[21] Sloboda 2008, p. 29.

[22] The Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections in the British Library contain 870 sheets in three volumes. The Western Manuscript Collections own an album entitled "Original Drawings by Alexander and by Daniell" (Add MS 35300) consisting of 37 works. The Maps Collection possesses "A collection of 80 views, maps, portraits and drawings illustrative of the Embassy sent to China under George, Earl of Macartney, in 1793" (Maps 8.Tab.C.8). The Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum also has an album entitled "Drawings taken in China," which contains 82 watercolours by Alexander (1865, 0520.193–274). The Paul Mellon Collection at the Yale Centre for British Art includes 32 pieces of art.

As can be seen from the graph, cityscapes, landscapes, and figures constitute the great majority of the images. The drawings of architecture, vehicles and other subjects take up a smaller proportion, and yet provide readers with a more elaborate impression of China. Generally, the process of theme selection refers to a consideration of the identity, social acceptability, and market value of an audience. The choice of images aimed at the taste of a general, low-bugdet audience. In his albums, Alexander picked massively popular human subjects to cater to the interests of his audience, and ignored botany and zoology.

Figures in Alexander's Portraits

Portrait painting was the most conspicuous genre of Alexander's works. These works not only record information about Chinese customs and costumes of the day, but also represented the British perspective of global knowledge. The portraits hint at two contradictory characteristics: ethnography and vivid exoticness, which cooperate to expand the content and nourish the meaning of the portraits.

1 The Vivid Exotic Style

One of the most distinct features of some of the pictures was that the scene and the actions of the people, especially in the illustrations accompanying the *Authentic Account*, were vividly depicted. The pictures represent a wide range of Chinese people with different identities and professions. Although Judy Egerton insists that Alexander's works "lack a sense of immediacy," she concedes that some of his works are more dynamic than she gives them credit for: "Alexander's work seems most engaging when his subjects are most obviously droll, as in 'The Stage Player'."[23] There is no indication that Egerton has studied Alexander's work on stage performance. "A Scene in a Historical Play exhibited on the Chinese Stage" (Fig. 7) is an even more active representation of the same theme mentioned by Egerton. In this picture, the image conveys a vitality infrequently found in the works. Alexander adopted (or probably invented) a special visual angle from which his audience can observe both the whole stage and the band. Performers are acting, and musicians are playing various instruments, and no one is exhibiting himself to the audience. Every figure has a certain communication partner by eye contact and body language: the man in the lower right-hand corner is kowtowing to his superior in front of him; the well-dressed girl is looking at the kowtowing man; the guard is opening his arms to stop all the people behind him; the child is hanging on the guard's leg; the man in the attic upstairs is looking at the whole stage; the musicians are carefully watching the performers' actions. The landscape in the background and the stage set are also visible. The mountain, temple, trees, and cloud in the background extend the audience's perspective and enrich the content. This picture demonstrates that the artist had the capability of representing the relationships between people and to construct a rich and dynamic picture with aesthetic taste.

[23] Egerton 1981, p. 699.

FIGURE 7. William Alexander, "A Scene in a Historical Play Exhibited on the Chinese Stage," engraving, *Authentic Account*, vol 3. Plate 30.

2 Unrecognisable Facial Features

Another trait of the pictures is the unrecognisable facial features of the people. The artist depicted the costumes of his subjects in detail, but devoted little attention to their Chinese facial features. Most had westernised faces, and some even shared the same face. The portrait of Emperor Qianlong is the best example of this inaccuracy. There are two famous portraits of Qianlong after Alexander: one is printed as the frontispiece of Staunton's *Authentic Account* (Fig. 8),[24] and the other appears as the second plate in *Picturesque Representations* (Fig. 9). The two figures strike the same pose, but are depicted from different points of view: full-face for *Authentic Account* and in profile for *Picturesque Representations*. In addition to the inaccurate throne and crown, the facial features instill doubt. Alexander's only opportunity to catch a glimpse of Qianlong was on the occasion of the ceremonial return of the Emperor to Beijing on 30 September. The creation of two portraits depended on one fleeting glimpse, and Macartney's sketch. Even so, the portraits are too far removed from a Chinese face. Although John Barrow considered the Emperor "so little afflicted with the infirmities of age, that he had all the appearance and activity of a man of sixty,"[25] this sounds like a flattering compliment more than a true description. As an 80-year-old man, Qianlong was portrayed by Alexander as

[24] The watercolour versions are in the British Museum (L.B.22[1]), the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and the India Office Library (WD 959, f. 19,94; WD 961, ff. 56, 152).

[25] Barrow 1804, p. 225.

FIGURE 8. William Alexander, "The Great Emperor," engraving. *Authentic Account*, vol 1. Frontispiece.

much younger. The high cheek bones, pointed chin and short philtrum are ominous features in traditional Chinese physiognomy, but conventional portrayals in European paintings.

In the depiction of facial details it is necessary to distinguish between on-the-spot sketches and completed compositions for publication. Some lively Chinese faces appear in the very original sketches, most of which were gifts for Qing officials. In this capacity, the portraits had to be authentic in facial details. Obviously, the final publications present more Western faces. The artist chose a series of typical Western features that facilitated the identification of the European readers. Priority was given to the costumes as a representation of Chinese culture. Instead of facial features, the adornments in the pictures can be interpreted as ethnographic details to identify a type of Chinese person.

As a professional artist, Alexander was surely capable of making clear ethnic distinctions, but we have to realise that for the greater part of the 18th century, the conception of race was unknown, and the word little used. Academic education

FIGURE 9. William Alexander, "Kiew Lung," engraving, *Picturesque Representations*. Plate 2.

only recognised the branch of portrait painting, but not as yet ethnographic painting. In other words, the division was made between humans and other living creatures, not between races. Especially in the 18th century, artists and scientists shared a consensus that ancient Greek sculpture represented the perfect body image and provided the standard model for all portraits. As a result, all human beings shared only one standard figure, and the diversity of different races was not considered. Alexander noticed some distinct facial features of local Chinese in his sketches, like high cheekbones and flat nose, but he tended not to emphasize them, nor to represent facial differences between Chinese and British figures. His subjects are more like models displaying their clothes than actual local Chinese people. The trend of adding iconographic costumes and adornments provided a homologic framework to remind viewers of images about a certain status and figure.

3 Ethnographic Tendency

The ethnographic style evolved from the natural history paradigm of the later 18th century. Natural history was in a sense a form of scientific discourse in the 18th century that included professional disciplines such as botany, zoology, geology, geography, and anthropology. Natural history sought to describe and classify every natural phenomenon that it encountered in various unknown regions of the globe.[26] Natural history was formerly taught in college science courses as a part of science proper. In the 18th century, it became an elegant "amateur" hobby such as the study of insects, wild plants, and minerals. Natural history was "not simply neutral information gathering, but information gathering with a purpose."[27] Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson contend that scientific discovery effected "a benign colonization" that nevertheless prepared the way for "actual occupation of territory."[28]

The discoveries gradually expanded to a range of quality research of a great variety of human species, customs, beliefs and cultures.[29] The study of geographical variations within the human species required a great quantity of visual information, thus stimulating painters to portrait people in an ethnographic art style. Ethnographic portraits focus on typical features at the expense of individual ones. The explorers of the later 18th century adopted this creation style to document newly discovered areas in a seemingly objective way.

The Macartney Embassy was emphatically a part of scientific search. Dr. Joseph C. Sample contributed to the issue of Macartney Embassy from a contact zone perspective in his dissertation. He incisively observed the Embassy member's emphasis of knowledge in their journals:

> To varying degrees all of the learned men of the embassy were natural historians […] we can view the writings by embassy participants as contributions to the emerging interest in and attention to travel writing as a dynamic, knowledge-producing genre.[30]

In Ulrike Hillemann's words, "for the first time it became possible to construct a China according to the ideas of the new natural history."[31] Some of Alexander's figure paintings thus "function[s] simultaneously as a historical document and an ethnographic one"[32] in comparison to the vivid exotic taste. More specifically, his portraits focus on typical features at the expense of individual ones, thus delivering the most essential information about China to British audiences. The Chinese on Alexander's pictures were divided into particular categories such as peasant, mandarin or children.

The local people in Alexander's pictures are rather generic. They share similar features and stature. They are usually depicted alone, have no partner with whom to communicate, let alone a foreign one. The method of natural historical description

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[26] For details see Tobin 1999, pp. 144–150.
[27] Hall 2000, p. 24.
[28] Fulford-Kitson 2001, p. xxv.
[29] For details of the relation between natural history and anthropology, see Haakonssen 2006, pp. 930–932.
[30] Sample 2004, pp. 9–10.
[31] Hillemann 2009, p. 44.
[32] Hayot 2009, p. 63.

was "objective," and the personal and the subjective were, by and large, suppressed. Obvious individual distinctions were absent because the audience's primary demand was for visual information of an entire group. Alexander's primary task was to present the common appearance of natives as the ethnic data of Chinese; all other details yielded to this purpose.

No picture in the sketches or publications represents moments of communication between local Chinese people and foreigners. Theoretically, once the Embassy arrived in China, transnational communication must have occurred. But Alexander understood that once local Chinese and Britons gathered together in one composition, people left their isolated worlds and claimed acknowledgement as an equal partner in communication. The ethnographic meaning of the picture fades. To avoid this, communication between Chinese and Britons was not represented.

Alexander carefully recorded costumes to identify types of Chinese people. He depicted their clothing and personal adornment in detail. Some portraits in *The Costume of China* indicate that these are taxonomic images of specimens through the depiction of their special costumes. The customs and manners branch of natural history depicts native people in terms that stress a search for types, and "the surfaces of people – their clothing, racial characteristics, dwellings, and diet."[33] Usually the figures convey no clues about their personal characters or features; instead the costumes are the dominant theme of the images. Everything is drawn for the purpose of categorising the figure.

Another visual ethnographic trait in Alexander's works is the lack of backdrop. This phenomenon appears in the original sketches, and is also obvious in Alexander's two published albums. The on-the-spot sketches are not only the evidence of what the artist was seeing, but also what he chose to record. His sketches directly filter out the objects that may snatch the audience's attention from the figures. The lack of visual elements on the backdrop was affected by the nature of on-the-spot sketches. They were quickly drawn to record a subject's features. Nevertheless, the lack of backgrounds in published images was clearly the artist's conscious choice. As ethnographic art, all other visual information should defer to the subject.

The people in the portraits are usually only categorised by their social identities: for example, "A Vender of Lanterns," "A Soldier with his Matchlock," and "A Chinese Lady of Rank." As the pictures show, the categorisation implies the polarisation between the upper and lower classes, with the lower classes making up the majority of the population. Besides these two social classes, the artist ignored other representatives of Chinese society in the publications, such as what we would today term "intellectuals." It is impossible to know if this was conscious on his part. Literati are cultural elites and representative of civilisation. Ignoring literati is to ignore the culture they represent.

Alexander's works were created in a certain historical context that was shaped by certain trajectories. Great Britain in the later 18th century was experiencing capital accumulation and an economic transformation. During this period, the British government vigorously developed the maritime industry, and the Navy encouraged the establishment of various types of overseas trading companies. This was also a time

[33] Regis 1992, p. 148.

of marked enlargement of British colonization around the world. Its imperialist career was developed rapidly. During the age of Imperialism,[34] Britain colonized North America and several islands in the Caribbean, and established the East India Company to administer colonies and the Asian trade. These years, until the independence of the American colony, as the 18th century neared its end, have been referred to as the "First British Empire" by some historians.[35]

The slave trade was an important part of the British imperialist movement, as stated by Martin Meredith:

> In the decade between 1791 and 1800, British ships made about 1,340 voyages across the Atlantic, landing nearly 400,000 slaves. Between 1801 and 1807, they captured a further 266,000. The slave trade remained one of Britain's most profitable businesses.[36]

With the growth of respect for scientific knowledge, Britons created a "scientific" racist ideology which they could use to justify the slave trade. They asserted this ideology to prove the innate superiority of one race and the inferiority of all others by what passed for rational and objective demonstration.[37] A number of derogatory terms, like "thievish," "slavish," and "naked" were used to disdain other races.[38] The British Parliament prohibited slave trade in 1807. This historical fact establishes that the slave trade and its derived arrogance still affected Britons' perception of other races at the time. In his journal, Macartney positioned China vis-à-vis the most meaningful of imperial centres, the 0° longitude point of Greenwich, from which Britons established important understandings about geography for the entire world.[39]

According to Roxann Wheeler, "[r]acial ideology relied on ingrained belief in the desirability of subordination, most familiar to Britons through their hierarchy of ranks within the nation as well as their translation to conditions abroad."[40] In the course of British imperialist expansion, British artists usually portrayed the people of other races as cultureless beings, not as individuals undergoing historical changes in their way of life. Alexander could not avoid grafting the social collective unconsciousness of the British onto the pictures. P.J. Marshall writes of the Embassy:

> It was strongly hierarchical, based on a confidence that accumulated knowledge acquired by properly qualified observers could be used to support a comparative study of man, which would have the status of scientific objectivity.[41]

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[34] The Age of Imperialism is a period of history beginning approximately 1760, which saw European nations in the process of industrialization as they engaged in the act of colonizing. This included influencing and annexing other parts of the world. For details see Bassett 1994, pp. 316–335; also see Fieldhouse 1961, pp. 187–209.

[35] Canny 1998, p. 34.

[36] Meredith 2014, pp. 191–194.

[37] Curtin 1960, pp. 40–51.

[38] For details see Hunt 1993, pp. 338–344.

[39] For details see Cranmer-Byng 1962, p. 70 and p. 116.

[40] Wheeler 2000, p. 290.

[41] Marshall 1996, p. 125.

Alexander's ethnographic works were not only representative of Imperialism and racism, but also influential factors among others to prove and strengthen the British stereotype of self-superiority.

Landscape and Architecture

Landscape and architecture drawings account for the largest portion of the Embassy's works. The artist used original landscape sketches as background scenery of the images in the publications. On this foundation, he adopted various other visual elements from the sketches, such as figures, methods of transportation, and still lifes. A completed work was thus a pastiche of various visual materials, but not the authentic record of a scene.

1 Perspectives from Waterways

The landscape drawings of China focused on human and cultural landscape more than the geographical. The regions through which the Macartney Embassy passed were all bustling. Alexander's journey in China began from the Wanshan 萬山 Islands and Macao, and proceeded through the rural and urban areas of Guangzhou 廣州 and the Pearl River. Afterwards, they went north to Poyang 鄱陽 Lake, Jinshan 金山, the Zhoushan 舟山 Islands, Dinghai 定海, and Dengzhou 鄧州, then to Tianjin, Beijing, and Jehol. The southern return journey went downstream through Baoying 寶應, Nanjing, Suzhou, and Hangzhou. On 22 October 1793, the Embassy's ships transferred to the Grand Canal, but Macartney seems to have been scarcely aware of it, and wrote curtly: "Before dark this evening we quitted the river and entered through a sluice into a narrow canal."[42] Alexander, Colonel Benson, Dr. Dinwiddie and Captain Mackintosh were separated from the main party and went to Canton by sea. Meanwhile, Macartney's overland party continued south by waterway through Ningbo 寧波 and the Gan 贛 River, then arrived in Guangzhou one week later. The separate routes of the Embassy point to the fact that not all the engravings from this period which reached publication can be contributions of Alexander. If some of the works carried his signature, he must have produced them on the basis of other members' sketches or accounts.

The landscapes of China can be divided into two types from the painter's different perspectives: canal and rivers, and the land area. The works drawn on water are more realistic, and focus more on the activities of the common people. In addition, the perspective in the pictures is sharper because the bank lines form the visual point. In contrast, the pictures on land follow the traditional aesthetic taste, and pay more attention to famous human landscapes. Tracing the route of the Embassy, it is obvious that their opportunity of observing China from the water was much greater than from land. Alexander depicted what he saw from his ship in some pictures, and perhaps executed some of his work in this way. There were in fact few opportunities for excursions on land: "Any attempt by the British to take exercise by walking along the bank met with mirth on the part of the Chinese – so absurd

[42] Cranmer-Byng 1962, p. 169.

FIGURE 10. William Alexander, "Temporary Building at Tien-sin Erected for the Reception of the Ambassador," engraving, *The Costume of China*, no page number in original.

did such a notion seem to them."[43] The long stay on board ship restrained the members of the Embassy from a truly comprehensive observation of China. Yet, most of Alexander's best-known landscapes, particularly those appreciated for their eminent vitality, derive from the voyage on the Grand Canal.

Being restricted to travelling by ship, Alexander was compelled to pay more attention to the daily lives of local people, since the Grand Canal was lined with flourishing cities. Consequently, these landscapes never lacked local people, and revealed the influence of the English landscape formula of arranging both landscapes and figures in a wholly naturalistic approach. In the very act of composing and executing, artists make a series of continuous and conscious choices as they paint. For artists in the 18th century, landscape was a social text that had to be read. The British artists chose to efface figures in some exotic landscapes, including India, Australia, and North America, as if illustrating the idea of "virgin" soil or the legal doctrine that these countries were a "no-man's-land."[44] However, Alexander's landscape paintings actually deviate from this "virgin soil" model and imply the opposite idea: China possessed a huge population and her own customs. It should not be forgotten that one of the aspects of the Embassy's mission was business. "Huge population" here simply meant "big market."

The picture "Temporary Building at Tien-sin Erected for the Reception of the Ambassador" (Fig. 10) includes most of the visual traits and representative subjects for the theme of waterway perspective. The picture indicates the scene of a reception

[43] Conner – Sloman 1981, p. 12.
[44] For details see Burke 1995, p. 45.

for the Embassy on 13 October 1793. The Embassy reached Tianjin on this day. To compliment and entertain participants in the festivities, the landing place and the building on the banks were decorated with mats which the chief mandarin of the city had arranged to be fancifully painted. According to Alexander's journal, the person sitting in the chair in front of the building was the chief magistrate, while the other figures standing on both sides were lower officials. The picture represents the scene on the Canal and its banks, the grand official reception and, finally, the daily life of the native people. In this picture, Alexander paid more attention to architecture and ships; his depiction of people is not so meticulous. The bustling composition implies the large population of China.

2 Perspectives from the Land

The landscapes viewed from the travel by land are observations of China from another perspective. They illustrate the artist's close and minute attention to China without geographic limitations. Alexander focuses on the Chinese-built environment, and almost always arranges the composition of the landscape to make a building – a temple, a palace or a city gate – the focal point, while classicising these architectural elements. Although various scenes were recorded in the sketches, the publications excluded most of the daily life of the local people to focus on famous landmarks and royal gardens. "The landscape garden, in particular, becomes this vision's most fruitful narrative location."[45] During the journey by ship, the members of the Embassy had numerous occasions to sketch residences of ordinary people. Consequently, once they disembarked, they paid more attention to grand buildings with typical architecture. In Staunton's *Authentic Account* some eleven landscape illustrations are inserted into the two-volume journal, and in five of them the visual angle is from the land. In these five landscapes, the main buildings depicted are the Lin-Tsin Pagoda (Linqing ta 临清塔), the Poo-Ta-La Palace (Budala gong 布達拉宫) in Jehol, a memorial arch, the Imperial Palace, and the Leifeng Pagoda (Leifeng ta 雷峰塔), all typical of Chinese architecture and occupying the visual focal point. Unlike the rendition of India which William Hodge (1744–1797) offers his audience, which knitted together the natural and cultural landscapes, Alexander's drawings preferred to represent the cultural landscape. Natural elements like mountains, willows and clouds were merely ornaments to enrich the picture, but were never permitted to become the main subject. The aesthetic trait of these landscapes is the picturesque. Most of them strictly followed the picturesque composition. "A View near the City of Lin-Tsin on the Banks of the Grand Canal" (Fig. 11) in *Authentic Account* employs the picturesque repertoire and taste. The picture possesses a standard tripartite structure: a darkened foreground, a strongly lit middle ground, and an ethereal background. The local people are crowded in the foreground, their figures used as a foil for the pagoda behind them. The viewpoint is parallel to the horizon to stress the height of the pagoda. Several junks and houses adorn the whole picture and clearly imply that this is an urban landscape. In general, China in the collective art of the Embassy was depicted as a realm inhabited by ordinary people. China appeared as a huge potential market, and a country with a formidable tradition.

[45] Chang 2010, p. 38.

FIGURE 11. William Alexander, "A View near the City of Lin-Tsin on the Banks of the Grand Canal," engraving, *Authentic Account*, vol 3. Plate 33.

TECHNOLOGY AND HANDICRAFT

The particular works depicting technology and handicrafts are few in number. In fact, most of them Alexander disguised as portraits, examples of architecture, and still-life drawings, since the core of technology could be represented in the form of craftsmen, tools and products. "The Fishing Cormorants" explains how to use cormorants to catch fish; "A Watchman" introduces special Chinese chronometry; "View of a Bridge" displays technology for Chinese bridge construction. "Chinese Abacus or Counting Board" shows the mathematical technique of the Chinese. Alexander represented manufactured items and products through images, and expounded their use and application through text. The sketches delivered more information about Chinese technology than did the writings. Several other random on-the-spot sketches record special life skills such as playing Chinese musical instruments and shouldering bamboo poles.

The Industrial Revolution arose in Britain about 1760. Britain's interest in China changed from a philosophical viewpoint to a curiosity about practical technology. Because of the high expectations of their audiences, and the official demand for intelligence collection,[46] Alexander's drawings of Chinese technology and implements

[46] The Macartney Embassy carried out a confidential intelligence mission from Henry Dundas (1742–1811) in addition to its commercial and diplomatic requests: "You will naturally in the course of your residence in China extend your remarks as far as can be done without exciting jealousy, which must be carefully avoided, to every circumstance likely to throw a light upon the present strength, policy, and government of that empire." Morse 2000, p. 240. Macartney gathered scientists and craftsmen who possessed "enlightened knowledge" from all over Europe to accomplish the Embassy's goal of intelligence collection. The Scottish natural philosophy lecturer

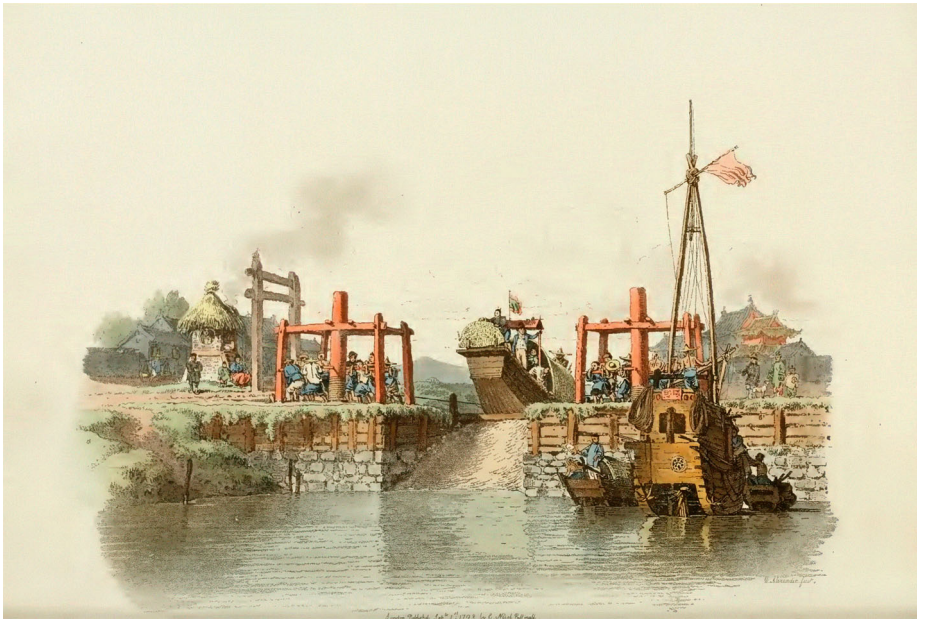

FIGURE 12. William Alexander, "Front View of a Boat Passing over an Inclined Plane or Glacis," engraving, *The Costume of China*.

are the most authentic and detailed part of the whole oeuvre. In turn, these works are still able to demonstrate a variety of extinct ancient crafts and skills.

As an example, *fan ba* 翻壩 was a form of an ancient Chinese shipping technology. The term refers to the technology of drawing boats over the dam between canals.[47] Since dams nowadays are constructed higher than they were in ancient times, this technology has fallen into oblivion. The only image resources about the technology that survive are Alexander's few watercolours and a few photographs taken by foreigners during the 19th and early 20th centuries. During the passage from Hangzhou to Suzhou in November 1793, the embassy faced the challenge of passing from one water level of the canal to another, and witnessed the process of *fan ba*. The watercolour Alexander collected in his *The Costume of China* is a vivid illustration of the very moment the ship is elevated to the top of the dam with labour power acting on two hoisting winches beside the dam (Fig. 12). He also recorded the process in detail in the picture's caption. In addition, Alexander contributed an illustration of *fan ba* in *Authentic Account*.

Generally speaking, most of the technology in the drawings is low-level manual activity without the support of much scientific knowledge. In correspondence with this visual information, Macartney revealed:

James Dinwiddie, the Swiss clockmaker Charles Petitpierre, the mathematical instrument maker Victor Thibault, the botanist David Stronach, and the metallurgist Henry Eades were involved. Some unknown artisans and craftsmen also accompanied the Embassy to observe the state of knowledge about China, whose total number has not been confirmed.

[47] For details see Shi Xiaolei 2012, pp. 28–33.

> In a country like China, where the sciences, which first pointed out those artificial powers, are little known and little cultivated, difficulties when they occur can only be surmounted by the increase and exertions of number.[48]

Banks mentioned porcelain and paper-making in his letter to Macartney. In addition, knowledge about the process of producing tea was also chief among Britain's interests, because the purchase of tea engendered a chronic British trade deficit. However, no relevant image can be found in the publications and original manuscripts of the Embassy. In King George III's personal collection, there is a series of four pictures contributed by an anonymous Chinese artist, "The Process of Planting, Growing and Curing Tea" (Maps K.Top.116.19.2.a–d), which depicted the scenes of sowing, picking, basking, and stir-drying tea in detail. The distorting perspective of the pictures suggests they are among the early Chinese export paintings. Since the pictures are collected with 16 other finished drawings, they may have been brought back by the Embassy.

Instead of tea production, the attention of the Embassy turned to agricultural production, especially the method of irrigation. Nearly all the party members recorded the Chinese water wheel in their journals, and Macartney even devoted a whole chapter to describing the operating principle. Alexander created a series of pictures about water wheels. The British Library has five of them: "Water-wheel" (WD 959 f. 23 120 with the description on the back of the paper); "Chain Pump Used in China" (WD 959 f. 23 121); "Description of a Pump" (WD 959 f. 23 122); "Chinese Working the Chain Pump" (WD 959 f. 23 123, and *Authentic Account*, Plate 44); and "A Wheel for Raising Water" (1865, 0520.268; *Authentic Account*, "Section and Elevation of a Wheel Used by the Chinese for Raising Water"). The Yale Center for British Art also has the "Section of a Wheel for Elevating Water" (B1975.4.810; see *Authentic Account*, "Section and Elevation of a Wheel Used by the Chinese for Raising Water"). Staunton collected Alexander's "Section and Elevation of a Wheel Used by the Chinese for Raising Water" in the album attached to his *Authentic Account*. Each component and its function, as well as its specific size, was marked below the picture. Staunton also inserted another illustration of a water wheel in the journal text. In addition to the description of the water wheel, Staunton placed a model of a Chinese water wheel, worked by men in a way similar to a treadmill.

Alexander punctiliously depicted the structure and function of pump and waterwheel in his sketches and journals. It is worth noting that Banks was the one who chose the illustrations for the *Authentic Account*. In other words, not only Alexander himself, but also several other British intellectuals, like Banks, were keen on the discussion of machine, axel, and cultivation technology. In addition to water wheels, Alexander depicts the form of Chinese harrows (WD 961 f. 68v 207) and ploughs (Maps 8 TAB.c.8.37). In contrast, Alexander did not represent any complex technological features in his drawings. In the caption of "Travelling Smith," he keenly observed that "the artificers moreover are rarely fixed, or settled in a workshop convenient for their purposes, but generally travel about the country carrying their shop and apparatus with them."[49]

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[48] Cranmer-Byng 1962, p. 267.
[49] Alexander 1814, p. 117.

Alexander did not gain visual information about the Chinese "travelling smith." In fact, except for state-run institutions, there were few factories in ancient China, and iron factories were explicitly forbidden. The absence of images of Chinese complex technological development and the emphasis on water wheels reveal that the Qing was still an agricultural society. The smelting iron industry in Britain was well advanced in the 18th century. The output of steel in Sheffield supplied half of all Europe. The Industrial Revolution led to the building of a veritable forest of factories in Britain. Macartney stated that "in respect to science the Chinese are certainly far behind the European world. They have but a very limited knowledge of mathematics and astronomy."[50] John Lust collected an abundance of Western books on China to be found in the library of SOAS, which ranges from accounts by medieval travellers and delegations to middle of the 19th century. In his observation, the visual information of Chinese technology exposed its weakness to the whole Western world: "Diplomatic representation was to be imposed by force on a China that was rapidly weakening, both militarily and politically."[51] This representation implanted in the minds of the British public an image of China as a backward country that had a long-standing and arrogant impact on the perception of China.

Punishment

Methods of Punishment is the most frequently delivered visual information about China. In the 18th century, the European adventurers acquired numerous Chinese export paintings, including a number of works dealing with the theme of punishment. The number of such works in private collections is beyond calculation. The British Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Mason, who had travelled to Canton in 1789, published *The Punishments of China* in 1801, collecting 22 scenes of Chinese punishment, specifically named Puqua as the artist.[52]

The Embassy's works on punishment were all contributed by Alexander, and constitute some of the earliest Western representations of this theme. His exhibits of Chinese punishment in Staunton's *Authentic Account* and his *The Costume of China* are incomplete and limited to bastinado, *cangue* and ear-piercing, and the sketches only include examples of the former two forms. In comparison, his sketches were more reliable, since the *cangue* and bastinado were two kinds of punishment which he would have been most likely to encounter and understand. Although he must have been familiar with more forms of punishment from local sources and Chinese export paintings, Alexander chose to represent those that were the most rational and mild.

In the age of Enlightenment, Europe was interested in "humane" modes of execution. Ancient forms of European punishment and incarceration were rather severe, but the Embassy's journal to China was written in the spiritual and intellectual climate of the Enlightenment, when torture and corporal punishment were seen

[50] Cranmer-Byng 1962, p. 264.

[51] Lust 1987, p. vi.

[52] Pugua 蒲呱 was a painter from Canton active in the late 18th century. His biography is unknown. According to Li Chao's *A History of Early Period Oil Painting in China*, Pugua was famous for portrait and landscape paintings, and stayed in Britain from 1769 to 1771. For details see Li Chao 2004, p. 239. However, the name of Pugua was used on Chinese export paintings from mid-18th century to late 19th century, a period of more than one hundred years. "Pugua" could therefore be a designation for more than one painter.

as symbols of an inhuman and reactionary regime.[53] A sense of the importance of sympathy in defining the nature of human beings and their social relations was growing. Adam Smith had argued the universality of sympathetic identification, and connected it to judicial execution.[54] At this time, scenes of punishment were barely visible in public in Britain. The members of the Embassy therefore must have been attracted to it in China. However, the Embassy's route in China was designed by the Qing court, so Alexander generally would have had no opportunity to view scenes of punishment conducted by local governments. His manuscripts also contain only two pictures on this theme. Many more are available in his publications, which were obviously not adapted from sketches, but rather perhaps from Chinese export paintings.

Once the system of imprisonment and punishment is displayed to an audience, the psychological discomfort of that audience would appear to be inevitable. Visual displays of punishment had a stronger visual impact than verbal displays, and aroused great sympathy in the collective mind of viewers. As Eric Hayot stated, "[t]he idea of sympathy as a fundamental aspect of the human is inextricably intertwined with theories having to do with the development of such global concepts as 'Western civilisation,' or 'political economy'."[55]

1 Avoiding Bloody Scenes

In the preface of *The Punishments of China,* Henry Mason asserted that the pictures aroused psychological discomfort in the European audience:

> Various writers have mentioned other punishments, in addition to those represented in this publication, of a much severer nature […]; but drawings, or even verbal descriptions, of these would be committing an indecorous violence on the feelings, and inducing us to arraign the temperance and wisdom, so universally acknowledged in the government of China.[56]

It is true that some of the pictures are bloody and cruel in representing scenes of execution. But Alexander was a gentle and conventional artist. His aim was to display Chinese punishments, but avoid cruel scenes. In his pictures, the instrument is usually kept at a distance from the criminal, and none is splashed with blood. He produced several works about the bastinado, none of which illustrate the moment in which the cudgel touches the victim's body, although the scene in which the lower-ranked officer raises the cudgel above the criminal lying in front of him clearly indicates that the deadly instrument will fall on the buttocks of the criminal the following moment.

2 Ignoring the Onlookers

Alexander's pictures also focused on the punishment itself. They do not show the surrounding onlookers. His purpose in placing the stress on the main subject is

[53] For details see Cockburn 1994, pp. 155–158.
[54] For details see A. Smith 2011, pp. 4–21.
[55] Hayot 2009, p. 91.
[56] Mason 1801, "Preface."

FIGURE 13. William Alexander, "Punishment of the Bastinado," engraving, *The Costume of China*.

reasonable, but he lacked the understanding that the onlooker was also an important component of Chinese punishment. Alexander's visual preference originated from his ignorance of Chinese customs. Besides the judicial procedure, another important part of Chinese punishment was the deterrence of future crime. Consequently, the government did its best to extend the influence of a penalty. In this climate, execution was open to the public, and the execution ground was always a busy place. During the executions of infamous convicts, it was common for a large crowd to gather and watch. The only picture depicting onlookers is the "Punishment of the Bastinado" (Fig. 13) in *The Costume of China*. To make certain the scene of bastinado is clearly visible to the audience, Alexander arranged for all the observers to stand behind the Mandarin at a middle distance, looking as if they are in line to visit an exhibition. The artificial composition reveals the artist's ignorance of the Chinese custom of public observation of the punishment of execution. This suggests that his views of the bastinado process may have been plucked from hearsay.

FIGURE 14. William Alexander, "View of a Pai-Loo, improperly called a Triumphal Arch, and of a Chinese Fortress," engraving, *Authentic Account*, vol. 3, p. 31.

Another interesting depiction of the bastinado is "View of a Pai-Loo, improperly called a Triumphal Arch, and of a Chinese Fortress" (Fig. 14). The appearance of three prisoners comprise this picture. Their figures, and those of the officials, were adapted from "Man being beaten" (WD 961 f. 70 215; 217) in Alexander's manuscripts. (Another relevant work is Maps 8 TAB.c.8.1 in the British Library.) At first glance, the picture is a landscape, and the focal point is the memorial arch (*pailou* 牌樓), but the artist drew a crowd of local people to attract the viewer's attention. In addition to the scene of the bastinado, Alexander also arranged many figures in the picture. Yet no one seems to notice the punishment. This was not in accordance with real life, and the picture seems like a combination of several scenes tacked together. Since no on-the-spot sketch of bastinado appears among Alexander's sketches, it can be inferred that this picture originates in his imagination, and he deliberately disregarded the onlookers.

Another aspect of the picture that deserves our attention is that Alexander arranged the scene of bastinado just in front of the memorial arch. Memorial arches were a kind of Chinese architecture that the Embassy saw most frequently during their journey, and the members of the Embassy understood that "these monuments are erected for the purpose of transmitting the meritorious actions of good men to posterity."[57] The memorial arch was an emblem of the Confucian moral code. Placing the scene of the bastinado in front of the arch encapsulated the metaphor of "the carrot and the stick." In brief, the bastinado punished those who acted

[57] Alexander 1805, p. 155.

in violation of the rules; in contrast, the arch was the reward for those who followed the rules.

3 Ignorance of the Chinese Law

Punishment was one of the important dimensions of judicial procedure which was stipulated by legal provision. The depiction of Chinese punishment by Alexander leaves out the sophisticated legal context of the *Da Qing lüli* 大清律例 (Legal Code of the Great Qing) in which punishments were embedded. Europe had no clear conception of Chinese law before the 19th century. The Embassy's knowledge of the law of the Qing was scanty due to its short sojourn in China under the Qing court's supervision.

The complete judicial system of the Qing empire was constituted by law, trial and punishment, but the scenes of punishment in Alexander's pictures disregard this legal context completely. In addition to his visual displays of punishment, Alexander did not supplement these by any verbal information on Chinese justice. Instead, he described the practical form of punishment and its application to the criminal in a way that would elicit sympathy in his audience by his explanation, "the punishment of the *cangue* may be compared to that of our pillory."[58] His caption of *cangue* shows a different emphasis from that of the pillory in "British Costumes." The introduction of pillory in Britain is more subjective, and focuses on its history:

> The ignominious punishment of the pillory has been inflicted upon certain delinquents, even from the time of the Saxons. […] Among the atrocities perpetrated in the year 1378 by the rebels of Suffolk, who were led on by John Cavendish, Lord Chief Justice of machine, they placed his head upon the pillory which stood in the market place at St. Edmundsbury.[59]

In comparison, Alexander paid more attention to the form and usage:

> In China a person convicted of petty crimes or misdemeanours is sometimes sentenced to carry the wooden clog about his neck for weeks, or even months; sometimes one hand, or even both hands, are inserted through holes, as well as the neck.[60]

Without the context of history and legal provision, Alexander's picture shows more physical attributes. Alexander also contributed three pictures of an examination. Two are "Culprits before a Magistrate" (WD 961 f. 70 215; 216) in his manuscripts. The relationship between the pictures and the title is not clear, since the artist only depicted officials, and the culprits are out of the picture. The other picture is the plate entitled "Examination of a culprit" in *The Costume of China*, in which the official and messenger are adapted from the former sketches (f. 70 216). The picture is in fact nothing like an actual examination. The caption explains that the female miscreant is a prostitute, which may be a mere attention-grabbing stunt, since no

[58] Alexander 1814, p. 165.
[59] Pyne 1989, p. 105.
[60] Alexander 1814, p. 165.

FIGURE 15. William Alexander, watercolour, WD 960 ff. 59–65 171, British Library.

prostitute appears in Alexander's other sketches. The caption provides nothing about the details of legal procedure in this case, but only the introduction of the official's robe and accoutrements, and how the punishment was executed.

Ignorance of Chinese law and the judicial process on the part of the Embassy remained a negative factor in representing practices of punishment in China at the time. Affected by the Enlightenment movement, the European idea of justice tended to rationalism and aversion to severe penalty. In this vein, Montesquieu declared:

> The severity of punishments is fitter for despotic governments, whose principle is terror, than for a monarchy or a republic whose spring is honor and virtue […] the

> civil laws have therefore a foster way of correcting, and do not require so much force and severity.[61]

Alexander's picture of punishment without a suitable explanation of legal provision illustrates only the cruelty of punishment, produces sympathy, and negatively judges the temperance and wisdom of Qing authority.

Public executions were however still a known phenomenon in early 19th-century Britain. In the eyes of spectators, their cruelty was not so very different from its Qing counterpart. Moreover, during the Embassy's voyage to China, Alexander drew the figure of a boy hanged in public on the back of his sketch of an unidentified coast line (WD 960 ff. 59–65 171, see Figure 15). He explained his picture as following: "Manner of Punishing a Boy for Stealing on Board the Hindostan by Dropping Him Suddenly from the Yard Arm into the Sea." The punishment was not according to any legal code or regulation, which made it a form of "lynch law." Alexander's sketches reveal the Embassy's double standard towards punishment: the Chinese punishment exhibited in Alexander's picture seems discretionary, but the Embassy itself engaged in "lynch law." Considering the ship was sailing on the ocean, the legal sensitivities of the boy's punishment look much more questionable than that of any Chinese criminal in the publications.

Religion

The Catholic China mission constituted the closest cultural encounter between Europe and China before the Opium War, so it cannot be ignored in cases of Western observation of the country. Generally speaking, religious themes make up only a very small proportion of the Embassy's drawings. The British Protestant Reformation weakened clerical authority, making the clergy subordinate and inferior in comparison with the secular authority of the monarch in the 16th century. The Industrial Revolution had shifted British attention to industrial and commercial development, and further eroded social dependence on religion. In these circumstances, the Embassy sent to China for business purposes did not devote much attention to it.

In Alexander's pictures with religious themes, the most frequently depicted subjects were architecture, monks, and scenes of worship. However, the artist did not emphasise their religious significance. The subjects are distinguished by their physical identity, not by any type of spiritual demeanor. In the caption of "A Pagoda (or Tower) near the City of Sou-tcheou" and "A Pagoda or Tower," Alexander did not mention the pagoda's religious import, but focused on its construction and practical function. Similarly, in the caption of "Portrait of a Lama, or Bonze," the artist described the costumes and habits of Chinese monks without remarks on their religious significance.

In scenes of worship, the people, their costumes, and their actions were the main subjects of representation; the statues of gods were only used as background elements. "A Sacrifice in the Temple" (Fig. 16), the 25th plate of *The Costume of China* is a typical example, as the deities are mere symbolic representations. The main subjects are the three men in different costumes and the incense burner, similar sketches of which appear separately in the manuscripts. It is thus a composite picture, and not a real scene of sacrifice. The artist gathered various figures and

[61] Montesquieu 1819, p. 101.

FIGURE 16. William Alexander, "A Sacrifice in the Temple," engraving, *The Costume of China*.

elements in one picture in the context of this religious scene, but did not aim to distill the spirit of religion. Alexander viewed the Chinese religion as an expression of local custom, not as a cosmic and metaphysical way of valuing the world. As a consequence, the representation of the religious atmosphere is not sufficient to invest the picture with religious content.

Except for a few related pictures in Alexander's two albums and one in Staunton's *Authentic Account*, no additional pictures with religious themes emerge in the publications. He supplies several sketched subjects in the manuscripts for publication, and a few deities do appear. See, for example, "Chinese Neptune" (Yale Center B1975.4.809), "The God of Thunder," "A Chinese Idol" (WD 961 f. 19 56), "An Idol of China" (WD 961 f. 19 57), and "A Goddess, Vong-khum, An Idol" (WD 961 f. 19 56; also see Staunton IIP.85). On the whole, these images seem the result of practical observation, and yet the details are unreliable. The Chinese gods are distinguished by their ritual implements. In contrast with Alexander's picture, the goddess Vong-khum (Yanguang niangniang 眼光娘娘) does not hold a mirror, but a sword; the god of thunder (Leibu Dengtianjun 雷部鄧天君) does not stand on a wheel, but on a drum; the Dragon King (Longwang 龍王) does not hold a clock and a ruler, but an inscribed wooden board. Alexander's depiction of the deities reflects his shallow knowledge of Chinese religion. In addition to his own painted deities, he also collected a sample of a Chinese folk painting in his journal. Compared with Alexander's images, the figure is apparently more authentic, and yet he chose not to adapt it for publication.

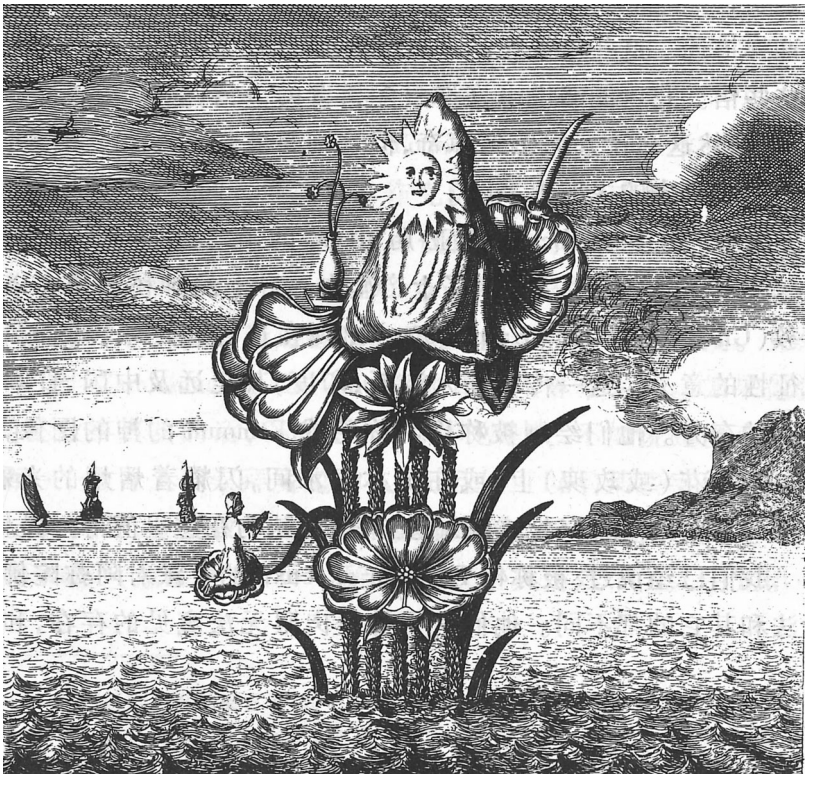

FIGURE 17. Athanasius Kircher, "Guanyin," engraving, *China Illustrata*, p. 140.

In contrast with the Embassy's secular attitude, European missionaries to China over the previous two centuries had paid more attention to religious noumena in the illustrations of their books. They attempted to persuade Europe that the Chinese religion was closely linked to Christianity, so that they could win more support for their missionary agenda. Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata* introduced China from a Christian perspective.[62] Inspection of the illustrations in Kircher's book serves to underscore the stress upon the secular in the Embassy's pictures. The illustration of Guanyin 觀音 (Fig. 17) is of a purely imaginary figure, but it conforms to our general description: Guanyin is sitting on a lotus with solemn appearance, and holds bottle and sword in her two hands. Macartney describes the image of Guanyin in his journal:

> In several of the miaos and pagodas there is a recess or alcove carefully concealed by a close curtain, the removal of which discovers the image of a beautiful woman with a crown upon her head, surrounded by a glory, and two little boys sitting at her feet; the whole seeming like a parody upon popery, or a typification of the Virgin Mary, our infant Saviour, and the young Evangelist St. John.[63]

[62] For details see Luca 2012, pp. 106–137.
[63] Cranmer-Byng 1962, p. 232.

A second look at the illustration from Kircher seems to conform to Macartney's narrative. A creation with reliable image reference would not stray this far away from the image of genuine Guanyin. The artist must have created the image on the basis of a verbal narrative. The picture sharply exposes the extremity of the European misconception of Chinese culture. Nevertheless, what most deserves our attention is the relationship between Guanyin and the worshipper. The worshipper is kneeling on a much smaller lotus leaf below Guanyin, and putting his palms together devoutly. Compared with the size of Guanyin, he is very small. The relative size and position of the goddess and the worshipper directly indicates that religious authority outmatches human will. Reviewing Alexander's "A Sacrifice in the Temple" (Fig. 16), it is interesting to find that the Embassy's perspective and attitude of Chinese religion is totally opposite to the traditional missionary spirit. Kircher's goddess is identified as Guanyin, but the figure is unrecognisable. In contrast, Alexander's figures are more reliable, but difficult to identify. In contrast with Kircher's image, three worshippers occupy the focal point; their figures are much larger than the josses. More importantly, worshippers do not offer prayer in the presence of the deities. In this instance, human secular life has overcome the influence of the divine figure. In contrast with Kircher's illustration, Alexander paid more attention to the humans than to the divinities in his art. Furthermore, the contrast between the amount of religion portrayed, and the portraits as well, suggests that the members of the Embassy focused more on the quotidian behaviour of the local citzenry than they did on their spiritual culture.

Conclusion

Alexander's pictures, together with the event of the Macartney Embassy, should be brought into more general discussions of the European representation of China by other travellers. Colin Mackerras divides the controversial nature of Western images of China into three stages before the Opium War. The first major stage was constituted by the records of European travellers and merchants from the time of ancient Rome until 1540. The second great stage of Sino-European contact was dominated by the European missionaries. The third stage was the European Imperialist projection of China, pioneered by the Macartney Embassy. In the third stage, there was a general shift in European perceptions of China from the positive to an increasingly negative view in the late 18th century.[64] Before the Embassy, merchants and Catholic missionaries already brought back a great quantity of information about China. Generally, Europeans had a positive impression of the Chinese regime system, and its culture and art. However, the rapid development of industrialization and national strength stimulated Britain to claim superiority to the other countries. Alexander could not avoid grafting the social collective unconsciousness of Britain onto the pictures he drew. This is emphasized by Liu Lu and Frances Wood: "They [Alexander's works] were not expressions of his personal creative will, but determined by the British cultural condition in the end of 18th century."[65] Alexander's depictions of

[64] For details see Mackerras 1989, pp. 15–27.

[65] 應該不是出於他本人的藝術創作意願，而是由18世紀末英國特定的文化狀態所決定的. Liu – Wood 2006, pp. 2–3.

Qing China show a land with a developed cityscape but scant industrialization, with forms of severe punishment and idolatry. Thus they contributed factual evidence to this shift in impression.

In the first decade of the 19th century, the Embassy's record of China generated an increasingly negative image of the country and its culture on the British media.[66]

More importantly, Alexander's pictures reflect Britain's self-recognition in comparison with China. John Berger reminds us that "we never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves."[67] Alexander constructed the image of China as an "other" through a Western system of representation to his audience. The construction of the positive "other" is set against the negative aspect of self-recognition, and vice versa. The China in Alexander's pictures was unbelievably calm and unsophisticated. The image of a "pastoral China" could also be regarded as a criticism of industrial and commercial development. Modern economic growth is commonly attributed to the factory-based industrialization that emerged from British inventions in the later 18th century. As early as 1769, Richard Arkwright (1732–1792) patented the water frame, a machine which produced twisted threads, using wooden and metal cylinders rather than human fingers. James Watt (1736–1819) improved the steam engine in 1769, which lead to the installation of the first engines in commercial enterprises in 1776. These inventions allowed the more efficient works in textile mills and other heavy industries. By that time British factories provided some two-thirds of the world's output of "new technology industries."[68]

The pace of British life was speeding up, and the importance of nature appeared to be in the descent. The accelerated daily life aroused a yearning for a pastoral lifestyle, and a rebellion against the modern lifestyle. The "pastoral China" in the pictures reflected the distance between British daily life and the pastoral. Nevertheless, the appreciation of China was just a small part of the picture. The establishment of positive self-recognition was based against the "other." The rising Britain was eager to confirm its national confidence, and one way to do this was by denying other countries the opportunity to express their superior features. In his art, Alexander constructed an agricultural China without strong commercial strength. Even established shops were largely absent in Alexander's China. At the same time, British merchants were traveling around the world in search of commercial opportunities. In these circumstances, compared with China's agricultural economy and restrained commercial society, the Embassy did build self-recognition based on Britain's advanced commercial economy.

The Embassy's discovery of China, in turn, shaped British and other European views and understandings of their own cultures: advanced, civilized, and industrial. There is no denying that the side effect of this was that the explorers retained possession of absolute power over the dissemination of knowledge, and that the disadvantaged

[66] For example, in 1800, five years after the Embassy's return to Britain, the article "Chinese Dogs" appeared in *Universal Magazine*, describing the Chinese as "scavengers" willing to "eat any animal, even if they have died of sickness, such as dead horses and dogs that they see floating down the canals." For details see *Universal Magazine*, vol. 107 (July 1800), p. 54 cited in Collins 2014, p. 45.

[67] Berger 1985, p. 9.

[68] Bairoch 1982, p. 288.

group represented as the subjects of the images had no room to speak for themselves. Yet the collection of such global visual knowledge connected the various races and countries around the world.

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Chinese Abstract

威廉•亞歷山大筆下的中國形象

威廉•亞歷山大是馬戛爾尼使團的官方繪圖員。他筆下的中國圖像題材廣泛而全面地反映了清乾隆時期中國社會生活的方方面面。作為英國官方畫家，他所選擇的每一種題材都投射出不同的目的性。風景、建築和肖像是其作品最主要的三個組成部分，都投射出當時英國對中國人文社會圖像知識的匱乏和濃厚興趣。除此之外，亞歷山大的繪畫還包括景物、風俗、動植物和宗教題材。這些作品進一步豐富了英國觀眾對中國的視覺認知。對比其他歐洲畫家的作品，以及使團之前英國畫家的作品，亞歷山大筆下的中國圖像表現出 18 世紀末英國特有的社會觀念和對中國的看法，而這觀念為將來兩國之間的政治和經濟危機埋下了伏筆。

關鍵字: 馬戛爾尼使團、人種學傾向、中國圖像、文化誤讀、東方主義

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