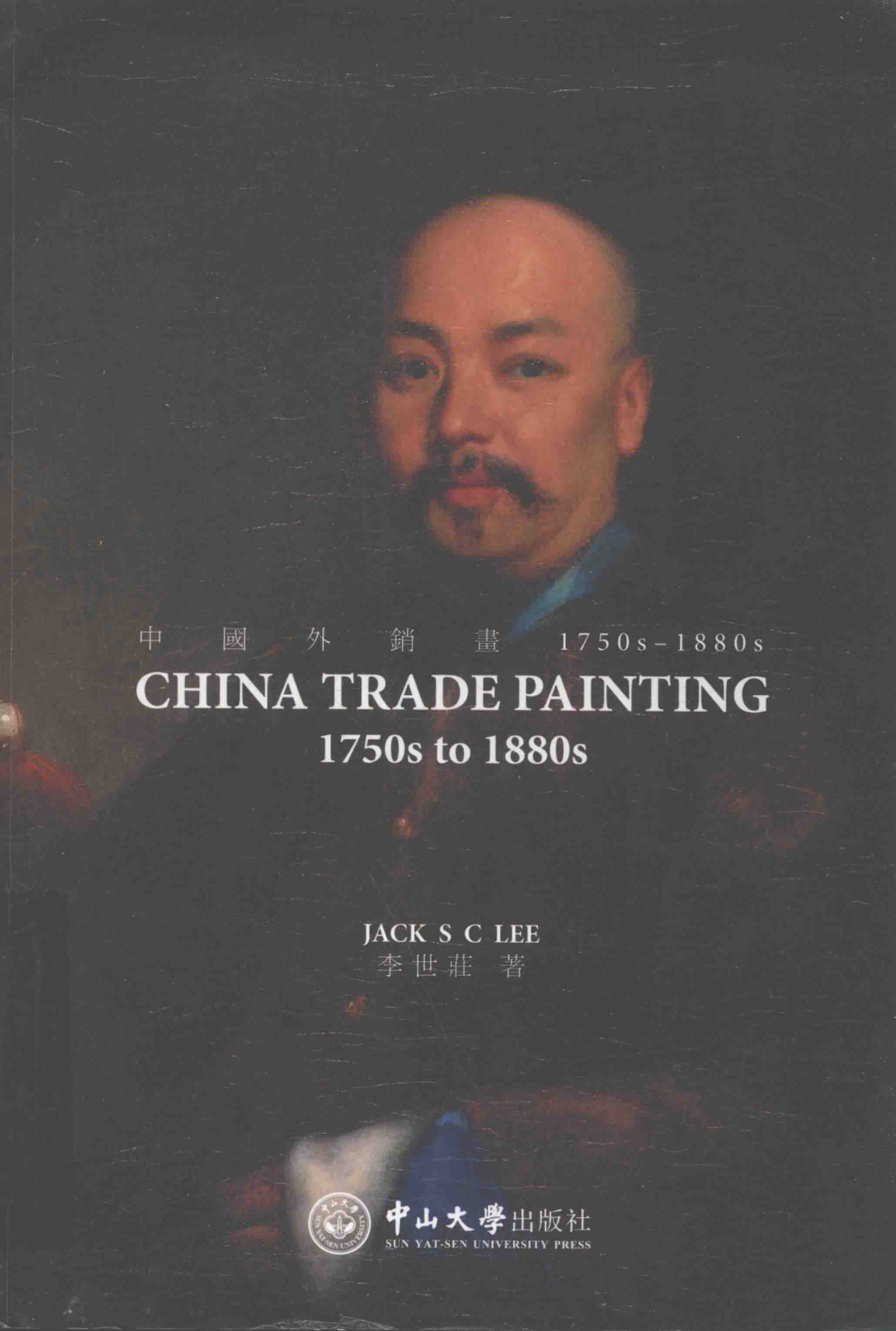


A portrait of a man with a mustache, wearing a blue shirt, is the background of the cover. The man is looking slightly to the left.

中國外銷畫 1750s-1880s

CHINA TRADE PAINTING

1750s to 1880s

JACK S C LEE

李世莊 著



中山大學出版社
SUN YAT-SEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Introduction

My interest in China trade painting stemmed from my research in the art history of nineteenth century Guangdong and Hong Kong some twenty years ago. Through studying the art and life of Kwan Wai Nung (關蕙農)¹, one of the earliest commercial artists in Hong Kong who received his training in Chinese watercolours from Ju Lian (居廉), the forerunner of the so-called Lingnan School, I come to know that the early generation of the Kwan's family already engaged in the trade painting business in as early as the 1830s. The famous Chinese trade painter Lamqua, whose oil portraits are comparable to George Chinnery's in some Westerners' eyes, is the great grandfather of Kwan. To my surprise, however, the name of Lamqua has never been mentioned in any art historical writings in China before the last two decades, let alone any in depth study of him. Curiosity drove me to initiate another preliminary study on things about Lamqua², through which I began to realize the incompleteness and inadequacy of conventional writings on nineteenth century art in Guangdong, particularly in area about western media painting. Gradually, my initial interest in the "Western elements" in art in Guangdong and Hong Kong rendered myself to a continuous research, and later an obsession, on China trade painting.

China trade painting is by no means new to the West. Since the late eighteenth century, a huge amount of pictures, mostly executed in a westernized manner, were manufactured, sold and exported to the West first via Canton and later via other treaty ports after China was defeated in the Opium Wars. These works of art were then collected, inherited or sold generation after generation in the Western world. As an export commodity, the final destination where China trade paintings landed should always be nations that traded with China during the eighteenth and nineteenth

¹ See my article "Study of calendar poster paintings in the early twentieth century Hong Kong and Canton", Besides: *A journal of art history & criticism*, vol. 1, 1997, pp. 91-110.

² See my article, "Some problems in studying the identity of Lamqua", Besides: *A journal of art history & criticism*, vol. 2, 1999, pp. 127-150.

centuries, but never in China. Thus, China trade painting can only survive outside China, and art historians in China could have very limited access to the original works. The commercial nature of trade painting also accounts for its insignificance in the discourse of traditional Chinese art. Not all trade painters were accomplished in utilizing western art media, in fact many of them were not well trained, but there was still a number of outstanding figures who demonstrate unusual artistic merits and understanding of Western drawing techniques in their works, amongst whom Spoilum, Lamqua, Pu-Quà, Sunqua, Youqua and others are able to reveal strong sense of individuality in their artworks instead of being mere copyists. The general preconception that trade painting is no more than decorative arts performed by professional painters can easily prohibit any further reading on the genre, hence its artistic and cultural significances are obscured.

In view of the insufficient study on China trade painting, it is my intention to examine its role in the art development of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries China. When I say this, I do not imply to construct a grand narrative of China trade painting. I observe from my research that the development of China trade painting is rather scattered, fragmented and sometimes discursive when compared to the conventional linear pattern one used to find in traditional art historical writings. Again, such quality owes much to the nature of the art form. One should note that China trade painting is only a by product of foreign trade in China. Unlike Chinese ceramics, tea or other products, China trade painting was seldom traded in bulk order, instead it was usually treated as a commodity purchased by foreigners in private. Thus, the production of trade painting relies heavily on the trading environment in China. The more Westerners arrived at Canton, the more trade paintings sold. Prosperity in foreign trade always secures the production of China trade painting, and vice versa.

The over two century's history of foreign trade in China engendered a huge, steady and potential market for Chinese works of art. Though it is impossible to measure the exact amount of trade paintings manufactured in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one must confess that there were many, especially after seeing the immense collection in the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem. American traders played a dominant role in the foreign trade in Canton since the early nineteenth century. The Yankee shipped large amount of tea and silk from China in every trading season, they at the same time brought on board a considerable amount of Chinese works of art. Thus, museums and historical societies in the New England area, Philadelphia of the United States are always reliable and valuable sources for China trade paintings. Moreover, the British Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Museum of Art in Hong Kong are some of the major institutions where substantial collections of trade paintings are housed, not to mention other collections of the Dutch, the French and the Scandinavian, or private galleries and auction houses that specialize in this field.

From a researcher's view point, the abundance of visual examples of China trade painting is always a merit. Yet, when an art historian is engulfed by such a huge amount of materials, this can be problematic. Whilst Chinese trade painters had generally been

criticized by Westerners as mere copyists and did not possess much creativity in art, such convention of imitating and copying still prevails when reproductions of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries trade painting are not uncommon in today's commercial art market. Copying copied works no doubt complicates the identification and analysis of trade painting. Intriguingly, to trace the authenticity of a trade painting sounds ironic as Chinese trade painters used to copy works from each other, and it is very difficult to identify the original author of a work. Despite this, I believe that a genuine dating of the work is always essential for any rigorous art historical study. Thus, I need to set out some criteria in the selection of trade paintings cited in my book. I avoid using examples of neither doubtful provenance, nor anonymous, attributed works which abound in auction markets. Even if anonymous works are quoted, they will only be treated as side reference in my discussion. Given this constraint, the number and variety of trade painting I can use unavoidably dwindles to a handful, but this seems to be the only alternative where a more accurate, truthful history of the trade painting can be attained. I always think that it is too ambitious to write a complete history of China trade painting, at least at the present stage when research materials are not yet fully investigated and explored, I therefore have spent lots of effort in very detailed study and analysis of particular artists, works or subjects. Such approach may not be interesting to readers who fascinates conventional cultural and literary interpretation on art history, yet I believe that unless the primary materials of China trade painting are well researched and inspected, it will be indiscreet to construct a big theoretical interpretation based on second hand or unverified materials.

This book comprises seven chapters. Each can be read as an independent topic, and when put together, these chapters reflect the underlying framework of how Chinese painters approached, recognized and utilized Western art media during different stages in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries China coast. Perhaps fascinated by the unprecedented encounter between China and the West, many conventional writings on Chinese export art have a tendency to discuss the historical background of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries China rather than focusing on the actual art objects. In my writings, I attempt to deal with visual examples of trade paintings more directly and precisely. This of course does not mean that the historical context is foregone; rather, its importance should be clearly demonstrated through my analysis of the art works.

The first chapter of this book outlines the current scholarships on the study of China trade painting. As mentioned, this subject has been marginalized if not completely excluded from the tradition of Chinese art history, the study of trade painting usually appeared as a branch of the decorative arts in China, amongst which Carl Crossman has contributed the most comprehensive study. Until the last decade, Chinese export art became a very popular topic in China, at least several PhD papers on this topic were produced before the birth of this book which contents are basically derived from my PhD study. A study of these research papers is inspiring as they reveal how Chinese scholars tackle a "new" category that has never existed in the paradigm of Chinese art

history before.

Presumably, Chinese clay model was one of the earliest art forms that interested the Western markets. Well before the emergence of demand for trade painting in Canton, there were already a considerable amount of Chinese modellers working for the West. In the second chapter of this book, I shall discuss the special type of clay models the Chinese modellers designed for Westerners. Also, the early encounter between Chinese artist and Westerners, in and outside China, will be mentioned. The accomplished skill of Chinese modeller such as Chitqua who won the fame of “the modeller who steal likeness” in the West somehow reflects the taste of the buyers — “likeness” preferred, and that such preference was transformed to their demand for trade paintings, particularly in portrait, in the late eighteenth century.

Chapter 3 focuses on reverse painting on glass, a completely new medium imported to China from the West since the eighteenth century. Court painters in Beijing are believed to be the earliest to work on glass through the teaching of the Jesuits, but visual and documentary evidences revealed that professional painters in Canton also acquired the same skill in an even earlier period, suggesting that the export art market in south China can possibly be another route where western art media was spread to China. Moreover, the demand for portrait by Westerners emerged in Canton since the late eighteenth century, the extant oil portraits of Spoilum, the earliest known Chinese portrait painter, reflect that painters in Canton already utilized western medium with a certain degree of confidence and proficiency.

The desire for Chinese things was a common phenomenon in the China trade history. In the fourth chapter, I will use the drawings of Pu-Quà to illustrate how the representations of Chinese were created with the use of western drawing technique. Though not much is known about the artist Pu-Quà, his design of Chinese images were influential as they turned out to be the sources of Western understanding of the Chinese in the late eighteenth century, and such influence was so deeply rooted that even till the mid-nineteenth century, trade painters in Canton kept on reproducing Pu-Quà's design for the Western market.

A considerable proportion of my book is devoted to Lamqua as both Chapters 5 and 6 offer a comprehensive study of the artist. Undoubtedly, Lamqua played an extremely crucial role in the history of China trade painting as he was the most famous and well documented artist in the West. It is my aim to inspect the controversial identity of Lamqua, and I will give a detailed analysis of the oil portraits he executed for both his Chinese and Western customers. Apart from demonstrating the high proficiency of a Chinese painter in utilizing oil paint, these portraits, with specific depiction of the sitters, also illustrate the socio-political situation of Canton. Regular demand of portraits of Houqua (or Howqua) and other Hong merchants by Westerners reflect the dominant position of the merchant class in foreign affairs; and Keying's diplomatic exchange of portraits with foreigners is an evidence of the Chinese's recognition of Western art. Moreover, due to the reputation of Lamqua, his studio had always been a tourist spot for visitors to Canton. A precise study of the *modus operandi* of Lamqua's

painter studio can give us an idea of how Western style paintings were massively manufactured by many anonymous painters in nineteenth century Canton.

Following the Opium Wars, China was forced to open its gate to the West. The concluding chapter discusses how trade painting industry has flourished since 1840s. The individual character of trade painters became more identifiable during this period, from Tingqua, Sunqua to Youqua, each painter and their studios bear certain characteristics that are not found in the others, even though the kind of pictures they produced are sometimes overlapping. The increasing economic and political importance of Hong Kong after British colonization opened a potential art market for trade painters. Many painter shops in Canton shifted their business to Hong Kong, and the production of monumental size landscapes of Canton, Hong Kong can metaphorically be read as the foreigner's increasing interest as well as involvement in these places. With the advent of photography, the production of trade painting faced a new challenge if not a threat. The quick response of the late nineteenth century trade painters in integrating painting and photography to their art business once again manifested their flexibility and open attitude towards Western art media.

A final note about the convention of spelling and romanization is necessary. I have been using both the *pinyin* and the old Wade-Giles systems for Chinese names of person and place throughout my writings. Though the *pinyin* system becomes the more widely applied system nowadays, it is also true that Wade-Giles was more universal in literatures written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus, I prefer using "Canton" than "Guangzhou", "Amoy" than "Xiamen", or "Keying" than "Kiyang" because these romanizations are generally recognized. Other than this, the *pinyin* system will be adopted. In addition, I have cited a considerable amount of visual examples in this book. Since some of them like Chinese watercolours by Pu-Quà, Tingqua or Samqua are taken from specific albums, I think it is more convenient for readers if they are grouped under an appendix instead of loosely scattered in the illustration section.

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1

Current scholarships on the study of China trade painting

Despite the fact that there has been a rapid growth of interest in the Chinese export art since the second half of the twentieth century, which is perhaps best manifested in the numerous ongoing art auctions of varying scales pertinent to the genre in the United States, Britain as well as the Far East, it only received very little attention from, if not being entirely ignored by, art historians until the last two decades while the quantity of writings on Chinese export art is seemingly gradually increasing. Such writings are to be found, on most occasions, in museum exhibition catalogues, auction booklets and art magazines, and it is quite a common feature that a large amount of them tends to be characterized with trifle fragmentary in terms of contents, showing the insufficiency of research work which had been undertaken on the genre.

Although substantial publications about Chinese export art emerged in as early as the 1920s, of which James Orange's *The Chater Collection: Pictures relating to China, Hong Kong, Macao, 1655–1860* can be considered as one of the very few and early attempts to focus on works executed by Chinese trade painters of the time, and yet still a key reference in the study of the subject nowadays, it was only until the late 1980s that eminent scholars such as Michael Sullivan began to include the genre into the paradigm of Chinese art, aiming to render it from an artistic aspect that no other historians had proposed before. In his *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*¹, Sullivan treats the Chinese export art under the context of Sino-European contacts in the early nineteenth century, looking at works produced geographically bound to the South China coast. Conceivably, it may not be Sullivan's interest to depict an overall picture of the historical development of the genre, nor to investigate the underlying

¹ See Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (London: University of California Press, Ltd., 1989).

mechanism of the export art trade in his book. Rather, he only gives quite a brief and general remark on the possible Western impacts found in Chinese export art brought by some European travellers and painters, with special focus on the well-known Chinnery-Lamqua relationship as an example. However, judging by our increasing knowledge in the history of Chinese export art today, Sullivan's view perhaps can account only for a very small part, if not being an oversimplification, of the nearly two hundred years development of this genre. It is not my intention to challenge Sullivan's understanding in the study of Chinese export art, yet one should aware of the surprisingly limited sources Sullivan has relied on, other than the inaccurate information on Chinnery quoted and the arguable attribution of paintings made in the book². Such deficiencies in Sullivan's writing on Chinese export art are, perhaps, not uncommon amongst works by other art historians and writers, owing to the fact that this subject has long been under-researched in the art history field, in Mainland China and Western countries alike, hence the erroneous literature.

1.1 James Orange's *The Chater Collection*

Long before the academics began their interests in the history of China's export art, a number of books on this topic were already published in Britain and America respectively, of which the earliest can be traced back to the 1920s. Strictly speaking, these books may not be all written academically, yet they are by all means key texts to the study of Chinese export art nowadays owing to the substantial amount of primary sources employed, thus becoming basic references for most beginners and have also been widely quoted by later writers. Of all these books, I select commenting on James Orange's *The Chater Collection: Pictures relating to China, Hong Kong, Macao, 1655–1860*, Margaret Jourdain's *Chinese export art in the eighteenth century* and Carl L Crossman's *The China Trade* in detail, for each of them demonstrates the problems that Chinese export art has been tackled in different phases since the early twentieth century.

Written in 1924 as an inventory of Sir Catchick Paul Chater's collection of pictures

² Sullivan has only cited three books as references in discussing Chinese painting in the European manner in *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*. To my surprise, key references such as Margaret Jourdain's *Chinese Export Art in the Eighteenth Century* (Feltham: Spring Books, 1967), Carl L. Crossman's *The China Trade: Export Paintings, Furniture, Silver & Other Objects* (Princeton: The Pyne Press, 1972), or Craig Clunas' *Chinese Export Art and Design* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1987) are not mentioned by him. See Sullivan, p. 288. In addition, Sullivan mentions in his book that George Chinnery settled in Hong Kong after the Opium War. Yet, the source of such information is not given. See Sullivan, p. 83. Current research on Chinnery shows that the artist only came to Hong Kong in the first half of 1846 and sojourned for no more than six months, then he returned to Macao and stayed there till his death. See my article "George Chinnery and Hong Kong", *Xingcai fengliu* (形彩風流), ed. Edwin Lai Kin Keung (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co. Ltd., 2002), pp. 82-85. One of the China trade paintings illustrated in Sullivan's book, titled *Riverside at Canton*, is attributed confidently to Lamqua on no ground. Works of similar subject and style are found in Crossman's *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade* and the author also attributed them as Lamqua's paintings without any documentary support. Obviously, these kinds of attributions are more speculative than derived from thorough study of the works themselves. See Sullivan, p. 86, figure 60; and Crossman, pp. 96-97, plates 31 & 32.

acquired from Wyndham O. Law, James Orange's *The Chater Collection* can be considered as an unprecedented substantial publication on images of the China coast for it covers about 430 oil paintings, watercolours, ink and pencil drawings, mezzotints, etchings, aquatints, engravings and lithographs, with the focus chiefly on views of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Canton, Hong Kong and Macao. All these works were later bequeathed to the Colonial Government after Sir Chater died in 1926 and they, if were not lost during the Japanese invasion³, formed, together with the Ho Tung Collection of Paintings⁴, the core of the existing historical pictures collection of the Museum of Art in Hong Kong. Not much biographical information of Orange is known today, except that he had been residing in Hong Kong since the 1880s, was the author of two other books on Japanese decorative art, namely *Japanese lacquer* and *Bizenware*, of which the latter was also a catalogue compiled for Sir Chater's ceramics collection in 1916. It is likely that Orange himself was not a trained art historian⁵, or at least was not specialized in the history of Chinese export art, as it reveals in the text of *The Chater Collection* that, he made no attempt in analyzing neither the artistic significance of the overall collection and achievement of the artists, nor to have in-depth study on any particular single work that an art historian will usually be interested in. All the images published act more as illustrations of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries China coast history than being the point of discussion. Indeed, Orange admitted in the preface that he only drew quotations from contemporary authors "to produce an impression of the times"⁶ in the letterpress of various sections of the book, and detailed research would not be the prime concern in his writings. Standard literatures about eighteenth and nineteenth centuries China, such as W. C. Hunter's *The fan-kwae at Canton* and *Bits of old China*; H. B. Morse's *The trade and administration of China* and *The international relations of the Chinese empire*, are the major sources in which his letterpress drawn upon.

Given that *The Chater Collection* consists of over four hundred pieces of works, a clear classification system or arrangement of the works is necessary or one might easily be confused. The classification method Orange adopted is simple but straightforward — foreign trade in China, early British diplomatic relations, China wars, Canton river, Canton, Macao, Hong Kong, treaty ports of China, shipping, north country and so on. Albeit overlapping in some cases, such thematic and geographical classifications set

³ A large part of the Chater Collection was plundered during the Japanese invasion in 1941 and only a small part of it was secreted previously or recovered after the war. Details about the recovery of the collection is mentioned in the preface of *The Chater Collection of paintings and engravings, pictures relating to China, Hong Kong, Macao 1655-1860, an exhibition arranged by the British Council in conjunction with the Government of Hong Kong*, exhibition catalogue, 1950, pp. 3-4.

⁴ See *The Ho Tung Collection of oil paintings and watercolours*, exhibition catalogue, January, 1959 (Hong Kong: The Government Press, 1959).

⁵ The most detailed biographical information of James Orange that I can locate is as follows: ORANGE, J. (Hong Kong), M.I.C.E., M.I.M.E., M. Amer. soc. C.E.; Civil Engineer and Architect. Senior partner in firm of Leigh and Orange. Resident in colony over 22 years. Club: Hong Kong. Address: 1 Des Voeux Road Central, Hong Kong. See *Who's who in the Far East, 1906-7(June)* (Hong Kong: China Mail, 1906), p. 256.

⁶ See *The Chater Collection*, p. 9.

up a template for many late followers, in particular commonly availed by curators in compiling exhibition catalogues⁷. Of all these representations of the China coast, only about twenty-two pieces are attributed to Chinese artist, out of four to be by Lam-qua; and the majority of these works are by westerners, among which artists like George Chinnery, Thomas Daniell, Thomas Allom, Auguste Borget and William Alexander are some of the better known examples. It should be noted that views of the China coast can be of two kinds if simply categorized according to the background of the authors—one executed by foreign artists, draughtsmen, captains, navigators or travellers during their voyages to the Far East; the other produced by professional Chinese artists, or the so-called trade painters who based mainly in Canton or other treaty ports. Comparatively speaking, the quantity of trade paintings drawn by Chinese artists is far less than pictures by westerners in *The Chater Collection*, and all these Chinese artists are anonymous despite that four pictures were said to be “probably by Lam-qua, the best known of George Chinnery’s pupils”, groundlessly⁸. Causal attribution of works is not uncommon in writings about the China trade paintings and in this case is with no exception to *The Chater Collection*. Aside from the problematic Lamqua’s works, several views of Canton in the catalogue were attributed to George Chinnery devoid of any convincing evidences, and also a Chinese official portrait impossibly to J. Castiglioni, the renowned missionary court painter who never worked in the China coast⁹.

Nevertheless, the substantial amount of images on the China coast recorded in *The Chater Collection* accounts for its documentary importance. Since its publication in the 1920s, no other same volume of China coast pictures has been compiled so far. Because of the early publication date of this catalogue, the China trade paintings printed are highly reliable in the sense that they are works done by nineteenth century China trade painters; unlike some of those works, though appeared in auctions or commercial galleries in the last two decades, are always questionable in their authenticity. Judging from this, *The Chater Collection* is no doubt a valuable guidebook for the study of the visual images of China trade paintings.

1.2 Chinese Export Art in the Eighteenth Century by Margaret Jourdain

Chinese Export Art in the Eighteenth Century by Margaret Jourdain and R. Soame Jenyns is a pioneering study of the subject in the early 1950. Based on both the public and private collections in England, the authors made use of diaries, manuscripts, journals and many other original research materials for a comprehensive survey of

⁷ Such influence is particularly obvious in the historical pictures exhibition catalogues published by the Hong Kong Museum of Art over the decades.

⁸ See *The Chater Collection*, Nos. 52-55, Section VI, p. 240.

⁹ Examples of this kind of causal attributions can be seen in *The Chater Collection*, Nos. 39-41, Section VI & No.16, Section XI, pp. 265-66; 471.

the Chinese export art collected in the eighteenth century Europe. Although neither oil painting or watercolours of the treaty ports scene, nor portrait of hong merchants or captains by the Chinese painters are illustrated, the book covers a great variety of art forms, including lacquer ware, furniture, paper-hangings, paintings on glass, prints, paintings, painted enamels, carving in ivory and silk textiles, which, perhaps unwittingly, gave its first attempt in defining the term “Chinese export art”¹⁰.

Just as *The Chater Collection*, the pictures Jourdain discussed are reliable in terms of date of production inasmuch as their provenances are usually clearly stated. In fact, most of these works were brought back to England by the supercargoes of the Honourable East India Company or merchants who had been trading in Canton during the late eighteenth century. In some cases, inscriptions by the original collectors or painter shop's labels are found on the rear of the picture frames among these works, and that provide very crucial hints to the authenticity, history and dating of the works of art. Whilst Jourdain may not be interested in studying the content of each work in great detail, she noticed the significance of such textual information and made considerable quotations of them in her writings, and they then became useful documentary sources to later researchers, particularly if the original works are in the hands of private collectors where public access is very limited. As regarded by the *Illustrated London News* as “a very valuable piece of historical research” of the time, the *Chinese Export Art* relies heavily on both English and French references to manifest the contemporary interest in Chinese works of art, presumably the earliest to document the Chinese export art from a historical perspective. However, comments on these works of art by the authors tend to be limited and thus their ideas are not explicitly demonstrated, though they were aware that many contemporary criticisms on Chinese pictures, for example, were totally measured with the western standard.

1.3 Carl Crossman's *The China Trade*

If Jourdain's book offers an overview of the eighteenth century Chinese export art in Britain, then Carl Crossman's *The China Trade* has unquestionably laid good foundations for scholarly study of the nineteenth century Chinese export art with particular association to the American market. There are two versions of Crossman's *The China Trade*, one published in 1972, the other in 1991 which is an updated version and expansion upon the former¹¹. Since its first print, Crossman's book is considered to be a very influential, if not authoritative, publication in the field not only because of its extensive coverage of China trade artifacts but also the substantial amount of first hand information cited. The main purpose of this book, as Crossman states explicitly, is “to

¹⁰ As far as I know, Margaret Jourdain is likely the first one to suggest the term “Chinese export art” as no one used this term before early 1950.

¹¹ The book's name of the first version is *The China Trade: Export Paintings, Furniture, Silver and Other Objects* (Princeton: The Pyne Press, 1972); the second *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade* (Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1991).

answer some of the basic questions of what is or is not China trade"¹², which to some extent is a review of the definition on "Chinese export art" that Jourdain proposed two decades earlier.

Formerly an assistant curator of the Peabody Museum and president of the Childs' Gallery, Crossman has engaged in the research and business of Chinese export art for many years and has no doubt had a wide exposure to many related works. Aside from works that are under private collections, examples illustrated in the two versions of *The China Trade* are basically collections from the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. Works from the Peabody collection were mostly brought back by the Yankee from China since the inauguration of the American China trade in the late eighteenth century, their provenance are usually fully recorded and thus are reliable artefacts to quote.

Basically, the contents of both versions of *The China Trade* follow that of Jourdain's, that is to deal with different categories of export arts in individual chapters, including painting, furniture, lacquerware, carvings, fans, silver and pewter, wallpaper and so on. However, Crossman shows an apparent interest in painting as over a half volume of the book is devoted to trade painting, either focusing on individual painters or painting of different subject matters and mediums¹³. One of the most important contributions that Crossman made throughout his China trade study is to initiate discussions on the identities of Spoilum and Lamqua, the two renowned Chinese trade painters in the western market. In *The China Trade*, Crossman tries hard to establish, albeit arguably, that Spoilum is one of the earliest Chinese artists to execute portraiture in western painting style in China¹⁴. Owing to the limited amount of signed works by Spoilum found so far, Crossman relies largely on stylistic analysis and comparison with attributing works to Spoilum, hence the conclusions are bound to be speculative in many cases. Nevertheless, such attribution helps to raise, gradually, the art-historical as well as market values of some China trade paintings once they are ascribed to a certain artist, as the tradition of art history writing tends to be more artist-based in general. Works of art by anonymous artists usually receive relatively less attention.

In Crossman's view, Spoilum had a tremendous influence on later Chinese trade painters, and Lamqua, as he believes, can possibly be a son of Spoilum since both painters' painting styles are very similar. "It would seem, however, that after Spoilum had learned to paint he was the artist to pass on his methods to the next generation of

¹² See Crossman, 1972, p. xii.

¹³ Seven out of thirteen chapters in the first version of *The China Trade* are about painting, which topics are as follows: "Spoilum and his followers", "George Chinnery and Lam Qua", "Later portrait painters and photographers", "Painters of port views and ships", "Genre painting and copies of western art", "Watercolours and gouaches", and "Paintings on glass". In the second version, the discussion on Spoilum is further divided into two independent chapters, "Spoilum—Paintings on glass and portraits", and "The followers of Spoilum, 1800–1825", showing the significance of the artist in Crossman's writings.

¹⁴ Crossman claims that he is the first one to offer a full discussion of Spoilum, "the first Chinese painter known to have painted in oil on canvas at Canton", in the first edition of *The China Trade*. See *The Decorative Arts of the China Trade*, 1991, p. 35.

Foeiqua, Tonqua, Tonqua Jr, Fatqua, and Lamqua”, says Crossman, and “the similarity of execution in port and ship paintings from 1800 to 1825 would certainly support this theory.”¹⁵ Obviously, this is only an untenable claim without being proved, yet it should not be overlooked that Crossman has somewhat constructed an idea that a linear development of style existed between these Chinese artists, and that such idea later became a popular topic to many writers on China trade painting.

The names of George Chinnery and Lamqua have almost been paired off in writings of China trade paintings. Although Crossman is not the first researcher to discuss the mysterious relationship between these two artists¹⁶, he is likely the earliest to put together many related writings from the nineteenth century, and demonstrates to the readers that Lamqua was already well-known to the westerners in the export art market. Speaking in high praise of Lamqua’s paintings, Crossman conceives that the painter “will unquestionably remain the most important painter of the group, and his studio will remain the source for the great quantity of paintings produced from the 1830s to the 1850s.”¹⁷ The complexity of Lamqua’s identity is hitherto problematic. Whilst *The China Trade* had not been able to solve this question, nor did other contemporary publications, Crossman’s lengthy discussion on Lamqua certainly marks recognition of the unusual position the artist possessed in the China trade history. Since then, “Lamqua” became the core in many discourses on China trade painting, and a number of comprehensive studies on this Chinese artist were launched hereafter¹⁸.

The anthropological approach Crossman generally adopted in his discourse on China trade paintings has in itself some limitations. The scarcity of documentary information on these Chinese trade painters, partly resulted from insufficient research in the past, is a determinant factor to biographical study of any scale. Despite the fame of Lamqua, the writings about him are very fragmented, sometimes contradictory, and that inevitably prohibits any in-depth study of an individual artist which is a common practice in art history writing. For such reason, what Crossman can achieve, up to the revised edition of *The China Trade*, is merely a name list of Chinese trade painters who are believed to have worked for the western market¹⁹. Among the painters listed, only the background of Lamqua and Tingqua have come to light, thanks to the records

¹⁵ See Crossman, 1991, p. 110.

¹⁶ Apart from the first hand materials about Chinnery-Lamqua relationship found in nineteenth century travel descriptions and diaries, the earliest writer to mention this subject can be traced back to Henry & Sydney Berry-Hill’s book on Chinnery, where a small chapter is devoted to the Chinese artists working along with Chinnery during his sojourn in China. See Henry & Sydney Berry-Hill, *George Chinnery 1774-1852: Artist of the China coast* (Leigh-on-Sea: F. Lewis, Publishers, Limited, 1963), pp. 37-40.

¹⁷ See Crossman, 1991, p. 100.

¹⁸ Following Crossman’s discussion, a number of scholars and researchers made extensive investigation and new discoveries on the works and life of Lamqua in the last two decades. To name some of them are Geoffrey Bonsall, Joseph Ting, Patrick Conner and the author.

¹⁹ Crossman listed 37 and 41 names of Chinese painters in the appendices of the first and second editions of *The China Trade* respectively. It should be noted that not all works of these painters are illustrated or discussed in his writings, and many of them are just names proposed by the writer himself perhaps for identification purpose.