



This paper provides an introduction to the three paintings from the Qing court collection entitled "Portraits of Meritorious Vassals in Zi Guang Pavilion".

by the American of Chinese descent, Dora Wong.

In early autumn 2001, I visited the United States at the invitation of the Smithsonian Institution, witnessing firsthand the grief and anger of the American people following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Though New York appeared to have regained surface calm within a fortnight, the atmosphere of tension and terror had not entirely dissipated, particularly in the vicinity of the collapsed World Trade Centre, where clearance

and rebuilt as the Ziguang Pavilion, continuing the Qing tradition. During the Kangxi reign of the Qing dynasty, the area before the Ziguang Pavilion served as an examination venue for military candidates. By the 20th year of the Qianlong reign (1755), the Qing government had achieved victory in subduing the Dzungars and Muslim tribes in the Western Regions. While celebrating this triumph, "the Emperor commended the merits of the ministers involved in the campaign, and thus renovated this pavilion. Portraits were commissioned of the meritorious ministers: Grand Secretary Fu Heng, Duke of Loyalty and Courage; General of the Frontier, First Class Martial Courage, Duke of Strategy and Valour, Hu

Chengdu Deputy Commander-in-Chief, General of Favour Shu Jing'an." The circumstances and timing of the dispersal of these "Portraits of Meritorious Ministers in the Hall of Purple Light" remain undocumented. It is posited that they were likely lost during the occupation of Beijing by the Eight-Nation Alliance in the twenty-sixth year of the Guangxu reign

(1900). At that time, foreign troops were stationed in the Zhongnanhai area where the Ziguang Pavilion stood, and the work of clearing the ruins of the Eight-Nation Alliance commanders' headquarters had only just begun.

The restoration of the ruins had only just begun, and people still had Zhao Hui, were confined within the pavilion. Fifty others Ziguang Pavilion. A contemporary account records: "The Westerners... yet heads were already bowed in the daily grind of work. This, while the rest were commissioned to be drafted by Confucian scholars" (Qing Dynasty, Yu Minzhong et al. the Three Seas. Foreigners from various nations formed processions of carriages and horses.

Amidst such an atmosphere, I arrived as arranged at a high-rise residence on Manhattan's East River Road, not far from the World Trade Centre, to view the lady of the house's collection. The hostess, Ms Wong Wai-ying, an antiquarian specialising in Chinese art born in Shanghai, is known by her English name Dora Wong. She received me in her elegantly antique, distinctly oriental-chic drawing room and study. After brief pleasantries, we promptly commenced viewing her treasures. She is well acquainted with New York's renowned calligraphers and painters, yet her approach to collecting proved uniquely effective. As she herself recounted, Mr Wang Jiquan possessed formidable expertise, and in the authentication and acquisition of Song and Yuan dynasty paintings and literati art, she could not compete. Thus, she forged her own path. Consequently, Ms Huang Huiying turned her attention to the portraits of meritorious officials within Qing dynasty court painting, a genre previously overlooked. After years of dedicated effort, she now possesses several examples of the "Purple Light Pavilion portraits of meritorious officials". Speaking with characteristic candour and evident pride, she showed me these acquisitions.

Before discussing Ms Huang Huiying's collection, we must first explain Ziguangge and the "Ziguangge Meritorious Subject Portraits".

Ziguangge, situated on the western shore of the Middle Lake in the Western Gardens of the capital (present-day Beijing), was originally a platform constructed during the reign of Emperor

Wuzong of the Ming dynasty before falling into disuse.

Fifty men, including the Minister of War The Ministry of Works was established within the The emperor commended Foreign troops were stationed in the gardens and

((Research into Old Tales Beneath the Sun In the forty-first year of the Qianlong reign (1776), following the Qing army's triumphant return from subjugating the Dajie and Jinchuan regions, "the Grand Secretary was commanded to compile the Praises of the First Fifty Meritorious Ministers, including the First-Ranked Loyal and Valiant Duke of Dingxi, General Dingxi, and the First-Ranked Resolute and Courageous Duke of Dingbian, Right Vice-General, Minister of Revenue Feng Yiji, among one hundred others, listed as the first and second fifty meritorious ministers. The Emperor personally composed eulogies for the first fifty meritorious subjects, commanding this humble subject to draft eulogies for the latter fifty, following the precedent established during the pacification of the Ili Muslim region." (Qing dynasty, Yu Minzhong et al. (Research on Historical Records of the Capital). By the late Qianlong era, an additional fifty portraits of meritorious subjects in the pacification of Taiwan thirty portraits of meritorious subjects in the pacification of the Gurkhas were added. During the Qianlong reign, the portraits of meritorious officials painted and hung in the Ziguang Pavilion totalled as many as 280 pieces. Subsequent emperors continued to add to the "Portraits of Meritorious Officials in the Ziguang Pavilion".

Hundreds of these "Portraits of Meritorious Officials in the Hall of Purple Light" have since been scattered far and wide, rendered fragmented and incomplete. The number of paintings currently extant differs markedly from the original total, indicating that some significant upheaval must have befallen them to bring about such an unfortunate fate. To the best of my knowledge, only two portraits from the "Purple Light Pavilion Portraits of Meritorious Officials" are now housed in domestic museums, both held at the Tianjin Municipal History Museum, namely the portrait of Kara Batulu Ayuqi, Minister of Scattered Ranks, and the portrait of the commander of the

campaign against the Dog Small Jinchuan,

The throng flows ceaselessly. Our nation's people in lorries, cars, and rickshaws

and rickshaws roam freely, dust obscuring the sky, the clatter of wheels shaking the earth

is more bustling than the main thoroughfares" (**Zhongfang Shi, Qing Dynasty**, Records of the Gengzi Year). The former imperial palace and gardens, had become entirely open areas. The furnishings within were destroyed and plundered, suffering immense losses, which was hardly surprising, though the passage above makes no direct mention of the whereabouts of the "Portraits of Meritorious Officials in the Purple Light Pavilion"

, but under such circumstances, they were not likely to have escaped unscathed.

Currently, the few surviving "Ziguangge Meritorious Officials Statues" are scattered across various locations both domestically and abroad. Some are housed in museums and art galleries, while others remain in private collections. During this trip to New York, three "Ziguangge Meritorious Officials Statues" were viewed at the residence of Ms Huang Huiying.

"Ziguang Pavilion Meritorious Subjects Portraits" at Ms Huang Huiying's residence, which was exceptionally rare. According to the author's understanding,

fewer than twenty such portraits survive worldwide. Naturally, this statistical figure is based solely on those "Purple Light Pavilion Meritorious Subject Portraits" that have surfaced in the auction market in recent years; the actual number may well exceed what is currently known. As mentioned earlier, these portraits were dispersed during the period when the Eight-Nation Alliance occupied Beijing, with looters treating Chinese cultural relics as



Liangshierguan

by the minister: Three grades  
 From this one may further surmise that perhaps I  
 gate.  
 bow' Right  
 Dance  
 A feast for the eyes.  
 Bu

Vase colour painting, 15 cm in height and 15 cm in width, depicting "Third-Rank Bodyguard Kesheke Batur Wukeshir Tu

Scroll (Portrait of General Ehui of Chengdu, Fashishang Abaturu Yun Cavalry Captain), also a coloured silk painting, dimensions unknown, inscribed on the right of the painting in Chinese characters: "Ehui, General of Chengdu, Fashishang Abaturu Yun Cavalry Captain. Unparalleled in his efforts, The garrisoned troops, General E Hui, Truly led them into action, Overthrowing strongholds and destroying fortifications, achieving success everywhere, Brave and resourceful, The hero of Qian Guo. Imperial inscription by His Majesty in the first month of summer, Wusheng year of the Qianlong era", On the left is the same content in Manchu. In the painting, Ehui stands upright wearing civil official court attire, adorned with a single-eye feather headdress and a waist sword, his countenance rather gaunt. The imperial inscription on the painting is dated Qianlong Wusheng, corresponding to the 53rd year of the Qianlong reign (1788). Ehui was one of the meritorious officials who subdued Taiwan during the Qianlong era. The fact that the Qianlong Emperor personally inscribed the caption attests to the magnitude of his achievements. Ehui belonged to the Manchu Plain White Banner, bearing the surname Biru. In the later Qianlong period, he participated in the campaign to subdue Lin Shuangwen in Taiwan. Upon triumphant return, he was honoured for his service with the privilege of having his portrait displayed in the Purple Light Pavilion. He later contributed to the suppression of the Tibetan uprising, rising through the ranks to become Governor-General of Sichuan. After being dismissed for misconduct, he was reinstated and eventually appointed Governor-General of Yunnan and Guizhou. After his death, he was posthumously honoured with the title "Kejing". To the best of my knowledge, this hanging scroll portrait of General Ehui of Chengdu, titled "Portrait of General Ehui, Shang'abaturu Yunqiwei of Chengdu", may be the sole surviving work from the original series of fifty portraits commemorating the heroes of the Taiwan campaign.

As for the artist of the "Portraits of Meritorious Officials in the Hall of Purple Light", since the paintings bear no signatures or inscriptions,

The author of the "Portraits of Meritorious Subjects in the Hall of Purple Light" remains unidentified, as the paintings bear no signatures or seals. Having examined portions of the Imperial Household Department's "Archives of Completed Works," I discovered materials offering relatively clear clues regarding the artist responsible for these portraits. The following excerpts are relevant:

"On the fourteenth day of the tenth month in the twenty-eighth year of Qianlong's reign, a dispatch was received from Langzhong De Kui and others: 'An edict was conveyed by Eunuch Hu Shijie on the twelfth day of the tenth month: "Portraits of the Fifty Meritorious Ministers" are to be painted. Jin Tingbiao is to create hand-scroll portraits modeled on the hanging scroll drafts. Ai Qimeng is to paint the portraits on white silk, with the drapery and colouring executed by the enamel painter. By Imperial Command.'" "On the 19th day of the 5th month in the 29th year of Qianlong's reign, received an official document signed by Chief Clerk Jin Hui and Treasury Administrator Bai Yongji.

Enclosed was an edict conveyed by Eunuch Hu Shijie on the 10th day of this month: "The portraits of the next fifty meritorious subjects shall have their drapery painted by the Painting Academy. The draft shall be submitted for review before execution. So ordered."

According to the records in the two archival materials above, it is quite clear that before the 'Portrait of Meritorious Officials in the Purple Light Pavilion' was completed as a hanging scroll, a small draft in the form of a handscroll had been painted. These handscroll-format preliminary sketches were likely produced through the concerted efforts of numerous Chinese and foreign artists, possibly even through life studies of the subjects themselves. Among the painters involved in creating the large hanging scroll of the "Portraits of Meritorious Officials in the Purple Light Pavilion," only Ai Qimeng and Jin Tingbiao are named in the archives. The names of other painters from the Enamel Painting Office and the Painting Academy remain entirely unknown.

Ai Qimeng, a native of Bohemia (now part of the Czech Republic), was a missionary sent to China from Europe.

born in 1708 (the 47th year of the Kangxi reign). He joined the European Jesuit order in 1736 (the first year of the Qianlong reign) and arrived in China in the 10th year of Qianlong (1735), entering imperial service that same year. Aimé de la Motte passed away in Beijing in 1780 (the 45th year of Qianlong). Aichimeng excelled in painting figures and animals, employing primarily Western techniques in his work.

Jin Tingbiao, courtesy name Shimou, hailed from Jiaxing (present-day Zhejiang Province). Born into a family of painters, he excelled in figure painting, landscape painting, and flower-and-bird painting. In the 22nd year of the Qianlong reign (1757), during the Emperor Qianlong's second southern inspection tour, Jin Tingbiao voluntarily presented his paintings and received praise. In June of the same year, he entered the imperial court to serve. Jin Tingbiao passed away in Beijing on the fourth day of the fourth month in the 32nd year of the Qianlong reign (1767) (see the "Archives of Completed Works" for that year).

Having established that the "Portraits of Meritorious Ministers in the Purple Light Pavilion" commemorating the pacification of the Western Regions were primarily executed by Ai Qimeng, Jin Tingbiao and others, we shall now analyse these paintings. The first two works exhibit distinct stylistic differences: the facial rendering employs colour wash techniques, emphasising chiaroscuro and three-dimensionality, while anatomical accuracy is also relatively well-maintained. This is particularly evident in Fu Heng's portraits. Apart from colour, facial features show almost no trace of ink



His paintings exemplify the fusion of Eastern and Western artistic traditions.

Regarding the aforementioned portrait scroll of "First-Rank Grand Secretary, Loyal and Valiant Duke Fu Heng," the author speculates that the facial features may have been rendered by Lang Shining. The scroll "Portrait of Kazakh Tribute Horses" by Lang Shining, currently housed at the Guimet Museum in Paris, France ( ), depicts figures standing before Emperor Qianlong.

lines, relying instead on variations in hue intensity and depth to sculpt form and convey surface texture. This clearly reflects characteristics of European painting. In contrast, the figures' bodies are outlined with lines, with some drapery folds also rendered through line work, while three-dimensional effects are not emphasised. The use of colour also predominantly employs flat washes, reflecting the strong characteristics of traditional Chinese painting. It can thus be concluded that, in these two works, the figures' faces were painted by Ai Qimeng' while the figures'

bodies were completed by Jin Tingbiao. These portraits demonstrate the highly harmonious and successful collaboration between Chinese and foreign painters, embodying the artistic spirit of the Qianlong period court.

The man beside him was Fu Heng. After the conquest of the Western Regions, the Emperor had commanded Lang Shi

Ning, Wang Zhicheng, Ai Qimeng and other Chinese and foreign painters to Chengde in Rehe to depict portraits of the surrendered Kogur chieftain and several meritorious officials. For instance, Lang Shining painted the portrait of Ayuxi. ~~There~~ the facial features in the portrait scroll of "The First-Ranked Loyal and Valiant Duke Fu Heng, Grand Secretary" were at the very least rendered by Ai Qimeng and others after reference to Lang Shining's work.

As for the portrait scroll of General of Chengdu, Fashishang Abaturu Yunqiwei Ehui, its painting style is relatively consistent, suggesting it was likely completed independently by a Chinese court painter, though the artist's name has been lost to history.

Ms Huang Huiying's collection of portraits from the "Ziguangge Hall of Meritorious Officials" comprises only three pieces.

only three pieces, it surpasses many museums and art galleries, which either possess none at all