

Ignorant Gaze: George Macartney's Negotiation with China in 1793

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Abstract

Preserved in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the *kesi* (silk tapestry) of the British Embassy has been exhibited in the context of Europe's economic, cultural and exploitative encounters with the Americas, Africa and Asia (**Figure 1**). The *kesi*, which has contributed to the misinterpretation of China's practice of foreign relations, provides invaluable insight into the political strategies of the Qianlong Emperor in the face of British imperialism. The work commemorates the infamous meeting between the Emperor and the English ambassador George Macartney in 1793. The event marks the failed negotiation between two incommensurable power systems due to conflicting interests and grave misunderstandings on both sides. Yet in English and Chinese language histories, the failed negotiation is often attributed to the backwardness of China's practice of foreign relations. Within the context of historical writing and museum display, the *kesi* is made to emphasize the Emperor's cultural blindness and ignorance of the changing world beyond China. What is more, the Emperor's alleged arrogance towards British maritime technology has been directly connected to China's humiliation in the two Opium Wars (1838 to 1842 and 1856 to 1860).

A closer reading of the *kesi* will reveal that its image and inscription integrates the *zhigong tu* genre (the official documentation of China's foreign relations) and *li* (the guiding principle of China's foreign relations). I will argue that the emperor employed the *zhigong tu* genre and *li* to assert the power of the Qing Empire and divert his criticism

of British imperialism. Pictorially the *kesi* follows the power structuring process of *li* by emphasizing the contingent relationship between the supreme lord (the Qianlong Emperor) and the lesser lord (George Macartney). The *kesi*'s inscription, composed by the Emperor himself, embodies the core of China's tributary practice: "In my kindness to men from afar I make generous return." The depiction of the British Embassy then is really a validation of the Emperor's power in giving more in return. Thus far, the *kesi* channels the conventions of *zhigong tu* and manifests the principles of *li*. During the Qing Dynasty, the decentralization of imperial power into local authority was an outcome of the growth and complexity of the empire. Thus, the Qianlong Emperor's materialization of his power through the appropriation of *zhigong tu* and *li* was necessary to foster domestic confidence. The *kesi*, marking the end of China's tributary practice, can be alternatively understood as the Emperor's last capacity to maintain internal stability through the Chinese tributary system.

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Glossary of Chinese Characters

Bin li 賓禮

Baihu Tong 白虎通

Biaowen 表文

chaogong zhi li 朝貢之理

Daqing Tongli 大清通理

de 德

fanyu 梵語

fangwu 方物

gong 貢

guo 國

Hanzu 漢族

Heng Zheng 橫章

Huangdi 皇帝

Huang Qing Zhigong Tu 皇清職貢圖

Huiyu 回語

Ji huangwei 繼皇位

jia 家

junzi 君子

kesi 刻絲

koutou 叩頭

li 禮

Qianlong 乾隆

qin 親

ren 仁

ruyi 如意

shengzuo 昇座

She Hai 豎亥

siyi 四夷

Taihedian 太和殿

Tangulayu 唐古拉語

Wanshu Yuan 萬樹園

Zhengming 正名

Zhigong tu 職貢圖

zijincheng 紫禁城

ziwei 紫微

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1 Introduction: A Historiography of Ignorance

Preserved in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the *kesi* (silk tapestry) of the British Embassy has been exhibited in the context of Europe's economic, cultural and exploitative encounters with the Americas, Africa and Asia (**Figure 1**).¹ The *kesi*, which has contributed to the misinterpretation of China's practice of foreign relations, provides invaluable insight into the political strategies of the Qianlong Emperor in the face of British imperialism. The work commemorates the infamous meeting between the Emperor and the English ambassador George Macartney in 1793. The event marks the failed negotiation between two incommensurable power systems due to conflicting interests and grave misunderstandings on both sides. Yet in English and Chinese language histories, the failed negotiation is often attributed to the backwardness of China's practice of foreign relations. Within the context of historical writing and museum display, the *kesi* is made to emphasize the Emperor's cultural blindness and ignorance of the changing world beyond China. What is more, the Emperor's alleged arrogance towards British maritime technology has been directly connected to China's humiliation

¹ According to Amy Miller, the curator of decorative arts and material culture at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the *kesi* is currently in storage and is only exhibited every other year due to its fragile condition. The Museum acquired the work through the Christie's Fine Arts Auction House in London in the 1930's. Throughout the twentieth century, the *kesi* has been exhibited in the Trade and Empire Gallery before the display was replaced by the Atlantic Worlds Gallery in 2007. The Trade and Empire Gallery featured a permanent collection of objects and visual imagery related to the impact of European trade and colonialism in the Americas, Africa and Asia between the 1600s to the mid-1800s. Such an ambitious exhibition focused on the European perspective of exploration and conquest. Recently, the division of the gallery space into the Atlantic Worlds Gallery has at its aim to provide a critical in-depth examination of the transatlantic slave trade. Miller relayed that the museum also plans to exhibit the *kesi* in a new collection entitled Asian Seas. The re-organization of the museum's exhibitions, which seems to be heading towards differentiating non-Western cultures, will hopefully allow room for multiple perspectives to emerge in the study of cultural exchange between Europe and Asia.

in the two Opium Wars (1838 to 1842 and 1856 to 1860).²

In English-language sources, the limited view of the *kesi* and the event in 1793 results from the misinterpretation (or perhaps in some cases, the unfamiliarity) of two performative aspects of China's practice of foreign relations: *zhigong tu* and *li*. *Li*, often translated as ritual, is the discourse of societal management and the guiding principle of diplomatic relations in imperial China.³ It is the power structuring process in foreign relations which involves establishing the Chinese Emperor as the supreme lord through the performativity of gift exchange. The process is then recorded as *zhigong tu* which is the official pictorial and textual documentation of foreign envoys presenting tribute. The format of *zhigong tu* follows the scheme of *li* and typically includes an illustration that is accompanied by a textual description of foreign peoples and their customs. Because *zhigong tu* and *li* are rooted in early Chinese tradition, it is assumed that the prevalence of such ritualized practices in foreign relations is a sign that the Qing Empire developed in isolation and therefore lacked progress.⁴

² James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham and London: Duke University, 1995), 230.

³ Primary sources which demonstrate the role of *li* in foreign relations in the Qing Dynasty include: the *Comprehensive Rites of the Great Qing* (*Da Qing Tongli*, 1756), the *Comprehensive Examination of the Five Kingly Rites* (*Wuli Tongkao*, 1761), *The Qing Emperor's Collection of Illustrated Tributaries* (*Huang Qing Zhigong Tu*, 1761), and *Records of the Qing Court's Cherishing Men from Afar* (*Qingchao Rouyuan Ji*, 1879). In contemporary studies of Chinese history and philosophy, the meaning of *li* and its translation as ritual have been extensively discussed and criticized. The different approaches of defining *li* include: the historical reconstruction of the term in classical Confucian teachings (Chow, Davis, Chan); the interpretation of the symbolic and functional value of ritual activity in the Chinese state and tributary practice (Fairbank, Pritchard, Wills); and the postcolonial criticism of the categorization of ritual and re-contextualization of *li* in the broader realm of cultural and political practice (Hevia, Hostetler, Rawski). The continuous debates over the meaning and translation of *li* not only points to the importance of the term in the study of China's tributary practice but also the limitations of fully comprehending the complexity of *li* in the English-language.

⁴ John K. Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations*. Edited by John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 200.

Recent studies of Qing society by Laura Hostetler, Susan Naquin and Evelyn Rawski provide strong evidence that the Qing Empire was an active participant of the cultural, economic and technological exchange in early global circulation. In her study of Qing cartography, Hostetler finds the co-existence of traditional forms of mapping and new forms that employed the direct observational method and accurate scaling found in European charts. If we begin to examine China's engagement with the eighteenth century world as a multi-lineal process, the question then becomes: why did the conventional form of diplomatic relations persist for so long? In what ways did China's practice of foreign relations become altered with the multitude of participants over time? Furthermore, for Qing rulers, what was strategically valuable in continuing the discourse of *li* in the management of domestic and international relations?

This thesis seeks to develop an alternative theoretical framework for unpacking the *kesi*'s image and inscription by re-examining the work under the rubric of *zhigong tu* and *li*. I venture to argue that the Qianlong Emperor strategically employed *zhigong tu* and *li* to assert the power of the Qing Empire and divert his criticism of British imperialism. Pictorially the *kesi* follows the power structuring process of *li* by emphasizing the contingent relationship between the supreme lord (the Qianlong Emperor) and the lesser lord (George Macartney). The *kesi*'s inscription, composed by the Emperor himself, embodies the core of China's tributary practice: "In my kindness to men from afar I make generous return."⁵ The depiction of the British Embassy then is really a validation of the Emperor's power in giving more in return. Thus far, the *kesi* channels the conventions of *zhigong tu* and manifests the principles of *li*. However, a

⁵懷遠薄來而厚往

nuanced reading of the image and poem will reveal the Emperor's oblique criticality of British imperialism through his portrayal of the embassy's gifts and conduct. The re-examination of the *kesi* in the context of China's foreign relations raises the question of why it was necessary for the Qianlong Emperor to go to such lengths to manifest yet withdraw his criticism of British imperialism. In what ways did the Emperor's political strategy in commemorating the event contribute to the study of Qing international and domestic politics? More importantly, how does the *kesi* alter and broaden our understanding of the failed negotiation between Britain and China?

In several Chinese and English-language histories of the event, the failed negotiation of 1793 signifies the confrontation between the “modern West” and “traditional China.”⁶ Publications immediately following the event consisted of travel narratives that relied solely on journals and drawings produced by the British Embassy. The embassy's sources were treated as empirical research and were thought of as accurate portrayals of Chinese culture and society. Early publications following the event in 1793, such as *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China* (1795) by Aeneas Anderson, shared Macartney's appraisal of the Qing court's civility and the ambassador's optimism for overcoming difference through reason.⁷ However, in the period surrounding the two Opium Wars, American and British observers condemned Macartney's efforts to impress the Emperor and viewed it as an act of subjugation.⁸ During this time, the peculiarities of Chinese customs, depicted by the embassy, were exaggerated in English-language sources and employed in the construction of dichotic differences between China

⁶ John K. Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order*, 20.

⁷ James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 229.

⁸ Robert A. Bickers ed., *Ritual & Diplomacy, The Macartney Mission to China, 1792-1794: Papers Presented at the 1992 Conference of the British Association for Chinese Studies Marking the Bicentenary of the Macartney Mission to China* (London: The British Association for Chinese Studies, 1993), 28.

and the West. For instance, the Qing court's practice of foreign relations was thought to promote Chinese "superiority," "isolationism" and "exclusiveness." These impressions of Chinese culture became the polar opposite of British "sovereignty," "cosmopolitanism" and "free trade."⁹

By the late 1920s, modern scholars dealing with Chinese and Euro-American relations, such as E.H. Pritchard and John K. Fairbank, interpreted China's practice of foreign relations as a form of cultural involution. Fairbank's model of the "tributary system" devalues the practice on the premise that the collapse of diplomacy (politics) and ritual (culture) under one system is a form of cultural involution. The resonance of Fairbank's model in twentieth-century Euro-American scholarship is so prevalent that the *kesi* of the Macartney Embassy is often used as an example to illustrate the Qianlong Emperor's ignorance and obstinacy.¹⁰ The cover of Cranmer-Byng's edited version of Macartney's journal has a reproduced image of the *kesi*. In regards to the image, Cranmer-Byng wrote:

The artist has shown the Europeans wearing sixteenth-century dress... [The artist] was ignorant of the nature of the astronomical instruments presented to the Emperor by Lord Macartney for he copied the celestial globe presented by the Jesuits to the Emperor K'ang-hsi in 1679.¹¹

⁹ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 230.

¹⁰ John Fairbank's commentary on the *Huang Qing Zhigong Tu* (*The Imperial Illustrations of Tributaries*), in his influential study *Qing Administrative System*, emphasizes the persistence of the Qing court's ignorance of Europe. On page 90, he states: "The amazing confusion exhibited in these entries was nothing new and had come down from the eighteenth century or earlier, when the Franks, the Portuguese, the French, Italy, the Spanish, the Philippines, and even Holland in the course of time had all become pretty thoroughly mixed up together in Chinese geographical writings. The important thing is not that such errors had arisen but that they persisted so long in the Ch'ing period...Plainly the ideology of the tributary system persisted with all its implications in the nineteenth century in large part because of pure ignorance – an ignorance so profound that the growth of a conscious Chinese foreign policy was seriously inhibited." It is important to note that Fairbank's commentary does not take into account *li* and its political and pictorial organization of space for the Qing Empire.

¹¹ J.L. Cranmer-Byng, ed. *An Embassy to China: Lord Macartney's Journal 1793-4* (Bristol: Western Printing Services Limited, 1963), x.

Cranmer-Byng's comment highlights the deficiency of the artist's skill. To him, copying from other pictorial sources rather than from real life is viewed as ignorance rather than a specific mode of image production in China. In Chinese art, the act of quoting from previous images and styles often validates the practice of the present artist and brings prestige to the work.¹² As a commemorative piece for the imperial palace, the *kesi*'s pictorial composition references a large-scaled *zhigong tu* that was made in the Tang Dynasty.¹³ The purpose of *zhigong tu* was not to render true-to-life representations of the tributary ceremony; but rather the genre follows the scheme of *li* to bring prestige to the Emperor by showcasing the multitude of lords that have paid tribute. Due to Britain's absence in China throughout the eighteenth century, the embassy's costume in the *kesi* must have been drawn from earlier examples of European dress (**Figure 2**). However, Hostetler has noticed a methodological shift towards direct observation in the production of *zhigong tu* during the Qianlong Emperor's reign. The *Huang Qing Zhigong Tu* (*The Imperial Illustrations of Tributaries*) was commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor in 1751 to accurately depict all of China's tributaries. The volume was intended to be a source for educating court officials on the customs of foreign peoples for more effective governance.¹⁴ Hostler argues that the *zhigong tu* genre was an early form of ethnography in China. It seems to me, the genre served as a visual map for the Qing Empire to manage the world under the political ideology of *li*. Rather than evaluating *zhigong tu* imagery according to representational accuracy, the variation in the genre's pictorial strategies

¹² John Hay, "What is Copying" (paper presented at St. John's College and hosted by the Art History, Visual Art, and Theory Department at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, March 29 – 30, 2007).

¹³ See *Yan Liben Zhigong Tu* (Tang Dynasty, 60.96 cm x 198.12 cm) in The National Palace Museum collection in Taiwan.

¹⁴ Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 206.

should lead us to ask the more pertinent question: to what extent did the *kesi* propagate the ideology of *li*?

Cranmer-Byng, who has failed to consider other modes of representation, continues to argue in his introduction, “The real reason for the failure of Macartney’s mission was that from the very beginning it never stood the slightest chance of success... No treaty of commerce or alliance, no exchange of ministers could be affected while the attitude of those in power in China remained unchanged.”¹⁵ His construction of China’s traditionalism and isolationism does not only extend to the way in which the Qing Empire handles foreign relations; but also to the Qing court’s ignorant representation of the world in visual imagery. *The Search for Modern China* (1990) by Jonathan Spence and the *Panorama of the Enlightenment* (2006) by Dorinda Outram are two recent publications which reproduce Cranmer-Byng’s misreading of the *kesi*.¹⁶ What is even more troubling is that the discursive economy of the Qianlong Emperor’s ignorant gaze is enveloped in a

¹⁵ Cranmer-Byng, *An Embassy to China*, x.

¹⁶ In Spence’s *Search for Modern China*, the *kesi* is interpreted as the passive illustration of the British Embassy’s arrival. In his chapter, “China and the Eighteenth Century World,” Spence states, “Lord Macartney’s embassy of 1793 sought diplomatic and commercial concessions from the Qing. The ritual exchange of gifts included three jade *ruyi*, or scepters, presented by the Emperor to Macartney, and a gold-plated, enameled, bejeweled telescope with clocks offered in return along with the scientific and technological instruments depicted in this Chinese tapestry. But Qianlong’s response in an edict to King George III was ‘We have never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country’s manufactures.’” Towards the end of the chapter, Spence emphasizes Macartney’s journalistic impressions of a declining empire which was ruled by an “old” and “crazy” man. Spence’s emphasis serves to further his own argument that the Qing court’s rejection of the British Embassy was China’s vital mistake which led to their defeat in the Opium Wars of the nineteenth century.

In the *Panorama of the Enlightenment*, Outram begins to consider the Qing Empire as an active participant of global exchange. Although she emphasizes Qianlong’s awareness and criticism of British imperialism, her reading of the *kesi* is severely limited. Outram criticizes the artist’s inaccurate portrayal of the British Embassy and the scaling of the planetarium in the *kesi*. On page 176, she states: “It is doubtful... whether the artist actually witnessed the scene. His Englishmen were copied from earlier pictures of Elizabethans and his globe and armillary sphere from Dutch instruments – made far too big.” Outram’s interpretation of the *kesi* lacks an in-depth examination of the *zhigong tu* genre and *li*. Her study explores the Enlightenment as a transnational and transcontinental project and is innovative for its analysis of the Enlightenment as an exogenous phenomenon through visual imagery. However, her argument falls short when she deals with the multi-lineal exchange between Europe, Africa, and Asia since the impact of Europe’s others is clumped together over in a brief overview.

boarder historical narrativity of China's development in Euro-American writing. In English-language sources leading up to the early 1990s, Chinese history is often portrayed as cyclic episodes of rise to power which inevitably lead to decline and failure.¹⁷ In the case of Spence's *Search for Modern China* and those who reference his singular framework for modernity, failure is defined by China's inability to modernize. Similarly, Chinese scholars in the twentieth century have associated China's struggle to modernize to the Qianlong Emperor's reaction towards the British Embassy.¹⁸

The event of 1793 did not become highly significant to Chinese-language historiography until the 1930s when British imperialism was thought to play a crucial role in Chinese modernization.¹⁹ In the early nineteenth century, Chinese commentators speculated on the issue of Macartney's performance of the *koutou* due to conflicting reports of the ceremony in the court's records. The imperial records indicate that the Qianlong Emperor and his successor, the Jiaqing Emperor (r. 1796 to 1820), treated the meeting of 1793 as part of China's practice of foreign relations.²⁰ However, several edicts composed by the Emperor reveal that Macartney expressed the desire to act in the manner of British court decorum. Decades after the event, the *koutou* issue was enlivened by Qing bureaucrats who debated over whether or not European countries should be allowed to pay tribute according to their own customs.²¹ (Hevia has explicitly demonstrated that

¹⁷ Arif Dirlik, "Is There History after Eurocentrism?: Globalism, Postcolonialism, and the Disavowal of History," *Cultural Critique* 42 (1999): 5.

¹⁸ Fredrick W. Mote, "Splendor and Degeneration: 1736-1799." In *Imperial China 900-1800*, 949-74, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 914.

¹⁹ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 239.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.

²¹ For a more comprehensive discussion of the historiography of the event in Chinese, please see: James L. Hevia, "From Events to History the Macartney Embassy in the Historiography of Sino-Western Relations," In *Cherishing Men From Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793*, 225-252, (Durham and London: Duke University, 1995).

the Qing court had altered the doctrine of China's practice of foreign relations to include a section specifically dealing with European embassies.²² Arguably, this became part of the imperial strategy to confront the challenges of a globalizing world).

By the 1930s, the issue of the *koutou* became obsolete in Chinese-language historiography. Scholars at this time focussed on the critique of the Qing Empire's failure to acknowledge British imperialism. From the Qinghua University, Tsiang Ting-fu's work "China and the Great Transformation of the Modern World" in 1934 shares a similar view as E.H. Pritchard's study of Chinese and British relations. Tsiang argues that China's isolationism and traditionalism, which were perpetuated by the tributary system, seized only after Britain's interference in the two opium wars.²³ This view was furthered after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Post-1949 history writing continued to place a strong emphasis on the role of Western imperialism and capitalism in the modernization of imperial China.²⁴ Thus, up to the mid twentieth century, Chinese-language historiography of the British mission was shaped by the discursive project of Chinese national modernity. The resurgence of nationalism in mid-century however led many Chinese historians to support Qianlong's domestic governance which was thought to have resulted in economic growth and internal stability. While China's practice of foreign relations remained under scrutiny in Chinese historiography, the Qing Empire's internal management was greatly praised. By the 1980s, China's economic boom brought on criticism of the effects of capitalism in Chinese society. Scholars such as Hu Sheng and Zhu Jieqing supported Qianlong's rejection of the British

²² Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 118.

²³ Ibid., 239.

²⁴ Ibid., 240.

Embassy and deemed it as an important move in preventing the rapid expansion of the Opium Trade.

In the early 1990s, Chinese and international scholars began to adopt a more balanced approach to re-evaluating the failed negotiation between Britain and China. The revisionist period reconsidered the event as the outcome of multiple circumstances that arose from both sides.²⁵ The *Symposium Marking the Bicentenary of the First British Mission to China* in 1993 featured works by scholars in China, the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany who sought to challenge the historical narrativity of the first British Embassy in China.²⁶ The most notable work that rose from the revisionist period is *Cherishing Men From Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (1995) by the American scholar James L. Hevia. Hevia's study is unique in its attempts to define Qing foreign relations according to the discursive formation of Guest Ritual (a literal translation of *Binli*). His analysis is based on his translation of the *Comprehensive Rites of the Great Qing*. Guest Ritual is a useful framework for understanding the way in which power relationships are structured around the physical and metaphysical dimensions of Qing foreign relations. It seems to me that Hevia employs the term Guest Ritual in lieu of the "tributary system" to emphasize the vital role of ritual in Qing governance. He problematizes the English translation of *li* and proposes to redefine ritual as a productive site of power relations. Drawing upon Catherine Bell's

²⁵ Papers presented in Chinese include: "Recalling the British Mission (Yingshi Chengde zhi xing de huigu)" in *Chengde* by Du Jaing, "The Qianlong Emperor's View of the West (Qianlong huangdi de xiyang guan)" by Guo Chengkang, "A Discussion of the Ceremonial Controversy during the British Embassy to Eighteenth-century China (Lun shiba shiji Zhong Ying tongshi de lijie chongtu)" by Liu Fengyun, "A View of the Qianlong Court's Diplomacy and Foreign Policy (Qianlong chao waishi ji dui wai zhengce chuyi)" by Liu Yuwen, and "The Impact of the Macartney Embassy on Sino-British Relations (Mage'erni shi tuan dui Zhong-Ying guanxi de yingxiang)" by Ye Fengmei.

²⁶ Bickers, *Ritual & Diplomacy*, 2.

investigation of ritual theory and practice, Hevia argues that ritualized actions should be “taken out of the domain of an acted script” and studied according to their “strategies, nuances, acceptance, resistance, and negotiation.”²⁷ In other words, Hevia rejects the notion that participants passively perform repetitive acts and argues that subjects, who are embodiments of their social, cultural and historical contexts, alter the hegemony of ritual. The discussion of *li* as ritual is relevant to our critical engagement of the *kesi* and its relationship to the historiography of the event. The series of issues that arise from the construction and reformation of ritual in English-language discourse prompts the following questions: how was *li* appropriated and altered by the multitude of participants in the specific sociopolitical context of the Qing Empire in the eighteenth century? How did Qing rulers employ *li* as a tool of negotiation in international and domestic relations? What can *li* potentially contribute to the notions of ritual in English-language discourse?

Although Hevia’s study of Guest Ritual is highly celebrated for its “postmodern sensibility” in his non-hierarchical approach of employing multi-lingual sources, it does not sufficiently cover the role of visual imagery in the construction of the meeting in 1793.²⁸ In the pivotal revisionist historiography of the 1990s, there is no mention of the *kesi* and its invaluable role in divulging the perspective of the Qianlong Emperor. The *kesi*’s absence in Chinese-language scholarship and those who draw upon Chinese-language sources can be attributed to two major factors: 1) the image and inscription follows the *zhigong tu* genre so closely that it is regarded as the passive reflection of the court’s

²⁷ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 21.

²⁸ Joseph W. Esherick, “Cherishing Sources from Afar.” *Modern China* 24 (1998), 138.

proceedings and 2) the *kesi*'s prolonged geographic displacement in Greenwich.²⁹ I will demonstrate that the *kesi* is not merely a reflective source of the event; but rather an embodiment of the Emperor's negotiation with British imperialism through his performativity of *li*.

In this thesis, the methodology for developing an alternative framework moves away from historical narrativity and towards an in-depth examination of a single work at a specific social, cultural, and political interval. I seek to extend Hevia's discussion of Guest Ritual to include a theorization of the *kesi* in the context of *zhigong tu* imagery and the concept of *li*. In the Qing Dynasty, *li* is a concept-term that has been developed by Confucian philosophy to become the ideology of imperial virtue. Imperial virtue is defined as "the behavioral expression of the inner moral quality *jen* (humanity or perfect virtue)"³⁰ and in practice, it is an act of privilege and humility. The Emperor's performance in foreign relations is thus guided by the principle of *li* and by conducting himself accordingly he becomes the exemplary ruler whom foreign lords seek to emulate. By taking into account Lydia Liu's criticism of cultural and linguistic translatability, I will cautiously consider the availability of the English-language equivalent of *li*.³¹

²⁹ Hevia suggests that the repatriation of the embassy's gifts by the British troops during the looting of the Summer Palace in the 1860s points to Britain's humiliation of the Macartney mission of 1793. During the period of the Opium Wars, Macartney's effort to impress the Qianlong Emperor was viewed as an act of subjugation. Britain's repatriation of its gifts remains outside the scope of this study. However, it is important to ask to what extent did Britain's sediments toward China in the post-Opium War period effect the reading of the *kesi* in twentieth-century English language history.

³⁰ Kai-Wing Chow, "Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793 by James L. Hevia." *The American Historical Review* 103 (1997): 10.

³¹ My analysis of the *kesi* will touch upon the urgent yet under-theorized issue of cultural equivalence and incommensurability in global circulation. The analysis considers Liu's study of the early process of globalization in her book *Tokens of Exchange*. Her work problematizes the process of linguistic and material translation whereby translatability between different cultures is premised on the assumption that meaning and value are commensurable. The problem with such an assumption is that the politics of translation are glazed over in search of universal concepts which are thought to exist across all cultures. In other words, whose standards of meaning and value are privileged in the process of translation?

Moreover, Hevia's reformulation of ritual, which draws attention to the mutually constitutive relationship between culture and politics, is already inherent in the Chinese term. Instead I will take up the issue of ritual as it relates to the misunderstanding of China's foreign relations but will focus more on excavating the meaning of *li* in Chinese philosophy and practice. In a similar vein, I will refer to the Qing practice of foreign relations as *Binli* (the name given to the written document which informs the Emperor's conduct in foreign relation) rather than use Hevia's term "Guest Ritual."³² Under the rubric of *li*, the *kesi* manifests the nuances and strategies of power negotiation through differentiation and repetition – an aspect to which Hevia could not fully divulge in his intertextual analysis of the British and Qing archives. In this way, the *kesi* can be understood as the Qianlong Emperor's political vehicle by which his awareness of British imperialism has been strategically encoded in the conventions of *zhigong tu*.

The first chapter of the thesis will historicize *li* in the cultural, political and linguistic context of the Qing Dynasty. I seek to demonstrate the way in which the concept-term permeates into the material and visual production of *zhigong tu*. Additionally, the chapter will examine the reasons for the Qing rulers' continuum of *li* in foreign relations and its importance to internal politics. The Qing Dynasty was governed by a lineage of Manchurian rulers who were culturally different from the diverse populace of China which consists of Mongols, Tibetans, Uighur's, and Han Chinese. For the Manchurian rulers, abiding by *Wuli* (Five Imperial Rites), including *Binli*, became a

³² As Hevia notes himself, "guest" is an inadequate translation of *bin*. First and foremost, foreign lords were not invited by the Emperor to participate in *Binli*. Rather they would have to acquire formal permission from the court to enter the Emperor's domain. "Guest" does not adequately represent China's foreign relations because *Binli* is a demonstration of imperial power through the Emperor's ability to attract, encompass, and admonish foreign powers. The Emperor's power does not operate on his extension of invitations.

political strategy to legitimize their control over China. In receiving foreign lords during ceremony, the Emperor of China must be recognized as *huangdi* (supreme lord) and become the exemplar of imperial virtue through the performativity of *li*. When an Emperor performs the imperial rites, the entire process would be meticulously documented and accessed by higher-ranked court officials in the Board of Rites.³³ The members of the board held the power to criticize the Emperor. In the Qing Dynasty, *zhigong tu* continued to be the official pictorial and scriptural documentation of the Emperor's imperial duty to perform *li*. By the Qianlong Emperor's reign, the decentralization of imperial power into local authority became commonplace due to the growth and complexity of the Qing Empire. The Qianlong Emperor's manifestation of morality and centralized power through the performativity of *li* in foreign relations became evermore pertinent in gaining domestic confidence.³⁴

The second chapter will contextualize the formation of two incommensurable power systems: China's power of sedentariness and Britain's power of mobility. This will involve a comparison of the textual and pictorial sources from both the British and Qing renditions of the meeting to investigate how each system of power was formulated through representation. The terms sedentariness and mobility, which will be further complicated in Chapter 2, are used to characterize the formation of power in both China and Britain at a specific interval of history. The two power systems are derived from the visual analysis of the *kesi* and offer an alternative understanding of the notion of difference beyond previous frameworks which maintain the absolute dichotomy between

³³ Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 200.

³⁴ Performativity, in this case, is drawn from Meike Bal's theoretical discussion of the way in which actions and receptions are continuously reconstructed spatially, temporally, and intersubjectively.

“traditional China” and the “modern West.” I will draw upon Susan Naquin’s study of growth and complexity in the Qing Dynasty to argue that the formation of sedentary power by the Manchu rulers was necessary to control what was the largest and most diverse empire in Chinese history.³⁵ By contrast, power as mobility in Britain’s context was a necessity to maintain and even regain the nation’s position as the “world’s dominant imperial power” in the late eighteenth-century.³⁶ The pictorial and textual sources produced by the embassy fed into the rising popularity of travel narratives which reflected the growth of technological improvements for mobility in Europe. This chapter will analyze the drawings by the embassy’s draftsman William Alexander in order to interrogate the validity of these documentary sources and their construction of Chinese customs.

In Chapter 3, I will undertake a detailed reexamination of the *kesi* in order to complicate the historiographic characterization of China’s foreign relations. I will demonstrate the ways in which the work underscores the complexity and sophistication of the discourse of China’s diplomatic relations. By unpacking the image and inscription, I will argue that the *kesi* was made to assert the Qianlong Emperor’s power in foreign relations even though the work has been read as China’s ignorance of Britain’s diplomatic intentions. In the Qing Dynasty, the complexity of internal management involved a delicate interplay between diversification (growth through conquest) and unification (consolidation of conquest). The Qianlong Emperor’s priority was to maintain the internal stability of the empire. However, managing internal affairs also entails

³⁵ Susan Naquin and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 97.

³⁶ Mote, “China’s Legacy in a Changing World,” 961-62.

negotiating with outer regions in order to thwart potential disturbances to domestic peace. The *kesi*, then, was made to assert the Qianlong Emperor's power in foreign relations by emphasizing his capacity to mobilize other centres of power from his throne under the ideology of *li*. I will then demonstrate the Emperor's expression of his underlying suspicion of Britain's intentions through the subtle pictorial and literary references in the *kesi*. In particular, the inclusion of the planetarium and the reference to China's ancient legendary explorers are meant to undermine and contest Britain's power of mobility. By treating the *kesi* as an exemplification of the Emperor's performativity of *li* and his awareness of British imperialism, this thesis seeks to rethink China's position in the changing world of the late eighteenth century, and in the scholarship of the twentieth century that made an issue of *li* to trivialize China's position. How do we, as scholars, better position ourselves in the 21st century?

2 Centering the Issue of *Li* in China's Foreign Relations

The perseverance of China's diplomatic relations, which extends back to the Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE),³⁷ has lead scholars to conclude that the practice is the primary source of China's cultural backwardness. In Euro-American scholarship, the reductive conclusion of China's practice of foreign relations is heavily influenced by the translation of *li* as ritual. In the Qing Dynasty, diplomatic conduct between the Emperor and the foreign lord is detailed in the official imperial doctrine *Binli*. *Binli* defines diplomatic relations as a mutually beneficial practice that entails the performative manifestation of a complex, hierarchal cosmology guided by *li*. Upon acquiring formal permission to enter the Emperor's domain, the foreign lord acknowledges the Emperor as the supreme lord by presenting valuable objects and performing the *koutou*. As the supreme lord, the Emperor must embody the exemplary ruler and reproduce the performance of the foreign lords in paying respect to Heaven. Thus the patterning discourse of *li* is a series of scared and ritualized acts. The problem is not that China's practice of foreign relations incorporates ritual activity. It is the limited framing of "ritual" in English-language discourse that requires critical attention.

The historical construction of ritual by Euro-American scholars in the 1960s and its application to *li* is problematic as the term maintains the dichotomy between progressive, political action and static, cultural practice. Both Fairbank and Pritchard argue that the "tributary system," with its ritualistic aspects, is a key example of cultural involution in China since the secular (rationality, diplomacy) becomes inseparable from

³⁷ John Wills, "Great Qing and Its Southern Neighbors, 1760-1820: Secular Trends and Recovery from Crisis." Paper presented at the *Interactions: Regional Studies, Global Processes, and Historical Analysis*, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 2001.

the non-secular (myth, magic, ritual). In the framework of the tributary system, the corporeal performance of the *koutou* becomes associated with ritual and culture while the reception of gifts was interpreted as a form of economic exchange which reveals the court's ulterior motives behind such ritualized activities. The perceived backwardness of the tributary system is premised on the idea that subjects partaking in rituals lack agency in their engagement with repetitive and immutable actions. Constructed in this manner, ritual evokes the dualism between thought and action. Moreover, the term has come to generalize the distinction between "high religion" and "primitive superstition."³⁸ According to Catherine Bell, "historically, the whole issue of ritual arose as a discrete phenomenon to the eyes of social observers in that period in which 'reason' and the scientific pursuit of knowledge were defining a particular hegemony in Western intellectual life."³⁹ Recent scholars of China's foreign relations have reconceptualized "ritual" as a dynamic and negotiable process between the Emperor and the foreign lord. In *Cherishing Men from Afar*, Hevia draws upon Catherine Bell's rethinking of ritual as a site of power production whereby culture and politics are understood to be mutually constitutive rather than oppositional. The reexamination of ritual in the context of China's foreign relations provides a more nuanced understanding of *li* in the broader realm of social practices.⁴⁰ In this chapter, I will contextualize the term *li* in Chinese philosophical discourse and Qing foreign relations in order to demonstrate the Qianlong Emperor's necessity for the continuum of *li* in international relations and how such strategy has irrevocable ties to domestic politics.

³⁸ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁰ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 15-19.

As the core of Confucian philosophy, *li* is the sociopolitical ideology of Chinese society and interdomainal relations. The concept-term can be roughly translated as “ritual,” “propriety” and “ceremony,” and in imperial, official texts it is the discourse of societal management and the guiding principle of *Binli*.⁴¹ In metaphysics, *li* is the all-encompassing, organizational principle of *jia* (the family, microcosm) and *guo* (the state, macrocosm).⁴² In his study of Confucian philosophy, Kai-wing Chow states, “*li* is important to all aspects of human society. It regulates one’s daily life and interaction with the other, channels emotions properly, distinguishes civilized patterns of behavior, and maintains political order.”⁴³ The power structuring principles of *li* can thus be understood as the lineal and patriarchal organization of familial and state relations derived from Confucian teachings.⁴⁴ Subjects should know their place in society and conduct themselves according to the basic principles of *li* which include: abiding to ranks, respecting superiors, and performing societal roles under the moral code. In the context of China’s foreign relations, *li* organizes the encounter between the Emperor and the tributaries through a series of formalized actions. Upon receiving the court’s approval to enter the Emperor’s domain, foreign lords would perform the *koutou* (kneeling and bowing) and present *gong* (tributes) to acknowledge the Emperor’s status as *huangdi* (supreme ruler).⁴⁵ In Han Chinese culture, *koutou* is the act of showing deep respect to elders and superiors by kneeling and bowing so low as to touch one’s head to the ground. In paying respect to the Emperor, the *koutou* is performed three times. The Emperor himself must perform the *koutou* to Heaven in order to demonstrate the imperial virtue of

⁴¹ Wing-Tsit Chan, “Neo-Confucianism: New Ideas in Old Terminology.” *Philosophy East and West* 17 (1967), 17.

⁴² Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 215.

⁴³ Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism*, 10.

⁴⁴ Laurence G. Thompson, *Chinese Religion: An Introduction (Religious Life in History)* (Wadsworth Publishing, 1995), 10.

⁴⁵ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 118.

humility.⁴⁶ Under the guidance of *li*, diplomacy between China and other countries was made possible within an inclusive yet hierarchical power structuring process.⁴⁷

The concept of *qin* elucidates the hierarchal principles of *li* which defines the interrelated structures of the family and the state. In *Cherishing Men From Afar*, James L. Hevia elaborates on the performative and discursive formation of *qin* (cherishment) in Qing foreign relations. He argues that the descriptive language used in various Qing sources to refer to *yi* (foreign peoples) suggests that foreign lords were regarded and treated as kin within the hierarchal relationship of *Binli*. Hevia interprets *qin* as the following,

“...sources indicate that the purpose of the rite was to bring close (*qin*) other domains... As a noun, *qin* is translated as family or relative. Here, however, it is used as a verb meaning "to love," "to be close to," as one would be toward one's own relatives. In either case, the use of this term, along with others that refer to showing compassion for lesser lords or cherishing them, seems to be pointing toward a process of inclusion, rather than one designed to affirm a dichotomy such as civilization and barbarism.”⁴⁸

It is crucial to understand that *qin* emphasizes the process of inclusion within the hierarchal structure of *li*. The Emperor seeks to establish a kin-like relationship with the foreign lord in the act of bringing close outer regions and returning a gift of great value. Furthermore, Hevia's interpretation of *qin* directly opposes John F. Fairbank's construction of sinocentrism in his model of the tributary system. Fairbank's analysis stems from the translation of *yi* as barbarian whereby the power structuring properties of the tributary practice affirms “Chinese superiority.” It was thought that the tributary system only served to demarcate the degrees of civilization against the standards of

⁴⁶ Evelyn S. Rawski, *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998), 206.

⁴⁷ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 121.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 120-21.

Chinese culture.⁴⁹ However, Hevia argues that in light of *qin*, *yi* denotes foreign peoples and is used as a means to distinguish between inner and outer regions. Thus, *qin* is an important concept to the performativity of *li* in that it expresses the Emperor's desired result in mobilizing foreign peoples from afar and to bring them into the proximity of the Qing Empire.

In demonstrating *qin*, the Emperor will provide housing and feasts for the tributaries, but most of all the Emperor's gift embodies his cherishment of the foreign lord. This may include a highly valued object which symbolizes the peace and prosperity that will come forth from the established relations. In the meeting of 1793, the Emperor gave Macartney three scepters: one made of white agate and two made of jade. Han Confucian scholars associated *li* with polishing jade, a process which is thought to reveal the six principles of ideal human conduct: *ren* (humanity and morality), *junzi* (the man of virtue, the exemplar), *zheng ming* (the rectification of names), *de* (virtuous power), *li* (propriety and ceremony), and *wen* (music, poetry, art).⁵⁰ The signification of jade is elaborated in the *Baihu Tong* (*Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Tower*) which is a classical work written in the Han Dynasty. It is said: "Jade is to symbolize virtue. A superior man possesses the central and universal principle and that in ceremonies and morality there are the distinguishing principles."⁵¹ In the Emperor's performativity of *li*, the scepters are gestures of *qin* and signify the act of bringing peripheral regions close to the center. The jade specters can be thought of as the extension of the relationship between the Emperor and the foreign lord that signify the process of inclusion within a hierarchal structure.

⁴⁹ Fairbank, *The Chinese World Order*, 140.

⁵⁰ Chan, *Neo-Confucianism*, 21.

⁵¹ Ibid. 21.

The encompassment of foreign lords within the power structuring process of *li* entails the differentiation among foreign peoples as opposed to assimilation. Qing imperial power was validated by the multitude of lords who acknowledged the Emperor's position as *haungdi* through the presentation of local produce. In the *Comprehensive Rites of the Great Qing (Da Qing tongli)*, it is stated:

In the ceremony of offering up the most precious things at court (*chaogong zhi li*), the foreign peoples of the four directions (*siyi*) are classified as domains (*guo*) and order their offerings according to the proper season. [The princes] of these domains send their servants to present petitions (*biaowen*) and local products (*fangwu*). They come to Our court in the capital.⁵²

By offering their most valued objects to the Qing Empire, the foreign lord is distinguished from other regions and greatly awarded by the Emperor. The way in which the foreign lord's visitation is commemorated in *zhigong tu* also stresses the court's concern with noting the differences among the multitude of lords. *Zhigong tu* illustrations focus on the distinctive clothing and objects of the foreign peoples. Thus, it could be said that *Binli* was not the outcome of sinocentrism; but one of the ways in which the Chinese Emperor acknowledged the dependency of his empire on the multitude of foreign lords who demonstrated their loyalty through *Binli*. The power structuring process of *li* is intended to be a mutually beneficial practice of power negotiation between Chinese and non-Chinese states that has as its aim to maintain stability between incommensurable systems of power. Ideologically, diversity in the context of Qing foreign politics was accommodated through the inclusive yet differentiating structure of *li*. Although foreign travel within China was heavily regulated during Qianlong's reign, the Qing court did not discount the importance of receiving tributaries. The demonstration of receiving tributaries of different ethnicities had at its purpose to instill domestic confidence in the

⁵² Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 119.

ruling elite. The ideology of *li* became evermore salient in the late sixteenth century, for the Qing rulers themselves were alien to China.

It is a well-known fact that the Qing Dynasty was governed by a foreign power which originally culminated from several semi-nomadic tribes in Northeast Asia. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, these tribes were unified by Nurgaci and his son Hontaiji under a single banner called Manchu. The Manchurians were culturally and linguistically different from the Han Chinese (*Hanzu*) who makeup the majority of China's populace and are thought by many historians to be the biological race of China.⁵³ It is not surprising that the Manchurian governance over the Han Chinese and other minor ethnic groups residing in China was a point of contention in the Qing Dynasty. However, the Manchurians consolidated their rule over China by strategically appropriating the administrative system of the late Ming Dynasty.

The Manchu's adoption of the previous Ming legislative system has been interpreted by some Euro-American scholars as the "sinicization" of culture in the Qing Dynasty.⁵⁴ Such discursive formation furthers the perception that eighteenth century China was static and resistant to change. Yet, culture in the Qing Dynasty was not so much about the "sinicization" of culture as imagined by Pritchard and Fairbank, but rather the diversification and negotiation of Han Chinese culture. It is not that scholars do not recognize the fluctuations in the Qing Empire's economy and population (signs of growth or decline) but rather they tend to perceive Chinese history in cyclic patterns that inevitably result in failure. New studies by Evelyn Rawski, Susan Naquin and Kai-wing

⁵³ Fredrick W. Mote, "Splendor and Degeneration, 1736-1799." In *Imperial China 900-1800*, 912-48, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 915.

⁵⁴ Mary C. Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862-1874*, (Berkley and Los Angeles: Stanford University Press, 1957), 37.

Chow demonstrate that growth, prosperity and peace were the result of Qing management.

In her study of Qing material culture, Rawski demonstrates that the Manchus were well-equipped, both politically and linguistically, for accommodating the multiethnic composition of the empire. She argues that the Qing rulers were consciously creating and maintaining a cosmopolitan image which is evident in the material culture of the Qing court.⁵⁵ The Manchu rulers not only accommodated the Han majority but they also concentrated on integrating yet differentiating the multitude of minority groups that were united under one empire. The Qing rulers' integration and appropriation of diverse cultures is part of the ongoing challenge of managing the expansion and complexity of the empire. The Qianlong Emperor himself has made statements that reflect the sociopolitical ideology of inclusion and differentiation which became vital during his reign:

In 1743 I first practiced Mongolian. In 1760 after I pacified the Muslims, I acquainted myself with Uighur (Huiyu). In 1776 after the two pacifications of the Jinquan (rebels) I became roughly conversant in Tibetan (Fanyu)... because the Panchen Lama was coming to visit I also studied Tangut (Tangulayu). Thus when the rota of Mongols, Muslims and Tibetans come every year to the capital for audience I use their own languages and do not rely on an interpreter... to express the idea of conquering by kindness.⁵⁶

The Emperor's emphasis on "conquering by kindness" relates to the concept of *qin* in the ideology of *li*. In this context, differences are resolved by cherishment, recognition, and inclusion as opposed to brute force.⁵⁷ The similarities between the strategies of domestic

⁵⁵ Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁷ The emphasis on the *ideal* of "conquering by kindness" cannot be underplayed in the context of Qing interdomainal and domestic relations. As Mote points out, the Qianlong Emperor placed importance in projecting himself as a "conquering hero" to "maintain the awe of Manchu-Qing China on the frontiers and also among the Chinese population at home." The military prowess of the Manchu reign was

and international relations affirm the all-encompassing aspect of *li*. The Emperor's act of including foreign powers under the ideology of *li* entailed a constant adaption and alteration of imperial power. The display of imperial power on an international level legitimated the Manchu's control over a pluralistic and multiethnic empire. As Rawski states, "Rather than cite sinicization as the primary cause of Qing success....the key to Qing achievement lay in its ability to implement flexible culturally specific policies aimed at the major non-Han peoples inhabiting the Inner Asian peripheries in the empire."⁵⁸

During the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu rulers continued to appropriate *li* as the political ideology in organizing domestic and international affairs. According to Hevia, *Binli* is a centering and patterning discourse by which the power relationship between the Emperor and foreign lord is concretized through performance. Qing foreign relations reflect the patriarchal and lineal structure of society in the sense that the Qing Emperor was recognized as *huangdi* among a multitude of lords. The language used in *Binli* suggests that foreign lords, who have properly engaged in the discourse of *li*, were regarded and treated like kin. The discursive formation of a kinship between the Qing Empire and outer regions is evident in the usage of *qin* in the *Comprehensive Rites of the Great Qing*; in this context, it means "to cherish" or "bring close like kin." As the central aim of *Binli*, the Emperor must demonstrate his imperial virtue in his ability to bring close and encompass other centres of power. The image and inscription of the *kesi* embodies the ideology of *li* in China's foreign relations in two ways. Firstly, the image

demonstrated through the Qianlong Emperor's "Ten Victorious Campaigns" which included pacifying various rebellions by different ethnic groups in the following regions: the Jinchuan tribe in Sichuan (1747-1749 and 1771-1776), the Dzungar Mongols in northwest Xinjiang (1758-59), Taiwan (1787-88), Burma (1766-1770), Vietnam (1788-89) and the Nepalese in southern Tibet (1790-1792). According to Mote, after the victorious campaigns, the Qianlong Emperor would receive the tribute of the conquered tribes.

⁵⁸ Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 7.

celebrates the British Embassy whose power is demonstrated through mobility and extravagant gift giving. Secondly, the inscription refers to the performative aspect of *li*: the Emperor's act of giving more in return. Thus, ideologically, the empire formed political relationships with outer regions by means of attraction, cherishment, and kindness. During Qianlong's reign, power and ethnicity were central issues to domestic politics. By demonstrating the adaptability of imperial power through the *kesi* of the British Embassy, the Qianlong Emperor was able to exercise influence over the domestic sentiments towards the ruling elite.

3 **The Limits of Influence: Power as Mobility Encounters Power as Sedentariness**

On September 14th 1793, the Qianlong Emperor received George Macartney in the summer capital of Chengde.⁵⁹ During the Qing Dynasty, three capitals were established to accommodate the diverse ethnic groups that were unified under one empire: the Manchus, Mongols, Tibetans, Uighurs, and Han Chinese. Chengde served as the location for the birthday celebration of all Qing Emperors.⁶⁰ Due to the timing of Britain's request to meet, the Qianlong Emperor was under the impression that the British Embassy intended to pay honor to him on his eighty-second birthday.⁶¹ In preparation for the Emperor's birthday, the imperial tent was centered in Wanshu Yuan (Garden of Tenthousand Tress) in accordance with the cosmology of *li*. The imperial tent was distinguished from the hundreds of other tents which housed court officials (including members of the Six Boards) by its yellow color and fenced enclosure. The separation of the imperial tent from the other tents emulated the spatial arrangement of the Qing capitals which were divided into an inner city and an outer city.⁶² Within this setting, the Qianlong Emperor's sedentary power was made manifest through the installment of the throne under the imperial tent, which faced south. On the day of the ceremony, the court officials and other tributaries performed the *koutou* to demonstrate deep respect for the Emperor upon the arrival of the imperial procession. The British Embassy, however, perceived the *koutou* as an act of subjugation and supposedly rejected the performance. In

⁶⁰ Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 19.

⁶¹ Bickers, *Ritual & Diplomacy*, 131.

⁶² Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 21

Macartney's journal, he claimed to have conducted himself in the manner of British court decorum.⁶³ Even before both parties had the opportunity to exchange gifts, grave misunderstandings had already occurred in regards to the significance in the timing of the meeting and what was considered proper bodily conduct.

During his long duration in China, the extent of Macartney's preparations indicates a strong desire to impress the Qianlong Emperor while demonstrating the economic and technological power of Britain. The embassy's gifts comprised of an impressive collection of objects that propagated Britain's scientific exploration of the globe. These included a planetarium, an orrery, telescopes clocks and maps. According to the embassy's records, Macartney had orchestrated a parade of wagons, pulled by two-hundred horses and accompanied by three-thousand servants.⁶⁴ The embassy's impressive display of wealth and mobility reflects Britain's sense of superiority as a rising colonial power among its European competitors. However, the purpose of Macartney's mission was to present Britain as an equal sovereign to the Qing Empire hence Macartney's claim of refusing the *koutou*. The ambassador's eagerness to please the Emperor indicates that China was regarded highly before the meeting of 1793 and that Britain's request to establish diplomacy was urgent.

Despite the careful preparations and lavish display of gifts on Britain's part, the Qianlong Emperor declined Britain's request to inaugurate diplomacy. In Chengde, Macartney presented the Qianlong Emperor with a jewel-incrusted box bearing a letter

⁶³ Audrey Singer, *The Lion and the Dragon: The Story of the First British Embassy to the Court of the Emperor Qianlong in Peking 1792-1794* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1992), 64.

⁶⁴ Jonathan D. Spence, "China and the Eighteenth Century World." In *The Search for Modern China*, 117 – 36, New York: Norton, 1990), 132.

from King George III. The message was a formal request to establish diplomatic relations with China. In return, the Qianlong Emperor gave Macartney three scepters (*ruyi*): one in white agate for the King of Britain and two in jade for the ambassador and Sir George Staunton.⁶⁵ In this context, jade not only embodied the imperial virtue of *qin* but it becomes an auspicious object that projects the future peace and prosperity between Britain and China. Unaware of the symbolic value behind the scepters, Macartney would later note in his journal that the gifts he received did not seem to be of great material value.⁶⁶

The Qianlong Emperor was also unable to find significance in Macartney's gifts. In an edict responding to the letter from King George III, the Emperor wrote, "We have never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country's manufactures."⁶⁷ By this he meant that the Qing court had already engaged in the epistemological and technological exchange of navigational technology in the early eighteenth century from the visitation of other European embassies and the Jesuit missionaries.⁶⁸ However, in both English and Chinese language historical studies, the Emperor's comment has been interpreted as a fatal decision made out of pure ignorance, which consequently lead to China's humiliating defeat in the two Opium Wars of the nineteenth century.⁶⁹ I have already demonstrated that in twentieth-century scholarship, the meeting in 1793 became entangled in the domestic and international discourse of China's struggle to modernize due to the Qing court's inability to acknowledge British

⁶⁵ Sir George Leonard Staunton was named the Secretary of the British Embassy in 1793. He was in charge of producing the official account of the expedition after the embassy's return to Britain.

⁶⁶ Crymner-Byng, *An Embassy to China*, 190.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, x.

⁶⁸ Paola Demattè, "From Astronomy to Heaven: Jesuit Science and the Conversion of China." *China on Paper*. Ed. Marcia Reed and Paola Demattè. (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2007), 53.

⁶⁹ Bickers, *Ritual and Diplomacy*, ii.

imperialism. Diverging from past interpretations, I will analyze the event as the limitations of two spheres of influence: China's power as sedentariness and Britain's power as mobility. This chapter will examine the textual and pictorial sources from both British and Qing renditions of the event to investigate how each system of power was formulated and legitimized through representation.

The *kesi* displays two incommensurable imperial formations in the juxtaposition of the travelling embassy and the imperial palace. In the context of China's foreign relations, the *kesi* manifests the power structuring process of *li* by emphasizing the contingent relationship between the Qianlong Emperor and the British Embassy on the governing level of foreign relations. Floating across the bottom of the image, the British are shown travelling to the imperial palace with an extravagant array of *gong* or tribute (**Figure 2**). For Britain, power as mobility was realized through travel, expansion and maritime technology. On the other hand, power as sedentariness refers to the Emperor's display of enthroned power in the performativity of *li*. In dealing with foreign relations, the Emperor would receive obeisance from his throne as a way to demonstrate his ability to mobilize other centers of power.

It is important to understand that sedentary power describes a specific mode of imperial formation that was made manifest in the context of Qing foreign relations. The term should not be taken to generalize the nature of imperial power in the Qing Dynasty. It cannot be forgotten that the Manchurians were once a semi-nomadic tribe, a heritage to which both Kangxi and Qianlong tried to preserve and negotiate in a cultural arena that was predominantly Han Chinese. The season and location of the tributary ceremony in Chengde and the erection of imperial tents have symbolic ties to the former semi-

nomadic lifestyle of the Manchurians. According to Rawski, Chengde is situated near the imperial preserve Mulan which is a Manchurian term that literally means “to call to deer.” It refers to the Manchu method of hunting deer by imitating the mating call of the stag.⁷⁰ The Kangxi Emperor used to hunt in the region every autumn and the practice was continued by the Qianlong Emperor. Although the *kesi* emphasizes Qing imperial formation as sedentary, the symbolic location of Chengde evokes the duality of the Manchurian Emperor’s power as both sedentary and mobile. Thus, Qianlong’s choice to commission a work which demonstrated his sedentary power through the palace can be understood as a strategic maneuver to specifically counter British imperialism through the cosmological power formation of *li* in foreign relations.

In the Chinese language, there are several expressions for sedentary power which include *sheng baozuo* (ascending the precious throne) and *sheng zuo* (mounting the throne). According to Rawski, *ji huangwei* or “going into imperial position” was commonly used after 1722 to describe the position of the Emperor when he received tributes.⁷¹ All these terms, particularly the last, describes the throne as the site of imperial power to which the Emperor must activate through performance. The architectural form in the background of the *kesi* is the Taihedian (The Forbidden City) and alludes to the Emperor’s sedentary power (**Figure 3**). Rawski states, “By the late imperial period, the throne in the Taihedian was integrated into a complex cosmology. The term for the palace, Zijincheng, linked it to the *ziwei*, the cluster of stars surrounding the centre of Heaven, the pole star. When the Emperor, the ‘pole star’ of the earthly realm, faced south (as does the star) and assumed the ruling position in the secular

⁷⁰ Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 19.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 205.

counterpart to the centre of Heaven, he thus drew on the symbolic capital of the Chinese cosmological system to reinforce his legitimacy.”⁷² By seating the throne and facing south, the Emperor engages in a cosmology which grants him the privilege of instructing and awarding regions beyond his domain. His enthroned position under the imperial tent of Chengde is symbolically patterned after his ruling position in Taihedian.⁷³

When the Emperor assumes *ji huangwei*, he embodies the role of the exemplary subject whose prerogative becomes the encompassment of *siyi* or the four cardinal directions. His performativity of *li* in foreign relations becomes a form of influence whereby affect is achieved by the self-cultivation of imperial virtue. Seating the throne and facing south is a highly privileged action that is exclusive to the Emperor of China and serves to establish his unique role as the mediator between Heaven and Earth.⁷⁴ The imperial position does not, however, signify absolute power. Firstly, *li* defines imperial power as an act of privilege and humility. The Emperor must demonstrate humility by performing *koutou* and making offerings to Heaven. When receiving foreign lords, he wears a simple, yellow, court robe lacking in embellishment. Secondly, sedentary power implicates the image of a ruler who “reigns by inaction.”⁷⁵ The sedentary rule by inaction embodies the power struggle between the Emperor and the civil service bureaucracy during the Qing Dynasty. Susan Naquin states that, by Qianlong’s reign, Qing governance was a “sophisticated bureaucratic power with limits.”⁷⁶

⁷² Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 203-204.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁷⁴ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 123.

⁷⁵ Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 207.

⁷⁶ Naquin and Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 7.

In the eighteenth century, economic growth produced a wealthy class of educated elites which mostly consisted of the Han Chinese. To control the growing number of Han Chinese entering bureaucratic positions through civil examination, the Qianlong Emperor implemented the diarchy system. Each governmental position had dual appointments with a Manchu official overseeing a Chinese official. As Naquin notes, during Qianlong's reign, the governing system became multi-layered, more complex in structure and administrative processes entailed a greater amount of paperwork.⁷⁷ As a result the Emperor became highly dependent on the assistance of elites, who were organized into Six Boards, for inquiries regarding domestic and international affairs. The Board of Rites who regulated *Wuli* (The Five Imperial Rites) held the power to criticize the Emperor's abidance to imperial virtue. The Emperor's sedentary power in foreign relations became salient to projecting the image of a cohesive ruling elite for the multiethnic populace at large.

Under the ideology of *li*, the purpose of *Binli* is to influence other centers of power to accept and become apart of the moral and hierarchical code of the Qing Empire.⁷⁸ Foreign lords, particularly in Asia, sought to emulate Chinese imperial virtue by performing *koutou* and presenting *gong* to the Emperor during special occasions. As Hevia explains, *Binli* is a patterning and centering discourse that operates on micro- and macrocosmic levels.⁷⁹ In the Qing Dynasty, order, stability and prosperity were partially realized through the ideology of *li* in both domestic and international relations. However, the Emperor's sedentary power is limited due to the complexity and sophistication of the

⁷⁷ Naquin and Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 8.

⁷⁸ Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 2.

⁷⁹ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 121.

Qing bureaucratic system. In foreign relations, the Emperor's performativity as the exemplary subject is only affective to those who understand and genuinely accept the Qing Empire's political ideology. In *Binli*, the text specifically states that only foreign peoples with genuine intentions are formally invited to participate in *li*. Such as the case with the British Embassy, the intentionality of the foreign peoples cannot be clearly deciphered by simply witnessing their actions.

The main purpose of the Macartney mission, as outlined by Henry Dundas (Home Secretary of the William Pitt's administration) was to: establish a resident British Minister in the Qing court, extend British trading in China by opening new ports, and create new markets in China for British produce.⁸⁰ To ensure that these objectives were met, Macartney was to make a favourable impression on the Qianlong Emperor by conducting himself in the manner of British court decorum and displaying England's power of mobility through the nature of the gifts. The embassy's strategy was to establish diplomacy and equality between the two sovereign countries before negotiating commercial terms.⁸¹ The Macartney mission marks the beginning of what Lydia Liu defines as two related forms of colonial circulation in East Asia: the spread of international law and the modern global market.⁸² However, during Qianlong's reign, global economics had little relevance to the empire's complex domestic politics which included: subduing the animosity between Han Chinese and Manchus, suppressing insurgencies in regions within and around the empire, and maneuvering within the increasingly complex bureaucratic system.

⁸⁰ Cranmer-Byng, *An Embassy to China*, vi.

⁸¹ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 60.

⁸² Liu, *Tokens of Exchange*, 7.

However, the Qing Empire's domestic affairs were unknown to the world at large due to the Emperor's strict regulation on foreign trade and travel within China. The British Crown's lack of knowledge in this respect posed a potential problem to the nation's economic endeavors to expand trade. Thus, aside from diplomatic purposes, the Crown ordered the embassy to gather information on China's customs, economy, political structure, society, infrastructure, and military defenses.⁸³ The embassy recorded their observations in the form of journal writing, the most notable source today would be Macartney's narrative of the journey. Britain's intentions to establish equality with China was also captured in illustrations by William Alexander who was hired as a draughtsman to accompany the embassy. Alexander produced as many as ninety-six drawings which were later published in a book entitled *The Costume of China* (1805). In his critical analysis of Macartney's journal, Hevia argues that the ambassador narrated his experience in China through the "naturalist gaze" which refers to the eye of the "disinterested" observer who sought to maintain distance from the object of study.⁸⁴ In other words, the naturalist gaze involved employing the scientific method in describing one's empirical experience of the "natural landscape" and "social world of other peoples."⁸⁵

However, as one can see from an excerpt in his journal, the ambassador's description of China at times is influenced by his naïve fantasies of the Orient. The following entry describes the scene in Tianjin where the British gifts were unloaded by Qing court officials: "...several dwarfs or little men not twelve inches high... an

⁸³ Cranmer-Byng, *An Embassy to China*, vi.

⁸⁴ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 189.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

elephant not larger than a cat, and a horse the size of a mouse; a singing bird as big as a hen, that feeds on charcoal, and devours usually fifty pounds a day; and last, an enchanted pillow, on which whoever lays his head immediately falls asleep, and if he dreams of Canton, Formosa, or Europe, is instantly transported thither without the fatigue of travel.”⁸⁶ Macartney’s description resembles the imagining of a whimsical and idyllic China that was present in the motifs of Chinoiserie in Europe. Chinoiserie was a style exoticizing the Far East to appeal to the Rococo taste for “lightness and fancy.”⁸⁷ The motifs of the Far East, which would be found in tea sets, decorative paintings or even wallpaper, was a blend of typified scenes from India, Japan and China. Before the eighteenth century, images of Oriental gardens and pagodas were widely circulated in Europe due to the excessive consumption of Chinoiserie. Although journalistic accounts of the event in 1793 by members of the embassy were thought to contain new knowledge about Chinese customs, the textual and visual materials only served to reflect popular European sentiments towards China in the late eighteenth century. As Robert A. Bickers states, “Like all travel writing, the literary legacy of the embassy is of course only a record of prior expectations and contemporary accepted wisdom about China.”⁸⁸

According to P.J. Marshal, Britain's contribution to the European economy of information pertaining to Chinese customs was marginal during the eighteenth century.⁸⁹ The English only began to circulate a wealth of first-hand information about China in Europe after the return of the British mission. Before the eighteenth century, knowledge of Chinese customs was limited to European observations of court life by Spanish,

⁸⁶ Cranmer-Byng, *An Embassy to China*, 114.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁸⁸ Bickers, *Ritual & Diplomacy*, 11.

⁸⁹ Bickers, *Ritual & Diplomacy*, 12.

Portuguese and French Jesuit missionaries.⁹⁰ The Jesuits held Chinese culture in high regards due to the similarities that they had perceived between Christianity and Confucian moral principles.⁹¹ Before the mid-eighteenth century, China was considered the model of civilization by many European countries. By the time the embassy was dispatched, Europe's favorability of Chinese culture and motifs was dying out with the onslaught of the French Revolution (1789-1799) which brought radical sociopolitical change to France and Europe. Chinese civilization was regarded as backwards in a context where hierarchy and tradition were rejected under Enlightenment principles in Europe. Marshal states, "Much of the vogue for an enlightened China in an earlier period depended on the polemical uses to which it could be put, above all by Voltaire, as a counter example to political and ecclesiastical obscurantism in contemporary France."⁹² In his study of British and Chinese relations in the eighteenth century, Marshal goes onto argue that the English had less need for counter examples of society since their interest in China had been strictly for commercial reasons.⁹³ Due to the limited flow of information between China and Britain, the embassy's understanding of Chinese customs had been largely influenced by popular imagery and beliefs in Europe.

Macartney's perception of China is best embodied in his costume which was influenced by the frivol and exotic Rococo-inspired notion of the Far East (**Figure 6**). The ambassador was splendidly dressed in what he considered appropriate adornment for "oriental" customs: "a violet, velvet coat pinned with a diamond badge, topped with a hat

⁹⁰ Naquin and Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 9.

⁹¹ Julia Ching, "Truth and Ideology: The Confucian Way (Tao) and Its Transmission (Tao-T'ung)." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974), 375.

⁹² Bickers, *Ritual & Diplomacy*, 15.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

of enormous white plumes.”⁹⁴ The ambassador’s costume is the first sign of his misunderstanding of China’s practice of foreign relations. As described in *Binli*, the performance of the *koutou* and the presentation of *gong* are supposed to be acts of humility which emulate the Emperor’s imperial virtue. In receiving tributes, the Emperor must display himself modestly by wearing plain court robes with little embellishment. Thus, Macartney’s exhibition of excess in his attire would be considered pretentious and highly inappropriate for *Binli*. Instead, the costume came to represent the ambassador’s desire to elevate Britain’s position in the eyes of the Chinese Emperor.

Britain became the world’s dominant imperial power in the latter half of the eighteenth century.⁹⁵ In 1757, Britain defeated the French in Calcutta which allowed them to gain control over all of northeast India. Such a victory meant lucrative trading in India with potential access to China through Tibet. Additionally, the Seven Years’ War in 1762 marked the victory of the British over the French and the Spanish in Europe, America and India. All these events solidified Britain as a powerful force among its European rivalries. Thus, Britain’s power as mobility was formed as a result of the nation’s competition for colonial power across the globe. However, towards the late eighteenth century, Britain lost the Thirteen Colonies in the American War of Independence in 1783. The devastating defeat instigated the British Crown to redirect its efforts in Asia.⁹⁶ The Crown’s efforts included regulating the tea trade directly from China as opposed to exporting the highly-sought-after product to Britain via the East

⁹⁴ Singer, *The Lion and the Dragon*, 63.

⁹⁵ Mote, “China’s Legacy in a Changing World,” 960.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 961-62.

India Company.⁹⁷ Due to the Qing Empire's tight management of its internal economy, trade within China was restricted to and conducted in Canton (Guangzhou). The British Embassy was thus dispatched in 1793 to expand trade in China and represents the Crown's effort to salvage Britain's imperial and economic power. Macartney's strategy for inaugurating diplomacy was to negotiate power relations with the Emperor so that Britain will be deemed as an equal sovereign to China. The ambassador's negotiation for equal standing at the ceremony is reflected in the visual imagery produced by the embassy's draftsman.

The watercolour sketch by William Alexander is a reconstruction of the scene in the tent at the very moment when Macartney hands the Qianlong Emperor the gift from King George III (**Figure 7**). The Qianlong Emperor is depicted on his throne and surrounded by high court officials while the ambassador is shown kneeling on one knee to present the gift. Not only does the drawing emphasize the ambassador's conduct in British decorum, the figure of Macartney and his extravagant plumed hat are equal in height to the Emperor. The composition of the image thus reflects the ambassador's desire to establish Britain as an equal power to the Qing Empire (**Figure 8**). Although the image appears to be a true-to-life depiction of the event, it is worth noting that artists were banned from directly recording the proceedings in *Binli*.⁹⁸ Alexander must have illustrated the scene from Macartney's account of the meeting. In a journal entry, Macartney wrote:

⁹⁷ Mote, "China's Legacy in a Changing World," 961.

⁹⁸ Rawski, *The Last Emperors*, 21.

I came to the entrance of the tent and, holding in both my hands a large gold box enriched with diamonds in which was enclosed the King's letter. I walked deliberately up and, ascending the side steps of the throne, delivered it into the Emperor's own hands who, having received it, passed it on to the minister by whom it was placed on the cushion.⁹⁹

What is crucial here is that both the watercolour sketch and Macartney's journalistic account would have been impossible in the Qing court due to the strict regulations and security measures taken to protect the Emperor. Macartney would not be able to get close enough to hand the bejeweled box directly into the Emperor's hand, let alone step on the base of the Emperor's throne. Even the Emperor's personal court artist Giuseppe Castiglione has depicted the arrival of the imperial procession in Chengde from an aerial perspective which barely shows the opening of the tent.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, *zhigong tu* imagery never depicts the moment of gift exchange; but rather the envoy's journey to the Qing Empire. Alexander must have rendered the scene from Macartney's description of the meeting in his journal as opposed to direct observation.

Apparent from visual documentation, Britain's presence in China in the late eighteenth century is at best described as an imagined colonialism whereby dominance was achieved through the representational means of travel writing and illustration.¹⁰¹ By 1790s, Bickers argued that the trajectory of Orientalism in Europe had developed towards an inclination to sinophobia from sinophilia. The materials that were produced by the British Embassy are reflections of this perceptual shift. In particular, Alexander's depiction of the meeting emphasizes the desired result of establishing equality between

⁹⁹ Cranmer-Byng ed., *An Embassy to China*, 65.

¹⁰⁰ Cécile Beurdeley and Michel Beurdeley, *Giuseppe Castiglione: A Jesuit Painter at the Court of the Chinese Emperors*. Translated by Michael Bullock (Rutland: Tuttle Co., 1971), 12.

¹⁰¹ Edward S. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Random House Inc., 1994), 21.

China and Britain. Upon returning to Britain, the embassy's sources were later employed to affirm the growing belief that China was deficient in governmental and scientific achievement.¹⁰² It was not so much that the visual and textual material provided empirical proof of China's deficiencies; but rather such depictions and interpretations of the event were informed by popular beliefs about China that were circulating between European countries. Contributing to these popular beliefs, the Qianlong Emperor's refusal of Britain's requests was understood as the result of the Qing Empire's backwardness and isolation. The problem with such an interpretation is that the failure of the negotiation in 1793 is attributed to one side rather than a series of circumstances that arose in both China and Britain. By contextualizing two systems of imperial formation and the way in which they are asserted in visual imagery, the failed negotiation of 1793 can be better understood as the limitations of the power of sedentariness and the power of mobility. While Qing political ideology was limited to those who understood the principles of *li*, Britain's attempt to negotiate equal sovereignty could not be accommodated within the hierarchical cosmology. The Qianlong Emperor's decision to dismiss Britain's inauguration of diplomacy was not based on ignorance, but rather on the basis that economic law had no perceivable relevance to the domestic politics of the Qing Empire in the late eighteenth century.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Bickers, *Ritual & Diplomacy*, 11.

¹⁰³ Naquin and Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 37.

4 Oblique Criticality: The Qianlong Emperor's Negotiation with Britain

In order to develop an alternative theoretical framework for the *kesi*, it is important to understand the strategies of communication in specific historical and cultural contexts as well as the advantages and stakes that are involved in the deliverance of such speech acts. François Jullien's theory of language, meaning and aesthetics in Chinese literature provides a departure point for studying the way in which visual imagery can embody the operative underpinnings of linguistic and cultural contexts. Through a comparative study between Chinese and Western political analysis and military strategy, Jullien argues that detour, the tactic of being indirect or inexplicit, allows the Chinese subject to exercise subversion through discretion.¹⁰⁴ Indirectness defers the conveyer's intentionality thus safeguarding his or her position. Detour places the reader or viewer at a disadvantage as they meander and lose their way in the infinite games of manipulation.¹⁰⁵ In a literary analysis of Chinese rhetoric, Jullien's theory shows how diametrically opposed strategies – detour and access - are in fact mutually constitutive and can produce varied results outside of their dialectic relationship. By moving “as far as possible from *logos*” to explore the depth of difference, Jullien argues, it is not the peculiarity of Chinese culture that makes it different from the West but the strategic foregrounding of obliqueness in the method of Chinese conversational language:

Just as strategic potential never ceases to be transformed by alternation, the aesthetic potential continuously renews itself by a variation between presence and evanescence,

¹⁰⁴ François Jullien, *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece*. Translated by Sophie Hawkes (New York: Urzone Inc., 2000), 52.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

manifestation and retreat... The basic principle of aesthetics in China, in both painting and poetry, is for the meaning, the pleasure, “not to exhaust itself at first glance” but to develop endlessly.¹⁰⁶

Maneuvering within this fashion the Emperor was able to express his discontent of the British Embassy through the political ideology of *li*. Direct criticism of a foreign envoy would suggest that the Emperor failed to demonstrate imperial virtue through his vital role of encompassing other powers within his reign. The Qianlong Emperor’s legitimacy as *huangdi* within a complex cosmology would be at stake. For the Qing Dynasty in the eighteenth century, the reception of tributes, particularly from European countries, serves to affirm the Emperor’s prestige and influential power. However, Macartney’s display of gifts and his additional requests to open trade jeopardizes the cosmological order that is defined by *li*. Strategically, the Qianlong Emperor must exercise caution in announcing his impressions of the British Embassy in order to avoid criticism from the Board of Rites and maintain stability at higher levels of Qing bureaucracy. The *kesi* exhibits what I refer to as the Emperor’s *oblique criticality* of British imperialism. This chapter will demonstrate the way in which disapproval and refusal are made manifest in an image that conveys the political ideology of *li*.

The *kesi* of the Macartney mission is exceptional in its size, material and detail which suggest that the arrival of the first British Embassy was as an important event to the Qing court. The work is approximately five feet wide and three feet ten inches high. The image channels the conventions of the *zhigong tu* genre which is the official documentation of tributary envoys in China. *Zhigong tu* typically includes an illustration and a textual description of the customs, clothing, produce and region of the foreign

¹⁰⁶ Jullien, *Detour and Access*, 53.

peoples. The genre has been produced in a variety of mediums such as woodblock print, silk, and in some earlier examples it has been made into wall murals. By the Qing Dynasty, the genre became a means of educating court officials on “the habits and customs of various non-Han ethnic groups” so that the officialdom would be able to govern these groups more effectively.¹⁰⁷ The Qianlong Emperor commissioned the *Huang Qing Zhigong Tu* in 1751 as a volume in the medium of woodblock print so that the work can be broadly circulated among the members of his court. Each page contained a full-bodied portrait of a male or female from each region who are depicted performing day-to-day activities. The illustrations were based on direct observation from the visitation of foreign lords as well as the court’s travels aboard and were aimed at depicting the various ethnic groups accurately. Interestingly, the ordering of the pages in the volume emulates the patterning and centering discourse of *li*. The volume was organized according to geography and the pages progressed towards the central region of the Qing Empire. Foreign peoples appeared in the first chapter of volume and the pages proceeded systematically from outer to inner regions and east to west. The various ethnic groups that were ruled by the Qing Empire came last in the volume. Thus, the commonality in the various types of *zhigong tu* imagery is the underlying projection of Qing political ideology in foreign relations.

The preciousness of silk, which is the material used in the *zhigong tu* of the British Embassy, also signifies the political ideology of *li*. The material of the *kesi* suggests that it was used as an imperial showcase piece much like the *Xie Sui* (1761-

¹⁰⁷ Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 5

1775).¹⁰⁸ *Kesi*, in its simplistic translation of “cut silk,” is the name given to Chinese silk tapestry. It is revered for its visual illusion of individually cut threads made of unblended color which together form pictorial designs. Commonly used for auspicious pictures, palace decorations, recording important events and internal diplomatic gifts, *kesi* has irrevocable cultural, political and economic signification in China.¹⁰⁹ Differing from the production of conventional tapestries which requires the use of a loom, *kesi* is made in a woven structure that allows the weaver to create images simultaneously in the construction process.¹¹⁰ The weaving technique thus requires a high level of skill and dexterity. *Kesi* is a desirable material as it allows designs to become embedded into the surface, resulting in a more elegant and durable fabric. Additionally, the *si* character in *kesi* is the Chinese word for silk. Silk alone has been a lucrative trade material within and outside of China. With the establishment of the silk trade during the Han Dynasty, the material represents China’s wealth, influence and global connectivity in extending relations through trans-continental networking. As a common medium for depicting court affairs, *kesi* often propagated the ideology of *li* and granted prestige to the patron. Thus the Qianlong Emperor, who commissioned the *kesi* and composed the poem, sought to materialize imperial virtual. Yet the Emperor’s oblique criticality of the British Embassy also suggests that he sensed that the event of 1793 would have significant political implications for the Qing Empire.

¹⁰⁸ The *Xie Sui* is an example of the *zhigong tu* genre that was made into four handscrolls. Each image includes a full-bodied portrait of a man and a woman engaged in day-to-day activities. The accompanying text is written in both classical Chinese and Manchu and describes the customs and livelihood of each region. In the illustration of the foreign peoples, the costumes and objects which are unique to each region are emphasized. Objects included an artifact, a tool, or a weapon.

¹⁰⁹ Schuyler van R. Cammann, “Notes on the Origin of Chinese Kesi Tapestry,” *Orientalism* 20 (1989), 74.

¹¹⁰ Irene Emery, *The Primary Structures of Fabrics: an Illustrated Classification* (Washington: The Textile Museum, 1966), 78-79.

The inscription and image of the Macartney *kesi* embodies the moral and performative aspects of *li*. As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, the depiction of the imperial palace in the *kesi* alludes to the Emperor's sedentary power or *ji huangwei* (**Figure 3**). The physical structure of the Taihedian in the Peking (Beijing) capital is aligned with a cluster of northern stars that signify Heaven. The throne is installed to face south which evokes the position of the polar star symbolizing the earthly realm. Thus, imperial power in the Qing Empire is largely performative in the sense that it is activated when the Emperor seats the throne and faces south, granting him the privilege to reorient *siyi*. In this manner, the Emperor engages other participants in a complex cosmology and gives visibility and form to the power structuring process of *li*. Even though the meeting in 1793 took place under the imperial tent and away from the capital of Peking where Taihedian is located, the Emperor resumes the position of seating and facing south when receiving tributes.

As a further demonstration of imperial virtue, the *kesi's* inscription shows that the Emperor's position is one of privilege and humility. The inscription is a poem personally composed by the Qianlong Emperor who thought of himself as an adept poet and calligrapher (**Figure 5**).¹¹¹ The text is read from right to left and translated as the following:

The Emperor composed a poem recording the fact that the King of the red-haired English sent his envoy, Macartney, and others, who arrived bearing a state message and tribute.

Formerly Portugal presented tribute;

¹¹¹ Mote, *Imperial China*, 913.

Now England is paying homage.
They have out-travelled Shu Hai and Heng Zhang;
My Ancestor's merit and virtue must have reached their distant shores.
Curios and the boasted ingenuity of their devices I prize not.
Though what they bring is meagre, yet,
In my kindness to men from afar I make generous return,
Wanting to preserve the prosperity and peace of my domain.¹¹²

At the beginning of the poem the Emperor announces Portugal's visit as a way to denote the vast influence of his predecessors. Between the mid seventeenth to mid eighteenth century, the Qing court had received visits from the following European countries: Holland (1653), Italy (1725), and Portugal (1690 and 1727).¹¹³ In the *Huang Qing Zhigong tu*, Europeans were referred to as the "peoples of the Western Oceans."¹¹⁴ The term describes the geographic orientation and extreme disparateness of European countries in relation to China. To the Qing court, Portugal is considered an exemplar among European tributaries since they had paid tribute twice. The poem's reference to Portugal's visit evokes both the Emperor's admiration of Europe's power as mobility and, indirectly, his derisiveness of the British embassy. As a compositional strategy, the Emperor underhandedly presents the relationship between an exemplar (Portugal) and non-exemplar (Britain). While other European countries had paid tribute nearly seventy-years prior, the arrival of the British Embassy in 1793 would be the first. The beginning lines of the poem discretely points to the tardiness of Britain's arrival and thus undermines the temporal significance of the embassy to the Qing Empire. This sets the

¹¹² This is a literal translation of the *kesi*'s inscription that is found in the cover insert of Cramner-Byng's *An Embassy to China: Lord Macartney's Journal 1793-4*. The following analysis of the text attempts to provide a theoretical and historical context for the various phrases of the Emperor's poem. The numbering of each line in the poem corresponds to the order of the inscription on the *kesi* not the English translation. Please note that in Chinese classical scripts, the letters are read from the right to left. Therefore, the first line would be the furthest line to the right.

¹¹³ Fairbank and Teng, *Ch'ing Administration*, 184.

¹¹⁴ *Da Qing tongli* (Comprehensive rites of the Great Qing) (DQTL) (Peking: Palace Edition, 1883).

tone for the Emperor's oblique criticality of British imperialism which is revealed and concealed throughout the image and poem.

In the Qianlong Emperor's poetic elicitation of *li*, he expresses humility by downplaying China's explorative accomplishments to praise Britain's maritime prowess. In the fourth line, the Emperor references Shu Hai and Heng Zhang who are legendary figures in Ancient China.¹¹⁵ They were thought to have existed four thousand years ago and were greatly admired for their expertise in charting land through world travel.¹¹⁶ In stating that the British Embassy has "out-travelled" China's great legendary figures, the Emperor has shown deep appreciation for Britain's arrival. However, the citation of China's legendary figures, who charted the world long before the British (or Europe for that matter), can also be read as an indirect scoff towards Britain's power as mobility. The nuances of poetic annunciation become more apparent when examined in relation to the image. Although the travelling embassy is the focal point of the *kesi*, the depiction of Britain's power as mobility also serves to validate the Qianlong Emperor's ability to affect, attract and bring close other regions.

The affirmation of Qing imperial power is further demonstrated in the fifth and sixth line of the poem. The Emperor mentions his ancestors as a way to annunciate the imperial virtue of ruling by heredity.¹¹⁷ By referring to his lineage, the Emperor further validates his privileged position of *ji huangwei* which grants him the prerogative to encompass *siyi* from a sedentary position. The second last line reiterates *li* as a crucial

¹¹⁵ 暨亥橫章輪近步

¹¹⁶ Michael Loewe, *Faith, Myth, and Reason in Han China* (Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company), 2005, 57.

¹¹⁷ 祖功宗德遠遙瀛

aspect of displaying imperial virtue in *Binli*: “In my kindness to men from afar I make generous return.”¹¹⁸ The Emperor bestows prestige onto his entire empire by returning a gift of greater value. In this way, the detailed rendering of Britain’s elaborate gifts, which the Emperor will award with items of greater value, can thus be understood as the circuitous affirmation of the Emperor’s sedentary power. In this way, the *kesi* exemplifies the political ideology of *li* in that sedentary power, as both an act of humility and privilege, is indirectly demonstrated through the cherishment of the British Embassy.

Binli stipulates that the Emperor should be the exemplar of lesser lords, particularly in the elicitation of humility. In the sixth and seventh line of the poem, the Qianlong Emperor expresses his disapproval of the boastfulness and arrogance of the gifts from Britain.¹¹⁹ The most notable object depicted in the *kesi* is the planetarium which stands three times as high as the figures surrounding it (**Figure 4**). As part of the elaborate gifts presented to the Emperor by the embassy, the planetarium was made to distinguish the British Crown from the East Indian Company as a way to emphasize Britain’s diplomatic intentions over economic endeavors. To show the formality of the Crown, the planetarium was built from the finest materials and constructed with the most sophisticated technology. However, the excessive size and detail of the object points to the embassy’s misinformed assumption that the Qing court fancied the spectacle of an elaborate display. From surviving sketches and notes, the planetarium was “ostentatiously embellished with gilt and enamel, and festooned with pineapples and other

¹¹⁸ 懷遠薄來而厚往

¹¹⁹ 視如常卻心嘉篤
不貴異聽物詡精

decorations...”¹²⁰ Despite the fact that the object was made to represent the "utmost effort of astronomical science and mechanic art... ever made in Europe," its conception and execution, as noted by Hevia, reflects Europe's imagination of Oriental customs that is depicted in *Chinoiserie*. Additionally, the assembly of the object would take a month to complete and once assembled it cannot be moved or dismantled. The object's restraint after assembly can also symbolizes the intended permanency of Britain's presence in China.

It is unsurprising that the planetarium became a matter of contention for the Emperor due to the implications of its size and constructive methods. In August of 1793, the complexity of the planetarium resulted in many delays in its installation. This infuriated the Emperor who took great offense to the possibility that the object would not be ready for the ceremony honouring his birthday.¹²¹ Furthermore, under the rubric of *li*, the excessive size of the planetarium only served to portray Britain's pride and arrogance. In an attempt to solicit humility from Macartney prior to the ceremony, the Emperor ordered a guard to escort the ambassador to the Yuanming Gardens where Macartney would find the palace's mass collection of globes, telescopes and clocks, which were acquired from previous European embassies.¹²²

Moreover, it is possible that the circulation of navigational technology between China and Europe in the early 1700s, has prepared the Qianlong Emperor to be critically

¹²⁰ Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 78.

¹²¹ Bickers, *Ritual & Diplomacy*, 132.

¹²² Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar*, 169.

aware of the implications of the embassy's gifts and its ties to Western imperialism.¹²³ In the study of cartographic forms in the early Qing period, Laura Hostetler identifies the coexistence of old and new forms of representing geographic space in the imperial court:

Between 1708 and 1718 the Kangxi emperor (r. 1662-1722) commissioned a team of European Jesuit missionaries in his service to survey and map the extent of his empire. The resulting maps, which appeared in Chinese, Chinese and Manchu, and various European languages versions, were different from other contemporary Qing maps in that they were drawn to scale, and as such required no accompanying text detailing distances from one location to another. The Kangxi emperor's desire for 'a precise map which would unite all the parts of his empire in one glance' corresponded roughly with Peter the Great's mapping of Russia, French cartographic projects at home and in the New World, and early British colonial exploits in India. This convergence in mapping activity, techniques, and even in the network of specific historical figures involved, can best be explained as independent yet interrelated responses to global conditions similarly affecting these world powers.¹²⁴

Kangxi's engagement with navigational technology indicates that the Qing court was by no means isolated from the new technological developments in Europe and were even familiar with the potential political control that can be achieved through cartography. What is even more interesting is the fact that Qing rulers employed both traditional and new methods in projecting imperial power through the visual representation of the empire. It seems to me, the introduction of scaled mapping had little influence over the way in which Qing rulers perceived their position within the world. Rather, new methods in mapping assisted with the court's surveillance of the vast empire, as well it was a means of quantifying the empire's geographic conquests. The Qing court's collection of navigational instruments and appropriation of cartography would provide substantial grounds for Qianlong's suspicion of the planetarium.

¹²³ Paola Demattè, "From Astronomy to Heaven: Jesuit Science and the Conversion of China." In *China on Paper*. Ed. Marcia Reed and Paola Demattè. (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2007), 53.

¹²⁴ Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 4.

By contrast, Zhang Shunhong's paper "Historical Anachronism: The Qing Court's Perception of and Reaction to the Macartney Embassy" in 1993 criticizes Qianlong's suspicion and rejection of the British gifts. Zhang argues that the Emperor's treatment of the embassy "contributed to [the court's] failure to recognize the real importance of the embassy's scientific instruments."¹²⁵ In his interpretation of the Emperor's edict concerning the planetarium, Zhang affirms that Qianlong had expressed anxiety over the complexity of the planetarium and was concerned that the object was technologically superior to the globes in the Qing court. The reasoning behind Zhang's argument is that the Emperor's paranoia led him to increase surveillance over the construction of the planetarium. The emperor's instructions in this regard were documented in several edicts that were composed in the month before the event in 1793.¹²⁶ Although Zhang's argument raises interesting issues around the Emperor's reactions, the court's surveillance of the embassy can also be considered a common process to determine the intentionality of the foreign lord. After all in *Binli*, tributaries were required to present precious objects with the genuine intention of engaging in a hierarchal relationship with the Emperor of China. The court's instruction for foreign lords to acquire permission and undergo vigorous assessment was intended to determine the genuineness of the foreign lord. Furthermore, Qianlong would have regarded the planetarium as a larger and more frivolous version of the gifts he and his predecessors had already received from other European countries; not one which signifies alarming technological advancement. Such reasoning complies better with the Emperor's act of soliciting humility from the ambassador and his devaluation of Britain's gifts in the poem of the *kesi*.

¹²⁵ Bickers, *Ritual & Diplomacy*, 139.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 136-8.

The planetarium was a highly valued object for the British Embassy. As an image and an object, it represents colonial conquest through travel and mapping. Cartography gave visibility to the concepts of territory and borders, all of which were now quantifiable and calculable. In Mary Pratt's analysis of European expansionism in the eighteenth century, she theorizes the emergence of Europe's "planetary conscious" and defines it as the Eurocentric perceptual organization of the world that arose with the development of travel writing and natural history.¹²⁷ The planetarium, a scaled representation of the Earth, is the embodiment of planetary consciousness and symbolic of Britain's entitlement to control the flow of resources through the delineation of space. What is more, the embassy's visit in 1793 coincides with a general trend towards interior exploration as opposed to coastal charting in European territorial expansionism. Pratt argues that the "shift coincides with bourgeois forms of subjectivity and power, inauguration of a new territorial phase of capitalism propelled by searches for raw materials, attempt to extend coast trade inland, and national imperatives to seize overseas territory in order to prevent its being seized by rival European powers."¹²⁸ Thus the British Embassy becomes a part of the inward phase of territorial expansion in its attempt to claim extraterritorial commercial rights in China for the necessity of remaining competitive with its rivals: France and Spain. Interestingly, the permanency of the planetarium represents the desired outcome of Britain's infiltration and stay in China. In the meeting of 1793, the Qianlong Emperor was confronted with the issue of negotiating

¹²⁷ Mary Pratt, "Preface," In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 15-37 (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), 7.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 9.

British imperialism in his act of encompassing the power of mobility under the rubric of *li*.

The image of the planetarium, with its multiple significations for Britain and China, is the embodiment of the negotiation between the conflicting ideologies of two incommensurable power systems. The object signifies Britain's planetary consciousness, defined by the nation's entitlement to regulate the flow of resources through international trade laws and permanent residency. Britain's entitlement to enforce extraterritorial trade in China is motivated by the nation's desire to re-establish itself as an imperial force in the late eighteenth century. The power of mobility is thus asserted in the planetarium which becomes a visual representation of maritime prowess and cartographic knowledge. However, the material and cultural translation of the planetarium in the *kesi* also elicits the issue of Britain's misconduct under the ideology of *li*. As cited in the poem, the Emperor was not impressed with what he perceived as a boastful gift. In order to gain domestic confidence and remain in favour of the civil bureaucracy, it is essential for the Emperor to project the ideology of *li* and conceal the complications of encompassing Britain's power of mobility. These complications included soliciting humility from the ambassador and diverting the embassy's ulterior motives to open trade within his empire. Since the *kesi* follows the *zhigong tu* genre, the depiction of the planetarium also indirectly affirms the Emperor's power in giving more in return. As the focal point of the image, the object of excess challenges then emphasizes the Qing empire's ability reciprocate above and beyond.

The *kesi*'s image and poem attests to the Emperor's ability to attract, encompass and admonish foreign lords. The poem emphasizes the Emperor's appreciation of the

embassy's long journey while alluding to his virtuous role in influencing other centres to power to pay tribute. By portraying the journey of the British Embassy, the image illustrates the Emperor's purpose in *Binli* which is to mobilize peripheral regions and bring them in proximity to the central power. The *kesi* thus displays the Emperor's negotiation with Britain's power of mobility in that encompassment can only be possible if Macartney follows the exemplary moral code of the Qing Empire by demonstrating humility. In international relations, *li* structured Qing imperial power as a centering and patterning discourse whereby the Emperor of China was the exemplary, virtuous ruler whom foreign lords sought to emulate. Macartney's frivolous costume at the ceremony and the excessive display of wealth in gifts, made the Emperor question the virtue of British imperialism although they were intended to appeal to the court's tastes and a means to gain the favour of the Qing Empire. In the poem, Qianlong reprimands the embassy's arrogance: "Curios and the boasted ingenuity of their devices I prize not. Though what they bring is meager, yet."¹²⁹ The statement by the Qianlong Emperor is not an act of ignorance; but rather, it reflects the Emperor's prerogative in admonishing foreign powers. Although the Emperor had attempted to solicit humility from Macartney by showing him the palace's collection of scientific and navigational instruments, the ambassador's demand to expand trade in China, which reveals ulterior motives, gave Qianlong no choice but to reject Britain's request to inaugurate diplomacy altogether.

For the Qing Empire, the British mission of 1793 marked the end of *Binli* which had for so long upheld China's foreign relations. From the nineteenth century onwards, the British employed naval coercion to force China to open trade. Perhaps the *kesi* speaks

¹²⁹ 視如常卻心嘉篤不貴異聽物詡精

to the emperor's assessment of the inevitability of the events that were to unfold between Britain and China. The last line of the *kesi* is a statement of the Qianlong Emperor's position: "In my kindness to men from afar I make generous return, wanting to preserve the prosperity and peace of my domain."¹³⁰ During his reign, the Qianlong Emperor was more concerned with maintaining stability within his vast empire, which was challenged by the dispersal of power into local authority and the conflicts between the various ethnic groups within the Qing Empire.¹³¹ By encompassing and negotiating a foreign system of power in material form, the *kesi* manifested the imperial power of the Qianlong Emperor and his oblique criticality of British imperialism. Most of all, the Emperor's commission of the *kesi* represents his last capacity to maintain stability through *Binli*. Despite the Emperor's efforts, in the decades to follow, Britain upon return would not entertain the Qing Empire with extravagant gifts but force their way into the Emperor's domain with warships.

By unpacking the *kesi* under the rubric of *zhigong tu* and *li*, we are able to achieve a broader understanding of the meeting in 1793 which goes beyond the scope of China's confrontation with the "modern West." As a work commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor himself, the *kesi* epitomizes his awareness rather than ignorance of Britain's hidden agenda for inaugurating diplomatic relations. The commemoration of the event in the *kesi* demonstrates the strategies and nuances that were undertaken by the Emperor in the framework of *li*. Although the *kesi* manifests the Emperor's performativity of *li* in foreign relations, his oblique criticality of British imperialism is channelled into the conventions of the *zhigong tu* genre and becomes accessible through a close reading of

¹³⁰ 懷遠薄來而厚往衷深保泰以持盈

¹³¹ Mote, "Splendor and Degeneration," 912.

the compositional strategies in the image and poem. The *kesi* elicits the issue of the Emperor's encompassment of Britain's power of mobility under the ideology of *li* as a strategy for fostering the domestic confidence in the ruling elite. The contextualization of the *kesi* in China's discourse of foreign relations not only underscores the complex role of *li* in Qing domestic and international politics but it also provides an alternative perspective in the study of the meeting in 1793. By taking into account the Emperor's active engagement in diplomatic relations through the *kesi*, the failed negotiation between the Qianlong Emperor and George Macartney can be better understood as the limitations between two imperial formations which were impenetrable and incommensurable with one another at a particular interval in time. Under the alternative framework for accessing the meeting of 1793, the *kesi* of the British Embassy becomes a visual and material example of the way in which the continuum of *li* in China's foreign relations stalled the spread of British imperialism.

Illustrations



Figure 1
Anonymous
The Kesi of the British Embassy
Silk tapestry
177.8 cm x 116.8 cm
© National Maritime Museum



Figure 2
Anonymous
The Kesi of the British Embassy (Detail of bottom left)
Silk tapestry
© National Maritime Museum



Figure 3
Anonymous
The Kesi of the British Embassy (Detail of top centre)
Silk tapestry
© National Maritime Museum



Figure 4
Anonymous
The Kesi of the British Embassy (Detail of bottom right)
Silk tapestry
© National Maritime Museum

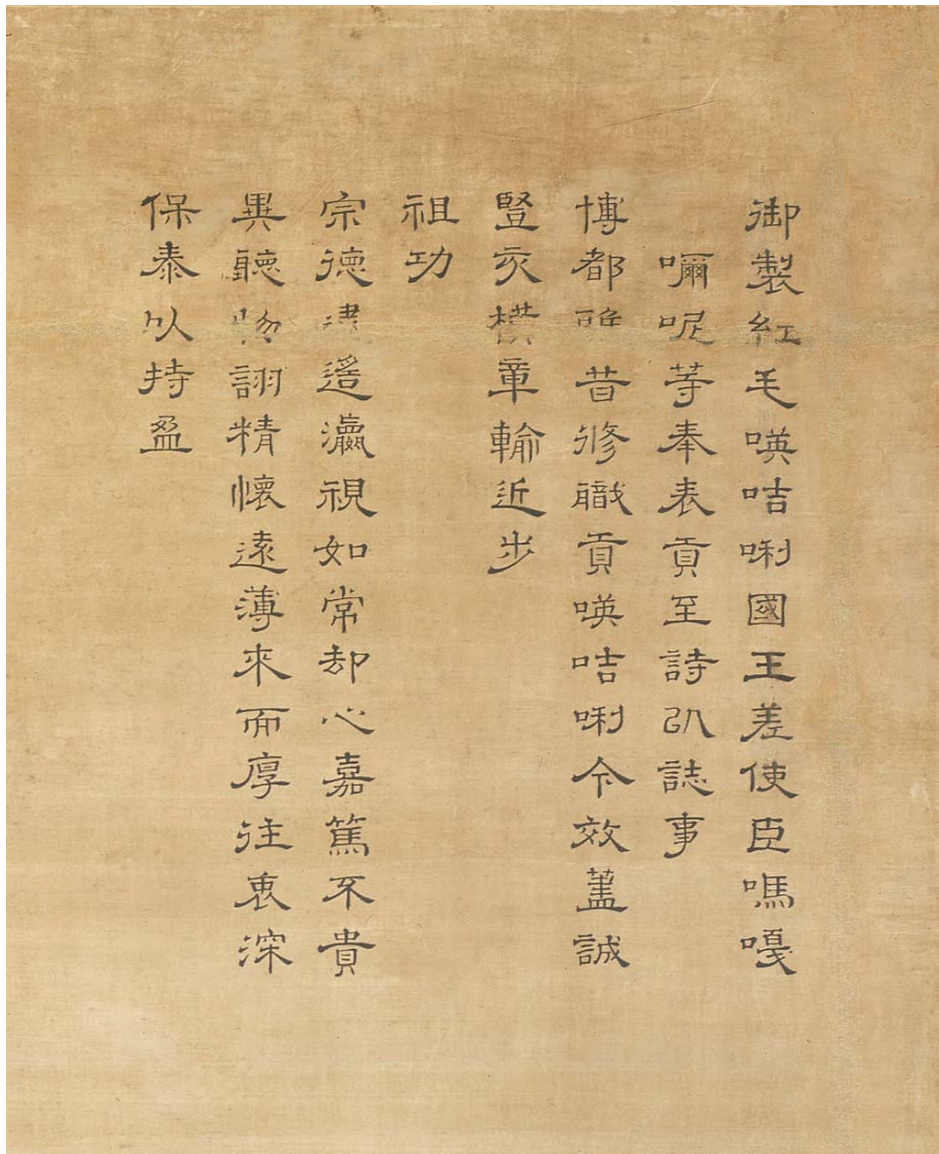


Figure 5

Anonymous

The Kesi of the British Embassy (Detail of top right corner)

Caligraphy on silk

© National Maritime Musuem



Figure 6

William Alexander

Sketch of Macartney in his Robes (from *Life of Macartney*, Vol. II. 1807)
1793

Water colour on paper

© The British Library Board. [WD 959, f. 19]

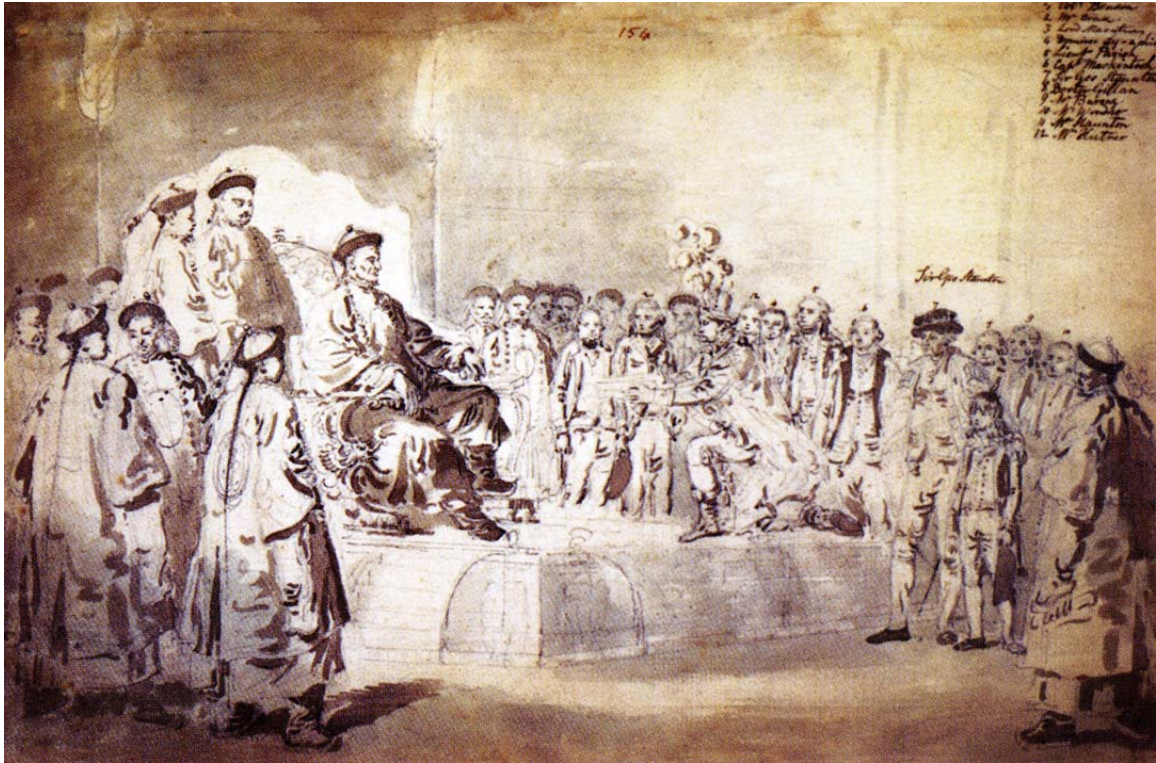


Figure 7
 William Alexander
Macartney's First Meeting with Qianlong
 1793
 Water colour on paper
 © The British Library Board. [WD 961, f.57]



Figure 8
William Alexander
Macartney's First Meeting with Qianlong (Detail of centre)
1793
Water colour on paper
© The British Library Board. (WD 961, f.57)

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