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Reconsidering Chinese Export Paintings: Impact of Art in China on the Paintings Made for Trade

Deng, Yiping

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Reconsidering Chinese Export Paintings: Impact of Art in China on the Paintings Made for Trade

Name: Yiping Deng

Student ID: s2428059

Date: 01/07/2021

Contents

1. Introduction 1

2. Export Paintings and Classical Chinese Manuals 9

2.1 Getty Woodcut and Volkenkunde Watercolor 11

2.2 *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* and its Precedent 17

2.3 An Influential Prototype 20

2.4 Conclusion 24

3. The Dipper Mother and Chinese Religious Art 25

3.1 The Dipper Mother in the Export Painting 26

3.2 Religious Art as the Source of Inspiration 33

3.3 Conclusion 38

4. Conclusion 39

Sources of Illustrations 44

Bibliography 48

1. Introduction

At the port of the late Qing Guangzhou, boxes of paintings were being loaded to the vessels. They would go on a long voyage and finally land in a foreign country, perhaps the United States, Britain, the Netherlands, or Germany. They would probably show up in a house as a piece of personal collection, at an auction as a lot, or in a museum as an exhibit. The previous lines are just a fictional scene imagined by me. However, the industry mentioned in the scenario did exist in the Qing China. What was transported within the complicated global network was a unique type of paintings, which is entitled with the name “export painting”. The discussion of this thesis is surrounding the topic of export paintings, through which I would like to explore the relationship between this specific sort of art with conventional art in China. Before we start the discussion, I am going to give an introduction first on what we are going to talk about throughout the whole thesis.

“Chinese export painting” relates to a phenomenon where various types of commodities were produced specifically for foreign consumers outside of China (most of which were from Europe or the United States), from the 17th century to the 19th century. Chinese teas, porcelains, lacquer wares, fabrics, and other commodities gained tremendous popularity in the western market. It was under this context that unique Chinese export paintings appeared on the lists of exported commodities.

In most cases, the term “Chinese export paintings” can be used interchangeably with “Chinese trade paintings”. However, it will be too arbitrary to categorize all paintings exported outside China in the 17th to 19th century under the heading of commodities for trade, though it is undoubtedly one of its primary identities. The transmission and circulation of this type of paintings are quite complicated. As Roselien van Paul explains, several phases consist of the commodification and decommodification of

export paintings. In some instances, export paintings played another role, such as gifts, rather than mere commodities for trade.[1] No matter how they were transported from China to a foreign land, the result is that most of these paintings found their home abroad. Given this indisputable fact, the term "Chinese export painting" will be more appropriate than "Chinese trade paintings" in this case.

Most Chinese export paintings are viewed as a product of mass productions. For a long time, Chinese export paintings have been enduring the infamy of non-original and less-creativity. In addition, they never occupied high status in the foreign trade like Chinese porcelains. As a byproduct of trades which seems to have few originalities, Chinese export paintings were consistently viewed to be inferior to most art forms. These paintings have been then situated in the periphery, of both art markets and scholarship. The beginning of the study on Chinese export paintings can be traced back to James Orange's *The Chater Collection: Pictures Relating to China, Hong Kong, Macao, 1655-1860*, which is famous for its abundant sources of pictures like oil paintings and watercolors, and its classification system which has been a model for many catalogues.[2] However, export paintings still had not got a relatively clear definition until another important reference book came to exist. That is *Chinese Export Art in the Eighteenth Century*, written by Margaret Jourdain and Roger Soame Jenyns in 1951.[3] The two authors want to attract attention to the cultural exchange through this book, in which western scholars try for the first time to define what "Chinese export art" is. They offer a quantity of primary sources to discuss paper-hangings and reverse glass paper mainly. They also briefly mention paintings on pith paper (in this book it is called "rice paper") and prints. With the foundation laid by these precedents, the following scholars have

1., Rosalien Van Der Poel, "Theories for new insights into Chinese export paintings," in *Made for Trade - Made in China. Chinese Export Paintings in Dutch Collections: Art and Commodity* (Dissertations, self-pub, 2016), 42.

2. James Orange, *The Chater Collection: Pictures Relating to China, Hongkong, Macao, 1655-1860 中國通商圖*（London: Thornton Butterworth Limited, 1924).

3. Margaret Jourdain, *Chinese Export Art in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Spring Books, 1967).

worked on more in-depth research and gradually unveil the values of Chinese export paintings. One of the leading illustrated reference works is *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade: Paintings, Furnishings and Exotic Curiosities*,[4] a new extended version of *The China Trade* written by Carl Crossman in 1972.[5] This treatise includes fascinating accounts on various types of exported objects (especially those stored in the United States), such as paintings, furniture, lacquerware, etc. With the solid and comprehensive analysis in the book, Crossman makes a great contribution to figuring out the identities of export painters and chronologies of certain paintings, and prompts the discussion on monographic studies. Following Crossman's path, in 1984 Craig Clunas researched Chinese export watercolors collected by the Victoria and Albert Museum. The outcomes are included in his book *Chinese Export Watercolors*.[6] In this book, he argues that Chinese export watercolors witnessed a tendency of pleasing western customers. Those paintings, though produced by Chinese artisans, owe little to Chinese culture. They are paintings of fantasy rather than depictions of reality. Clunas has also inserted brief introduction of Chinese export paintings into *Chinese Export Art and Design*[7] and *Art in China*.[8] So does Claudia Brown, who includes the history of Chinese export paintings in the last section of her book *Great Qing: Painting in China 1644-1911*.[9] In addition to Clunas, many scholars also endeavor to trace inventories of Chinese export in museums or other agencies. One of the representatives is *Chinese Export Paintings of the Qing Period in the British Library*, which was worked out under

4. Carl L Crossman, *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade: Paintings, Furnishings and Exotic Curiosities*, China Trade (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 1991).

5. Carl L Crossman, *The China Trade: Export Paintings, Furniture, Silver & Other Objects* (Princeton: Pyne Press, 1972).

6. Craig Clunas, *Chinese Export Watercolours* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984).

7. Craig Clunas, *Chinese Export Art and Design* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1987)

8. Craig Clunas, *Art in China* (Oxford [etc.]: Oxford University Press, 1997).

9. Claudia Brown, *Great Qing: Painting in China, 1644-1911* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).

the successful collaboration between British and Chinese scholars from 2003-2011.[10] This book series can be viewed as a considerable achievement, enabling readers to access 748 Qing export paintings stored in the British Library. Besides taking high-definition photos, researchers also carefully studied each image, which is evident by the notes next to the dedicated illustrations. Five years after the publication of this book, another important work on repositories in the Netherlands was published by Rosalien van der Poel. Van der Poel did both quantitative and qualitative research on the Chinese export paintings in the Dutch museums (especially the Volkenkunde Museum).[11] She declares in her Ph.D. dissertation *Made for trade - Made in China. Chinese Export Paintings in Dutch Collections: Art and Commodity*, that Chinese export paintings should be seen as a commodity and art, and she calls for awareness of these valuable objects.

Inventory is just one direction of studies on Chinese export paintings. Other scholars, such Ifan William and Lee Sai Chong Jack, unroll their studies from other perspectives rather than places of collections. Williams provides highly detailed information and analysis on *tongcao hu* 通草畫 (Chinese export pith painting) all around the world. In his book *Created in Canton-Chinese Export Watercolours on Pith*, Williams divides all nowadays accessible *tongcao hua* into six categories, including port landscapes, industries of agriculture and manufacture, flora and fauna, and etc.[12] It can be seen from his book that *tongcao hua* is an individual and massive branch of Chinese export paintings, with diverse styles and subjects. Lee concentrates more on the people involved in manufacturing these paintings. He researches the paintings through the lens

10. Wang Cicheng 王次澄 et al., Daying tushuguan tecang zhongguo qingdai waixiaohua jinghua 大英圖書館特藏中國清代外銷畫精華 (Chinese Export Paintings of the Qing Period in The British Library) (Guangzhou: Guangdong People's Publishing House, 2011).

11. Van Der Poel, (Dissertations, self-pub, 2016).

12. Ifan Williams, *Created in Canton-Chinese Export Watercolours on Pith*, trans. Cheng Meibao 程美寶(Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe 嶺南美術出版社, 2014).

of various artisans such as Chinqua, Pu Qua and Lamqua.[13] His book reveals how the style of Chinese export painting was gradually formed in the hands of Chinese artisans during different stages in the 18th and 19th centuries. Apart from these two books mentioned above, many other researchers and scholars also devote themselves to monographic studies. For example, Yang Guang 楊光[14] and Lin Lichuan 林禮川[15] start from the images of females in the Chinese export paintings to discuss the cultural exchange and hybridity between the east and the west. Research on paintings about funerals undertaken by Liu Mengshi 劉朦詩 demonstrates traditional funeral etiquette and rituals, and the difference between the eastern and western concepts of death.[16] Bing Jiaojiao 邴嬌嬌[17] and Wang Manjiao 王曼姣[18] give insight into artistic techniques and aesthetic values by working on paintings of streets and paintings of weaving, respectively. These substantial works not only expand the horizon of studying Chinese export paintings and fill the voids, but also display the values of Chinese export paintings as art and commodities with "social life".

Even though the Chinese export paintings' status of lacking attention has been changed

13. Sai Chong Jack Lee, 'China Trade Painting: 1750s to 1880s', *China Trade Painting* (Hong Kong : University of Hong Kong, 2005).

14. Yang Guang 楊光, "*Yunxiangyichang hualixiangrong: Qingdai nvxing ticai de Guangzhou waixiao bolihua* 雲想衣裳 畫裏想容——清代女性題材的廣州外銷玻璃畫 (The Guangzhou Export Reverse Glass Painting Regarding the Subject of Female)," *Oriental Collection* 東方收藏, no. 03(2021):18-24.

15. Lin Lichuan 林禮川, "*Qingdai waixiaohua zhong de nvxing ticai yanjiu* 清代外銷畫中的女性題材研究 (Research on Female Subjects in Export Paintings of Qing Dynasty)," MA Thesis., (Qingdao: Qingdao University of Science and Technology, 2020).

16. Liu Mengshi 劉朦詩, "*Guangzhou waixiao tongcaohua zhong de sangzang liyitu yanjiu* 廣州外銷通草畫中的喪葬禮儀圖研究 (Research on the Funeral Rituals in the Guangzhou Export Pith Painting)," MA Thesis., (Guangzhou: Guangzhou University, 2019).

17. Bing Jiaojiao 邴嬌嬌, "*Tuxiang yu jiyi: Qingdai waixiaohua Zhong de fangzhi tu* 圖像與技藝：清代外銷畫中的紡織圖 (Images And Techniques: The Textile Drawings of Export Paintings in Qing Dynasty)," MA Thesis., (Harbin: Harbin Normal University, 2016).

18. Wang Manjiao 王曼姣, "*Guangzhoushi renwu waixiaohua tese yanjiu* 廣州街市人物外銷畫特色研究 (The Research of China Export Paintings That Depicted the Street Characters of Canton)," MA Thesis., (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Sci-Tech University, 2016).

under the efforts of generations of scholars, it should be admitted that these previous studies have some limitations. One of the noticeable defeats is that most scholars did not mention the impact of art in China on the Chinese export paintings. This phenomenon can be explained by Clunas's statement, that "(Chinese export watercolors) did not exist separately from, but rather as an integral part of, the relationship between China and the West, one which tilted dramatically in the West's favour during the period to be covered".[19] As a sort of product specifically served for customers from the western countries, it has been widely acknowledged that Western styles and techniques significantly impacted Chinese export paintings.[20] What's more, when facing the uncountable Chinese artistic works and the lack of literature support, it is not easy to carry out this research. There are only a few scholars who show interest in this issue. For example, Jourdain notes many Chinese export prints come from illustrated books such as *Jieziyuan huapu* 芥子園畫譜 (Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden) by Wang Gai 王槩(1645-1710).[21] Lee points out export artisans might get hints from Chinese conventional aesthetic preference to slim when making export figure paintings.[22] Van der Poel also simply illustrates a few examples of art made within China and export paintings that share similarities.[23] Williams is the scholar who mentions this issue most among all researchers. He raises several assumptions about the sources of Chinese export paintings, such as novels and dramas.[24] On the one hand, even though these analyses are scattered, they are inspiring for researchers who are enthralled with this field. However, on the other hand, though many scholars approach this issue, they did not go deeper and further into this topic. Therefore, the attention on the impacts of art in China on Chinese export paintings so far is far from enough. It proves how crucial it

19. Clunas (1984), 11.

20. Jourdain.; Clunas (1984).; Crossman (1991).; Wang.

21. Jourdain, "Paper-hangings, Prints and Paintings," 32.

22. Lee, "Witness of the Opening of China: Oil Portraits by Lamqua," 174.

23. Van Der Poel, "Inventory of the Dutch collections," 112-168.

24. Williams, "Religion, old tales, processions and performances," 108-115.

is to fill the gap.

In order to make up for the absence of scholarly attention mentioned above, this paper seeks to provide a new insight into Chinese export paintings through the lens of the influence from China. In this research, multifarious and copious sources will be employed. Due to limited amount of written primary western and Chinese sources, this research will rely heavily on the paintings themselves. Besides the open-access collections in the worldwide museums, plates and illustrations in the following books will also be used as reference: *Created in Canton* (Williams), *Made for Trade-Made in China* (Van der Poel), and *Chinese Export Paintings of the Qing Period in The British Library* (Chen, etc.). The corpus will definitely offer a wealth of information, which includes roughly 1500 export paintings. In other words, paintings will, and can "speak" for themselves. In addition to the paintings, primary sources such as written literature, and secondary sources such as existing literature on export paintings and relevant subjects will play an important role as supplements.

The paper will be divided into two sections, each of which is based on a case study. The first section will explore classical Chinese manuals as the sources for export paintings. The obsession of westerners on Chinese export commodities, especially those commodities like silk and tea, triggered their interest in the agriculture and manufacturing industries of the remote and mysterious country.[25] In this context, the export paintings on the subject matters like agriculture, sericulture, and manufacturing, thus upsprang. Most scholars believe this sort of paintings is of the western painting style and owes barely nothing to the art in China.[26] However, through the case study of *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* 禦制耕織圖 (Imperially Commissioned Illustrations of Agriculture and Sericulture), I would like to challenge the conventional scholarly arguments. We can observe from the visual analysis that the Chinese albums on the theme of agriculture

25. Clunas (1984), "The Tea and Porcelain Industries," 23.

26. Clunas (1984).; Crossman (1991).

and sericulture, which initially made for introducing advanced technology to people, served as the archetypes for producing Chinese export paintings.

In the second half of the thesis, the readers' attentions will be drawn to figure paintings, another subcategory of the Chinese export paintings. It is going to question the narrative that the export paintings regarding figures were constructed by the "east" in the eyes of the west.[27] In the case of the Dipper Mother, who was one of the most influential goddesses in early modern China, readers will discover that icons from the Chinese religious paintings were copied and transplanted to export paintings. The medias and formats of Chinese religious paintings is another important topic of this section, since it would affect whether or not the export paintings had the chance to access to these "potential models" for their art-related activities.

On the whole, conducting research on the impact of the domestic context on Chinese export paintings is the main focus of this paper. It will twist the idea that paintings for the export purpose from the 17th century to the 19th century were only affected by western art. Instead, the art in China also got deeply involved in feeding the diversity of Chinese export paintings in the process of reproduction and copying.

27. Clunas (1984), "Figure Subjects," 43-72.

2. Export Paintings and Classical Chinese Manuals

The 18th century welcomed the second wave of European interest in Chinese export goods.[28] The expansion of the international market, and the increasingly rising demand in Europe for consumer commodities from China, led to the enormous import of silks, porcelains, tea, and so on. The export goods not only strengthened western customers' obsession with those stylish and luxurious Chinese objects, but also triggered their interest in how these fascinating commodities were made in the far distant country.

The intense interest in the Chinese exports and their manufacturing process opened up an opportunity for those making and trading export paintings to depict rural lives, and manufacturing or farming processes in paintings for sale overseas. Therefore, a great number of export paintings concerning the scenes or processes of agricultural or manufacturing were created during the late 18th century to the middle 19th century.[29] They can be appreciated nowadays in the museums and cultural institutions across the world, such as the British Museum, the Volkenkunde Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the National Library of France and so forth. From what I have viewed, most exporting paintings on this subject matter at first seem to owe little to Chinese conceptions of paintings (Figure 1). The traditional flatted perspective has been replaced by the single-point perspective of western drawing. Lightness and shading were applied in paintings, which was quite unusual in early modern China. Farms and labors are set in elaborate natural settings, reminding viewers of the harmonious and idyllic landscapes often seen in western paintings. Some researchers have also noticed these characters. For example, when Clunas analyses a set showing the stages of cultivation and preparation of tea, he points out the whole set was created under the guidance of western drawing tradition.[30]

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28. David Porter, 'Chinoiserie and the Aesthetics of Illegitimacy', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 28, no. 1(1999): 28.

29. Clunas (1984), "The Tea and Porcelain Industries," 23.

30. Ibid., 23-24.

However, not all export paintings on this subject matter follow western artistic conventions. Crossman mentions that the watercolors of the subjects, like growing tea, making porcelain, cultivating silk and rice, are more Chinese than western. He argues that although a degree of perspective was employed in painting architecture and background, these paintings are still very Chinese in feeling because of a certain flatness.[31] I have found several works that were made by copying, reproducing, or borrowing elements from the classical Chinese manuals of technical artifacts and processes.

Figure 1 An illustration in an export set collected by the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The illustration depicts a scene of cultivating tea.

Due to the word limitation, in the following text, I am going to focus on the case of a set of 24 Chinese export watercolors in Volkenkunde Museum. Van der Poel also use this set as an example when she investigates the subject on production phases. She suggests imperial albums such as the *Yuzhi genzhi tu* is the prototypical model for export

31. Crossman (1991), “Watercolours and Gouaches,” 174-179.

paintings.[32] However, she stops at a brief discussion and does not provide concrete proof. Therefore, in this section I will give a more careful work. I am going to provide rounded and in-depth illustrations of the issue, through which we will unveil the tight relationship between Chinese paintings and paintings made for export, both dealing with aspects of agriculture and manufacturing processes.

2.1 Getty Woodcut and Volkenkunde Watercolor

Before starting the visual comparison, some background information of the materials will be given. Figure 2 (cited as "Getty Woodcut"), which seems to be the sibling of Figure 3, actually has an extended history. It is an illustration from a hand-colored album collected by the Getty Research Institute. The album was woodblock printed in 1696. The album, in fact, is one of the most influential manuals of agriculture and sericulture, which is titled *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* 禦制耕織圖 (Imperially Commissioned Illustrations of Agriculture and Sericulture) or *Peiwen gengzhi tu* 佩文耕織圖 (The Peiwen Studio Pictures of Tilling and Weaving). More details about *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* will be given in the following text when introducing the circulation of the book. Figure 3 (cited as "Volkenkunde Watercolor" in the following text) comes from a set collected by the Volkenkunde Museum, in the Netherlands. The set consists of 24 watercolor paintings, each of which is 25 centimeters in height and 24 centimeters in length. The 24 watercolors created in the 19th century, are all painted on pith paper, a special type of media which export painters widely employed during the Qing period.[33] After having a general idea about these two figures, now is the time to pay the attention to the two figures.

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32. Van der Poel, "Inventory of the Dutch collections," 147-149.

33. Williams, "Introduction," 11.

Figure 2 (Left) Getty Woodcut. An illustration of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* collected by the Getty Research Institute. The illustration depicts ladies who are washing silkworm eggs.

Figure 3 (Right) Volkenkunde Watercolor. A watercolor in an export set collected by the Volkenkunde Museum. The watercolor depicts ladies who are washing silkworm eggs.

The shared affinities are very surprising when comparing the Volkenkunde Watercolor and Getty Woodcut. The artists of the two images adopted the same composition. An architecture, with the apparent traditional Chinese characteristics, fills up two-third of the paper. The architecture is located in a beautiful garden, surrounded by the foregrounded trees and rock and a lake on the right-hand side. In the background are lines of bamboos, which cover the wall in the back. There are four ladies in each painting. Three are in the hall of the architecture, who are dealing with silkworm eggs in the bucket. The other lady, who is holding a tea tray, stands with her back to the viewers. Regardless of the positions of these ladies, their clothes, or their poses, even their facial expressions, the depictions have a lot of overlap. If we examine the two figures carefully, we will observe that the elements in these two paintings are also alike.

For example, the root of the tree in the bottom left has a strange curving shape, which can be seen in the Getty Woodcut and Volkenkunde Watercolor. The two swallows flying low, also look exactly the same.

Another noticeable similarity is the use of the perspective. It can neither be simply described as the western one-point perspective, which has a single “vanishing point” on the horizon line, nor can it be described as the traditional Chinese flattened perspective, through which a painter can depict more than can be seen with the naked eye. Regarding the arrangement of elements in different distances, the technique adopted by the painters is much closer to the one-point perspective. Namely, objects appear to get smaller as they get further away. We can see from the image that the architecture in the middle ground is larger than the bamboo forest and the wall in the background. If the painters follow the Chinese convention, then the architecture lies in the middle ground, and the forest in the background would be almost the same in size. However, when viewing the inner of the architecture, some strange points that cannot be overlooked. If following the one-point perspective, the painter could not in any way show a great part of the screen standing behind the three ladies. It is also impossible for the viewers to see the ground and banister through the opening at such a strange angle. In drawing the interior, the painters chose to apply parallel lines. It can be proved by the ceramic tiles on the ground, that no matter how far they are, their size never changes. Therefore, the painters combined the western and Chinese conventional technique of perspective together, and endowed viewers with a unique visual experience.

Through the comparison, it can be seen that the Volkenkunde Watercolor have great overlap with the Getty Woodcut. A safe conclusion therefore can be drawn that, these two paintings are identical in respect of the composition, the depiction of elements, and the perspective.

Seen from the comparison, we can see that the Volkenkunde Watercolor is modelled on the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* by Jiao Bingzhen. However, it is too early to conclude that the

Getty Woodcut and the Volkenkunde Watercolor are exactly the same. There are still some nuances worth attention. The most noticeable difference is that the Volkenkunde Watercolor consists of one more painting than the Getty Woodcut. The extra painting is about embroidery (Figure 4), in which a lady and her servant are going to join the needlecraft activity that the other two ladies are enjoying at home on that occasion. It is a watercolor on pith, and the size of it is as same as the one of the other 23 watercolors in the set. From my research, this image is neither modelled on the Jiao's original album, nor on other albums containing illustration of sericulture. Nevertheless, it is also too soon to say that it is an original artistic creation. Further research is required to answer this question. Therefore, let us put it aside and look at the painting itself.

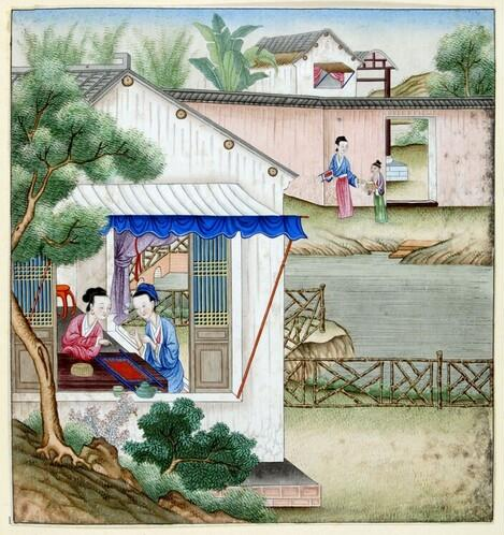

Figure 4 A watercolor in an export set collected by the Volkenkunde Museum. The watercolor depicts ladies who are doing needlecraft.

From where I am standing, the 24th watercolor shows great relevance to the other 23 images that it keeps company with, regarding the content and the style. As for the content, the feminine needlework depicted in the watercolor ties closely with sericultural activities such as raising silkworms and textile work demonstrated in the former 23 paintings. If following the sequence of illustrations in the Getty Woodcut by

Jiao, the subject of the last picture is *cheng yi* 成衣 (making clothes), in which customers are buying beautifully printed clothes from merchants. After taking clothes home, it is logical that women would start stay-at-home handiwork like needlecraft. In this aspect, the extra 24th watercolor supplements the story of a piece of clothing from its starting point to the end, making the series of sericultural activities more thorough and complete.

As for the style, the composition and perspective of this watercolor follow the same canon as the other 23 paintings do. The painting is divided into three parts (the foreground, the middle, and the background). The main architecture with two ladies sitting inside occupies two-third of the scene. At the same time, the export painter employed the combination of the western one-point perspective and the Chinese flatted perspective. Therefore, the background landscape can be clearly distinguished from the foreground. Meanwhile, more elements that are supposed to be covered are demonstrated through the side door of the architecture.

Besides the added 24th watercolor, some slight variation can be found when putting the Volkenkunde Watercolor and the Getty Woodcut side-by-side. For example, the color of the previous set is much lighter and richer than the latter one. During the copying, the export painter changed the color of certain elements like cloth and architecture. As I have observed, more ultramarine blue is used by the export painter (Figure 5-6). In addition, there are more decorative elements in the 24 export watercolors, such as the magic-script-shape decorations depicted on the door board (Figure 7). Other differentiations include the stroke in drawing plants, the omittance of Lou and the Kangxi Emperors' poems, etc. Although there are several dissimilarities, I would like to argue that it is undoubtedly that the export painter took the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* as the model in creating the Volkenkunde Watercolor. The alterations, such as the colors, decorations, brushwork, getting rid of texts, even adding the 24th painting into the set, do not shake the realization that the export paintings were loyally copied from the *Yuzhi*

gengzhi tu. As previously discussed, the compositions, the elements and the perspective technique in the Getty Woodcut and the Volkenkunde Watercolor share a considerable likeness. The modifications, which to some degree can be viewed as the original artistic creation by the export painter, are insignificant when facing the remarkable resemblance between the Volkenkunde Watercolor and the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*.

Figure 5 (Left) An illustration of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* collected by the Getty Research Institute. The illustration depicts the process of cultivating silkworms. The colors are light and elegant. Only a few blue-color is employed.

Figure 6 (Right) A watercolor in an export set collected by the Volkenkunde Museum. The watercolor depicts the process of cultivating silkworms. The colors are bright. Blue-color is extensively used in the watercolor.

Figure 7 The detail of a watercolor in an export set collected by the Volkenkunde Museum. A magic-script-shape decoration is depicted on the door board.

2.2 Yuzhi gengzhi tu and its Precedent

After spotting the similarities and differences of these two images, it is time to introduce more detailed information about the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*. So that we can better understand why the album was chosen as a model for the export paintings. The word "*yuzhi*" indicates its tight relationship with the imperial court. For the purpose of *quannong* 勸農 (promoting agriculture) and stressing the ethnic identity, the Kangxi Emperor (1654-1722) commissioned Jiao Bingzhen 焦秉貞 (active in the late 17th century to the early 18th century) to paint a new version of *Gengzhi tu*, by modelling on the renowned Song version by Lou Shu 樓璹 (1090-1162). (Bray p529) The *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* was completed in 1696, consisting of two sets of 23 illustrations. The illustrations are accompanied by texts, including Lou's poems in the original Song version, and imperial pomes composed by the Kangxi Emperor. The imperial background undoubtedly enhanced the prestige of work. It served for introducing advanced technology to the backward regions as well as for promoting the emperor's achievement in building and governing a harmony ideal Confucian society.[34] Owing to this reason, since the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* came to exist, the album had been widely published into different versions, which enabled the album to face a diverse readership.[35] The *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* was classified as a didactic illustration, while it is also impossible to neglect its high artistic quality. The album was painted in realistic style with neat outlines. The scenes look elegant and clean. The using of western perspective also made it distinguish

34. Francesca Bray, "Agricultural Illustrations: Blueprint or Icon?," in *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China* (Leiden, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007), 529-552.

35. Yuan Li 袁理, "*Yuzhi gengzhi tu* 禦制耕織圖 (Imperially Commissioned Illustrations of Agriculture and Sericulture)," The Palace Museum, accessed May 24, 2021, https://www.dpm.org.cn/ancient/hall/161234.html.

from traditional Chinese painting. In a word, it is a tasteful and delicate work of art. Therefore, as a gorgeous work of art conveying political message, *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* naturally entered wide circulation. As discussed by Takeshi Watabe, the *Yuzhi Gengzhi tu* enjoyed great popularity outside of the court. Porcelains, year paintings, or other types of art with the subject of *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* were also popular at that time.[36] The Volkenkunde Watercolor is just one of these reproductions. The export painters copied the second half of *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*, which depicts a completed process of making silks, from cultivating silkworm eggs to selling clothing. Due to the widespread of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*, it was most likely that export painters had seen the album somewhere, which led to the activities of copying and reproducing this icon. The context of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*, therefore explains why the Getty Woodcut and the Volkenkunde Watercolor share significant similarities, as I argued in the previous text`.

Another reason why the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* was chosen by the export painter was possibly because of the long tradition of painting processes of farming. The *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*, which the Volkenkunden Watercolor modelled on, can be traced back to the *Gengzhi tu* made in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279). The Song version of *Gengzhi tu* was made by Lou Shou 樓璹's (1090-1162) in 1145. After being completed, it received many appreciations and soon entered the artisans' repository of popular scenes.[37] Though the Lou's *Gengzhi tu* is lost, other artists and craftsmen's copies and reproductions have survived and were circulating in the Qing Dynasty. In 1689, the Kangxi Emperor achieved a reproduced *Gengzhi tu* during his southern inspection tour, which led to Jiao's assignment of painting a new version of *Gengzhi tu* (which later became the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*). Accordingly, Jiao borrowed many elements from *Gengzhi tu*. Japan National Diet Library collects two volumes of woodblock-printing books which was a copy of the Song original version of *Genzhi tu*. The book was printed in

36. Takeshi Watabe, "*Gengzhi tu liuchuan kao* 耕織圖流傳考 (Research on the Circulation of the *Gengzhi tu*)," *Nongye kaogu* 農業考古 (Agricultural Archaeology), trans. Cao Xingsui 曹幸穗, no. 01(1989): 162.

37. Bray, 529-530.

1676. Through these two volumes, we can see how the Song original version looked like. After comparing the two volumes with the Getty Woodcut and the Volkenkunde Watercolor, it can be traced that these three works have a strong connection. For instance, in the illustration named *er mian* 二眠 (the second phase of silkworm sleep) in the Getty Woodcut (Figure 8), a lady is fawning over a baby held by a standing woman. An elder boy is holding the standing woman's clothing, trying to get her attention. Again, the scene was precisely copied by the export painter in the Volkenkunde Watercolor (Figure 9). However, the scene in *er mian* was not originally created by Jiao Bingzhen. Instead, the motif was borrowed from the *er mian* illustration in the Song *Gengzhi tu* (Figure 10). Though the brushwork in the illustrations is different, the figures can be easily recognized through their postures and positions. Supported by the same arrangement of figures in the illustrations with the same title *er mian*, I want to suggest that the *Gengzhi tu* of the Song Dynasty, the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* of the Qing Dynasty, and the Volkenkunde Watercolor, are closely connected. The finding has therefore indirectly proved the significant popularity of the *Gengzhi tu* as a subject.

Figure 8 (Left) An illustration of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* collected by the Getty Research Institute. The illustration depicts ladies who are fawning over a baby.

Figure 9 (Right) A watercolor in an export set collected by the Volkenkunde Museum. The watercolor

depicts ladies who are fawning over a baby.

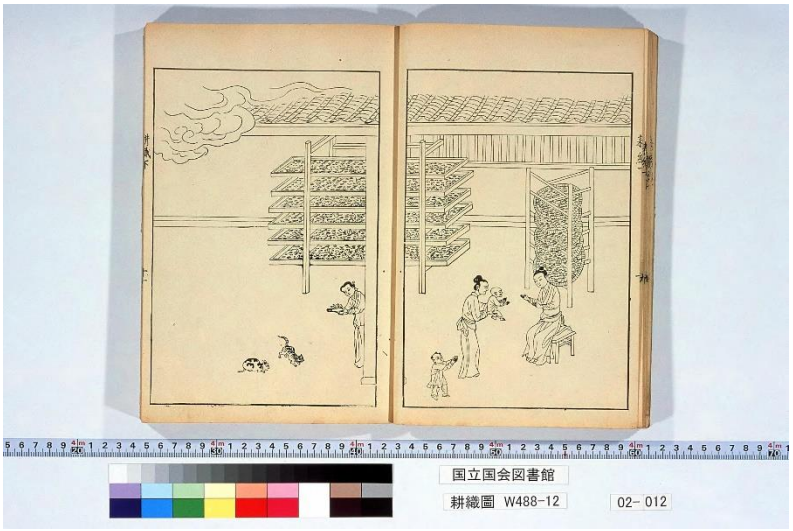

Figure 10 An illustration in a woodblock printed Gengzhi tu collected by the National Diet Library. The watercolor is about the process "*ermian"*. The left page depicts two ladies who are fawning over a baby.

2.3 An Influential Prototype

Due to the political purpose, artistic value and the long history of *Genzhi tu*, the subject *Gengzhi tu* had been continuously affecting the export paintings. Copying a completed set of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* is just one way for the export painters to create export paintings. An export album collected by the British Museum shows the other way in taking advantage of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*.

This album from the British Museum was created approximately in 1800 to 1850, almost the same time as creating the Volkenkunde Watercolor. It comprises six monochromatic ink paintings, which depict silk and cotton manufacture in China. The painting from the album (Figure 11), with the inscribed name "*shisi. zhi* 十四. 織(the fourteenth weaving)", displays a scene of weaving. In the architecture on the left-hand

side, a woman is using a reclining loom to weave cloth. The two women behind her are leaning against the banister to watch the weaving work. On the other side, a woman holding several cloth rolls seems to be talking with the other lady. What makes this ink painting interesting is that the left half and right half, which just been described, in fact were borrowed from two individual illustrations from the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* album (Figure 12-13). The half on the left side was modelled on the 17th illustration called *zhi* 織 (weaving), and the other half was copied from the two-thirds scene of the 16th illustration named *wei* 緯 (wefting). The two scenes, which are supposed to illustrate the procedure and process of making the weft and weaving clothes, are combined into one scene. The scene of a lady who preparing the weft threads with the spooling tool in the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* was deliberately ignored. A new gardening landscape replaced the two settings in the original illustrations.

Apart from this one, another painting named "*disi daqi* 第四. 大起 (the fourth newly-born silkworms)" (Figure 14) is also a reproduction of the Qing album collected by the Volkenkunde Museum (Figure 15). It shows that, the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* is an essential reference work for the export painter who made the ink painting set. Given the date of creating this album is close to the making date of the Volkenkunde Watercolor, I believe that export paintings on sericulture and needlecraft were warmly welcomed by the foreign customers and merchants during the 19th century. It is also demonstrated that the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* had an exalted status in the repository of export painters. That is why the export painters tirelessly copied the illustrations from the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*, or borrowed ideas and motifs from them in creating new artistic works on sericulture.

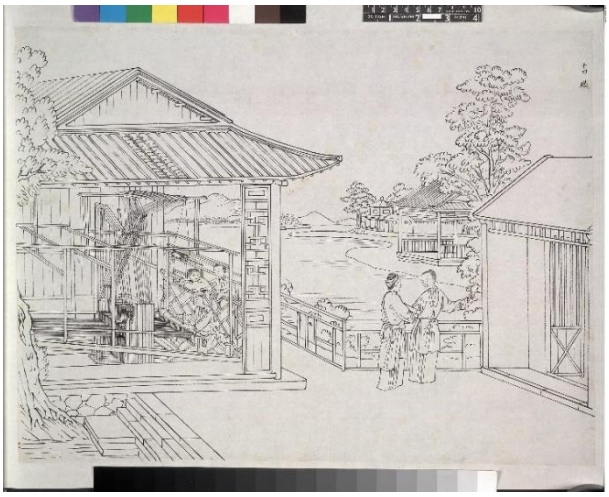

Figure 11 A leaf from an album collected by the British Museum. The leaf depicts the scene of weaving.

Figure 12 (Left) An illustration of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* collected by the Getty Research Institute. The illustration depicts a lady who is weaving, with the accompany of the other two ladies.

Figure 13 (Right) An illustration of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* collected by the Getty Research Institute. The illustration depicts a lady who is making weft and the other two ladies who are talking to each other.

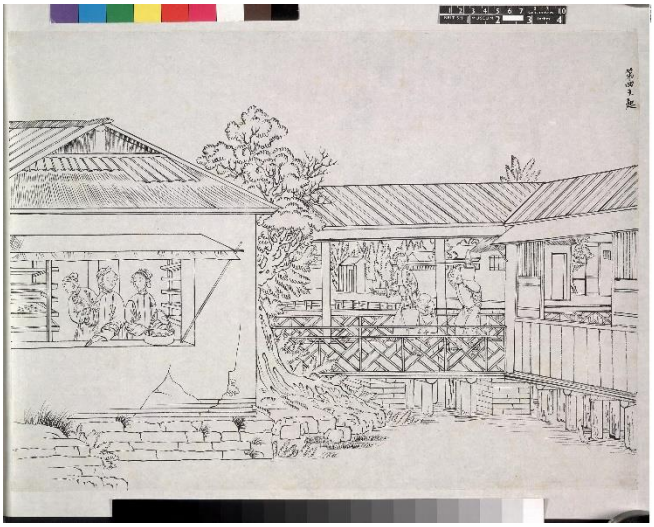

Figure 14 A leaf from an album collected by the British Museum. The leaf depicts the scene of people who are busy with cultivating silkworms.

Figure 15 An illustration of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* collected by the Getty Research Institute. The illustration depicts a group of people who are busy with cultivating silkworms.

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2.4 Conclusion

Apart from the Volkenkunde Watercolor and the British Museum albums, I have also found many other albums modelled on the classical Chinese manuals of technical artifacts and process. For example, the export album *taoqi zhiyun tu* 陶器制運圖 (Illustrations of Manufacturing and Transporting Porcelains) in the Hong Kong Maritime Museum is copied from the *Jingdezhen tao lu* 景德鎮陶錄 (A Record of Jingdezhen Ceramics). The album *nongjia gengtian tu* 農家耕田圖 (The Paintings of Ploughing) in the the Bibliothèque nationale de France is copied from the set of agriculture from the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*. From these examples, along with the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* and its imitators I have discussed above, we can see that Chinese albums of farming and manufacturing industries served as an essential sort of reference sources for the export painters during the 18th century. The illustrations in these albums were extracted from their original contexts, and were converted into export paintings. In this process, even though some slight modifications, such as colors, decorations, and strokes, would be applied, we can still observe the traces of copying. No matter how influential western art on agriculture and manufacturing were in the 18th century, the albums made by Chinese local artists still took an important seat in the production of Chinese export paintings.

3. The Dipper Mother and Chinese Religious Art

Throughout the 19th century, figure painting was one of the in-demand subjects of Chinese export paintings.[38] This genre provides a great quantity of vivid images of individuals with various professions and identities, such as peddlers, street performers, officials, mythological figures, and historical personalities. Some of these fairly early portraits might come from realistic observation. However, from the 18th century to the 19th century, in Clunas words, this type of art switched from realistic representation to a categorized "type", in which the Chinese elements from painters' own culture were misrepresented to show a stereotype imagined by westerners.[39] Under the tendency of abandoning an attempt at realistic representation in the creation of export figure paintings, a sub-category of figure paintings stands out as special because it remains highly reliant on "imagined" reality, or in other words, existing objects on mythical subject matters with elements from indigenous Chinese culture. This sub-category, which I shall now discuss in-depth, refers to religious art of deities from Chinese traditional religions.

Examining this type of export paintings requires a high familiarity with Chinese religions and the historical context. Furthermore, along with the fact that the numbers of these type of paintings cannot compare to other figure paintings with sample subjects such as officials and peddlers, so that, from what I have found, only two scholars have put this topic into their discussions on export paintings. Clunas employed one illustration bearing *SAMSING* (which means three sages), to raise his assumption of the relationship between the characters in the export figures watercolors and the Chinese deities and figures from literature and history.[40] Nevertheless, Clunas does not expand his arguments. Williams, by contrast, lists several concrete examples of pith paintings

38. Clunas (1984), "Figure Subjects," 49.

39. Ibid., 45.

40. Ibid., 64.

reflecting Buddhist, Daoist, or folk religious beliefs, which further reveals the inherent connections between the export paintings and Chinese domestic religions.[41] However, he stops at giving a general introduction, and does not go into a detailed visual analysis. In addition, when talking about this topic, neither Clunas nor Williams is much concerned about the associations between export paintings and art in China. Therefore, in order to fill the void of previous studies, I am going to explore the correlation between Chinese religious art and export paintings. To limit the scope of this analysis, I will focus on an export painting of the Dipper Mother from the Volkenkunde Museum.

3.1 The Dipper Mother in the Export Painting

The Dipper Mother is a deity known as the mother goddess of the Dipper in traditional China. The existence of the Dipper Mother is closely related to the long history of the Dipper worship, which can be traced back to around 6,000 years ago.[42] The Dipper has long enjoyed a prominent status throughout the history of China because it is a vital constellation because it is useful in useful in celestial navigation. The bright and unique star pattern can help guiding routes. Accompanying people's attention to the Dipper was the rise of belief and worship of the Dipper. From the surviving literature evidence, Dipper worship had become prevalent no later than the Han period (202 BC – 220 AD).[43] The first Celestial Master Zhang Daoling 張道陵 founded the *wudoumi jiao* 五斗米教 (the Way of the Five Pecks of Rice) in 142 CE, which marked the adoption

41. Williams, "Religion, old tales, processions and performances," 108-111.

42. Xiao Dengfu 蕭登福, "*Shilun beidou jiuhuang, doumu yu molizhitian zhi guanxi* 試論北斗九皇、斗姆與摩利支天之關係 (Discussion on the Relationship among Dipper Nine Perfected, Doumu and Mārīcī)," *Journal of National Taichung Institute of Technology* 台中技術學院人文社會學報, no.3 (2004): 1, accessed June 4, 2021, http://buddhism.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-MAG/mag122503.pdf.

43. Ibid., 1.

of Dipper worship into the Daoist religion.[44] When Buddhism entered China, just as what Daoism had done, they also incorporate the Dipper worship into their system of beliefs.[45] It is proved by Buddhist literature such as *Beidou jing* 北斗經 (the Sutra of the Dipper). Relying on the adoption by religions, the Dipper stars were embodied as star gods. In the early Daoist beliefs, the *jiu zhen* 九真 (Nine Perfected) was created to represent the seven leading stars of the Dipper and the other two constellations, which were perceived as Celestial Sovereign and Purple Tenuity. However, as the leader of this group of nine powerful and protective deities, the Dipper Mother came to exist almost a thousand years later. It is still unclear why the Dipper Mother, who was perceived as the leader of the Dipper group, appeared later than other Dipper deities. But, surviving textual sources have evidenced that the date of the emerging of the Doumu (written as 斗姆 or 斗姥 in Chinese), which refers to the Dipper Mother in the Daoist religion, can be dated back to the Northern Song Dynasty.[46] In the course of the development of the Doumu in visual form, the image of Doumu was intertwined with a bodhisattva called Mārīcī, which governed dawn and light in the myth. It is still debatable when the fusion started, but it is certain that in the Ming and the Qing Dynasties Doumu and Mārīcī were acknowledged as one deity by the public.[47] There will be further discussion of this issue when I analyze why and to what extent the export painting chosen for the case study was influenced by the Doumu belief. Given the intertwined history of Doumu and Mārīcī, it would be insufficient to use just one of them to explain the situation. Therefore, in the following text, I will use the word "the Dipper Mother" to refer to both Doumu and Mārīcī.

Figure 16 is a watercolor painting on pith painting from the 18th-and-19th-centuries

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44. Ibid., 3.

45. Livia Kohn, 'Doumu: The Mother of the Dipper', *Ming Qing Yanjiu*9, no. 1 (2000): 161, https://doi.org/10.1163/24684791-90000394.

46. Xiao, 4.

47. Xiao, 7-10; Kohn, 162-166.

China, which is now collected by the Volkenkunde Museum, the Netherlands.[48] Figure 17, which looks more refined and exquisite, is from the Beijing *Baiyun guan* 白雲觀 (Beijing Quanzhen Daoist White Cloud Monastery), the most prominent temple of the Quanzhen school of Daoism. It was painted in the Qing period, the exact date is unknown. It is a watercolor on silk, with 173 centimeters in height and 80 centimeters in length. It is under the category of *shuilu hua* 水陸畫 (paintings for water-and-land ritual), which was designed for the popular *shuilu fahui* (rite for deliverance of creatures of water and land) in traditional China.[49] According to the official introduction given by the Beijing *Baiyun guan*, the deity depicted in Figure 17 is Doumu.[50] Though the Volkenkunde Museum does not indicate who the female is in Figure 16, from its great similarities in shapes with the deity in Figure 17, I deduce that the female is the Dipper Mother. The following visual analysis will also support this interpretation.

Figure 16 (Left) A watercolor on pith collected by the Volkenkunde Museum. The illustration depicts a lady with three heads and eight arms sitting on a throne.

48. The online detailed information offered by the Volkenkunden Museum about Figure 16 is incomplete. The size of the image is unknown.

49. Shuilu hua is a specific type of Chinese religious art. It is an important theme which has been discussed by scholars, To know more information about the shuilu hua and shuilu fahui, it is recommended to check *Dunhuang Water and Land Ritual Manuals and their Paintings* (Gesterkamp Lennert, 2018), *Shuilu fahui yu shuilu hua yanjiu* 水陸法會與水陸畫研究 (Research on Water-Land Rituals and Paintings for Water-and-Land Ritual) (Su Jincheng 蘇金成, 2006) and *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Little, Eichman et al, 2000).

50. Li Xinjun 李信軍, "Doumu 斗姆," in *Shuilu shenquan: Beijing Baiyun guan cang lidai daojiao shuilu hua* 水陸神全：北京白雲觀藏曆代道教水陸畫 (The Collection of the Shuilu Paintings in the Beijing Baiyun guan) (Hangzhou: Xiling Seal Art Society Press 西泠印社出版社, 2011), 124.

Figure 17 (Right) A painting for water-and-land ritual, collected by the Beijing *Baiyun guan*. The hanging scroll depicts Doumu, who was a popular Daoist goddess in early modern China.

The layouts of the two illustrations are similar. The painters of each both adopt the vertical arrangement. There is only one figure in each painting, which is positioned in the center of the canvas. Both Figure 16 and Figure 17 display a goddess with three heads and eight arms, sitting on a throne with her legs crossed.

In respect to the depiction of details, the same icons appear in both works. Both figures have three heads with three faces. The human-like faces, which are frontal to the viewers, have benevolent and peaceful appearances. In contrast, the other two faces of both figures look bizarre. The heads on the right-hand side are depicted as pigs. The reason for this is Mārīcī has an alternative name Vajravārāhī, which means “Dimond Sow”. Therefore, the popular representations of the Dipper Mother are invariably with pigs. The heads on the left-hand side are also strange, yet less animal-like. In general, the two figures share significant similarities in respect of physical characteristics.

Each deity is holding ritual objects in her hands. *Daofa huiyuan* 道法會元 (Compilation of Rituals of the Way), which is an important reference for studying Daoist rituals, records the Dipper Mother (the mother of god Doumu Mārīcī) with three heads and eight arms, holds a sun, moon, bow, golden halberd, golden bell, golden seal, and a sword. She also wears the green outfit.天母聖相:主法斗母摩利支天大聖，三頭八臂，手擎日、月、弓矢、金槍、金鈴、箭牌、寶劍，著天青衣.[51] Viewing the two illustrations, we can see what is held by the two goddesses in the two paintings correspond to the texts, despite the different placement of them. The red and the white spherical objects held by the top hands manifest the sun and the moon. From top to bottom, though gripped by hands in different positions, each of the two Dipper Mothers grasps a bow, a seal, a bell, and a halberd with decorations like tassels. In the Buddhist traditions, objects held in hands not only symbolizes the unique identity and supreme status of a deity, but also present the diversity of a deity's roles and powers.[52] As mentioned above, due to the close interaction between the Doumu belief and the Mārīcī belief, the two deities share the same visual image. Therefore, the Buddhist tradition, that an identity of a deity can be defined by his ritual objects, can also be applied to the case of Doumu. In other words, since the various ritual objects held by the figure in Figure 16 are same as the objects in Figure 17, these shared and idiosyncratic icons can well prove my conclusion, that the figure illustrated in the export painting is the Dipper Mother.

Through the visual analysis, we have ensured that Figure 16 and Figure 17 are of the same topic, namely the Dipper Mother. It has also been proved that these two paintings share substantial affinities. However, the two painting are still distinctive, and what

51. "Daofa huiyuan 道法會元 Volume 83 Xiantian leijing yinshu 先天雷晶隱書," Chinese Text Project, accessed June 4, 2021, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=332527&remap=gb.

52. Li Yaohui 李耀輝, "Cong Doumu yu molizhitian de ronghe kan fodao wenhua de jiao she 從斗姥與摩利支天的融合看佛道文化的交涉 (The Interaction between the Buddhist and the Daoist Culture: In the Case of Doumu and Mārīcī)," *Zhongguo daojiao* 中國道教 (Chinese Dao ism), no. 4 (2011): 17.

creates the differences are the perspective. Figure 17 strictly follows the "iconic pose", including being face-forward, symmetrical, and compositionally centric. The dignified iconic pose was used in Chinese art to represent deities and transcendent individuals.[53] The Dipper Mother in Figure 16, instead of being shown in a frontal pose, is arranged to turn slightly to the right side. The export painter did not adopt the iconic pose that was adopted for almost all deities. Instead, he adopted the three-quarter, which offer viewers a visual effect differs from the one offered by frontal pose. However, no matter which perspective the export painter employed, it does not influence the demonstration of the image and the features of the Dipper Mother.

What's more, the two illustrations also show some variations in the icons. For instance, the Dipper Mother in Figure 16 holds two more ritual objects than the Doumu in Figure 17. The previous one holds a sword and an animal skull (probably a goat skull) with her two front hands, while the latter one just does *anjali mudra* (which means having two hands come together at the heart level) and holds nothing. In spite of the addition of new icons, Figure 16 still sticks closely to the subject of the Dipper Mother. As the textual account cited above, a sword is also one of the symbolic and ritual tools for the Dipper Mother. Therefore, it is reasonable for the export painter to add this icon to his artistic creation. As for the animal skull, I failed to find any literature recounting the relationship between the skull and the Dipper Mother. However, I have found this icon in another painting of Doumu (Figure 18) collected by the *Baiyun guan*. Just as Figure 17, this painting was made in the Qing Dynasty with no exact creation date. In this painting, the attendant on the right-hand side of the Doumu is holding a plate, on which is a goat skull (Figure 19). Therefore, I believe that the icon of an animal skull (mostly likely a goat) was not originally created by the export painters. Instead, the painters might have been inspired by the traditional Chinese paintings of the Dipper Mother. In addition to the two major contracts I have analyzed here, a viewer can also observe the

53. Jan Stuart, "Realism and the Iconic Pose," in *Worshiping the Ancestors: Chinese C ommemorative Portraits* (Washington, D.C: Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Ga llery, Smithsonian Institution, in association with Stanford University Press, 2001), 84.

difference in the decorative elements, the outfits and hairstyles, and shadows. Even so, a viewer can still recognize the Dipper Mother in Figure 16 through the distinctive and indicative icons, especially the ritual objects. The visual comparison has also demonstrated that the export painting of the Dipper Mother has received significant influence from religious paintings, or other reproductions of the same subject.

Figure 18 (Left) A painting for water-and-land ritual, collected by the Beijing *Baiyun guan*. The hanging scroll depicts Doumu and her escorts.

Figure 19 (Right) Detail of Figure 18. A f a goat skull is on a plate, held by a female attendant.

3.2 Religious Art as the Source of Inspiration

By means of visual analysis, we can see that reference was made to the Doumu image in Chinese religious paintings, when the painter was creating the Dipper Mother in the export painting. Following this observation, more questions have risen. The first question is about the subject matter. There are innumerous deities in the Chinese religious myths. Why did the export painter pick the Dipper Mother as the painting subject? The second question is about the circulation of images of Doumu. Figure 17 has been well preserved by the *Baiyun guan*. Additionally, it is noteworthy that most of the *shuilu hua* collected by the *Baiyun guan* were made by court painters, which means these works of art are precious and valuable. Considering this, it seems likely that Figure 17 never left the Beijing *Baiyun guan*, or may have even never been shown to the public. In other words, export painters, who were active in the Pearl River delta, would barely have chances to see Figure 17 in the capital city. Accordingly, where could an export painter have borrowed the image of the Dipper Mother from? Besides the *shuilu hua*, was there another possible source?

In order to answer the first question, we need to look back on the history of the Dipper Mother Worship. As briefly introduced before, the Dipper Mother is the product of the worship of the Dipper constellation, which spanned around 6,000 years. The surviving earliest record of the Daoist version of the deity Doumu was written in the Song Dynasty. During the development of the Doumu belief, the Buddhist goddess Mārīcī was adopted into the transformation of the image of Doumu, and gradually formed a new and mixed image of the Dipper Mother. This process, without a doubt, empowered the Dipper Mother and further extended its influence in modern China.[54]

Mārīcī was introduced from India into China from the end of the 5th century to the 12th

54. Xiao, 10-15.

century. In the early stage, Mārīcī, which was translated as *Molizhitian* 摩利支天, did not receive much attention in China, which can be proved by the insufficient number of translated sutras. The Tang Dynasty witnessed the first wave of Mārīcī as the rise of Buddhist Esotericism. The first influx of Mārīcī lasted until the 10th century in the early Song Dynasty. Supported by monks and upper-class patrons, the belief of Mārīcī went through standardization and reached its peak in this period.[55] Therefore, before the Mārīcī cult was absorbed by the Daoist Doumu belief, it had already gained certain degree of popularity in the popular culture. The Mārīcī cult suffered a decline in the later centuries, but it revived when it intertwined with the Daoist Doumu belief. The new deity now had power from both Daoist and Buddhist goddesses and the new bodhisattva-like image. Though, as Maspero remarked, the new image "is a rather heterogeneous mixture of ill-assembled Buddhist and Daoist ideas"[56], it was still widespread in public culture. The sculptures of the Dipper Mother were placed and worshipped in both Buddhist and Daoist temples. Manuscripts and sutras about the Dipper Mother were also circulated extensively, accompanied by systematic and wide-ranging individual and communal ritual practice. Drama performers had also worshiped the Dipper Mother as their protector in the Qing Dynasty. It has been acknowledged by the scholarship that the Dipper Mother was a popular deity in early modern China.[57] Even more noticeable is that the Dipper mother and the Nine Perfected were highly popular in the south of China, especially the Fujian area, which is close to the Guangdong province where export paintings were created.[58] In this context, the popularity of the Dipper Mother belief, especially in the south area, may explain why

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55. David A Hall, "Molizhitian—The Warrior Goddess in China (Sixth Century) Discourse on the Incantation of the Goddess-Spell Mārīcī," in *The Buddhist Goddess Marishiten: A Study of the Evolution and Impact of Her Cult on the Japanese Warrior* (Leiden: Global Oriental, 2014), 104.

56. Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese Religion* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 157.

57. Kohn, 174-175; Li (2011), 18; Xiao, 9.

58. Lv Fangyuan, "*Qingmo minchu doumu (jiuhuang) Xinyang de fazhan ji chuanbo* 清末民初斗姆(九皇)信仰的發展及傳播 (The Development and Circulation of the Doumu [Nine Perfected] Belief in the Late Qing Early Republican Period)," *Journal of Guangzhou Institute of Socialism* 廣州社會主義學院學報, no. 01 (2014): 61.

the deity was picked up as a figure depicted in export paintings.

The prevalence of the Dipper Mother belief stimulated the activities of visualizing the goddess. The *shuilu hua*, represented by Figure 17 I discussed above, is one of the typical types of art practice. *Shuilu hua*, as a type of religious art, was an indispensable visual aid for the *shuilu fahui*. During the ritual, *shuilu hua* would be hanged to temporarily serve as a ritual arena where the deity appears in physical embodiment during a ritual performance. In the previous text, I have deduced that export painters were unlikely to access Figure 17 because it has always been well preserved in *Baiyun guan* in Beijing. However, it does not mean the export painters barely had any chance to see another *shuilu hua* of the Dipper Mother. To support my judgment, it is necessary to introduce the development of *shuilu fahui* briefly. Before the Song Dynasty, *shuilu fahui* was only held by emperors or elites. From the Song Dynasty onwards, ordinary people were also encouraged to join in this religious activity. Scholars acknowledged that *shuilu fahui* had become one of the most spectacular and popular rituals throughout the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Owing to this reason, the production of *shuilu hua* boomed, and became an industry. In the Song Dynasty, *shuilu hua* had been commercialized, and widely spread in the market. This situation had been continuing until the late Qing period. *Shuilu hua* is usually in the format of hanging scroll, which makes them portable and travel friendly. Considering the popularity of *shuilu fahui* and the property of *shuilu hua*, ordinary people in the Qing Dynasty had many chances to see deities depicted in the *shuilu hua*. As mentioned above, the Dipper Mother enjoyed eminent status among the public. Additionally, the rituals of worshiping the Dipper Mother also took place often, no matter personal or communal. Therefore, it was common to depict the Dipper Mother. Nowadays, we can find numerous surviving religious paintings on the Dipper Mother, such as the *shuilu hua* collected by the *Baiyun guan* (Figure 20) and the Baoning Temple (Figure 21). In my opinion, there must be more *shuilu hua* of the Dipper Mother circulating in the market during the Qing Dynasty. Given that situation, I would suggest that export painters might take their inspiration from the *shuilu hua*.

Figure 20 (Left) A painting for water-and-land ritual, collected by the Beijing *Baiyun guan*. The hanging scroll depicts Doumu and her escorts.

Figure 21 (Right) A painting for water-and-land ritual, collected by the Baoning Temple. The painting depicts Mārīcī, the goddess of light in Buddhist belief.

Besides *shuilu hua*, woodblock prints, which also enjoyed a wide-ranging circulation, could be another potential referral source for export paintings on deities. Figures illustrated here (Figure 22-23) are all woodblock prints. Though some insignificant elements were added into each print, the printers, in general, kept the main characters of the Dipper Mother, such as three heads, eight arms, and ritual objects of various roles. So even though they were printed in different media with diverse painting styles, and were used for various purposes, like decorative art or illustration, viewers can still easily identify the depicted goddess through specific features. Compared to the *shuilu hua* illustrated above, these woodblock prints are obviously of inferior quality with crude and rough details. This is due to the fact that these woodblock prints were intended to be disseminated among the public. They were the “assembly-line” works rather than

the masterpiece for aesthetic appreciation. However, it was their "bad quality" that enabled them to circulate among a wider range of viewership, because they were economic-friendly pieces of art for entertainment. They were also perfect models for export painters because modelling on woodblock prints did not require excellent painting skills or too much time. Owing to the similar purposes of artistic creation, we can see that Figure 16 and these woodblock prints share similar properties. To get a relatively refined final product in an efficient way, they put effort into the depiction of icons at the expense of precision. As Clunas points out, mass media helped spread many stylistic features of both Buddhist and Daoist paintings.[59] Therefore, through the investigation, I believe the export paintings on religious themes are also likely to be benefited from the mass media.

Figure 22 (Left) A woodblock print of Doumu, collected by the National Museum of History, Taiwan. The print depicts Doumu sitting in her palace. The Chinese characters "斗姆宮" on the plaque literally means "the palace of Doumu".

Figure 23 (Right) A illustration of Doumu and Grand Unity.

59. Clunas (1997), "Art in Temple," 133.

3.3 Conclusion

Through this exploration and exploration, I have discovered that not all export painters, as Clunas perceived, “distort and misrepresent elements of their own culture” in creating most of the figure paintings, just simply for pleasing the foreign customers.[60] Especially when they were designing the paintings with the theme of mythical figures, they would follow the tradition of how the deity was depicted. In most cases, every religious deity has its own image, which is recorded in manuscripts such as *Daofa huiyuan*. Therefore, when a painter created a portrait for a deity, no matter in which media, he would include icons that can identify the figure, such as religious objects or physical traits. Even export painters were no exception. The reason the Dipper Mother was chosen as the figure for export painting, as I have discussed, was because the goddess was renowned and well-welcomed by people in early modern China. What followed the popularity of the Dipper Mother was the emergence of a large number of works of art, which probably provided export painters with inspiration. *Shuilu hua* and woodblock prints, the two types of art transmitted in a large scale of the viewership, both had a greater chance to be the model for export paintings. Besides the Dipper Mother, other famous religious deities such as *Leigong* 雷公 (God of Thunder) and bodhisattva *Guanyin* 觀音 also appeared in the surviving export paintings, which also evident the close relationship between the export paintings and Chinese religious art.

60. Clunas (1984), “Figure Subjects,” 49.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis, I researched the Chinese export paintings. These paintings, on the one hand, brought the landscapes of China to people who were curious about the remote country and obsessed with chinoiserie. On the other hand, they also manifest strong signs of adaption to western tastes, which was more likely to intrigue the target demographic. Naturally, the paintings were for granted as a product under the influence of the west. Therefore, as I have discussed in Introduction, tracing the marks of western elements has become one of the main tasks for scholars. This narrative that western painting skills and techniques greatly influenced Chinese paintings has become dominant in scholarship, which presents a problem because it undermines the identity of Chinese export paintings as hybrid objects. Therefore, this thesis reconsidered the relationship between the Chinese export paintings and art in China. Through the case studies, I explored two genres of art in China that inspired the export painters.

The first genre is the classical Chinese manual. An abundance of Chinese export paintings regarding the production process of silk, porcelain and other types of export products were produced during the span of the 18th century to the 19th century when there was an upsurge in western demands for and interests in China-made commodities, as I discussed in Section One. In this context, classical Chinese manuals concerning manufacturing these products had become an ideal model for export paintings. This section focuses on the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*, of which the predecessor is the Song *Genzhi tu* by Lou Shou. A comparable partner of the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*, the set of 24 watercolor paintings on pith, is now collected by the Volkenkunde Museum. They seem very alike in almost every aspect, from the composition to the perspective, from the figure to the icon. Some nuances, such as the adoption of colors and the decorative elements, were found through the visual comparison. Nevertheless, their final effects on the export paintings can be nearly ignored. What might overturn my argument is the 24th painting in the set. It is a completely original work, with an originally designed scenario in which

females are doing embroidery. However, after further research, I found out that this extra watercolor shows a traceable and significant connection to the other 23 paintings as it keeps consistency with the *Yuzi genzhi tu* in both content and style. Apart from loyally copying the classical original version, export painters also developed a new way to model the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*. They innovatively combined the two separate prints in the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* into one canvas, or insert them into a new scene. It was because of the fame of *Gengzhi tu* in Chinese traditional art, the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* was chosen by export painters as the model for their works of art. In turn, the various ways of borrowing inspirations from the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* in making export paintings, and plenty of widespread export paintings on this subject matter, also enable us to see the considerable influence of the classical Chinese albums represented by the *Yuzhi gengzhi tu*.

In addition to the classical Chinese manuals on manufacturing, Chinese religions art is another reference source for the export painters when producing figure paintings. Through the case study of the watercolor of the Dipper Mother, a popular deity in early modern China, I discovered a tangible connection between export paintings and religious art. Traditionally, in Chinese religious art, visualizing the image of a deity had to follow specific patterns and conventions. In other words, there are specific iconographic conventions that are used to identify a deity. How every deity looks like was written in the religious texts in detail. In the case of the Volkendunde Museum's watercolor of the Dipper, comparing it to the Doumu in the *shuilu hua* revealed that the export painter had displayed all characteristics the Dipper Mother should have. Even though the depictions of the pose, the outfit and the ritual weapons of the Dipper Mother slightly differ from the ones of the Doumu, the identity of the figure as the Dipper Mother can still be easily recognized at first glance through the physical traits and signature ritual objects. The reason why the Dipper Mother was chosen as the figure was probably because of its fame and prevalence. Doumu was originated from the worship of the Dipper. The goddess enjoyed great popularity among a broad audience after it appeared. When another well-known goddess Mārīcī was adopted into the

Doumu belief, the Dipper Mother had become a powerful protector who was warmly welcomed by the populace. The Dipper Mother belief's growth in popularity was followed by an increasing number of art-related activities. The commercialization of paintings stimulated the producing and circulation of religious art of the Dipper Mother. For this reason, export painters were able to access religious art in various media, such as *shuilu hua* used for the rituals, and woodblock prints which were known for low price, vividity, and portability. These religious were all likely to make contributions of directly providing the export painters with inspirations. Through the case of the export painting of Doumu, we can see the significant impact of Chinese religious art on the export paintings. As a whole, various and remarkable religious art were one of the sources of inspiration for export painters.

This paper, besides proving my initial judgment that art in China had great impact on export paintings, it also provides a good starting point for further research. There are two topics future studies can focus on. First, continuing the investigation on the impact of other genres of Chinese art on export paintings. Throughout my research, after appreciating hundreds of export paintings that reside in the different corners of the world, I developed a strong feeling that besides the classical Chinese manuals and religious art, many other types of art in China were likely to serve as the source of inspiration for the export paintings. For example, export paintings of subjects from nature (for example, flora, fauna, and fish), which "meet the western context",[61] are likely to be driven by the Chinese native pictorial tradition of depicting objects. Take figure 23 and Figure 24 as an example. Figure 23 is an export watercolor of a butterfly flying around a flower. A similar composition can be found in Figure 24, an illustration of the prominent *Gushi huapu* 顧氏畫譜 (Master Gu's Painting Manual). In this illustration, a butterfly is also approaching a blooming flower. Owing to the limitations in time and word, I have unfortunately not been able to go deeper in this thesis. However, facing such a striking resemblance, it is difficult not to question their relationship.

61. Clunas (1984), "Natural History Watercolours," 84.

Second, focus on the originality of export paintings. I have analyzed the new elements and designs applied in the export paintings in both case studies, such as the blue color of figures' outfits in the Volkenkunde Watercolor, and the ritual objects held by the Dipper Mother in Figure 16. Export painters were not merely copying and imitating, they were also making "origins". In other words, an export painting, in some cases, can be viewed not merely as a derivative genre, but as a creative new piece of work, or even, as one amongst many different successor genres of the art in China. These two interesting topics are just an example of what we can go in-depth in the future. What I want to illustrate is that, in terms of the inherent connection between the export paintings and art in China, there is still much work worth exploring.

Figure 23 (Left) A watercolor on pith collected by the British Library. The illustration depicts a butterfly approaching Dianthus.

Figure 24 (Right) An illustration of *Gushi huapu*. The illustration depicts a butterfly flying around a flower.

In conclusion, we have shown that art in China has had a notable and remarkable influence on the export paintings through the case of *Yuzhi gengzhi tu* and the painting of Doumu. It is not surprising that export painters would borrow ideas from conventional Chinese art. It is because copying was a classical and traditional way in China for a painter to learn and practice his painting skills, which was regarded as an entirely honorable thing rather than a humiliating activity.[62] Rethinking the influence of art in China on export paintings will not only help us deepen understanding of Chinese art conventions, but more importantly, will enable us to further understand how western and Chinese elements intertwine in Chinese export paintings. As Clunas comments, export paintings are "neither wholly Chinese nor wholly European".[63] Paying too much attention to the impacts from the west will mislead us away from the actual value of export paintings, which are a representative of the transcultural and transnational interaction between China and the west in the early modern period.

62. Ginger Cheng-chi Hsü, "Imitation and Originality, Theory and Practice," in *A Companion to Chinese Art* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2016), 293.

63. Clunas (1984), "Chinese Export Watercolours," 12.

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