

New York City, New York Public Library, Prints and Drawings Collection (MEBF +++)
 Vatican City, Biblioteca Vaticana, Cicognara collection (XII, 3886): V.D. 2/28?

5. *Huelsen's sample albums (parts I and II)*

a. *Lafreri period*

Erlangen, Universitätsbibliothek (Appendix 1.a)
 Darmstadt, Hofbibliothek (Appendix 2.a)
 Dresden, Kupferstichkabinett, 772/3 (Appendix 2.c)
 Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Arch. 85 (lost without record)
 Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Arch. 86 (lost without record)
 Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Destailleur 2942, part II (lost, or trans-

ferred and disbound?)⁷³
 Dresden, Staatsbibliothek (Appendix 2.d)
 Karlsruhe, Hofbibliothek, B. 60 (destroyed by fire in 1942)
 Rome, Thomas Ashby (Appendix 3.k)
 Stuttgart, Landesbibliothek (Appendix 3.j)
 b. *Duchetti period (1582-1586)*
 Berlin, Stadtbibliothek, Rar 5590 = Staatsbibliothek, 8 Unterden Linden (Rr 5590 R (2)?)⁷⁴
 Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, Destailleur 2942, part I (lost in World War II)
 Dresden, Kupferstichkabinett, B. 771, 3 (Appendix 3.a)
 Rome, Vatican, Cicognara collection, V.D. 2/28 (signature unconfirmed)⁷⁵
 Vienna, Bibliothek der Kunstakademie (unconfirmed)

73. During the 1960s the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin assembled a collection of 227 prints from *Speculum* published by Lafreri and his successors (Sig. OS 2651m). See M. Fischer, 'Lafreri's "Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae": Addenda zu Hülsens Verzeichnis', in *Berliner Museen. Berichte aus den Staatlichen Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz*, n. s. 22, 1972, 1, pp. 10-17. This collection was compiled from several sources and has probably been enhanced since. It is likely that there were one or more volumes disbound on this occasion. Perhaps the Destailleur volumes (parts I and II) were among them, although 45 per cent of this portion of the collection was lost in the war. W. Cillessen, in *Kunst in der Bibliothek*, B. Evers *et al.*, Berlin 1994, p. 57, no. 100.
74. This album is in a German library binding, labelled on the spine *Monumenta Romana*. One print-bearing sheet stamped: *ex-bib. Regia Berolimensi*. The album contains 77 prints including many

with Duchetti's address, and at least four seventeenth-century prints, thus discrepant with Huelsen's early dating. The album may have been rebound, possibly reordered, and prints added after Huelsen examined it. The date of rebinding may be indicated by the (acquisition?) stamp on the backboard: *St.B.19.8.37U* (19 August 1937).

75. Huelsen lists four Vatican albums: two from Ashby (see above); one formerly Duc de Loubat, inscribed 1587; and two from the Cicognara collection. There now appear to be at least six Vatican albums, with only the Ashby Riserva S6, S7 so far identifiable on Huelsen's list, and these acquired by the Vatican after Huelsen wrote. See, in addition, Barberini X, I, 13 A-B; Cicognara XII 3886 and Cicognara XII 541, 21-115, both of which appear to be late.

The Victories of the Emperor Qianlong

Tanya Szrajber

The subject of this article is a remarkable set of sixteen prints, known as *Conquêtes [et Victoires] de l'Empereur de la Chine*, commemorating the victories of the Chinese Emperor Qianlong in Central Asia between 1755 and 1759. The prints were commissioned by the Emperor himself and produced in France by the best engravers, under the direction of Charles Nicolas Cochin (fils), between 1767 and 1774. Cochin described the work as 'cet ouvrage, déjà par lui-même d'une nature toute différente de tous ceux connus jusqu'ici

dans la gravure' and his contemporary Charles-Antoine Jombert (in his catalogue of Cochin's *œuvre*) referred to it as 'une des plus considérables entreprises qu'on ait encore faites en gravure'.¹ Why they referred to the set in this way will become evident below. It is fortunate that a number of the documents relating to the commission have survived. The most comprehensive account of the subject was in 1921 by Paul Pelliot, whose fundamental article drew heavily on documents in French archives, which are extensively quoted here.

1. Cochin's letter to Marigny, 16 February 1767, *Nouvelles Archives de l'Art Français (NAAF)*, 3rd series, xx, Paris 1905, no. 559; C.-

A. Jombert, *Catalogue de l'œuvre de Ch. Nic. Cochin fils*, Paris 1770, pp. 120-21.

He did not, however, know of other documents, published in *Nouvelles Archives de l'Art Français* (NAAF) in 1905, and this article attempts to combine this material for the first time in a single narrative. Unlike Pelliot, I concentrate on those aspects that concern print production and have therefore extracted relevant material from his exhaustive account, as well as adding information from other sources.²

Emperor Qianlong had been engaged in a difficult campaign to subdue and pacify the tribal groups, mainly Mongol, in the border regions of the empire. Referred to variously as Kalmucks, Eleuths, Dzungars, Tartars and Muslims in the literature, these nomads lived in East Turkestan (corresponding to modern Xinjiang), including the regions of Ili, Kashgaria and Dzungaria. The campaign, which began in 1755, ended successfully in 1759, and the Emperor celebrated with a grand ceremony in 1760 in which he hon-

oured the two main generals, Zhaohui and Fude. The Emperor's desire to commemorate his conquests pictorially is recorded in a postscript added by Father Augustin de Hallerstein (1703–74), President of the 'Tribunal of Mathematics' and part of the Portuguese Mission, to a letter (dated by Pelliot 27 October 1765) he wrote from Peking to his brother, Father Weichard de Hallerstein.³ I have translated the postscript from Latin into English, as it is a contemporary account of the circumstances surrounding the commission:

That which I had forgotten in the letter, I here point out. Our Emperor wishes to have engraved, & printed in Europe sixteen images, which represent the operations of the war, which in these past years he waged against the Tartar Eleuths, & their neighbours, & the Mahomedans he had formerly subdued. Indeed, when the war was finished he ordered the painting of 16 large pictures, with which he

2. The main published sources are P. Pelliot, 'Les Conquêtes de l'Empereur de la Chine', *Toung Pao*, xx, Leiden 1921, pp. 183–275; also *Toung Pao*, xxv, 1928, pp. 132–33 and *Toung Pao*, xxix, 1932, pp. 125–27; M. Pirazzoli-T'Serstevens, *Gravures des Conquêtes de l'Empereur de Chine Kien-long au Musée Guimet*, Paris 1969. The French prints are also discussed in W. Fuchs, 'Die Entwürfe der Schlachtenkupfer der Kienlung – und Taokuang-

zeit', *Monumenta Serica*, ix, 1944, pp. 101–22 and W. Fuchs, 'Der Kupferdruck in China vom 10. bis 19. Jahrhundert', *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, 1950, pp. 67–87.

3. Pelliot published this text in Latin, but argued that although the postscript was originally attributed to a letter dated 12 September 1764, it must belong to the following one, dated 27 October 1765; see Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, Appendix, p. 268.



10. B. L. Prévost, C. N. Cochin fils (directed), after I. Sichelbarth, *On reçoit la soumission de l'Ili*, plate 1 for *Conquêtes de l'Empereur de la Chine*, 1769, etching and engraving, 572 mm × 925 mm (London, British Museum).



11. J. P. Le Bas, C. N. Cochin fils (*direxit*), after G. Castiglione, *On force le camp [établi] à Gadan-ola* [Mount Gādān], plate 2 for *Conquêtes . . .*, 1769, etching and engraving, 571 × 926 mm (London, British Museum).

adorned his halls. Afterwards, there came into his hands some images by the Augsburg engraver Rugendas, which presented similar actions; then indeed he appreciated them, and they pleased him. Therefore he ordered our Brother Giuseppe Castiglione, who is Milanese, and is 78 years of age [of which] 49 [spent] in Peking, even now sound in eyesight, & dexterity, Father Ignatius Sichelbart from Bohemia, Brother Dionysius Attiret from France, & Father Damascenus from Rome, of the Order of St. Augustine of the Propaganda Fide, to reduce these large pictures into a smaller form: he sent the first four completed ones about two months ago to Canton to the Viceroy so that they could be handed over to European ships for transport to Europe. Next year, another four will go, & so on. The desire of F. Castiglione is for them to be engraved and printed in Italy: since the matter is not my particular business, I have not become involved. However, the Emperor wishes that they be engraved each on a separate plate, and that only one hundred

impressions be printed of each, & these should be sent back here together with the plates: whatever the price, the Viceroy of Canton is to pay it in full. I thought that Your Excellence would be glad to know this, so that, if there is any talk about the matter, you would know what it is about.

Because if Your Excellence finds out about the place & the engraver, it would also be welcome to me to know this immediately. For the rest, there is a great difference among these pictures: that of Brother Castiglione is without doubt the best; followed by that of Father Sichelbart, & Brother Attiret, but not with equal steps; and with a long interval, that of the one from Rome, despite the fact that he is from Rome. Besides, he is still new.

The exact nature and authorship of the original paintings, said to be in ink, are unknown since they have not survived, but early sources confirm their existence and even their layout in the hall (thought to be the *Ziguang ge* or Hall of Fame), and the subject was discussed in articles by Fuchs and Pelliot.⁴ The origin of

4. Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1928, p. 132; W. Fuchs, *op. cit.*, 1944, pp. 101–22;

Fuchs, *op. cit.*, 1950, pp. 67–87.



12. P. P. Choffard, C. N. Cochin fils (*dirigé*), after J. Damascène, *Le Chef d'Us [Turfan] se soumet avec sa ville*, plate 6 for *Conquêtes* . . . , 1774, etching and engraving, 580 × 922 mm (London, British Museum).

the paintings as field sketches is revealed by a preface written by Emperor Qianlong in 1766 for the set of prints. Beurdeley referred to Father Jean-Joseph-Marie Amiot's biography of Father Attiret (one of the artists), which recorded that as soon as a few victories in the war against the Eleuths and other Tartars had been won, the painters were ordered to depict them. Court painters, 'especially the Jesuit missionaries', were ordered to paint the portraits of the victorious generals Zhaohui and Fude at the same time as the series of battle scenes destined for the *Ziguang ge*.⁵

The four missionary artists selected for the task of producing the reduced drawings for the engraver (and in all probability also responsible for the original battle paintings) were working at the court in Peking and had acquired Chinese names, as was customary. The most famous was Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining), a Jesuit attached to the Portuguese Mission, who acquired a great reputation as an artist working in tra-

ditional Chinese media and styles. He also worked as an architect, and was in great part responsible for designing the European palace buildings at the Yuanming yuan.⁶ The other artists were the Jesuit brother, Denis Attiret (Wang Zhicheng), the Jesuit Father Ignatius Sichelbart [or Sickelpart] (Ai Qimeng) and Jean Damascène [family name Sallusti or Salusti] (An Deyi), a barefoot Augustinian and missionary of the Propaganda Fide who later became Bishop of Peking. The process of reducing large-scale works required great skill, and was time-consuming. Regarding the date of production of the reduced drawings by the missionary artists, the lettering (production line) on the prints themselves states that several of the original drawings were produced in 1765, and that at least one drawing was made in 1766.

The three main documents regarding the engraving commission are Qianlong's decree, issued on 13 July 1765, a letter by Castiglione that accompanied it, and

5. No evidence is provided for the identification of the artists; see C. and M. Beurdeley, *Giuseppe Castiglione, A Jesuit Painter at the Court of the Chinese Emperors*, translated by Michael Bullock, London 1971, p. 79; it is also possible that Amiot may have been referring

to later campaigns.
6. See *Orientalism*, XIX, November 1988, where several articles are devoted to him.



13. J. P. Le Bas, C. N. Cochin fils (*dirigé*), after G. Castiglione, *La levée du siège de la Rivière Noire* [Qara-usu], plate 7 for *Conquêtes* . . . , 1771, etching and engraving, 572 × 921 mm (London, British Museum).

the contract drawn up by the Hong merchants. Pelliot published French translations of all of them. The edict and Castiglione's note were sent to France in Latin and Italian, according to evidence from the Hong contract, and possibly in French as well. In his edict, the Emperor stated that he wanted the sixteen 'prints' (literally 'estampes') of his victories in the Kingdom of Chumgar [Dzungaria] and the neighbouring Muslim countries which he had had painted by Lamxinim [Lang Shining], the Italian, Joseph Castiglione, and by other European painters at his service in Peking, to be sent to Europe, where the best engravers should be chosen in order that these prints should be reproduced perfectly and in all their detail on copper plates. He ordered that the price of this work should be paid without delay, and that one should take advantage of the first vessels to leave for Europe in order to send only four of these 'prints'. These were specified: *Nyaizuxi chayen* [*Aiyushi zhaying*] painted by Lamxinim [Lang Shining] the Italian, Brother Joseph Castiglione, SJ [Society of Jesus]; *Alchor* [*Aerchuer*] painted by Vanchichim [Wang Zhicheng] the Frenchman, Brother Denis Attiret of the Company of Jesus); *Ysligin min Theu hiam* [*Yili renmin touxiang*] by Nyaikimum [Ai

Qimeng], the German, Father Ignatius Sichelbart of the Company of Jesus); and *Curman* [*Kuerman*] painted by Nyantey [An Deyi], the Italian, Father Jean Damascène, a barefoot Augustinian of the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide. The Emperor wished the work to be carried out with the greatest speed, and that after printing 100 impressions from the plates, both the impressions and the plates should be sent to him. Regarding the remaining twelve 'prints', he gave orders that they be sent to Europe on three different routes, four by each route.⁷

Castiglione's letter was written in Peking on the same day as the edict, and according to the French translation reproduced by Pelliot, was addressed to the 'très illustre Président de l'académie de Peinture'.⁸ In it, he recommended two things. First, that regardless of whether the prints were engraved with the burin or etched, they should be executed with the greatest delicacy and the artist should exercise the greatest accuracy and neatness as befits a work to be presented to such a great emperor. Second that if after printing the number of impressions specified in the Emperor's mandate, the plates were found to be weakened or worn, it would be necessary to retouch and repair them



14. A. de Saint-Aubin, C. N. Cochin fils (*direxit*), after J. Damascène, *La grande victoire de Qurman*, plate 8 for *Conquêtes . . .*, 1770, etching and engraving, 580 × 929 mm (London, British Museum).

before despatch to China, in order that the impressions printed in that country should be as beautiful as the first ones.

Although it has sometimes been claimed that the Emperor himself or Attiret had chosen France for the production of the engravings, Pelliot produced a detailed refutation of this view. An undated report by

the Contrôleur-Général des Finances, Henri-Léonard Bertin, provides precise information on the matter.⁹ He stated that the Emperor of China had asked the Viceroy of Canton to obtain information regarding the task of engraving the drawings in Europe. The English were first approached, but Father Louis Joseph Le Febvre, Procureur Général of the Missions in Canton,

7. Pelliot could not find the original Chinese text of the edict, but published the French 'version' of it, and Castiglione's letter, from documents in the Archives Nationales (Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 184, Arch. Nat. o'1924 (2), pièce no. 1). These French translations were, in his opinion, most probably produced by the agents of the Compagnie des Indes; see Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 200. Pelliot included Chinese characters for proper nouns in the French translation of the Hong contract that he published and which is discussed later. He argued that one could work out the original Chinese versions of the proper nouns recorded in the original Chinese imperial edict (now lost) by working back from the Hong contract. This is because, he claims, the names of the artists as well as of the titles were taken by the Hong merchants from the imperial edict. The *pinyin* transliterations provided here for the French translation of the imperial edict are therefore based on the Chinese characters in the Hong contract published by Pelliot (Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 198, n. 2).

8. In his letter written in Seville on 18 April 1776 to Minister Bertin, Parent (his first assistant) claimed that he saw Castiglione's letter in French, Latin and Italian addressed to the Président des Beaux-Arts. In an undated report by Henri-Léonard Bertin (see n. 9 below), it is stated that 'on trouva la lettre d'envoi de F. Castiglione et le décret de l'Empereur de la Chine traduit en latin, en italien et en français: la lettre étoit adressée au très illustre Président des Arts (il n'étoit pas qualifié du titre de Président de l'Académie)'. Finally, a document from the offices of the Comte d'Angiviller (1775) claimed that Castiglione's letter was addressed to the 'Président de la sculpture en France'. For all this, see Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 201, no. 1; for Bertin's report, see H. Cordier, *La Chine en France au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris 1910, pp. 57-58, and for Parent's letter, H. Cordier, *Les Conquêtes de l'Empereur de la Chine, Mémoires concernant l'Asie orientale*, Paris 1913, p. 7.

9. Although undated, Pelliot said that it was 'undoubtedly written after Parent's letter of 18 April 1776'. Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 196, n. 3; Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1910, pp. 57-58.



15. B. L. Prévost, C. N. Cochin fils (*direxit*), possibly after G. Castiglione, *Le combat de Qos-Qulaq*, plate 10 for *Conquêtes . . .*, 1774, etching and engraving, 572 × 916 mm (London, British Museum).

let it be known to the Viceroy through a Mandarin friend of his, a professed spokesman for the French, that the arts were more cultivated in France than in any other state in Europe, and that engraving especially had reached the highest level of perfection there. On the basis of a report produced on the matter, the Emperor ordered that the drawings of his victories should be sent to France on French vessels and then conveyed to the 'Président des Arts', in order to have them engraved following his intentions as expressed in the imperial decree accompanying the drawings.

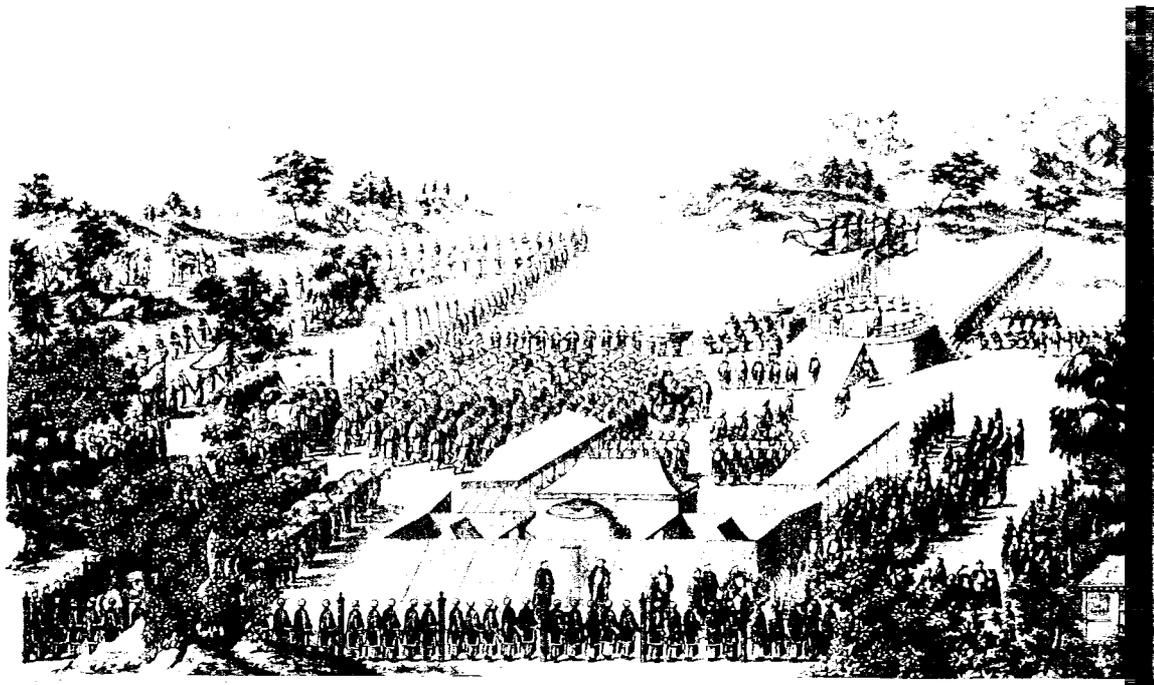
Once France had been chosen for the commission, a contract was required. As was customary with any commercial dealings with Europeans, Hong (trading corporation) merchants based in Canton handled any negotiations between the Chinese and foreigners, each nation having its own Hong. European traders were confined to that port, and their companies had

specific locations on the waterfront. Pelliot published a French translation of the original Chinese text (which survived) of the contract signed by ten Hong merchants in Canton in 1765 for the order made to 'the commercial chiefs for the kingdom of France', Gan Zhili and Wujialang (presumably representatives of the *Compagnie des Indes*).¹⁰

In the contract, the Hong merchants reported that they had received from the 'Viceroy' and the Superintendent of Customs notification of an imperial order to hand over, for the purpose of having them engraved on copper, four drawings representing the victories gained in the land of the Dzungars and the Mahomedan tribes. The drawings, sent with a note, are specified as follows: Lang Che-ning [Lang Shining]: *The camp [taken] by ruse by Ngai-yu-che [Aiyushi]*; Wang Tche-tch'eng [Wang Zhicheng]: *The [battle of] A-eul-tch'ou-eul [Aerchuer]*; Ngai K'I-mong [Ai Qimeng]: *The*

10. According to Pelliot, the document has a registration date of 1 May 1767 (Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. fonds chinois no. 5231); see Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 197–99. It was translated by Courant and published by Cordier in 1902 in French in *Toung*

Pao, II, III, pp. 304–06, and Pelliot reproduced this translation 'with very slight modifications'. He suggested that Wujialang might refer to Vauquelin, who was named Consul in Canton in 1766.



16. D. Née, C. N. Cochin fils (*diréxit*), after J. Damascène, [*L'Empereur se rend*] dans la banlieue pour prendre [personnellement] des nouvelles des officiers et des soldats qui se sont distingués dans la campagne contre les tribus musulmanes, plate 15 for *Conquêtes . . .*, 1772, etching and engraving, 572 × 922 mm (London, British Museum).

inhabitants of Ili show their submission; Ngan Tō-yi [An Deyi]: [The battle of] K'ou-cul-man [Kuerman]'. At the same time were also sent two sheets 'in the barbarian characters of the kingdom of Italy' (i.e. Italian) and two sheets 'in the barbarian characters in contemporary usage in all Western countries' (i.e. Latin).

The Hong merchants had received these various items as well as the order from the authorities to deal with this matter. They were handing all the items over to Kan-tche-li [Gan Zhili] and Wou-kia-lang [Wujialang], in order that they should be transported by the vessel *Po-ye* [Boye] (presumably a ship belonging to the *Compagnie des Indes*) to France and handed over to the *Compagnie*. The latter would then pass them on to the French Ministers of State, who would be given the task of having engraved four copper plates with a 'respectful' precision, in accordance with the rules and instructions contained in the documents in 'barbarian' characters. On completion of the engraving, 200 impressions would be printed from each plate on good hard-wearing paper, that is to say, 800 sheets in total, which together with the copper plates would be divided and loaded on two vessels to be brought

back: each vessel would carry two copper plates and 100 impressions of each engraving – 400 sheets in total. The four original drawings sent from China and the four documents in barbarian characters would be included, and the whole should arrive to Canton in approximately the 33rd year (1768) to be handed over to the authorities. An immediate advance payment of 5,000 taels of silver would be made. If this were insufficient for the price of the work, they would make up the price fully when the copper plates arrived. Should there be an accident at sea, the cost of the work and the cargo would be covered by them.

Two copies of the contract were made, one for France, the other for Canton. The contract states that the engraving must be very fine and conform to the model. As soon as [the work] was completed, the whole should be sent back within the time limit; the earlier the better.

The imperial edict and the Hong contract are very specific regarding the subjects of the first four drawings. When these drawings arrived in France in the autumn of 1766, there was confusion and political manoeuvring regarding who would be responsible for



17. J. P. Le Bas, C. N. Cochin fils (*dirigé*) after an anonymous artist, [*L'Empereur*] offre un banquet de Victoire aux officiers qui se sont distingués, plate 16 for *Conquêtes . . .*, 1770, etching and engraving, sheet 500 × 877 mm (London, British Museum). Impression printed in China from the original French plate. The poem inscribed at the top of the print is traditionally regarded as in the Emperor Qianlong's own handwriting.

dealing with the commission.¹¹ A letter from the Directors and Syndics of the Compagnie to the Marquis de Marigny (Surintendant des Bâtiments), dated 17 December 1766, indicates that they decided to contact Marigny directly.¹² After giving an account of the commission, the Compagnie representatives said they believed that only he, Marigny, could direct a project whose success had a bearing on the honour of French artists, and that they were therefore sending him a translation of the edict and of Castiglione's letter. They pointed out that the work should be finished by the following November ('au mois du gbre prochain') in order to comply with the Emperor's wishes and in

time to catch the departure of vessels that the company would then be sending to China.

The importance of completion by November is understandable when one considers the schedule of the sailings to China. From the documents considered in this article, it is clear that the Compagnie des Indes ships normally left France for China in December or January each year, although two letters from Marigny refer to autumn (or end of autumn). The ships arrived in China around the end of August. Sailings from China occurred around early December and reached France in July (or by autumn).¹³

A different slant on the events in Paris is provided by

11. There is only indirect evidence for the exact date of their arrival in France, although the year is verified. The Hong contract announced that the drawings and the documents had been gathered for despatch to France. A letter from Bertin to 'Ko' and 'Yang' of 27 January 1769 (referred to later concerning the arrival of the second lot of drawings) stated that the first four had been sent in 1765. Pelliot, however, stated that the Council of the Direction of Canton, in announcing the despatch of the second lot in 1767, said that the first despatch had occurred the 'previous year'; Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 200.

12. Pelliot stated that there is a copy of it in the Archives Nationales; see Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 202; Arch. Nat. o'1924 (2), pièce no. 1, and n. 17 below.

13. Documents supporting these dates are as follows. For departures from France, see Cochin's letter to Marigny of 16 February 1767, Marigny's letters to Cochin of 19 April 1767 and 26 May 1767, and Cochin's letter of 6 December 1774; for arrivals in France, see references to arrival in France of the two lots of drawings; for departure from China, see Father Michel Benoist's letter of 25 November 1770, where he states that French ships were due to leave shortly; for arrivals in China, see Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 210, where it is stated that first batch arrived in Peking at the beginning of December 1772 (so arrived in Canton or Macao some time before) and that three crates reached Macao on 29 August 1774.

two documents written many years later, by Parent (first assistant to the Minister Bertin to whom the Compagnie des Indes was responsible) and by Bertin himself, in obvious attempts to curry favour with the intention of obtaining sets of these valuable prints. In his letter to the Minister dated 18 April 1776,¹⁴ Parent described how he was at the office of the Syndics and Directors while the magnificent drawings from China were being examined, and was informed that M. Vaselet had been asked to find artists capable of engraving them. While they were discussing the preference given to various candidates he amused himself by reading Castiglione's dispatch, which was in three languages (French, Latin and Italian) and saw that it was addressed to M. le Président des Beaux-Arts. He pointed out to M. de Rabec (one of the directors of the Compagnie des Indes) and to several others present that the execution of the work was not their business, and that the Emperor of China had intended that the Minister of Arts (specifically the 'Directeur général des Bâtiments du Roy', i.e. Marigny) should be in charge of it. He immediately returned to inform Bertin, who in turn instructed him to alert Cochin [Secretary of the Académie, and Marigny's right-hand man], which he did. The very same day Bertin spoke to Marigny, who followed the King's orders and removed the drawings.

In the undated report referred to earlier (dated by Pelliot as after Parent's letter of 18 April 1776), Bertin emphasized that the Compagnie des Indes had never been chosen to have the engravings made.¹⁵ He said that the Syndics and Directors [at the Compagnie des Indes] began to consider several artists whom they regarded as suitable for the project, but that when the drawings were unrolled Castiglione's letter was discovered, as well as the Emperor's decree translated into Latin, Italian and French. The letter was addressed to the 'très illustre Président des Arts (il n'étoit pas qualifié du titre de Président de l'Académie)'. The administration of the Compagnie was advised to inform Minister Bertin, who immediately alerted the Marquis de Marigny, and as a result, Cochin was put in charge of the work. The drawings were apparently handed

over to Marigny on 31 December 1766 by M. de Mery d'Arcy.¹⁶

Pelliot published an undated *Mémoire* (probably in 1766), which was obviously drafted by or for Bertin.¹⁷ The author of the *Mémoire* stated that Emperor Qianlong was paying tribute to French industry by giving the officials of the Compagnie des Indes in Canton the responsibility for the engraving in France of the drawings, etc. After summarizing the history of the commission, he noted that in order to cover expenses, a sum of 16,000 taels had been delivered to the Compagnie officials by order of the Emperor. He also reported that 'it was said' that the English East India Company and its employees in China had done their utmost to secure the commission, but that the missionaries at the court in Peking procured this advantage for France.¹⁸ He therefore recommended executing the four drawings on a small scale, on large vases of a beautiful shape of the Royal Manufacture of Sèvres as a gift for the Emperor, or perhaps alternatively reproducing them as tapestries at the Royal Manufacture of the Gobelins, or at least that of Beauvais. The rest of the report, according to Pelliot, enumerates the commercial, political and religious advantages gained from the order.

Although there is no evidence that plans for tapestries or vases as gifts came to fruition, they were discussed at the highest level, as shown in a letter from Bertin to Marigny, dated 27 December 1766.¹⁹ In it, Bertin says that the *Mémoire* he had sent to Marigny (summarized above) had been given to the King, who had given him instructions regarding the Sèvres manufacture. The King had also asked that he, Marigny, should carry out the instructions contained therein relative to his (Marigny's) administration, after procuring from the Compagnie des Indes all necessary clarifications regarding the objects concerning him, etc.

As late as 9 January 1767 the idea of reproducing the four drawings in a large format at the Gobelins was still under consideration. The fact that the King had become involved in the matter highlights the importance accorded to the *Conquêtes* project. Cordier published part of an undated *Mémoire*, which he says was

14. Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1913, p. 7.

15. He refers to *D.M. 167 (Bibl. de l'Institut)*. See nn. 8 and 9 above, and Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1910, pp. 57-58.

16. See I. S. Helman's preface to his set of engravings, reduced versions of the *Conquêtes* prints, first published (together with Ponce) in Paris in 1785, and advertised in the *Mercure de France* of 3 September 1785. The information is confirmed by Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1913, p. 7. Helman's preface, however, contains several inaccuracies. See Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 203, n. 3.

17. Pelliot said that a copy of this *Mémoire* and a copy of the following letter from Bertin to the Marquis de Marigny of 27 December 1766 were present with the copy of the Compagnie des Indes letter of 17 December 1766 (Arch. Nat. 0'1924 (2), pièce no. 1); Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 203-04.

18. See earlier argument refuting the latter part of this statement.

19. Pelliot published a copy, from Arch. Nat. 0'1924 (2), pièce no. 1; see n. 17 above; Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 203-04.

sent from the offices of Bertin, and which 'pointed out to the King' the usefulness of executing the four drawings on Sèvres vases and Gobelins tapestry. The *Mémoire* emphasized the fact that such work would give the Chinese a good opinion of French artists and manufacture and that the French would no longer be confused with other nations, under the generic term European, as they were in China. It would dispose the Emperor favourably towards French commerce, which for some time had suffered as a result of the bad conduct of the English in an incident a few years previously, for which all Europeans had endured the resulting prejudice.²⁰

Having been asked to direct such a prestigious commission, Cochin had to select the best engravers and provide specifications. In a report addressed to Marigny, dated 9 January 1767, Cochin responded to no fewer than fifteen requirements.²¹ A complete translation is provided below:

1. *Cochin will be named and paid by the King to supervise the execution of the work; to agree the price with him.* Cochin can only be filled with gratitude for this new kindness and promises to take all possible care to accomplish his mission well.

2. *Four of the most skilful engravers will be chosen, to be entrusted with one plate each.* The four engravers which I have the honour to suggest to you are M. Le Bas, M. Prévost, M. Aliamet and M. de Saint Aubin, all very able and for whom this is the appropriate type of work. There is also a fifth, equally skilful, called M. Le Mire; but I do not think that we can benefit from him because he is committed to deliver to subscribers to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; moreover, we only need four, and we can find them without having recourse to him.

3. *Each will provide a signed estimate, for fees as well as delivery.* Following your orders not to discuss the subject with anyone yet, I have been unable to confer with them. Nevertheless I presume that the price will be 9,000 *livres* for each plate due to the extraordinary manner in which you wish them to be treated. They might only cost 2,000 *écus* [i.e. 6,000 *livres*] normally, given that the etched state is usually estimated to be a third of the total work [i.e. 2,000 *livres*]; but given the neatness and finish which I would insist on, the etching would amount to barely a fifth of the total, and so I think one would need to increase the estimate by 50% [i.e. by 3,000 on top of 6,000 *livres*];

the same would apply to the time allowed because the extra care needed would take them longer; thus I think one will have to allow completion around the end of summer 1768.

4. *Furthermore, the King will set aside bonuses for those who would seem to merit them.* I hope that all four will merit them. Moreover, this item being purely of goodwill, one can only talk about it after completion of the work.

5. *A superb and rich frame will be made [for] the said plates.* This item entails some difficulties which need to be resolved. The drawings are 33 pouces 3 lignes [897 mm] in width and the 'grand aigle' paper, the largest we manufacture, is only 36 [pouces] in width [972 mm]; which would only leave a pouce and a half of margin on either side, a space in which it would be impossible to accommodate a rich [printed] border, and also too narrow to provide the plate (even without border) with a margin of some grace. I therefore propose to slightly reduce the drawings, so as to make them fit on our 'grand aigle' paper, with a reasonable margin, and then, if one really wants a border, the impressions which would be printed with this border would be [printed] on paper of foreign manufacture (very beautiful and very good) with a width of 39 pouces [1,053 mm].²²

6. *Plates of copper of a different size would be used to engrave the frame at the same time.* I have a very strong objection to engraving this frame on the same copper for each of the plates, apart from the increase in work from useless repetition, it would no longer be possible to print impressions without this border; whereas, since they did not ask for this enhancement, it is necessary for them to be able to print without it, even if they do choose to add it if it pleases them, as we shall do. Furthermore, if we wish to send a few framed and glazed, there would be a decorative border, and it would be in bad taste to see a [printed] border within another border [i.e. within a carved wooden frame]. I would therefore agree to engraving this border on a separate copper [plate]; and one would paste within it the impressions to which one wanted to add this border. There would also be the problem that since these four borders could only be engraved after completion of the plates, this would entail a great deal of time in addition to the time specified, whereas, engraved separately, it would be done at the same time by M. Choffard, who is the most able

20. See Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1913, pp. 7–8, where the provenance of the document is given as Bibl. de l'Institut.

21. NAAF, no. 554, original.

22. This was presumably a reference to Whatman, famous for being able to manufacture large sheets of paper.

draughtsman and engraver in this type [of work].

7. *The same [i.e. printed] frame would serve for the four plates; one will employ everything which characterizes the majesty of the King of France to make it stand out.* This request is difficult to fulfil properly with regard to people so removed from our learning and our customs. The majesty of France can only be designated by emblematic figures. All our emblems are taken from Greek mythology or from our religion. There is reason to believe that these would be unintelligible to the Chinese; it would be as if they sent us emblems of their seven incarnations. I therefore think that, if one wants a border, one should only use the richness of architectural ornaments, mixed with emblems taken from the properties of animals, such as the lion's courage, the eagle's loftiness, etc., or meanings attributed to plants, the laurel for glory, the oak for the protection granted to citizens, etc. In addition, one might need explanations in order to understand the meaning; however, there is time to make decisions about all of this.

8. *300 impressions will be printed on paper, of which 150 in red.* This requirement will be carried out without any problem.

9. *100 impressions will be printed on satin, of which 50 in red.* From what I have learnt, one must give up the idea of printing on satin. It is not possible for satin to produce impressions supporting such delicate work. It is a luxury which is sometimes used for theses because they are of common everyday engraving, large and deep, but this fabric cannot be softened and lend itself sufficiently to carry very small, fine lines which are but lightly engraved. Instead, I have the honour to suggest printing the hundred on 'papier de soie' from China, of which I hope we can get the necessary quantity through the Compagnie des Indes.

10. *An impression of each colour will be placed under glass with magnificent mouldings.* It will be carried out in the most careful manner.

11. *Freedom for the artist to correct that which appears to him too ridiculous, without however changing the main elements in any way and even less so, the details.* After close inspection of the group, three of the drawings are fine and can be engraved with the greatest accuracy apart from some barely perceptible slight improvements in the effect of shading and the shading-off of objects. But that of F[ather] Damascène Roman is too inferior to the others to allow it to be engraved in such a way as to take its place alongside them, unless the whole drawing is redone or at least a careful outline is provided. This is what I think it is necessary for you to allow me to do, whilst keeping within the prescribed conditions, that is to say to change nothing but sim-

ply give it some spirit and lightness which might inspire the engraver.

12. *In the event of the plates being affected as a result of the number of impressions requested, they will be retouched.* Plates capable of printing 1,500 impressions will not be noticeably affected by having printed three or four hundred; in addition one will do what will be necessary.

13. *A very detailed set of instructions will be produced of the manner of pulling impressions, etc.* One could even send them a press with all the tools necessary for printing (this will be done very well).

14. *One will add to it the Cabinet du Roi, and the best prints, etc.* Will be easily carried out.

15. *I would wish that, aside from the engraving, the four drawings be executed in [tapestry in] large format at the Gobelins in greyish monochrome and with borders of a gold background, with the attributes in their natural colour.* I can envisage no other than M. Vernet [ie. Claude Joseph Vernet] for the task of producing the paintings required for the project. However much his works are valued, one can always get hold of him at a price, as is the case here where you do not wish to save on anything. Failing that, M. Le Prince could fulfil the requirement. But whatever happens, one must wait until the plates are etched in order for the painter to make use of the impressions, as it will be necessary for the drawings to remain in the hands of the engravers until the end of the work. One will observe that the Chinese prefer small, cold and precise hatchings above everything characterizing genius and talent. I hope that, without losing too much on the matter of talent, we shall achieve a soft and fine engraving, pleasing to all eyes, whether expert or not. I await the necessary orders so as to get in touch with the engravers and to establish something definitive.

Notes of M. de Marigny on various passages of this *Mémoire* [appended to the end of the document; the numbers do not correspond to those above]:

1. Fine, we shall take sr. Le Mire if one of the four refuses.

2. No doubt, and this will be notified to, and agreed with, the people at the Compagnie des Indes.

3. I do not wish to hear of any diminution or reduction of the drawing. One just has to make the framing separately, and if absolutely necessary, forego it.

4. A fine idea, as many architectural ornaments as one wants, but a lot of fleur-de-lis.

5. If this is possible, I consent to it.

6. One will take M. Le Prince who is not yet spoilt and who will suit me better in all respects.

7. Regarding orders, one must wait until I receive

those of the King.

Cochin had underestimated cost and time factors. In a letter to Marigny the following month, dated 16 February 1767,²³ he hastened to tell him – before Marigny had been given the King's definitive orders – the results of his discussion with the four selected engravers. He had been wrong regarding various factors in the 'report' that he had presented to him. He had underestimated the costs, and the engravers had asked for 10,000 *livres* for each plate, with a bonus of 1,000 for whoever had to deal with the more complex and detailed plate.²⁴ Cochin was backing their demands and advised Marigny to keep to the idea of a bonus on completion of the work. He pointed out the considerable funds allocated to the project by the Emperor of China. He then admitted to having also underestimated the time required. Although he had hoped everything would be ready for the departure of the vessels in autumn 1768, the engravers considered this 'impossible' and had asked for an extension to the end of summer 1769. Cochin supported them, due to the unusual nature of the task and to avoid any excuse for negligence. Having re-examined the drawings, he considered it necessary to redraw two of them (he had originally said one), which would delay the engravers concerned.

On 2 April 1767 Cochin wrote once again to Marigny, this time specifically about his own fees, which are broken down.²⁵ He asked 6,000 *livres* (3,000 each) for the two drawings that he had to redraw, which would be large and 'overloaded'. Then, at the stage of the first proof after etching, he would have four proofs to retouch and the first ones ordinarily required considerable work. Thus he estimated 2,000 *livres* for the four (500 each). There would then be a second proof to retouch, involving less work, which he estimated at only 800 *livres* (200 each). He had reason to believe that a third retouched proof might be necessary to complete the work, estimated at 400 *livres* for the four (100 *livres* each). The total for this work amounted to 9,200 *livres*, which he said he would ask of any well-off individual. Given the engravers' demands (independently of any bonus) for 41,000 *livres*, he asked Marigny to bring the total to 50,000 *livres* to include his own work. He also said that if [Marigny] was completely satisfied with the beauty of the execution a bonus would be appreciated.

The letter ends with a plea to Marigny to obtain the King's authorization to suspend him from all other work, including any for the King himself.

Marigny did not agree to all the conditions requested by Cochin. In a letter he wrote to him on 19 April 1767²⁶ he told him to assemble the engravers as soon as possible, and to agree with them the cost of each plate and the time allocated to achieve a perfect result. He agreed to the sum of 10,000 *livres* as well as the additional 1,000 *livres* for whoever had the most 'overloaded' plate. However, he reminded him that the work should be finished in the last months of 1768 in order to take advantage of the sailings of the Compagnie des Indes vessels to China, which normally occurred in December or January each year. Referring to the engravers' request for a delay to the end of summer 1769 (reported in Cochin's letter of 16 February), he told Cochin to make them commit to the end of 1768. A year's delay could remove France's advantage, which would be regrettable. In order to get the engravers to complete before the end of the following year, he authorized Cochin to promise them a bonus on his [Marigny's] part.

Since the King had approved Cochin for the inspection and general direction of the work, Marigny told him to lose no time in redoing the inferior drawings, and approved his fees. He agreed that the borders should be produced on a separate plate, and that it was up to the Emperor to make use of it or not. He also approved the motifs suggested by Cochin, although noted that even these might be obscure to such distant people, and asked him to tell Choffard (who would do the work) to make abundant use of fleur-de-lis! He agreed to the use of paper of foreign manufacture, since the drawings would not be reduced, and since that of French manufacture was only 36 *pouces* wide, which would leave a mean margin. The matter was not pressing, however, and a decision could be made when the plates approached completion. As far as taste was concerned, he reminded Cochin that the Chinese preferred precision and finish to that which characterized genius and talent for the French, and Cochin should recommend the engravers to conform to this.

Sieur Prudhomme, a paper merchant, was ordered to make a special manufacture of a paper called 'Grand Louvain'. Jombert stated that since 'grand

23. NAAF, no. 559, original.

24. Prévost, according to Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 213.

25. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 563, original.

26. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 564; copy.

27. Beurdeley, *op. cit.*, p. 86, and Jombert, *op. cit.*, 1770, p. 120. In the

introduction to his reduced set of *Conquêtes* prints, Helman recorded that the impressions (of the original set) destined for the Emperor and the King were printed on specially made paper called 'Grand Louvois'.

28. Pelliot does not quote, but refers to, documents in the Archives



18. Anonymous Chinese artist, Plate 1 from the 'Formosa Campaign' set of prints, 1789–90, engraving, sheet 510 × 885 mm (London, British Museum).

aigle' paper was not large enough, it was necessary to manufacture paper without a fold in the centre, of an extraordinary size, costing 400 *livres* per ream, but did not provide a name.²⁷

On 22 April 1767 Jacques Philippe Le Bas, Augustin de Saint-Aubin, Benoît Louis Prévost and Jean Jacques Aliamet each provided estimates for the execution of a plate which they had to do their utmost to deliver in October 1768 – apart from Saint-Aubin who had until November 1768, since he was assigned the engraving after Father Jean Damascène.²⁸ Progress was achieved in the negotiations, and on 24 May 1767 Marigny wrote to Cochin to tell him that he had accepted the estimates of the four engravers, and that he should tell them to work with the utmost haste as soon as the copper plates had arrived from England.²⁹ He was writing to the Compagnie des Indes so that it would provide M. Denis [Treasurer of the Bâtiments] with the sum of 6,000 *livres* for distribution to the four artists, as the

advance that Cochin had requested, while at the same time requesting [from the Compagnie] Cochin's own remuneration.

Two days later, on 26 May 1767, Marigny wrote to remind Cochin of the importance to the French nation that the work be executed as quickly as possible, so that it could be despatched on the vessels leaving at the end of autumn the following year.³⁰ He also told him that the King had ordered Cochin to suspend any works which he [the King] had assigned him, in order to concentrate on the engravings.

The remaining twelve drawings arrived on ships from China in July 1767, according to a letter from Bertin of 27 January 1769 to 'Ko' and 'Yang'. This conforms with the Emperor's wishes as stated in the edict, that the remaining drawings should be distributed on several vessels.³¹ However, it was only on 20 September 1767 that the Directors of the Compagnie des Indes informed Marigny of their arrival, and on

Nationales, the original estimates: Arch. Nat. o'1924 (2), nos. 6–10; Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 208.

29. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 566, copy.

30. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 567, copy.

31. The letter is published in Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1913, p. 10; the document is referred to as Bib. de l'Institut, D.M. 167.

21 September Marigny acknowledged receipt of the twelve drawings placed in three crates.³² The drawings were accompanied by a letter from the Conseil de Direction de la Compagnie des Indes at Canton to the Directors of the Compagnie in Paris, dated 10 January 1767, part of which Pelliot published.³³ The letter specifies that the twelve new drawings (referred to as 'estampes') were enclosed in groups of four in three 'calyx' boxes which would be distributed on three vessels – *Le Berryer*, *Le Panthievre* and *Le Duras*. The need to adhere to the prescribed terms of the commission is stressed. Although the authors acknowledged the honour of being chosen over other nations to decorate the Emperor's palace, they expressed concern about the exposure to a potentially awkward situation. To avoid compromising themselves, they suggested that they should not set a time limit, or should at least ask for such a long-term one that they could not fail to meet their obligations. The letter ends on a slightly worried note. The authors stressed that this request did not regard them personally; they would not suffer as a consequence of any failure, but it might bring about the ruin of the recipient's principal tradesmen [the Hong at Canton] and as an indirect consequence, inevitably rebound on the Compagnie.

Despite the emphasis on finishing the project on time, delays occurred, and are explained in a letter of 19 September 1767 from Cochin to Marigny.³⁴ Cochin told him that an engraver could not produce such a plate, especially with the finish and care demanded, in less than two years. In winter one could spend only four to five hours per day at such work, and often not at all on dark days. It was not possible to find sixteen engravers skilled enough to be able to allocate one plate to each of them. He would ask those working on the first four drawings to take on one further drawing each, or even two, and would look for other engravers of sufficient talent in order to arrive at a distribution that would ensure the success of the project. He proposed the following schedule for delivery: the four already begun for the end of 1768; six or maybe eight more at the end of 1769; and the remaining four or six at the end of 1770. The only alternative would be to use mediocre engravers, etc. Marigny arranged for Jean-Etienne Montucla [First Assistant at the Bâtiments du Roi] to inform the Compagnie des Indes of the matter.

Even after the allocation of the drawings to the various engravers, there were complications, as might be expected, with the etching process and retouching of the proofs by Cochin. These are spelled out in a detailed letter, undated but of 1767, from Cochin to Marigny.³⁵ Due to the large size and detail of the plates, as well as to the various problems (referred to as 'accidens'), it would be impossible to have anything ready that year. Even if the departure of the vessels could be delayed to spring, one could only hope to have one, maybe two (plates) ready. All the drawings had been distributed, and work had begun on eight or ten plates, and it would not be long for the others. He himself was working hard on the correction of the drawings. He had seen the 'ébauches' (etched proofs) of five of the eight or ten mentioned. The first was by Le Bas (after Sichelbarth), the second by Saint-Aubin, the third by Prévost, the fourth another by Le Bas and the fifth by Aliamet. Cochin did not think it possible to send any work at the present time. In addition, he did not think it feasible to print more than twelve or fifteen impressions per day. He was planning to use only one printer, known for his talent and probity. He therefore thought it necessary for the Compagnie des Indes to write to China to obtain agreement for the delay.

Printing took a very long time for huge plates and required great skill. The printer chosen was Sieur Beauvais.³⁶ The fact that Cochin referred to the probity of the printer is explained by the likelihood of printers pulling extra impressions for their own personal gain.³⁷ For the *Conquêtes* commission it was particularly important, politically, not to have impressions available on the market in France. Some of the additional engravers taken on by Cochin are mentioned in another letter, dated 30 January 1768, to Marigny, according to which Cochin presented him with the estimates of several of the engravers assigned to the *Conquêtes* drawings.³⁸ They had signed them on the previous few days, but he said that most had already begun work, and that was why he was asking for their advances to be paid with the Compagnie des Indes funds. He specified 2,000 *livres* each for (Pierre Philippe) Choffard and Prévost (two plates each) and 1,000 *livres* each for (François Denis) Née, (Louis Joseph) Masquelier, Aliamet and Saint-Aubin (one plate each).

Two days later, in a reply dated 1 February 1768,

32. Pelliot referred to documents in the Archives Nationales to support this, but did not publish them: Arch. Nat. o'1924 (2), nos. 2 and 15; Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 208, n. 2.

33. Arch. Nat. o'1924 (2), no. 4; see Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 208.

34. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 573, original.

35. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 584, copy; it is included in the 1767 section.

36. Beurdley, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

37. See A. Griffiths, 'Proofs in Eighteenth-century French Printmaking', *Print Quarterly*, XXI, 2004, pp. 3–17.

38. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 590, original.

Marigny acknowledged receipt of the renewed demand and enclosed orders for payment of the advances.³⁹ Cochin had to pursue the matter of payment for his engravers fairly continually, as shown by several further letters. He wrote to Montucla on 1 May 1768 asking for money from the Compagnie des Indes, and informing him that he was about to receive three etched plates and one with retouched proofs. He also said that Le Bas was the most assiduous (engraver), the fastest and the best in all respects, yet also the most in need of money.⁴⁰ He wrote three further letters concerning payment to Montucla in 1769 (30 January, 1 February and 27 April). A significant event at this time was the dissolution of the Compagnie des Indes, which Cochin had just heard about from rumours in Paris, and which he communicated to Marigny in a letter dated 8 April 1770.⁴¹

The process of completing the plates and printing impressions, as well as of the shipping, was piecemeal. There appear to have been three shipments. A first lot of seven plates and impressions reached Peking at the beginning of December 1772. This is recorded in a letter from Father Benoist to a 'Father du Gad' (presumably a missionary at the Court), dated by Pelliot at the end of 1773 and discussed below.⁴² A second lot of three crates reached Macao on the *Superbe* on 29 August 1774.⁴³ A letter by Cochin of 6 December 1774, requesting settlement of the account of the engravers, stated that the plates had been delivered, the impressions printed, and that the last despatch would be made in two or three days' time.⁴⁴ Thus the last plates and impressions, sent from Paris in December 1774, must have reached China around mid-1775.⁴⁵

The cost of the commission was borne by the Hong

39. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 592, 'minute'.

40. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 605; original; all the other letters are published in the same volume.

41. NAAF, *op. cit.*, no. 673, original.

42. Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 222–23; where it states that the letter is an insertion in the collected 'Lettres édifiantes', xxiv, 1781, in *Pantheon littéraire*, iv, pp. 222–23.

43. Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 210; he refers to Cordier, 'La France en Chine' 1910, pp. 38 and 60. Pelliot made a reference to the second lot consisting of twelve plates, which is confusing as it would

bring the total number of plates to nineteen. He wrote: 'Je n'ai retrouvé les soumissions que pour 11 des 12 planches du second envoi'. These are listed as: two of 2 December 1767, eight of 1 February 1768, one of 26 March 1768 (Arch. Nat. o'1924 (2), no. 19; o'1911 (4) nos. 18–23; o'1924 (2), no. 21); Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 209.

44. Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 209 and n. 6. No documentary source is provided for the letter.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 210.



19. Anonymous Chinese artist, Plate 14 from the 'Hunan [or Miao] Campaign' set of prints, 1798–1803, engraving, sheet 510 × 885 mm (London, British Museum).

merchants on behalf of the Emperor, and payments were made to the engravers by the French Treasury using funds placed at its disposal by the Compagnie des Indes. Pelliot referred to three sources for evidence of costs totalling 20,000 taels (or 150,000 *livres*) between 1765 and 1766. The first, the Hong contract, specifies 5,000 taels. The undated *Mémoire* from Bertin's offices (probably 1766) records 16,000 taels, signifying an additional payment of 11,000 taels.⁴⁶ A third document, published by Pelliot, is an entry in the accounts of the Compagnie des Indes at Canton. It reveals that in 1765–66 the Chinese Cong-hang deposited no less than 20,000 taels on account for the plates.⁴⁷ Further payments were made by the Hong after that date. According to Pelliot, in addition to the 150,000 *livres* of 1765–66, a further sum amounting to 54,000 *livres* (10,000 piastres) was paid by the Hong in 1773 (6,000 piastres) and 1775 (4,000 piastres). Thus the total paid by the Hong was 204,000 *livres*.⁴⁸

The documents regarding the number of impressions to be printed for China vary, as we have seen. The imperial edict states that 100 impressions were to be printed from each plate. The Hong contract specifies 200, and this figure is repeated in the undated *Mémoire* (probably 1766) from Bertin's offices. Cochin referred to 300 in his letter to Marigny of 9 January 1767, and appears to have suggested 1,000 (see Father Benoist's letter of 25 November 1770, discussed below). Pelliot suggests that the Hong merchants increased the number specified in the edict as a precaution against the possible loss of one of the ships, which would not matter as much if the other also carried 100 impressions demanded by the Emperor. Although the numbers stated above refer to the first four plates, one assumes that they apply to the rest. As we shall see, the Emperor in fact sanctioned the 200 specified in the Hong contract.

The impressions remaining in France were in addition to the total specified for despatch to China. Some were official, as recorded by Isidore Stanislas Helman in the notice to his set of a reduced size version of the

Conquêtes prints, first published in 1785. It states: '... les Planches avec cent Exemplaires qu'on tira, furent envoyés a la Chine; il n'en fut réservé qu'un très petit nombre pour la famille Royale et la Bibliothèque du Roi...'. Commercial copies were not to be made available. Jombert states that it would not be possible for print connoisseurs to obtain a set unless some returned from China.⁴⁹ However, despite precautions to prevent illicit printing of impressions, this certainly occurred.

The value attached to the prints is clearly indicated by the persistent attempts by those connected with the project or with the missionaries to obtain impressions. Jean-Baptiste Attiret, a painter from Dôle and the brother of the Jesuit Denis Attiret, hoped to benefit from his familial connection. He wrote to Marigny several times in order to obtain impressions and their correspondence runs from 1769 to 1772. Although at first encouraging, Marigny's replies became increasingly negative. Attiret tried again in 1775, and the Comte d'Angiviller, Marigny's successor in the Direction générale des Bâtiments, told him to address himself to Abbé Terray (the Contrôleur-Général des finances) or to the Compagnie des Indes. He warned him that it was very much in the Compagnie's interests that none of the prints should remain in Europe, following the Emperor's wishes, and that trade might be jeopardized on account of it. The Comte's own attempts to obtain impressions from Abbé Terray are recorded in a detailed *Mémoire* of 24 July 1775, drafted in his offices, in which it is suggested that Marigny too should get a set.⁵⁰ The only person who appears to have made a successful bid for impressions was Bertin, but the evidence is indirect. His attempts to obtain impressions of the prints are recorded in a letter to Marigny of 18 May 1771.⁵¹ Although it is not specified that he had succeeded, Bertin wrote (in an undated note) that he wished to put 'these prints' in his library, with a sheet for each explaining the subject. This absence of legends on 'Monseigneur's' prints was discussed by one of his secretaries, either Chompré or Parent, in another docu-

46. Arch. Nat. o¹1924 (2), pièce no. 1; see n. 17 above.

47. Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 211, quoting Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1910, p. 14.

48. Pelliot calculated on the basis of a tael being worth 7 *livres* 10 *sols*. He also confirmed the final sum of 204,000 *livres* on the basis of alternative figures, relating to expenses (engravers' fees, packaging, shipment costs) rather than to the Hong payments referred to. Some of the documents he based his calculations on refer to piastres, so these are also mentioned here; see Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 210–14. Beurdeley stated 204,000 'francs'; see Beurdeley, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

49. Jombert, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

50. Pelliot published extracts of the letters from Marigny and the

Comte d'Angiviller, but only summarized what Attiret wrote; he published the Comte d'Angiviller's *Mémoire* and provided references to the documents of the correspondence between Attiret and Marigny and Angiviller (Arch. Nat. o¹ 1924 (2), nos. 43 and 44; o¹ 1911 (5), nos. 176–77; o¹ 1912 (2), nos. 9, 10, 17, 35; o¹ 1912 (3), nos. 138 and 144; o¹ 1913 (2) nos. 148 and 160; see Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 214–17. Attiret's letters of 13 March 1771 and 4 August 1775, and Marigny's letter of 7 December 1772, are published in *Lettres inédites d'artistes du XVIIIe siècle*, Archives de l'Art Français, 1, 1907, pp. 5–7.

51. Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 204, n. 2; Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1910, p. 59, and *op. cit.*, 1913, p. 16.

ment, where the context clearly implies the Conquêtes prints.⁵²

At the end of 1769, Cochin sent a *Mémoire* to the Jesuit Father Michel Benoist, superior of the mission of the French Jesuits at Peking. Although the *Mémoire* is lost, its content can be deduced from three letters from Father Benoist, the first two addressed to Bertin. In the first letter of 25 November 1770, Father Benoist recorded that he had just received Cochin's *Mémoire* from the Compagnie des Indes at Canton.⁵³ The Council members wished to know the Court's intentions regarding this *Mémoire*, and Benoist promptly set about translating it into Chinese. He informed Bertin that he himself had been working on a new edition of the maps of the Empire in 104 sheets, which the Emperor wanted engraved on copper, and that he had reluctantly agreed to supervise the printing of them. With no previous experience of this task, he had to rely on some written works on printing impressions. In order to confirm Cochin's observations, he had written his own report on the difficulties experienced by palace workers, which he witnessed, regarding the paper, the oil, the black, the wiping of the plates (either with a cloth or with the palm of the hand), and many others. On 24 November he went to the Emperor's country residence outside Peking (the Yuanming yuan) and presented his report to the Mandarins who had dealt with the despatch of the drawings. The latter would not be drawn in, advising him to write to the French and tell them to address themselves to the customs officer of Canton. Despite Benoist's concerns that referring the matter to Canton might delay the despatch of the plates and the prints for at least a year, as the French ships were due to leave shortly, the Mandarins would not oblige because they were observing court protocol.⁵⁴ On the following day, he reported the matter to the Council representatives residing in Canton, and advised them to address themselves to the customs officer from whom they had accepted the commission, since only he could determine the approach to take. Benoist doubted that he would agree to 1,000 impressions being printed from each plate, especially if this would delay the arrival of the plates.

The second letter from Benoist to Bertin is dated 16 November 1773.⁵⁵ He referred to the fact that three years previously (1770), the Emperor had received the translation of Cochin's detailed *Mémoire*, in which Cochin had specified the difficulties that they would have in China in printing such fine and perfect engravings as the *Victory* plates. So although Benoist could not hand it over to the Emperor via the Mandarins in Peking, it must have been sent, as Pelliot said, from Canton by the usual route of the provincial authorities.⁵⁶ He also stated that the Emperor was so pleased with the *Victory* prints he had already received, that as soon as the seven *Victory* plates (which their vessels had brought the previous year) had arrived in Peking he ordered impressions to be printed from them, and these were presented to him in June.⁵⁷ Benoist admitted that they could not compare with those printed in France, but that all the Europeans who saw them thought that they were better than expected.

A third letter from Benoist, addressed to 'Father du Gad' and dated by Pelliot as the end of 1773, begins with events that occurred in 1770.⁵⁸ Benoist's account confirms that Cochin's *Mémoire* had exposed the difficulties of printing impressions in China from the *Victory* plates. It also reveals that Cochin had suggested printing in France a greater number of impressions than the Emperor had requested, and that subsequently, in addition to the plates and the impressions, he offered to send European paper, materials necessary for the composition of the printing ink, and a detailed *Mémoire* on how to print the engravings (i.e. a printing manual). The Emperor had refused these offers, and reiterated that he wanted 200 impressions of each plate, and did not require either paper or the ingredients for printing ink to be sent from Europe. The letter then recounts that in December 1772 seven plates arrived with the number of impressions requested by the Emperor, who then ordered impressions of the seven plates to be printed there and summoned Benoist for his advice on the procedure. Benoist wrote a report on the precautions required, including problems such as the spells of harsh weather when work would be halted, during which time the new press could be prepared and

52. Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, p. 217 and Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1913, p. 12.

53. H. Cordier, 'Les Correspondants de Bertin', *Toung Pao*, xviii, Leiden 1917, pp. 337-40; Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 219-22.

54. The journey from Peking to Canton was lengthy: Father Benoist's letter to 'Father Gad' of 1773 states that a 'special post' could travel the distance in twelve days.

55. Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1917, pp. 347-48; Pelliot, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 221-22; Cordier, *op. cit.*, 1913, pp. 16-18.

56. Pelliot, *ibid.*, p. 222, n. 1.

57. The account is slightly ambiguous in that it can be interpreted as suggesting that some prints had arrived prior to the shipment of the seven plates in 1772, but the following letter does not support this possibility.

58. Pelliot published the letter, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 222-23; he gave the provenance as an insertion in the collected 'Lettres édifiantes', xxiv, 1781, in *Panthéon littéraire*, iv, pp. 222-23.



20. Chinese printing plate, copper, engraved with a scene from the 'Annam Campaign' set of prints, 1789–90, 592 × 950 mm (London, British Museum).

materials gathered. The Emperor agreed to his proposals.

Thus we know that at the end of 1770 the Emperor asked for 200 impressions of each plate to be printed in France, and that in December 1772 seven plates were received in Peking with the required number of impressions. The impressions from the seven plates that the Emperor asked Benoist to produce in Peking were printed in the spring of 1773, and proofs were presented to him in June. On 5 August 1774 news reached China of a papal brief proclaiming the dissolution of the Society of Jesus in France.⁵⁹ Father Benoist died on the 23 October 1774, before the arrival of the last batch of plates in Peking. Had the Emperor asked for new prints to be printed, someone else would have had to be responsible. The last plates and impressions, sent from Paris in December 1774, must have reached China around mid-1775.

Prior to Benoist's efforts to produce these prints, another European, the Italian missionary Matteo

Ripa, working at the Court of Peking, had produced engravings in China of the palace complex at Chengde (*Thirty Views of Jehol*), and of maps of the Empire, in the early eighteenth century.⁶⁰ However, the Emperor Qianlong clearly desired to have the best printmakers available in the world, regardless of expense, to commemorate his 'East Turkestan' victories in print form. The commission was very demanding, especially given the cultural and geographical divide between the two nations. However, due mainly to Cochin's tenacity and experience, under intense pressure from ministers aware of the political prestige that the commission represented, the project was a success and a tribute to French expertise.

Interest in the *Conquêtes* commission extends beyond its origins, progress and completion. The arrival of the *Conquêtes* plates in China had a direct impact there, since the Emperor Qianlong (and his successor in one instance) subsequently ordered the production by Chinese artists of further sets of engravings to

59. Beurdeley, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

60. See Fuchs, *op. cit.*, 1950, pp. 67–87; for a more recent publication

mentioning Ripa's engravings, see Victoria & Albert Museum, *Encounters*, London 2005, pp. 301 and 306.

commemorate other military campaigns. In France, Helman and Ponce published a reduced version of the original *Conquêtes* prints in 1785, to satisfy public curiosity.

The British Museum collections (in the Department of Prints and Drawings and in the Department of Asia) are extensive concerning the subject of this article. They include the original French *Conquêtes* prints (figs. 10–16); impressions printed in China from the original French plates (fig. 17); Helman's reduced versions of the original prints; numerous impressions from the sets commemorating the later campaigns, printed in China

from copper plates engraved there (figs. 18–19); and a copper plate engraved in China from one of the sets commemorating the later campaigns⁶¹ (fig. 20).

Finally, the intention to use the *Conquêtes* designs for media other than prints (i.e. for tapestries or ceramics) has already been noted, but in one of his later articles Pellicot provided a brief account of the reproduction in lacquer of the later sets of 'battle prints', and wondered whether the same process might have occurred for the original *Conquêtes* set.⁶² As matters stand at present, it seems that no echo of them can be found in any of the decorative arts.

61. The only publications known to me mentioning the BM collections are a note by Lawrence Binyon of an acquisition, *BMQ*, III, 1928–1929, pp. 80–81; two illustrations in *The British Museum Book of Chinese Art*, edited by J. Rawson, London 1992, figs. 145 and 212; and a mention of BM prints in H. Walravens, 'The introduction of copper-engraving into China', 62nd IFLA General Conference, Conference Proceedings, August 25–31 1996 (published on the Internet). The Department of Prints and Drawings has an almost complete set (fifteen, including early states and a proof before lettering) of the original French *Conquêtes* prints and an album of the complete set of Helman's reduced versions of the original *Conquêtes* prints. The Department of Asia has a wider range of material. Fuchs (and to a lesser extent Beurdeley) provided lists of sets in collections worldwide (the BM material is not

included), but did not discuss their full provenance (Fuchs, *op. cit.*, 1944, pp. 112–13, and Beurdeley, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–87). Pellicot and Fuchs noted that some sets of the *Conquêtes* impressions included poems composed by the Emperor Qianlong on the subject of the events depicted, and other sets included additional sheets: a preface composed by the Emperor and a final notice written by court officials. In most instances, these poems were printed as wood-engravings on separate sheets, to accompany each copper-plate engraving, but in his later article in 1932 Pellicot mentioned that he had seen a set of the prints with Qianlong's poems handwritten in his own calligraphy in the skies of the engravings (Pellicot, *op. cit.*, 1921, pp. 253–55; Pellicot, *op. cit.*, 1932, p. 126; Fuchs, *op. cit.*, 1944, pp. 110–13; and Fuchs, *op. cit.*, 1950, p. 79).

62. Pellicot, *op. cit.*, 1928, pp. 132–33.

Shorter Notices

The Use of Woodcuts in Fifteenth-century Italy

Roberto Cobiانchi

The perishability of paper on which fifteenth-century single-sheet woodcuts were printed certainly accounts for the

survival of relatively few examples, especially in Italy where their production seems to have been smaller than in

This article was written while I held a Bibliotheca Hertziana–Compagnia di San Paolo di Torino Fellowship in 2004–05 at the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome, and I gratefully

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