

欧美藏

十九世纪中国蓬纸画

广州制作



伊凡·威廉斯 著 Ifan Williams

程美宝 译编 Trans. & ed. by Ching May Bo

CREATED IN CANTON

Chinese Export
Watercolours on Pith



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Front cover image: two azure winged magpies
Courtesy of National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, the Netherlands



Pith, Bodhi Leaves and Magpies

—— Canton souvenirs brought back by our friend from afar (Preface)

Chen Yuhuan

Before the pictures collected by Mr. Ifan Williams and his study of them were made known to us, few people in China recognized that Guangzhou used to produce a huge number of watercolours on pith for export and even fewer paid any attention to them. For us it is no exaggeration to say that Mr. Williams is at present the specialist who knows pith most extensively and thoroughly. Had he not introduced the term “pith paper watercolours” to us in the first instance, we would not have looked up the nineteenth century Chinese literature and would probably never have realized that the original Chinese phrase for pith watercolours was “*tongzhi hua*”.

With his curiosity about pith Mr. Williams began falling in love with Guangzhou — a city he knew very little before. The “love story” started in the early 1970s. While in Cambridge, Mrs. Williams was wondering whether she should buy a winter coat or spend her money on an album of watercolours of flowers and butterflies she had seen in an antique shop. She so loved the paintings that she decided she would give up the coat and buy the watercolours for her husband who always showed an interest in different kinds of art. With this first collection Mr. Williams soon realized that the “paper” used for the paintings was pith. From then on he became captivated by the paintings as well as the material they were made on and spent much of his spare time on studying pith. These little pith paper watercolours also drew his attention to the old provincial walled city located in the southernmost part of China — Canton.

But it was not until twenty years later that he visited the city and that was when we met each other for the first time. His Guangzhou tour and hence our meeting was in fact triggered by a sequence of events. In 1995, my husband and I looked at the pith collection of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Without knowing much about the medium we were attracted by the colourful effect of the paintings and we ordered a set of slides of them to send back to China. Soon afterwards Mr. Williams also visited the Bodleian and looked at the same set of paintings. From the Library’s visitors’ book he knew that some people from China had expressed a similar interest. Through a mutual friend he managed to contact me. In December 1999 he was on his way to Guilin and stopped at Guangzhou for a few hours. He left his wife in the company of other members of the tour party and came on his own to Sun Yat-sen University for a brief meeting with us. He shared with us what he had seen and what he knew of pith in the museums and libraries of Britain and other parts of Europe and showed us the photographs of many of the paintings he had seen and some he had personally collected. The meeting was hasty and yet it established a long term friendship and mutual trust between Mr. Williams and ourselves. Gradually we no longer called him “Mr. Williams”; we call him “Ifan”.

Despite the fact that pith watercolours were “born” in Canton, until the 1990s no public institutions in Guangzhou collected pith, nor did the curators of the city’s museums and galleries know



蒹纸画·菩提叶·喜鹊图

——一位远方友人带来的广州手信（序）

陈玉环

在伊凡·威廉斯先生的收藏和研究为中国人所认识之前，中国没有几个人知道广州曾经制作过如此大量的蒹纸水彩画，更没有人重视甚至认识广州蒹纸水彩画的研究价值；可以毫不含糊地说，威廉斯先生是迄今对蒹纸画研究最全面和最透彻的人。如果不是因为威廉斯先生把“pith paper watercolours”带进我们的视野，我们在翻译时检阅清代的中文文献，这种物品最地道最贴近时代的中文名称“蒹纸画”也几乎被人遗忘了。

威廉斯先生由对蒹纸画的钻研而萌生出对广州这个他本来并不熟悉的城市钟爱，恐怕比许多中国或世界各地的专家学者都来得真挚。故事要从20世纪70年代说起。一天，威廉斯太太在剑桥大学的露天市场闲逛，正嘀咕着要不要花钱买下一件她看上的大衣时，瞥见有一家古董店正摆卖着几幅画有花卉蝴蝶的水彩画。深悉丈夫对艺术的兴趣，威廉斯太太放弃了买大衣的念头，买下那几张画送给丈夫。威廉斯先生收到太太这份礼物，爱不释手，后来才知道，这几幅质感独特的水彩画用的材质是“pith”，从此，他迷上了蒹纸画，走上一条搜集和研究蒹纸画的不归路。也因着蒹纸画，他知道远方的中国南端有一座古老的城市叫“Canton”。

与广州神交已久的威廉斯先生，一直到二十多年后才首次踏足这个城市。这个因缘也来得有点偶然。1995年，我们在牛津大学的饱蠹楼（The Bodleian Library，博德莱安图书馆）曾调阅过该馆收藏的蒹纸画，并制作了幻灯片带回广州，当时我们在访客签名册留下了名字。威廉斯先生后来到牛津大学看同一批蒹纸画时，看到我们留下的签名，知道我们来自广州，多方设法与我们取得联系。1999年，他乘着与妻子到桂林旅游经广州转机之际，在等候转机的几个小时的间隙，让太太随旅行团参观，自己则跑到中山大学，与我们匆匆会面，分享了他在欧洲各博物馆搜罗这类藏品的收获与心得，并让我们看了他私人收藏的蒹纸画照片。这短短几小时的会面，令我们与威廉斯先生成了莫逆之交，从此亲切地称呼他为伊凡。



威廉斯太太当年在剑桥买下的蒹纸画（下同）
The pith paper watercolours bought by Mrs. Williams in Cambridge (same below)



much about this particular genre of export art. When we told Ifan that there were no examples of paintings on pith in Guangzhou he decided to select sixty examples of paintings on pith from his personal collection to give to Guangzhou. In September 2000 he brought them to Guangzhou in person. In 2001 an exhibition of the pictures he donated was held in Guangzhou Museum with a published catalogue. Ifan and Dorothy (Mrs. Williams) came to attend the opening ceremony and tour around the city. It is pith which brought Ifan to Guangzhou to search for the traces

of old Canton. It was Ifan who brought pith back to Guangzhou, giving the Guangzhou Museum its first nineteenth century watercolours on pith. With Ifan's donations, museum curators and the general public began to pay some attention to pith.

Walking about Guangzhou with Ifan makes us feel like wandering in the nineteenth century "good old Canton". His last tour to Guangzhou was in 2009. By then he had already visited many sites of interest. When we asked him where else he wanted to go, he said he would like to see the "Flowery Pagoda"—one of the places which appear frequently in the journals of Europeans and Americans who resided in Canton in the nineteenth century. The monk of the Buddhist Temple was kind enough to open the door of the pagoda for us and allow us to climb up to the top floor. Ifan was the oldest of us, but he climbed up most quickly. Arriving at the top he took a panoramic view of the city. With years of demolition and reconstruction Guangzhou has changed so much that he may have found it very difficult to compare the contemporary scenes with those depicted on pith but he still stood and gazed for quite a long while. It seems that he still wanted to "see" the old Canton according to the "map" he redrew with the aid of pith paintings and old literature. We did not know whether he saw it or not. What we noticed was that when he came down from the pagoda, he was very delighted to see six banyan trees—hopefully they were still the old banyan trees. Having read numerous journals written by nineteenth century European and American expatriates, he knew the story which said the

蒹纸画虽然“生在”广州，但一直以来广州的公藏机构都没有这类藏品，广州的文博工作者对这种画也相当陌生甚至从未听闻。伊凡知悉后，慷慨地从他的私人收藏中挑选了60张不同题材的蒹纸画赠送给广州。2000年9月，他亲自把这批准备捐赠给广州人民的礼物带到广州，我们于2001年在广州博物馆举办了展览并出版图录，伊凡也与他的妻子多拉菲亲临广州，出席了是次展览，并终于能够细细地游览了这座在他心目中永远是那么古老的城市。是蒹纸画把伊凡带到广州，引领他寻觅两百年前的羊城足迹；他也把蒹纸画带回广州，使广州拥有了第一批19世纪本地制作的蒹纸画藏品。广州的文博工作者和社会大众对蒹纸画的认识和重视，就是从伊凡捐献的这批藏品开始的。

与伊凡一起漫步在当下的广州，常常会冒出仿佛走在19世纪的粤东省城的感觉，他眼中的一草一木，都能让人联想到那逝去的“good old Canton”。最近一次伊凡再来广州，是2009年，广州和附近的许多景点，他之前已游览过，我们问他还想去哪里，他说希望一登“Flowery Pagoda”——六榕寺的花塔——这是当年寄寓广州的欧美人士十分向往的景点之一。我们得六榕寺住持惠允打开花塔大门，陪他拾级而上，他虽然在同行者中年纪最大，却也走得最矫健轻松。他一马当先登上塔顶，极目四望，尽管这个城市经过多年的破坏与建设，变得面目模糊，使他难以寻得当年的风貌，难以跟蒹纸画上的羊城风物对应起来，但他还是在塔顶遥望，凝视良久，仿佛要按照他心中那幅以蒹纸画和各种文献记载绘画的地图，竭力找回老省城。我们不知道他有没有找到，只见他从花塔下来的时候，看见那六棵老榕树——但愿是当年那棵吧——即异常欣喜，因为他阅读过19世纪外国游人的广州游记，知道六榕寺的名字源出于此。之后，



“Six Banyan Tree Buddhist Temple” was named after the trees. Then he stopped for some time under a bodhi tree, and picked up a few leaves. He said that when home he would soak the leaves in water so as to reveal the skeletal form—he knew that the Buddha was said to have been sitting beneath the bodhi tree when he attained enlightenment and that nineteenth century Chinese painters also painted on bodhi leaves for sale.

Since then we have been staying in touch with Ifan. He reported to us from time to time the updates of his “pith hunt” and shared with us what he had seen in the museums and libraries of the Netherlands, Portugal and other European countries, as well as his own latest publications. Ifan’s approach may be that of an amateur; he is not a member of “academia”, nor does he know a word of Chinese, yet we know that at his own expense he has visited as many museums, libraries, and galleries as possible and has purchased any book relating to this subject that he can afford. From the plentiful collections he has seen in Europe he has carefully selected more than two hundred watercolours on pith to compile this catalogue. This must be one of the best possible gifts for presenting to the people of the city of Guangzhou. He retired from university administration in 2000 and such academic research was never part of his paid employment. What he has done is purely out of his interest in art and his curiosity about the history of Canton. He has been working on his own for years and has never proposed to us schemes of publishing this catalogue to make his works widely known. Whenever he writes about the pith collections of Guangzhou Museum, he mentions no single word of his own contribution. Ifan’s humility and persistence, as well as the collection of works on pith that he has been building up little by little for almost forty years, make us—local scholars and curators—feel ashamed. We realize that we have done too little about pith. What we can do is to take up the role of cultural mediator and apply for some public resources to make his works known better to Chinese audiences and to the rest of the world. If this work of his remained in manuscript form it would be not only a matter of personal regret but is also an indication of our failure and of the loss to the city of Guangzhou.

When most textual and visual materials for this catalogue were already in hand, we asked Ifan which picture he would choose for cover design. Right away he chose the painting of a pair of azure winged magpies from the collection of the Museum Volkenkunde at Leiden. We asked him why and he said he thought it was a beautiful painting and the colours would make the cover stand out and be immediately recognizable. From some English sources he understood that in China the magpie was regarded as a bird of good omen, that the Chinese term for the magpie meant literally “bird of joy” and that the chattering of magpies before a house was an indication that a welcome guest would shortly arrive. Having obtained the approval of the museum we asked Ms. Liang Lihui, the book designer, to



他在那棵菩提树下驻足多时，细心地捡起几片较完整的叶子，准备带回家把叶脉脱出，制成书签。因为他知道，佛祖当年在菩提树下顿悟，而菩提叶也是 19 世纪广州画工除了莲纸之外经常使用的廉价作画物料。

我们之后一直与伊凡保持通信，他也经常向我“报告”，兴奋地告诉我们最近他又去了荷兰、葡萄牙或其他什么国家，看了如何精美的莲纸画藏品，并与我们分享他陆续在各种艺术和文物杂志上发表的文章。严格意义上，伊凡不属于所谓“学者”之列，也不懂半句中文，他的研究成果和写作风格，可能在某些人看来不够“专业”，但我们清楚知道，多年来他在几乎没有资助的情况下，以己所能及之力，跑遍欧美各国藏有莲纸画的博物馆，并从浏览过的诸多藏品中，精挑了约 200 张集中研究讨论，最终辑录成集，呈献给广州的人民和今日的世界。他从大学的行政岗位退休多年，并非以写作为业，他所做的一切，纯粹出于他对这种艺术品的热爱和对广州这个城市的兴趣，没有半点功利的目的。他从来没有向我们提出过出版图录或宣扬他的研究成果的要求，他撰文时若提到广州博物馆的莲纸画藏品，也没有半句话提到是他的捐赠。伊凡这种低调的态度、执着的精神以及多年来细水长流累积的成果，足以教我们这些本地学者汗颜。我们觉得，如果我们不老老实实在地担负起文化中介的角色，不利用我们本地的资源，帮已经 80 高龄的伊凡把这本图录公诸于世，不但是他个人的遗憾，也是我们广州本地文化工作者的过错，更是广州这座城市的损失。

当这本图录的编译工作快要完成的时候，我们问伊凡，在众多图画中，他希望用哪一张来做封面设计，他毫不犹豫地选取了荷兰莱顿国立民族学博物馆藏的喜鹊图。细问其由，他说这

make a draft for the cover design. Seeing the draft Ifan felt very satisfied. He said that for him the two individual birds represented the two sides in the relationship between China and the West: they were greeting each other and having a forthright conversation. With much delight he sent us an email saying that he found the design “absolutely right”.

The magpies brought us this welcome guest from afar and this welcome guest brought back to Guangzhou the pith watercolours which were born in this city. Our guest never expected us to present him a gift in return. He simply brought home a few bodhi leaves that he picked up in the Flowery Pagoda. As Chinese we know well that it is always a pleasure to greet a friend from afar. As Guangzhou citizens let us do our humble best to make this catalogue come into being, so as to express our gratitude and respect to this Welsh gentleman who lives a simple and peaceful life in Yorkshire and has a lasting curiosity about the legends of China.

Chen Yuhuan
7th August, 2013



张画色彩艳丽、构图精美，且查过有关资料，知道喜鹊在中国是吉兆的象征，所谓喜鹊临门佳客至也。本图录的美术设计师梁丽辉女士乃根据伊凡这些想法做了封面草图，伊凡看后，非常喜欢，认为正合其意，而且中文和英文书名分别置于左上角和右下方，仿佛两只喜鹊是中英文化的使者，正在亲切对话，互相问好，这种意象是他之前没有想过的。

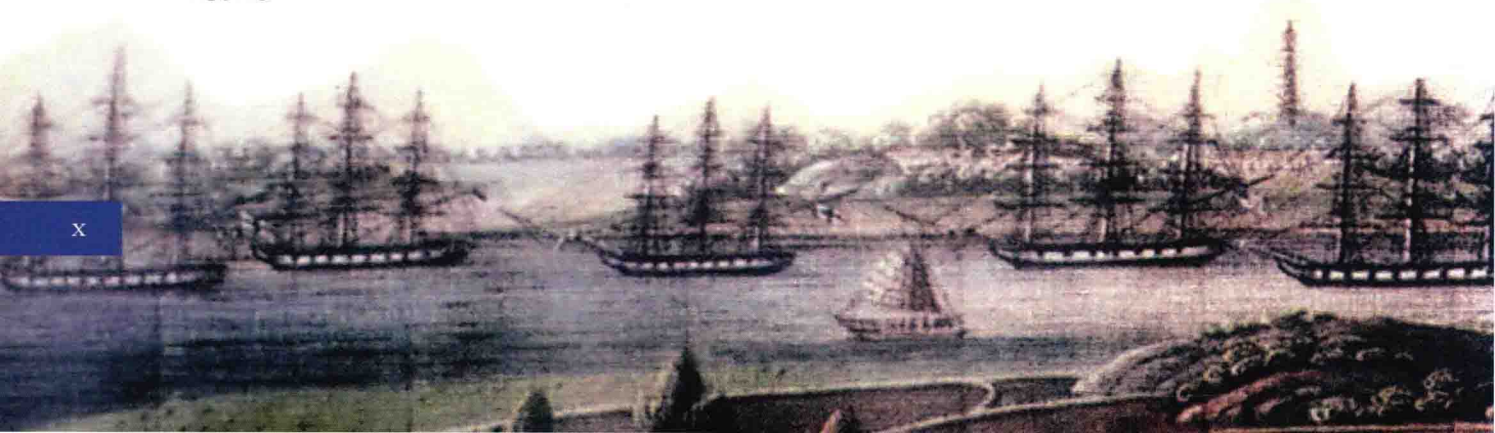
是的，喜鹊迎来了远方的佳客，这位佳客给广州带回当年生于斯的莲纸画，他从来没有期望过会有什么回赠，带走的只是几片在六榕寺捡拾的菩提叶。我们中国人都爱说“有朋自远方来，不亦乐乎”，让我们身为中国人，特别是身为广州人，做好款客之道，尽点绵力出版这部图册，对一个在英国约克郡深居简出却对遥远的中国充满好奇的威尔斯绅士，表示一点应有的感激和尊重。

陈玉环

2013年8月7日



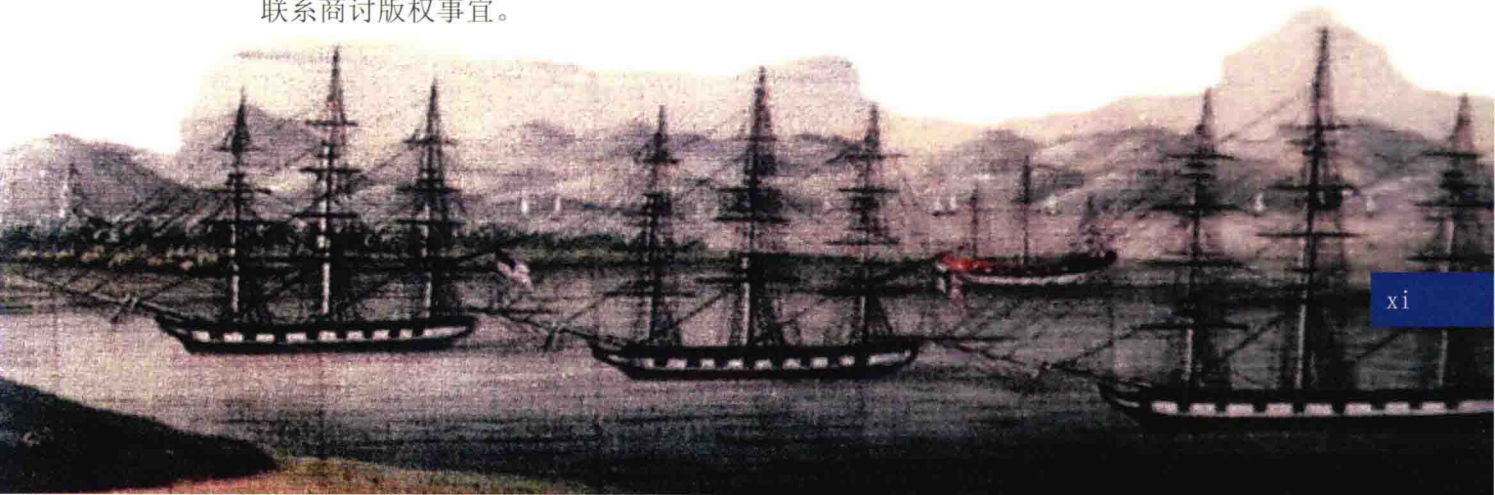
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4. A number of the small illustrations in the text originate from the three institutions which failed to provide us with new images to use for the monograph, although it was made clear in the formal request and subsequent correspondence that we would meet any publication fees and new photography costs. The World Museum at Liverpool said from the beginning that they could not produce any photographs. The State Hermitage Museum said that they could only provide photographs of pictures already published elsewhere. Since this did not apply to the pictures we were asking for it meant that they were not able or willing to provide what we sought. At the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris we were told that of the three sets of pictures we were asking for they could only provide the one showing paper making (although the whole set on glass-making was published in 2004 in a book on Chinese glass). We eagerly responded to the offer of four pictures from the one set but got no response. These negotiations continued over a year but came to naught. The pictures we sought are by the painters Sunqua and Youqua and are very important in the story of painting on pith. We had therefore to use the photographs taken by the author as small-scale illustrations in the text. We are unable to show these pictures in an approximation to their actual size among the plates. These three institutions are welcome to contact the author and editor about copyright clearance.





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— Canton souvenirs brought back by our friend from afar (Preface)

Chen Yuhuan

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——一位远方友人带来的广州手信（序）

陈玉环

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